Dialogue Theories
Volume II
The Dialogue Society is a registered charity, established in London in 1999, with the aim of advancing social cohesion by connecting communities through dialogue. It operates nationwide with regional branches across the UK. Through localised community projects, discussion forums, teaching programmes and capacity building publications it enables people to venture across boundaries of religion, culture and social class. It provides a platform where people can meet to share narratives and perspectives, discover the values they have in common and be at ease with their differences.
Dedicated to my parents Osman and Sukran Sener, my younger brother Mehmet, my wife Merve, and my colleagues, for their selfless love, friendship and support

Omer Sener

Dedicated to the students and graduates of the Keele University MA in Dialogue Studies, and to the dialogical philosophers of Harris Westminster Sixth Form

Frances Sleap

In tribute to my mother, Rhoda Weller and my father Dennis Weller who, through their example of dialogue with me, even when we have thought differently, have taught me about the value of dialogue

Paul Weller
Contents

About the Editors and Authors .............................................................. 7

Editors’ Acknowledgements ............................................................... 13

Foreword .............................................................................................. 15

Introduction: How and Why Should we Study Dialogue?
Paul Weller .............................................................................................. 17

Mikhail Bakhtin
Jeff Shires .............................................................................................. 29

Daniel Barenboim
Jay Prosser .............................................................................................. 43

Wilfred Cantwell Smith
Şerafettin Pektaş ........................................................................................ 59

Laura Chasin
Frances Sleap ............................................................................................ 77

The Circle of Seven
Kerri Arruda and Olen Gunnlaugson ....................................................... 95

Diana Eck
Charlotte Dando .......................................................................................... 111

Paulo Freire
Michael Atkinson ...................................................................................... 125

Hans-Georg Gadamer
Oliver Ramsbotham ................................................................................. 139

Erving Goffman
Phil Henry ................................................................................................. 157
Contents

Daisaku Ikeda
Olivier Urbain ................................................................. 173

Emmanuel Levinas
Andrew Wilshere .......................................................... 189

Louis Massignon
Nazirudin Mohd Nasir ...................................................... 205

Dominique Pire
June Boyce-Tillman ....................................................... 221

Harold Saunders
Amy Lazarus ..................................................................... 239

Ludwig Wittgenstein
Gorazd Andrejč .............................................................. 255
About the Editors and Authors

Editors:

Omer Sener wrote the first volume of *Dialogue Theories* with Frances Sleap. He is a researcher and freelance writer who holds a BA in American Literature and a PhD in Cultural Studies and Literary Criticism. His research interests include ethnicity, Asian American literature, and cultural narratives. He is particularly interested in intercultural dialogue and dialogue as an academic concept across disciplines. As a Research Fellow at the Dialogue Society he worked on a number of academic publications, such as *Debating Multiculturalism I*, and taught tutorials on a number of dialogue thinkers as part of the MA in Dialogue Studies programme. He is an assistant editor of the Journal of Dialogue Studies. In addition to his role at the Dialogue Society, he is working on a research project at Open University while also supporting the work of Centre for Hizmet Studies.

Frances Sleap wrote the first volume of *Dialogue Theories* with Omer Sener. She studied Philosophy and Theology at the University of Oxford, graduating with first class honours, before exploring different religions in a master’s degree in the Study of Religions. She then worked at the Dialogue Society for over four years, contributing to projects including the Dialogue Society Success School for young people, various community and academic publications and the Dialogue School for students following the MA in Dialogue Studies at Keele University. While now beginning a career in Religious Studies teaching she retains a keen interest in dialogue and the Society’s work and continues as an assistant editor of the Journal of Dialogue Studies.

Paul Weller is Professor of Inter-Religious Relations at the University of Derby, where he is Head of Research (MPhil-PhD Students and Research Excellence Framework [REF Outputs]). He is a Visiting Fellow in the Oxford Centre for Christianity and Culture at Regent’s Park College, University of Oxford and a founder and Trustee of the Multi-Faith Centre at the University of Derby (http://www.multifaithcentre.org). He is a member of the Advisory Board of the Dialogue Society and a Trustee of the Interreligiöse Arbeitsstelle in Germany (http://www.interrel.de). He was a founder member of the Joppa Group of Baptist Christians engaged in inter-faith dialogue and is currently a member of the Baptist Union of Great Britain’s Inter-Faith Working Group. On a European level he has been a consultant to Belieforama (http://www.belieforama.eu), a community of practice based around the development of a prize-winning training programme in religious diversity and anti-discrimination.
Authors:

**Gorazd Andrejč** is a Junior Research Fellow at the Woolf Institute in Cambridge. He has studied at the Universities of Maribor, Cambridge, and Exeter. In his PhD at the University of Exeter he examined the role of existential feelings in Christian concept formation, engaging with the work of Wittgenstein, Schleiermacher, and Merleau-Ponty. His main research interests are ways to understand the interrelatedness of religious language, belief and experience, especially in contemporary Christianity, and interreligious communication, especially between Abrahamic religions in Europe.

**Michael Atkinson** is currently completing a PhD on the facilitation of intercultural dialogue at La Trobe University’s Centre for Dialogue. He holds a Master’s degree in International Education and a Graduate Diploma of Education, both from the University of New England. He has contributed papers on dialogue, multiculturalism, anti-racism and adult literacy at various conferences in Australian universities and has published papers in journals including the *Journal of Dialogue Studies* and *RaPAL Journal*. He has worked as an adult English language teacher at Victoria University – Sunshine campus since 2008 and was previously a curriculum adviser, teacher educator and ESL teacher at Nha Trans University Vietnam, with Australian Volunteers International.

**June Boyce-Tillman** is Professor of Applied Music at the University of Winchester and artistic convenor of the Winchester Centre for the Arts as Well-being. She is an extraordinary Professor at North West University, South Africa. She is a composer active in community music making, exploring the possibilities of intercultural/interfaith sharing through composing/improvising. Her one-woman shows have been performed in three continents. She has written widely on music, healing, gender and spirituality. Her large scale works for cathedrals involve professional musicians, school children and people with disabilities. She was awarded an MBE for her services to music and education and is an ordained Anglican priest.

**Charlotte Dando** is an interfaith activist, communications professional and writer. Charlotte is Assistant Director - Communications and Development at William Temple Foundation, a research and ideas hub shaping debate on the role of religion in public life. She co-founded the European Network of Young Interfaith Leaders to build capacity, increase the number of active young people involved in interfaith work and increase age equity in the interfaith movement. She holds an MA ‘Religions of Asia and Africa’ from SOAS, University of London.

**Olen Gunnlaugson** is an Associate Professor in Leadership and Organizational Development within the Department of Management in the Business School at Université Laval, in Quebec City, Canada. He brings an increasingly trans-disciplinary
approach to his current research in conversational leadership, deep presencing, we-space practice and facilitation, as well as contemplative management skills and coaching. His research has been published in several books as well as numerous international academic journals and presentations at leading conferences. Project-wise, he is currently collaborating with colleagues on a number of books and articles. More recently, he was the chief co-editor of the management book, *Perspectives on Theory U: Insights from the Field*, a recently published anthology featuring applied research on Theory U by 30 faculty members and associates from North America and Europe.

**Phil Henry** has a first class honours degree in Religious Studies and Creative Writing from the University of Derby. He completed his PhD at the University of Liverpool examining Buddhist social movements. He has a Postgraduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education and is a fellow of the Higher Education Academy. As Director of the Multi-Faith Centre at the University of Derby since 2009 he oversees the strategic development of the organisation, its projects and research with a small staff team. Phil is a Sociologist at the University of Derby where he also teaches part time. He is a researcher and member of the Society, Religion and Belief Research Centre at the University. He has established research interests in the voices of marginal communities and dialogue as a living interaction.

