

GREEN PAPERS
for Dialogue
on Dialogue

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Introduction

The purpose of these papers is to stimulate in organizations group/team dialogue on the practice of transformational dialogue.

The papers draw from my decades of experience using dialogue to solve problems, make things happen, and stretch the potential of individuals and groups.

Some papers draw from my books *Dialogue: A Way to Live* and *Dialogue: A Way to Live – Revised Edition*, which focuses on leadership to extend the practice of dialogue.

Each of the papers includes three questions for dialogue, and these may lead to additional questions in groups and teams engaged in this dialogue on dialogue.

These papers are available on: <https://dialogue4us.com>.

Green Paper #1: What Is It?

We would NOT be in dialogue in interpersonal or group/team relationships if I focused on showing you how wrong you are or tried to persuade you to accept my point of view without being willing to listen to your point of view – if in a business, the boss told his subordinates that there was only one good way to sell their product – if in the Congress, one party refused to consider any solution to health care coverage but theirs.

We are in a dialogue environment when we listen for what is meant and respond empathetically - when we ask questions to clarify and draw out the thinking of others - when we resist being defensive - when we agree to disagree when called for but seek to find that on which we do agree - when we don't focus to persuade but to discover - when we change our views or positions in light of what we are discovering.

When we change our views or positions in light of what we are discovering, we approach transformational dialogue.

***Transformational Dialogue is a means
to constructive convergence
and synergistic relationships.***

Converge:

to come together and unite in a common interest or focus

(Merriam-Webster)

to tend to meet in a point or line; incline toward each other

(Dictionary.com)

Synergy:

a mutually advantageous conjunction or compatibility of distinct business participants or elements (such as resources or efforts)

(Merriam-Webster)

the interaction of elements that when combined produce a total effect that is greater than the sum of the individual elements

(Dictionary.com)

Q: How often do you engage in this kind of dialogue?

Q: What barriers do you experience attempting to practice this kind of dialogue?

Q: What benefits do you/would you experience practicing this kind of dialogue?

Green Paper #2: How do you do it?

“Those who engage in dialogue,” affirms Nancy Dixon, “must come to it with **humility, love, faith, and hope** – a formidable list of characteristics, but one that exemplifies a relational, rather than technique, perspective.” (Dixon 1996)

A special kind of courage is required to engage in this kind of dialogue. It requires courage to affirm our best nature, to actualize our potential, and to contribute to a society in which human energy can be put to constructive purposes. This courage calls for confidence empowered by a faith in a force that lifts, guides, and supports our initiatives for a relational, more than a transactional, way of life.

Something happens that can be healing, even transformational, when we **empathetically relate to other people**. This healing happens between friends, lovers, therapists, and even between people with disagreements. When empathy opens the gate, dialogue can emerge through questioning, listening, and reflection. Empathy enhances both perspective and relationships.

We are rewarded when neurons in our brains connect to create empathy. Oxytocin, the hormone that creates warm feelings from close connections, can be released just when making eye contact.

Neurons in our brains appear to cause us to mirror what we observe in others – how and why we can read people's thinking as well as feel empathy for them. These neurons are key to how we survive and thrive in a complex social world.

Serious attention is required to practice this *way to live*. When our attention focuses on a dialogical exchange, we get a neural harmony – an interconnection among diverse brain areas. Paying serious attention puts our brains in the zone. Creating space where attention can thrive energizes a more open, responsive environment in which to explore.

Active listening is a way to help us move from simply hearing words to creating an exchange of meaning. It is difficult to listen. We lose interest. Our minds wander. We find ourselves “reacting” to what we hear or to the way that we hear it, rather than being open to meaning.

Active listening is an absolute necessity for transformational dialogue. Questions can only be asked and dialogical responses given when serious listening is at work.

Questions that optimize dialogue do not put others on the defensive. Consider the difference between asking, “Why don’t you agree with me?” and asking, “Is there something in my position with which you don’t agree?” Or instead of saying, “You can’t possibly mean that,” say, “Can you understand how I might disagree with that?”

Dialogical questions evoke deeper perspective when we offer brief reflective comments to show that we understand. For example, we might confirm understanding by summarizing what has been said, and when appropriate, ask questions to seek clarification or encourage further exploration. (Google offers references to active listening.)

Nonverbal expressions can either reinforce the context for this kind of dialogical exchange or create the opposite effect. Eye contacts, smiles, frowns, nods, restlessness,

leanings, and other wordless expressions of our interest and responses greatly impact the communication climate.

In his newsletter, Dan Schawbel shared an interview with professor and author Brené Brown whose TED talk, “**The Power of Vulnerability**,” is one of the top five most-viewed TED talks in the world. Schawbel asked Brown why we have a crisis of disconnection in our society.

“The root cause of this disconnection,” said Brown, “is our loss of a sense of true belonging that leads us to retreat to our bunkers. To change this, we must allow ourselves to be vulnerable, uncomfortable, and intentionally to be with people who are different from us. ... We’re going to have to learn how to listen, have hard conversations, look for joy, share pain, and be more curious than defensive, all while seeking moments of togetherness.

“We have to create cultures where people feel safe — where their belonging is not threatened by speaking out, and they are supported when they make the decision to

brave the wilderness, stand alone, and speak truth to bullshit while maintaining civility." (Brown 2017)

Q: What grade do you give yourself on practicing dialogue as described above?

Q: What difference would it make in your social relationships if you practiced dialogue as described above?

Q: Which of the characteristics of dialogue described above would you have the most difficulty practicing consistently?

