

Chapter VI

Crafting Cooperation: the Practice of Dialogue

What first impressed me about David Bohm was his ability to carry on an even and mutual dialogue with Krishnamurti. Through their exchange on the nature of intelligence, the renowned physicist and the great spiritual teacher demonstrated the power of human dialogue to *create*, to bring into being a new understanding of intelligence that incorporates science and eastern wisdom yet transcends them both into an integral whole. Bohm was a true renaissance man who, I believe, takes integral studies to a new height, relating modern physics, human intelligence, creativity, communication and dialogue, to a single unbroken unified field of consciousness.

Krishnamurti and Bohm make a clear distinction between thought and intelligence, explaining that they are on two different levels altogether. Thought, by its very nature, is passive; it follows the lead of our awareness and is directly affected by our inner states. Most of what we call thought serves primarily to uphold our attitudes or illusions and supports our fundamental assumptions. It is based on memory and is often merely associative, relating new input to our unique mixture of past impressions and experiences, of what we already know. In other words, thought is rarely fresh, original, or creative. Intelligence, on

the other hand, can be best described as awareness and allows for observation of thought. True intelligence arises through the quiet of the mind, makes its appearance when we allow space for it. Further, intelligence informs thought, much like a driver operates a vehicle and chooses a destination. The action of intelligence can bring a new quality of thought, and can be—or according to Bohm, must be—extended into human communication.

To continue with their findings: thought is of the order of time; it is mechanical, and duality-based predicated on a subject-object, an I and thou. We think *about* something, we constantly divide things, create categories, and form opinions and points of view—what is more, we tend to take ownership, identifying with what is merely a nerve impulse in the brain. In other words, thought is highly automatic and fragmented. “Krishnamurti states: “Thought is confused, polluted, dividing itself, fragmenting itself.” Intelligence is of another order; it is capable of seeing and embracing thought. Bohm goes on to observe: “The brain doesn’t create intelligence, but it is an instrument which helps intelligence to function.... The quietness of the instrument *is* the operation of intelligence. ... The non-quietness of the instrument is the failure of intelligence.”

Krishnamurti takes it to another step. “Yes. Now in the movement of thought is there harmony? If there is, then it has a relationship with intelligence. If there is no harmony but contradictions and all the rest of it, then thought has no relationship with the other.” He continues, “Intelligence uses thought. ... So thought is a pointer. The content is intelligence.... So intelligence is necessary. Without it thought has no meaning at all.”

The seemingly insoluble problems of the modern world—wars, poverty, conflict—derive, according to both of them, from the radical separation of thought from intelligence. Thought creates division, it fragments itself from the whole. When Adam and

Eve discover and falsely cherish their separateness based on duality-laced thought and the seductions of the ego for security and pleasure, they banish themselves from the garden of unity and lose a connection to a larger intelligence. Bohm speaks of the fallacy of divisions such as partisanship and nationalism, “Intelligence sees the falseness of what is going on. When thought is free of this falseness it begins to be different. Then it begins to parallel to intelligence. That is, it begins to carry out the implications of intelligence. That is very interesting because thought is never actually controlled or dominated by intelligence, thought always moves on its own. But in the light of intelligence, when the falseness is seen, then thought moves parallel or in harmony with intelligence. ”

Although it was never explicitly stated, their dialogue begs the question, is intelligence of the order of consciousness itself? What deeply strikes me is the phrase: “the light of intelligence.” It seems a fitting phrase to introduce Bohm’s view of human dialogue. In this chapter, I intend to offer a brief introduction to Bohm’s body of research on dialogue, and examine its potential for a radical and wide-ranging influence on such fields organizational leadership, science, politics, art and business. Then, with that foundation in mind, I hope to correlate his research to recent thinking in my own field, creativity and the creative process.

In the Light of Intelligence

The conditions of today’s world beg for a new form of human dialogue which transcends mere thought and becomes genuinely creative. Dialogue must form an approach to intelligence and come under the lamp of intelligence. That is to say dialogue, though driven by thought, must be informed and illuminated by intelligence.

Can we become aware of thought and learn to find its proper place in serving intelligence? And can we hold our *thoughts* about intelligence in abeyance, seeking something of its, deeper resonant meaning? In *Wholeness and the Implicate Order*, David Bohm states that “fragmentation is continually being brought about by the almost universal habit of taking our thought for ‘a description of the world as it is.’ Or we could say that, in this habit, our thought is regarded as in direct correspondence with objective reality. Since our thought is pervaded with differences and distinctions, it follows that such a habit leads us to look on these as real divisions, so that the world is then seen *and experienced* (italics mine) as actually broken up into fragments.... So what is needed is for man to give attention to his habit of fragmentary thought, to be aware of it, and thus bring it to an end.”

Bohm has taken this principle of giving “attention to fragmentary thought,” as a means of interrupting the dangerous effects of divisive thinking, and directly applied it to human dialogue. He continually refined his principles of dialogue in series of essays dating from 1970 until his death in 1992. Published in 1996 in a collection titled *On Dialogue*, Bohm offers seminal insights on how we might actually get along, use the process of dialogue as a creative force, and discover the greater intelligence that lies within us and between us in equal measure. Here I intend to summarize several of his key insights that can help catalyze both individual and group intelligence.

