

**Exploration on Sustainability,
Communication and Consciousness**

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For Zelo the Magician

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Foreword

This thesis is about sustainability, the focal arena of our two-year academic exploration. Its aim is to investigate the interrelationships between and among sustainability, leadership and consciousness, with the hope that certain illuminations reveal themselves to support changes needed to bring the planet into balance.

After several evolutions, I centered the project around examining ‘communications’ on sustainability; theorized as a useful nexus between the domains of sustainability, leadership and consciousness. Directional questions were “How is sustainability talked about? By whom to whom? Using what concepts and language? How does the level of development (consciousness) of leaders and followers impact the conversation? How does communication impact two underpinning facets of leadership: understanding (answering the question “what is really going on?”); and action (mobilizing self and others to do their adaptive work)?” These served as the overarching tenet and framework of my thesis exploration.

However, what began as a conceptual and arms-length intellectual pursuit of these questions turned largely into a personal journey of discovery from within them. While starting with theories, models and an analytical orientation to seeking and magnifying objective data and findings, I dropped into a deeper realm of subjective direct experience of the questions at hand and found myself traveling a personal journey of discovery into the nature of sustainability and “what is really going on?”

As I open this paper, it is important to place this question “what is really going on?” on a prominent pedestal. By continually asking it I have discovered the importance of exploring both ‘surface,’ or what initially presents itself as visible manifestation, and ‘depth,’ a more subtle, multidimensional sense that moves toward the ground and holds surface manifestations. Together surface and depth form a sphere I have come to call the “view,” or perspective. David Bohm called it wholeness and the implicate order. I have come to know this place as that from which I see and understand the world, and from which all action springs.

A second and equally important notion for my exploration has been the domain of ‘maps and ideas.’ Throughout the cycle of the project, I consistently found that the answer to a question was different from initially perceived. This ‘holding a mirror’ up to valuable ideas, theories, models, and beliefs identified the ways they can also become limiting reifications. Testing them in the world taught me time and again that their value lies in being a guide of the territory, but in no way are they the territory.

Together, the view and maps contribute to the understanding part of leadership. New understandings and their implication on action are central notions in this paper and the container for my examination of sustainability.

As an introduction, let’s begin with an objective, rational definition of sustainability. This definition, used in several of my dialogues on sustainability, is a composite drawn from several sources:

“Forms of progress that meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs.”

“Improving the quality of life for all citizens without increasing the use of natural resources beyond the capacity of the environment to supply them indefinitely.”

Preliminary surface observations about the definition are it appears long-term, intergenerational and places the economy within the world ecosystem; yet it seems devoid of emotion and a third-party thing. What of the subjective ‘depth?’

Part I

Widen Your World

Widen Your World is a story of the dawning of a new view, a new perspective, new ways of seeing the world and reality. Through the enfolding and unfolding of this MSc project I was introduced to the nature of the ground. I now understand more how life is a continuous flow, not fragmented piece parts. I have felt its intelligent evolution. I also felt myself within some larger whole, one in which myself and all other conscious actors participate in creating its unfolding. The mind alone cannot know this. In terms of taking action, I “undid” some of the usual ways of engaging in the world: planning, implementing, controlling, making things happen, multitasking to be more productive, etc. In their place, various elements contributed to a new view. They are addressed in the sections below and include:

- *Follow My Energy and Passion*
- *Be Open. Listen*
- *Give Things Time and Space*
- *Recognize When I Need Support*
- *Find a Way*
- *Reflection of the Whole*

Background

My project got its start in September of 2000, when I left full-time employment to become a contract consultant after working full-time since 1983. This began a new phase in my life where I had both time and space to do what I wanted. So what to do with the time and space? Well, I was already involved in personal psycho-spiritual work (Diamond Approach) and volunteer community service, so these two things came into the foreground. It was my professional life that I was less sure of, so in January 2001 I began working with a career coach, a colleague of mine from the Diamond Approach group. Peter Vajda and I worked together over the course of about three months and through this work I discovered the term sustainability, the passion I felt for it, and that it was a professional and academic field. Hel-lo-o!

Follow My Energy and Passion

A key thread for the project and really all of the writing I have done for the MSc has been to follow my energy and passion. When I look at the gestalt of the project and its process, one thing that’s clear is the intelligence in its unfolding and emergence. It has never seemed like work, but more of a fun exploration and even a game. When it is right, it is energizing and fun, and has momentum.

This energy is more than “energy.” It is intelligence, a feeling inside my body that says, “Yes!” As I write, this energy activates, excited to be named and written about in such a way. The hair rises up on my arms and back and my back and shoulders are chilled, all while my heart and stomach quicken with movement and warmth. My blood is flowing around my solar plexus, pulling blood from my back to my front, making me cold in back and warm in front, enlivening my body in such a way as to provide forward momentum. This energy is also an attractor for others, I would discover.

Without this resonance, I follow what I think I should or ought to follow, or some other belief that has driven many of my actions, and still does, about some “ideal” professional that I am supposed to be. I have even followed other people’s passions and interests.

The project has consistently pointed in the same direction – because I have stayed with where my energy is. What has emerged is the specific route and discernment of the depth of some of the parts.

My first learning paper in May 2002 set the stage. I wrote about sustainability and consciousness and my interest in the marriage of the spectrum of consciousness to sustainability, with application in the business world. However, this writing was propositional and conceptual. It was based on my passion for sustainability, my personal inner consciousness work, and developmental theory, but I had not yet done anything with these combined ideas in the world. I went on in my second learning paper in September 2002 to do a first person inquiry on my purpose on this planet, and came out with an enduring purpose “to seek my own consciousness evolution, and to help create the conditions for this evolution in others.” A medium term objective was to “take on a role in sustainable development in a corporate setting, in a consulting organization or some place where I can evolve my consciousness and leadership capabilities in the context of groups of people and the sustainability movement.” Key “buckets” here were sustainability, consciousness, business, and leadership.

My passion for the marriage of sustainability and consciousness “got legs” in March 2003 through the portfolio of work. There I outlined a new desire to learn how to talk to people effectively about sustainability, using levels of consciousness models as communication and framing tools. I had made attempts to talk to people about the MSc program and the subject of sustainability, and found it less than satisfying or effective. I felt frustrated and incompetent. Presenting questions were:

1. How do I talk to and get Americans engaged in sustainable development?
2. How do we get people to move from unaware to aware, from understanding to responsibility and action?
3. How do we appeal to people at different developmental levels?
4. What do we communicate?

Key buckets were sustainability, consciousness, communication, and leadership. The pattern continued, and a theme on communications with others emerged. I took notice of the value of following my energy and passion. It provided focus, and outlined a playing field and context. Its energetic intelligence is at once engine, pilot and navigator.

Be Open. Listen

Being open to the input of others has not been easy for me to do. I have had a very defensive side and it came out quite a bit during the first year of the MSc program. Early on I had a visceral negative reaction to the action research theory. I was pissed off as it felt superficial compared to inquiry work I was already undertaking in the Diamond Approach. During the first week I called John back in the U.S., heatedly complaining of the shallowness and wondering if this program was for me. I felt I didn’t fit. The campus was bleak; it was too elementary, everything was wrong. Most importantly, inside I felt like I was being constricted and closed off. I was pushing the course and most of people away, which I came to learn later as pushing myself and my experience away. This reactivity is a great teacher about my psychodynamics, but at this point, I do not see it as such. I identify with being closed to the program. Period.

I would come to each workshop and reel from the feedback from Peter on my learning papers. I interpreted his feedback as constraining and could hardly read what he had written. I would read it fast, and it went in as diminishing. This had an impact on my relationship with Peter, which became strained and uncomfortable. My reactions to the learning papers continued and were strong enough that I finally engaged my learning group in helping me to see what was going on more clearly. What was this defensiveness and reactivity about? What was I protecting?? The answers that emerged were having to know, have answers, be learned, competent and have something to show for my spiritual work. The energy behind it was self judgmental and it kept me impermeable. My learning group’s care and support and my commitment to the truth helped me to hear Peter’s comments for what they were, and led me to face these issues at workshop 4 in December 2002, have a conversation with Peter and alter the energy of our relationship and my openness going forward.

The written feedback from Peter and Chris on the project outline in March of 2003 felt supportive and helpful, indicative of a change in me. And the very end of Peter’s comments he wrote, “How to move this forward as part of the discipline of my path?” At the time I had no answer, yet the question resonated, emerging months later in what became a transformative component of my research: the practice of dialogue.

Openness allowed for more and diverse ideas to come in and the possibility of enrichment. This is exactly what

happened during face-to-face time with Chris and Judi Marshall Week 5 in March. Sitting across the table from Chris in the room next to our main session room, the energy between us is palpable as she speaks of making connections and linkages between my buckets of interest. We are leaning in toward each other, balanced on arms and elbows, our bodies covering the expanse of light wood table, trying to physically do what her words convey. I feel spacious, curious and open.