**Amy Lazarus** is the founder and CEO of Inclusion Ventures, LLC, training, strategising with and supporting organisations to be more welcoming and effective. Amy served as the inaugural Executive Director for the Sustained Dialogue Campus Network, then as the Sustained Dialogue Institute’s Executive Director. Under her five-year tenure, programmes grew from serving eleven to forty-five college campuses and impact increased significantly; the work expanded globally and into workplaces and earned revenue increased from six to thirty-three percent. Amy earned an M.S. in Public Policy and Management at Carnegie Mellon’s Heinz School and founded Common Ground at Duke University. She is a World Economic Forum Global Shaper and has received numerous awards for her social justice focus. From Shaker Heights, Ohio, Amy lives in Washington, DC and serves on the boards of Coro National and The Harwood Institute.

**Nazirudin Mohd Nasir** is Deputy Director of the Office of the Mufti, Singapore. He has recently completed his D.Phil at St Cross College, University of Oxford, in the comparative study of the Abrahamic religions. Prior to that, he did postgraduate work in law at the School of Oriental and African Studies (MA), and the study of religion at Oxford (MSt). He was also involved in scriptural reasoning work with the Centre for Muslim-Christian Studies, Oxford. In Singapore, he is involved in the local Building Bridges Programme with other faith communities.
Şerafettin Pektaş holds a PhD in Islamic Studies from KU Leuven, Belgium. His dissertation examined the views of Wilfred Cantwell Smith (Canadian scholar of religion) and Said Nursi (Muslim scholar and the initiator of the Nur Movement) on faith and modernity. After he received his MA degree in Sociology from Boğaziçi University, Istanbul, he stayed for two years in Rome where he conducted research on interfaith dialogue and comparative theology at the Pontifical Gregorian University. He was here awarded a research grant by the pontifical Nostra Aetate Foundation. Since 2008, he has been actively involved in various intercultural initiatives in Brussels. His research interests include religious studies, comparative theology, theological anthropology and Muslims in Europe.

Jay Prosser is Reader in Humanities at the University of Leeds. He is author of books on photography and on autobiography, among other subjects. He is Principal Investigator of the AHRC Research Network, ‘Ottoman Pasts, Present Cities: Cosmopolitanism and Transcultural Memories,’ and he received funding from the Government to carry out work on transcultural dialogue in Leeds communities with the Dialogue Society. He is descended, on his mother’s side, from Baghdadi Jews who were part of the Ottoman Empire for 400 years. He is completing a memoir about their story, called The Camphorwood Chest Journeys: A Story of Jewish Transcultural Love.

Oliver Ramsbotham is Emeritus Professor of Conflict Resolution at the University of Bradford, UK. He is President of the Conflict Research Society, and former Chair of the Oxford Research Group. He is on the Advisory Board of the International Journal for Conflict Engagement and Resolution, and co-series editor with Tom Woodhouse of the Routledge Studies in Peace and Conflict Resolution. In the last 5 years, in addition to several articles, he has written the following books: Transforming Violent Conflict: Radical Disagreement, Dialogue and Survival (Routledge 2010); Contemporary Conflict Resolution (with Tom Woodhouse and Hugh Miall, Polity 2012, fourth edition forthcoming 2016); When Conflict Resolution Fails: Engaging Radical Disagreement (Polity, forthcoming 2016).

Jeff Shires is Associate Professor of Communication at Purdue University North Central. He teaches course in the Communication major and in the General Education programme. Before taking up this role in 2002 he lectured on Communication Arts at Wartburg College. He has given many papers at Communication, Cultural Studies and Communication Arts conferences, including a number on Bakhtin and dialogue. He has published articles in The Encyclopaedia of Television, edited by Horace Newcomb, and in Human Perspectives in the Internet Society: Culture, Psychology and Gender, edited by K. Morgan, C. A. Brebbia, J. Sanchez and A. Voiskounsky.

Andrew Wilshere completed a PhD in 2013 on the relationship between Levinas’s philosophy and analytic accounts of moral rights. He worked under the supervision of Prof. Alexander Samely and Prof. Hillel Steiner at the University of Manchester, and was examined by Prof. Joanna Hodge. He currently works as an independent researcher and manager in healthcare research at University College London, and has plans to publish further on Levinas, ethics, and analytic political theory.
Editors’ Acknowledgements

We would like to express our heartfelt thanks to Ozcan Keles, Ilknur Kahraman, Cem Erbil and Sadik Cinar for their support and assistance in the various forms of dialogue involved in the creation of this volume. We are very grateful to Ruth Woodhall, Miranda Bain and Valeria Matasci for their contributions to the editing process and to Paul Hedges, Fabio Petito, Michael Barnes, Chris Lawn, Sue Vice, Uvanney Maylor and Kurt Krammer for their written feedback on draft chapters. We appreciatively acknowledge the participation of Fern Elsdon-Baker, Fabio Petito, Paul Hedges, Esther Efemini, Simon Keyes, Jo Malone, Nicola Sugden, Ali Paya, Ayten Ç. Deniz, Marianne Zeck, Tamanda Walker, Claudia Colvin and PninaWebner in the workshop which contributed to the dialogical refinement of the work.

Sincere thanks most of all to the authors, for their insight and expertise, their diligence and enthusiasm, their patience, and their unfailing readiness for dialogue.
We heartily welcome the contribution made by this book to the Dialogue Society’s work of researching, promoting and facilitating dialogue. We see dialogue as a critical component of building a more humane and connected society in which people of diverse perspectives, faiths and backgrounds can live together in peace and friendship. Our academic projects, alongside those in the community and policy areas, are intended as small pieces in the great jigsaw of work towards that society.

The book incorporates the work of fifteen authors who bring expertise and insights from distinguished academic study and community dialogue efforts, in addition to that of the editors, the three colleagues responsible for the first volume of *Dialogue Theories*. Together with that volume, the *Journal of Dialogue Studies* and the MA in Dialogue Studies which we launched with Keele University, we hope that *Dialogue Theories Volume II* will play a valuable role in building momentum for the academic study of dialogue. Serious examination of the meaning of dialogue, its dynamics and the factors contributing to its flourishing in different contexts will, we hope, inform and assist practitioners of dialogue in different spheres.

Our efforts in this academic area are continuing in earnest. When the first volume of *Dialogue Theories* was published we were just about to launch the *Journal of Dialogue Studies*. We are now receiving submissions for the fifth issue. In September Keele University will welcome its fifth intake of students for the MA in Dialogue Studies, and we look forward to offering them training in dialogue theories and methods during their placement with us in the spring.

Like the journal, this book brings together the contributions of people with diverse areas of expertise and a shared serious interest in dialogue. However, the book shares the aim of the first volume of *Dialogue Theories*: to introduce thinkers who make a substantial contribution to thought on dialogue to readers who may be encountering their ideas for the first time. While the book is intended to contribute to academic discussions, authors have taken pains to adopt a style accessible to those engaged with dialogue beyond the confines of academia. The hope is that their work will appeal to a wide audience, from conflict resolution practitioners to those simply wishing to reflect further on the informal dialogue of everyday encounter.¹

¹ This is the ‘dialogue of life’ referred to by Diana Eck, whose work is examined in this volume.
While the editorial team actively sought contributions on a small number of thinkers who had been commended to us as important figures, most of the thinkers examined here were selected through the following process: prospective authors, responding to a widely circulated call for papers, each made a case for the inclusion of a particular thinker and the editorial team accepted chapter submissions on the basis of the cases made. This process resulted in a fascinating array of thinkers, all of whom we consider fully worthy of inclusion. It also resulted in unfortunate imbalances in terms of gender and cultural/religious background. We hope that readers aware of further significant female thinkers or of thinkers from underrepresented or unrepresented backgrounds will consider bringing them to the attention of ourselves and our networks by proposing columns for our website or articles for the journal.