1. In human communication, we must call into question both language and meaning. The way that I use a word, the meaning it represents to me, differs from your representation of the meaning of the word or concept. To a degree, when we observe this common occurrence

of misunderstanding, we attempt to elucidate our intended meaning through further clarification and so on. But the fact remains, what comes back in the form of a response often implies that the other person understands what we say differently than we do. And we them. So what can we do?

The normal reaction to such a state of affairs is to grow increasingly frustrated, to identify closely with our intended message to the exclusion of other potential meanings, and to emotionally want to be understood. Bohm suggests we simply let this go, and merely observe what is happening. He makes a rather stunning insight, that in this process of negotiating meaning back and forth, that implicit within the field of an evolving meaning — even if first grows through misunderstanding — a larger order and new understandings may begin to appear.

Bohm observes: “Thus, when the second person replies, the first person sees a *difference* between what he meant to say and what the other understood. On considering this difference, he may then be able to see something new, which is relevant to both his own views and those of the other person. And so it can go back and forth, with the continual emergence of a new content that is common to both participants. Thus, in dialogue, each person does not attempt to *make common* certain ideas or items of information that are already known by him. Rather, it may be said that the two people are making something *in common*, i.e., creating something new together.”

In other words, an intrinsically new meaning grows in a highly creative manner through an openness not only to each other’s thoughts but to the shared content that emerges in the space between the participants. And the meaning that grows from the space between the two or more people often has an unexpected coherence and surprising

freshness. Bohm uses the word *coherence* as a fitting description of the nature of the new thought or concept. He believes that the coming together of thought contains a dynamic force that he likens to a highly focused, concentrated point of light that a laser emits, compared to the rather diffuse nature of ordinary thinking, which he likens to a mere incandescent light bulb. Many important questions and startling implications arise.

Is shared thinking and genuine dialogue a process of *uncovering* a meaning that already exists, in the shared space? Is there an implicit order that we *find* rather than create? Is there an unconscious and energetic connection between individuals that is working in the background finding common ground and mutual insight—and does this process unfold before it can be fully recognized by the conscious mind? Does an intelligence exist in the very atmosphere itself created by energy fields coming together or attracted by the mutual energy of the participants? Can a chemical blend between certain individuals create more force than a random combination of people? An entire book could be written just exploring these questions. These questions help me realize just how little we know about the role of human energetics in communication, and how far we need yet to travel. These questions reveal the hinted-at shape and general direction of the summit of a genuine understanding of collective intelligence—and help us understand we are merely traversing the early foothills.

Let us continue to examine Bohm's findings. He describes artistic or scientific insight as a form of the relative wholeness of the mind. As one explores and puzzles over a wide range of seemingly unrelated factors that do not fit together, one *allows* this rather fragmentary process to proceed without a prior expectation or even an emotional investment in the outcome. Bohm likens the associative nature of the mind to a process of digestion and its search for new meaning and implicit wholeness— similar to the growing dialogue

between individuals . Out of the *forming* quality of the mind, he claims, comes a moment where “suddenly there is a flash of understanding, and therefore one sees how all these factors are related as aspects of one totality.” However, one basic requirement is fundamental to the creative activity of the mind: that our *intelligence* must *observe* the nature of reactive and associative thought. The creative flash, he believes, is a quality of *perception* not of mere thought. Through a higher sense of intelligence, we *perceive* an implicit order, the final design of the creative process. Bohm states: “Design, is, however only a special case of final cause. For example, men often aim toward certain ends in their thoughts but what actually emerges from their actions is generally something different from what was in their design, something that was, however, *implicit* in what they were doing, though not consciously perceived by those who took part.”

We see this activity frequently in the creative process. Although we may initiate an activity, and have a design or plan in mind, something altogether new may emerge as we continue to work and bring genuine attention to the process. Writers speak with delight of how their characters eventually take on a life of their own and develop in ways that are surprisingly coherent. Painters seek the moment when the paint and color is applied to the canvas in unexpected and sometimes astonishing ways. And sculptors speak of uncovering the soul of a work that is known to be implicit in a block of marble or clay. This brings us to the real question. Like the sculptor’s piece of marble, is there an inherent possibility, an implicit shape, embedded in a shared dialogue? How may we approach this form of interpersonal dialogue, that could become profoundly creative, knowing all too well the shallow reefs and divisive barriers that confront human communication?

Bohm speaks to this: “Communication can lead to creation of something new only if people are able freely to listen to each other, without prejudice, and without trying to *influence each other* (italics mine). Each has to be interested primarily in truth and coherence, so that he is ready to drop his old ideas and intentions, and be ready to go on to something different, when this is called for.”

