

**Third Cybernetic Revolution:  
Beyond Open to Dialogic System Theories**

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**Abstract**

We question Systems Theory by adopting a Bakhtinian dialogism approach. We argue that a dialogism approach gets us beyond first order cybernetic (control) and second order (open) system thinking to a third order cybernetics (multi-dialogisms). We believe third order cybernetic theory is an extension of Bakhtin's work. We explore how dialogue is not equivalent to polyphonic dialogism; the later does not assume being in same time and space, as in some meeting. Further, we look at three other dialogisms (stylistic, chronotopic, & architectonic). Multi-dialogisms raise questions for dialog, learning, and appreciative inquiry approaches. We conclude with insights on how dialogism is already a part of organization practice, and ways to enhance dialogic competence.

**Key Words:**

Dialogism system theory, third cybernetics, storytelling

**Introduction**

We begin with what Mikhail Bakhtin (1981: 25, 14, 273) calls a *dialogized story*. According to Holquist (1990: 15), "dialogism" is a word Bakhtin never used; instead Bakhtin (1981) used "dialogicality" (here we use them interchangeably). Dialogicality (or dialogism) predates Derrida's difference and de-centered discourse. Dialogism overcomes binary opposition of signifier/signified, text/context, self/other, etc, in order to look at an Einsteinian version of relativity. In terms of the dialogized manner of story, the implication is that each story is in motion, relative to meaning between bodies (physical, political, social, bodies of ideas, etc.), and to another telling (see Holquist, 1990: 20-21).

Our purpose is to problematize mono-language model of system theory, to re-think and re-evaluate it so that we can move beyond open system theory, and beyond organic theories, such as population ecology (where competition is presumed). We offer a dialogism model to reinvent system theory, to move it beyond economist Kenneth Boulding's

(1956) level 4 and 5, into more dialogic arenas. We also extend Bakhtin's (1973, 1981, 1984) work on dialogism by extending his language theory to a theory of dialogic systematicity of organizations.

The article is organized in four parts. Part one summarizes what we are proposing as third order cybernetics, and puts it into relationship to first and second order cybernetics. In part two, we point out shortcomings in general systems theory (GST) and develop our interdisciplinary dialogic model. In part three, we develop a dialogic system theory for organization studies that extends from Bakhtin's work, and in part four, we explain some ironical situations that are prevailing in our contested-globalized world at organizational level as well as at country level because of lack of dialogism. Dialogic System Theory is presented as an alternative.

**Part I: Third Order Cybernetics**

Bakhtin dialogicality theory problematizes Shannon and Weaver (1949) information processing theory (sender-receiver-feedback loop) that has been in vogue since its inclusion in von Bertalanffy

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(1956) “general system theory.” Dialogism creates a case for “third cybernetic revolution” (Boje & Baskin, 2005; Boje, 2005a, 2006). The 1st cybernetic revolution was mechanistic, cybernetics of deviation-counteraction. In Bakhtin’s term this is only part of heteroglossia, the centripetal forces (or deviation-counteracting forces) of language, including story/narrative. The 2nd cybernetic revolution occurs with open system theory of deviation-amplification, known as Law of Requisite Variety: it takes more variety in organization to process the variety in the environment. Bakhtin’s heteroglossia theory, we think treats an open system as one where centripetal forces become opposed by centrifugal (i.e., deviation-amplification) forces of language (Boje, 2006, chap 2).

Third cybernetics takes us beyond open system theory (level 4) in Boulding’s (1956) nine orders of complexity model. The lower order system levels include: 1. Framework, 2. Mechanism, 3. Control-thermodynamics, 4. Open-cell, and 5. Organic-plant. System theory at these lower levels is fixated upon sign, upon unified language representations and metaphorizations. It is therefore very problematic to use Shannon-Weaver (1949) mono-logic, monophonic, and mono-language theory to get at polyphonic dialogism, and several other types of dialogism that Bakhtin envisions. At more complex orders, Boulding argues, similar to Bakhtin, that sign-representation gives way to more multi-languaged ways of envisioning human systems: image (level 6), to symbol (level 7), to social networks involved in history and self-reflexivity (level 8), and to transcendental systems (relation of what is knowable to what is unknowable).

Lou Pondy (1976) took up Boulding’s call to move beyond open system theory, to develop a multi-language theory of systems, substituting Chomsky (1975) for Shannon-Weaver, but as Cooper (1989) points out, this only replaced one information-processing theory for another. The unifying language perspective is a valorized lens onto the past

of system theory history. System theory sociologists explain history of the search for a new language lens quite succinctly as the transition from the first cybernetic to the second cybernetic system theory (Buckley, 1967). What seems therefore sensible as a theory move is to try Bakhtin’s dialogism theory.

