

DAVID BOHM AND GROUP DIALOGUE

or The interconnectedness of everything

By Naomi Gryn

'We are proposing a kind of collective inquiry not only into the content of what each of us says, thinks and feels but also into the underlying motivations, assumptions and beliefs that lead us to do so' – Professor David Bohm, FRS (1917–92)

Regarded by Albert Einstein as his intellectual successor and hailed by the Dalai Lama as his 'scientific guru', David Bohm was the last graduate student of Robert Oppenheimer, known to posterity as the father of the A-bomb. Forced to leave America by McCarthy's henchmen, Bohm eventually became Professor of Theoretical Physics at Birkbeck College in London.

For many years he was disturbed by the failure of communication between his fellow scientists, especially Einstein and Niels Bohr. He also saw that this failure was pervasive in modern society, causing dangerous fragmentation. To counter this, in the 1980s Bohm began experimenting with a process he called Group Dialogue.

Central to Bohm's work, from quantum theory to the nature of consciousness, was the notion of undivided wholeness. Can the legacy of this great twentieth-century thinker help to heal rifts and reconcile differences between us all?

My career as a physicist was cut short just a few weeks before sitting O-levels when Mr Blackwood, Queen's College's fiery-tempered physics teacher, exiled me to the dark room for having been a loud-mouthed smart-arse one time too many, and that's where I spent the rest of the term. Later, studying Philosophy of Science, I had trouble understanding physics much beyond the time of Galileo and had only the most rudimentary grasp of quantum mechanics.

How I wish I'd known then about Professor Bohm, but it would be another 20 years before I stumbled across his work. That came in 1999, looking not to expand my scientific horizons, but for a model on which to base Daughters of Abraham, a dialogue group for Jewish and Muslim women

through which we hoped to learn more about each other's cultures.

The Jewish Women's Network invited me along with one of my co-founders, Yasmin Alibhai-Brown, to talk about the group. Afterwards, a woman with a warm, motherly smile introduced herself as Saral Bohm. She handed me a paper written by her late husband, which she said I would find of interest, and then disappeared into the crowd. I got home and pulled it out of my bag.

Dialogue is a way of observing, collectively, how hidden values and intentions can control our behaviour, and how unnoticed cultural differences can clash without our realizing what is occurring. It can therefore be seen as an arena in which collective learning takes place and out of which a sense of increased harmony, fellowship and creativity can arise . . . ' – David Bohm, Don Factor and Peter Garrett, 'Dialogue: A Proposal'

I couldn't believe my luck. This was just the sort of blueprint I'd been looking for. There was an e-mail address on the back of the pamphlet and I wrote to Saral, but the e-mail bounced back. Some weeks later, I went to Israel for Passover. At Ben Gurion Airport, queueing at passport control, I saw Saral standing in the next line. It turned out to be the first of many uncanny coincidences. We even share the same (if rather inconvenient) birthday, New Year's Eve.

Saral gave me a list of Bohm's books and, once back in London, I devoured them all. His insights into communication could be applied to almost any field of human activity and my head buzzed with possibilities. One book in particular, a slim volume appropriately titled *On Dialogue*, was so succinct and inspiring that I recommended it to all my dearest friends, an accolade reserved for classics such as James Hillman's *The Soul's Code* and Machiavelli's *The Prince*.

I drew Saral into Daughters of Abraham for a few sessions and she, in turn, invited me to the group set up by Bohm, which had continued functioning after his death. There I met Don and Anna Factor, dialogue enthusiasts and close friends of the Bohms. Together we plotted a workshop on Bohm's notions

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of dialogue, opening with a video of Bohm shot in 1989.

Modestly dressed in a V-necked pullover, he explained in his gentle American accent the nuts and bolts of group dialogue:

'Dialogue' comes from a Greek word *'dialogos'*. *'Logos'* means the 'word' or the 'meaning' and *'dia-*' means 'through' not 'two', so it gets across the notion of a communication or an energy flowing among people, between them and through the space between them, rather than a discussion in which we go back and forth, arguing and trying to make our points.

