

Six Voices of Discovery: Prologue, Monologue, Dialogue, Polylogue, Metalogue, Epilogue

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Abstract

This article discusses six types of “voices” noted in the title that we encounter during our lives whether pre-pandemic, pandemic, or ~~post~~-pandemic as we pursue the exhilarating quest to learn about ourselves and our world. The purpose of this article is to position and contextualize our current experience living in a world that continues to try and outsmart the mutations of the SARS-CoV-2 virus within the context of these six “logues”. An additional contextual component is the iPhone (and its variants) that also has had a dramatic impact on our lives but in a very different way. It is hoped that readers will critically evaluate this essay since it represents only the author’s perspective, perceptions, and understanding of why these voices are important and how they interact with two selected phenomena; namely the pandemic and the iPhone. The extent to which readers engage in these six logues based on this article will be the measure of its transferability and usefulness.

Key Terms: Prologue, Monologue, Dialogue, Polylogue, Metalogue, Epilogue, iPhone, Pandemic, StarTrek

Introduction

While the COVID-19 Pandemic may go down in modern history as having as much impact on us and our culture beginning in 2020 as did the introduction of the iPhone in 2007, it is important to recognize that we will continue to engage in monologue, dialogue, polylogue, and metalogue (as well as prologue and epilogue from a writing perspective) to explore, discover, and make sense of things until time is no more. The purpose of this article is to position and contextualize our current quest of discovery living in a world that continues to try and outsmart the mutations of the SARS-CoV-2 virus within the context of these six “logues”. However, I think that I first need to say a few words about Star Trek and the iPhone!

Star Trek and the iPhone

We bought our house in 1993 which was built around the year 1930 and features a wood burning stove in the living room that had been inserted into the original fireplace. We found this stove to be quite charming and it played an important role in our deciding to buy this house especially since when we came to view it with our real estate agent, the owner was conveniently seated in front of it with his little daughter on his lap reading a fairytale to her. How could we not buy this lovely house? And so, even though we later experienced trials and tribulations that rivaled those of Tom Hanks in the 1986 movie “The Money Pit”, we plunged ahead and purchased this house and, as of the time of this writing (September, 2022), we still live in it with that same wood burning stove although it has been deactivated for several years now.

Now that You have the context of this story, it is now time to talk about the iPhone which was introduced in 2007 and how I unwittingly preconceived it in 1993. While we really wanted

to fire-up that wood burning stove as soon as we moved in during that winter of 1993, we wisely chose to first have the chimney inspected to make sure that it was safe. As it turned out, there were parts of the stove and the chimney that needed repaired or replaced. And so, as the chimney technician examined our stove, he casually asked me if he could use our phone so he could talk to some other experts. When I handed him our “land line” (remember, no cell phones), he dialed-up somebody and I listened as he described the problem and told the person on the other end of the phone the serial number on the stove. He wrote down some notes in response to whatever this person said, ended the conversation, and then explained to us what parts he would need to purchase, approximately how much they would cost, and when he could come back to fix the stove. It was perfectly reasonable and satisfying solution to our problem. And then “it” struck me!

The “it” that struck me was what I had just witnessed I had seen previously on Star Trek beginning in 1966 – the “communicator” that Captain Kirk and the crew carried with them to get in touch with the Starship Enterprise when they needed information or assistance. It enabled them to get what they wanted when they needed it so that they could successfully complete their mission. And, that chimney technician’s request to use our landline foreshadowed the introduction of the iPhone and its progeny which enable us to do today the incredible things that we take for granted when we use our “phone” with its array of “apps” that go far beyond voice transmissions and enable us to connect to the world in real time, access an untold number of data bases, and enable us to monitor and control our personal and our work lives by clicking and swiping on a device measuring perhaps 6 inches by 3 inches. The iPhone and its progeny are now ubiquitous in our pockets and purses and it has truly revolutionized our world for better and for worse personally, emotionally, and socially. Now to move on to our “logues” while keeping

in mind the incredible array of things that mobile technology now allows us to do even though we have now become so accustomed to its wonders that we barely even notice.