The irony is that for all its writing about being living, organic, or open system, the field of investigation is quite closed when it comes to language models. Astley (1984) argues that, in strategy work (& we think system theory) initial theories and frameworks were egocentric (the one organization, and its enacted environments). Astley argues that less egocentric models of strategy focused upon populations of competing firms, engaged in rivalry, ignoring social ecology models, such as that of Emery and Trist (1965) that focus on cooperation of organizations. The reluctance to look at collaboration (instead of just competition) could explain why Katz and Kahn (1966) approach to open system theory became more central to organization theorists, particularly those with contingency frameworks (definitely a level 3, first order cybernetic approach).

It is time to wean open system theory away from its dependency on unified language theory. This continues to be a problem, for Emery and Trist (1965), which is more about dialogue, than it is about the dialogism (or heteroglossic forces of multi-languagedness). Systems are not just dialogue between players, systems are dialogic in their language forces, in the opposing centrifugal (deviation-expanding) and centripetal (deviation-counter-acting) forces (to use Maruyama’s 2nd order-cybernetic terms) that Bakhtin (1981: 7) calls heteroglossic. The centripetal forces are outmatched by the more powerful and ubiquitous centrifugal ones. The rational theory of information-processing at the root of organization system thinking, is focused on the centripetal, highly rational, deviation-controlling forces, and thereby missing the chaos of variety in the centrifugal forces.

Most of the organizational writing on Bakhtin picks up on his work on polyphony (multiple voices in dialogue), but misses his heteroglossic implications for a dialogic system theory. Heteroglossia manifests itself in polyphony, but more importantly in the carnivalization of rational models of information processing. Heteroglossia raises two serious challenges to system theory: (1) there is no unifying single language of system; (2) there is no system-language that is independent of context.

No unifying language - The chaos of variety in dialogic organization system is the interplay of past, contemporary, and future contexts, as well as the variety of locality being swarmed by environmental, more accurately, global spaces. A third source of the chaos of variety is the socio-ideological dimension of language. The centrifugal forces of a system are an articulation of its becoming system, an experience of language in use in everyday work life that exceeds the bounds of centripetal language forces. There is a GST and an organizational system theory delusion that there is a single unified language of system that is interdisciplinary, more accurately a one-language leveling of the disciplines. This delusion is counter to the realities of heteroglossic language forces. It is this delusion of a single unified language of system actuality that is the fatal error of von Bertalanffy's GST. A dialogic system theory, therefore, is about the chaos of language variety. "Languages throw light on each other: one language can, after all, see itself only in the light of another language: (Bakhtin, 1981: 12).

There is no system-language independent of context - A second delusion of GST is that such a unifying language is independent of context. The heteroglossic force of language, its swarm of chaos, is in extraordinary interplay with context of situated experiences of time and space. Systems are on the boundary of past, present and future, and the forces of locality and globalism of space. The chaos of variety in heteroglossic language forces is always

adding, subtracting, refracting, distorting, and disuniting any unity of meaning. In a dialogic system, the centripetal (unifying) forces of language unification are being undone by the centrifugal (disintegrating) forces of language.

A dialogized system captures the everyday practices of speech, language and style, in all its chaotic variety. The unitary, rational, standard information processing model of system theory is grossly inadequate to this task. Systems are increasingly dialogized consummations with diverse languages, possessed with diverse ideological orientation. A system is a "zone of dialogical contact" where an organization can be defined as a "system of languages that mutually and ideologically interanimated each other" (Bakhtin, 1981: 45, 47). Centripetal system forces orchestrate the different languages and the diverse ideologies by subordinating the polyphony of voices to official voice (thereby striving to unify language variety). The centrifugal heterogeneous stylistic forms, temporal periods, and local variety of language forces turn such unification into chaos. The dialogized system becomes increasingly aware of its diversity and chaos and becomes more self-reflexive; a dialogized system is forever criticizing itself. Several languages interanimated by parodying one another, travestying one another, and borrowing from one another. Instead of a unifying language, such as a GST, Open System Theory, or Organic models (i.e. population ecology); instead, we invoke what Bakhtin (1981: 59) calls a "parodic-travestying discourse" in our approach to dialogic system theory. And this involves an organizational system in acts of self-reflection and self-criticism, and even self-laughter. In this way as a system becomes dialogized it is multi-styled, multi-generic, multi-voiced and soberly self-reflexive, and fully heteroglossic.

