

Polyphony And The Relative

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Thesis

My thesis here is that Open Dialogues polyphony recognizes the relative, the statement by Buddhism, in actual practice; that is, without referencing it explicitly in their theory, the professionals find that the individual awakens to this or that, that serves to re-orientation, healing, and recovery, via polyphony and open dialogue. One might be able to say that the Open Dialogues polyphony recognizes the fact of what is spoken of in the Buddhist idea 'the relative'.

In their book *Open Dialogues And Anticipations: Respecting Otherness In The Present Moment*, by Seikkula and Arnkil, the authors note that Open Dialogues does work very well, and that it can be shown that this is so; and they show also how as they developed the idea in the late 1980s and early 1990s they went through a careful iterative development of the theory and practice. They understand the idea. But in the book they were uncertain as to, at its basis, *why* it (the theory and its practice, the idea) worked. This thesis here, in addition to its statement, could be a significant *explanation* as to *why* open dialogues works so well.

Polyphony And The Relative

Polyphony (Open Dialogues)

This is a feature of a type of open dialogues, that the team proposes, and is integral to it.

Polyphony among various voices speaking in genuine response/reply; no actual beginning.

The individual, the professional team, the family, friends, work colleagues; all in mutual respect and speaking/listening/reflecting.

In open dialogue, the mutual co-arising of each voice.

There are no preconditions to starting the dialogue.

The professional team does not bring "an answer"; but listens and contributes, part of open dialogue. They do not talk without the individual present, but "write" or "develop" the dialogue by letting each person speak.

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It is done 2/3 of the time without meds; 1/6 of the time short-term meds; 1/6 of the time long-term meds.[1]

To re-orientation and often full recovery. The symptoms disappear in a short time.

Open Dialogues. (Theory and Praxis)

See the book *Open Dialogues And Anticipations: Respecting Otherness In The Present Moment* by Seikkula and Arnkil. 2014.

The Relative (Buddhism)

The unfolding simultaneity of things.

The interplay of the subjective and the objective in the unfolding simultaneity of things.

The relative positioning of things.

The absolute sense to the relative positioning of things.

The moving-unmoving aspect to the relative positioning of things.

Things are relative to each other.

Things are relative to each other, and this unfolds in a continual and infinitesimal way, including both the integers and the real numbers. This is the unfolding relative. One can find the infinite point this way.

And because things are relative to each other, there is the relational. Also, things are in a constant state of flux, and while ‘things are relative to each other’ imagines a time and place where one can image such a relative and relational aspect, and describe it, one can also describe this flux and dynamic, multiple vectors.

Buddhism. (Theory and Praxis)

You can see this in your own mind and awareness, and really work with it, and realize it, until it’s one moment, “just-so”, and the unfolding. You can see it in the world around you, and the space within.

One could also work with ideas of mutual co-arising, interdependence, interconnectivity — and impermanence (the impermanence of thought means that another thought can arise; and this is connected to the unfolding speech – the dialogue and polyphony – and this can lead to a beautiful mental space).

The Explanation

That is, the individual recognizes the reality of mutual co-arising and the unfolding relative, in the dialogue, the dialogue itself, the polyphony, the people before him or her, what is said, how it is said, and then perhaps in the world around him or her.

This then becomes part of the reorientation and healing process, of Open Dialogues, and the individual's (and others') participation. It may be part of its basis, along with other things, the basis of Open Dialogues and the reorientation and healing process, *along with meaning* – the meaning of what is said, and also recognized in the very world.

This is only realistic, as well.

Notes

The correlation between polyphony and the relative is striking. I realized it on a bus ride, as I was listening to sounds in the bus and watching the scenery go by. It was last year (or 2 years ago) that I carefully read and studied their book *Open Dialogues And Anticipations*; and it's been a delight (and effort, and effortless effort-putting) to work with Zen for the past while.

Some Reflections

As far as I can tell from the book, the practitioners in Finland developed Open Dialogues independently from Buddhist thought. They pulled from other sources, and their own reflections, and working through cycles of theory-practice-theory-practice. They hit upon the Russian novelist Bhaktin. I have had the view that they have expressed thought and praxis that is consistent with that of Buddhism, in some notable ways: interconnectedness; mutual co-arising; dependent arising; the importance of realizing of-, for both self and other; the present moment; dialogue and sharing; the ability of each of us to probe and find new answers, and open questions. This thesis here is really nice to see.

I wonder also if the Open Dialogues proponents also do the following: they do not reify difficulty as having absolute substance (that is, ego-substance). Then things can be seen as to be workable, if possible; one is realistic, but realistic in all ways. Thus the lack of preconditions and the polyphony, where all voices are respected. Also, 'merit that is no-merit'. This would be consistent with Buddhist thought.

A corollary: difficulty has no ego substance, and neither does the routine at-ease (or non-suffering). Thus, 'merit that is no-merit'. But that's the point: being neither is nor is not. Then it realizes the absolute, and the way that the relative (and emptiness) is just this life: nirvana is samsara, and samsara nirvana (the Zen view). The wall neither exists (there is no ego-substance 'wall' in the wall that makes it there, there, or not-there; or plain or textured; or with a window or not) nor does not exist (to do this, we have to imagine 'wall' in the first place, and 'wall' does represent something, as a relational, that is functional) – it is an illusion, a very real illusion; at once substantive (but not ego-substance), to notice or to work with, and

just (significantly!) the relational, to notice or to work with. There is, in addition, dependent arising. This all can be meaningful, and realized in mind. Thus we study Mind, and the physical world and the mental world.

The ability to work with all of this is skillful, and the Open Dialogues proponents have hit upon this, to not reify things, in the open dialogues polyphony and lack of preconditions, no-beginning, and respect for each voice.

This is not to downplay difficulty, and it is the case that difficulty can sometimes be acute. But difficulty has no ego-substance; and neither does at-ease. (But at-ease is recognized in the absolute, where we can take refuge, where nevertheless nirvana is samsara and samsara nirvana, and that is its joy and participation and recognition of difficulty. Thus the world – reality – is an interlocking, uninterlocking, unfolding place.)

“I apologize for my digression into Buddhist thought.”, he says. “But I wanted to interleave something here with the careful work reflected in their book.”

Endnote

Open Dialogues is one way of doing psychiatry. It is a realistic, dimension approach. It applies to the psych unit crisis-type situation, but open dialogues can be used in many situations. The authors, in their book, and in online presentations, explain in careful, illuminative terms, what the approach means. It is a result of dedicated, intelligent work, and the ideas are meant to be adapted to the local context. That is, it is a theory and praxis that is meant to be understood, then applied, as appropriate to context; it is not to be treated as a checkbox method that one would, say, constrain to paper-document format.

Footnotes

1. This statistic I think is for psychosis; the statistic for depression would be different, though there also the method shows significant benefit. See the book.