Green Paper #3: Dialogue in Groups/Teams

- A group of nine is optimal for dialogue; however, I have also had good experience with a few more and a few less.
- Omit a hierarchy of roles and references to external authorities.
- Invite those who hold back to speak out.
- Listen for what is *meant* instead of listening for what is correct or seeking agreement. What does the person who is speaking *mean*?
- Assume that each member of the group has a piece of the answer to issues and that together the group can craft a new and better response.
- Validate disagreements as a different way of looking at a subject, rather than trying to strong-arm agreement.
- Celebrate new insights, deeper understandings, greater clarity as they occur.

David Bohm, Donald Factor, and Peter Garrett affirm in their *Notes on Dialogue*, “The spirit of dialogue is one of free play, a sort of collective dance of the mind that, nevertheless, has immense power and reveals coherent purpose. Once begun it becomes a continuing adventure that can open the way to significant and creative change.” (Bohm, Factor, and Garrett 1991)

William Isaacs put it this way: “Rather than seeing our conversations as the crashing and careening of billiard balls, individuals may come to see and feel them as fields in which a sense of wholeness can appear, intensify, and diminish in intensity again.” (Isaacs 1999)

Barriers to the practice of dialogue:

- Different personalities sometimes rub against each other instead of seeking mutual discovery.
- Respect for one another can suppress openness.
- Some egos find dialogue too confining.
- Rank and power can intimidate instead of liberate.

Q: Which of the guidelines listed on the previous pages would be the most difficult to follow for a group/team to which you belong?

Q: What kind of leadership is implied by these guidelines?

Q: Does/would your participation in such a group/team feel like a continuing adventure?

Green Paper #4: A True Story

Jack led the growth of a now multi-billion-dollar company. The Board of Directors employed him to be an outside CEO and Chairman of a family business. He changed the company's name, expanded the product line and built a new corporate headquarters. He increased employees by 125%, sales by 222%, and the value of the stock increased by 300%.

We were friends and colleagues in another corporation. Jack invited me to become his consultant. We evolved the practice of dialogue throughout the company. Jack and I had engaged in dialogue prior to the executive retreats that I was to facilitate. We assigned a serious book to be read that included the importance of dialogue. We engaged in why and how to practice dialogue. We focused on issues in a dialogue context including matters such as the most effective integration of a new acquisition.

Jack viewed the practice of values to be an essential part of the culture of the company. This practice became a signature feature of the company.

There were examples of breaches in the practice of those core values, and those involved were fired. There were times when dialogue was not appropriate.

I asked Jack what he thought the benefits were of the practice of dialogue in his company. Here is what he said: “Getting the pertinent facts and potential alternatives was one of the best benefits of dialogue. Team members recognized that their ideas were considered and their input was important. We could see that each member had some segment of the best solution and collectively the final decision was the best possible.

“The dialogue discipline enhanced communications on strategic issues and growth opportunities. It engaged the leadership team in positive and creative work sessions where everyone contributed in an open fashion and multiple aspects of a situation could be examined.”

Q: Would Jack's company be the kind you would like to work in? Why or why not?

Q: What benefits for employees might there be working in a company like Jack's?

Q: What special efforts might be required working in a company like Jack's?

Green Paper #5: Dialogue Connects Us as Persons

At the end of his book *On Dialogue*, David Bohm reminds us that half a million years ago people lived in small groups of hunter-gatherers; they all knew one another and used what Bohm called “literal” thought only for simple technical purposes. “But then came the agricultural revolution, and larger societies developed. These societies needed much more organization and order and technology, and they had to use much more literal thought.

“They organized society by saying, ‘You belong here, you do this, you do that.’ They began, therefore, to treat everything as a separate object, including other people. They used people as means to an end.”

“Literal thought knows the person by his function – he is whatever you call him – a worker, a banker, this or that. That sets up the social hierarchy – people are isolated from each other, and the participation is very limited.”

"In such a view, the world is made of objects, literally. We treat other people as objects, and eventually you must treat yourself as an object, saying, 'I must fit in here, and I must do this and be that and become better,' or whatever. But 'society' is not an objective reality – period. It is a reality created by all the people through their consciousness."

How do we know each other? Is it what we look like? The clothes we wear? The schools we attended? The jobs we've had? The clubs we belong to?

If we wish to relate to others at a deeper level, dialogue achieves this benefit. Physician-psychologist Paul Tournier wrote a seminal book entitled *The Meaning of Persons*. In it he made the following declaration: "I can speak endlessly of myself, to myself or to someone else, without ever succeeding in giving a complete and truthful picture of myself."

There remains in each of us, he adds, "something of impenetrable mystery." We cannot grasp the true reality of ourselves or of others, "but only an image; a fragmentary

and deformed image, an appearance: the 'personage.'" He differentiates the personage, which we present as "actors in a play," from the persons that we truly are. Tournier: "The person is the original creation."

Tournier believed that dialogue liberates us as persons. "In this act of dialogue in which a relationship involves both choice and risk and lays us open to an exchange of replies, we act with a responsibility that further opens us as persons."

Q: What difference do you think it makes to be part of an organization that treats people as objects or as persons?

Q: Can transformational dialogue work in an organization in which people are treated as objects?

Q: What benefits for the people in an organization and for the organization are there when people are treated as persons?

Green Paper #6: Dialogue Opens Closed Systems

After 9/11 we learned that if our multiple intelligence sources had been more open with one another, available information might have warned us about what the jihadists were planning.

Instead of walls between groups, like marketing, production, and finance, *open systems management* views separations between groups as being semi-permeable membranes through which information, personnel, and energy can be exchanged easily.

A team of research scientists located in Switzerland experienced limits in gaining patents for their work. Gaining patents involved patent attorneys. Research-driven patents were key indicators for the success of this group.