2. If we seek to engage in a creative process of interpersonal communication, a clear distinction forms between dialogue and discussion. Bohm claims that dialogue is inherently creative, a *stream of meaning* flowing through participants while discussion is a form of analysis that breeds fragmentation and division. I find ironic humor in the fact that Bohm cites the word *discussion* as having the same roots as *percussion* and *concussion*. In my own daily work as a college professor where the spirit of inquiry should prevail through the practice of dialogue, all too often I feel the educational environment is intruded by the agenda-ridden *politics of concussion*. I have many, both liberal and conservative, friends who cannot or will not concede that an opposing point of view holds any merit *whatsoever*. Indeed, many teachers identify classroom resources and guest speakers which merely serve to uphold their own standpoint, rather than seeking a healthy pluralism, offering students the advantage of highly differing viewpoints, and giving students sufficient respect to help them come to their own minds. They cannot empathize and cannot generously hold the spirit of dialogue in front of them—and this condition persists and dominates many arenas of life, even in or perhaps especially in today’s academia.

Discussion implies a taking apart, an analysis of individual points of view. It derives from mere thought, which, as we have seen, tends toward duality and subject-object viewpoints. It is often reactive and derives from sets of entrenched assumptions and disputing opinions. Discussion could be best described, I feel, as a form of negotiation, where somewhat rigid and opposing points of view seek to find small corners of common ground. Bohm makes the analogy: “Discussion is almost like a ping-pong game, where people are batting ideas back and forth and the object of the game is to win or to get points for yourself. Possibly you will take up somebody else’s ideas to back up your own—you may agree with some and disagree with others—but the basic point is to win the game.”

Dialogue, on the other hand, seeks mutual insight and enlarged understanding, and often arrives at something entirely new, original, and unanticipated. It is a creative process that embraces ambiguity, mutualism, a healthy sense of not-knowing (beginner’s mind), and a large measure of exploratory adventure. In true dialogue, participants avoid a specific goal and a desired outcome. Further, awareness lies at the heart of dialogue. We become aware of our own assumptions and opinions and learn not to identify with them. And we become tolerantly aware of the biases and blocks of others. Bohm makes the point that a doctor rarely feels negatively challenged when he or she makes a diagnosis based on the best evidence available, and the patient prudently seeks a second opinion. But in most areas of life, we believe strongly in our own opinions, rarely call them into question; and, even more dangerously we defend and aggressively promote these duality-based manifestations of the lowest form of our head brain (I will not dignify it by calling it thinking). In striving to bring awareness to thought, the lamp of consciousness begins to dispel both our trust in fragmented opinion and our emotional investment in seeking other’s agreement. And, from

this form of openness, encouraged by a broad, generous awareness of self, a genuine dialogue may begin.

Certain conditions are required for true dialogue. They hardly need mentioning here. We have not only heard them before, but almost all books on relationship, education, creativity, psychology, organizational development, and group dynamics hold some measure of these desired characteristics as being essential to individual and collective evolution. They have become cliché and we tend to gloss over them with boredom and disinterest. I personally believe that we treat these laudable aims with a certain degree of indifference because we know the truth about ourselves, that the *full* realization of these aims is grounded in imagination and hopelessly unrealistic for our present level of being.

These conditions for genuine dialogue include:

- Suspending fundamental assumptions
- Holding our opinions in abeyance
- Lack of judgment
- Tolerance and encouragement of others
- Mutual respect
- Non-identification with our ego
- Belief that other well-grounded viewpoints hold equal weight to our own
- Non-competitive stance
- Surrendering to the process, not desiring specific outcomes.

Knowing well that we cannot fully realize *all* of these conditions, we treat them as powerful ideals, work toward them, and proceed in spite of the limitation of self and others. We are realistic, seeing the truth of ourselves, and growth-oriented, setting our compass by

these higher aims. Both Krishnamurti and Bohm offer a profound tool for initiating genuine relatedness in the midst of our cultural conditioning that breeds an individual identification with our opinions, agendas, and self-interests. They ask us—can the mind know itself? Can intelligence inform thought? Can awareness stand above the fray and simply see, broadly observing our conflicting impulses, mechanical thought, and reactive emotion?

As soon as we bring the light of awareness into fragmentary thought, reactive emotion, and tense boundaries, something begins to evolve of itself. The chemical mixture within and without begins to change. We observe our opinions and assumptions, but we begin to have a different relationship to them and not identify as strongly with them. We can begin to genuinely listen to self and others, find a new kind of thought, and a new form of dialogue where we can explore something together. Awareness alone has the capacity to deeply reconcile our conflicting impulses and release our tight boundaries.

It is the same with the creative process. As we begin to play music or paint a canvas, the activity at first can feel flat and lifeless. We have not yet found our own connections to the task. We need to warm up and gradually come into accord with the activity. Very often, for example, when I write I intentionally use the first half-hour to hour as a time to merely release the everyday garbage of the mind. As we persist, and stay in front of the moment with a broad awareness, not wanting it to be different, our interest and excitement begin to grow. We enter the flow. Our passion and interest are deeply activated. Or in athletics, at first our muscles feel tight and constricted. But as we continue to run or swim, after a short while our energies enliven, the endorphins get released and we enter a blissful oneness with our bodily rhythms and movements. It is no different with our search for genuine dialogue. We must simply begin, get out of the door in spite of our entrenched attitudes and closely-held

opinions. We recognize that dialogue is a process that we engage in, not a known destination.