Why does thought require attention? Because sometimes it goes wrong. With the authority of a world-famous scientist, Bohm talked about ecological dangers caused by technological achievements and listed other human inventions or creations of thought such as nations and religions, capitalism and communism, and the divisions between them. He moved fluently from one theme to another, pausing only to clear his throat or look up to the camera. He proposed that through dialogue we might change our collective thought processes and find solutions to problems without being misled by our assumptions.

'What is essential here is the presence of the spirit of dialogue, which is, in short, the ability to hold many points of view in suspension, along with a primary interest in the creation of a common meaning' – 'Dialogue as a New Creative Order' (1987), in *The Essential David Bohm*

There's a tradition of mysticism among cosmologists that stretches back to Isaac Newton. Was there something in Bohm's background that had determined how he saw the world?

His father was from Munkacs – the town next to my own father's hometown in the foothills of the Carpathian Mountains – but had left for America when he was 16. His relatives in the Old Country would be deported to Auschwitz in 1944. Bohm grew up during the Depression in Wilkes-Barre, a poor mining town in Pennsylvania. He persuaded his father, who ran a second-hand furniture store, to let him study physics. At Berkeley, Bohm joined J. Robert Oppenheimer's lab and started work on his doctoral thesis.

With war raging in Europe, there was at this time

a feeling of gratitude – especially among Jews – towards the Russians for standing up to the Nazis. Encouraged by Oppenheimer's wife, Bohm and a number of his fellow students joined the Communist Party. He was interested in the philosophical and political ideas, but found the meetings excruciatingly boring and gave up his membership after some months.

'Because of that,' says Saral, 'they tried to use Dave when they were trying to get something on Oppenheimer.' Oppenheimer was scientific director of the Manhattan Project, developing the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945, but later, as Chairman of the US Atomic Energy Commission, he voiced his reservations about the building of the hydrogen bomb. 'The Army was really out to get him.'

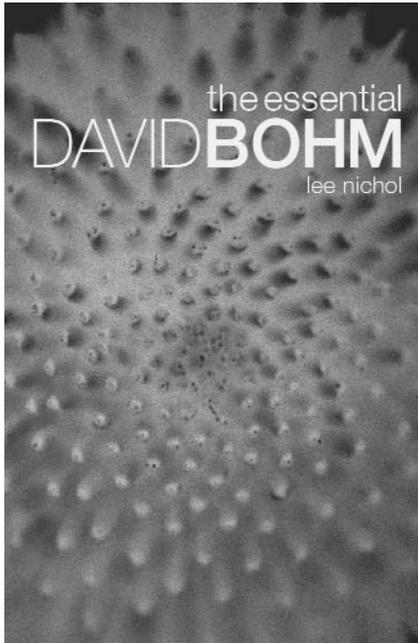
Bohm came to prominence for his work on plasma theory – the fourth state of matter – and in 1947 got an appointment at Princeton University. There he found a great mentor in Albert Einstein, who regarded Bohm as his intellectual successor.

But Bohm's days in Princeton were numbered. Subpoenaed to appear before the House Un-American Activities Committee, he was asked to betray his fellow scientists. Bohm refused to 'name names' and pleaded the Fifth Amendment. He was suspended from his work at Princeton and banished from the campus. Oppenheimer advised him to get out of America and in 1951 Bohm left for São Paulo to be Professor of Theoretical Physics.

Bohm hated Brazil; he didn't like the climate or the former Nazis who'd made it their home after the war. When the Haifa Technion offered him their chair in physics, he gladly accepted and, without an American passport, applied for Brazilian citizenship in order to travel to Israel.

A week after his arrival at the Technion in 1955, Bohm met Saral Woolfson, his future bride. A Londoner, Saral had come to Israel with her brother Yitzhak in 1948 as volunteers for Machal (*Mitnadvei Chutz L'Aretz*, Volunteers from Outside Israel). Their father, a staunch Zionist, followed a year later, bringing their mother and sister, and settled in Haifa. Saral was working as a physiotherapist in Jerusalem, but after the outbreak of a polio epidemic she moved to Haifa to look after polio victims in nearby *kibbutzim*.