I was invited to consult with this group on its patent generation. The group included bright people from half a dozen different countries.

I interviewed the group members to understand the work as well as the facility culture. I discovered that the scientists felt most creative in relationships with family and friends rather than in those relationships in their research lab.

At an off-site workshop, we did a number of things; however, it was a game we played that was the key lever for progress. In groups with scientists and attorneys in each group, one person was designated to role-play being a patent. Group members asked the “patent” many different kinds of questions. It was a fun experience that thawed barriers and energized creativity.

Groups working on specific patent issues followed the exercise. Exchanges across domains were needed to refine the patent process. Dialogue opened up those exchanges. The simple game led to a culture change, which led to solutions in the interests of all.

Roger was Jewish, German, and a leading engineer in England. His family migrated to England after Hitler's rule in Germany. He asked me to help him with a challenge.

He was to consolidate three companies that were competitors in a global business. Their headquarters were in France, Wales, and the U.S. Employees, plants, products, patents, offices, customers, and cultures were to be integrated for a competitive advantage in their worldwide business.

The company leaders could be *ordered* to make the consolidation happen. Roger needed the leaders to contribute to sustainable contributions and motivation. A different approach was needed.

I had consulted with Roger's parent company. During that time, we had a weekend break. Roger asked me if there was something in Europe that I would like to do on that weekend. I asked him if we could visit the cathedral in Chartres, France.

In college, medieval history was a special interest of mine. Henry Adams' classic *Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres* fascinated me. The thought of visiting Chartres was intriguing and Roger said, "Let's do that."

It was a great weekend. There was the incongruity of a German Jew and an American Protestant making a "pilgrimage" to a Roman Catholic cathedral. It was that incongruity that stimulated serious dialogue between us and prepared the way for our project.

The project was a challenge. Nevertheless, with shuttle diplomacy and substantive dialogue with each group, we built the bridges and opened spaces to make the consolidation happen. There was satisfaction, ownership, and commitment to future progress that made the effort worthwhile.

Q: What risks might there be in an open system organization?

Q: What changes in the people described above were needed to work in an open system organization?

Q: What kind of leader is required to lead an open system organization?

Green Paper #7: Other Examples

The Jury Is In

A company, with a long history of making a particular product, recognized the need for a new product line. Unknowns clouded the decisions. A colleague and I recommended a process we had learned about from a mentor friend. A multi-day off-site meeting included several company disciplines and even corporate directors.

The model was based on a jury trial. Pro and con advocates and experts came with data to make their cases. Directors and senior executives comprised the jury. The purpose was not to make a decision but to surface features to be considered. The decision makers followed with dialogue to reshape the company's direction.

JL

A client's CEO directed me to "orient" JL, a new senior executive, to the culture of his new business home.

At his first executive meeting at that new home, JL and I took a walk during which I did the orientation, and we discovered that we could be open and trusting with each other. We bonded.

Later, JL became the CEO of another corporation. He invited me to be his consultant. We evolved a unique plan. We visited major company locations to convey the plan to key managers. At dinner meetings, JL shared the plan and then responded to questions.

Something came up in the first meeting, and JL responded in a way I thought was not in sync with the intention of our visit. After the meeting, JL and I met. I shared my concern. He was the person in charge. His executive power would prevail. However, he was willing to listen to my concern. We engaged in serious dialogue.

At breakfast with the group the next morning, I was surprised to hear JL say that he wished to reposition what he had said the night before.

Our dialogue made a difference. His people sensed that their CEO was open to revised thinking, and our plans for the subsequent meetings were on a sounder footing.

The Relocation Issue

I was asked to facilitate a workshop with the leaders of a Canadian company to deal with the relocation of a manufacturing plant. There was conflict among the key people about how and where to relocate.

We used an analytical tool to sort out the forces that impacted this decision. I asked many questions to clarify the analysis. Listening to responses and cooling some of them in order to clarify the meaning of the exchanges proved to be of value.

The workshop went on for most of a day. The questions to be answered at this meeting were posted up front to remind us why we were there. Namely *when, where, and how* shall we relocate this plant?

By the end of the day, there were serious conversations about these concerns. Clarity came when the key

executive took the floor and said something to this effect: “What has become clear today is that we should not relocate this plant. We will focus on acting on what has emerged from this workshop to strengthen our plant where it is.”

Q: In these examples what do you think led to the use of dialogue?

Q: Do you think that a non-dialogical approach would have achieved the same results? Why?

Q: What changes in the culture of an organization do you think are needed to encourage the practice of dialogue?

Green Paper #8: A Global Analysis

We conducted an opinion survey on perceptions about the practice of dialogue. Responses came from educators, psychologists, religious leaders, social workers, business leaders and others from five nations. The *Revised Edition* of my book includes a survey summary, and a summary is also included on our dialogue website: <https://dialogue4us.com>.

This paper includes highlights from that survey. The responses revealed that cultures influence receptivity for dialogue. In some cultures, there is little knowledge of dialogue and therefore little receptivity. Some cultures discourage dialogue. There are cultures in which there are no barriers to the practice of dialogue.

The lists that follow are composites of multiple sources including responses to the survey. The list includes redundancies retained for their nuances.

Reasons given that impede the practice of dialogue.

- The meaning and benefits of dialogue are not clearly understood.
- Participants lack empathy with and respect for others.
- People avoid engaging in dialogue based on feelings of weakness.
- Active learning skills are lacking.
- There is confirmation bias; we only hear what others who agree with us say.
- When there is fear of being rejected or criticized, it is safer to keep quiet and not engage in dialogue.
- The inability to suspend judgment and honor cultural differences is widespread.