Bohm speaks of the core inherent difficulty in dialogue as the point where we discover our “absolute necessity.” And this becomes the central crisis point where a new, creative movement can begin to take place. He explains that our central assumptions and strong opinions generally revolve around a core issue that we perceive as an “absolute necessity,” where we cannot or will not yield under any circumstances. For example, a pro-life advocate might say in response to why they hold their position so strongly: “because it is God’s will.” And they will entertain no argument that could possibly redefine their position. An absolute necessity then is the irreducible residue of your position that you *think* cannot be changed. These absolute necessities form the primary cause of war, conflict and untold numbers of deaths. It is important here to observe that we all have our place of absolute necessity. Now, if we can observe that we are literally all the same, tightly grasping the irreducible residue of our position—we will soon see that the stubbornness of our entrenchment, when multiplied into nations and societies, *is* one of the primary causes for the insoluble problems of the modern world. Whether our position is based on economics, religion, philosophy, or national interest; whether it is ethical and based on the common good; or whether it is entirely driven by self-interest, we must see that *any* entrenched attitude or position bases itself on fragmented thought and cannot be fully trusted.

Even if we are objectively in the right, no matter. The clash of opinions itself generally causes far more problems for ourselves and the world than what the consequences may be of either upholding or relinquishing our points of view. One of the axiomatic questions of modern psychology is: “would you rather be *related* or *right*?” A generous awareness of

ourselves, each other, and process often brings a form of empathy, realizing we are all the same, and can begin to loosen the log jam. We begin to see that awareness, the hints of consciousness itself, contains far more creative potential than our divisive and fragmented thought. Bohm observes: “At a certain moment we may have the insight that each one of us is doing the same thing—sticking to the absolute necessity of his idea—and that nothing can happen if we do that. ... So much is being destroyed because we have this notion of it being absolutely necessary. Now if you can question it... then at some point it may loosen up. ... The dialogue can then enter a creative new area. I think this is crucial.”

We may arrive at the stunning observation that true freedom is the freedom from the limitations of our own minds, the freedom from opinion, and the freedom from our subjectively defined “absolute necessity.” The fixed patterns of ordinary thought, when not harmonized by awareness and intelligence, makes an improper and highly inefficient tool of dialogue. Accessing the mind’s intelligence to witness itself, as well as deeply listening others creates new inner and outer conditions from which genuine dialogue may spring. Bohm likens this freedom to creativity, strongly asserting that “freedom makes possible *a creative perception of new orders of necessity.*” He implies that heightened awareness and the letting go of fixed patterns of thought encourages the discovery of *a creative necessity* that we may arrive at either individually or collectively that far transcends—holding much greater personal or social potential—mere assumptions or opinions.

Proprioception of Thought

If the ordinary mind is an improper tool for creative dialogue, what in us can be trusted? What do Bohm and Krishnamurti mean by awareness? If we seek a collective

intelligence that arises from the breadth and depth of the group, where do we look for it?

Bohm offers a valuable method that he calls the “proprioception of thought,” which is a term derived from neurophysiology that really means “self perception.” Bohm further describes the process: “thought is aware of itself in action” “Whatever terms we use,” Bohm continues, “thought should be able to perceive its own movement, be aware of its own movement. In the process of thought there should be the awareness of that movement, of the intention to think, and of the result that thinking produces. By being more attentive, we can be aware of how thought produces a result outside ourselves. And then maybe we could also be attentive to the results it produces within ourselves. Perhaps we could even be aware of how it affects perception.”

In other words, thought produces a result both within and without. Attention holds the capacity to inwardly observe our component parts: mind, body, and feeling. Through attention, we may observe that a particular thought gives rise to an emotion, which in turn gives rise to another thought and bodily reactions such as adrenaline or quickness of breath—and so on in a never ending cycle of action and reaction. Our responses to thought, in other words, extend to the action of the body and emotions as well as to each other. And, with subtle attention, we may see that our thoughts have a similar impact on others. Rupert Sheldrake, in *The Sense of Being Stared at and other Aspects of the Extended Mind*, claims that all living things emanate an energy field that interweaves with others, even at some distance. Our thoughts and emotions extend beyond our physical boundaries, permeate the atmosphere, and can be read or sensed by others. Often, this takes place in the field of the body, or through the emotions; we feel or sense the inner attitudes of another. Sheldrake calls it the “seventh sense.” Perhaps then the western insistence on the “privacy of one’s own

mind” needs to be called deeply into question. Our thoughts and feelings energetically stretch beyond our bodies and often have a noticeable impact on those around us. In other words, thought extends deeply into ourselves, giving rise to emotion and sensation; and we react to both the energy imprint of our own thoughts *and* those of others.