Saral's parents lived across the road from an American couple who often threw parties and invited her to one of their gatherings. 'I came into this room which was very crowded and, right across the room in a corner, I saw Dave, and as soon as I saw him, I knew I was going to be with him. I didn't know anything about him, I didn't know who he was, he was just sitting there. So I went over to him and I said "Are you new in the country?" because I knew all the people that were there and he wasn't



one of the crowd. He said: "I've just come to work at the Technion, I've been here a week." Only later did I know that the party was for him.'

They fell in love and, the following year, when Bohm was offered a job in Bristol, they married and moved to England. One day, in the public library, Saral pulled from the shelf a book by J. Krishnamurti, the Indian guru. 'I'd never heard of him,' recalls Saral. 'That wasn't our milieu at all. I read a sentence about the inseparability of the observer and the observed. I knew that this was a problem in quantum theory that had occupied Dave for many years, how you can't separate what you use to observe and what is being observed because it alters it. I passed the book to Dave. He read the whole book through there and then, in the library, and he was absolutely taken with this.'

Bohm saw that Krishnamurti's philosophical and sociological ideas mirrored much of his own work in physics. Saral suggested that Dave should write to the publishers in America to ask whether Krishnamurti was still alive, and if he ever visited England. 'Dave was absolutely burning to talk with him, I've never seen him quite like that.' The publishers replied that Krishnamurti had been ill, but was making a trip to London for the first time in a number of years and invited the Bohms to hear him talk.

'We stayed in a crummy hotel because we didn't have any money, one of those awful places around the Cromwell Road. The talks were being held in a hall in Wimbledon and we went to the first one. Dave said I must talk to him, I really must talk to him, but they said no private interviews.' Bohm was torturously shy, but Saral encouraged him to write to Krishnamurti. 'So he wrote on the note paper of this crummy hotel, and said that he was a physicist and he really wanted to speak to Krishnamurti.'

They were granted half an hour with Krishnamurti. At first the two men said nothing, they just sat still, looking at one another. Once again Saral stepped in. 'I said, you know my husband is a physicist and he would like to talk to you about his work, so Krishnamurti said "Please", and then it came out like water, like turning on a tap. At one stage Dave used the word "totality" and Krishnamurti got very excited. He jumped up and threw his arms around Dave and said: "That's it, that's it, that's it!" After that, every time Krishnamurti came to England, he'd meet with Dave and they'd talk together.'

When Krishnamurti set up a school at Brockwood Park in Hampshire, Bohm became a trustee, always available to teachers and students alike, while Saral helped out – mostly, she says, in the kitchen. A fruitful exchange of ideas flowed between the two men, recorded in a series of dialogues published as *The Ending of Time*. Krishnamurti thought that the root of our problems

lies in man's vain quest for security. He asked: 'What will make a human mind change? What new factor is necessary for this?' Bohm answered: 'It is the ability to observe deeply whatever it is that is holding the person and preventing him from changing.'

In 1961 the chair in Theoretical Physics opened up at Birkbeck College in London, where most of the teaching takes place in the evening. It suited Bohm to leave his days free for research, and the Bohms moved to Edgware. His growing interest in dialogue is chronicled in a selection of letters addressed to Saral's brother included in *The Essential David Bohm*. In 1962 Bohm wrote:

To see the whole truth, you must not be in a state of conflict between 'what is' and a motivation as to 'what should be'. What should be is always an illusion, which prevents you from looking at what is . . . Conflict fragments the mind, and is therefore incompatible with a state of understanding, in which the mind sees a totality.