The Six Logues

Keeping the iPhone in mind, let's now talk about the six logues. First of all, the term "logue" has its origins in the Greek term "logos" which refers to speech or discourse and then seems to have mutated into a philosophical and theological search for understanding what makes us and our universe function. In my view, both of these meanings are interconnected since the way that we try and make sense of things is to think, write, and talk about them. I have organized the six logues into prologue, monologue, dialogue, polylogue, metalogue, and epilogue where prologue and epilogue were added as the final two logues almost as an afterthought because they relate almost exclusively to things like movies, novels, and writing such as in this article while the other four logues reflect my original intention to speak to more generalized life experiences.

Prologue

"Tell them what you are going to tell them, tell them, then tell them what you told them" Anonymous

I liken *prologue* to the concept of an "advance organizer" (Ausubel, 1963) that is used to help learners organize and structure what they are about to hear or read in relation to their existing knowledge and unique ways of learning. It might be quite unusual to start an article with a prologue that was actually written after an article (or speech) has been written but I thought it might be of value to readers (and myself) to look back at how I went about constructing this article. I say "look back" because even though I write this as beginning remarks, I actually wrote this section when I had just about finished the article – sorta history in reverse. However, for

those of you who like to read things in chronological order, you can simply come back and read this section later.

One of the things that you should know is that I only added the quotes that begin each section after I had finished writing what I thought was the end of the story. However, as an after-thought I searched through my electronic file where I have collected sayings and expressions for several years from my Franklin Planner, daily newspapers, bumper stickers, and even fortune cookies. Speaking of the latter, whatever they pay those who write these sayings should immediately start paying them more – I have found so much wisdom there and best of all, you can legitimately claim it as your own since the writers are anonymous! Seriously, because of this late idea of adding quotes, I ended up changing and editing what I originally wrote because I found that the multiple perspectives about multiple realities were both unsettling and stimulating. As quoted under “Metalogue”, Albert Einstein famously said (among hundreds of other gems of his wisdom) that “the more I learn, the more I realize how much I don’t know” and that is certainly the case when you are open to other’s insights whether in dialogue, polylogue, metalogue, or even your own inner reflections and self-talk. I found myself initially placing most quotes under Metalogue since I now think that it is much like the top level in Blooms Taxonomy (Bloom et al., 1956), or Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow, 1968) and other taxonomies ... don’t we all yearn to reach those top rungs?

I also found myself wanting to build connections to the wonders of our memories as I reviewed my repertoire of quotes and then linking these to ideas and articles that I had previously written. I often advise my doctoral students that when they get to the “For Further Research” section in the last part of their dissertations to not simply engage in a kind of self-flagellation where they want to be sure that readers (and especially their dissertation committee)

perceive that they are sufficiently humble and for goodness sakes not dare talk too boldly about generalizability/transferability. Rather, I encourage students to develop a thoughtful agenda for their own future scholarly pursuits—one that will provide a foundation for their future adventurous discoveries. And so, listening to this advice myself, I found pleasure in being able to connect to some of my past work since it forms part of my own scholarly foundation. I hope that readers find at least some value or perhaps even inspiration in what resulted from this mode of inquiry.

Regarding the quotes that begin each section, I found it very difficult to toss-aside quotes since every one of them gave me something to think about. I also found myself continually shifting selected quotes downward from Monologue to Metalogue which is actually upward on the complexity scale. I tried to keep in mind Einstein’s advice that “Any fool can make things bigger, more complex, and more violent. It takes a touch of genius--and a lot of courage--to move in the opposite direction.” I hope that I at least partially succeeded in this regard but I think that this can be decided only by readers. My hope is that I discover later what the verdict is.

Monologue

“Blessed is the man, who having nothing to say, abstains from giving wordy evidence of the fact” (George Eliot)

“Half the world is composed of people who have something to say and can’t, and the other half who have nothing to say and keep on saying it.” (Robert Frost)

“We do not talk — we bludgeon one another with facts and theories gleaned from cursory readings of newspapers, magazines and digests.” (Henry Miller)

When we use the term “monologue” we may think about a stand-up comedian who entertains us with his wit and humor which, of course, Johnny Carson, perfected from 1962-1992 on “The Tonight Show”. On the other hand, a negative connotation is sometimes applicable such as when an individual monopolizes a conversation not allowing others to speak such as when professors lecture non-stop while their students feverishly try and write down what they say even though they may understand very little of this monologue nor actually care much about it.