- Insistence on being in charge and setting unrealistic goals prior to dialogue is encouraged by authority figures.
- In some areas of the world, leaders are discouraged from promoting or initiating dialogue, and women are not allowed to speak openly.
- Dialogue has the potential to change its participants, and many people are afraid of change.
- Many religious as well as political leaders create closed environments that negate others' thoughts and opinions.

Reasons given that encourage the practice of dialogue.

- When dialogue takes hold and is sustained long enough for internalization it becomes an adventure, a source of energy and joy.
- Dialogue increases empathy.

- Helps to build interpersonal relationships and reduce stress.
- Helps participants reach new insights and solve problems with greater depth. As dialogue slows down normal communication, there is an inclination to dig deeper.
- Provides peace within, with others, and with God.
- Enhances our emotional intelligence.
- Helps in therapy groups to identify in-depth details of the patient and to reduce resistance of patients to share personal issues.
- In one sense it is the best way to come unto and become a new being in Christ Jesus.
- The experience of satisfaction at the opening of one's mind to a new reality is rewarding.

- It strengthens courage to speak and share.
- Enables the development of trust and honesty.
- Upholds the principal that clarity is more important than agreement.
- Builds communities of mutual trust and interests.
- Just imagine what could be accomplished if political foes could discuss options and compromise without all the grandstanding and rhetoric, which simply fuels the general populations' behaviors.
- Dialogue could stem the tide of individual acts of violence often caused by frustration, isolation, and mental illness gone unnoticed/untreated.
- Encourages participants to be less likely to accept extremist leaders.

This analysis implies assumptions.

The practice of transformational dialogue includes anthropology, psychology, theology, philosophy, sociology, and economics.

There is a shortage of the serious practice of transformational dialogue in the world today.

We need a means to sustain this practice.

This is a leadership issue.

Q: With what of the analysis do you agree or disagree?

Q: Given the list of impediments, is encouraging the practice of transformational dialogue worth the effort?

Q: What steps do you think would best overcome the list of impediments?

Green Paper #9: Dialogue with My Friends

I asked friends to tell me what our dialogue meant to them.

Carole is a university professor. I learned new things when I read some of her publications. This discovery prompted exchanges in which both of us began to see some things from new perspectives. I asked Carole if she felt we had experienced dialogue in our relationship. Here is her response. “Two different family friends from my father’s home town suggested, independently one from the other, that I reach out to Irving. So, I did.

“In our first conversations, I learned all about how Irving had worked closely with my father’s childhood friend, whom I also knew and loved growing up. How satisfying it was to picture this family friend anew from Irving’s perspective! Hearing Irving’s stories, which were often quite funny, was like a window opening up on someone who felt like part of my family, and someone who was deeply connected to my father.

“Irving’s stories expanded my perspective on my father, his boyhood friend, and the generation in which they grew up.

“Irving has shared stories about any number of consultation jobs he was asked to take on where the parties involved were attempting to achieve a goal or rectify a problem, and from what he reported, you could never imagine a solution, so heated were the disagreements.

“These stories stretched my capacity to live with the discomfort of disagreement and see it as part of a process. I admire and appreciate Irving’s attitude of hanging in there in the midst of conflict, as well as his understanding that heated arguments may very well be an opening outward to a genuine exchange of ideas.

“Through listening to one another, the parties involved might break through to something bigger than themselves. Irving’s commitment to digging deeper and seeing things through to meaningful communication seems to have a spiritual quality to me, one that is sorely needed in our times.

“Irving and I may be opposites in terms of politics (I don’t know!), but I agree with him that our world has become dangerously polarized, with people gravitating mostly to others that are like minded. I believe the Internet exacerbates this problem and is at heart, potentially, quite un-democratic.

“I agree with political philosopher Cass Sunstein who feels that for a democracy to remain robust, we need constantly to bump into people with colliding perspectives and points of view. (Sunstein 2017)

“Being open to meeting someone different from yourself and taking part in a collision of ideas is what is dear to me in being human, and I’ve found a kindred soul in Irving. I feel blessed.”

Harry is an attorney and a friend of many years. We read heavy science and theology together. We dig into our readings with joy and enlightenment. His contribution tells our story.

“The question is whether true dialogue is worth the effort? The answer is yes, because true dialogue is transformational. Most conversations are shallow and do not reach the depth necessary to be qualified as dialogue. For those who have truly participated in and understand dialogue, good questions lead to deeper questions.

“The reason is additional questions require those who are communicating to be sure first that the meaning of the question is understood in order for the meaning of the answer to be understood. The thought processes for the additional questions to the initial question is the reason that dialogue is transformational.

“The series of questions makes dialogue participants consider a greater foundational meaning for the entire subject. This transforms the original question into something greater than what one initially intended.

“One of the reasons that I know this is true is because of my experience in dialogue with Irving Stubbs for over 40 years. During this time, we have regularly discussed important

subjects and most times have utilized dialogue to discuss the subjects deeply.

“As these events continued, so did our skills at asking questions and participating in dialogue. This resulted in a process of delving deeper into the nature of the meaning of true and complete communication. The result opened our minds to more possibilities of a greater understanding of the meaning of the subject matter and the potential answers.

“The result for my part has been mind-expanding and an understanding of the richer fabrics of meaning and truth. The ‘aha’ moment occurs at the point when the consideration of another question opens one’s mind to a different picture or perspective of the subject matter.

“For my part it feels like another layer of my brain has been opened to a greater consciousness. One can sense that on such occasions, one grows into and becomes a newer and more whole (holier) Being.”

