



Dialogue of Reflective Thought

Guest post by Sabrina Sharma, Australia

History teaches that dialogue is a space for interactive discussions to take place, usually with a pre-existing purpose to achieve a particular goal or outcome which allows for transitions into assimilation or integration of two participating perspectives.

Where traditional forms of dialogue consist of an exchange perhaps to comprise purpose and resolve, I have developed a dialogue approach which yields effective outcomes without the constraints of actively seeking a solution or change (Sharma, 2021).

The “Dialogue of Reflective Thought” (DORT) approach is a type of dialogue allowing parties to engage without a mutual resolve or change per se. DORT is a process whereby two or more parties engage in dialogue, each without the intention to transform the other’s thought process or to expect that the other party would be placed in a position of mandatory consideration of the other to birth a “perception changing” view. Although a shift may ensue from the dialogue itself, the goal is rather to share experiences and thoughts. If a transition occurs, it appears in the natural course of the dialogue itself.

There are allowances for questions and queries, however this is not initiated by the other party to the dialogue. This feature grants the DORT approach its unique character whereby any queries and questions posed are established by a participant through self-reflection. This enables a more subservient approach to the dialogue and opens the platform to honest and transparent sharing if the parties so desire.

This type of dialogue serves to enable a platform that will encourage:

- sharing;
- self-reflection and an option to share ideas as they arise; and
- opportunities to query self-perception and thought.

The purpose behind the DORT approach is to enable sharing between participants and to initiate a reflective process. The latter may commence once the individuals involved merely “hear” any questions being posed “out loud” during the dialogue, or those that have arisen from life experiences.

Both participants leave the dialogue without compromising their beliefs or having to feel judged or scrutinized by the other.

The fact that those participating in the DORT approach may depart from the dialogue platform without an expected solution places it in an advantageous position. This is due to the absence of expectations of a specific outcome; rather, this dialogue approach allows individuals to simply speak and be heard.

In one of my recent studies using the DORT approach, participants discovered healing and a deep appreciation for one another. The dialogue occurred between an Indigenous person and someone of Persian background. The former was able to share of her trauma, her life experiences and challenges surrounding her cultural identity. The Persian party to the dialogue engaged in queries examining her own cultural traits and questioned the practices of persecution of Persian Christians in Iran.

This process allowed both parties to co-exist in a safe context for dialogue, without scrutiny or judgment from the other, promoting values of tolerance at its center.

Although the DORT approach harbors the principles enshrined in the UNESCO 1995 Declarations¹, it serves to enhance Article 5² in its application to dialogue pertaining to tolerance. Generally, tolerance is an aspect that seeks to experience an exchange of views (which I believe may include one person questioning the other's beliefs and perspectives as a basis for the creation of tolerance).

The DORT approach and exchange of views does not require agreement of perspectives between those holding a dialogue. Instead, the essential traits of mutual understanding, respect, and the like drawn from UNESCO's tolerance principles anchor the dialogue to a position of strength and appreciation.

In this regard, I believe that a platform comprising a "Dialogue of Reflective Tolerance" serves to create deep and meaningful relationships.

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Reference

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Notes

¹ UNESCO. (1995). Declaration of principles on tolerance. Paris, France: UNESCO. <https://undocs.org/pdf?symbol=en/A/51/201>

² *Ibid.*