One of the more intriguing questions is whether Lev Vygotsky’s conception of “Private Speech” (Vygotsky, 1978) is a monologue or a dialogue with oneself. For those not familiar with this concept, private speech is like talking to yourself in a subdued voice perhaps mumbling or barely moving one’s lips. Sometimes, of course, we talk to ourselves aloud which may cause others to wonder about our state-of-mind which is why I invented the abbreviation “LS” for “laugh silently” when alone in a public setting versus “LOL” (laugh out loud). In any event, for purposes of this present article, please consider private speech as monologue while keeping our options open.

When we consider monologue in its various interpretations, we are left with a form of communication or “logue” where we must rely heavily on our ability to listen to whomever is speaking -- even if it is ourselves. Some might even consider books and other written language as well as art, film, and plays as monologue since we don’t have much opportunity to respond, although we can “reflect” on what is said or seen, and thus engage in a type of dialogue although in modern parlance it is asynchronous rather than synchronous. Of course, these latter two terms are associated with online learning which came to play a more significant part in our lives with the advent of the pandemic in 2019-2020 and may (or may not) continue to be a significant part of our lives in the future if the variants of the SARS-CoV-2 virus continue to mutate. Monologue

has played a significant part in our lives since time immemorial and will presumably continue to do so in a post-Covid world even if post-Covid becomes something like flu season and is a perennial part of our lives.

In relation to the iPhone, we can access databases, Youtube videos, games, apps to control our home appliances etc. as a type of monologue although again, there might be a certain degree of reflection that accompanies these excursions into cyberspace thus meriting perhaps a higher degree of affirmation because they may touch upon higher levels of the famous “Bloom’s Taxonomy” (1956) such as application or analysis. It appears that “monologuing” may have increased dramatically during the COVID-19 pandemic as individuals sought ways to engage virtually albeit without any live interaction.

Reflections on Monologue

I now recognize that I selected the three quotes listed at the beginning of this section because of my inherent negative view of monopolizing conversations whether in the classroom or in life -- including when I do it myself. I remember about ten years ago when I was teaching a group of practicing teachers that I stopped in midsentence as I was lauding the merits of a “student-centered” teaching approach because it struck me that I was doing the very opposite! I was too busy lecturing students instead of inviting them to share their own experiences and insights about this topic – I was “talking the talk but not walking the walk”. Based on this pivotal experience, I gradually began to internalize the maxim that “if there are 20 students in the classroom, there are 21 potential teachers” whether I was teaching undergraduate, masters, or doctoral students no matter the subject matter and regardless whether it was online or in a traditional classroom setting. I do think that the subject matter moderates how this approach is

used (for example, I have found that statistical procedures require more teacher voice than some other courses that I teach), but even with this type of class, I have been able to “flip” instruction and hopefully create a more student-centered classroom approach.

Dialogue

“One of the most sincere forms of respect is actually listening to what another has to say.” Bryant H. McGill.

“No matter what people tell you, words and ideas can change the world.” Robin Williams

“To think is to speak low. To speak is to think aloud.” F. Max Mueller

“Perhaps you will forget tomorrow the kind words you say today, but the recipient may cherish them over a lifetime.” Dale Carnegie

“Get you facts first, and then you can distort them as much as you please.” Mark Twain

The term *dialogue* is commonly used to denote a conversation among multiple persons; however, in order to try and preserve distinctions among the logues, I will use it to describe communication between two individuals and reserve conversations among more than two individuals to *polylogue*.

Listening demands more attention and effort than does simply hearing. However, sometimes when we are engaged in a dialogue, the other person may say “I hear you” where they mean that they understand what it is you are trying to communicate. In this sense, it seems that hearing and listening mean the same thing. So, what exactly is dialogue versus monologue? While listening is certainly a critical component, each person also needs to contribute something meaningful to the conversation that somehow connects to the reason why a conversation was started in the first place. In other words, a real dialogue needs to have something more important than the weather or else it is simply a parallel monologue versus an interaction of thoughts and feelings between two individuals.