The role of the body, its sensations and reactions, holds important clues to the perception of thought and will be explored in the next chapter. For now, we admit that thought gives rise to bodily manifestations. A connection to the body, through inward attention, helps us in observing the quality of our own thoughts, the emanations of others, and the content that emerges in dialogue. The body is a useful, necessary anchor in the process of expanding our awareness and discovering an intelligence that can harmonize both thought and feeling.

Let me try to keep this simple. As I understand the process, attention belongs to intelligence, awareness. And attention can be a broad stream, embracing the thoughts of the mind, the action of the emotions, as well as the sensations and reactions of the body. Genuine dialogue seeks wholeness, creatively discovering an implicit order, a new understanding. If we wish to engender this dialogue within a group, it must begin with ourselves. We must seek inner wholeness through—this is the first step—observing our fragmentation. The mind goes this way, the emotions feel something quite different, and the body contains its own reactions. Once the lamp of awareness is shone within, a unifying force is added to the inner mixture. And awareness may also be brought to others in the form of empathy and careful inner listening, giving attention not only to thoughts and words, but to tones of voice, body postures, non-verbal cues etc. We read between the lines of thought through an active “sensing” and “feeling” of others. So awareness can be seen as

the reconciling factor that begins to create unity, both within ourselves and with others.

Awareness engenders an inner quiet, where we may begin to perceive the truth of the now.

However, we must remain ever vigilant. Attention has a taste of alchemy. It begins to transform both the inner and outer mixture. Awareness, an inner witness, stands above the ordinary mind with its assumptions, opinions, and attitudes. All too often, we confuse attention with introspection where the ordinary mind merely takes note of itself. Bohm states that we must be careful not to allow our assumptions to merely reinforce themselves by looking into the mirror. Attention arises from a larger order, the order of intelligence, and can bring coherence to oneself and a group.

Let us take now, this moment as an example. You and I have been engaged in a form of silent dialogue for five chapters. Let me ask you some questions. Can you bring your attention to bear on your thoughts, emotions, and sensations? What do the contents of this book communicate to you? What thoughts and insights might you add to the unfolding meaning? The book actually is a *creative* dialogue between you and I, for your meaning of my words creates a new entity, a new conceptual framework that derives from both of our experiences and understandings. This is perhaps fairly easy to comprehend. But let's go a little deeper into this. The words and the concepts, as I express them, contain a flavor and an underlying feeling that your emotional nature responds to, that gives my words a certain evocative tone. The *poetics* of meaning can be read by your feelings and form another layer or meaning that gets transposed on, or ideally integrated with, the conceptual underpinnings of my expression. The subtle impressions offered by your emotions have already given you a certain feeling about who I am and the particular nature of my being. And what of the body, the senses? Do my words have a rhythm—maybe appealing, maybe not—and a flow that

interacts with the inner sense of your body? Do you at times find yourself breathing freely as you read, and at other times furrowing your brow with difficulty? Do you find unexpected tension with certain thoughts, or do you find a relaxed permeability with others? Does your body sense the truth of certain passages and resist others? Remember what Einstein said, that we have to think with “feelings in our muscles.” The body knows, has its own form of intelligence that adds its sensations to our evolving sense of meaning.

Now lets go even deeper into the moment. Can you observe your mind? Thoughts come and go with startling frequency and apparent randomness. As you read, you may find your thoughts commenting on my own, with agreement or criticism. You may find a flow of associations taking you down-river to past experiences or insights of your own trapped in memory and suddenly released. And, maybe your gut tenses at certain passages, or your flow of associations awakens pleasant or unpleasant memories. The meaning of my words continues to grow within you. Other books, other authors, other passages you have read come into conscious view. You begin to form relationships between my words and other thoughts contained within your memory. Maybe you go to your bookshelf and look something up, striving to find correspondence to what you are feeling and thinking. And as you observe your mind, it actually grows a bit more still, opening you to spontaneous insight that feels to arise from another, a deeper source. As Walt Whitman observes about the inner noise of the mind and emotions: “These come to me days and nights and go from me again, but they are not the Me myself.” When the mind relaxes it becomes more like a still, reflecting pool allowing for a deeper order of thought and insight to appear.

Let's now journey for a moment into the unconscious. Perhaps you have a sixth sense, an intuitive response to my words and concepts. Perhaps certain vague pictures form in your mind, or symbolic representations emerge from certain passages. A friend of mind called me last night to share the result of a Google image search, showing me a symbol that her experiences while reading the previous chapter awakened in her mind. Perhaps you sense our barriers of distance, time, sociologies start to dissolve as we both to seek to understand the collective field that resides in our shared human foundation. Perhaps your attention, finer and quicker than the ordinary mind, begins to capture fleeting images that cross your consciousness that serve to enlarge meaning or raise important questions. And perhaps our unified field of humanity gives rise to a feeling of the collective potential that inspires in you a sense of awe or wonder.