It was through this exchange that Chris placed me in the project for the first time and made links between my own issues with communication and communication on the topic of sustainability. This was a key turning point in the nature of the project – from oriented to the objective, arms-length and outer communication, to linking the nature of my inner process to my ability to communicate, then finally to communications in the context of sustainability. Thus the inner linked to the outer was born and my consciousness was placed squarely in the center, recognizing its central role in how I see and experience the world, and in this case in terms of communications. Key questions here were:

1. How do I make and feel links between consciousness and sustainability?
2. When do I feel the connection between my spiritual path and work?
3. How do I know there is a connection?
4. What is going on inside, and what is its relationship to my communication? What works? What is hard? Disturbing?

Through this I become more of an open system, able to change, while being true to what resonates.

Give Things Time and Space

When being open and following my energy is also given space and time, another dynamic entered the project. I had focus while being alive and responsive to my environment, while allowing things the time needed to percolate and gestate.

Second Evolution - March to June

Reflecting on Judi’s comments during the March week reframed my project from an arms-length activity to: “what am I really learning? What am I deepening?” Judi had made a comment about action inquiry being a “stumbling gait,” in essence giving permission to be imperfect. This challenged a pattern of needing to be seen as credible or competent, and reframed it into an experiment. This evolution, depicted in Figure 1, refocused on what I am learning and put first person in the context of second person and content on sustainability.

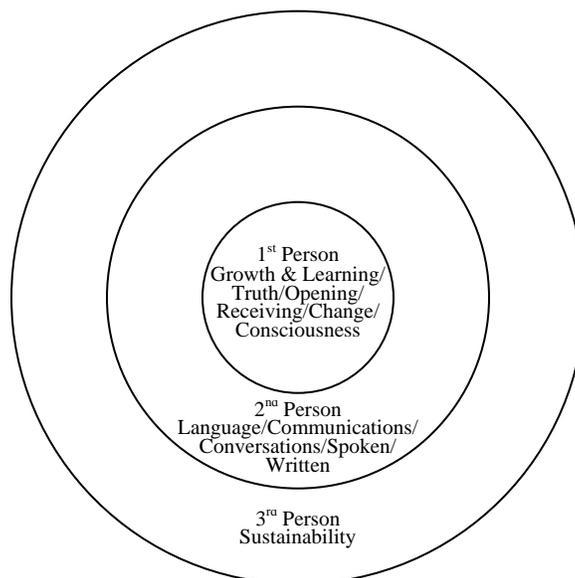


Figure 1: Second Evolution of Project

Third Evolution - Outline for Ken Wilber's Integral Institute (late August)

Throughout 2003, I had been having telephone conversations with a new colleague, Barrett Brown, every week or two on the subject of consciousness and sustainability. Barrett is a member of the Integral Institute, the organization creating an online, accredited academic program based on the integral theory of Ken Wilber. My conversations with Barrett turned into my being brought into the Integral Sustainability domain as a contributor and co-host. The domain is broken into several parts, from introductory writing to practical cases demonstrating integral theory in practice. I prepared an outline of my thesis for posting on the domain, and participated in several conference calls with Barrett, Ken Wilber and others about this domain and its content. Figure 2 highlights a part of the outline. The discipline of thinking and writing for this audience by a certain deadline provided momentum and excitement. It also put to rest any residual concern about the complementariness (or lack thereof) between action research, integral theory and developmental psychology.

Figure 2: Third Evolution of Project

"We" + "It" – Dialogues and Communication on Sustainability

This aspect of the project includes two parts. The first is to research existing communication on sustainability in/to business to determine who is communicating what, what seems to work or not work, and what can be learned from current communications.

The second is engagement in formal and informal conversations and dialogues on sustainability as a topic to discover what contributes to an effective dialogue and communication on the subject. What is the objective of the communication? What is "effective" and how is it gauged? In what ways do situation, speaker, and worldview differences impact communication? Are there multiple levels of communication on the subject, from basic to considering the uncertainties and deeper questions in the issue or engendering collective insight and wisdom on the subject?

"We" – Interpersonal Dialogue

This dimension explores the ways conversation and dialogue can contribute to collective growth, learning and creativity. What do I need to know and learn in order to participate in and help take conversation deeper and more creative, generative place?

"I" – Personal Consciousness as Inquiry

The inner dimension looks at the role of my inner process as I go through project. How does it inform and shape me? What do I need to know, uncover and learn in order to see more deeply into what is affecting my ability to communicate and dialogue?

Recognize When I Need Support

Fourth Evolution - Draft Work Program & Preparation for the First “Dialogue on Sustainability” (late September)

John and I sat down on our back deck one sunny Saturday afternoon in late September to talk through my project in a more formal way than the usual dinner table conversations. John has spent his professional life as a consultant, and a good one at that, so he approached this project in the same manner with me. He brought three things to the table: a practical approach to thinking it through; objectivity; and emotional support. See Figure 3 for the final evolution of the project that resulted from this work session.

As we began to talk about it and lay it out, I began to feel gripped and afraid. The project was beginning to feel big – John wanted to sponsor some of the research and thus make it into a wider project than the MSc project. What I felt most afraid of was conducting the dialogues. The actual doing part scared the you-know-what out of me. I was jumpy, chewing my nails, getting up and sitting down. My energy was staccato, shooting out and away from my body, and up in my head, like an explosion.

For some time I have had this fear of being in front of groups, facilitating or speaking. I put myself into leadership roles in volunteer community service as one way to safely begin to do more public speaking and it has helped me progress. Recently I led the facilitation team for a leadership development session for Hispanic high school students, and opened the session with the kids and parents. I had worked on this opening and rehearsed it for John. His feedback to me had to do with “giving a speech” compared to talking with and connecting to the kids. John and I inquired together about what was really going on, and I saw how I set standards for myself about how I *should be* and *need to be* as a facilitator or presenter. I expect myself to be just like the best – articulate, funny, wise, smart, whatever. The impact of this invisible standard is that it pushes me to be a certain way, like how I first rehearsed the opening for John, and away from being alive and genuine in the moment.

I was able to see and talk with John about this fear coming up again, even more so as now I feel the difference between a volunteer setting and a professional setting and my fear of looking and sounding incompetent when it really DOES matter. What John offers next is brilliant, though I didn’t see it nor appreciate it at the time. He suggested we conduct the inaugural “Dialogue on Sustainability” together at a company client session, one evening after dinner, with staff I have worked with for years. This was the support and nudge I needed to feel comfortable and able to do it. So I have learned an important lesson: I can’t always do it myself. Sometimes I need the support of others to get over a hump, real or imagined. John has been this support to me all along the way in the MSc, and with the project in particular.

A second big fear surfaced during the back deck work session with John – that I was getting started too late and am way behind – here it is September and I have not done the first Dialogue on Sustainability, though I have done 2nd person dialogue experiments. Recognizing the incredible value that has come from allowing this project to have its time and space, we coin the phrase “There is just enough time.” It has been a safe container for me ever since, having proven to be true.

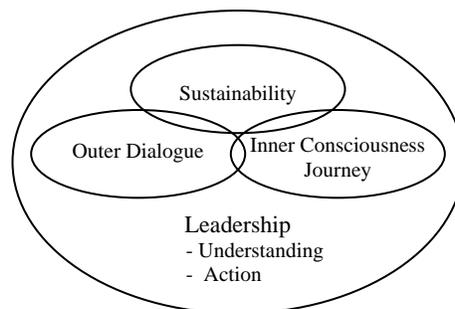


Figure 3: Fourth and Final Project Evolution

Find a Way

Not Being Able to Write

In June, Peter reminded us that the crucial time for the project is between June and November. I return home from the UK and find that I can't write. I have no motivation to do actual writing. It is one thing to draft project concepts on paper, drawing diagrams of the parts and pieces as I have been doing all along. But I have a 15,000+ word thesis to produce. So what does a good Diamond Heart and MSc student do? Use inquiry as a tool to look into the issue.

Journal Tuesday, July 22, 2003, Vero Beach, Florida

Keep writing keep writing. How do I make writing fun? This was a theme that popped up yesterday on the beach during a Diamond Heart exercise about practices that support my holding process. Writing does not seem to be working for me. I sit down in front of the computer and open a Word document (blank) and expect to write a finished product over the next couple of hours. So I agonize over each sentence that comes out, working on it and tampering with it to the point that I don't recognize the writing for the experience that it was. The writing becomes a costumed resemblance; it's spun and made to look like I think writing should, versus just transferring the experience onto paper as I am doing now. I talked yesterday about wanting to make writing fun and now I see that it is not the writing itself that is not fun and enjoyable because I am really enjoying what I am doing right now. Sitting up in bed, I just woke up and opened the blinds to let all the July Florida sun stream in and light up the was-dark room, with the ceiling fan on low, lightly breezing my naked upper body, with my lower body under the covers and warm.

So it's HOW I write that makes the difference. I thought it had to be on the computer, like this download from my body through some invisible wire onto the electronic page in neat 11 point Garamond. But today I see that it's the process of sitting in front of the computer that squashes my writing realness and true voice, as I had the belief that the computer has made me a better writer. How funny and relieving to see this. I can write anywhere, anytime, "unplugged," and it works.

For the next six weeks I write by hand on tablets and gave 42 pages to my friend and colleague Zu to word process. This got me over the writing hump.