Engaging in a dialogue also requires that we “bracket” our own beliefs to some degree or else we end up with the kind of political “debates” that often beset us as aspiring politicians apparently believe that to agree with their opponent to even a small degree might lose them votes. It is indeed a challenge to listen and to even agree with some arguments especially when they concern deeply-held beliefs like politics or religion. In fact, we often avoid bringing up these topics and their variants such as abortion, transgender, and welfare because most of us want to avoid unnecessary conflict. The problem, of course, is that by failing to talk about these issues we block creative solutions that might be generated as a result of rich dialogue or perhaps even a deeper understanding of the issue and empathy with those who hold contrary views. The recent/continuing pandemic for example gave rise to violent disagreements regarding mandatory vaccinations. Of course, these disagreements were exacerbated by the confusion caused by sometimes conflicting guidelines which was exacerbated by our lack of knowledge and understanding of this hopefully once-in-a-lifetime assault on virtually every aspect of our lives. Nonetheless, it would seem that honest and open dialogue absent political vitriol might go a long way to finding amicable and effective solutions.

Roger von Oech said “one of the major factors which differentiates creative people from lesser creative people is that creative people pay attention to their small ideas” which brings up another dimension of dialogue and that is conversations that we might have with ourselves. While “talking to yourself” was looked seen by Piaget (1954) as an early stage of development that he thought of as egocentric speech and when children play together as a “collective monologue”, Vygotsky (1978) as noted under *Monologue* , thought that “private speech” is a positive attribute for promoting cognitive development. I generally side with Vygotsky on this issue because we all need to slow our sometimes frantic minds and emotions down by quietly

enunciating what we are thinking or what we should do next in order to solve problems or plan our day. In fact, I would argue that dialogue with ourselves is both common place and helpful for clarifying our thoughts and ideas – I for one surely find this to be a daily routine!

As far as the iPhone, while we might think that this wondrous invention would promote a healthy and richer environment for dialogue, it seems, at least to me, that the very ubiquity of the cell phone has caused us to devalue rich conversation and listening and has seemingly produced a generation(s) that does not know how to engage in dialogue but rather sees genuine dialogue as an outmoded way to make wants known; consequently, we sometimes find ourselves rushing through conversations by quickly providing bits and bytes of information. Of course, this negative observation could simply be the rantings of a baby boomer lamenting Millennials and Gen Z just like the “Greatest Generation” probably lamented what they had brought forth. In fact, as a bona fide baby boomer, I must admit that I often use my cell to call friends and family when I am in my car traveling to or from work or an errand so I will have a ready-made excuse to end the call when I arrive at my destination. In other words, the foundation of the phone call is often built on the expedient to simply convey information, discharge an obligation, or at best to “converse” in order to fulfill the basic human need to talk to somebody and share pleasantries.

Reflections on Dialogue

First of all, notice that while there are three quotes for Monologue there are five quotes at the beginning of Dialogue as well as one embedded in the text and I have a feeling that there will be progressively more quotes as we move on to Polylogue and Metalogue! I think that the reason for this is because these higher levels of interaction are simply more interesting as well as more complex and so perhaps more has been said about them. It may also be the case that as I curated the quotes in my collection, I was simply drawn more to these higher genres. In any event, these

five quotes span the spectrum from the practical to the humorous with insightful words of substance in between. On a personal note, I find it quite difficult to listen to others attentively before jumping in with my own thoughts. I think that one reason that I do this is because I'm afraid that I'm going to forget what I want to say if I delay saying it. And, if I do manage to silence myself, I find that I keep repeating my own ideas to myself privately (private speech?) so that I don't forget and consequently I don't really listen nor understand what the other person is saying. I have often thought about inventing some kind of device where I could store my thoughts like an external hard drive that I could then access when the other person is done speaking and thereby relieve my anxiety about forgetting what I want to say. Thus far, I have failed in this product development enterprise and continue to envy those individuals who seemingly can give full attention to others as they speak and when it is their turn to speak, they are able to connect their ideas to what was said with no apparent anxiety about forgetting their thoughts. I suppose in the meantime, I will continue my product development quest or hopefully learn from others a better strategy for listening rather than just hearing!

Polylogue

"The newest computer can merely compound, at speed, the oldest problem in the relations between human beings, and in the end the communicator will be confronted with the old problem, of what to say and how to say it." Edward R. Murrow

"Conversation may be compared to a lyre with seven cords-philosophy, art, poetry, politics, love, scandal, and the weather." Anna Brownell Jameson

"Tell your own story, and you will be interesting." Louise Bourgeois

"By listening, one will learn truths. By hearing, one will only learn half-truths." (Fortune Cookie-Angor Restaurant, Pittsburgh, PA.) (5-6-22).

