

Chapter 7 – The Art of Dialogue

In the previous chapter I focused on various aspects of understanding that arise in the coming together of I and Thou. I learned that understanding grows in the relationship between people, and between people and the things they talk about. I realised that understanding was not a problem of method or willpower, but a state of being which is being with others. It arises when I let something be said to me and I allow that the other always has something to say to me. The distance that I had imagined between me and the things and people of the world proved to be illusory and it began to dissipate. I could still distinguish I from thou, and this from that, but now I did so with challenges and ideas from others. I could see how different perspectives could inhabit the same world.

In this chapter, I turn to more aspects of collaborative understanding, this time expanding the field of inquiry to look at how understandings arise not only in a relationship between you and me, but in a the life of conversation itself. First I tell a story of four meetings, and focus on how I learned to listen in the conversation. Then I turn to an interview with three pastoralist elders, two men and a woman, about their views on coming to understanding with others within and beyond their tradition. In the chapter that follows and completes this investigation, one of these elders, who was also one of the organisers of the entire series of pastoralist meetings in Ethiopia that spanned five years, talks to me about what they meant to him. We focus together on the life of a great conversation.

Listening to pastoralists

From 2001, I was part of the Pastoralist Communication Initiative, a project and a group of people working on understanding and dialogue in East Africa. We took part in, and supported, a series of discussions that radiated across multiple people and across distances of time and space. This story describes how I listened in on a

series of meetings in southern Ethiopia; the first in 2004 and the last in 2009. Each one demonstrates different qualities of understanding.

I was sitting on a school bench feeling hot and bored. It was January 2004, a meeting organised by officials of the government of Ethiopia as part of the annual national 'Pastoralist Day'. I was writing in my notebook, sitting in an airless hall that looked out onto a run-down old agricultural project yard in Yaballo. We were ranged in rows facing the officials who sat behind a table at the front. Pastoralist leaders from all parts of Ethiopia were standing up in turn, grasping their ceremonial sticks in their knobbly hands and addressing the seated members of the ruling party, bureaucrats, resource-rich agents (such as I) and fellow members of pastoralist communities.

I wrote: Borana elder: his speech is just a shopping list, a bunch of requests to the government officials – conflict, education, stopping agricultural expansion, health, roads... My writing trailed off into a picture of an old man with a long ceremonial stick. I thought: 'they put themselves in a subservient position by always asking for things. They are vulnerable to refusal and dependency. This isn't working. I hate listening to this.'

Fifteen minutes later, I wrote: Hararghe elder – "we have spoken about the conflict in our area many times, but we didn't get a solution". I looked around me at the faces watching the speaker and glanced at the panel to check their reactions. There was a hum of approval. I thought: 'it's brave to suggest to government officials that pastoralist citizens are not being heard, it is challenging the government. His point is that government is responsible in one way or another for the fighting and violence. I wish I could find a solution for them.'

Readings on power, intimidation and colonialism had encouraged me to frame the situation as an oppressive one. I thought of behaviours, structures and psychologies of political and bureaucratic interaction. I chose these frames because of notions of hegemony and dependency prevalent in my work in the university and in the fraternity of international aid agencies, outlined by the likes of Paolo Freire, Robert Chambers and many others (Freire 1972; Belenky, Clinchy et al. 1986; Foucault 1995; Chambers 1997; Shapiro 2006). It tied up with my own experience. When I heard pastoralists giving out lists of needs, I thought their obsequiousness would exacerbate disrespect and bind them in dependence to people who did not have their interests at heart. I was frustrated and anxious. You can imagine my gestures: my back was a little bent and my expression morose. I twisted round in my chair and whispered with my neighbours about when the tea break would be.

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Six months later I was in the same town, sitting under a tree at a four-day meeting of pastoralists, on which they had invited us to collaborate. They had brought together several clans to discuss serious problems and solutions and put these to government. My understanding of what our collaboration would mean in practice changed as time went on, from the first request for our help

in late March 2004, (when I imagined hordes of people arguing feverishly in different constellations under trees, orchestrated by a tense but occasionally brilliant facilitation team including myself) to the day when the meeting was over and we looked back at how it had actually gone.

Sarah, Jarso, Alastair and I discussed our theories. They needed our financial guarantee for the meeting, that was clear enough, but they had also asked for our “protection”. I felt proud that they wanted us to protect them. I felt we could, but also that we couldn’t. I saw forces bearing in on the pastoralists’ institutions and culture. When they asked Robert Chambers to come I was pleased, relieved and a bit jealous. They said it was because they had seen what he could do in a meeting between pastoralists and government that we had organised together earlier in the year; how he could make a meeting a different space, where people saw each other anew and people gained knowledge. New paths away from old problems would suggest themselves. Robert was my colleague from the Institute of Development Studies, my original mentor there. He is in his seventies, a living champion of a participatory life, a jewel, boundlessly enthusiastic and a delight to be with. I was relieved because I felt that I could not facilitate such a meeting of 200 pastoralists, plus people from government and international agencies, on my own. I was awed by the numbers, awed by the subject matter, awed by the people who were to come. We were being invited to join in the mediation of a long and violent conflict. This was a moment we had been anticipating. I imagined failure: angry words, arrogant statements, secret betrayals. I imagined the army coming in. I imagined success, peace and plenty.

At our hotel in the centre of Yaballo town, a ring of wooden chairs, shifting with the shade as it moved from one side of the courtyard to the other, was in constant use by groups of elders of different clans and tribes, the logistics team, the government administrators, the spies, the parliamentarians, the organising committee. Our task was mainly to arrange the chairs and to listen.

At first I was nervous. In the preparations for the meeting there had been rumours that changed the colour of the air even in our house in Addis Ababa. The spiritual leader is not pleased; the merchant group has taken over; the government is trying to control the event; the Islamic groups are trying to convert everyone; the Gabra want to have separate land from the Borana; there have been killings in Negelle; people will get killed for speaking out...

Our facilitation team came into Yaballo a few days before the meeting. Robert from UK and Taghi from Iran arrived along with Marco the Italian anthropologist. Jarso and I welcomed them to town, a place with a school, a market and two petrol stations. Marco went off into the town to see what was going on, while Robert, Taghi and I talked about what we would do. We created scenarios and possible activities. Each day the organising committee came to us and said ‘we don’t need you yet, maybe tomorrow. Just keep on listening.’ Each day we sat on an anthill and listened to the meetings, and Marco came back from town with stories of who was saying what about what. As the days went by I slowly began to realise that we really might not be called to facilitate at all. But we felt we had to stay ready. Like the group of

vultures who came to settle on the tree near where the bull would be killed for the opening feast, we hopped from one foot to the other, watching, listening and questioning in quiet voices. Robert said it was exhausting. Taghi told stories and shared nuts. I began to feel my shoulders lifting and gravity letting go of its hold on my feet. A red-billed hornbill flew across the field.