How to "Not Practice"

I have always been a reader. I got it from my mother, who got it from her mother and from there I don't know. I read my way into spirituality, in between various and sundry workshops, until I found the Diamond Heart path in 1999. I read my way into developmental psychology, integral theory, holistic cat care, nutrition and more. So following leads on ideas and books for the MSc and the project is natural. I have come to see, as a result of the action research process, an over reliance on books and conceptual knowing in lieu of practice and action in the world. What surfaced is a lifelong pattern using reading and ideas as a way to stay in my head and not engage in action. As noted above, I am uncovering fear of certain kinds of action. This in no way means no more reading; it is recognition of the value of a balance. It was a slow dawning, via the year between the first learning paper to engagement in the project, and over this time I came to see the importance of choosing to read less and do experiments more3()-6 no(1)10.8(3(.3114 a(o)-1(oexpe)8(ri)4(m) wa1(oexpe)84care,(projes-5(imean)-4een)-5(te5uTeadto)4(h)6(o))1

Reflection of the Whole

Each of the project domains, and indeed the project itself, has turned into a mirror, reflecting back images of who I take myself to be and how I view things. Each in turn is teaching me that these images are boundaries – and sometimes limitations. One way to new insight is to abide in the boundary – to experience it. Through this project, I have experienced being where I am with my heart and soul more open and alive, such that I am the flow that is at once mine and not mine, a flow that connects me to others, to the earth, the universe and the unknowable.

Journal Tuesday, July 22, 2003, Vero Beach, Florida

One month from today I turn 45. Is there anything significant in this? It establishes me firmly in middle age. I thought about this just the other day ... middle aged. And I am “middle age” and I’m not. Chronologically I will be 45, but my attitude seems to get lighter and easier. I feel less rigid, less fixated on things being a certain way, the way people aging seem to get. Gotta have things just so, the way children can insist on things. And I’ve been doing yoga for some time now, the more advanced classes, and my body feels strong and flexible and dependable, even with its few quirks.

More importantly about middle age is that I feel I am coming into myself and beginning to tap into who I really am. Cynthia’s true nature underneath the personality and beyond the ego. My “mother-in-law” told me yesterday, when I made a comment about not wanting to be loud and disrupt her, “Too loud? You’re not loud enough!” What does loud mean? I don’t feel the need to “be” anything much anymore, except for where I am, and more and more I find that place to be quiet, relaxed, easy, not having to prove anything to anybody, especially to myself. It’s a place that feels softer inside, without the scratching and clawing that accompanies needing to be seen, or not seen, or prove my worth or be funny or smart or anything forced. Consequently, I feel funnier and smarter. Amazing how that works.

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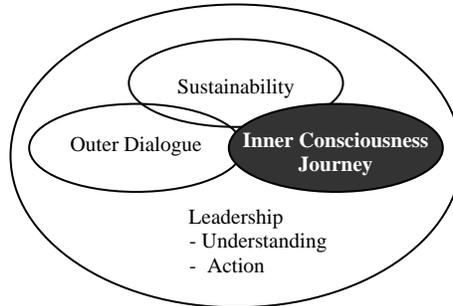
Feel everything
Question everything
Resist nothing
Live like you’re dying
Live like you’re dreaming
Love like you’re dancing
Widen your world

~ *Raphael Cushner*, "Setting Your Heart on Fire"

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Part II

New Eyes



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The true voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes,
but in having new eyes.

~ *Marcel Proust*

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This section highlights some key inner consciousness work that has contributed to a new “view”; my ability to see and experience the world and myself in a new and different ways. In particular, the focus is on beliefs and “maps,” identifying with them and their limitations, and when what seems real beco

The Judge is the internal structure that, when we are children, keeps us safe on many levels. Now, it keeps me “safe” within its known range of standards and behavior. This safety has a price - authenticity, freedom, infinite potentiality. True nature has no preference - if there is preference for an inner experience, it is the ego. My work is to see what insights all experience holds.

Understanding how I fight with myself, meddle with my experience, or force myself to be something other than where I am in the moment has been one of the main keys to deepening my inquiry. I have seen how I continually disconnect from my experience in a wide array of ways with the belief that the real experience is not valid nor tenable. Right in this moment I am tired, as I was last night writing this thesis. Writing is not an activity that I naturally gravitate toward. So I either push the tiredness away by using caffeine, “sucking it up,” giving in to it and laying down, doing something I would rather be doing, or being tired then write and see what happens. I have a belief that the quality of my thinking and writing goes downhill with fatigue, and this has proven to be true in certain circumstances. But to always wait for the perfect conditions to write forgoes the possibility of being productive despite tiredness and any insight that might arise.

I discovered that the actual experience is not how I “thought” it would be, and that it contains insights that are not available to me when I push it away. My mind has an “idea” of how the experience is or should be. By allowing my tiredness to just be, I find my face is quieter and softer, my energy subdued, yet I feel calm and relaxed. And, I am writing and thinking from this place and making progress. Thus a discerned tired differs from the initial, surface tired. It is the allowing, the curiosity, the leaning into, which leads to seeing the structures of the mind from a vantage point.

Journal August 4, 2003, Sacramento, California

I arrived at the Doubletree in Sacramento, CA, Friday night July 25th, agitated, tired, and contracted. I stood in line at the front desk to check in and began to see some of my colleagues from the Estes Park group wandering by. I felt like erecting a tent around me, so they wouldn't see me. I did not want to interact with these people. I was thinking “please don't see me, please don't approach me.” I put an imaginary wall up in front of me, to protect myself from the energetic demands of engaging with another. I didn't want others to experience my hardness or my frenzy, as they have already started the retreat and would be in a “spiritual place.”

This was the opening evening of the retreat theme “Being Real” and what I felt this night was the pushing away of my experience. I was tired, jet-lagged, agitated and hurt from being yelled at by John the night before, and I didn't want to be feeling any of it. Yuck. And I certainly didn't want anyone else to see me this way. And so I entered into the 8 days of retreat on “Being Real,” my first invitation-only all Diamond Heart school retreat with 700 other students and teachers.

The first day and half was spent establishing that being real is being oneself and that when we are not real we are an image of something, a picture, a representation, a reaction, a pretension, an idea, a reflection – and we are distant. Regardless of how distant we are there is always something going on, and we are always someplace, it is always changing, we are somewhere in the experiential field and don't have to do anything, because that something is related to who we are. Start with what we have – the experience in the moment – not always true nature but it has some flavor of our true nature and this flavor is access. By understanding our experience in the moment, we see truth, and how it is related to our true nature.

So every day, after each teaching, we did an exercise, usually a 15-minute monologue with 5 minutes of feedback in groups of 3. To first, see where we are, attend to the moment, pay attention, be interested, and be aware of what is arising in my experience, if I am fighting where I am I won't see it but if I am fighting it *that's* where I am. The practice was quite simple: to be present in the moment and aware of what's happening with me. Not looking for a particular state, simply noticing, and with practice one's awareness and understanding expands. Not trying to do anything with it or get something out of it, simply noticing, registering of images, sounds, thoughts, feelings, like a mirror that reflects without commenting.

So I begin to see how I fight my experience, like when I arrived feeling yucky, not wanting to feel at yucky, not wanting other people to feel my yuckiness.

I was working on MSc writing yesterday afternoon and began to feel frustrated that it was nearing 5 PM and I had yoga class which meant taking almost 3 hours away from working/writing if I include getting dressed, driving to yoga, the class itself, driving home, and I had a 9 PM call with my niece – there goes the rest of the day without getting any writing done again! So I laid on the futon, as I felt exhausted, and just was with

my tiredness and pressure about not getting any writing done today. Again! The pressure squeezed the sides of my head and tightened my chest. Pressure about feeling a lack of progress in the writing part of the project though I have a lot of material to write about. Pressure to work out after 8 days of not much working out. So I stayed with the pressure and did not push it away or ignore it.

I follow the thread of the pressure: of driving myself to yoga, to this yoga class tonight, it is already paid for and I'm going to miss a week coming up and I just missed a week and the end of the series is at the end of August and will I get all my classes in and get my money's worth and yoga is the way to re-enter exercise, nice and easy, and this will be the rest of the night and still no progress on writing kind of pressure. In the staying with the pressure I felt other options arise – that exercise felt important but it didn't have to be yoga – I can cycle, walk, run, do yoga at home with a Rodney Yee tape, all later right before my niece calls and give me time to work on my paper. And with these options the pressure changed to relief and space and opening and, yes, I can accomplish all that I want to today but in a different way than I had planned. I took a short nap, got up and outlined how I would write about the Sacramento retreat and found out sunset times and rain forecast (yes!) to consider my ride or run options.

It seems simple when I look back on this example but what I am beginning to see is how I hold myself to schedules for yoga in a somewhat rigid way, which feels similar to how I push myself around more generally. It is as if someone else has decided what is right for me and I do it regardless.

