

We Are Relative To (And Polyphony)

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We are relative to all people; not just those that are our relatives.

We are relative to all things; not just the things we cherish most.

In the Zen view, then: we are them, and they are us. Yet we retain our distinctions — but where? In the Diamond Sutra, the Buddha speaks of characteristics that are no-characteristics. This is a very interesting question!

We indeed are also the unfolding simultaneity of things; and we are the relative positioning of things — but so is everything else!

The Relative

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. And one can find the infinite point in this.

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.

This is most striking! If one can see this in mind’s awareness, as the unfolding or immediate realization of the mind, it’s a surface one can take to this or that place.

— It is this last statement that yields, it just might be the case, the basis for the “functional working-out in fact” of Open Dialogues (via polyphony and open dialogues). That is, the individual sees, awakens to the possibility of, or realizes again the way to take “a surface [that] one can take to this or

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that place” to the reality around him or her — the situation, the people, the descriptions, the circumstance. And these are all unfolding, and so is the polyphony, which makes this clear. And, so is the world as a place, and an unfolding reality, or real space. It also invites realism — including for the individual and professional team and all those involved (family, friends, work colleagues, etc). This may be comfortable or uncomfortable or something neutral in feel, but somehow I think in all cases more graspable, easier to navigate, more fruitful to work with; realism also intersects meaning very directly — and this may be another feature of polyphony which yields its sound basis. (And to keep the individual in his or her own context, or to adapt it, in a place of meaning and context ‘the world’, may be important.)

In any case, I feel this deserves careful scrutiny, and reflection and discussion.

For a slightly different presentation, and some points on what polyphony is in the Open Dialogues context, see my paper “Polyphony And The Relative”.

Finally, from the Buddhist perspective, we can be participant in this world, as realizing the relative; and we should enable others then to be able to be participant also, and this becomes real.

Endnote

See the book “Open Dialogues And Polyphony: Respecting Otherness In The Present Moment” by Seikkula and Arnkil for an excellent presentation (on Open Dialogues and what open dialogues means): accessible, thorough, expert, theory and praxis, descriptive, complete. There are also video resources available online, for instance talks or documentaries.

This version is for applications in the psychiatry field and mental well-being space. I have a version sans the final note, for Zen.