As I sat and listened, I heard the pastoralists say what I considered to be brave things. What they said made sense to me, but I feared that the government officials would not like what was said, and if they disapproved, they could be very harsh. It was the job of government to tell the people to become farmers, and it was not the job of the people to disagree. But listen to this:

Godana: 'I do not support Wako's idea. I want to give my own opinion. Farming has some advantages, but not many. Because our area is arid, there is not much advantage with farming. The agricultural system takes place outside our rule and regulation that protects the *tula* (wells) and the *ardha jila* (land). The people are cultivating in the bottom of the valley where water flows and it is silting up the ponds. They are cultivating at the edges of the traditional water areas like Weebi. In Liban, the *yaa'aa* (parliament) has lost the settlement place on the *goro* (hills) as well as in the *diidaa* (plain): everywhere is cultivated, and they are closing and privatizing the land. To perform the ritual, the *yaa'aa* was forced to break the fence and implement it in the cultivated place. The owner of the field came to complain with the *gadaa* (council), and he argued and fought with a stick. Some people were hurt and a camel was killed. People are enclosing the land for their private sakes. They should enclose only the ploughed land, but they have expanded it to include a large area around it. This is robbing us of common grazing land. It should be completely banned.'

'KEEP ON LISTENING,' the elders counselled firmly. I think that they were keeping us doing what we were doing, because it was strangely useful to them. We were there, a hovering international presence. We made spaces, apparently innocently: the circle of chairs in the sunny courtyard, the anthill on which people visited us aside from the main meeting, an officially neutral place in the meadow.

I had believed that visible action was more important, because it could make me visible and powerful. I was fed up with being invisible and I felt I had to actively reverse the trend. And now I found myself (and the facilitation team I had invited from UK, Iran and Italy) useful but not central. We quietly made invisible spaces in a highly charged situation. We did not do much. We wanted our input to be light, not that we had much choice. Marco said afterwards, 'I didn't respect your non-intervention approach before, now I do.'

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I went to a meeting in November 2008 under that same tree, with many of the same elders, the same kinds of flowers in the meadow. Oddly the anthill had disappeared from view. The government officials were different too – they get moved about a lot. The quality of the dialogue was even better: analyses of land, drought, education and wealth. One woman spoke so well that the entire

meeting turned to conclude on the point she had made. When the government officials spoke, they spoke with respect – we hear you, they said. I was amazed.

By the time we reach 2009, at a gathering of 500 pastoralists not far from Yaballo, I was listening quite contentedly. Some of what was said was even more courageous than I had heard before. Other parts were just as boring to me as ever. After one of the sessions, the chairman came to us under our tree where we were sitting making a pot of tea on the fire. He asked us politely if we had any advice. I made an observation about the government officials speaking for long and saying little. I said that the audience had become bored and restless. He replied that he was aware of this, but it was part of the game. I could see the possibilities more distinctly now.

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My group gave back-up to the meetings. Within the series we developed a practice drawn from the collaboration of two cultures, African and European, pastoralist and bureaucratic. From the second meeting onwards, we (the Pastoralist Communication Initiative team and the leaders of Borana, Guji, Gabra, Somali and Afar pastoralists) made efforts to find people who could and would talk well together; these people, whether antagonists, strangers or comrades, were introduced to one another with a few words and left free to talk; old friends were helped to meet; people were made comfortable in ways they recognised as respectful; chair people made small interventions to keep the dialogue to its focus; the places we chose to meet were pleasing to the people who came. It may not seem like much to do this, or perhaps it seems dilettante, but in effect it was an appreciation, largely instinctive and confirmed through practice, of certain of the conditions of understanding and possibility. We thought of ourselves as trying to avoid methodical or political domination, instead looking for openness to the possibilities that might arise from what Habermas has called 'unconstrained dialogue', dissolving obsolete prejudices and overcoming social privileges through rational inquiry and discussion (Habermas 1971). Nonetheless the constraining political reality was clearly a fundamental parameter of the field of play and people's subversions and strategies were all part of it.

My hope in all these meetings was that the people there would make progress in their discussions about their situation and potential. At the first meeting in 2004 they attempted, relatively unsuccessfully under the chairing of one they defined as a colonial overlord, to talk across the mighty cultural gulf that divides pastoralist people and government in Ethiopia. At the second meeting in 2004 they talked fluidly to one another – at least until some officials arrived and called them 'backward' to their faces. They made some powerful agreements behind the scenes. At the third meeting in 2008, their conversation was brave and interesting, and the government officials who came were respectful and engaged. It was a pleasing progression. The fourth meeting showed that the progression was not only in one direction – once again there were many lengthy speeches by outsiders saying only that the pastoralists should change their ways, and many pastoralists stood and agreed with them.

It was so strategic I wondered if the people might forget which parts made up the smokescreen.

In the first meeting the subject matter was obscured by the critique in my head and had I not written it down in my notebook I would have forgotten it. I judged that the pastoralists were not improving their negotiation position and I entered into a mode of criticism. I believed that those sitting on the panel were asserting rather than listening, and restricting rather than opening up, but I did not notice that I too was doing the same, until I analysed it later. It was only the pastoralist leaders who were probing for openings. In general, I felt, the meeting presented little in the way of possibility.

Notebook or no notebook, I did not forget the cavernous room, the faces of the pastoralists gripping their tall sticks as they concentrated, the junked rusting machinery in the yard outside infiltrated by yellow flowers, and the government chairman in his dark leather jacket (who had showed me a list of the “agreements of the meeting” before the meeting had taken place). At the time I paid attention not to the hackneyed critique in my head, but to the drama of the event: its scenery and staging, its tragic-comic encounter of these historically positioned worlds. My internal critique put the rest of it, the public conversation, out of my reach. The drama was where I could probe for possibility, and where I could glance at co-conspirators on the benches beside me and look for ways out of our predicament. I felt the stultifying effects of assertion and later on I discussed with my colleagues and some pastoralist leaders about how to organise other meetings in ways that would liberate people’s voices in the debate. My sense of drama and irony had at least allowed me some freedom to innovate.