Many of the authors of accepted papers participated in a workshop at the Dialogue Society’s head office in London, presenting and discussing their chapters and engaging in dialogue on the purpose and direction of ‘dialogue studies.’ The workshop’s fruitful conversations helped authors to refine their papers and explore connections between the different thinkers, as well as raising diverse questions for examination in future work and study. As always, we also valued the dialogue that happened in the spaces between our more formal conversations: dialogue is also getting to know one another over a shared meal, or discovering one another’s musical and poetic talents!

Naturally this book contains many definitions of dialogue. We have a broad working definition of our own at the Dialogue Society, understanding it as ‘meaningful interaction and exchange between people (often of different social, cultural, political, religious or professional groups) who come together through various kinds of conversations or activities with a view to increased understanding.’ As a definition itself generated through dialogue it is of course subject to refinement as our dialogues continue.

We invite you to be part of that continuing dialogue. Please send comments or questions concerning the book to dialoguetheories@dialoguesociety.org. We would also be delighted to receive more substantial responses to the book or any part of it for potential publication on our website or in the Journal of Dialogue Studies.

Ozcan Keles, Chairperson
Sadik Cinar, Executive Director
Dialogue Society
February 2016
Introduction: How and Why Should we Study Dialogue?
Paul Weller

This Book in Context

This book builds on the previous volume called *Dialogue Theories*,¹ which aimed to advance theoretical and practical engagement with dialogue through introducing to the wider public, in a broadly accessible way, the work of ten individuals who have made important and insightful contributions to theories of dialogue. In that volume, this was done by providing an overview of the biographical context for their thought; outlining the contribution that their theory made to practice; providing a bibliography of work referred to in doing the above; and offering a list of further recommended reading. Each chapter was then concluded by posing a series of reflective questions, designed to provide promptings for personal or group consideration of the meaning, relevance, potential limitations and applications of the theories presented in each chapter.

The present volume - *Dialogue Theories Volume II* - adopts a similar overall structure. However, on this occasion each chapter has been written by a different author on the basis of a peer reviewed proposal followed by presentation to, and discussion with, the other chapter authors as well as some other participants at a Dialogue Theories Workshop organised by The Dialogue Society,² and taking place on 26th-27th June 2014 at the Society’s offices in London. *Dialogue Theories II* thus contributes to an emerging body of work that has been sponsored by the Institute of Dialogue Studies as an academic arm of the Dialogue Society, which produces the academic peer-reviewed *Journal of Dialogue Studies*, and also works with Keele University in the delivery of a Master’s degree in Dialogue Studies.

In the editorial introduction to the first edition of the *Journal of Dialogue Studies*, the contributors were asked to address a range of questions that were intended to help them ‘focus on “dialogue studies” as a concept, with a particular emphasis on its boundaries, viability and usefulness as an academic field’.³ Arising from the contents

---


² See http://www.dialoguesociety.org/

of the current volume and the workshop debates held on the original papers that lie behind these chapters, additional questions are (as discussed further below in this introduction) also brought into focus. But the original questions posed by the *Journal of Dialogue Studies*, and the provisional working definition of dialogue proposed by the Institute of Dialogue Studies and the Dialogue Society, still remain pertinent to bear in mind when reading this volume. These were, as follows:

**Dialogue Questions and Working Definitions**

- What arguments might there be for (or against) developing ‘dialogue studies’ as a distinct academic field (or perhaps even emerging discipline)?
- What are the implications of doing so?
- What do we mean by dialogue, dialogue theories and dialogue practices?
- How might ‘dialogue studies’ be of use to academics, policy-makers and practitioners?
- Where along the spectrum of fields is this field best placed?
- What does the discourse of one or more thinkers, philosophers, activists on dialogue tell us about the viability of a ‘dialogue studies’?
- Is dialogue valuable in itself and/or by virtue of its outcomes?
- How far should the field of ‘dialogue studies’ extend? Can one field encompass cultural production and intercultural communication?
- What might be the implications, if any, of a distinct field in dialogue for peace-building and conflict resolution studies?
- What can policy-makers learn from dialogue theory or practice that would benefit the development or implementation of policy?
- Can/should dialogue be measured or thought of in terms of effectiveness?
- Would a distinct field on dialogue focus attention on the instrumental outcomes of dialogue as a practice?
- What is the relationship if any between dialogue practices and government policies on multiculturalism, social cohesion, shared values and developing a sense of belonging?

In order to facilitate a broad inter-disciplinary and practice engagement, *The Journal of Dialogue Studies* encourages critical debate around the concept and practice of dialogue with reference to a provisional working definition, as put forward by the Institute of Dialogue Studies and the Dialogue Society, in which dialogue is characterised as:

……a meaningful interaction and exchange between people (often of different social, cultural, political, religious or professional groups) who come together through
various kinds of conversations or activities with a view to increased understanding.\textsuperscript{4}

The framework for discussion provided by this provisional working definition does seem to have been facilitative in encouraging scholars from a wide range of disciplines to make their contributions to debate on the theory and practice of dialogue, as evidenced by the range of articles that have engaged, among other things, with a range of contexts for dialogue\textsuperscript{5} and some of the ethical dimensions of dialogue.\textsuperscript{6} However, both within and beyond the suite of related publications represented by the \textit{Journal of Dialogue Studies}, the book \textit{Dialogue Theories}, and the present volume of essays, it is important to continue to be self-critical and to continue to ask questions about the adequacy of this working definition. In doing so, one can potentially set the agenda for further future exploration beyond the existing mainstream boundaries for engagement in, and understanding of, dialogue that often set by ourselves and others, either consciously by choice, or unconsciously by default.

\section*{Questions about the Questions and Working Definitions}

Central to the provisional working definition of dialogue set out above (and, in fact, also to the definitions of dialogue offered by many) is a sense that for dialogue to take place words are a necessary component. In relation to this, the minimal aspects of dialogue as verbal exchange (as well as its more developed classical meanings in the context of Socratic didactic method) are, of course, already to at least some extent implied by the etymology of the word in its original Greek language, in which the word χιλόγος (dialogos) has roots which include διά (dia, meaning through) and λόγος (logos, meaning speech or reason).

However, while continuing to explore the role of speech and interactive reasoning in dialogue (as is done in the various chapters of this book) it might also be important to ask questions that could inform further explorations that go beyond this particular volume and could inform a thematic focus for either a possible \textit{Dialogue Theories III} volume; for a thematic focus for a future edition of the \textit{Journal of Dialogue Studies}; and/or elsewhere. For example, what might the role be of silence in dialogue, as has been practised by monastics across a number of different religious traditions, and as also found in the Quaker tradition of decision-making? And what can the spoken or written logos aspects of dialogue learn from this?

Perhaps silence can be thought of as a shared context of humility prior to the individual act of speaking, and such silence could therefore be pregnant with the kind

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{4} Institute of Dialogue Studies, quoted in Weller, ‘Editorial Introduction,’ 1.
  \item \textsuperscript{5} \textit{Journal of Dialogue Studies}, 2014, volume 2, number 2.
  \item \textsuperscript{6} \textit{Journal of Dialogue Studies}, 2015, Volume 3, number 1.
\end{itemize}
of possibility out of which forms of *logos* can be brought to birth which can contribute to fruitful dialogue. At the same time, there are of course, forms of silence in and through which a reluctance or refusal to participate in dialogue can be expressed and maintained. In connection with this, in discussion at the workshop, participants raised an important question about what might be called the ‘precursors to dialogue’ and its ‘presuppositional stages’ - in other words, about the preconditions for dialogue to get as far as the potential participants being prepared to sit together in the same room. As also pointed out in discussion at the workshop, this can link with questions of power and the exercise of it in the process of constituting structured and organised dialogues. In connection with this, it is at least worth asking the question of whether, in certain personal, corporate and political contexts, it be possible to see at least an initial a refusal to engage in a form of dialogue constituted by ‘*logos*’ as being in itself an expression of dialogue on the part of the relatively powerless party to a ‘logocentric’ dialogue?