This pushing in a physical way also feels familiar to my inner experience, like how I arrived at the Sacramento retreat and push through uncomfortable inner experiences rather than just abiding in them. It's more than pushing through – I actually push it away when I tell myself “you can take it, toughen up,” and in the toughening up I change what I am experiencing. This has a quality of fighting what is happening for me, or blocking what is really going on, but fighting feels more accurate because it feels like I am saying “No, don't feel pressured or tired or frenzied” and by saying no and pushing this experience away I push myself out of my body and toward a picture or idea of what I think I should be experiencing, which is something other than my real experience. Thus, what I feel mostly is distant from myself, like I am hovering above and around, in my head or even nearby but not embodied. My energy is focused on not feeling. What I do feel is a buzzing in my body, like a television gone off the air, containing what is really happening to keep me from feeling it. So I feel that edgy murky vague gray silent TV buzz of “don't feel this” and disconnected from myself. I always thought that I was being strong and stoic by pushing away what I call weak or uncomfortable states. But it is the pushing away of the state that takes me further away and makes it harder, coarser; the pushing is hard, I have to work at it. When I am just with the state of pressure, it is much easier; I can settle into it and relax more. So what I thought was helping me be a better person is actually not serving me well at all.

*Journal August 17, 2003, Woodstock, GA
The Poison*

I woke up to a beautiful morning, birds sounding their many calls, a rooster crowing, and the sounds of morning right after dawn. Daytime has begun. John has his light on and is reading the current Randy Wayne White book that has him captivated, so I go down to the kitchen and find windows closed and his stuff from the evening before scattered here and there. He likes to drop things wherever he is and I like to put things away and keep the home clutter free. So either I live with a home with his stuff here and there or I pick up after him. We've talked before about this and it's his habit – his office is the same way. So this morning I feel heaviness and resentment color my entire presence. I am hateful, contracted inside, not even wanting to go near John or engage with him. I put his few things and dishes away, and decide to sit outside and write.

I can't write when I first sit down but I feel my state and it is a state of complete hate, judgment and poison. I am deadly still, and feel an invisible fence of hate circumnavigate my entire body as both defense and ready to strike. It feels like a cloud of hateful energy has taken over my body, heart and mind and extends beyond my body such that my field of awareness narrows in to only what I can see straight ahead. My hate both dominates my experience and keeps it reined in. I am not separate from this hate, it is me entirely in that I have no name for it or any objectivity and it takes me over totally. There is no space – I am locked down in hate and can see only hate. It isn't until I sit outside and sit in hate and sit with hate that I begin to see it with a little distance, then some space opens up and my field of vision widens enough to start to write about it and do this inquiry.

So what is this hate and judgment about? The first thing I notice is that my Aunt Barbara exuded this sense the last time I saw her, after a family conflict that was hard on us all and split my mother and me and my aunt and my cousins into two camps.

When I sense in to the hate it feels deadly, poisonous, like it can strike another person down instantaneously but it is toxic to me all the while.

As I sit with it now and inquire, I see that I awoke with some of the hate and judgment already activated, so I wonder if it was activated in sleep. I remember dreaming that my beloved niece was diagnosed with terminal cancer and as I sit with this I touch into fear about her dying and my own mortality. It becomes clear that hate overtook me with the intent to totally block out this feeling of fear and that I projected it onto John.

It is quite profound how much I bother myself such that I can't directly perceive, and instead react from habit. It keeps me on the surface – with the comparing or defending or whatever the flavor, and often keeps me in a certain and known mode of existence. Certain and known is only the surface of my inner experience. Staying at the surface limits my expanding, maintains a narrow view and is completely made of maps and standards. So my work is to continue to unseat the Judge from its ruling position.

Surface and Depth: Intimacy

This section speaks directly to the impact of repressing a fundamental human state of longing. It demonstrates the striking difference between what is happening on the surface and the depth below it. It points to the surface linked to depth, if only I can recognize it.

Journal July 29, 2003, Sacramento, California

It seems to have abated now, this unbelievable but palpable pull toward Mr. Bay. I left him a note on the bulletin board to see if he would like to have tea before the retreat ends. In some way now it doesn't matter, I have seen what I needed to see. Yet to have such a feeling with another human being has happened to me only a handful of times.

When I was 15, I met a guy named Carl in upstate New York, in the Adirondacks where my family has a camp. Carl and I adored each other as 15-16 year olds do. But he was more mature than I then, probably due to a near-death motorcycle accident that left him on crutches and his friend dead. Carl had an easiness and friendliness that was infectious. He loved my mother, and she him, and I thought that anyone who could engage with her the way he did must be of another cut.

unprotected, no inner walls or defenses, not doing anything to hide myself.

So I stayed with what was arising and it felt like all my channels were wide open. I felt gentle and kind, warm and sexual, clear about feeling attraction to him, able to tell him this. The pull toward this man was like space infused by millions of tiny charged energy particles hued a light gold. It was between us and around us, and felt so strong and obvious that onlookers, if there were any, certainly would have seen the effect of this energy in our bodies and faces. Our eyes held each other's with kindness and with a little shock at what was happening.

Following this exercise with Mr. Bay, the next few days are hell as I carry the energy of this experience with another man into meeting my partner John for meals and sleeping together each night. When I am with John, every cell of my body feels shut down and closed off. I am tight, contracted, as if I am physically protecting my insides with all my might. I cannot look him in the eyes. The clash and contrast is unbearable, and I am miserable. Yet I am here on retreat and this has happened for a reason, so one evening while John is at the gym I do a private inquiry with myself. I begin to speak out loud and follow the thread that comes up. It leads me to touching myself the way I want a lover to touch me – present, in the moment, there is only touching and an incredible in-step-with sense. The in-step-with is more than physical; it is in my heart and in all of the energy of the moment.

Suddenly, the awareness comes crashing in – how what I want and really long for is to be intimate with myself – attuned to myself – because in this moment that is exactly what is happening. My belief was that this attunement comes from outside of me and thus my pattern has been to seek out others to do what I long for and want from myself.

Several days later, I have a private session with my teacher, Katie Boone. Through this session I contact this place again, buried so deep, with a pain so unbearable that I sob and sob that “I can’t take it” though I am in fact taking it. My insides are flaring and I twist and turn on the bed to help my nervous system regulate this long-buried energy up and out of my body.

The evening before we depart, I end up in a monologue with my partner John and Barbara, a woman from my Colorado group that I love and deeply respect. The question is “Explore, from the beginning of the retreat to now, what’s been my unfolding? What’s been my meaning? Then continue with the thread in the present moment.” For the next 20 minutes I share publicly all details with John and Barbara, my heart aching, yet honoring the truth with dignity. I describe not feeling attunement from John and unconsciously seeking it from others, only to journey home to an intimate, sweet, delicate, alive attunement to myself. Barbara says she witnessed an incredible love as we all cry together at the story’s end.

This is how Hameed Ali describes “being real” - feeling intimate, close to ourselves, no distance, settled. If I am not able to allow things to reveal themselves, I will think the surface is all there is.

A View: Awareness Has No Preference

Journal writing best speaks to this notion.

Journal August 6, 2003, Woodstock, GA

Last night I attended the first of a number of meetings for the Junior Woman’s Club of which I am a member. I went with the intention of balancing advocacy and inquiry, and seeing how this plays out with Being Real – the being where I am theme from the Sacramento retreat. I drove to the meeting at the beginning with a relaxed state, driving, and testing out non-doing practice in driving. Non-doing practice is where we abide in where we are, noticing, registering, but not following thoughts, images, ideas, feelings, sensations.

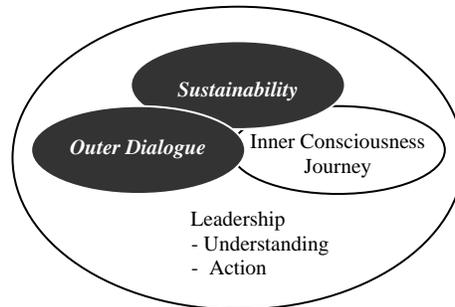
I had gone for a run earlier in the day and experimented with non-doing running. It was quite interesting. I saw that my tendency is to want to make eye contact with other runners and walkers. So what is making this eye contact about? Well, by doing the non-doing run meant not following my desire to make eye contact, and I noticed that I believed I was being unfriendly, or others would think of me as antisocial, inwardly focused or unhappy. When in truth, as I ran non-doing, which meant noticing others but not following it or pushing it away, I felt more attuned to this run. It continues to be very interesting how I push myself into certain ways of being, and away from “unwanted” or “weak” states, thinking that this behavior is helpful. When in reality, every time, I notice how much more forced the behavior feels, even if it is slight, like wanting to make eye contact running. It takes effort to be something other than where I am, and it is this

effort and the energy it takes and the artificiality (however familiar the behavior seems) that I am noticing and understanding. After running for 20 minutes or so, I relaxed into a place where non-doing began to flow.