During the second meeting I was at greater liberty to listen. The phrases were fluent and pithy. I admired the people who spoke, not for their status, but for the simple trueness of their speech. They never said more than was needed. The burden of directing the conversation was not mine, nor was I overcome by a clamour of critique, so I had an opportunity to hear a bit better. I was worried about having brought a team from three countries to help with the facilitation, and now we were all sitting on an anthill together just listening. But we agreed that we had a role on the anthill, being unlikely protectors of free speech, and my co-facilitators were as fascinated by the scene, by what was said and what was happening to us, as I was. More than anything else, the matter that occupied me was the distinct difference between that meeting and other ones I had been to. It was being run by the pastoralists in their own way, and I judged it to be efficient and fair. Every so often someone would say something that clinched the argument – about land, or education or conflict and I was intrigued by the instantaneous way in which a consensus was agreed. It came out through the mood, not by a vote, nor by the domination of the chair. A person would second what had been said, and that, and the mood, was enough for a decision, apparently, to be made.

By the third and fourth meetings, I had become familiar with the skills of the people running the meetings and taking part, their eloquence and carefulness never failed to raise my interest. I could hear what was said with greater

resonance, because I had come to understand the subjects they were talking about over the years.

Being interested

I was listening. My interest in the subject and direction of their discussion arose on the one hand from my solicitude for the pastoralist communities and the leaders whom we were getting to know, and on the other hand from a wish to validate and improve a method that we were developing – of inviting particular people to meet one another and discuss whatever they needed to discuss. I wanted to see if there were new possibilities of meeting and understanding or not. I was open to what they were saying and how they were saying it. I wanted to hear how they would work with the potentials that presented themselves for improving their negotiation position with government, or for doing things among themselves.

There were different modes of listening. I can distinguish the forms even in my body language: I slumped over a little to criticise, leant forward to hear when I was anxious, and sat on the grass with my legs stretched out before me when I was feeling free to listen. When I really heard something I was making distinctions between what it was and what it was not. I was applying what I heard to myself and what I already understood. I was not trying to judge it as valid against a binding ideal (BT 198). Neither was I making generalisations in my mind. I was asking questions. Some involved expectations – I was suspicious that speakers might have been co-opted by corruption and were thus using empty rhetoric; I was hoping for free speech and new institutions of accountability as an outcome of all our work. But there were also open questions like ‘what kind?’ and ‘how?’ and ‘how does that fit?’.

What made for the moments of openness that meant that I was listening to others rather than closing off what they had to say as soon as I had heard a minimum amount? One of the particularities of these debates was that the subject of pastoralist ways of life was alien to my culture, and I was listening to others more expert than I about something that I wanted to know. I was aware of my ignorance and that of those other outsiders who I hoped to see influenced.

What is the ontological basis of being interested? I was ontologically bound to what was at hand in the world, what was there to be used, what would have an effect, and with which I co-existed. I had interest in those things. I had ears to hear, eyes to see and so on. The things that were being talked about – land, animals, councils, policies, conflicts – mattered to me. They were being disclosed through the speech of the pastoralists and government officials. I felt involved in their potential. I was *interested*. My understanding as I listened was a kind of throwing or being thrown forward, or projection, into possibilities. Heidegger explains that I project myself into the world with interest, because my being knows that possibility is possible, and that things are available, or threatening, and so it is that I always project myself beyond my experience and towards potential (BT 184-185).

I projected my interest in a world of communication. If listening to what is said is being open to the world and to its future, listening to others is being open to the truths that they can tell us about the future. Listening supposes concrete possibility and horizons of disclosure (BT 206). It accepts the address of the other and the potential that it bears, it is prepared for the other to tell us something (TM 298). Conversely Heidegger outlines how assertion has the effect of '*restricting*' our view and confining what is heard within this or that character (BT 197-8). Listening understands already and yet it expands horizons. When I heard what was said I did not just perceive tones and sounds and then interpret them, I heard what people were saying about the grass and the markets, the young and the old, history and modernity and images and sentences formed in my mind (BT 207). Some of the speakers might have been lying, dissembling, or being idealistic, but what they were saying was about something. I listened.

With listening as a fundamental aspect of being, I did not choose whether to listen, but the way I listened varied. The way I heard and interpreted the things discussed, the way I was affected by the places we sat and the people who were there was affected by the particular mode of listening that the situation demanded. I was *captivated*.

While observing that *'solicitude dwells proximally and for the most part in the deficient or at least the indifferent modes'*, Heidegger suggests that where our relationships are most understanding, lively mutual acquaintanceship *'often depends upon how far one's own Dasein [Being] has understood itself at the time; but this means that it depends only upon how far one's essential Being with Others has made itself transparent and has not disguised itself'* (BT 162). The more I noticed being with others, the more I heard.

As I noticed being with others, I also noticed the absence of others. I did not necessarily know who those absent ones were, just that there were potentially many more who could have added their voices to the debate. It is this that Gadamer's critics tend to emphasise, that conversation is always more exclusive than it is inclusive. When one woman spoke and gave an incisive comment at the 2008 meeting, I could hear that it was grounded in the debates of the kitchen where she and her sisters sat and discussed matters of family and future. It reminded me of all the women who were not there. But the mode of understanding is the mode of understanding, including its historically affected social arrangements, however deficient in inclusion. She showed that variety of voice and perspective, when it is heard, clearly makes a difference to the quality and content of understanding.

Application

There was a distinct variation in the degree to which I expected and allowed what was being said in the four meetings to say something to me. At the first meeting, whereas I allowed the place and its drama to address me and retained a vivid memory of it, the spoken words said very little to me. I had heard them before and they offered no new experience. But I wrote them down and years later I reviewed them and remembered what was running through my head at the time. I remembered my criticisms and I considered them. I saw how I was dimming down possibilities and preventing experience by assuming I knew what was happening. As Gadamer says, if I had been truly hearing, I would have been letting myself be told something and keeping myself open to the truth claim that was within what addressed me (TM 362). It is interesting to note that in the end I

did hear something of what was said, because years later I returned to the notes and thought about them, allowing them to tell me something at last. From that I learned that even the most boring situation is telling me something. I gained a little hermeneutical consciousness: *'The hermeneutical consciousness culminates not in methodological sureness of itself, but in the same readiness for experience that distinguishes the experienced man from the man captivated by dogma'* (TM 362).