But perhaps a more radical still question than the necessity or otherwise of ‘*logos*’ in dialogue is the question of whether more than one human participant is always needed for dialogue to take place, or whether dialogue can also take place with non-human animals? Still further, in discussion at the workshop, the suggestion was made that it might be possible to ‘train for dialogue’ with humans by engaging in a broader dialogue with other elements of life such as the communing with the sun, the sea, and the earth, and then coming back to human dialogue informed by a sense of the human as a part of the whole and much wider biosphere? Indeed, it was pointed out that for many ‘indigenous traditions’ - from African traditions through to Daoist perspectives - their ways of knowing the natural world can all too easily be excluded by the ‘*logos*’ orientation of much theory and practice around dialogue.

In connection with these issues, interestingly, the *Journal of Dialogue Studies* has received at least one proposal for publication of a piece which, although presented partially in written form, is substantively concerned about dialogue with ‘materials’. Such a notion might seem strange to those who would limit dialogue to an inter-human form of interaction. But the question needs to be asked about whether such ‘strangeness’ might simply reflect the constraints of a culturally limited view of materiality in which ‘things’ are seen as inanimate ‘objects’ rather than as being infused with living spirit, as is for example, in the worldview of many ‘indigenous’ cultures and traditions, such as the Maori people of Aotearoa/New Zealand? At the same time, given that the submission of the piece concerned was made to a printed journal, one comes back again full circle to the question of the extent to which ‘*logos*’ is needed - if not for the original primary dialogue between a person, a ‘thing’ or a non-human animal, then at least for interpreting and communicating more widely about this primary experience of such dialogue.
In relation to other forms for, and participants in, dialogue beyond its ‘logocentric’ forms undertaken between individuals and/or in groups sharing at least a temporary physical space and presence, the present writer recalls a number of years ago working with a doctoral researcher who undertook Gestalt-based group work in various cultural and intercultural contexts. This researcher explained that when he carried out such group work among Africans he had to be conscious that from the perspective of the African participants, those who physically shared their presence in the physical space of the room were, in fact, not the only ones who were present – rather, the ancestors were there too and no holistic dialogue could take place without acknowledgment of that being a social reality for the physical participants.

It is perhaps also worth noting that neither the previous nor the present volume have really explored the phenomenon of dialogue as conducted in the ‘electronic world’, including through internet discussion groups, participation in on-line phenomena such as Second Life, and via social media. In future it could therefore be worth giving some more focused consideration to this. This is not only because of the increasing importance of electronic and social media among the communication norms for young people, but it is also important to consider because of the possibilities and complexities associated with dialogical engagement in and through such media. Among other things these possibilities and complexities include the potential for creating adopted online identities that can - in quite substantial ways - (for example, in terms of gender or age, or ethnicity or religion) be different from one’s embodied and historical identity. This can in turn raise sensitive and difficult questions about the extent to which such ‘on-line uncertainty’ might affect the dynamics of dialogue attempted through electronic media. For example, what are the implications of an individual’s potential ability, in terms of cyberspace, literally to try to move ‘outside of one’s own skin’ of one’s physically and temporally located identity and to experience aspects of how ‘others’ are treated on the basis of assumptions about their identity? But also what might the implications of this for the integrity and trustworthiness of apparently dialogical interactions in cyberspace?

In relation to the earlier provisional working definition’s reference to dialogue as involving ‘a view to increasing understanding’, one might also need to consider the phenomenon of the ‘dialogue of daily life’, as distinct from dialogue that is, so to speak, ‘set up’ by bringing people together in an artificial way. This can range from contexts such as dialogical discussions conducted over one’s garden or backyard fence or wall; in shops or at bus stops; through what can occur through intentional visits to one’s bereaved neighbour to express human sympathy and understanding in their bereavement; to dialogue that can emerge out of shared action in pursuit of the common good. As one of the participants in the workshop put it in relation to the phenomenon of dialogue itself, ‘Dialogue isn’t a profession but a lifestyle’; while in
relation to the study of dialogue, another noted that ‘From our discussions, I have been getting a clearer sense of the relation between a sociologist of the everyday and dialogue studies’. In and through both of these observations is an important warning about the need to beware the potential dangers arising from any over-professionalisation of dialogue and of dialogue studies of a kind that can restrict rather than enable broad participation in dialogue.

The Aims, Study and Evaluation of Dialogue and the Study of It

Moving on from debates about the characteristics of dialogue in different forms, it is important also in researching and studying dialogue to try to develop an awareness of: the diverse aims and objectives that exist for engaging in dialogue; the variety of approaches to, and justifications for, researching and studying dialogue; and also to explore the question about how far the effectiveness of dialogue can be evaluated.

In a recent presentation to the Woolf Institute\(^7\) in Cambridge that focused on the specific example of inter-faith dialogue, the present author highlighted some of the challenges posed when one takes seriously the task of trying to assess the impact of inter-faith dialogue. This includes the question of what, actually, might be ‘telos’ (goal/end) of inter-faith dialogue. Among the various goals set forward as justifications for engaging in inter-faith dialogue include, first of all, those that are concerned with trying to join the religions together over and against the ‘secular’ and/or what might be perceived as ‘irreligion’. Historically, such underlying motivations could be found as rationales at work in the convening of the 19\(^{th}\) century’s World Parliament of Religions in Chicago, USA.\(^8\) For others the ‘telos’ of inter-faith dialogue has been more to do with the search for a ‘larger vision’ (including the non-religious) than that which can be offered by an individual historical religious tradition. This approach perhaps reflects that of the World Congress of Faiths\(^9\) when it was founded in the early part of the 20\(^{th}\) century as well, perhaps, as of some contemporary local interfaith groups. For others, the goal has been a more limited and perhaps pragmatic one of the fostering of at least ‘good relations’ as compared with deep historical conflict mistrust, and this might be seen in the historical development of the Council of Christians

\(^7\) See http://www.woolf.cam.ac.uk/about/


and Jews\(^\text{10}\) as well as in a number of contemporary local interfaith groups. For still others, the ‘telos’ of inter-faith dialogue can be seen in the possibility of making a contribution to ‘social cohesion’ or ‘good governance’, which was characteristic of many of the ‘Fora of Faiths’\(^\text{11}\) during the time of the New Labour government in the UK and that were (as argued elsewhere by the present author), to some extent ‘called forth’ by government.\(^\text{12}\)

On the question of rationales not only for the conduct of dialogue, but also for research into and study of it, this includes the question of whether the study of dialogue does, in fact, need any justification at all beyond the fact of that study. However, in the academic world there are always a range of rationales for doing things, some of which are linked with disciplines. But this is also a field in which caution should be exercised because ‘disciplinary justifications’, in institutional settings, very often are linked with ‘ideological justifications’. If approached in a more ‘instrumentalist’ way, then among the justifications articulated for dialogue one can find the significance and importance of dialogue being explained with reference to a ‘grand narrative’ of conflict-resolution and/or peace building; or as a social narrative in personal or group therapy; or as a contribution to problem-solving in specific fields and issues. In more ‘phenomenological’ mode, the justifications for dialogue can include a more Bohmian approach to dialogue that is focused as purely as may be possible on attention to, and understanding of, the process of dialogue in and of itself. In discussion, workshop participants pointed out that very often both research and study start from a particular predicament of some kind. In this sense, if issue of dialogue has become so much discussed in different contexts this may well be to do with the phenomenon of globalisation and the challenges entailed by it in terms of the unprecedented kinds of cultural interaction to which it has given rise.