## Part II - Shortcomings of General System Theory

Language theory of Shannon and Weaver (1949) so eagerly championed by von

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Bertalanffy (1962) became the foundation of organizational system theory for the next fifty years. It is an aging, dying era of general system theory (GST) that has left language rotting on the vine. It has voided system theory history of any evolving heteroglossia. The information-processing style of Shannon-Weaver was quickly wed to the biphasic language style of von Bertalanffy. The latter "self-deconstructs all on its own" because "it is another order of mechanistic closed system theory, which calls itself (rhetorically) an open system theory." (Boje, 2004) In fact, as a socio-physical entity, Bertalanffy's system is paralysed, deprived from dialogism, dynamism and a "languaged philosophy." The ultimate role of language in it remains univocal far from the dialogized and multivariate meaning adopted by Bakhtin. It is also far from being socially constructed (Burger and Luckman, 1969) and effectively translating the experiences of the "I" and the "Other." (Bakhtin, 1990) The interactivity in its deepest sense is completely constrained if not absent in Bertalanffy's theory. Paradoxically, the very definition of system in the biophysics of GST, which is the "complex of interacting components, concepts characteristics of organized wholes such as interaction, sum, mechanization, centralization, competition, finality, etc." (Bertalanffy, 1962: 13) contradicts itself in many ways. While it highlights interaction it falls in the trap of homeostasis, linearity, hierarchy and reduction of living systems to mere machines. Using Bertalanffy's (1962: 18) own words: "it still adheres to the machine theory of the organism."

This theory is demeaning and devaluing of the human being while it is providing credentials to a pure capitalistic system that is seeking efficiency and profit at the expense of humanistic values. Although Bertalanffy contends that "homeostasis model transcends older mechanistic models by acknowledging directiveness in self-regulating circular processes," his GST remains a closed, mechanistic system disguised in an open, vital one and far from being transcendent at least as used by Boulding (1956) in his hierarchy of complexity. Bertalanffy's conception of GST

finds its grounds in teleology and refers to transcendence as "goal seeking and self controlling behavior" (Bertalanffy, 1962:13). The chief objective of self-regulation here is geared toward the maintenance of a hegemonic and competitive system "open" only to "closed-loop feedbacks". Self-reflexivity is denied and search for transformative alternatives is ignored. Silencing transformational voices within this system becomes easy if not sought, exposing the whole GST to a critical ethical dilemma. Imagine what would happen if these underlying assumptions are continuously transposed to social sciences in general and organization studies in particular.

Actually there is no need to imagine, there are enough real examples that we will mention in the last part of this paper.

While, ironically several other systems theorists who followed and adhered to Bertalanffy's view without questioning, Buckley (1967) is one of the fewest sociologists to criticize GST and to recognize its potential dangerous impact on social sciences. Buckley (1967:58) introduced Maruyama's (1963) "morphostasis and morphogenesis" and enriched them with other cognitive processes such as consciousness and self-awareness taking the dynamics to a higher level than the self-organizing systems.

Finally, in spite of being named general, the GST as perceived by Bertalanffy, does not move beyond the first cybernetics and cannot be extrapolated or extended to other disciplines. In the following part, we shall question and discuss this prevailing idea of generalizability and extension of systems theory (ST) to other disciplines aiming at rebirthing an interdisciplinary paradigm that challenges the existing knowledge.

While Boulding managed to trace a clear trajectory for GST, he insisted that it is a skeleton of science raising a fundamental question on the identity of ST. To what extent advocates of this field will agree that ST is just a framework for other disciplines that should be filled with content from the other

corresponding areas? While the metaphor “skeleton of science” seems to be reductionist vis a vis ST, it does raise the issue of the type of content that it should be based on. Should ST seek a general, holistic content that would fit the diversity and the specificity of each domain of knowledge? Or should it hunt for specialization within the existing disciplines resulting in different kinds of STs? In any case, the problem of methods reiterates itself. Moreover, if it is a “system of systems” as Boulding claims, then what “language” does it offer to the other systems, what does it take from them and how does the “whole” and the “parts” work to reach the “consummation”? Embracing the whole as mentioned by Bakhtin is illusionary, a “kind of fiction that can be created only from a particular point of view” leading to “a purely positional or relative construct” that is never consummated” (Holquist, 1990: xxvi-xxvi).