(Perhaps from his legal training and experience, Harry makes an important connection between dialogue and questions. Open-ended questions clearly open to greater consciousness and “aha” moments when a flow of questions lead to rich and enriching insights.)

Jacqueline has been a friend and colleague for decades. She was a professor of criminal justice. Her IQ is likely higher than mine. I asked her to share what she thought was the basis of our dialogue. “That one is easy, Irving: **Love** - a deep appreciation of the other and a recognition of a common bond to make things better in the world.

“It began for me when I interviewed for the job at your company. You gave me a personality test that consisted of questions - the answers to which would tell you something deeper about me.

“I felt at home with your endeavor, and I remember thinking, ‘Irving Stubbs really understands what is important not only in a relationship (dialogue), but also in a person.’ You made me feel comfortable and welcome. You weren't looking for someone who agreed with you, but someone

who shared your values of integrity - a seeker of truth and, I believe, of justice.

“I also felt at home with you because you appeared to care deeply about what you were doing. Putting all of that together equaled the potential for a deep friendship, a common road traveled and grounded in CARE.

“My studies at Vanderbilt were focused on Martin Heidegger's *Being and Time*. Heidegger's philosophy of being-in-the-world as *Dasein* (being there, as in being at the horizon or end of life - living with a grounded and deep sense of one's mortality) was a shared reality between us, as it has been for other friendships in my life.

“For Heidegger, we live in advance of ourselves. We carry our end within us. How we live that truth of being mortal is literally the difference between living authentically or inauthentically. (Heidegger 1962)

“You and I share a reality that is not designed or concocted by us, but that simply is. It is not easy to put into words, yet it is manifested through dialogue.”

I asked television personality, author of *You Bet Your Life*, and friend of many years, **Spencer Christian**, how he would describe the dialogue in our relationship. With his permission, here is his response.

“I found our dialogue meaningful, not only because of the words and ideas exchanged during the dialogue, but also because of the probing ‘internal dialogue’ that has naturally followed our conversations.

“My dialogue with you has always encouraged me to more carefully examine my relationship with God, to question whether I am living purposefully.”

A 48-minute version of “Bach Out of the Box” (originally “Jack Out of the Box”) has more than 1,000 views on YouTube. The concept and performance were the creation of **Joseph Erwin**, beloved music teacher and choir director. I was the Executive Producer.

Joe was a very close friend for decades. With our wives, we engaged in heavy dialogue on many occasions.

Joe had a dream of presenting Bach in a way to make his music accessible to a wide audience. He asked me to help him realize his dream. The dream's form emerged as a project that would require a church and organist, an orchestra, a chorus, a panel to dialogue about what they heard, a production crew, an editing process, and funding. It took a year to complete the project.

Joe had very strong views about how the production should be. I respected him for his music and concept, but I had strong views about what the product needed to be to gain viewers.

Our dialogue was often a few degrees beyond warm even to a point that I thought I could not continue to produce the project.

Our friendship, mutual respect, shared vision, and creative ways to exchange meaning that required change on both

of our parts got us through to the finish line with a product that made us proud and that many have enjoyed. We created music between the notes.

Q: With what friends have you experienced dialogue?

Q: What difference, if any, did your dialogue experience make with your friendships?

Q: Do you or would you find it easier to engage in dialogue with friends **or** with colleagues in a group or team?

Green Paper #10: Dialogue Advocates

Socrates

Transformational dialogue is not new. The philosopher Plato wrote about conversations between Socrates and others. Socrates used dialogue to encourage people to think. He challenged assumptions and forced people to dig deeper for the truths they held. He helped people to surface understandings that they didn't know were there.

Socrates helped fellow citizens discover their "ignorance" and to be morally better. Admonition, persuasion, and advice failed to achieve these goals. He suggested that the job of the dialogue midwife is to develop potential knowledge located in the soul: The "child" being delivered is an undeveloped thought, which has not yet become knowledge. In his dialogue with Socrates, Plato's *Theaetetus* says, "You've made me say far more than ever was in me."

Socrates affirmed that learning is the development of thoughts into "fertile truth." Dialogue refines knowledge, and it is through dialogue that truth emerges. Equated with truth

is “the good,” and in Socrates’ view, inquiry is essential to discover the good. Therefore, Socrates was happy to be refuted by inquiry because in that challenge to his previous views, he was relieved of the burden of false opinion.

Note: Socrates’ search for truth resulted in his arrest and imprisonment. While in prison, he drank a fatal dose of hemlock. Dialogue requires some risk-taking.

David Bohm

Quantum physicist David Bohm, a colleague of Albert Einstein, influenced advocates of dialogue. Science, affirmed Bohm, deals with the explicit order, but there is an ontological reality, which he called the implicit order, that must include three dimensions: the individual, the social, and the cosmic or religious. (Peat 1997)

David Peat wrote Bohm’s biography, *Infinite Potential: The Life and Times of David Bohm*. He reported Bohm’s affirmation that dialogue occurs when we become open to the flow of a larger intelligence in which we are able to discover the wholeness and interrelatedness of the world.

He invited fellow big-thinkers to gather in a “free space” for something new to happen. (Peat 1997)

Joseph Jaworski

Joseph Jaworski in *Synchronicity – The Inner Path of Leadership*, found in Bohm a kindred spirit. He reported Bohm’s view: “We are all connected and operate within living fields of thought and perception. The question to be resolved: How to remove the blocks and tap into that knowledge in order to create the kind of future we all want?” (Jaworski 1996)

Daniel Yankelovich

Pollster and social analyst Daniel Yankelovich in *The Magic of Dialogue: Transforming Conflict into Cooperation* affirmed, “I believe that a certain kind of dialogue holds the key to creating greater cohesiveness among groups of Americans increasingly separated by differences in values, interests, status, politics, professional backgrounds, ethnicity, language, and convictions.” (Yankelovich 1999)

Martin Buber

Yankelovich reflected on the insights of Jewish philosopher Martin Buber. Buber felt that in dialogue something deeper than conversation goes on.