Alongside the question of justifications for studying and researching dialogue, there is also the question of how one might go about studying and researching it. Clearly in principle dialogue can be studied academically. But this does not in itself answer the question of how such study ‘fits’ in the academy given that there is not a traditional


subject or discipline called ‘dialogue studies’. Of course, in some respects this is not completely different from a number of other originally newly emergent areas for study and research, such as gender studies and cultural studies. In thinking about this, a participant in the workshop suggested that there is difference between a ‘discipline’ and a ‘domain’. Sometimes there are phenomena in relation to which there are enough people within a society who are ready and willing to study and research it as a domain, and in doing so to draw upon as many different disciplines as possible.

In discussion within the workshop, it was suggested that instead, at this point at least, of trying to resolve the issue of where dialogue studies might best be located within the academy, there were plenty of more limited tasks that could be progressed regardless. For example, within the domain of dialogue studies many individuals are working in ‘corners’, and do not necessarily know what is going on elsewhere that is relevant but could benefit from doing so. It was therefore suggested that dialogue studies could take up the challenge of ‘mapping’ comparative understandings of dialogue and, in doing so, to uncover any biographical, historical, organisational relationships that practitioners of dialogue and/or theoreticians themselves may not explicitly acknowledge, but a critical understanding of which may be important to achieve for properly understanding the various forms of dialogue.

Finally, in mediating between the rationales for why one might practice dialogue and also study it, it is important to take account of a challenge given to the workshop in a presentation by Fern Elsdon-Baker. This concerned the need both for gathering and for evaluating any evidence that there might be for empirically measurable effects of dialogue, and this is an area in which there have been a number of recent developments, including by the Woolf Institute which has been conducting a project on assessing the impact of inter-faith dialogue within which the ‘how’ and ‘why’ of ‘doing’ and ‘studying’ dialogue relate.

This is important because, just as with ‘business studies models’ in relation to the actual practice of business, without robust evaluation, ‘dialogue theories’ can also turn out to be ‘quack models’ in the way that some business studies models have also been shown to be in light of empirical evidence. Such models can be based on what more or less function as ‘magic formulae’; they can be peddled by either ‘charismatic’ figures whose charisma is not always grounded in effectiveness and/or by consultancy organisations for financial self-interest; or they can be developed as an expression of political self-interest, whether in terms of the politics of particular organisations and/or in terms of a broader power politics. One thing that all such approaches have in common is their tendency to pass over instances which do not neatly ‘fit’ with their proposed models right through to occasions on which real failures of the models are deliberately concealed from critical scrutiny. In the light of this, another important – and perhaps hitherto relatively neglected - aspect of research and study into dialogue...
could that of the potential for learning from dialogue failures.

Nevertheless, while acknowledging the need to try to evaluate the effectiveness of dialogue, one needs also to be critically conscious of how all too easily the contemporary world of measurable ‘targets’ that can become reduced to a ‘tick box’ exercise. There is also a danger of reinforcing a ‘numbers rule OK’ approach to quantitative research results on the basis that quantification can appear to provide a more specific and clear set of outcomes than the often more nuanced outcomes of qualitative research. Equally, in reaction to such an approach, there can be an unjustified fear of quantification? Overall, in taking a balanced approach it would seem important to try to measure what can be measured, but at the same time to ask the question about whether everything can, in fact, be measured and assessed in these ways? And, even if it is decided that it can be, a question perhaps remains about whether everything should be assessed in these ways? Finally, there is the issue of the whether particular aspects and phenomena involved in dialogue might themselves carry pointers to what might be the most appropriate forms of assessment for such phenomena?

Thus, in relation to evaluating the varied aims and objectives articulated for inter-religious dialogue, even within a temporal horizon religions have their own critical criteria for assessment which, for example, within the Christian tradition can be summed up by the injunction of ‘by their fruits you will know them’ – in other words, a criteria concerned with ethical consequences. But from within a religious perspective, any penultimate historical ‘telos’ may also need to be assessed in relation to the crucial nature of time in terms of its ‘eschaton’ (or ultimate end)?

**Dialogue with the Book**

The authors of the original papers behind the chapters were asked to work in the context of a dynamic interplay between the biographical context for the individual exponent of dialogue in relation to the individual’s contribution to the theory of dialogue; the application of that theoretical approach to practice; and also its wider location. Such an approach is also partially reflected in the overall structure of each edition of the *Journal of Dialogue Studies* which includes ‘theoretical’ pieces; more ‘narrative’ or ‘empirical’ pieces; and, as the journal has further evolved, also (since Autumn 2014, Volume 2, number 2) the inclusion of more ‘reflective’ pieces.

Perhaps, in many ways, it is what could be called the ‘modality characteristics’ of any emergent field of ‘dialogue studies’ that may, in the end, prove to be more important than the question of whether dialogue and the study of it belongs to a particular subject or discipline. Such characteristics might even include that dialogue studies can and should itself be conceived of, and actualised as, a dialogical activity that, for the realisation of its full potential, needs to be engaged with in a multi-disciplinary
environment that includes a diversity of intellectual theories, professional practices, and practitioner engagements.

In this book we have individual chapters that engage with the biographies, theories and the relationship between theory and practice found among fourteen individuals and a group, all of whom are drawn from a wide range of human cultures, academic disciplines and walks of life. These include diplomats such as Harold Saunders; educationalists such as Paulo Freire; groups such as The Circle of Seven; musicians such as Daniel Barenboim; philosophers such as Mikhail Bakhtin, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Emmanuel Levinas and Ludwig Wittgenstein; spiritual or religious figures such as Daisaku Ikeda and Dominique Pire; scholars of religion such as Diana Eck, Wilfred Cantwell Smith and Louis Massignon; sociologists such as Erving Goffman; and therapists such as Laura Chasin.

As a step beyond the chapters in Dialogue Theories, the authors of the chapters included in this volume, in finalising their initially presented papers for publication, were encouraged to make dialogical connections with what had been presented about individuals and their theories and related practice in other chapters. This nevertheless remained in many ways a still somewhat limited approach and maybe a Dialogue Theories III could be developed that would go beyond this and into an internal dialogue between the thought of the individuals presented, as well as of those presenting them. Nevertheless, as in the Dialogue Theories book, one of the most important parts of the present volume are the reflective questions that are intended to provide prompts for personal or group consideration of the meaning, relevance, limitations and applications of the theory concerned. This means that this book will

---

13 Amy Lazarus, 239.
14 Michael Atkinson, 125.
15 Kerri Arruda and Olen Gunnlaugson, 95.
16 Jay Prosser, 43.
17 Jeff Shires, 29.
18 Oliver Ramsbotham, 139.
19 Andrew Wilshere, 189.
20 Gorazd Andrejac, 255.
21 Olivier Urbain, 173.
22 June Boyce-Tillman, 221.
23 Charlotte Dando, 111.
24 Şerafettin Pektaş, 59.
25 Nazirudin Mohd Nasir, 205.
26 Phil Henry, 157.
27 Frances Sleap, 77.
only have succeeded in its aim if draws you, the reader, and those with whom you interact in your life and work, into a dialogical engagement with what is in this book. As quoted in Şerafettin Pektaş’ chapter on Wilfred Cantwell Smith in relation to the specific field of inter-religious dialogue, but as highlighted here with relevance to overall enterprise of dialogue:

The traditional form of Western scholarship ..... was that of an impersonal presentation of an ‘it.’ The first great innovation in recent times has been personalization .... so that one finds a discussion of a ‘they.’ Presently, the observer becomes personally involved, so that the situation is one of a ‘we’ talking about a ‘they.’ The next step is a dialogue where ‘we’ talk to ‘you.’ If there is listening and mutuality, this may become that ‘we’ talk with ‘you.’ The culmination of this progress is when ‘we all’ are talking with each other about ‘us.’