Also, this highlighted idea of hierarchy within ST appears to be unsettling! Considering ST as a super system manifests the danger of unidirectionality, unidimensionality, conformism and a dominant consciousness at the expense of many marginal ones. Consequently, rather than allowing for divergence, heterogeneity and polyphony, all the other subsystems will be fashioned and forged to fit the orchestrating “system of systems”. Another element that appears significantly important here and constitutes a major factor of Bakhtin’s architectonics is the epistemological factor that sets the scene to a deeper understanding of the other disciplines and systems. Without it, any theorization for other systems will be sterile, meaningless and evicted from life. Therefore, systems theorists who are passionate with the art of producing “skeletons” and/ or coherent “contents” to explain different realities may find themselves entailed to develop a wide spectrum of empowering knowledge pertaining to other disciplines. Pundy & Boje (1981) who adopted a multiparadigm inquiry to ST recognized the need for “bridgers”, specialists in several perspectives who can accomplish Maruyama’s “transpection process.” (p. 93). In

other words, a mastery of the different paradigms’ utterances allowing for an internalisation of every paradigm’s language, world view, and phenomenological, ontological and methodological concerns is essential. Otherwise, the dialogue will turn to be a mere conversation without flavour and the excess of seeing will end up being a superficial gaze at the other without an exploration or introspection of its deepest consciousness! The aim here is not to achieve Pundy and Boje’s compatibility or Boulding’s integration. It is neither a search for generalizability that many systems theorists have been striving for to fulfill Boulding’s wish. It is beyond that. It is dialogism!

### **Part III - Dialogic System Theory for Organization Studies**

Dostoevsky’s (1969: xvi) *Underground Man* would rather be free than submit to any “rational systematization of his advantageous desires.” Bakhtin (1973: 204) says that the opening to *Underground Man*, “I am a nasty man... you perhaps imagined from the first word that I am looking for your sympathy...” anticipates a reaction from the reader. Dostoevsky’s “dialogic reversal” violates the anticipated response of the other (the reader), since the style of the storytelling is “under a determining influence of someone else’s speech” (Bakhtin, 1973: 205). Each anticipated rejoinder is what makes it dialogic, instead of just a dialog. The difference between dialog and dialogic is a hard one to sort out. Bakhtin wrote *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics* in 1929, and his essays in the 1930s which became *Dialogic Imagination* (1981) and his work on Rabelais (1968) written in 1940, all continue to sort it out.

So be patient as we sort out the subtle difference between dialog and dialogic, and proceed to develop a dialogic system theory. For Aristotle, dialog is another way to express plot; but “dialog is for him [Dostoevsky] not the threshold to action, but the action itself” (Bakhtin, 1973: 213). Dialog can be monologic, with people toward another’s

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speech, but the conversation is in one logic, or in exchanges where other logics are not heard or anticipated. It is this monologism that destroys Socratic dialog, which “finally degenerated into the question-and-answer form of training neophytes (i.e. the catechism” (Bakhtin, 1973: 90). Dialogic, preserves something in Socratic Method, and is more of a method for “seeking the truth [that] is counterposed to the *official* monologism.” (p. 90) Zappen (2004:37) argues that “Bakhtin's Socrates is the practitioner of anacrisis and syncrisis, the drawing forth and juxtaposing of different ideas and different persons not for the purpose of persuading but for the purposes of testing, contesting and creating ideas”. It is not a simple exchange of voices, but rather an exchange of perspectives that illustrates Bakhtin's dialogized heteroglossia. Unlike the official monologism that “pretends to possess a ready made truth,” (110) dialogue is a collective, joint effort to discover the truth that is always in the process of becoming. According to Bakhtin (Holquist, 1981: 110), “truth is not born nor is it to be found inside the head of an individual person, it is born between people collectively searching for truth, in the process of their dialogic interaction.”

Dialogic system is therefore defined here as the counterposing of *official* monologism with other logics and ideas as a form of inquiry into differences. It is deeply imbued with a carnivalesque outlook to all that is official about systems, one that seeks to transform the official, and an official that seeks to contain language variety. A dialogic system is an opposition of multiple philosophical views, not a monological synthesis; it is as Bakhtin (1973: 4) puts it, “unmerged voices” in “multi-plotting” and “multi-story” not the monologic, official voice, in univocal plots. A dialogic system is a “vertex of dialogically intersecting consciousnesses” (p. 74), not the self-sufficiency of the single consciousness of monologic system theory. Monologic system asserts a unity of consciousness; any dialog is to domesticate diverse consciousness into conformity with official consciousness; a sort

of “systematic-monological *Weltanschauung*” (p. 64).