I focused on a spot on the running trail about 6 feet out and was able to look without looking – keep myself running, safe, not in another’s way, yet with eyes softened onto this ever moving spot. My field of awareness expanded out side to side and top to bottom – “seeing” in all directions, sounds coming from a number of places around me, close by (a lawn tool) and far away (planes flying over) and I began to relax and settle. It was triggered by my eyes softly settling on the trail in front of me and the okayness of running in a public town park in this way. Then I see how I give myself away by needing others to see me by making eye contact, because when I do it now I lose awareness and it is the looking, seeing, needing to be seen, needing to connect that carries me and that I focus on intently, meaning I am wanting something. It is the wanting that becomes the thread, wanting to be seen, be visible, and seeing how I have created this belief that others make me visible. I need to be seen, acknowledged, contactful with others, then I exist and am visible. What an insight! Yet in this run, once I settled into the non-doing practice contactful with myself, in a pubc-22ts ae, 4, me, wsu4 it wies

Part III

Keep Knocking



Keep Knocking reviews the action learning, or the practice component of the project, where I chose to practice dialogue in everyday life and set up dialogues on sustainability. Experimentation has been one of my greatest teachers.

The headline is about the value of linking awareness to experience. Dialogue took my internal process and personal work into the world as a communication practice, effectively pulling my inner process into my outer life. It became the most the transformative part of the project. One without the other goes down a different road. With thta1d87842 418.73944 Tm(h

These outcomes are at play in the journal entries below.

*Journal August 29, 2003, Roswell, GA
First Attempt at Dialogic Leadership*

It is harder in practice than I thought it would be.

I prepared in advance, reading the Dialogic Leadership article very closely and getting into the four practices model deeply, making it my own. I added words that I have meaning for me, creating a 'cheat sheet' from Bill Isaac's article *Dialogic Leadership* (See Appendix A). This process was quite helpful in terms of knowing it deeply, intellectually and conceptually. I felt prepared and ready to give it a go.

The kick-off meeting of the design and facilitation team was Thursday, August 28 at 9:15 at John's offices in Roswell. Again, I was well prepared to lead the meeting: copies made, space cleared, beverages and food on order, and agenda flip charted, photocopies of the Start Something framework underwritten by Tiger Woods Foundation.

There are a total of 5 of us at the meeting. I kicked off the meeting by reviewing the agenda and hoped for outcomes of this meeting. I overviewed design goals, demographics and characteristics of the high school group with whom we will be working. Early on, I "move" by voicing design goals I consider important, such as meeting the students where they are and making this meaningful and valuable for them. "Following" discussion ensues regarding another of my design goals, which is to be transparent about the role of the MSc project in Start Something and modeling openness and lifelong learning.

We then move into the Start Something framework, spending time reading it silently together. Linda breaks the quiet first with very excited and energetic comments about customizing one of the role plays to exactly fit the environment in which these kids live – the apartment complex, and its owner / manager, the Mayor of Roswell, other area business people, etc. Linda has a lot of energy for this and it echoes exactly our desire to customize this program and have it be very experiential / interactive. We read some more and then move into a conversation about some content pieces Zuzana has brought and likes quite a bit. Again, some Moving and Following. Then, Zu and Linda get into a Move / Oppose conversation in which I bystand, noticing what is going on between them while keeping some objectivity and perspective. The meeting wraps up with various commitments.

At the time, it felt difficult to me to focus both on running the meeting and on this model. I had my cheat sheet right in front of me on the conference table and was aware of it. But I was not fully able to multitask and keep attention on the model.

In retrospect, I see that there was mostly Move and Follow roles, with some opposing and bystanding. So, a balance was in play, though at the time I was not aware of it. This feels like a presence amidst doing practice – one that takes capacity building to be / stay with myself "in the heat of the moment." I am very excited about this first attempt, I have to get out and do it, then keep doing it mindfully, and with practice I hope to get better at it.

What I do feel is that this model complements my inner process and work beautifully and will raise the quality of my interactions. To respect at the level the model asks for is honoring the legitimacy of others even when they are saying things I may not agree with. The ability to not be identified with ego is a capacity that will support this communication skill building, because Dialogic Leadership asks for one to be able to fully hold space for another, completely, not in any false or partial way. You cannot respect or listen halfway.

*Journal September 6, 2003, Woodstock, GA
A Step at a Time*

The second design team meeting for the Start Something Leadership Development Program was held Thursday 9/4/03 at 9:30 am. This time in attendance, in addition to the 5 member core team, was the director of the Star Something segment of Star House and the ESOL teacher / counselor from Independence High School.

I prepared the day before in a couple of ways. First, I read portions of the Leadership Development Framework to get some sense where my core team members might fall. I concluded that two I know best are achiever action logic. Then I mulled ... what am I going to do with this information? Can it help me in my quest for better conversation? I revisited the Dialogic Leadership model and knew immediately that this

feels right where my focus needs to stay, because the model feels like a friendly helpful frame, while the LDF did not offer me an immediate way to go forward. I also read clips in Bill Torbert's book, *Personal and Organisational Transformations*, and found the review of the 4 parts of language helpful, probably because it fits well with the Dialogic Leadership model. I also found some of Bill's words of wisdom helpful: on the practice becoming "a silent practice amongst real world situations." I thought about the goals the team needed to achieve and drafted an agenda. It became clear to me that I was going to focus more on the "process" of dialogue and less on the content, keeping the meeting goals in mind. I felt prepared.

The meeting started with some introductions and an overview of the goal and process for the meeting. We then moved into a dialogue about the kids that will be participating. We then had a dialogue that felt emergent, meaning we were open and therefore building on the flow generated in the moment. Our talk ranged from the kids not seeing themselves as disadvantaged to goals of the program. Some advocated being incremental and practical, like college not needing to be the kids' goal yet helping them be productive citizens post high school (though they may not even be US citizens!) is enough. A discussion around setting the bar too low ensued. We talked about "whose dreams" are we hoping to have these kids imagine and take steps toward – and the reality of their world where fathers are landscapers and mothers work at the bargain store. We spoke of skills that can become life skills, and came to a set of goals around the interplay of enlarging the sense of who they are and their world, a more solid inner strength (which we each have a different understanding of what this is), within the context of THEIR dreams, and an action project during the 10 weeks.

Amidst this dialogue I noticed a couple of things. I was tuning one member of the group completely out by not listening to her. Rachel is the only black member of our group, and I have had previous interactions with her in other volunteer work, and found her unimpressive. The second thing I noticed was that, other than Rachel, I was listening much more fully, really seeking understanding. I was flip-charting parts of the conversation, and asked questions to deepen understanding of these kids and their world. At one point, Linda made a comment about kids not thinking about what a career choice means in terms of doing something for the next 20 years, "like being a hairdresser" and being contented with a choice over time. Her reference to hairdressers struck me as judgmental, so I turned to her and said that we had to be careful not to judge occupations as more or less / better. I could see she felt a little stung. Debriefing with John later that night, I saw that I was judgmental in return to her, and John and I talked about ways I could have engaged with her with respect. For example, "Linda, your comment sounds to me like certain careers are above a bar of 'what's acceptable' and others are below it. Is that what you mean?" In other words, I found through reflection that her assumptions, when viewed with respect, are better put on the table as such. She told me later, when I asked if she felt stung, that judging was not her intention. I see how easy it is to judge in return, or invalidate (like not listening to Rachel!) or wanting to be right, or more moral or more enlightened. When I come from a place of GENUINE respect, the energy of my actions is different. In the instance with Linda, the words were out of my mouth quickly, so a little space, a little pause, a checking in with my body, helps. John gave me feedback that I was direct and had strength with Linda. It was only upon closer examination that we both found the pearl in the moment.

I guided the group into building an agenda for our introductory meeting. We laid one out and had good dialogue about the details of most components. We assigned to do's and concluded the meeting right on time.

More feedback from John. He thought I did an excellent job listening and capturing the flow of dialogue, allowing for rich conversation, yet guiding it into the results we needed out of this meeting. He was quite complimentary of the quality of the meeting and the results it produced. I am quite a novice with this dialogue facilitation thing. There is much to pay attention to and I see that it will take practice. I also see that I had expectations that I would "get it" and have capacity pretty quickly. What I get is that there is some undoing that has to occur – poor listening, singular focus on content, being identified such that I am unable to have perspective. Playing the roles of process, balance, outcomes / deliverables, achiever, and participant in a multidimensional way will take some practice. It feels so rich, so qualitatively different from previous ways of interacting. The Dialogic model complements the spiritual work incredibly well, and is really just an application of it in conversation. "Harmony with what is, what was and what will be." (from *The Legend of Bagger Vance*).

Day-to-Day Dialogue

I demonstrate this exclusively through journal writings of two events.

Journal November 26, 2003, Vero Beach, Florida
Listening

We are sitting at the dinner table on the eve of John's birthday. Having cooked a wonderful meal yesterday of grilled steak, BBQ chicken, baked collard greens, and purple/red potatoes. We are feasting on heated leftovers. We are at John's mother's house in Vero Beach, Florida and she is sitting at the head of the table with John and me to her left and right. Ellen, John's mother, had already eaten earlier and is joining us in the anticipation of the birthday cake and ice cream to come. Ellen is not a difficult woman, but one with a very narrow world due to health problems that keep her homebound for the most part. She gets out occasionally – maybe once a week or less to the grocery or Wal-Mart. The remaining time she remains home alone, reading the paper, watching television or reading a book. She has no friends in Vero Beach and a handful of life long friends and relatives she speaks with on the phone a couple of times per year.