Although proud of his Jewish heritage, Bohm's instinct towards universalism was stronger than his sympathy for Jewish nationalism. In May 1967, just two weeks before the Six Day War, he had this to say:

Every Arab gets great pleasure out of identifying with the victory of the Arabs, and pain out of their 'humiliation' by the Jews. So his mind is ready to accept any illusion, if he can only get pleasure rather than pain. The Jews are the same, at bottom. After all, the Jewish nation is also only an idea in the minds of various people and gives them a satisfying and pleasing sense of identity and security . . . Nationalism makes brutal and destructive wars inevitable. The idea of peace between nations is meaningless. The very existence of a nation implies a state of mind that makes war unavoidable in the long run. And politicians, along with their followers, are like drunken people, whose minds are befuddled with clouds of illusions. They don't really see what they are doing.

Bohm also found it very disturbing that the two greatest scientists of the twentieth century, Albert Einstein and Niels Bohr, once very close friends, had fallen out so badly that they couldn't talk to each other or even be in the same room together. As he wrote in *On Dialogue*:

they had two different assumptions, or opinions, about what was the way to truth. Bohr's judgments were based on his view of quantum theory, and Einstein's on his view of relativity. They talked it over again and again in a very patient way, with all goodwill. It went on for years, and neither of them yielded. Each one just repeated what he had been saying before. So finally they found that they weren't getting anywhere, and they gradually drifted apart. They didn't see each other for a long time after that.

Then one year, both of them were at the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton, but they still didn't meet each other. A mathematician named Herman Weyl said, 'It would be nice if they got together. It's a pity that they don't.' So he arranged a party to which Einstein and Bohr and their respective students were invited. Einstein and his associates stayed at one end of the room, and Bohr and his associates stayed at the other end. They couldn't get together because they had nothing to talk about. They couldn't share any meaning, because each one felt his meaning was true . . . in a dialogue they might have listened properly to each other's opinion. And perhaps they both would have suspended their opinions, and moved out beyond relativity and beyond quantum theory into something new.

Bohm was a maverick and an original thinker, yet he enjoyed collaborations with other fine minds right up till his death in 1992. 'He had a heart attack in front of the house,' Saral recalls. 'He was finishing his last book with Basil Hiley, his colleague at Birkbeck. On the last day Dave said "I really need to go in, we need to use the computer." He phoned me up and he was like a young boy. It was years since I'd heard him with so much energy and so happy. He said "We've finished, we've finished!" and then "I think I'm on the edge of something.'" Bohm took a taxi home from the station and collapsed outside their home.

'Dave used to say that one of the most important things he learnt as a child was the *Shema*,' recalls Saral. 'One should love God with all your heart and soul and might. He felt that this is how he wanted to live his life, totally, with all his energy.'

Don Factor started out as a chemist at Max Factor, his grandfather's cosmetics firm, and then took charge of lipstick promotions. He left to become an independent movie producer and in 1968 produced Robert Altman's *That Cold Day in the Park*. Don then moved to London. His second film, *Universal Soldier*, was directed by Cy Enfield, who'd been blacklisted by McCarthy. Anna Factor, now a painter and devoted grandmother, had been living in Kenya before she and Don met in the 1970s.

Don first met Bohm while he was developing a screenplay for a science fiction movie: 'It had to do with UFOs and flying saucers and I wanted to get the science right, to describe technical things that could be believable.' A friend suggested Professor Bohm, 'one of the grand old men of theoretical physics', and a meeting was arranged. 'He announced that his health wasn't very good and he only had the energy to give me a few minutes because he had this heart problem. About two hours later I staggered out of the office, absolutely exhausted, having had the most interesting conversation I've ever had with anyone about anything in my life. He talked about how science functions

through communication and how you can't keep a secret in science for very long.' What stayed in Don's mind from that day to this was Bohm's image that all the matter in the universe was like a ripple on the surface of an infinite sea of energy.

