

Reflections on the Purposes of Human Inquiry

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Human inquiry is participative, experiential, political, and action oriented. As such, it addresses very different purposes from orthodox social science, moving away from the narrow purpose of contributing to a field of knowledge toward a living inquiry that is integrated in the lives of all those involved. Such inquiry "faces the people" and "is of use," arising out of the needs and experiences of the people it serves, aiming to interrupt patterns of power that define issues in the service of the powerful. Using theory primarily in the service of the practical may also aim to speak out to a wider audience in a manner that causes them to reflect on the nature of knowledge making. In addition to immediate purposes, human inquiry also aims to heal the fragmented experience that is part of the legacy of positivism and to stand continually against the development of a new orthodoxy in inquiry.

We started our debate with a discussion of the purposes of human inquiry, for it was evident from the beginning that the group of people that joined in the dialogue at Bath wished to legitimate very different purposes from academic social science. It became clear that if we are to revision the nature of human inquiry as a participative, political, and experiential human process, we need to look at and legitimate a wider range of purposes than merely to contribute to the field of knowledge. It seemed appropriate, therefore, to begin our discussions with a longer look behind both the methodology and the epistemology of orthodox social science and ask, "What are we trying to accomplish in our inquiries?" As Marja-Liisa Swantz put it, "I am just basically wanting to say that I do not separate my scientific inquiry from my life and that for me it is really a quest for life and to understand life and to create what I call living knowledge and it is knowledge which is valid for the people with whom I work and for myself."

Traditionally, science and scientific research have been seen in the Western world as privileged disciplines, separate from other human processes, whose purpose is to produce some objective knowledge about an empirical world. Mitroff and Kilmann (1978) described this approach to science as occupying "a privileged and preferred position: value free, apolitical, cumulative, pro-

gressive, disinterested, clearly separable from other fields" (p. 34). It is interesting that Mitroff and Kliman, in their exploration of different approaches to social science methodology, do not actually address the question of the purpose of inquiry, although Mitroff, in a recent manuscript with Churchman, argues that science must be in the service of humanity "as if people mattered" (Churchman & Mitroff, 1993, p. 3). Similarly, Lincoln and Guba, in their exposition of naturalistic inquiry (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) and the constructivist perspective (Guba & Lincoln, 1989), are concerned with the nature of knowledge rather than the purpose of inquiry.

Susman and Evered (1978), in their classic article on the scientific merits of action research, suggest that it is a process that aims to contribute to the practical concerns of people in a problematic situation, to contribute to the goals of social science, and to develop the capacities of people and social systems in facing their own problems. However, most of their article is concerned with the epistemological merits of action research rather than an in-depth exploration of these diverse purposes, and it seems that action research has been in continual difficulties in resolving the perceived contradictions between theory and practice. By contrast, Tandon (1989), writing in the tradition of participatory action research, places the question of purpose first in addressing the question of a possible alternative system of knowledge:

The dominant system of knowledge describes its purpose (answer to the question "For what?") as the pursuit of truth. . . . In contrast, alternative systems of knowledge production are involved in answering questions of daily survival and providing insights into the daily struggle for life and living or ordinary people in struggle. (p. 7)

Thus it was to this fundamental question we turned at the start of our dialogue. This article is based on the debate we had at the conference, drawing on the tape recordings of the proceedings. The headings and quotations were selected by me, and the overall comments are mine; I chose the quotations from the dialogue—more or less verbatim, although tidied up a little to make sense on the printed page—in an attempt to present the reader with a feel for the discussion and questioning. Participants in the dialogue are often referred to by their first names to emphasize the personal quality of the debate. No attempt is made to provide firm answers; the intent is rather to raise the questions and encourage wider debate.

LIVING INQUIRY

To the scholar-practitioners at the conference, inquiry is not a separate, privileged discipline but is directly connected to our lives and the questions we bring to our lives. Ilya Maso argued that inquiry was about asking real questions, "a real question you really don't know the answer to." Marja-Liisa talked of her purpose in inquiry as "first of all something that arises from your own self

and the need to somehow fulfil your own inner self. . . . Your research is determined by your own quest. I have called my quest the quest for living knowledge, and that has shaped the purpose of my work through quite a few decades." For Marja-Liisa, the quest for living knowledge is directly connected with working in the interests of ordinary people in their life situations (Swantz, 1995).