It is to such a ‘... “we all” talking with each other about “us”’ that this book, its editors and the authors of its chapters invite you, whether alone and/or in groups with others, to engage with and to reflect upon.

---

28 Smith, ‘Comparative Religion,’ 142.
References


Biographical Introduction

Mikhail Bakhtin\textsuperscript{1} was born November 16, 1895 in Orel, Russia, the second of five children.\textsuperscript{2} It is difficult to untangle Bakhtin’s early biography from those of his friends and family. Bakhtin, for example, claimed to have a degree from Petrograd University – this, as Craig Brandist points out, is false (his brother Nikolai did receive a degree from Petrograd).\textsuperscript{3} Ken Hirschkop writes that no records exist of him even enrolling, although Mikhail most likely did attend classes there.\textsuperscript{4} It was at Petrograd that Bakhtin met Matvei Kagan, who would become an important figure in Bakhtin’s intellectual development.\textsuperscript{5} Kagan had studied philosophy at the University of Marburg under the neo-Kantians Hermann Cohen, Ernst Cassirer and Paul Natorp. Kagan returned to Russia and joined the so-called ‘Bakhtin Circle’. The Circle’s membership was made up of, among others, Bakhtin, Kagan, Pavel Medvedev and Valentin Voloshinov.\textsuperscript{6} Bakhtin produced three major works during these years,\textsuperscript{7} *Toward the Philosophy of the Act*, ‘Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity’ and *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*. In 1928 he was arrested and sentenced to exile at the Solovki prison camp.\textsuperscript{8} Maxim

\textsuperscript{1} I would like to thank K. R. Johnson, April Milam and Susan Anderson at the Purdue University North Central Library for their help in obtaining many articles and books for me. Their assistance was invaluable in helping to compose this chapter.


\textsuperscript{5} Bakhtin also tries to claim part of Kagan’s intellectual pedigree by stating he studied at Marburg, Germany for four years. See Hirschkop, *Mikhail Bakhtin*, 140ff. Hirschkop’s source for information on Bakhtin’s claims for an university education is a series of recorded interviews between Bakhtin and V. D. Duvakin in 1973. The transcripts were published in Russian.

\textsuperscript{6} Brandist, *The Bakhtin Circle*, 5–6.

\textsuperscript{7} Some, like Clark and Holquist, argue that all of Bakhtin’s ideas develop from the immersion in neo-Kantian philosophy. Others, like Gary Saul Morson and Caryl Emerson in *Mikhail Bakhtin: Creation of a Prosais* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 1990) argue that his career can be divided up into sections of differing concern.

\textsuperscript{8} The charges against him concerned participating in religious activities. See Clark and Holquist, *Mikhail Bakhtin*, 140.
Gorky, among others, intervened and the sentence was commuted to internal exile in Kazakhstan. Bakhtin began work on ‘the novel’ during his exile and, in 1936, returned to teaching at the Mordovia Pedagogical Institute. Bakhtin received the Candidate of Science degree (Ph.D.) in 1946 for his work on Rabelais. In the 1960s, his work on Dostoevsky was rediscovered by students, including his literary executors Vadim Kozhinov and Sergei Bochorov, who convinced him to update his work. He and his wife moved to Moscow and remained there until his death in 1975. Most of Bakhtin’s writings were translated and published posthumously. His earliest works on philosophy appeared in English in the 1990s while his later works on the novel and linguistics were published in the 1980s. Bakhtin’s work on Dostoevsky was translated in 1973 and then re-translated and updated in 1984. Bakhtin’s collected works have been published, in Russian, in the correct chronological order.

---

9 Ibid, 142–145.


Thought on Dialogue

Life and the world are dialogue for Bakhtin:

Life by its very nature is dialogic. To live means to participate in dialogue: to ask questions, to heed, to respond, to agree, and so forth. In this dialogue, a person participates wholly and throughout his whole life: with his eyes, lips, hands, soul, spirit, with his whole body and deeds. He invests his entire self in discourse, and this discourse enters into the dialogic fabric of human life, into the world symposium.¹²

Life is made up of individual 'acts' or interactions that help to shape who we are and how we develop. The 'act' brings together items into relationship – these relationships can be 1) between objects, 2) between subjects and objects and 3) between subjects.¹³ Dialogue occurs when two or more consciousnesses – people engaged in conversation, interactions between an author and reader or interactions between an author and the characters he or she is creating – express themselves through concrete utterances.¹⁴

Dialogic interactions require, at least, two fundamental positions – the self or ‘I’ and ‘the other.’¹⁵ Each of these have what Bakhtin calls a ‘surplus of vision’ towards each other; each has the ability to physically see things the other cannot – ‘parts of his body that are inaccessible to his own gaze (his head, his face and its expression), and the world behind his back.’¹⁶ Since the self and the other cannot change points of view, they must share information through interaction.

The other, then, is vital in defining the self and vice versa, even before birth. Bakhtin uses the example of a mother and child. The mother helps to define the child’s personality. The child internalises the mother’s description of himself or herself – ‘[i]t is in her [the mother’s] emotional-volitional tones that the child’s personality is demarcated and upbuilt, and it is in her love that his first moment, his first posture

---

¹⁵ Mikhail Bakhtin, ‘Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity’, *J*87–188.
in the world is formed.’ The child combines this description with the descriptions of others and creates a self. The “other’s words,” Bakhtin states, ‘are processed dialogically into “one’s own/others” words with the help of different “others’ words” (heard previously) and then in one’s own words.’ Because of the constant interaction between ‘our’ and ‘other’s’ words, the self is in constant flux and is, largely, unfinalisable. All words and descriptions, Bakhtin writes, have ‘a loophole’ – a word or description ‘should be an ultimate word and does present itself as such, but in fact it is only the penultimate word.’ The self can always change, making any description of the self contingent. The final word – the last description – is only possible with the death of the individual, and even then we can question how definitive that final word actually is. The story of the individual’s life may continue to evolve through the accounts of others.

The self also finds himself or herself in dialogue with societal values, norms and ideologies. The individual must decide which of these has actual value for himself or herself – as Bakhtin writes, ‘any living consciousness finds cultural values to be already on hand as given to it’ and the individual’s job is ‘acknowledging their validity for itself’.

Once an individual accepts a value or rule set, he or she is responsible for meeting that standard. Bakhtin uses the example of scientific reasoning:

Having acknowledged once the value of scientific truth in all deeds or achievements of scientific thinking, I am henceforth subjugated to its immanent law: the one who says a, must also say b and c, and thus all of the way to the end of the alphabet. The one who said one, must say two: he is drawn by the immanent necessity of a series.

The individual is held responsible for following only those values that he or she endorses internally or in front of others. ‘It is not the content of an obligation that obligates me,’ Bakhtin writes, ‘but my signature below it – the fact that at one time I acknowledged or undersigned the given acknowledgement.’ These value sets are passed through concrete utterances of stories and narratives, not sets of abstract rules.

This is important for dialogue since values that the individual internalises are fundamental in guiding how he or she interacts with the other. Every interaction produces a unique concrete obligation on the part of the participants. Bakhtin refers

17 Bakhtin, ‘Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity’, 50.
18 Bakhtin, *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, 163.
20 Bakhtin, *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*, 35.
21 Bakhtin, *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*, 35.
22 Bakhtin, *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*, 38.
to this as ‘the ought’ or ‘ought-to-do’. Bakhtin argues that universal values or oughts cannot and do not force themselves onto a situation – he argues, in other words, against Immanuel Kant’s ‘categorical imperative’. The imperative is defined by Kant as an action: ‘I ought never to act except in such a way that I could also will that my maxim [action] should become a universal law.’ The imperative is a moral law that universally covers all situations that serves the greater good of all humanity. Kant uses truthfulness as an example. It may be expedient for an individual to make a false promise but if that were universal, others ‘would pay me back in like coin; and thus my maxim, as soon as it were made a universal law, would have to destroy itself.’ If lying becomes universal, an individual could not expect others to be honest with him or her so therefore one must not lie.