"Every man hears only what he understands." Goethe

Here is where we try to engage in group discussion involving more than two individuals whether in a real setting or online via Zoom, Google Meet, or some other platform. Of course, digital polylogue, just like monologue, got a real boost from the pandemic when schools and corporations learned to work remotely except for those who were required to be in the real setting such as hospital staff, emergency workers, and those who had to deal with actual material goods such as truck drivers and bricklayers. Others, whose work could be done digitally and remotely were able to work from home by using a computer in conjunction with application software and some kind of digital communication platform where they could manipulate data and solve problems in a virtual group setting.

As an online instructor, I have found both synchronous and asynchronous approaches to be effective ways to engage students in polylogue learning. I have been teaching online at the doctoral level ever since my university began an online program in 2012 as a complement to the traditional classroom program. I had experience teaching online prior to doctoral teaching; however, I must say in retrospect that I would probably give myself a C grade at best for these early online experiences since I was under the illusion that uploading a syllabus, and assignments interspersed with occasional announcements, constituted effective online instruction. Fortunately, by the time I began online doctoral instruction I recognized the primacy of teaching presence (Bhatty, 2020) and worked diligently to put this essential component into practice by regularly engaging in asynchronous conversations with students, hosting synchronous sessions as needed, and generally trying to make students feel like they were of central importance during these virtual encounters. I must humbly say that based on student feedback it seems like I have generally succeeded in this task. However, in the Spring term of 2022, I encountered a challenge that was entirely unexpected when I was assigned to teach a course in the traditional classroom

setting that I had been teaching online for ten years and it jolted my confidence in engaging students in polylogue! At the time of this writing (October, 2022), I am still trying to make sense of this unique turn of events by exploring this issue in collaboration with one of the doctoral students in this class as well as the director of the doctoral program. Because of this, what I write here will assuredly be incomplete but at least I can share how this challenge relates to polylogue.

As noted, I had achieved a certain measure of success teaching online and while I knew that moving back to the traditional classroom would entail some challenges, I was confident that they would be minor. This illusion lasted for perhaps two classes when the students convinced me through words and actions that an approach designed to teach online did not work in the traditional classroom setting. While details will be lacking here since trying to understand the ramifications of this experience must await collaborative efforts with colleagues, let me say that this transformation ended well because I eventually was reminded to put students first – not goals and methods. Just like online teaching, genuine listening and engagement came to define our polylogue in the traditional classroom setting. I re-applied the advice of Cooper and Garner who argue convincingly in the “New Three R’s” that **R**elationships must precede **R**elevance which must precede **R**igor if you want to create a “learning classroom” versus a “managed classroom” (Cooper & Garner, 2012).

The more that I think about polylogue, The New Three Rs apply not only in educational settings but in family and social settings as well. By first establishing relationships, we create the necessary foundation of respect and sense of caring (Bernauer et al., 2017) to facilitate polylogue. Relevance means that we seek and build on common ground whether in the classroom or elsewhere and try to offer meaningful comments so that new knowledge can begin to emerge between and among all participants. While rigor is often presented as the most

essential component of academic excellence, my own take on this based on teaching undergraduate, masters, and doctoral students (as well as with my own son) is that if we place rigor before relationships and relevance, while we may win the fealty of a few gifted students in the area we are teaching, that most of our students even if they “pass” the course will not leave our classrooms (or families) with the positive attitude and mindset that we hope they would have.

Quality polylogue is vital in our classrooms, families, and nation because it is only through this kind of group discussion that we can fully unleash both our own creative potential as well as that of others. What we can create through such polylogue is a kind of knowledge that can be created in the spaces among and between us which can then be re-constructed by each of us in our own unique way. And, it is Constructivist Learning Theory (based on the work of Jean Piaget, Lev Vygotsky, and John Dewey, among others) that seems to provide the best way to understand how the interactions among individuals engaged in polylogue can result in significant leaps in human knowledge. The iPhone (as well as other media) can be used to facilitate polylogue which can be quite effective as I recently discovered in a family tele-medicine meeting regarding required medical care for loved ones which the pandemic forced upon us.