Now imagine if we could actually have dialogue about all of the intuitions, thoughts, emotions, and sensations that take place while reading the book. Undoubtedly, it could be highly creative, would likely enlarge the book, and could teach both of us a great deal. Now imagine if this dialogue could take place in a group, say, of twenty people. What do you think might happen? Could we find a coherency and a single purpose? Probably not right away; we would need to clear the air of a certain garbage of our opinions and assumptions. But perhaps if we aired them, keeping genuine attention and empathy on the process, we might rather quickly, or maybe not so quickly, get beyond them and find areas of deep creative exploration. Staying with the process, bringing awareness to thought, and attention to the body and feelings, seems to hold the key to a highly creative movement that could arise between us, could engender a group inquiry and might very well lead to a genuinely creative collective exploration.

Common Consciousness

In dialogue, we do not seek consensus *per se*; that is merely a form of negotiation that attempts to find areas of common ground. We do not seek compromise *per se*; that is a mere blending of two intrinsically different points of view. And we do not seek agreement *per se*; apart from being unlikely in a large group, that is a mere recognition of our points of similarity. While all of these aims are important and do have their definite place, “Bohmian” dialogue looks beyond them. What then do we seek? I will not write about this as if I understand it, I merely have hints of this potential. I intuit that we seek consciousness, and consciousness is one, an indivisible whole. It is the unified field, the implicit order. There cannot be any disagreement among one whole. It is common to us all. And it is much larger than we are, individually and collectively. We are merely closer or farther from it. We are seeking a connection to a common consciousness, the field that underlies our differences, where we are, in the words of Christianity, one in spirit. While most of us are some distance from this realization, can we search for it together, and can the shared search itself bring us closer to the one taste of consciousness?

I find it rather strange and ironic, that in spite of last century’s unassailable discoveries in modern physics, we still feel the need to emphasize our separateness rather than our relatedness. We should keep in mind that Bohm’s discoveries grow out of rigorous scientific research, and are not based on mere speculation or a form of new-age idealism. The Eastern wisdom traditions have taught for centuries the oneness of life and the rich diversity found *within* unity. Modern physics now agrees. Let’s examine some recent discoveries in modern physics that provide the underpinnings for Bohm’s thought and his theories of wholeness and the implicate order.

In quantum theory, the observer and the observed are intricately connected, and this takes place even on a sub-atomic level. The methods of preparation and the measurement of an object on an atomic level actually influences the properties of an object. In other words, the presence of the observer has a profound and inseparable effect on what is being observed and studied. Fritjof Capra writes in *The Tao of Physics*: “Quantum theory thus reveals a basic oneness of the universe. It shows that we cannot decompose the world into independently existing smallest units. As we penetrate into matter, nature does not show us any isolated ‘basic building blocks’, but rather appears as a complicated web of relations between the various parts of the whole. These relations always include the observer in an essential way. The human observer constitutes the final link in the chain of observational processes, and the properties of any atomic object can only be understood in terms of the object’s interaction with the observer. This means that the classical ideal of an objective description of nature is no longer valid. The Cartesian position between I and the world, between the observer and the observed cannot be made when dealing with atomic matter. In atomic physics, we can never speak about nature without, at the same time, speaking about ourselves.”

The astonishing fact presented here is that consciousness has an influence, perhaps a profound and inseparable influence on that which it observes. The intelligence of which Krishnamurti speaks embraces both the observer and the observed. The awareness that observes is the same awareness that experiences what is being observed—we become the observer and the observed; they cannot be separated. Observational awareness thus becomes more than a passive, neutral force; it actually changes the very nature of the thing observed. And, in respect to human behavior, this change take us out of the dualism of subject/object

and I/Thou and helps us realize our essential interconnectedness. Knowing this, we can no longer in good conscience create and maintain a distinct inviolable separation between mind and body, you and me, the individual and the collective.

The second well known theory, one that proves the existence of “non-local connections” between sub-atomic particles is known as Bell’s theorem. For a highly simplified view of this experiment, when two particles (electrons) are made to spin side by side, they are spinning in opposite directions so that their total spin cancels each other out. In other words, they are related in such a way that their total spin equals zero. Now if these particles are separated by a great distance, say one is in Paris and the other in New York, and you change the spin of one of these electrons—the other will change *simultaneously*, even if it is thousands of miles away. Since no signal can travel faster than the speed of light, what causes this simultaneity? Capra writes: Even though the two electrons are far apart in space, they are nevertheless linked by instantaneous, non-local connections. These connections are not signals in the Einsteinian sense; they transcend our conventional notions of information transfer.” David Bohm describes the implications of this theory as “we are all one.” Physicists know that everything is connected, they are just not sure how this connection takes place. Bohm describes it as a “separation without separateness. The oneness implicit in Bell’s theorem envelops human beings and atoms alike.” As a human mirror of this theory, William Segal writes in *Opening*: “A man who rises in spirit in London helps his fellow men in Walla Walla.”