Bakhtin’s ought occurs when a universal principle comes into contact with a particular instance of interaction between two people. ‘There are no moral norms that are determinate and valid in themselves as moral norms,’ for Bakhtin, ‘but there is a moral subjectum [the person within the interaction] with a determinate structure.’ The person within the act, Bakhtin writes,

\[ \text{understands both the actual and the ought-to-be sense of the interrelationship between himself and these persons and objects – the truth of the given state of affairs – and he understands the ought of his performed act, that is, not the abstract law of his act, but the actual, concrete ought conditioned by his unique place in the given context of the ongoing event.} \]

Universals cannot be applied with no regard for the concrete situation but come into play in the specific instance. As Bakhtin states, ‘my performed act...orients itself precisely with reference to that which is conditioned by the uniqueness and unrepeatability of my own place.’ The act ‘unites the moment of what is universal (universally valid) and the moment of what is individual (actual).’ Values must be of use in a specific act. ‘Any universally valid value,’ Bakhtin writes, ‘becomes actually valid only in an individual context.’ The individuals within the interaction are the only ones who can decide if they will fulfil the ought. The individual can refuse to acknowledge his or her responsibility. According to Bakhtin, ‘no one in the entire

\[\text{24 Kant, } \textit{Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals}, 4:402 \]
\[\text{25 Bakhtin, } \textit{Toward a Philosophy of the Act}, 6. \]
\[\text{26 Bakhtin, } \textit{Toward a Philosophy of the Act}, 30. \]
\[\text{27 Bakhtin, } \textit{Toward a Philosophy of the Act}, 46. \]
\[\text{28 Bakhtin, } \textit{Toward a Philosophy of the Act}, 29. \]
\[\text{29 Bakhtin, } \textit{Toward a Philosophy of the Act}, 36. \]
world, besides myself, can accomplish what I must accomplish’ and if the individual chooses not to respond to the ought, he or she ‘is tormented by conscience not for disobeying a law but as a result of proceeding from my once-occurring position’.

Unlike the universal ought where there is a chance that everyone may act in a like manner, the Bakhtinian ought holds the individual accountable to the other person in the interaction and to his or her conscience.

Bakhtin’s emphasis on the primacy of the other is similar to that of Emmanuel Levinas. Both, according to Jeffrey T. Nealon, ‘insist that ethics exists in an open and ongoing obligation to respond to the other, rather than a static march toward some philosophical end or conclusion.’ The other remains external to the I, or, in the words of Daphna Erdinast-Vulcan, ‘unassimilated alterity.’

Any interaction occurs at the borderline between the present moment (the context of the interaction, the people involved), the past (previous encounters, an individual’s history) and the future (the outcome that an individual wants to achieve) and at the borderline between the internal (values, self-definition) and external (the other person and their definition of my self). Each participant in the interaction will bring a unique perspective and a unique ‘ought’ to the encounter. These oughts will not be identical or even compatible, but both participants must recognise the right of the other to hold their particular ought. Dialogue occurs when the participants in the interaction are able to view each other as equal subjects (both individuals are unique I’s with full rights as selves) and not as objects – through mutual respect and understanding.

Dialogue can also occur in a purely aesthetic realm, such as between an author and his or her characters. Bakhtin refers to this as polyphony and discusses it in regards to Fyodor Dostoevsky, the Russian journalist and novelist. Dostoevsky, according to Bakhtin, did not approach his characters in a purely authorial mode whereby they would assume the point of view and ideology of the objective author. Instead, Dostoevsky treats the characters within his novels as ‘ideologically authoritative and independent; he [the character] is perceived as the author of a fully weighted ideological conception on his own, and not as the object of Dostoevsky’s finalising

---


artistic vision.\textsuperscript{33} Dostoevsky does not offer ‘a multitude of characters and fates in a single objective world, illuminated by a single authorial consciousness; rather a plurality of consciousnesses, with equal rights and each with its own worldview.’\textsuperscript{34} The author takes a subjective position alongside his or her characters. Bakhtin calls Dostoevsky’s approach ‘polyphony’ or ‘polyphonic’:

The essence of polyphony lies precisely in the fact that the voices remain independent and, as such, are combined in a unity of higher order than in homophony [single-voiced]. If one is to talk about individual will, then it is precisely in polyphony that a combination of several individual wills takes place, that the boundaries of the individual will can be in principle exceeded. One could put it this way: the artistic will of polyphony is a will to combine many wills, a will to the event.\textsuperscript{35}

This is a reflection of ‘lived life’ where several autonomous wills are brought together and allowed to interact as equals. Polyphony becomes an important concept in that, as we shall see below, it is taken as a metaphor and used in the field of psychology.

In summary, the dialogic requires two concrete consciousnesses, ‘self’ and ‘other’, to interact through the medium of language. The dialogic is important as it leads to the development of a sense of self for each participant. All interactions occur in an architectonic which gives order to the relationships between the concrete individual and the other subjects and objects in his or her world. One of the relationships is between the individual and ideologies found within the context of the individual’s life. The individual affirms some ideologies as important to him or her and others as not important. The ideologies are not passed down as sets of axioms and maxims, but as narratives. The ideologies to which the individual ascribes create an ought, or choice, for responding ethically within an interaction. This can play out in the world of art when the author (‘self’) and hero/character (‘other’) are brought together in interaction. The author can allow his or her characters freedom (‘polyphony’) or dictate their thoughts and actions (‘homophony’).

\textsuperscript{33} Bakhtin, \textit{Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics}, 5.

\textsuperscript{34} Bakhtin, \textit{Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics}, 6. Emphasis is Bakhtin’s.

\textsuperscript{35} Bakhtin, \textit{Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics}, 21.
**Theory and Practice**

Bakhtin’s ideas are being picked up in psychology and applied to therapeutic practice. Psychologists like Hubert J. M. Hermans, Mikael Leiman, James Cresswell, João Salgado, Joshua Clegg, Jaan Valsiner and others have implemented Bakhtin’s notion of self/other into a new theory of the self – the dialogical self. Hermans, one of the pioneers in this area, uses Bakhtin’s theory of the polyphonic novel as a metaphor for how the self experiences life.

Hermans, J. G. Kempen and Rens J. P. van Loon apply this to how the self develops and understands his or her experience through stories. The authors draw on the works of William James and James Bruner in addition to Bakhtin, to argue for this ‘narrative mode’ of human experience and psyche, since narrative ‘strives to put the general human condition into particulars of experience and attempts to locate experience in time and space.’ The authors adapt William James’s concepts of I and Me from its original conception of author (or ‘self-as-knower’) and protagonist (respectively) to author and actor. Experience is understood as the I being author who sorts through the various accounts of an experience which are developed by the Me:

> On the basis of the foregoing considerations, we conceptualise the self in terms of a dynamic multiplicity of relatively autonomous I positions in an imaginary landscape... The I has the possibility to move, as in a space, from one position to the other in accordance with changes in situation and time. The I fluctuates among different and even opposed positions. The I has the capacity to imaginatively endow each position with a voice so that dialogical relations between positions can be established. The voices function like interacting characters in a story. Once a character is set in motion in a story, the character takes on a life of its own and thus assumes a certain narrative necessity. Each character has a story to tell about experiences from its own stance. As different voices these characters exchange information about their respective Mes and their worlds, resulting in a complex, narratively structured self.

Every event is experienced differently by different individuals. Meaning is made through the interplay between our experience – which forms one account – and the accounts of others who directly or indirectly experienced the event. Individuals come into contact with a number of accounts of the event and internalise them through other individuals’ stories which may agree with, differ slightly from or completely contradict each other. Each one of these accounts takes on the role of a character.