If you will allow that some systems are more monologic, and others exhibit “dialogicality” (p. 34), then we can begin to explore the differences, and even the interplay within the same organization. Some dialogs are carried out monologically and others are thoroughly dialogical. Some dialog enforces convergence, others are divaricating. Dialogic is co-existence of fully-embodied perspectives; a plurality of unmerged consciousnesses and wills.

The dialogicality of a system is the struggle of unmerged consciousnesses to undo any monological framework, or to reduce all to a unilateral consciousness.

By way of introduction we posit a difference between a monologic, rational, univocal system theory and one that is dialogic, polylogical, and unfinalized. Dialogic system destroys all the monologic systems, be they open or closed, mechanistic or organic. Dialogic system interferes with everything.

But man is so partial to [monologic] systems and abstract conclusions that he is willing to distort the truth deliberately, close his eyes and plug up his ears, all to justify his [mono] logic (Dostoevsky, 1969: 22).

So far, we have clarified the basic elements pertaining to our dialogic theory such as dialog, monologic versus polylogic and the relationship between consciousnesses, our story is still unfolding, and we shall now discuss the key characteristics and the other constituents of this theory. These will include the excess of seeing and dialog between multiple consciousnesses and identities, appreciative/depreciative and collective inquiry, collaborative learning, deliberation, tendency toward permanent liberation and transformation, reflexivity and toleration. Three chief components of dialogic theory that support the mentioned features will be simultaneously presented. These are

cognition, axiology and emotions.

While Descartes was radically concerned with the act of thinking and places it at the centre of human existence "je pense donc j'existe," Bakhtin perceives the value of self in its assiduous dialogic communication with the other. A dialogic self can not exist without dialogue and without a "significant" other! It is "fated to need the other if we are to consummate ourselves" (Holquist & Liapunov, 1990: xxvi). Here again the self seems meaningless without the prevalent presence of the other and the needed dialogue is senseless if it is perceived as a mere conversation, a suppression of self or a translation of a particular hegemony. It is in this context that Bakhtin brings in the metaphoric concept "*excess of seeing*" that implies the empowering ability to see beyond what others can see. It also refers to the peculiarity and uniqueness of vision that stems from a specific context marked by specific contingencies.

The "ever-present excess of my seeing, knowing and possessing in relation to any other human being is founded in the uniqueness and irreplace-ability of my place in the world.....only I-the one and only I occupy in a given set of circumstances this particular place at this particular time" (Bakhtin, 1990: XXV).

The "interactive" intertextuality in Bakhtin's writings is a clear testimony of dialogism. He set up great dialogic conversations with several significant others from completely different cultures than his, such as, Rabelais, Zola, Diderot, Balzac, Rimbeau, heroes from Greek mythology, etc. Seeing is then interconnected with knowing and knowing is worthless if it does not guide towards a deep introspection of the other that would help him/her see the hidden part of the iceberg in particular time and place. "L'oeil ne peut pas se voir" according to « Standhal » (cited in Holquist & Liapunov, 1990). Therefore, Bakhtin values the other's presence, input, vision and pertinent

knowledge to give sense to any individual's life and to be able to reach the consummation. "We must share each other's excess in order to overcome our mutual lack" (Holquist & Liapunov, 1990: Xxvi).

Besides the powerful epistemological element that underlies the act of seeing and constitutes the basis for dialogism, the ethical component has a magnificent contribution to directing thoughts and actions towards what ought to be achieved.

Ethics lies even behind the ontology of being and determines the real responsibility of man vis a vis the other. It is also founded on the "recognition of the constant need for exchange and exchange is fuelled by differences in values" (Holquist and liapunov, 1990: xli). Although ethics springs from an epoch and a milieu and is characterized by a chronotopic dimension, it is expected to engage in a dialogic dialogue with other kinds of ethics to create a responsible polyphony. No value system is better than the other, nor is it allowed to think so. Aesthetically, it is "purely positional or relative construct": Bakhtin goes further in his thinking and states that:

"Nothing conclusive has yet taken place in the world, the ultimate word of the world and about the world has not yet been spoken, the world is open and free, and everything is still in the future and will always be in the future" (Holquist, 1981: ).