For Buber, dialogue is a way of being. “In Buber's philosophy, life itself is a form of meeting and dialogue is the ‘ridge’ on which we meet. In dialogue, we penetrate behind the polite superficialities and defenses in which we habitually armor ourselves. We listen and respond to one another with an authenticity that forges a bond between us.” (Yankelovich 1999)

Peter Senge

Professor Peter Senge introduced the business world to dialogue in *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization*. He said that we learn when we suspend assumptions and think together. Our sensitivity becomes a fine net able to gather subtle meanings.

The discipline of team learning, said Senge, starts with *dialogue*. He affirmed that in dialogue there is a cool

energy like that associated with a superconductor. With wasted energy (heat) diminished, paradoxically hot topics can be discussed and can become windows to deeper insights. (Senge 1990)

Jane Vella

Some educators worry that the often well-worn and biased lectures delivered in colleges do not equip the next generations for the practices needed to participate in changing the world. Too much education, argues one educator, involves pedagogic “banking” in which professors make deposits in their students without helping them to learn how to use their knowledge.

Jane Vella designed and led community education and staff development programs in more than 40 countries. She has been a professor and an author. In one of her books, *Learning to Listen, Learning to Teach – The Power of Dialogue in Educating Adults*, she got my attention with her chapter on “Quantum Thinking and Dialogue Education.”

Quantum thinking is moving us beyond Newtonian mechanics to a new paradigm. Vella connects dialogue education and quantum thinking. “We have been brought up to accept hierarchy, certainty, cause-and-effect relationships, either-or thinking, and a universe that works as a machine—in short, mechanistic thinking.” (Vella 1994)

Vella suggests that it is a shock for most of us to consider a universe composed of energy that is patterned and spontaneous, the certainty of uncertainty, both/and thinking, and the connectedness of everything. “This is quantum thinking.” (Vella 1994)

William Isaacs

Professor and author William Isaacs said in his *Dialogue: The Art of Thinking Together*: “Dialogue, as I define it, is a conversation with a center, not sides. It is a way of taking the energy of our differences and channeling it toward something that has never been created before. ... Like the Total Quality Movement, it seeks not to correct defects after they have occurred but to alter processes so that they do not occur in the first place.

“Rather than seeing our conversations as the crashing and careening of billiard balls, individuals may come to see and feel them as fields in which a sense of wholeness can appear, intensify, and diminish in intensity again.”

“We cannot manufacture a ‘field.’ But we can create conditions under which a rich field for interaction is more likely to appear.” (Isaacs 1999)

Nancy Dixon

Professor and author Nancy Dixon wrote *Perspectives on Dialogue: Making Talk Developmental for Individuals and Organizations*. She said, “The term ‘dialogue’ is now frequently heard when the speaker wants to convey that the discussion will be at greater depth or will be more real than usual. Yet, as I listen to conversations between organizational members or sit in meetings of organizations, I hear very little of what I call dialogue going on.” (Dixon 1996)

“Dialogue,” says Dixon, “requires each person to say one’s own truth – not *the* truth but one’s own truth.” When this

happens, each person opens the door to development. “Those who engage in dialogue,” affirms Dixon, “must come to it with humility, love, faith, and hope – a formidable list of characteristics, but one that exemplifies a relational, rather than technique, perspective.” (Dixon 1996)

Dixon added, “Society to work must be based on shared meaning, which [David] Bohm likened to the cement that holds society together.” (Dixon 1996)

Richard Feynman

Richard Feynman pioneered quantum electrodynamics. He jointly won a Nobel Prize in Physics in 1965. Albert Einstein attended Feynman’s first lecture when Feynman was a graduate student at Princeton University, and Bill Gates was so inspired by Feynman’s pedagogy that he called him “the greatest teacher I never had.” (Gates 2016)

Feynman shared his experience working with a committee of high-powered fellow scientists who were discussing the topic of separating isotopes. He reported on the committee’s process.

The process unfolded like this: Someone would make a point; then the chairman would explain a different point of view; then another person would add that there might be another possibility that needed to be considered. Even with considerable disagreement around the table, the chairman did not insist on his point of view.

Feynman was shocked to experience a group of experts building on the ideas of colleagues and sharing many new facets that led to a decision with which there was agreement. There was a confirmation of mutual respect and creative building on a central issue.

King Abdullah II

King Abdullah II of Jordan won the Templeton Prize for promoting dialogue and cooperation between Muslims of different traditions. The Templeton Foundation stated that King Abdullah “has led a reclamation of Islam’s moderate theological narrative from the distortions of radicalism.” His efforts have “come with great personal cost including condemnation and death threats from radical terrorist groups.” (Templeton Foundation 2018)

The King advocated for and funded an initiative named “A Common Word Between Us and You” calling for cooperation between Muslim leaders and their Christian counterparts based on the shared traditions of love of God and neighbor.

The King called for the promotion of tolerance, mutual respect, support of inclusion and hope; to speak out against Islamophobia and other wrongs; and to make our values a real force.

Shirley Turkle

Sherry Turkle, a professor and author of *Reclaiming Conversation: The Power of Talk in a Digital Age*, offers a perspective about empathy and dialogue.