A couple of years later, Don was in Dillons – now Waterstones – the bookshop opposite Birkbeck College. 'There was a big display of David Bohm's book, *Wholeness and the Implicate Order*. It was not a book I would normally look at twice, but I was so impressed with this guy, I bought the book, read it and it was a life-changing experience. It was a view that says that, in order to understand the world of quantum physics, you have to think in terms of unbroken wholeness. Everything is infinitely and internally connected to everything else. He was arguing this point in language that I could just about understand, the maths chapters I had to skip over. I realized that the way we'd been taught to look at the world was too limited and I got very excited.'

The Factors were then living in Devon, but Don 'got bored communing with the neighbourhood sheep'. In 1983 they helped organize a conference for the Foundation of Human Unity at Warwick University and Bohm was invited to speak. Bohm was reluctant to present a formal paper; instead Don conducted an interview with him in front of an audience of six hundred people.

Don recalls the example Dave gave of unbroken wholeness: 'Take an acorn, there's not much matter in an acorn but there's DNA, there's information in there. That acorn goes into the ground and then something happens which has to do with gathering all the material and energy it needs from everything around it. So the oak tree isn't made out of that acorn: the acorn carries the information which allows a tremendously complex and vast process, using air, water, nutrients, micro-organisms, and on and on. All of those things combine together to create the oak tree. Just out of this seed.'

Everyone in the hall cheered when they heard this. Encouraged by this enthusiastic response, a smaller seminar was arranged for anyone seriously interested in Bohm's ideas at a hotel in Mickleton, Gloucestershire. The Mickleton weekend in May 1984 was a seminal experience for many of the participants. 'Dave came prepared to deliver three papers and discuss them with about 40 people and it ended up as a dialogue with 40 people.'

'The weekend began with the expectation that there would be a series of lectures and informative discussions with emphasis on content. It gradually emerged that something more important was actually involved – the awakening of the process of dialogue itself as a free flow of meaning among all the participants. In the beginning people were expressing fixed positions, which they were tending to defend, but later it became clear that to maintain the feeling of friendship in the group was much more important

than to hold any position. Such friendship has an impersonal quality in the sense that its establishment does not depend on a close personal relationship between participants. A new kind of mind thus begins to come into being which is based on the development of a common meaning that is constantly transforming in the process of the dialogue' – David Bohm, *Unfolding Meaning*

Bohm introduced the Factors to Dr Patrick de Maré, a psychiatrist who'd worked in group therapy during the war when soldiers having nervous breakdowns vastly outnumbered available psychiatrists. De Maré observed that such groups were microcosms of society and developed a system he called sociotherapy. 'We started looking at the ins and outs of what we could do with this notion of group dialogue,' recalls Don, 'to understand why we find it so difficult to talk about things that are important to us and not begin to defend ourselves or identify with our points of view, as if they're precious things that have to be protected.' De Maré thought that if groups of 20 to 40 people got together, they could create a microcosm of the larger culture and, if the group kept going, you would begin to see its dynamics. 'You'd see how little subcultures and oppositions form,' Don explained, 'and once you see how it works you can begin to know what to do about it and how to get beyond it.'

Bohm understood from de Maré's work that if anyone in the group was 'cured', it would be the beginning of a larger cure, but he was less interested in the therapy than understanding how it worked and wanted to bring together a group of people to explore such ideas in depth. He was particularly attracted by the tribal structures of American Indians and in later years met with a number of American Indian groups. 'They took him very seriously,' says Anna. 'Dave found there less structured ways of getting together as a group'. He saw in their tribal gatherings an echo of how societies had functioned in the distant past.

'Some notion of the significance of such a Dialogue can be found in reports of hunter-gatherer bands of about this size [20-40 people], who, when they met to talk together, had no apparent agenda nor any predetermined purpose. Nevertheless, such gatherings seemed to provide and reinforce a kind of cohesive bond or fellowship that allowed its participants to know what was required of them without the need for instruction or much further verbal interchange. In other words, what might be called a coherent culture of shared meaning emerged within the group. It is possible that this coherence existed in the past for human communities before technology began to mediate our experience of the living world' – David Bohm, Don Factor and Peter Garrett, 'Dialogue: A Proposal'

In what might be called Bohm Dialogue, everyone sits in a circle so they can observe each other's body language. There is no leader or facilitator, no fixed rules, nor is there any fixed agenda or specific goals. The optimum length for a session is about two hours. The important thing about group dialogue is listening – not just to what the other participants have to say but to yourself as you're listening and holding back your own judgments of what is being said.