The axiological system built by Bakhtin portrays a theory of values that underpins the humanity of the individual. "To be human in Bakhtin's sense is to mean." (Holquist & Liapunov, 1990: xli) Meaning is understood as the articulation of values and this articulation requires language and expression in their fullest forms. "The greater the power of self-expression, the fuller the being." (Bakhtin, 1990) Bakhtin's axiology is based on humanistic values that are developed and shared through a dialogized dialogue where the meaning is created by different identities,

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selves and consciousnesses following an appreciative inquiry process that is inhabited by the game of creation, innovation and transformation. This does not deny though “the struggle within us for hegemony among various available verbal and ideological points of view, approaches, directions, and values.” (Bakhtin, 1990: 79) At the same time that we recognize diversity and difference of opinions, paradigms, and worldviews, we find ourselves in front of dilemmas of choice. Flood (1996: 154) contends that “for every argument put forward, it is possible to locate problematic dilemmas in its solutions.” Our colleague Cliff Oswick, in defiance has called for a “Depreciative Inquiry” (personal communication, 1999). He considers a need to balance out the appreciative inquiry rejection of deconstruction. Appreciative inquiry, builds upon the positives, and does not engage in any negative science. In many situations this leaves a hegemonic dominant and oppressive story in play. In the restorying work by White and Epton (1990), what is called appreciative inquiry, is preceded by deconstruction, by a depreciative inquiry. We do not argue one versus the other. Instead both are necessary, in a dialogic approach.

Toleration, cooperation and reflexivity can open the doors toward a constructive meaning creation and the development of new knowledge. Depreciative or deconstruction of a dominant story can allow for a rethinking, a resituation of historical and contextual forces keeping hegemony in place. Further, doing both can allow for a full critical and creative engagement and involvement in a collaborative learning journey that tolerates ambiguities, uncertainties, paradoxes, risk taking, self-critique and the possibility of making errors. In short, doing both is more dialogic.

We infer here to the triple loop learning that “is about increasing the fullness and deepness of learning about the diversity of issues and dilemmas faced. It is about ways of managing them. It is the *dénouement* of single loop learning and double loop learning.” (Flood, 1996: 157) The dialog between consciousness becomes more than the sum

of its parts leading to a genuine “complementarism”. This process as mentioned briefly above is facilitated by appreciative inquiry that is in our sense at the heart of dialogism. As a concept, appreciative inquiry was used first by Cooperrider (2004) to broadly mean the “coevolutionary search for the best in people, their organizations, and the relevant world around them.” It involves, crafting pertinent “unconditional positive questions” and engaging in “the art and practice of asking questions that strengthen a system's capacity to apprehend, anticipate, and heighten positive potential.” This inquiry is based on an iterative cycle composed of 4 Ds: Discovery (Appreciating), Dream (Envisioning results), Design (co-constructing), and destiny (Sustaining). It negates destructive criticism and seeks a meaningful “union” between people's histories, capacities, unleashed potentials values and stories. It practices the art of tapping into a “deeper corporate spirit or soul and visions of valued and possible futures.” (Cooperrider , 2004)

Another crucial characteristic that is embedded in our dialogic theory is deliberation or more precisely 'deliberative dialogue'. The latter drives from a participatory and emancipatory action that aims at engaging the community in bringing all issues to the table and creating a free, “true public context for public conversation.” (McCoy and Scully, 2002) We believe that systems theorists may need to take the responsibility of initiating such dialogues involving several communities of other theorists. There is a need now more than ever to recognize the interdisciplinary connections and the unlimited boundaries between all fields of study. Engaging all these to unravel their stories in public spheres and co-construct new knowledge is working towards the rebirth of a deliberative dialog that would necessary impact positively people's lives and well being.

Dialogism maintains the virtue of heterogeneity, polyphony and diversity in an attempt to transcend and surpass the boundaries of traditional, conformist, reifying mentalities. Here the notion of system itself

can be challenged and liberated from its different frames, metaphors and complexities to honestly embrace the public sphere concerns, worries, problems, practicalities ! Mind "liberation" and envisioning in the context of dialogism can not occur without the ethical component! In addition a dialogic theory will effectively use its reservoir of conceptions, theoretical development, knowledge built, human resources (theorists as they interact with each other and with normal individuals) to make human life better.

Our story has not yet reached the end! We still need your patience and attention as we unravel. Our focus now will be turned to a key factor that characterizes our Bakhtinian approach and that has been often overlooked as it is thought to be less important than the epistemological, rational constituent. We infer here to the emotional element that gives a free rein to our dialogic theory! We contend that a symphony between dialogic theory and other theories, disciplines, realities, communities, etc. won't happen unless there is an emotional attachment and interest based on empathy and complete trust. Thus, an intelligent use of emotions would facilitate and crystallize the co-experiencing process leading to at least a partial understanding of the other's consciousness. This goes beyond the level of reason and moves the reasoning from "*dare to know*" (Cooper & Burrell, 1988) up to "*dare to share*". It surpasses the modernism's duality of certainty versus uncertainty to engage in a mystic search for the other in order to complete ourselves. It differs from postmodernism which is in "search for instabilities" (Lyotard, 1984:53, cited in Cooper & Burrell, 1988) in the sense that it seeks an auratic illumination of self and the other through uncovering the veiled part of the consciousness to both parties. It is a rational powerful act fully inhabited with deep emotions. It seeks the fullness and completeness through the other and goes beyond Foucault's "knowledge power" (Cooper, 1989).