Heidegger and Gadamer both explain that to hear, one has to already understand something that makes what is heard recognisable (BT 208, TM 269). It is not the kind of understanding that generalises and closes off, but the kind of understanding that recognises and opens up. We situate, says Gadamer, the meaning of what we are hearing *'in relation to the whole of our own meanings'* (TM 268). As I listened to what was said, I inevitably applied it to myself, in the sense of making it my own, making a picture of it, imagining the people and their land as they walked over it and talked about it under their trees, remembering my previous visits to pastoralist places, beautiful rangelands and dirty towns and my previous encounters with their words about it all. I fitted the things I heard about into this horizon, coming forward with my perspectives and silently offering them to be ameliorated by the new explanations.

In the process I was bound to those others in understanding through the things we were talking about. It was not that we understood exactly the same way, but we were together considering the same thing. The claim that was being made by the words, about farming or markets or law, was being understood at each moment in a new and different way. The presence and reaction of important officials, of venerable leaders, of women who were involved in trade and women whose children came back from school speaking an incomprehensible language made for new interpretations and new resonances. It became clear that understanding was not objective knowledge of the state of the land, government, education or trade, but an event of tradition and negotiation on those subjects (TM 309). My and others' interpretations were situated within that event of tradition, and contributed to a process of handing down and handing on (TM 309). The interpretations that each of us made belonged to the objects that we

were interpreting and bound us and our histories to the way those things were now known in that part of the world.

We were taking part in a dialogue between tradition and possibility as much as between one idea and another. Even though I was silent, mostly, I was engaged in the dialogue. The words were addressing me as directly as anyone else (TM 462). They gave me access to the world that the speakers and the listeners were mutually concerned with. The words included me in the tradition from which they came and which swept onwards, with me now included, my encounters and ideas forever influenced by what I had heard.

Sitting and listening to the debate gave me an opportunity to look closely at understanding as it plays out across boundaries that interested me, where there is alienation and differences of norms, and where politics are raw and a matter of survival. I can see many elements of understanding at play within the conversation: prejudice, tradition, consideration, indifference, absence, provocation, projection, possibility and fusion of horizons.

When I noticed that my own facilitation was acting primarily as a diversion, my question about methods for promoting understanding evaporated. I did not think that there was someone else doing it better in a different corner of the field. I understood that the question was not about facilitation. The people coming to talk did not need or want a facilitator. They wanted an opportunity to understand something. They wanted to converse on a question that they agreed upon. And, as you will see from the story of the gatherings in the next chapter, they had a question that had a sense of direction. Their meetings had chair-people and rules, but the requirement was not methodological: it was to pose, clarify and discuss their apposite question between them. They understood and developed their question because they understood its horizon, its acuity, its moment, its direction and its interlocutors.

The art of dialogue

In this section I have concentrated on the art of listening and the dynamics of dialogue. A dialogue, in which the *logos* embraces the people and the subject

shows itself to create a certain kind of comportment in its participants. Gadamer speaks of it as the *'art of questioning even further'* (TM 367). The participants must not speak at cross-purposes; speakers assure that the listeners are with them. One must *'allow oneself to be conducted by the subject matter to which the partners in the dialogue are oriented'* (TM 367). One must try to bring out the real strength of what the other is saying. One must prevent questions from being suppressed by the dominant opinion. *'What emerges in its truth is the logos, which is neither mine nor yours and hence so far transcends the interlocutors' subjective opinions that even the person leading the conversation knows that he does not know'* (TM 368).

The dialogues conducted by the pastoralists focused on things that each person could see and talk of clearly, they seemed prepared to hear one another, prepared to expand their horizons, prepared to concede the point to whoever spoke it well. They favoured a good proverb that encapsulated tradition, wisdom and humour. There was a certain amount of directive from the chair, admonishments to keep to the subject, not to bring in hearsay, to keep speeches short. For me I learned about listening, what it meant to attend and not attend, to be interested and captivated. I learned how a clear focus on the thing of the discussion itself, the land, the law, the fighting, made listening easy and coming to an agreement happen.

Three pastoralists on understanding

I now turn to three of the people who were at all or some of these meetings; Borbor Bulle, Nura Dida and Godana Did Liban. I report on a long conversation I had with them in 2007 about their perspective on understanding. They do not refute any of the thinking that I had gained from Gadamer; rather they nuance and add texture and additional insight to it. Blanchot, quoted by Donald Marshall, describes a conversation between two very different people: the first spoke and then the second, using quite different words, expressed the same propositions. Blanchot says *'this redoubling of the same affirmation constituted the strongest of dialogues. Nothing was developed, opposed, or modified: and it was manifest that the first interlocutor learned a great deal and even infinitely from his own words*

repeated, not because they were adhered to and agreed with, but, on the contrary, through the infinite difference' (Marshall 2004:139).

Clarity

We met in Yaballo on 4th December 2007, and we talked for two days. On the third day we joined Godana at her house and Borbor went off back to his house in Dubluk. Borbor, Nura and Godana are the elders being consulted. Jarso is translating and listening. Patta is asking questions and Abdia is listening. Borbor is the chief historian of the Borana people. He holds in his head not only the law but also the history of six centuries of Borana councils. Nura is an elder, a strategist and a leader. Godana is an elder who can ask a clever question, a wise old mother. Abdia is a young woman from Kenya who I am working with.

We went to a little shop and bought some tea and sugar. Then we drove along the tarmac road that runs north and stopped at a place called Haro Bake. Here tall yellow *Acacia* trees grow along a sandy valley. There is a cluster of tatty wooden and thatch buildings and striated animal paths in the sand. We paced about a bit, from one tree to another, looking for a good one to sit under. We laid some mats on the ground. Then Abdia and I made a fire and she put on the milk for tea. Once it was made, I introduced my questions. I asked, *'I am interested in coming to understandings across cultures. I want to ask how you come to understanding in your culture.'*

Borbor: *'Listen, this story is very important. When Amhara people came from the highlands and captured our land Borana, the Amhara had guns. Just before they arrived, the Borana had been involved in a fight with guns with the British and Italians. There were many people wounded in that war, and there were many stories going round about how dangerous guns were. When the Amhara came, people ran to Kenya because of the guns, some never came back. But they did not know what kind of guns they were; they could have even been sticks. The *Qallu* (traditional leader) went to the Amhara to find out what the Amhara wanted. Instead of collecting facts, the *Qallu* made an agreement with the Amhara because his people had already decided that the gun was dangerous. He came back with small flags and said if you have these then you will be safe.'*

Nura: *'There are principles that need to be in place for understanding to be established. First, the originator of the thing to be understood has to be very clear and very sure. He has a firm position. Only when you understand crystal clear will you be able to pass that understanding on. Second, the other party needs to be listening to understand: he needs to have no view about what he is listening to understand. He is not listening to comment, but listening to understand. What you need is first clarity from the originator and second attentiveness of the listener. The person who has clarity of understanding, the originator, tries to explain and on the other side the person has to listen. Then the other person is expected to ask*

questions to clarify and the understanding is transferred bit by bit. Understanding starts forming in the listener's head, and eventually he says it back to the other person. Unless he has done that then it is pointless to start discussing.'