Reflections on Polylogue

Based on both the opening quotes and the discussion that follows, I find that I now want even more to create a culture in both my classroom, family, and social contexts where I “tell my own story” while also listening closely to (not just hear) the stories that others are telling. Failing to recognize the uniqueness of every individual and empathetically listening to them (even if I am anxious that I may forget what I want to say—see *Dialogue*) is probably at the heart of most of our social woes and divides. As far as the iPhone and its progeny, I think that technology (like most things in life) can be a force for good or evil depending on contextual considerations and

whether moderation rather than excess is the rule. Communicating in a meaningful way with others must emanate from who we are as individuals while we simultaneously practice the art of listening to others because we recognize that we can learn from each person while we reciprocate in kind by offering our own genuine and caring insights. This is a quest that seems worthy of our efforts.

Metalogue

“The more I learn, the more I realize how much I don’t know.” Albert Einstein

“Sometimes the heart sees what’s invisible to the eye.” — Alfred, Lord Tennyson

"Good instincts usually tell you what to do long before your head has figured it out." Michael Burke

“We do not remember days, we remember moments.” Cesare Pavese

“Life can only be understood backwards, but it must be lived forward.” Soren Kierkegaard

"Someday you will be old enough to start reading fairy tales again." C.S. Lewis..

“Poetry is when an emotion has found its thought and the thought has found words.” Robert Frost.

“We cannot teach people anything; we can only help them discover it within themselves.” Galileo Galilei

“Chronos is time looked at in measured moments. Kairos is being lost in a timeless experience that cannot be measured. Like the first moments of loving someone deeply and not being conscious of time.” Fr. Bertrand Buber

“I know that I don’t know what I don’t know.” Marguerite Yourcenar

“True wisdom comes to each of us when we realize how little we understand about life, ourselves, and the world around us.” Socrates

“The true sign of intelligence is not knowledge but imagination.” Albert Einstein

“I try to avoid looking forward or backward and try to keep looking upward.” Charlotte Bronte

“There are two statements about human beings that are true: that all human beings are alike, and that all are different. On those two facts all human wisdom is founded.” Mark Van Doren, American poet, 1894-1972.

As I opined under *Dialogue*, I would probably find myself collecting a greater number of quotes as I moved onto *Polylogue* and *Metalogue* and indeed this is the case—before I whittled my selected quotes down to 14, I preselected 39 quotes that I perceived to be related to *Metalogue*. This whittling was a most difficult task since all of the quotes offered unique insights. Unfortunately (or fortunately, I know not which), we humans must still engage in reductionism at some point in our inquiries since, while our creativity may be limitless, our capacities to analyze, interpret, and understand are circumscribed by our inherent limitations.

Our discussions regarding monologue, dialogue, and polylogue have probably not created much criticism or elicited many “aha moments” among readers. However, I think that the still emerging conceptualization of metalogue is transformational because, while it entails elements of the preceding logues, it goes well beyond them and results in something that incorporates these logues into a gestalt that is more than the sum of the component logues. What does this mysterious logue look like? I would argue that athletics, books, movies, art, music, theatre, sculpture, dance, poetry, etc. reflect metalogue because they almost magically take an entire spectrum of learning and experiences and transforms these into something new that may surprise even the person who creates it. However, if individuals are not engaged in what they read, see, or experience and do not construct their own meanings, they cannot enter into conversational metalogue (whether in person, synchronously, or asynchronously) but rather may perceive everything as simply monologue that often results in surface knowledge rather than deep or “robust knowledge” (see Richey & Nokes-Malach, 2015) as often happens to recipients of uninspired lectures, speeches, and sermons.

A legitimate question is whether the “consumer” of creative works can actually become a partner in metalogue. I think that the short answer is “yes” provided that there is a parallel

attempt to create unique yet shared meanings as in both dialogue and polylogue; that is, that the consumer works to become a co-creator. These kinds of encounters are characterized by an excitement that punctuates conversation, painting, playing, sculpting, writing, and other creative endeavors. I am reminded of the affirmation by the late Harry Wolcott (2009) where he said that “I have come to the (obviously oversimplified) belief that people whose lives are involved with the written word can be divided into roughly two groups: those who mostly read and those who mostly write (pp. 17-18). While I do not hold either of these predilections to be superior, it seems that writing is more akin to the transformational act that can create metalogue. For those of you who are avid readers please do not take offense at this statement since I am aware that reading well is an art of great merit in and of itself (see, for example, Adler, 1940). However, I think that for metalogue to occur whether in the arts, crafts, music, or sciences, something unique must be created that “speaks” to others via varied and multiple mediums. I am reminded also of the movie *Apollo XIII* where the space crew is stranded and requires the creative application of materials designed for one thing to be used for other things – sometimes referred to as “bricolage”. Based on true events, this movie shows us how creatively and collaboratively working to transform objects and tools into new creation represents the fruits of metalogue.