David Bohm introduces the third experiment by discussing implicate order: “A *total order* is contained, in some *implicit* sense, in each region of time and space. Now, the word ‘implicit’ is based on the verb ‘to implicate’. This means ‘to fold inward’. . . . So we may be

led to explore the notion that in some sense each region contains a total structure ‘enfolded’ within it.” He goes on to describe “a striking example of implicate order.” In the laboratory, a transparent container full of a very viscous fluid is set up with a mechanical rotating stirring device that can thoroughly “stir” the fluid. An insoluble drop of ink is placed within the viscous fluid and stirred. Gradually the ink drop is transformed and blended with the fluid in such a way that it is distributed randomly into a thread that extends over the whole fluid, appearing a shade of gray. Then, if the mechanical stirring device is made to turn in the opposite direction, the “transformation is reversed, and the droplet of dye suddenly appears, reconstituted.” When the ink droplet was extended over and blended with the entire fluid, becoming a gray mass, it nevertheless maintained some kind of order—an order *enfolded* or *implicated* in the gray mass which can then be revealed again *in its totality* when the stirring device is reversed.

Like snowflakes in a snowbank, we are united in a single mass, yet we each maintain our unique range of variation. The individual and the collective cannot be entirely separated; they form one unit. Yet within the whole, we maintain our separate and unique individuality, an implicit order that is enfolded into the whole.

In *Synchronicity the Inner Path of Leadership*, Joseph Jaworski acknowledges the profound influence David Bohm had, that transformed his very worldview and changed the fundamental manner of his thinking. “Bohm’s conversation with me was like a bolt of lightning. . . . We were talking about a radical, disorienting new view of reality which we couldn’t ignore. We were talking about the awareness of the essential interrelatedness and interdependence of all phenomena—physiological, social, cultural. We were talking about a systems view of life and a systems view of the universe. Nothing could be understood in

isolation, everything had to be seen as part of a unified whole. It is an abstraction, Bohm said, to talk about nonliving matter. Different people are not that separate, they are all enfolded in the whole, and they are all a manifestation of the whole. It is only through an abstraction that they look separate. Everything is included in everything else.”

During their conversation, Bohm said: “Yourself is actually the whole of mankind. That’s the idea of implicate order—that everything is enfolded into everything. The entire past is enfolded in each one of us in a very subtle way. If you reach deeply into yourself, you are reaching into the very essence of mankind. When you do this, you will be led into the generating depth of consciousness that is common to the whole of mankind. We are all connected. If this could be taught, and if people could understand it, we would have a different consciousness.”

“At present, people create barriers between each other by their fragmentary thought. Each one operates separately. When these barriers have dissolved, then there arises one mind, where we are all one unit, but each person also retains his or her own individual awareness. That one mind will still exist even when they separate, and when they come together, it will be as if they hadn’t separated. It’s actually a single intelligence that works with people who are moving in relationship with one another. Cues that pass from one to the other are being picked up with the same awareness... Therefore, these people are really all one. The separation between them is not blocking. They are all pulling together. If you had a number of people who really pulled together and worked together in this way, it would be remarkable. They would stand out so much that everyone would know they were different.”

It is not so much techniques of dialogue that we seek; rather it is a more fundamental shift of attitude that becomes necessary. Techniques mean nothing, cannot be effective without the proper attitude and perspective that govern their use. Attention, individual awareness; these form the tools towards awakening, towards consciousness. These and nothing else. For individuals and groups. How we use and modify the tools to suit our individual purpose and questions; these may differ. But here we come to the edge of a realization that defies cultural constructs, that lies at the heart of the human condition, that “pulling together,” the cooperation with a “single intelligence” can move mountains, and serve to unite heaven, earth, and their common inhabitants.

The verb “cooperate” is derived from the roots *cooperari*, together, and *operari*, to work, which is in turn derived from *opus*. And *opus* forms the root of such words as “opera”, “magnum opus”, and means *a creative work*. Therefore, we conclude that cooperation implies a form of creativity, the bringing of something new into being. But, in listening to Bohm, is it entirely new, or is it already enfolded in our potential wholeness? Cooperation becomes an operative word in the initiation of genuine dialogue then in three, distinct, yet highly related ways. Our own inner constitution—body, mind, feelings—can learn to cooperate, come together, and work together. We may also learn to work together with others, cooperating in the search for genuine creativity and understanding. And finally, the group itself may, over time, learn to cooperate with the higher forces that surround us, the consciousness common to us all, yet separated from us through our lack of inner and outer unity. The fundamental dialogue that we must find is ultimately the relatedness between our being—our thoughts, feelings and sensations—and our awareness, the intelligence that wishes to, is ready to, enter us and harmonize us when we are open and available. It raises the

single, most significant question alluded to in Rene Daumal's book, *Mount Analogue*: "And you, what do you seek?"



Questions and Practice

We know through experience how difficult dialogue can be, especially in a group setting. For the most part, dispassionate Platonic dialogue has given way to ego-bound, agenda-ridden, and subjective discussions, often becoming heated when one's fundamental assumptions are challenged. Can we view this as a necessary part of the process and move to get beyond it to more meaningful and productive dialogue? And the primary question is: in what way can we allow for the full individual expression of points of view, and at the same time, seek creative collaboration? We are not necessarily seeking common ground, or even consensus; rather we are seeking the arresting flash of insight or the freshness and originality of a new thought, of a new order of intelligence. And can we find a means to verify the power of the group mind as being greater than the thought of each individual? Can we, using Jacob Needleman's evocative phrase, learn the craft of the "the art of association?"