'In dialogue it is necessary that people be able to face their disagreements without confrontation and be willing to explore points of view to which they do not personally subscribe. If they are able to engage in such a dialogue without evasion or anger, they will find that no fixed position is so important that it is worth holding at the expense of destroying the dialogue itself . . . What is essential is that each participant is, as it were, suspending his or her point of view, while also holding other points of view in a suspended form and giving full attention to what they mean' – 'Dialogue as a New Creative Order', in *The Essential David Bohm*

Don is modest about what group dialogue can achieve, 'but if anyone is involved in conflict management, conflict resolution, negotiations and so on, if they've read some of the theory – or, even better, participated with it – it would help them do things differently. If people who were experienced in dialogue were part of some of these peace projects, they could bring a particular way of listening to other people and working with the many different sides and ideas. You couldn't get a bunch of politicians together to do this sort of thing. It would take too much time. You're not trying to solve anything specific, you have no intention, no purpose for the group, or product that can be delivered at the end.'

He elaborates: 'It's a learning experiment for those of us interested in trying to understand why we could behave so badly when we know better and have the best of intentions.' Sometimes it can be very frustrating. 'And of course that's a very positive aspect of it, because when you query your own frustration, when you ask "What is it that I want that I'm not getting?" or "What is it I'm getting that I don't want?" interesting new insights come out that lead the dialogue onwards and upwards.'

Bohm was particularly interested in anger. 'When people got angry,' explains Anna, 'he thought that you could really learn something. He was pretty good at diffusing it when it came up, not dissipating it, but saying "Well, let's see what's going on here", before it developed into a tirade. In that sense he was a good facilitator, and I think that's what he hoped we would all become, each able to see the dynamics of what was happening and learn from it, or be able to vocalize or verbalize it, rather than just getting into a silly argument.'

Bohm didn't want an organization built around dialogue and declined any offer to help set one up, but to spread Bohm's message from grassroots a network of dialogue groups drawing on his guidelines was created, and a number still flourish in America, Germany, Scandinavia and Britain. Like a chain reaction, as participants import what they have learnt from group dialogue back into their professional lives, his ideas have infiltrated many different spheres. In America it has spawned management consultancies that offer clients a controlled, facilitated version of dialogue.

But, warns Don with an anarchic twinkle, 'dialogue can be subversive. If you bring it into an organization, it can wreck that organization, because if people are going to look at their own presumptions and presuppositions it's likely to change everything.'

'Organizations are basically conservative. I mean, why would anyone want to create an organization if they didn't want to conserve something? At some point all organizations begin to devote more energy – money, time, attention – to preserving themselves than to carrying out whatever made the organizers start the thing in the first place.' That's why Don doesn't much credit the organizational consulting approach to dialogue, and why he likes the idea that the practice of dialogue might expose any tacit assumptions holding an organization together and thus limit its evolution. 'But usually the guys who pay the salaries and own the shares are not keen to see their territory torn up or altered by those who work further downstream. We are all parts of innumerable organizations both subtle and manifest and each of us is also a kind of organization ourselves.'

For many years Anna and Don were involved with an alternative community based in Gloucestershire. Anna recalls the reaction when they introduced the idea of dialogue. 'Quite a few people thought it would be terrific to do, but then it started and people who hadn't spoken up for a number of years began to say what were their satisfactions and dissatisfactions and speak for themselves. The management of the community felt very threatened, and they put a stop to it after two or three meetings.'

But as an example of an organization that has benefited from group dialogue, Anna cites a hospital in Denmark. When management and workers started listening properly to each other, a crisis was resolved: 'The hospital reorganized itself and then began to run again in a much more effective way.'