(within an individual) in a narrative. The I ‘moves’ between these characters, listening to their accounts and perspectives as if they were independent entities. Because the accounts are just perspectives on the same event, not one account can ever claim to be the objective truth of what happened. The I can choose which accounts he or she wants and put them together to create a coherent narrative of the event. The narrative is always tentative and changes as some characters become more, or less, authoritative. The what, how and why of the narrative is, and must be, left open. Meaning is negotiated through the interaction of the various positions.

These interactions are formed in the structure of utterances. Utterances are always given within concrete situations of joint interactions. As Mikael Leiman states, ‘[t]he subject matter of psychotherapy research cannot be abstracted from the living arena of joint communication.’ The context of the situation in which the utterances are spoken play as much of a role in understanding as the words themselves. New utterances build off what was said before (older utterances) and what someone might possibly say (potential utterances). Complete understanding of an individual is thus impossible – all understandings are locked within a spatial-temporal pairing and the individual is free to change. According to Joshua Clegg and João Salgado, ‘understanding the other (unifying with the other) is never complete and always remains possible only through responsiveness.’ The therapist needs to keep in mind that their knowledge and understanding of the individual he or she is engaged in conversation with is only partial at best. A fuller understanding of the other is possible, and there is no finalising word that will sum up the client once and for all.

40 Joshua W. Clegg and João Salgado, ‘From Bakhtinian Theory to a Dialogical Psychology,’ *Culture and Psychology* 17, no. 4 (2011): 530
Questions for Reflection

1. Bakhtin’s ‘consciousnesses’ include more than just other human beings. He believes that texts also serve as consciousnesses with which we can interact. How might you engage in dialogue with the characters of a novel or a film?

2. Bakhtin believes that to live is to be engaged in dialogue. Do you think it is possible for an individual to purposefully choose not to engage in dialogue?

3. Bakhtin discusses how the self and other each have a ‘surplus of vision’ in regard to each other – I can see things about the other that he or she cannot see themselves. How might my surplus of vision towards the person I am talking to expand beyond just what I can physically see?

4. Bakhtin requires concrete individuals for interaction. Is it possible to enter into dialogue with possible individuals (family who have passed on, friends who are not present, an imaginary interlocutor)?

5. Bakhtin believes that we are responsible only for those values and ideologies we internalise. However, every value and idea we come into contact with changes us in some way. Is it possible not to judge ourselves against values we disagree with?

6. If each interaction is unique, can we build knowledge or a theory of interaction in general?
Bibliography


Guilfoyle, M. Using Power to Question the Dialogical Self and its Therapeutic Applications. *Counselling Psychology Quarterly* 19, no. 1 (2003), 89-104.


Hirschkop, K. *Mikhail Bakhtin: An Aesthetic for democracy.* Oxford: Oxford
Recommended Reading

Bakhtin’s Works:


Commentary:


**Practical Applications:**


Biographical Introduction

Daniel Barenboim is a pianist and conductor whose work in music provides a powerful model of dialogue. Barenboim’s life has both shaped, and in his later years been shaped by, his ideas. He has been director of many major orchestras and is currently Music Director of La Scala and the Staatskapelle Berlin (Berlin State Opera). In 1999, with Palestinian literary scholar Edward Said, Barenboim founded the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra, which remains his most prominent achievement in the facilitation of intercultural dialogue.

Born in 1942 in Buenos Aires to Russian-Jewish immigrants, Barenboim moved to Israel in 1952 and has lived most of his adult life in Europe, also spending some time in the US. While his parents immigrated to Israel because they wanted their son to grow up in a majority rather than in a diasporic Jewish minority, since the 1967 Arab-Israeli Six-Day War Barenboim has not felt comfortable about living in Israel permanently. An Argentinean citizen by birth and an Israeli citizen by naturalisation, Barenboim also acquired Spanish citizenship, and in 2007 became the only Israeli to be given a Palestinian passport. He espouses a notion of being ‘at home wherever I make music.’

In 1966 Barenboim married the English cellist Jacqueline du Pré, who converted to Judaism. Following her death, he married the Russian pianist Elena Bashkirova.

Describing how as a child ‘learning to play the piano was as natural as learning to walk,’ Barenboim studied with his father as his principal music teacher until he reached seventeen. As a teenager he also took lessons from the Israeli composer Paul Ben-Haim. In the summer of 1954 the young Barenboim so impressed the musical director of the Berlin Philharmonic, Wilhelm Furtwängler, that the latter invited him to join his Berlin orchestra. However, Barenboim’s father thought that – just nine years after the end of the war and the Holocaust – it was too soon for a Jewish family to move from Israel to Germany, and he turned down the invitation. Furtwängler’s

---

subsequent letter of introduction for the child Barenboim opened many doors in his adult professional life, including studying in Paris with Nadia Boulanger, who he has said gave him ‘an ascetic strict musical education’ and taught him ‘that the ideal musician should think with the heart and feel with the intellect.’ Intellectually driven as well as musically prodigious, in his late teens Barenboim discovered philosophy and has been particularly inspired by his reading of Spinoza, but also Martin Buber, Max Brod, Kierkegaard, and the Bible or Torah. Barenboim’s core musical repertoire is Austro-German, a tradition which may be considered particularly troubling for Jewish musicians and philosophers following the Holocaust.

The first performer to deliver the BBC Reith Lectures (in 2006), Barenboim also gave the 2005 Norton Lectures at Harvard University. He is the author of several books: *Everything is Connected: The Power of Music; Parallels and Paradoxes* (with Edward Said); and *A Life in Music*. Barenboim has been honoured with a Knighthood of the British Empire, France’s Légion d’Honneur, and various peace prizes.

Following his acceptance of the award of Palestinian citizenship in a gesture of peace, Barenboim stated that in ‘the Israeli-Palestinian conflict there was and still is an inability to admit the interdependence of their two voices.’ To acknowledge this interconnectedness, he argued, both Palestinians and Israelis should have dual citizenship.

This edited volume introduces the work of fifteen original and insightful thinkers with significant contributions to make to thought on dialogue. They come from diverse fields ranging from philosophy to family therapy and from sociology to music. Distinguished authors from a range of professional backgrounds in academia and dialogue practice present thinkers whose work they know intimately. In the contexts of intractable conflict, bitter political polarisation and complex economic and ecological crises, ‘dialogue’ is often raised as an alternative or as (part of) a solution. The thinkers introduced here delve deeply into what dialogue is and what it might be capable of.

This book is intended to inform and inspire anyone with an interest in the meaning and value of dialogue, whether that interest is academic, professional or personal. No knowledge is assumed and authors have sought to adopt a readable style. Each chapter presents a short biography of a thinker and the core of his or her ideas, relates those ideas to the practice of dialogue and suggests further reading and questions for reflection. This is a book which seeks not only to contribute to academic reflection but also to give practical dialogue ideas and to start further conversations.

This book is a companion volume to the Dialogue Theories book published in 2013, which presented ten other thinkers. Comments on this book included the following:

Both individuals and groups will be helped by the book’s accessible approach, its concise analysis and the stimulating questions appended to each chapter. It makes readers recognise the complexity of dialogue, and its crucial importance in current circumstances. Few will come away without finding something of value in what it contains.

Professor David Thomas, University of Birmingham

...I doubt there are many people who could not learn much from it. For myself, I was acquainted with some new names, learnt more about others I already knew something about, and even for those I was most familiar with new insights were brought up... the clarity of language and presentation make this an excellent tool for practitioners, whether individually or in group sessions, to reflect upon the way they understand and conduct dialogue.

Dr Paul Hedges, then University of Winchester, now S Rajaratnam School of International Studies University, Singapore.