“When two people are talking, the mere presence of a phone on a table between them or in the periphery of their vision changes both what they talk about and the degree of connection they feel. ... People keep the conversation on topics where they won’t mind being interrupted. They don’t feel as invested in each other.” Turkle asks, “What has

happened to face-to-face conversation in a world where so many people say they would rather text than talk?" (Turkle 2015)

The God Connection

In a pastorate, I tried to build a unique kind of bridge. In our town there was a manufacturing facility that involved a lot of heavy and noisy machinery.

I spent time at that plant tape recording the sounds of the machinery at work. After editing my recording to comprise some rhythmic sounds that had a rough musical quality, I asked my minister of music to compose an organ accompaniment to those sounds. We then presented the composition to the congregation as a *concerto for organ and manufacturing sounds*.

I told the congregants that this strange-sounding "dialogue" was like a bridge between what we often differentiate as being either the sacred or the secular. Our "listening" God, I added, doesn't make that distinction. This event stirred up conversation in the community, even some dialogue, as well as some questions about this out-of-the-box pastor.

Donald Dawe

I asked my friend and Christian theologian Donald Dawe what he saw to be the theology of dialogue. He said that dialogue is the means by which God's Spirit opens us to truth.

Reuel Howe

Reuel Howe was a theologian and author of *The Miracle of Dialogue*. He covered a wide range of reflections that might be considered a theology of dialogue. These were his powerful words: "Dialogue is to love, what blood is to the body." (Howe 1963)

Howe said that dialogue renews vitality to relationships that were originally intended to be life sustaining. He goes *ontological* when he affirms that dialogue brings us into our being. He describes the kind of person whom he calls the "dialogical person." That person is a totally authentic person, an open person, a disciplined person, and a related person. (Howe 1963)

Jesus

In his paper *Jesus and the Samaritan Woman: A Model of Dialogue With The Other*, Nigerian priest Thaddeus Tarhembee offers this insightful interpretation of that relationship. (This paper was an address to his ecclesiastical colleagues convening for a conference.)

“Jesus initiated a dialogue with the ‘other,’ the Samaritan woman, a non-person in the eyes of the Jews. The ‘other’ refers to one who differs from another in some respect, like religion or ideology. The ‘other’ is discriminated against and is not welcomed in that society/group. He/she is despised and rejected by others. This was the situation in which Samaritans found themselves at Jesus’ time. The ‘other’ in our contemporary world is not different from the Samaritan as seen in the gospel.”

“Jesus initiated this dialogue to harmonize and heal the wounds of the past, accept those considered outcast/unclean, and to welcome them into the people of God. It is this search for mutual understanding and acceptance that Jesus achieved in the encounter with the

Samaritan woman. He is challenging us and inviting us to do the same.

“In a pluralistic society ... we have to meet in conference to search together, listen and learn from each other. This invites us to share with others all that life brings.

“We are all invited to dialogue to enhance mutual understanding, tolerance, trust, acceptance, welcome, and accommodation of ‘others.’ We are challenged to participate in humankind’s corporate self as the creation of God.

“We cannot be truly free unless we are prepared to face the truth. In the posture of dialogue, faith discovers truth... (Herzog). Truth on the other hand will help us to participate honestly and fully in our new corporate relationship.” (Tarhembee 2003)

Peggy Noonan

Author of *John Paul the Great* and columnist Peggy Noonan shares her dialogue experience. “I joined a Christian Bible

study group with some intelligent women, who were to one degree or another desperate to believe in something, but it had to be the truth. (They had already tried the non-true, and it hadn't worked.) These were women who'd been through modern life ... they hadn't kept themselves apart and protected from the culture but had jumped right in, and their conversation was as interesting as a modern novel."

"They all knew that the lives they had previously lived were un-whole, not in accord with the peace that they somehow knew or intuited was out there, and available and summoning." (Noonan 2005)

Yo-Yo Ma

Cellist Yo-Yo Ma speaks of his music being communion between himself, his instrument, the scores, and his audience. When you watch and listen to him, you become engaged with him as he seeks to be engaged with you. It seems that for Yo-Yo Ma, music is dialogue.

In his *Marsalis on Music* series, Wynton Marsalis and Yo-Yo Ma engaged young students at the Tanglewood Music Center with the challenge of practicing. The last of 12 practicing rules is “connection.”

Marsalis and Ma demonstrated connection in an improvisational rendering of Duke Ellington's *Mood Indigo*. I have listened to many renderings of this jazz classic, but this one is a milestone.

I could see and hear in this performance the “connections” – the nonverbal exchanges between Marsalis and Ma as they performed with deep empathy and dialogue. They listened to each other, looked at each other, and interpreted each other to bring a fresh meaning of the music to the notes they played.

Emerson Quartet

In her Blog *Conversation Matters*, Nancy Dixon, whom we referenced earlier, shared these reflections.

“Last evening, I heard a beautiful reflective conversation between two violins, a viola and a cello. The conversation spoke of the greatest joy and the most profound sorrow, both almost indistinguishable from each other. The conversation was among the members of the world-renowned Emerson Quartet.

“The program was two of Beethoven’s late quartets that are enormously difficult to play with sounds ranging from the softest, most delicate in some movements, to rough and strident chords in others.

“I heard their playing as a conversation because when one instrument introduced a phrase or theme, another voice reflected back a more in-depth statement of that theme, perhaps in a different register or with embellishment, but still recognizable as the same theme.

“It was as though the viola might be saying to the first violin, ‘This is the meaning I took from what you just said.’ In other passages, the voices of the instruments blended, seeming to have reached a common understanding. As the music

intensified, the players leaned toward each other, just as we lean in when we're concentrating on what a friend is telling us.