Metalogue brings us back full circle to the other “logues”. Both revolutionary technology such as the iPhone and revolutionary events such as the COVID-19 pandemic may accelerate metalogue if we remember to keep our eyes, ears, hearts, and brains open to what we have experienced and continue to experience and create in our own unique way something that conveys our insights to others both now and in the future. Through sharing our insights and questions with both the present and future generations, we can become instigators of heuristic

inquiry rather than only conveyors of static knowledge that is continuously being transformed and re-interpreted.

Reflections on Metalogue

I was struck by two quotes including Cesare Pavese “We do not remember days, we remember moments” and by Fr. Bertrand Buby “Chronos is time looked at in measured moments. Kairos is being lost in a timeless experience that cannot be measured. Like the first moments of loving someone deeply and not being conscious of time.” Both of these quotes add richness to Metalogue in terms of how memory and experience affect this most esoteric form of logue. I have previously written about memory including what I referred to as “Metamemories” which I coined well-before I came to read or think about the concept of Metalogue. (see Bernauer, 2020). I have a feeling that others (especially poets, novelists, composers, and playwrights) have plumbed these concepts and ideas in different ways over centuries.

When it comes to writing, Wolcott (2009) describes his hope that his writing is not looked upon as monologue but rather what I have described as metalogue –

By its very nature, however, writing does produce a sort of *monologue*, a monologue in which one individual monopolizes the conversation, albeit in written rather than spoken form. I wince when anyone refers to something I have written as a monologue, wondering if perhaps that is exactly the word they intend. You have no opportunity to tell me why you chose to read this, what kind of information would be most helpful, or where you would like me to begin. I must more or less “make you up” as I go along, trying to anticipate what brings you to this reading and to address those concerns. More important, just as in lecturing, I must try to convince you that I know what I am talking

about, so you will attend to the problems that I identify rather than remain singularly preoccupied with your own (p. xii).

I think that Wolcott's concern with his writing seems to reflect the need for a "conversational approach" (see for example, Adyanga, 2022); Bernauer et al., 2020; Bernauer et al., 2022).

While such writing may not be perceived to be "academic" by some, I have found it can capture the essence of both polylogue and metalogue as described in this paper in a way that goes beyond formal academic writing.

Epilogue

While I have tried to create and to convey my own understanding of "logue", it is the "voices" within each of us that we must be attuned to if we really want to engage in genuine dialogue, polylogue, and metalogue. The term "conversation" whether with oneself or with others for me captures the essence of both dialogue and polylogue. However, the art of conversation, just like the art of reading and writing requires disciplined work (Adler, 1983). Garner (2022) when describing conversation as an art, the website for the Century Association whose "major criterion for membership is being a good conversationalist" states that members can be "of any occupation long as their breadth of interests and qualities of mind and imagination make them sympathetic, stimulating, and congenial companions in a society of authors and artists" (p. 43). Here we see the need for integration of all of the logues – I wonder about the stress level of those who must meet these criteria!

Regarding the Covid-19 pandemic, and how it has affected our predictions based on existing data about the economy, inflation, traffic patterns, etc., Allison Schragger says-

“It is unusual for the world to change so much in such a short amount of time, but it offers a valuable lesson that we will probably forget: Data is only a guide, and never a replacement for our own judgment. Going forward, we’ll have to take all the predictions, big and small, with some skepticism and balance them with our own personal experience.” PPG , July 8, 2022, in an article “The Data Will Enslave and Misperlead You”, p. A9. This speaks to me of metalogue.

I offer the following Youtube link to a music video that my son created in the midst of the pandemic. Let me warn you that it uses some language that some may find offensive so please be forewarned. However, being a part of this “lived experience” I can honestly say that this metalogue captures much of the angst that continues to surround us as of this writing while still in the pandemic or perhaps a post-pandemic with residual trappings. While it is in one sense monologue, I think that if you are open to its message, it can create an ongoing metalogue for all of us. In any event, the music that you will see and hear is a voice of discovery that I hope speaks to you as it has to me. You be the judge and feel free to engage in any and all the logues that come to mind!