The dialogue group started by Bohm continued for ten years after he died. It went through many reincarnations, meeting first in Mill Hill and ending up at a Quaker centre opposite Birkbeck and the Bloomsbury bookshop where Don first bought one of Bohm's books. As further testament to the interconnectedness of everything, for a year or so they met in the living room of Felix

and Elena Greene, two floors above my parents' flat in Marylebone. But now, says Don, 'it seems to have run out of steam. I don't feel bad about it. Dave originally thought the group would last only a year or so. Our group lasted considerably longer. It began to develop that family thing when the group got smaller so there was a little core of people, all of whom behaved in predictable ways, including myself.'

'In any dialogue group,' says Don, 'there will be certain voices that dominate, people who find it very easy, and they talk a lot. I'm one of them. There are those who talk a lot and those who find it very difficult to break in. Over time, if a group continues, the quiet ones find a way in, or the whole dynamic of the group shifts just enough that the ones that talk all the time talk less. You can't predict these things, that's part of the fascination of it.'

That struck a note of resonance. In *Daughters of Abraham*, we often talked about gender issues. I wanted to involve some men in the group to develop this further, as did the women with more feminist leanings, but other members felt they'd be silenced if men were involved. Naturally there were tensions, but curiously these were mostly between co-religionists, such as the Sephardi woman who felt that Ashkenazim were insensitive to her tradition, or between Muslim women who covered their heads and those who did not. The dialogue often continued between meetings. Following a spate of suicide bomb attacks, one of the Jewish women with whom I had been particularly close became so fearful for her family in Israel that she began to see all Palestinians as barbarians. I clung to my assumption that they're not and it saddens me greatly that we haven't been able to meet again since. But there were moments that were also profoundly gratifying, such as the time when one of the Muslim woman gave birth to a son and called to ask me to recommend someone to perform a circumcision.

After hostilities between Israelis and Palestinians re-ignited in September 2000, a number of the Muslim women withdrew and it became increasingly difficult to find new recruits. But I like to think that we were all enriched by the experience. It was an intense period of discovery. I learnt not just about Islam, but also about the parameters of my own identity, both as a Jew and as a woman. It equipped me to deal with disputes less emotionally, to question the validity of my own beliefs and assumptions, and consider those of people with whom I'm in conflict; to look for the bigger picture. Occasionally I'm asked to facilitate other dialogue groups and I'm always happy to share what I learnt.

'The spirit of Dialogue is one of free play, a sort of collective dance of the mind that, nevertheless, has immense power and reveals coherent purpose. Once begun it becomes a continuing adventure that can open the way to



David and Saral Bohm

significant and creative change' – David Bohm, Don Factor and Peter Garrett, 'Dialogue: A Proposal'

I asked the Factors how dialogue has transformed them. 'I certainly feel,' offers Don, 'that my ability to think through problems now is far better. This mechanical thing still has a way of taking over, but I know now that within a short time I can rethink and say "Oh yes, that was the mechanical response, but what might be an appropriate way to deal with this now?" It would be nice if it happened instantly, but I haven't got to that stage yet.'

Anna answers: 'I'm glad for more confidence in my own voice and being able to speak my own point of view; a sense of timing, when it's important to say something or when to just let it go. I feel much more confident in a group.'

They didn't actually decide to end the group. Anna picks up the story: 'Don and I were away in America, Saral had been in Israel . . .'

Don continues: 'It just sort of petered out. Last December.'

'No,' argues Anna, 'longer than that. The December before. I don't think we met last year at all.'

'Oh yes we did. It was sometime during last year . . .'

'Anyhow . . .'

Disagreements are resolved swiftly in the Factor household. They are now thinking about getting

together a few interested people to start another group. 'Maybe something different, take a whole new tack on it,' says Don. Then he quotes Mikhail Bakhtin, a Russian literary scholar exiled by Stalin, 'because when the dialogue ends, everything ends'. ♦

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