Bill Torbert elaborated on this by telling how he started his inquiry career by wondering "if I could study my own leadership in trying to create a school and thereby study my own leadership." So for him "the purpose . . . has also been not what we call a pure modernist scientific purpose at all, but rather . . . I have come to use the phrase 'living inquiry,' which I think probably means the same thing as 'living knowledge.' The inquiry has to do with changing myself first of all in real situations. In some sense, we are seeking for the good life—what we each may come to mean by the good life."

Living inquiry is thus passionate, committed, involved, and personal. Yvonna S. Lincoln made the distinction between "knowledge for curiosity, which is how I understand the modernist search, and knowledge for living, knowledge for being, knowledge for feeling, knowledge for staying engaged, knowledge for I don't know what . . . but it's not just knowledge for curiosity, knowledge for knowledge's sake. It's knowledge for the sake of relating to people in a different way."

But the notion of living knowledge is not simply a personal quest. As Marja-Liisa pointed out, there are always conflicts between your personal quest, what you want to gain for yourself, and the needs of the situation and the people with whom you are trying to work. Judi Marshall pointed out that "the danger is reading oneself so much into the research that the research becomes only a portrayal of yourself. . . . I have an image of myself living on the edge in my research and wondering if I am too comfortable, whether I am really choosing the difficult things to do or whether I use the privilege of my position . . . and I just take the easier hits."

We also wondered together whether curiosity was such a bad thing. "Were we to be intolerant to people's curiosity?" Adri Smaling asked. And Ineke Meulenbergh-Buskens pointed out that curiosity could be an expression of deep concern and connectedness. Orlando Fals-Borda mused, "Maybe it is more than curiosity. Perhaps what you need is anxiety when you are anxious or you experience anguish and you look for an answer or a solution, not mere curiosity, and from that standpoint the knowledge gained may be more useful or significant." And this comment took us to Ilya's point, drawing on Gadamer: "To do research you have to ask a real question and a real question you really don't know the answer to."

Thus a central purpose of human inquiry is to develop knowledge that informs and guides the way we and others live our lives. It is a living knowledge or action inquiry immediately relevant to how we live our lives and thus, as John Heron puts it in this issue, it emphasizes the primacy of the practical. Bill notes, "The aim of [social science] is to inform the active living of our own lives in personal, organizational, and political contexts."

INQUIRY AS A VALUE IN ITSELF

In a way, the very question, "What are the purposes of inquiry?" is misleading, for it leads us to think in instrumental ways that inquiry is of value for what it results in, for some external end point. From another perspective, inquiry is simply good in its own right as an expression and actualization of human capability, and the development of the capacity to inquire—into our purposes and values, into our individual and collective behavior, into the life on our planet—is to be celebrated and encouraged in its own right.

Thus Judi spoke of the life energy that research can bring: "I really loved, Maria-Lisa, hearing you say that for you research is a living quest. It's been part of that journey about finding out what my quest in the world is, why I'm here as an inquirer. I seem to have little choice about that identity in the world. . . . If the research that I have done has not meant something to me, I have not been able to do it with any heart and therefore I have moved away from it. I think often research is about a personal process, that people bring their life energy and questions to research. . . . I have found in my own research journey that when I have a question that is really important to me, even if I don't know what that question is, then the research is alive and I am questioning. I love to see it with postgraduate students; when they are really working on the edge of something in their lives or in the political arenas in which they work, then it feels as if research is important and makes a difference."

The process of fully engaging in inquiry makes this more evident. Judi spoke again: "I notice that quite often people have overt aims for doing research when they start; and at some point, if allowed the freedom. . . . to become themselves in their research, then those overt aims often collapse into why it is really important for them to be doing that piece of research. For example, one of our Ph.D. students came here saying she wanted to know more about equal opportunities strategies and policies in organizations. But that kind of way of framing her research could not be sustained—somehow it did not have life in it—and after a bit she said what she wanted to know was about Black women's identity in the U.K. at the moment—hers. So sometimes it's the honoring of that deeper level of question or that more personal level of question. . . . It's about legitimizing one's own thirst for knowledge at the edge of one's own world."

Binoy Acharya expressed his identification with the participative research process: "I never ask this question why I'm doing participative research. The purpose was never a question to me because if I am going to question why I'm doing participative research [then] I am questioning my existence. It is a part of my lifestyle. . . . The purpose of entering into participative research is entering the process. . . . asking questions about 'How do we live?' It is an ongoing question; it unravels. The questions of passion, concern, anxiety—these are part of it."