One of the key roles of dialogic theory is to allow all voices to be heard, to promote

heterogeneity and polyphony rather than seeking one "idealistic", "utopian" framework to be generalized on all areas of knowledge or diverse realities. Promoting a dialogic dialogue between all theories that would serve the prevailing diversity in a "global" world is necessary. It is our understanding that every reality is cultural par excellence and has its own cultural specificities that make it hard to apply one systems theory that is constructed in different reality and is characterized by its own ideology. It is high time to engage in reconstructing the whole field of systems theory. The Dialogic theory inspired from Bakhtin promotes key factors, such as: knowledge, ethics, emotions, aesthetics, excess of seeing, and the mystic co-experiencing where a researcher can get rid of his/her own assumptions and immerse fully in the subject researched and translate objectively reality of his heroes.

As you may have noticed, our dialogic theory is based on a Bakhtinian approach, but it is enriched and extended to include other new powerful elements such as appreciative/depreciative and collective inquiry, collaborative learning, deliberative dialog, tendency toward permanent liberation and transformation, reflexivity and toleration. While it sets the ground for a new and different paradigm, it contributes to taking Bakhtin out of his philosophical haze and making his conceptions more explicit. The following part is the story telling of systems confrontations in a world called "globalized" and how our dialogic theory could be applied to create an effective intercultural dialog.

#### **Part IV - Globalization, Cultural Hegemony and Dialogic Systems**

"Globalization", "Global village", "Globalized World" all these have become buzz words nowadays. No one knows what meanings they exactly convey. While some naïve people think that these are filled of notions such as freedom, free and quick access to goods and services, liberation, and cooperation between countries to promote

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better lives for the human being no matter who, where and when he is, we contend that globalization is the disguised word for hegemony, new colonialism and slavery. It is a concept that has been voided of humanism, dialogism and ethical conduct. It does promote political totalitarianism, economic monopoly, and socio-cultural hegemony of one paradigm over all the others! While it is hard to deeply analyze all these aspects within this essay, we will confine ourselves to addressing the case of giant corporations in the world trying to emphasize their reinforcement of the "one powerful culture" and relate that to our dialogic system theory. Having said so, it is worth noting that we recognize the strong interplay between the political, economic, social and cultural components of any system and we will give some highlighting examples of these.

Now, let us tell you a story adapted from a movie you may have seen. Our purpose is to maintain a dialogized dialogue with you and with other genres as well. So, bear with us and even if you haven't watched that movie, you will get our point.

There was a community of people living in peace somewhere in this huge world. They loved each others, helped one another, cooperate to fulfill their needs, and had their own language, rituals, customs, and values. Everything was going fine and a steady state was maintained until the day, a plane threw a mysterious empty bottle on their land. Every one of us at the moment is very familiar with it! It is the bottle that contains a famous soft drink promoted all over the world by a giant corporation. "What is this strange creature sent to us by God? What do we do with it? Who will have the priority in the community to use it? What benefits would we get from it?" all the community members started to ask the same questions before figuring out how the bottle can be used in their daily lives. Yet, after spending years of peaceful interactions, the mysterious creature will generate disunity, conflicts, and abhorrence. The leader of this community decided to bury it to protect his people from fights, hate and endless

confrontations. It was found though and led again to undesirable consequences. Persuaded that the bottle was a source of soreness and grief, the community chief was willing to leave his family and tribe to throw the mystery/threat out of their land. This is exactly what he did!

How many goods are thrown like that in different environments without engaging in any dialogue with the host culture? How many transplantations of giant corporations in other countries are made possible every year in the name of the free economy without questioning "*the imposition paradigm*"? How many indigenous employees serve as slaves under the economic crisis in their countries to promote a highly capitalistic system at the expense of the basic human dignity? How many giant corporations rule now the world and shape its policy to make more profit without caring about the destiny of millions of people from the emerging or poor countries? Where do we want this overwhelming globalization trend to go?