Borbor: 'The worst thing in Borana culture is this thing we called falsehood. Lack of clarity leads to lies. If something is not clear it is a step towards falsehood. This falsehood comes in many ways. It could be something from the imagination that is not a fact. It is something in the mind. For it to be factual there has to be evidence and you have to see it. The thing that leads you away from clarity is the action passed on but which you have not seen. You can clarify in two ways. First you can see it yourself, you are physically present. Second you can hear a story from somebody who has seen it and that image is transferred to you. The difference between seeing it and hearing about it is that hearing about it can lead to a lack of clarity. You are looking for pasture and you meet somebody on the way and they tell you it has rained in Yaballo. You go back to your village and move your animals. When you get to Yaballo you find there is no pasture. Maybe the person was not lying, maybe it had rained, but there is no pasture. There was a lack of clarity in what was understood.'

Nura: 'Clarity is being sure, not only being sure but confident that the situation does not change its home. It is getting it clear and clean. Seeing it and understanding it clearly is far from falsehood. For you to be able to speak, first you have to understand it yourself. Speaking before understanding is the beginning of lack of understanding. Say, for example, Patta is asking us questions about understanding, only when she is clear can she go to explain it. For example, I am walking by the road and I meet sheep and goats and then I meet a man whose sheep are lost. I cannot say anything about those sheep that I saw, unless I have looked at the evidence. The colour, the marks, female or male, and then when someone asks, I can speak. If you speak from your imagination, it is false. When someone asks you a question he assumes you understand. When you understand you face the challenge of helping someone else understand. Seeing is for your own understanding, speaking is for someone else's understanding, you can't speak until you understand.'

I could not but interpret what I was hearing from a Gadamerian point of view. I heard prejudice and encounter, openness and application. I heard what was said as a person who has spent many years with pastoralists. I have seen that they take understanding very seriously. In the arid savannas where the people are moving often very far from one another, where the consequences of a bad decision may be fatal, I have witnessed how that they put a premium on clear communication.

'What did you hear me say?' they always ask.

I reply, 'I heard you say this.'

'Do you want to clarify?'

'No I heard you.'

'Now you can give your opinion, but do not give me hearsay. Tell me what you know is true.'

The nineteenth century *Qallu* who went to appease the Amhara took with him an unexamined prejudice and it affected the whole future of the Borana people, according to Borbor the historian. What a person already understands must be clear if it is to be conveyed, it gives less chance for wrong decisions, added Nura the strategist. The listener needs to be attentive they said. Open to understanding, I interpreted.

Their idea of understanding had meaning and significance for them and it is differently rooted. Their meaning is resonant with my own and I can hear it. The virtue of their attention to clarity is that they are able to speak well and explain easily, even to a foreigner. And yet people in government and aid offices do not come to understandings with them. There is no clarity or agreement on what is happening in pastoralist lands, to pastoralist people, and what could be done. For one thing, these administrators do not focus on how they are or are not coming to understandings with pastoralists. They just forge on. The aid agencies in Ethiopia focus mainly on the poor and forget that the better off are responsible for welfare and integration, cutting society into new pieces. Ethiopian government officials seem to focus a great deal on politics and other shenanigans. Their policy of settling pastoralists is designed to suppress mobility and modernise, despite explanations of its necessity and intelligence. The pastoralists tend to focus on how their way of life is under siege. Clarity is being lost between them and within them.

I noticed the moments when my mind drifted. It was not difficult to listen; I found what they said interesting, pertinent and easy to follow. As you will notice from the way they spoke, what they said was always relevant to the question, so there was little room for me to be confused. They made references and gave examples that required experience of their world, but they did not digress. I remembered a previous conversation with Nura in which he had described the

rigorous stages of education that Borana pass through from birth to the age of 40, in which the art of listening and observing is given the greatest emphasis. When you have learned to listen and observe accurately he said, and then and only then, are you expected to give opinions. You can give them before that, but no one expects them to be particularly useful.

Listening

So as I listened I attempted only to hear what I was hearing, to try to leave the question open, and not worry about the next question. All this was helped by the rhythmic slow pace of the conversation: a pause, Borbor speaks, and Jarso takes up the translation, Nura speaks, and Jarso takes up the translation, a pause, and round again. At a moment of high emotion, or a pause of exhaustion, I suggest a cup of tea and Abdia and I go and attend to the fire, Abdia brushing me away. And then I ask a clarifying question.

Borbor: 'Listening... What is listening? Let's define it. Listening is hearing actively. When you hear like that is when you will know the path to understanding. Take an example. We are hearing the goats are making noises but we are not listening. Listening is giving it attention. If you are not giving it attention you are not listening. If you are not listening you are not going to understand because clarity is not there. If we hear these goats or sheep make noise and we give it attention, next time we will be able to know which one is making the noise. When you now give it attention, out of your 1,000 animals you will be able to link the noise to the particular animal and you have understood it.'

Nura: 'You ask questions. If we do not listen and hear to understand what you are asking then we would not be able to reply. So we start with your question. The answer we give tells you whether we have understood your question. When Borana pass messages to each other they normally use children or elders. They call you and you listen. If you heard, you say, yes I have heard. Have you understood? Yes. Tell me what you have heard. Tell me what you have understood. And then you take the message to the other person and the other person asks you questions and later that person gives you a reply and asks you if you have heard and understood. Without that procedure the Borana never send a message. You don't send somebody you don't trust, as they must be prepared. It touches on the issue of conflict, and the interest and the belief of the other person.'

Borbor: 'From the elders I learned law and over many years I learned to listen, but I do not know how to speak. The emphasis of understanding is learning to listen.'