“They watched each other, checking to see the right moment to enter the conversation. They even breathed together. At the beginning of a movement, you could see the first violin breathe in before his bow struck the string; the others breathing in concert with him, so that first note from all four instruments was simultaneous.

“The music did not originate from instruments. As beautiful as they are, they were only the carrier. The music came from meaning deep inside each player, in much the same way that the meaning in an authentic conversation arises from deep within each individual speaker.” (Dixon 2018)

Q: Are you familiar with any or all of these advocates? If so, are you surprised to discover their advocacy of dialogue?

Q: If advocates such as these have seen the value and importance of dialogue, why might we be surprised to find as little practice of dialogue as seems to be the case?

Q: Whom do you know that advocates and practices transformational dialogue?

Green Paper #11: Consciousness and Reality

What we watch, listen to, think, and remember bind together to create consciousness. Our consciousness is like a symphony orchestra with multiple players combining their talents to create a performance.

Our consciousness plays a big role in our capacity for and practice of dialogue. These three-pound brains in our heads contain billions of neurons with trillions of synaptic connections. These electro-chemical connections flash across our brain networks and form patterns that lead to our consciousness.

Our levels of consciousness evolve. They stretch from early childhood, youth and adulthood to meet our needs at those stages in our lives. As we become adults, we become more aware of others around us. If and when we evolve to the higher levels of consciousness, a more inclusive and relational life flourishes. We are less self-centered. We are more open. The orchestra members create music between the notes. We are more receptive to practice dialogue.

Developmental psychologists suggest that only a small percentage of the population reach this higher level. They believe that there are steps we can take to raise our levels of consciousness. The practice of transformational dialogue enables those steps.

With higher levels of consciousness, we become more inclusive and open to development. Getting to know one another as persons beyond the “garments” we wear – discovering tacit knowledge, the stuff below the surface – opening up closed systems in which different functions and expertise stimulate collaboration and innovation - all are ways to get us closer to reality.

In research published in the *Journal of Economic Psychology*, biologist Robert Trivers finds that we unrealistically deceive ourselves in order to deceive others to gain a social advantage. We employ biased information gathering, biased reasoning and biased recollections to support what we want to believe and avoid that which does not support our beliefs.

What kinds of leaders promote reality in science, religion, politics, marketing, or annual reports? If dialogue is a means to get us closer to reality, maybe we have a clue for why it seems that only a small percentage of the population advocates and practices transformational dialogue.

Medical doctor, neurologist, and neuroscientist, David O. Wiebers wrote *Theory of Reality: Evidence for Existence Beyond the Brain and Tools for Your Journey*. What he affirms about reality at a cosmic level is a stretch for most of us. His theory includes references to consciousness, quantum theory, an implicit order, and other matters to which citations in this book have alluded.

If a benefit of dialogue that transforms us is it gets us closer to reality, then these gleanings from Wiebers invite a level of dialogue that could change our worldviews.

Decades of research seem to confirm that we live in a universe of energy. Our senses put us in touch with an explicit material order.

The implicit order of complex energy is stretching our understanding of reality as we make discoveries through

intuition, peak experiences, meditation and near-death experiences.

Wiebers, the neuroscientist, explores the reality of consciousness as yet another dimension of reality with big implications. “Intelligent, informative consciousness is fundamental to all matter,” says Wiebers, and “The universe is a unified living process rather than a collection of separate objects.” Furthermore, adds Wiebers, “Consciousness is the canvas upon which mind generates our impressions – it is not PART of the impressions.” “The deepest reality is the reality of pure consciousness.”

"Despite the human brain having an enormous number of neurons (nerve cells) and synapses (connections between brain nerve cells), there is substantial evidence from the realms of computer science and neuroscience over the past couple of decades presented by Berkovich (1993), Romijn (1997) and others to suggest that the brain's anatomical and functional total storage capacity is incompatible with the possibility of storing a lifetime of memories.

“This would suggest that our memories, which are part of the contents of our consciousness ... would need to exist outside the realm of physical brain structures.”

Getting one's consciousness, “free from the endless stream of ‘waking chatter’ and the ‘noise’ of day-to-day living ... enhances one's coherence.”

“When one intentionally chooses to bring higher-level motivations into the experience (e.g., love, compassion, selflessness, forgiveness, acceptance, gratitude), as opposed to lower-level motivations (fear, guilt, greed, revenge, selfishness, jealousy), one becomes more coherent and open to higher-level consciousness – information - intelligence that would otherwise be inaccessible.”

“Everyone has the potential to make use of it, and the results can constitute some of the most wondrous and beautiful experiences in an individual's lifetime, as well as some of the most profound and helpful revelations that any of us can contribute.”

Wiebers, the medical doctor, affirms that this heightened experience of consciousness contributes to good health and well-being.

He views this reality of the stretch-consciousness to relate to a divine energy.

Said Wiebers: "I think, then, that there is the possibility of the transformation of consciousness, both individually and collectively. It's important that it happens together – it's got to be both. And, therefore, this whole question – of communication and the ability to **dialogue**, the ability to participate in communication – is crucial."

Q: This **Green Paper #11** is a bit of a stretch. To what extent do you find yourself in alignment with the above?

Q: Are you happy with your level of consciousness?

Q: Are you interested in stretching your level of consciousness?

Green Paper #12: Postscript

You may have used these Green Papers to engage in dialogue and encourage the practice of dialogue with:

Friends

A group or team

An organization

If that is the case, congratulations!

If that is the case, what did you get from that experience?

If you wish to continue your journey in dialogue, you will find additional resources on: <https://dialogue4us.com>.