When two or more are gathered together with a common purpose—whether in a relationship, a workplace, a civic forum, or a seminar-based exploration—can we try to set the following conditions. Just that, with a degree of intent, create an environment with certain conditions that can hold a place for dialogue. No more, no less. Do not seek to create anything more than the conditions or try to manipulate the interaction in any way. These conditions have been modified from the introductory section titled "Practices for preparing

and opening,” of the excellent booklet, “Centered on the Edge,” published by the Fetzer Institute on collective intelligence which may be viewed at centeredontheedge.com.

1. Holding a Space

In Hawai‘i it is considered unthinkable to begin an activity—a celebration, meeting, gallery opening, or concert—without some form of blessing, an invocation to higher forces. Before initiating any form of dialogue try to sit together in total silence for several minutes. Use the time actively to bring your attention to the sensations of the body, using it as an anchor to be aware of your field of being. Strive for inner silence, a quieting of the mind. Remember David Bohm’s observation at the beginning of the chapter: “The quietness of the instrument *is* the operation of intelligence.” Using your body and feelings, sense the others and the common space; after several minutes, you may find a resonating silence grow in the atmosphere of the room itself.

2. Listening Deeply/Non-attachment

As individuals begin to speak, leave room for the unfolding of their thought—with quiet and respect. Stay aware as much as possible of your whole body. Listen not only with your mind, but with your senses and feelings. You will undoubtedly find reaction and response to their words. You might find yourself leaning in to their space if you like what they are saying or you may observe a tensioning in your gut if their words oppose your basic assumptions. Just let it be; merely observe. Above all, stay focused in listening and avoid the common trap of attending to what *you* are going to say next. The fact is, if you stay focused in the present, you do not know what you will say next. This is the whole point; we are

seeking a different level of the mind. Let your words unexpectedly startle even you as they pass through your being. One of my most enlightening exercises in the art classroom is to walk up to a student's pictures pinned on the wall for a critique without having any idea what I will say, and merely observe the words grow directly, in the moment, from the *process* of my interaction with their work.

3. Not knowing/non-judgment

When speaking, also listen to yourself—the tone of your voice, the resounding of your voice in your body, and the sense the “inner feeling” of the words you speak. Remember, words have weight; they go out from your person with a certain energy infused with your state of being that is instantly recognizable by others. Try to understand—this is the hard part for most of us—that we may be seeking to uncover an implicate meaning that grows from all the participants, that may arise naturally and *unexpectedly* through some degree of opposing dialogue. Others hear our words differently than we mean them. Let it be, and try to discover an enlarged understanding that may come through the meaning that grows between the participants. If your words are misunderstood, try to see what the other person perceives and what may grow from the common ground of meaning, even if it differs from what you initially meant. Try to speak from within, not only from your mind, but from your whole being. You may find words arise that come from deep within that delight and surprise you when speaking them. Stay in front of your “not-knowing,” the beginners mind. Try not to judge your own thoughts or those of others; maintain a sense of inquiry and exploration. Non-judgment may not be entirely possible; we do and will react. Again, let it be and just observe the process. Sometimes the fresh thought and the original breakthrough

idea may come at the most unlikely place. Maybe at lunch or during a break, sometimes in the relaxed space between the intended dialogue.

4. Proprioception of thought/whole body sensing

The intelligence of the body and the wisdom of the feelings hold many keys to observing the interactions between participants and responding to a growing stream of meaning that may emerge. The body's sensitivity and the responsiveness of the feelings are capable of reading between the lines and sensing when we are nearing truth, which is here defined as a creative, original new thought that can enter the room through our shared quest. We simply *know*, we distinguish through our inner receptivity, when a "right" thought is expressed or a larger meaning implicated. Can we learn to trust a deeper form of intelligence that grows from a search for a wholeness of being? The body knows what is right. Don Juan teaches Carlos Castaneda to listen with his body to discern energy and to form connections to the world.

5. Trusting intuition

We are seeking a larger form of intelligence than mere thought. Both David Bohm and Krishnamurti view ordinary rationality as divisive and fragmented, truncating the world into neat duality-based categories. The means towards intelligence is through awareness. Clear observation of oneself comes from a deeper region than the ordinary mind. Ironically, through observation of oneself, finding the space of the witness, we become more inwardly connected; we become the observed and the observer simultaneously. In a group, with others striving to bring genuine attention both inward and outward, moments of magic can occur

spontaneously, insights seem to arise from the atmosphere itself, and we become aware of a combined force, a collective magnetism that can attract influences from higher realms of intelligence. Through seeking relatedness with each other, we are ultimately seeking connectedness with an intelligence that lies both within us and beyond us.

Can you find your own way, experiment with the art of association, and seek relatedness? Are we seeking relatedness to each other or the source of intelligence that pervades us and unites us? Or both?