Nura: 'There are some people who are hasty and there is a saying in Borana: Don't burn your fingers – don't speak until you understand. Fingers mean speaking – you are putting yourself forward. Feeling and thinking is irrelevant to understanding. That is why for understanding you bring facts. This is what I saw, this is what I heard and this is what I said. This is why Borana are very clear. This is why information moves so far. The foundation of clarity is very important. The beginning of clarity is based on an explanation. There are very good speakers. There are others who are good listeners but can't speak. Some people fumble around. Some are very articulate. The fact that you can explain is clarity that leads to understanding.'

Patta: 'How do you arrive at a question that will help you to understand?'

Borbor: 'You don't ask a question when you are clear. There was something said that was not heard then you ask a question. Questions are between two things: first the statement made and second the fact that you are asking.'

Nura: 'Somebody can explain something very clearly but you understand it differently. If you go and explain it without asking questions you may get it wrong.'

Borbor: 'Reaching understanding is not a question of chit chat. It requires clarity of where you are coming from and establishing what knowledge you have. The other person needs to appreciate where you come from. For example, you are discussing something about a cow and this person thinks Boran cow and you think Friesian cow. But when you come to specifics you don't understand each other.'

Nura: 'You must cultivate strength. Reaching the strength to overcome your own weakness, you work on yourself. You know yourself; you try to understand the person. You work on that. Often it depends on the behaviour and character of the person who is advising you. They can help you cross bridges. You come and sit next to them. They will be knowledgeable and paying attention and they will be able to help you clarify things that you fear and don't ask. They will draw you in until you are encouraged and given inspiration. There is a mother who has a certain character or a kind of behaviour who wants to help you. She gives you a seat; she guesses all the questions that you have. If you find a mother who is quiet, or is in a certain posture then that person will be able to help you overcome your fear.'

Borbor: 'In the shade there are some very knowledgeable elders who are very articulate and even though they can easily understand, they create a clever obstacle to closing the discussion too early. They are so brilliant. They know that clarifying questions makes the situation more questionable and understandable. And they know that wives and mothers can do that. So the elders postpone the meeting and allow time for the issue to be resolved with their wives. When they start asking questions, (when

normally they come to clarification very quickly), they are giving time for everyone to overcome whatever is holding them back.'

Borbor and Nura said that listening is paying attention and attention is focusing on the thing being talked of and nothing else. Listening to the other's question and replying to it and only to it, is the art of arriving at clarity. It keeps with the sense of direction established by the situation itself. Listening is application and having a sense of direction.

I hear again their mobility and concern to maintain the liquidity of communication, just as I also hear my own concerns with clarity in order to understand and be understood in my context. I hear recognition of prejudice and the dangers of not saying that you do not know, and of the value of making a thing 'questionable'. It seems that understanding has a circular structure of continuous communication: listening attentively, seeing accurately, probing, aligning, conveying clearly, and listening attentively and on. I thought of psychology when Nura spoke of the need to be strong to work on understanding and inquiry despite embarrassment, but their 'psychological' and mine are no doubt different. The embarrassment that Nura has described to me at other times relates to failing the group, the family, the clan, the world, not failing the self.

Cross-cultural encounter

Patta: 'Can you come to understandings with someone of another culture?'

Borbor: 'Two people meet. When you meet you just talk. You do not listen to understand, you listen to hear the talk. The person is telling you something. It is interesting, it is entertaining, or perhaps there is something you are looking for. If what they are saying gives you inspiration that really there is something, then you want to understand! Until then you are just talking.'

Nura: 'Cultures are different and for different cultures there is no way you can understand one another unless you expose your cultures to one another, raw. So you need to help that person to understand a culture. It requires time. I agree with Borbor. Most of the time we do not listen for understanding. You find it is not necessary to struggle to understand because the point was made for the moment. You have to explain why do you want to talk to me? Why me in all the world?'

Borbor: ‘Borana believe if you learn from your father it is good, but if you tell people stories from your grandfather it is more believable. The classification that people give you – liar, joker, serious etc – is commonly known and affects whether people listen to you well. Their idea about the guidance you got, the coaching and the rehearsal is important. It doesn’t necessarily mean if you are rich you know more, it depends on the people who grew up around you. If you are an outsider you will also be graded or classified or tagged as trustworthy or not. If they don’t know you, they might tag you according to the institution you have come from. They might judge you instantly based on what you say, or on stereotypes of institution or ethnic background. Whichever mechanism that delivered you to the spot you are speaking to them in, whether you are government or an ethnic group and they have already classified your group as a failure, will affect whether they listen to you or not. Then the less factual you are considered to be, the more they will just hear you, not listen to you.

‘You might be isolated as an individual if you are very clear, so even if you are from a questionable institution, they may agree on a grace period. It will depend on how factual, how credible, how clear you are. Cross-cultural communication means there is already history, culture and stereotype, but if you come across clearly they will give you a grace period. If you say I will do one, two, three things and don’t do them then you lose credibility. How credible, how factual you are will affect how much interest they have in trying to understand what you are after.’

Patta: ‘If the person in the grace period keeps her promises, so you decide she is interesting, but you still have to overcome the differences in education and culture – what is your strategy?’

Borbor: ‘This is not difficult. It requires free and open talking. At some stage you have to get out of the structure that binds both of you. You get to a neutral ground where you can come to a common understanding. Is the place of trying to understand in the territory of one or the other? No it has to be a new territory – where you see something new. You have to get into a new space where you both have a new thing in front of you and compare what is different from what you know. You have an interest.’

Patta: ‘You know what you think and you notice the difference between what you think and what you are hearing and you ask why. Is this what you mean by new territory?’

Nura: ‘You could be shying away from constructing a statement because it is shameful in your culture to ask, but you are asking because you want to understand, so you can ask it – this is new territory. It is a situation of a child, nothing holds them from learning. This is new territory. You are told something. It is not enough clarification, until you see and when you see, you need to ask questions, until you believe what you see. This is new territory.’

Bringing forward my own interpretation of Gadamer's provocation of prejudice I question the new territory, and Nura answers it in an unexpected way. His observation helps me with the question I had already posed about how prejudice comes to the foreground. I acknowledge that the shamefulness of asking is indeed an aspect of how prejudice remains hidden. I had thought of the knowingness of positivism and the academy, and the business of fear of exposure. Among other things, the freedom that Borbor talks of in his new territory is freedom to make error, to be wildly inquisitive as I was when I took the wrong bus. It is also a place where the raw elements of culture can be patiently exchanged, so that appreciation of tradition can be understood within the dialogue. In the end it is important that the fact – by which I understand them to mean the thing we are talking of, the promises or observations that we are making – is credible to the other.