She keeps her house closed up even in the most glorious weather. So, having conversation with her centers around her ailments or television programs and if that isn't enough, the closed-in stuffy house combined makes me want to run outside and down the road screaming.

All things considered it makes for a fabulous "dialogue" environment. It provides the opportunity for me to look at the mental messages that play in my head and the way/manner in which I engage with Ellen. After all, dialogue starts with inner awareness and moves into the commons.

So back to the dinner table and birthday cake and ice cream. The conversation turns toward our (John and me) going to Switzerland in February. Ellen expresses her concern about us flying internationally and then begins to speak of terrorists and what they are doing to "us." The conversation gets a little livelier and at some point, she states that they are not like "us" at all, but uncivilized and "lesser" human beings. These comments literally take my breath away! I suck my breath in and stare at her wide-eyed and shocked. Then I feel the judgments coming in about Ellen, none of which are positive. It is at this moment that I recall Bill Isaac's chapter on listening and the practice of "following the disturbance," "listening without resistance" and "standing still." All at once I see where my mind is taking me regarding Ellen and her comment — it is closing me down to listening deeply, I am projecting some kind of elite enlightened stance all over her and judging her as unenlightened, and I am thinking about all the ways she is narrow and part of the problems in the world — I see her as "over there" in the group of unenlightened masses and me "over here" in the informed, enlightened elite. The chasm, the split is palpable to me. She is "there" and I am "here."

Within a couple of minutes of gasping at her words, I notice the implication on space and energy within me and amongst the three of us. A thought from Isaac I remembered is "coherence" and in that instant, I remember the validity of Ellen's comments. Because her comment made me uncomfortable and was one I did not agree with it, I noticed that this was a point at which I started to invalidate her and make her wrong. Consequently, my capability to listen and engage shrunk. But by catching it when I did and allowing for the possibility of validity, coherence and that we are all three part of a whole enabled a remarkable shift. I was able to hold her comments in a more neutral way, and my curiosity arose, wondering about what leads her to think what she thinks. I was holding all of our comments, noticing what was emerging. There was an openness and expansiveness, and I felt much more whole and at peace inside. It was a much more pleasant and enjoyable inner state, as compared to when I am judging, which feels like I am very separate from myself and others. Like a broken mirror, sharp and grating, versus the whole mirror, calm and serene.

Journal November 30, 2003, Woodstock and Atlanta, GA
When it is Painful

John and I went out for a walk on a beautiful winter afternoon in late November. I began speaking about sustainability in a stream of consciousness type of flow, asking questions of me like what will it take for people to begin to change, for ME to change my behavior to live within whatever the "footprint" of one person is, or, if I live above it, how can I also take actions that are restorative? I mused on these questions for about 30 minutes, with John not responding. The conversation then turned to the arena of "social nets" or paying taxes at the level where all people have a basic standard of living. At this point John got into the conversation and we had a back and forth, back and forth, back and forth. He feels strongly that it is not right for the government to dictate how much money an individual should have to pay in only to give it away to others. I feel like it is possible to provide some floor level of living experience for all, but I am skeptical about the government's ability to do this well.

The most important part of this conversation is not the content but the process. It was awful. We went at it for about 30 minutes or so and I was relieved when we walked through the front door and could move on to something else. Not only was it awful, but it left me feeling rather soiled, glum and heavy.

I got into the shower to get ready for the theater production we were attending in the evening and all of the sudden it struck me that this is the difference between dialogue and debate Bill Isaacs talks about! The ping-pong, going back and forth until one person beats the other down, whether subtly and in a refined way or in a gross and power over manner. John's style is the latter, so I often collapse and give up. I am not a fighter in this way. So here it is live, reflecting on the action!

On the way to the theater, I question John to get clear his perceptions of the exchange. He, too, felt the defensiveness of the exchange. I asked him how satisfied he was as a result of this exchange, and he looked at me as if I was joking. I asked him if his satisfaction was high, medium, low or below zero and he said the latter. He said that once he disagreed with me, every comment back was only reinforcement of my position. He felt like I had a position, and that I was ungrounded in my comments. He went on to say that we lost objectivity, though I do not know exactly what he meant by this. For my part, I noticed that I distanced myself from the conversation, and made it into a kind of game rather than taking it seriously. This distance and frivolity kept me from having to feel the hurt and pain of being attacked, not listened to and discounted.

So the real value comes both in seeing the behavior and being able to reflect on it in a productive and healthy way. I was able to talk to John about our exchange in a way that did not threaten him, though he did point only at me as the cause of the problem. It did not seem to be a good time to point out his contributions, as I feel it important to work on my own behavior first and then little by little help build a bridge for John. He is sensitive to being told what to do or how to be, as I can be as well, so I really relate to behavioral change coming from within and not imposed by another. If I work on my capabilities for dialogue, he may or may not be interested in changing, but by example and being delicate with him, I may create a space in which he chooses to look at his own behavior. I can see how I want to push it on him, in a manner that says "Look at what I am doing, how I am changing, you need to change in this way too."

Later that night

We are over at a friend's house, Atlanta playwright Sandra Deer. We have just come from seeing the world premier of her play "The Subject Tonight is Love" and she has the director, Kenny Leon over, as well as her son and daughter-in-law and partner Jane. Kenny and Jane have opened a new theater company called True Colors. We are talking about the play (it was wonderful) and the process that goes into creating all the aspects of a play once the playwright has turned over a script. It is fascinating to hear about the enfoldment that happens with all the players involved – from playwright to director to set, sound, music and actors.

The conversation turns to what John and I are doing in the sustainability arena, and we begin an unplanned "Dialogue on Sustainability" and a "dialogue on dialogue."

Kenny talks of a sense he has with just a few people, one of whom was in the room (Jane), that he knows their heart, and thus is able to go with all of their ups and downs without getting fazed. It was really interesting to hear someone describe a way to stay true to a relationship by remembering its depth and essence, and thus not get caught in the web of ego patterns.

In the dialogue on sustainability, Sandra asked what it was, and we spoke of living within the means of the planet. Then we talked about "Sustainable Atlanta" and she exclaimed, "I just woke up!" What she explained was that sustainability always felt global, and overwhelming, and by thinking about it in terms of her city, she got it, because it felt real to her. She asked then about the aspirations of sustainability, and she described the need to have a sense of where it was heading, a picture of it in her mind, one from which our actions and policies can be measured and offering a clear measure for yes or no, this will or will not take us in this direction.

Dialogue on Sustainability Structure and Process

I conducted five dialogues on sustainability between October 13 and December 4, 2003. Three were structured, two of these three video recorded, and the remaining two were spontaneous. Each had three to five participants in addition to me and a videographer. The lasted from 45 minutes to over two hours in length. I had established time blocks for each and they ran up to the time and over if the group was willing and able. Preparation and materials used included framing and introduction, guideline of questions, flip charted agendas, a one-page handout on the dialogue process, and a flip charted/one-page handout on sustainability.

Dialogues on Sustainability Findings

This section highlights the findings from the five dialogues on sustainability. The language comes directly from participants. I generated themes based on the data and knowledge of the subject. Grouped into three categories, the findings are:

- I. Findings on the Concept of Sustainability
- II. Participant Recommendations
- III. Findings on the Process of Dialogue

I. Findings on the Concept of Sustainability

1. *Scope and Scale*

Respondents were tentative in approaching the subject because of its newness or their lack of familiarity, or felt overwhelmed by it. Details and quotes included:

- People asked to have it defined. Each dialogue began with a participant asking, “What is it?”
- “It’s too huge to deal with on daily basis.”
- “Feels global, has to do with the planet and overwhelming.”
- “Concept not really even out there in the public discourse.”

2. *Urgency*

There was a general lack of a sense of urgency. “Nice to have but down the list until technology gives cheap/innovative products where people can see and feel the results.”

3. *Image*

The image of sustainability is hippie, uncool and square, elitist, boring, academic, leading-edge, for those that can afford it.

4. *Values Around a Prevailing Way of Life*

This set of responses point to values like materialism, self-focus, autonomy and entitlement.

Respondents varied in their degree of actual participation in the widespread consumption-based value system. Two somewhat paradoxical undercurrents arose: feeling restricted, and materialism missing the point. Comments ranged as follows:

- “Corruption of the American dream. Nice house, nice neighborhood, all amenities used to be a dream, now is what we are used to. Corrupted to that’s all there is. Things are supposed to be a means to an end, to make life more pleasant. Now it’s about things – where did life go?”
- “Pressure to conform to get more / have more / be more. People trapped by who has more. It is amazing what people will give up for a big house.”
- “See it as something that ‘takes from’ people’s way of living. Needs to make life better or enhance life. No compromises.”
- “Identity in the U.S. is that people are entitled to what they want, be it big, top quality, excessive, no limits.”

- “We don’t all live that way (i.e., big). I am not going to change because it doesn’t fit the norm.”
- “It’s about women working for money, things, and focus on self. It is easier for them to work, and what they get from work is about them.”
- One participant related, upon graduating at the top of her Ph.D. class, “You have an obligation as a woman with a Ph.D. to take a prestigious position and set an example for other women.” Her response was, “No, I have an obligation to raise my sons to be good men.”
- “Hard to think about environmental issues when we have no value on human beings. If it is okay to throw away a generation of kids, how will people care about a problem 50 years down the road? When you have kids, you no longer have the right to put your own needs first.”