Here is the video link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SyYnMyYXO7I>

Conclusion

“A country can be judged by the quality of its proverbs.” German proverb

I would like to conclude by sharing a very recent experience that I had attending a phone conference with a physician who was caring for a family member who had experienced heart

failure. I must tell you that I was so impressed by not only this doctor's knowledge but also his humility. While he led us through the results of various tests and answered our questions patiently, he also let us know that he did not have all the answers in terms of long-term outcomes and other questions although the patient had positive markers in several area which was encouraging. In a quiet yet humorous voice, he said "unfortunately when I graduated from medical school, they gave me a diploma and not a crystal ball." We all laughed and appreciated both his concern and competence as well as his self-deprecation that showed me that he recognized that he was indeed in "practice" and that learning would continue to grow. He also said that, even though he was able to understand test results that they all had to be interpreted within the context of each patient. This conversation was indeed a satisfying polylogue!

Now what made this polylogue even more interesting was that when we ended the call, two other participants entered the picture. Two relatives were actually in the patient's room while the three of us were engaged in the conversation with the doctor and the contrast in perceptions was striking. While the polylogue left us (especially me) with a most satisfying aftertaste, the two participants in the patient's room talked about the apparent pain that the patient was experiencing and concerns about a lack of liquids. The impression conveyed by these follow-up voices who had "boots on the ground" apparently painted a different picture of the reality of the patient's well-being than what I was left with following our conversation with the doctor. This stuck me as the differences we find between a scientific view of the world and a naturalistic one – between abstraction and tests versus observation and listening to the voices both around us and within us. As I continue to reflect on this apparent dissonance, I am struck by the complementary nature of quantitative/scientific data and qualitative/naturalistic data. The evidence presented in these various "logues" yearns to be integrated within a larger theoretical

framework whether one of holistic health versus specialization or more accurately including specialization or perhaps a more integrative view of education where terms such as online, onground, virtual, and technology come to be viewed as threads within a larger tapestry of learning. It struck me that both qualitative and quantitative data of necessity must be integrated because, if they are viewed within an appropriate larger theoretical framework, “paradigm wars” can truly be forever disbanded just like we try to disband wars with, of course, only partial success.

In a recent virtual conversation with colleagues when I asked how they thought about and used the term “meta”, it sparked some very interesting comments. For example, Marti Snyder replied --

Great question. I guess the word "meta" alone means going beyond, or transcending. I'm using meta within the context of the metaverse (as a new space beyond what we've mostly experienced on the Internet). The metaverse is a 3D model of the Internet. You can access the metaverse either through a computer browser or headset or head mounted display (HMD) like the Oculus Quest, HaloLens, etc. You can meet up with people and have real time interactions in this immersive space. Meta (formerly Facebook's) workrooms is a cool example of this. There are a bunch of separate metaverses that are, right now, not connected. Examples include Fortnite, Roblox (e.g., Nikeland when you can go and dress avatars in virtual Nike gear), Decentraland, Sandbox. You can attend virtual concerts, art exhibits, conferences, etc. The metaverse even has its own economy that is run through crypto currency and blockchain technology.

I responded thusly

Perhaps our whole fascination with "meta" stuff is a continuing evolution away from our rationalistic view of the universe to try and paint a more complete picture of reality. So, instead of continuing to only try to parcel out variables that can be analyzed in a linear fashion perhaps it reflects our growing awareness that we need to use not only mixed-methods but also mixed-paradigms in conjunction with emerging technologies to achieve a fuller understanding and appreciation of what's both inside us as well as the outer layers of reality including spatially, chronologically, historically, philosophically, psychologically, sociologically, spiritually,

I fully subscribe to the notion that “writing is thinking” (Wolcott, 2009, p. 18). Actually, I think it is probably more correct to say that writing is a part of thinking or a type of thinking that, just like qualitative and quantitative data and our various voices, should be understood for what they are – an orchestra whose instruments and voices can and should be appreciated both as solos (monologues) as well as the full production of dialogues, polylogues, and metalogues. Regarding the quotes at the beginning of each section I conclude with this final one attributed to Thomas Macaulay and English historian -- “Nothing is so useless as a general maxim.” Yes, life is too complex, exciting, and full of potential for discovery to limit our perspectives based on a single unchanging maxim because life itself offers us the opportunity to enjoy all of our voices as we engage in ongoing conversations with both ourselves and others.

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