I could sense that Nura and Borbor did not have entirely the same views on the matter of understanding, so I did not feel that they were lecturing me from one inflexible standpoint. I did feel the weight of experience that they were bringing to bear, and the authority that in their culture is achieved by people who have reached their position in life. Nonetheless, at the end they told me that they had learned something important from the conversation, even if it does sound like they are lecturing me.

Culture and institutions

Patta: 'Can you tell me the effect of cultures like those of law, money, bureaucracy and religion?'

Nura: 'Irrespective of race, black or white, there are two things important to living. The first is law and the second is justice. People want to know and clarify law and everybody has fear or respect for the law. You fear to make a mistake because justice will be done and that is what makes you fear lying. But now the law has become so weak that nobody enforces it.'

Borbor: 'When you are in a leadership position your job is to help people to understand law. Lately it has gone in a bad direction and elders just speak to eat or enrich themselves. Why do people respect Nura more than they respect other elders? Because he always tries to help people understand.'

Nura: 'Law is held in text. The text has meaning that has to be understood. The most difficult factor is the purposes of the litigants. There could be interests for people to deny justice. It is not the text that is the problem it is the practice. Justice is ultimately about the truth. It is factual. It doesn't change its form whatever angle you look at it. If you lie you will not reach understanding with god, if you speak the truth you may not reach understanding with people. I know somebody whose nature and his being is truth. He could deliver justice and he is very brilliant but everybody hates him. It's a mix of reasons. Some are that people would easily go along with falsehood. That is why the delivery of judgement is one statement by one person. But it may take years to get there, because we are very bad at getting clarity. If you go straight you deny the opportunity for the other people to clarify. For some who are clear at the beginning they do not speak while the deliberations are going on.

'There are two people who are very brilliant; they ask clarification as it is supposed to be asked. They deliver their judgement. But people see them as dangerous because they understand things quickly, they ask right questions, they have no fear and they listen and they deliver right judgement. They point to the truth and they are very aggressive, up to putting the truth bare. They don't wait for you. If men were to go by justice as it is, the judges would move much quicker, but there would be more conflict. People would rather believe in falsehood than justice; that is why it is necessary to go on clarifying.

'People use a lot of proverbs. They use them when they have already reached understanding, for others to understand. For example the woman at the Hudet pastoralist gathering who spoke the proverb. "Men were disturbing women as there was something about women that men wanted. Women met and said why don't we cut this thing they want from us and then they will stop following us? But you can't cut it." She was trying to help men to understand that they were wanting something impossible when they wanted to separate one clan from another.'

Borbor: 'We are in the right track for clarifying understanding. The truth is ultimately with god and justice is truth. You are reaching understanding with god. It encourages you, and you overcome your fear and shame. Without justice prevailing, you will never be able to reach understanding.'

Money

Nura: 'Money is a paper with a kind of magical power. It not only breaks clarity but can make you go against principles of understanding. People kill because they have been promised money. Understanding is when things are clarified based on the truth, but you can lie consciously because of money. You are obstructing clarity. Money is also involved in changing culture and laws. People initiate meetings that have no clarity. There can be false witness. Recently a customary leader left an important religious activity one day before because he was offered money. Only money could

do that. You could have offered power and he would not have left. Money can distort facts and create confusion.'

Borbor: 'But you can use it in the reverse, you can use money to unlock all that. You can hire someone. Money is not a bad thing in itself. It can do good things that are completely the opposite. You can use money to do good things. It establishes communications. A person who is poor and hungry, his senses are broken by starvation, you feed the person and then he can speak to you.'

Bureaucracy

Nura: 'You can capture all of truth, but without justice all the clarifications are useless. You need a strong legal system and delivery of justice. Unfortunate situations create opportunities for bad things to happen. Nobody is taking care at those times. Leadership becomes weak. They may make the situation worse. It is a new thing we have learned from this discussion. We understand the question of clarifying what are the bad situations that bad leaders are taking opportunity from. We want to process it. For now this is our response. We have always believed in black and white. We do not have a talent for grey.'

Borbor: 'Bureaucracy does not clarify things.'

Nura: 'It clarifies something very clearly: bureaucracy clarifies the existence of injustice. It makes you see that you have no rights in certain things. It makes you understand. Something that can be decided instantly can be rescheduled for two months and then not honoured. The small guys are the most problematic. It is a very unfair system. It clarifies that injustice is here to stay.'

Patta: 'You both seem to be saying that you can't come to an understanding with a bureaucrat.'

Nura: 'This takes us back to the money debate. In the bureaucracy it camouflages character of the people working in the system. Some people in the system are looking for something. You will never see it with your eyes. Some fear the boss; some create difficulties, because they say they are too busy. If you bribe the watchman or secretary you get to see the boss in two minutes. Few of them sit down under a tree and discuss. Few of them are about commitment. Bureaucracy is not our thing, it is someone else's territory and we have to play by their rules.'

Religion

Borbor: 'One single most difficult thing that creates lack of understanding is religion. It relates to the fundamentals of what religion is all about and whether it can be clarified. Borana heard about Islam. Some Borana chose to be Muslims and they continued to be pastoralists. Some continued to be Boran. The common language they use for daily life is the same. If

somebody becomes a Muslim or a Borana it is OK. But when a new religion is introduced, one that moves on power that is not fully explained, when there are guns involved, then you cannot clarify. The missionaries came. They did not clarify anything. They first came and helped the poor. They came at a time of drought and they helped. But they bring up children in a strange way. In facing that challenge a new type of Muslim arrived – bringing Islamic counter-arguments. These ones also deliver relief and development. They do all the things Muslims do, but they also do all the things that Christians do. This brings confusion.

‘You have the government, the missionary, the new Muslims. The Muslim restaurants were separate from the Christian ones. Then came democracy, which said that you can do what you want because you want to do it. So you will never clarify the issue of religion in Borana. It has confused Borana. Even among the Christians there is confusion. They are arguing among themselves. Why did it all start? Religion is the one most important thing that created lack of clarity, whichever religion. It depends on who you are talking to.

‘There are people who want to clarify this. In one family there may be Islam, Boran and Christian. It is democracy that spoiled us. Not one of them sits down and clarifies to each other. They just get on with life. Us elders, we are now observing what is happening around us. We see what it means to get lost. What it means to get extinct has become clear as we see the implication of the behaviours.’