5. *Emotional Tone*

Conveys explicitly stated emotions, whether respondents were actually feeling them or not. It also points to implicit emotionality underlying the topic of sustainability. The three main emotions were denial, fear and optimism. Examples of each with comments follow:

- Denial – some topics in some locales (i.e., drinking water in Florida) are off limits. In other locales (Salt Lake City), drought has forced it into the public discourse. “Where there is no conversation, there is no political will.”
- Fear – “scary stuff.” “Where there is conversation, there is tremendous, even paralyzing fear.”
- Optimism – “smart people will fix the problems. How do I build it? We can figure this out. Technology will solve the problem.”

6. *Power of Citizenry*

Many respondents pointed to the power of citizens to push for change, but noted their lack of will to do so. Comments:

- “When the push comes from the community that we’re willing to pay for and to make it happen it will, but we’re not there or ready.”
- “Politicians and corporations will go where citizens push them.”
- “People don’t want to allocate resources for something that will come to fruition in 50 years. Can spend \$15K on countertops but when water bill goes up a little, the response is ‘I don’t know about this.’”

II. Participant Recommendations

1. *Create Vision / Goals / Aspiration*

2. *Work on Changing Mindsets and Paradigms*

Participants were quick to note the need to work from the inside of people as well. They got right to the point about finding ways to address attitudes, beliefs, and image and identity issues of both people and the concept of sustainability. They recognize it as a change process and spoke of how to create societal momentum toward sustainability.

- a. Wants, Needs, and Benefits
 - “Work at the mindset level to change the opinion of what consumers want.”
 - “Focus on what’s in it for me?”
 - “Prove benefits, especially hard economic benefits.”
 - “People will buy-in when there is an economic benefit.”
- b. Image
 - “Consider how the concept of sustainability is communicated in terms of image building.”
 - “Make it urban friendly – put it in an urban context.”
 - “Make it sexy and cool.”
- c. Change and a Tipping Point
 - “When communicating about it, consider dealing with issue of fear generally and fear of change specifically.”
 - “Have people name the ways in which they are already doing something that is sustainable.”
 - “Work the magnitude of numbers of people in the middle class and working poor; yet also must reach the power brokers, decision makers and the rich.”
 - “Look at successful Social Change models (i.e., not based on fear; public health campaigns). What does it mean to different people so you can approach it in waves?”
- d. Communicate and Educate
 - “Get people talking about it.”
 - “Take care with language and nature of communication.”
 - “In defining it, have people name the words that come to mind.”
 - “Build off of the curriculum already in schools that might be related (i.e., how you run your life) or insert new curriculum.”

3. *Identify and Publicize Best Practices*

Again, respondents pointed toward positive, tangible examples as ways to change attitudes and behavior. It reflects the oft-given MSc advice “Don’t tell me, show me.” Their suggestions:

- “Find and promote companies that are leading the pack in their industries (e.g. Toyota in automobile transportation).”
- “Talk about things that people *don’t* do that contribute to sustainability. Less of action than non action, like not doing the whole commercialism, or activist consumption (not buying from certain companies).”

4. *Innovate*

Respondents felt that building better mousetraps would sell sustainability. But they were clear that there could be no compromises. Comments:

- “Innovate such that people can’t resist. Make products incomparable.”
- “Products must be top notch in quality.”
- “No compromise.”
- “Produce cheap technologies where people see results on human level.”

5. *Generate Incentives, Constraints and Mandates that Take Us in the Right Direction*

Participants noted that sometimes ‘sticks’ give a push in the right direction.

- “Hit people in their pocketbooks. Have it make sense economically.”
- “Work at the behavior level via incentives like tax breaks.”
- “Mandate behavior – ‘7 habits of sustainability.’ ”

6. *Create Alliances and Partnerships in the field of Sustainability*

Advice was offered toward the conveners as sustainability consultants. “Find good partners with needed assets, like research and knowledge but weak in marketing and distribution. Partnering can help with momentum.”

III. Findings on the Process of Dialogue

This final section reflects my learning from the use of dialogue as a communication process. Learning relative to the process:

1. All participants found it more enjoyable, richer, value added, engaging than expected.
2. Framing matters. Does it open the dialogue or narrow it down? I used a couple of different handouts on two occasions, and was told once that it did not seem to help the process of inquiry.
3. Make it as creative an inquiry as possible. This resulted in participants wanting to find out more about sustainability or a particular related subject (i.e., nature of water).
4. When dialogue as a tool was explicitly explained in one of the situations, participants were really aware and conscious of becoming “analytical and judgmental.”
5. Make it clear that the dialogue is not about getting someplace or that participants need to help the convener. Several times people wanted to make sure I was getting “what I needed” out of it.
6. It was delightful how each successive experiment built from and was informed by the last, yet was quite its own entity and different in many ways. Each had a life of its own.
7. The question came up of using dialogue (with emphasis on listening without resistance) if the end point is wrong (the example was pedophilia). On this subject, one participant said, “I will never listen to this without resistance.”

Learning relative to my psycho-dynamics:

8. There is enormous liberation due to the “practice” perspective.
9. The process pushed up against inner patterns of fear (I can’t do it), anxiety (I can’t do it right) and standards (I can’t do it well). John’s support helped me over the initial hump. It was extra fun to see the speed at which these beliefs were blown out of the water between mid-October and early December.

* * * * *

Submit to a daily practice.
Your loyalty to that
is a ring on the door.

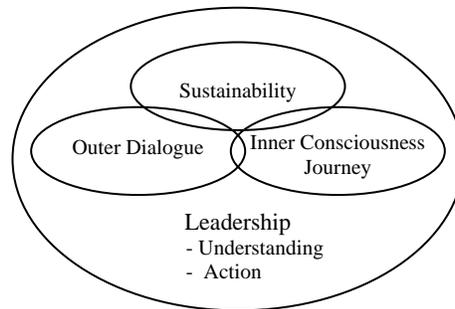
Keep knocking, and the joy inside
will eventually open a window
and look out to see who’s there.

~ Rumi

* * * * *

Part IV

Synthesis and Manifestation



"In an evolutionary context, the *reason* we would engage in spiritual practices or any form of self-cultivation would be in order to remove all the obstacles to our own potential to participate wholeheartedly in the process of evolution itself. We need to step back from our own conditioned relationship to life so we can gain objectivity and liberate ourselves from unconscious engagement with our own mind and feelings and with the world itself. But the reason to do that is so that we will be able to engage in a liberated way *with* the world and the evolutionary process. In this, there is always a very direct connection between personal spiritual practice and its goal. And that's what's important: that whatever practice wirso

On Communication

Communication has been an insightful nexus between sustainability, leadership and consciousness. I found, like Patricia Shaw, “the activity of conversation itself is the key process.” After going through this project, I am no longer convinced that specific focus on the level of people’s consciousness is the way to new beliefs, values and ultimately, more sustainable behavior. This project points to creating situations that *ignite curiosity*. I discovered this first through my own travels into ‘life purpose,’ coming away with an enduring purpose “to seek my own consciousness evolution, and to help create the conditions for this evolution in others.” Yet it wasn’t until I engaged in the dialogues on sustainability that I saw the impact of conversation when undertaken with the true spirit of dialogue. On a subject I perceived would be challenging, people found it stimulating and some became motivated to learn and do more. Everyone participating in the dialogues was at least interested and pleased to be speaking with others on the topic. “Mind candy” said one participant. Another, the well-known theater director, said it had been some time since he had such a stimulating conversation. This feels like a long road traveled fast – from hearing “huh?” when uttering the word sustainability to mind candy and motivated.

A natural approach to communicating about sustainability is to tell the story in a way such that people *find it within themselves* to challenge long held beliefs, like the book *The Da Vinci Code* is doing in the U.S. around Christianity, or in a manner that engages and stimulates people positively. This points toward communication that is positive, interesting, inspiring, provocative, lighthearted, fun, stimulating, and away from communication based on fear, threats, scare tactics, seriousness, judgment, crisis-crying, etc. We need to *light the fire positively within people*, not dampen it through fear. It’s my understanding, based on a conversation with an Interface executive, that Ray Anderson employed these strategies.

The communications challenge is great. Where does one begin? Sustainability is a process, a fluid and evolving concept. It is a call to deal with the entire complex of global problems as an interrelated whole. The range of approaches include economic, environmental, systemic and socio-political. It highlights the interplay between individuals and the international, between local and global, developed and developing, between economic, social and ecological, short and long-term. There is no formula or right answer. Solutions differ depending on context, values and resources.