In our sense, this refers to the Bertalanffy's closed, mechanistic system assumptions as well as to other paradigms in organization science. It is a mere return to taylorism and scientific management in the name of human resource development and employee empowerment. It is a consecration of the most hegemonic systems in the world in the name of the inversion of pyramids, democracy, and participative decision making. Take the example of offshoring that has recently become very extensive (about 6 organizations out of 10 are using it (Schramm, 2004) and see the extent to which it is humiliating to millions of employees in the emerging economies, such as Mexico, Senegal, India, Salvador, and the list is still very long. All the jobs and tasks that are hated in the developed world are transferred to the transitioning countries providing cheap salaries and hard conditions of work and requiring high productivity and high stamina. It is very ironical, to sustain the rhetoric of democracy, humanism, cooperation, human development when in reality giant

corporations as well as strong political systems consider human resources of other countries as a *second class human beings*. Is this the model we want the world to adopt?

Let's, now, take you with us to another level of analysis that would emphasize our *dialogic systems theory* (DST). The latter insists on perceiving the other as an equal, respected partner, with an identity and a consciousness that may be different than ours, but that adds value to it. It calls for a dialogic dialogue that would protect the interests of both parties for the benefit of the whole humanity. The DST promotes an *axiological consciousness* and puts the ethical component at the heart of any conduct. Hence, people will build a "holistic collegiality" (Cooperrider and Srivastva, 1987) that seeks the global human growth without accounting for any segregation between people, their identities, nationalities, their country level of development or their culture. This will require a full emotional engagement to know the other and to embark on a deep appreciative inquiry resulting in a complete awareness of oneself and the other. "The more this awareness is enhanced, the more people are collectively capable of discerning and sharing relevant knowledge to resolve shared questions regarding what is possible or ought to be" (Powley et al., 2004: 76). The DST is interdisciplinary, goes cross-levels (political, socio-economic, cultural and economic, etc.), and always guarantees the achievement of "win-win situations." Despite differences in cultural identities, the ultimate objective is to effectively function in a diverse world and ensure better lives for people around the globe.

## Conclusion

Systems theory faces today a real crisis of identity. We have argued that this crisis was apparent even in the 1950s when Bertalanffy instigated his "biophysics" system and when Boulding came up with his hierarchy of complexity and his definition of GST that viewed ST as a system of systems

or "a super system". These theories were replicated and reified in newer versions of ST and were applied to organization studies although they don't involve a dialogic dialogue and are not enriched with the key elements of dialogism mentioned above. As an alternative, we developed a dialogic theory inspired from Bakhtin and extended to other components that seem to us very relevant in today's environment. We came up with examples on how it can be applied in our globalized world to foster diversity, difference and particularity rather than promoting cultural, social, political and economic hegemony. The vital goal of our DST is to crystallize a real dialog between different disciplines, mindsets, countries, and systems in order to enhance people's lives and serve the most dignified interests of Man.

The third order cybernetic revolution in system theory, brings us in touch with dialogic forces. We have argued that four dialogisms are involved: polyphonic, stylistic, chronotopicity, and architectonics. Polyphonic voices is beyond here-and-now dialog intervention; voices can be dispersed across time and place, and what is critical is how one answers logics and ideologies of other voices. Consensus, and mono-linguaged, mono-logic frameworks of system theory are destructive to dialogic forces. Stylistic dialogism is the interplay of various styles of telling (skaz of everyday speech, official writing in reports, photos, gestures, décor, etc.). When multi-stylistics does not interrogate one another, and become managerialist orchestration, it is just more impression management, more spin, and dialogism ceases. Chronotopicity is relativity of time-space, how temporalities (past, present, or future) are privileged, and how space (4th dimension of time) is local or global. This maps with Boulding, who posited that the critical complexity property is history, and self-reflexivity. Architectonics dialogism is societal discourses, the interanimation of cognitive, aesthetic, and ethic discourses (one into the others). Again, this maps to Boulding, who saw in level 8 (social networks) as the emergent complexity property. Finally, there is the 9th level, that

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Boulding calls transcendental. It is here we believe that another complexity property is critical: how knowledge and the unknowable interact. Boje (2005b) in an article for *Journal of Management, Spirituality and Religion*, argues that this may constitute a reversal of modernity's expulsion of transcendental consciousness.

There is one more issue. The dialogism of the four dialogisms, how they are

interactive. For Bakhtin, as for Boulding, it is not a matter of one property succeeding another, and vanquishing it from the dialogic field. Rather, the complexity properties, as with the dialogisms, are cumulative, and interactive. What is critical is which ones are dominant, which ones have their effect, more or less, in a context. We conclude dialogisms in their interplay pose a revolution in system theory, the third cybernetic revolution.

*System Theory*, 1:1-10

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