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The next day we went to Godana’s place and sat outside her house. We took milk and tea with us. Nura told Godana what we had been talking about.

Godana: ‘I am satisfied with what you said. One more point: I agree that [there is] damage, yet I still believe that the memory is working. But do men still retain things and do men still observe? They are not stupid. It is something to do with the way you learn things. In the past learning was a long life process and knowledge had no limit. Now you start education and you learn for four years and then you have finished. With that attitude you are always in a hurry. Ideally education doesn’t finish. That is why people turn to papers because the education you finish is in the paper. You think you have nothing to learn from people because you assume it and you think all the learning is in the paper. You read books and do not talk to anybody.’

Nura: ‘This concept of finishing education is something to do with work: you qualify for a job – because you are interested in the job.’

Godana: ‘There is one old woman called Galma Halake. The father of Halake told her that if you are have not been properly educated or if you have not gone to school you have completed your work. When you are

properly educated your work will never end. You will be imagining things. You will be developing your vision, and you will have things to work on. If you are not properly educated your job is to take animals to pasture. If you are properly educated you pay attention all day, you are looking at the environment and you will be able to make analysis of what you are going to do next year. If not, you will just take animals out and bring them in again.'

Patta: 'I am hearing that education is developing capacity to pay attention. In our language education means more than just going to school, although some people think of it as just about schooling. Is it the same with you?'

Godana: 'Her father never told her it is about writing or reading, education is learning from a trusted source. It is knowledge you gain from a trusted source that enables you to pay attention. There are different names. Education of reading and writing is normally referred to in Borana as education that you can finish. The implication is that you go and get employment after you have got it. The other is the education that you keep on with. You will be referred to by others, they will say that you are a listener, you are good at paying attention and you speak truth. There is no end to paying attention to speaking truth.'

Borbor: 'People have lost hope, they have surrendered. There is a lot of inertia. There is also a lot of division and disagreement. There may be two people who are talented, who could create a vision, but if they come together they will be on opposing sides because of, for example, religion. They are antagonistic. Traditionally people cared for each other but it is also a matter of necessity that they require leadership. The government has lost direction. It is an unclear government system. In one family now there may be Islamic, traditional and Christian religions. It is democracy that spoiled this. Democracy means you can do what you want because you want to do it. Not one of them sits down to clarify to each other. They just get on with life.'

Nura: 'The culture has changed since government came. People are still making a transition; they have not been completely overrun. The people have not let go of their own culture. There is a tug of war between old and new cultures. In the past if you lied there was a penalty. If you lie now there is no penalty or there is even a reward. It used to be that people who lie were known and they knew themselves and they knew people knew them, so it didn't cause much damage. Now everyone is lying. The confusion is a mix of two ways, neither is clear to the other. Nobody is paying attention.'

Godana: 'It has been prophesied that on the verge of collapse the system will come back. The people will not be extinct but confused. Nobody will be able to clarify anything. They will start consuming alcohol. They will get lost and those who get lost will start eating *enjera*. They will be scattered all over the place. Near the end most of them will refuse to accept the truth. Almost at the collapse, somebody knowledgeable will be born. All that was

predicted has come true except this last one. This is the one we are looking for.

Nura: 'People will change. Change will come from discussion and these discussions are the ones that will help people clarify confusion. There is magic in it. It is like the discussion we are having here: setting and clarifying things until we understand. When we talk we can help each other understand things.'

I looked up at the white afternoon sky, through the thin leaved branches of our shade tree. I said, 'Thank you, thank you.' Godana smiled, got up and went back into her house.

I had been reading Habermas' *Theory of Communicative Action* and I recognised his decoupling of the lifeworld and economic and administrative steering systems in my own cultural horizon (Habermas 1984b; 1984a). Did it have any resonance for the Borana people? I had been observing what I thought were the effects of new administrative, economic and political systems in their land. I was aware when a new question popped into my mind that it came from a prior prejudice. I could see the pattern of my questions, their sources from what people were saying along with questions that had been arising in my reading and prior encounters. My questions about clarity and listening had arisen with the earlier conversations with Nura, the ones about bureaucracy, money, law and religion came with Habermas, and those about new territory and prejudice with Gadamer. I felt, nonetheless that the questions came at the right moment; they did not appear to make the conversation falter and change the direction it was moving in. The direction was set by the subject of understanding. The Borana discipline in keeping to the subject kept the direction straight.

All the institutions that we talked of were causing confusion, as far as the elders were concerned. Clarity was haemorrhaging from them as from an unbound wound. But then Nura said there was magic in discussing and coming to understandings about understanding. At least our discussion fed into that same great river of pastoralist clarity which Nura described in the previous section. We had done something good in conversation.

The infinite difference of affirmation

In both the sections above I have considered the arising of understanding within dialogue. Dialogue shows here the structure of understanding on a larger scale than I have considered up till now. Whereas I have been focusing on an individual me, projecting into the future with questions from the grounds of her tradition, here I am releasing her into the lifeworld. In dialogue the thing we are talking about takes hold of all of us who take part and gives each a wealth of angles and moments to consider and reconsider. The debates are patterned by the cultures, places, procedures, rituals and powers at play in the event.

Dialogue shows how understanding arises from a multiplicity of influences of tradition and a multiplicity of potentials. Each person speaking, each one listening and pondering and each infinitely different version of the thing under discussion makes a contribution. I cannot know where I will be in terms of new prejudices, but to take part means that I know that each of us will arrive somewhere beyond where we started, our horizons expanded and to some extent fused.

I have not focused on dialogue as a political exercise, or as an ideal method for arriving at human harmony, but as a structure of understanding as it happens to people as they cast their gaze on the things of their concern. My own experiences and those of the three elders affirm that modes of listening, attention and clarity/confusion are always at work in understanding. They are called into action in dialogue. As Gadamer says, we *submit* to dialogue if we are involved in it at all. To listen and be interested means to admit ignorance, to be clear means to be able to speak the limits of what I know. When I am part of a dialogue, which is most of the time, I am absorbed in language, listening to and being influenced by an infinite number of possibilities and challenges.

'Dialogue is not a method. It is not at the disposal of our will, even our good will. We cannot be exhorted, cajoled, or sermonized into it. No one can be forced into it - or out of it. We do not enter into dialogue, we find ourselves already in it - but only if we are already listening with the most intense attention, all ears to the discreet, the whispered word. Dialogue has no guarantees, being pure risk' (Marshall 2004:143).

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