This leads me to the next edge of learning in terms of my ability to communicate on sustainability. I see a need to include the informal as well as formal communications – those moments around the dinner table, or waiting for a plane with others at an airport. Everyday conversation has great power and leverage as a touch point in the transition to sustainability. I have been at dinner many times with most people in the party ordering non-sustainable fish. Or part of a conversation about the many chemicals in a particular kind of breath gum. These events are quite personal and intimate, often with people I know, and the circumstance has direct bearing on the issues of sustainability in a real way. How can I speak in this moment in a way that creates an opening, ignites curiosity, and allows for another potential understanding to take place? At times I have spoken up, yet felt judgmental, believing people should know these things by know, be informed, know better, or do the right thing. I would either say nothing and privately fume, or speak from this space of judgment, the tone of which does not invite curiosity!

This next step feels again like the weaving together of several important elements I am learning through this project: taking a stand on sustainability, with my desire to build more capability in communication, with it framed as an experiment and practice.

Manifestation

Inner work is not for the sake of itself. As Andrew Cohen says, inner work enables us to engage in a liberated way with the world. The Diamond Approach saying goes, “in this world but not of it.” Both point to the freedom inherent in the natural spaciousness of being, before we identify it as Cynthia or Peter or Chris. I would like to describe a professional outcome that flowed out of the work presented in this paper: consciousness and ‘ways of being’ explored in the first two sections and dialogue practice in section three, all supporting practical manifestation of sustainability work in the world.

Through Avastone Consulting (formerly Executive Expeditions), I worked for Alcoa, Inc., the world's leading producer of primary aluminum, fabricated aluminum, and alumina, from late November into late January on the design and delivery of a follow-up day to the General Manager Leadership development session (GMED) in June

2003 that included the Everglades Leadership & Sustainability simulation. I was working with another of our senior consultants, Dr. Terry Tipple, and the client Joan Karas. The GMED session is for senior Alcoa executives – those running a number of businesses and plants around the world. These sessions have had about 25 participants each in attendance. The second in the GMED series was held late January 2004 in Coral Gables, Florida, and three-quarters of a day had been reserved for a “field trip” to support the learning from the June 2003 sustainability simulation. It came to me to research the options, design the agenda and manage the operational details of the day. I did not, nor did anyone on the Avastone staff have direct knowledge of south Florida in this capacity. The singular goal was to “immerse” the participants in a field trip experience.

Always cognizant of the needs of the client, I participated in conference calls about options and it was clear early on that both Terry and Joan had preference for a boat-based eco tour. Water is sexy, and we have found you can't go wrong by immersing people into a water environment. Still, I had been on the design and delivery team for the Everglades simulation. It was about Everglades restoration, and the quality of leadership required by complex, long-term situations. Finally, it was about how Alcoa leaders can lead Alcoa and its industry toward sustainability.

From the beginning, even with a blank canvas as the starting point, I knew what was needed. Yet it was not a traditional knowing that stems from controlling things. It had a quality of quiet certainty, a calm, in terms of the potential impact of this experience, that the right experience would emerge, and to be flexible and open about ways to make it happen. I knew this experience would make a difference and yet I never was attached to the outcome. I did not fret about how it would be received. This knowing stayed in the present. I also had come up with the idea of a panel. I had never organized one, thought I had seen many and had in fact listened to one in early December at a Sustainable Atlanta Roundtable. The macro concept became “immersion” field trip, then panel.

So I began to explore. I talked to all kinds of people on the telephone in south Florida – they became my eyes and ears. I found people interested in what we were doing at the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers (responsible for the engineering of south Florida's totally man-made water supply) and the Department of the Interior (responsible for oversight of the restoration of the Everglades, an \$8 billion, 30-year project). They found it quite intriguing to be able to interact with a group of business leaders in a panel forum. I heard that the physical Everglades were not sexy – it is flat and nondescript to the uninitiated, unless one takes an exciting helicopter ride over the region (big bucks). I talked to people in and around the National Park Service at Biscayne Bay (the boat option) and Everglades National Park. A turning point came when I spoke to a Park Supervisor in Shark Valley in Everglades National Park, who, when asked to compare options for a tram ride, boat ride or slough walk (pronounced slew), said, “if you want to change someone's values, you have to change their experience.” She recommended the Slough Walk into the Everglades, a 2-hour hike in about 6 inches to two feet of water through 3 ecosystems. No fishing waders allowed.

The four experts I was able to convene for the panel comprised the Chairman of the Governor's Commission for Sustainable South Florida (the group responsible for the plan that became federal and state legislation); a senior Vice President from U.S. Sugar, a major agricultural player in the region; the Director of the Department of the Interior's South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force; and the Chief Corporate Communications Officer for the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers. The panel was requested to address:

- What are the universal leadership challenges/lessons from the Everglades situation that are relevant to Alcoa business leaders?
- What were some of the key complexities you faced, and how did you exercise leadership to address them?

I knew the combination was right. Yet again, it was a soft right, a knowing, not a rigid stance but one that knew the right combination of things emerged. The quality of knowing went beyond me and included a larger, felt support and rightness, as if the physical ground and air were silent witnesses. This quality of sureness and rightness is distinct by being within and beyond me and, as the energy of the unfolding, without doubt. This knowing expressed itself conversations with Terry and Joan, who had to and did buy-in to the design. The other notable quality was the ease with which things came together.

The field trip required a 45 minute bus ride to the Everglades (with a dry change of slacks and shoes) and a stop at Florida International University for the panel. I met the bus and got the group off on their slough walk, then went on to the university to prepare for the panel. One of the panelists was an hour late – he went to the wrong university. I had to introduce the panelists and manage their time. Quite a public speaking role for me, if you remember my fear

expressed earlier in this paper.

The results? Here are actual comments from the debrief:

Slough Walk:

- ◆ “I saw the power of observation through the eyes of three guides. I will never have it without going to someone with it or going to the system and watching how it works.”
- ◆ “The community comes to Alcoa. I have never gone to see environmental problems or walked the shop floor. Our credibility will go up when we do. It pointed out balcony and dance floor, and if that wasn’t dance floor. The dance floor grounds you. There is nothing like getting on the floor.”

Panel:

- ◆ “Took an incredibly complex situation and boiled it down to a simple and powerful vision. Just being able to say it is incredibly powerful.”
- ◆ “It has gotten harder and harder through this week (of leadership development). What they are doing is far harder than anything we are doing.”
- ◆ “Delicate balance between rational thought and emotion. The (Everglades) simulation started with equations, and we gradually began to see it calls for more. Then today we see rangers with emotions and hear emotions from 4 people.”
- ◆ “Shows me how to move from starting with tactics and strategy to starting with people.”

This is the manifestation of consciousness and inner work in the wider world of sustainability – it is the dance between being and doing – letting go to stay open to the potential, rightness and intelligence in the situation, no matter the high stakes, corporate politics, or my own fears.

I learn that dialogue and communication on sustainability happens in many ways, and in this case, my role is convener of dialogue between groups of people who have much to share and learn from each other.

Then I look outside and the ground whispers, beckoning a vastness, an intelligence, a magnificence. As my understanding and perspective has changed, so too has the nature of action. When I am soft and lean into life, listening, sure of the process yet open to the unknown, I am love and joy that can make it okay for others to relax, open, be curious and step into a dialogue on sustainability.

We are where we are; I am where I am; and the world is unfolding in the best way that it can.

Part V

Settling

Stillness Holds its Echo

This thesis covers some ground, spanning practice in the world, private fears and longings, to the larger issue of the nature of the cosmos. It is the latter that closes the thesis, bringing the ground or holding into the foreground for a moment, not just to consider, but also to show its impact on the project, this thesis, my life, and an emerging understanding that flips and vastly expands my notion about reality.

What is the ground? The ground that holds you and me? That holds the concept of sustainability? That holds all?

An ultimate outcome of this project has been perspective. A change in understanding changes the place from which action springs. In the context of the MSc, the unfolding and enfolding resulted in an inner holding for sustainability from a place of joy. Yes, joy. When my perspective of reality is at the level of planet Earth, it is frantically urgent to save it from unsustainability. This sense and these actions are from a place of fear that the planet is all there is. However, when I consider the planet from the perspective of a multidimensional reality, with the Big Bang a wave on a vast ocean, and where the threads between life and what we call death hold consciousness and information for potential unfolding to come, my actions toward unsustainability come from a place of joy. I still care, more deeply than ever, about the state of the planet and its course of unsustainability. Yet I see that each conscious being, myself included, has a role in its unfolding. The intelligence and aliveness of the ground spawns all, including the cycle of life to death, from the live vibrant tulip-poplar tree in early spring to a dead one. The dead tree becomes the soil from which what comes next manifests. So, too, is a planet that moves from alive to dead part of this intelligence, and even 'dead' contains the conscious, information-laden ground out of which the next unfolding and enfolding occurs.

So I still take actions and devote much of my time to the transition to sustainability. But I know that out of the ashes of planet Earth, should it unfold this way, are seeds for what's to come, in a glory or of a nature we may or may not be able to imagine.

* * * * *

What sings in your heart
Is the melody of creation
Is the rhythm of life becoming itself.
Nothing of time or place
can end this song.
Stillness holds its echo
as it holds the flame and the seed
of all life.
Move from this stillness
Act and Speak from this stillness
Allow this singing and its echo
to guide you
to all that you can become!

~ Source: Angelo Lazenka, *School of Lost Borders*

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