Bill spoke of the importance of inquiry in the life of a wider community. Our individual question is always in the context of others: "therefore somehow we are working toward a concept of a good community or a good sociality, so there's

that element in my purpose. What kind of knowledge helps me to see myself more clearly, what kind of knowledge helps me to create community and then. . . there is obviously a larger question of what kind of knowledge can help to create some more lasting standards or images of what a just society looks like." Harry also expressed concern that the idea of inquiry might become too individualized and wished to emphasize the place of the community in which meanings were made and action took place.

Thus quality human inquiry is an end in itself; it is the actualization and celebration of a human capacity and of our place in the scheme of things. We may see this in humanist terms such as the actualization of a unique human capacity. We may see it in political terms such as reaffirming the right of people to create their own knowledge. Or we may frame it in a wider and spiritual context such as seeing ourselves as emerging out of the primal origins of the universe so that our consciousness participates in the universe. From the latter perspective, "The human activates the most profound dimension of the universe itself: its capacity to reflect on and celebrate itself in conscious self-awareness" (Berry, 1988, pp. 131-132), and humanity is "nature rendered self-conscious" (Bookchin, 1991, p. 313).

FACE THE PEOPLE

Orlando observed that the purpose of inquiry is "to transform society radically through knowledge/action for justice, equity, and freedom, especially for the benefit of those social classes which are exploited, destitute, or oppressed, and to give them a proper exercise of power. Science is thus related to political action by means of radical praxis."

The quest for living knowledge is directly connected with working with people in their life situations, working with how people experience their worlds and how we might work together to change them. Many of those attending the conference identified their work as being in the service of impoverished or disadvantaged people, working directly from their needs. Maria-Lisa described her life in Africa: "I faced a. . . situation from which you could not start from a scientific scheme; you could not start working from some preconceived theoretical construct, but you faced the people. That has influenced my total work. . . . I have faced many different situations, and I was glad that I could say that the reality is always different from what you would think that it theoretically should be." She talked about working from the people's level up, rejecting terms such as "culture" and "development"; rather, "I just talk of 'life situations' and work with people in their life situations, trying to see how the people can better manage their own situations and how they can defend themselves against all these forces which are thrusting from all over now, even more so than before, on the ordinary people in the villages in Africa."

Binoy introduced the notion that inquiry is about "taking sides" and the term captured our imagination and became part of our conversations. Before the conference he wrote, "Participatory research has its basis in taking the side of the poor. . . . If the processes of people making history is the broadest theme of our research, rather than theory building, and [if] living with people to understand the social reality is a core value of social inquiry, rather than debating over methods, we might get to a new sort of social inquiry." Later he said, "It's the people's question. . . . The people start questioning their reality. . . . The purpose of research is not just voice but to make the people's voice."

I argued that working for people was not only about working with the disadvantaged or oppressed: "The kind of people that I find myself being of use to are professional people who are trying to revision their professions. . . . I work with people like doctors and accountants who want to practice doctoring in different kinds of ways. They may want to share power or be more open in what they are doing, to collaborate with patients and collaborate with other people in more effective ways. That feels important to do, and I think it is liberating in a different kind of a sense. . . . liberating people from the constraints of the Western worldview."

Jenny Campos expressed similar concern that her work should serve "the other." She talked about the "different constituencies that we serve. There are those of us who are involved in universities, and we do this type of research with a constituency not typically served by a university. There are those in the public domain working in institutions or organizations who then work with yet a different constituency. There are those of us in Third World development who are working with oppressed indigenous groups or whatever, who have been involved for years and years in politically sensitive lives. So going back to the question of the other, the journey for us as researchers is important but also isn't the main purpose of what we are doing. . . . which is to address the needs of the other."

Quality human inquiry starts not with a concern for theory or knowledge but from engagement with the reality of people's lives and how they live and experience them. As Harry Coenen pointed out, concern for knowledge arises from this practical concern to help people make better sense of their lives and create more and better possibilities in their lives. Although it may be influenced by our own life quest, we must start from questions of experience, need, and practice as defined by the people with and for whom we are working. Human inquiry is thus essentially in-service.

TO BE OF USE

Pat Maguire wrote before the conference, "I am not a social scientist interested in more participatory research, but an educator and activist exploring alternative paradigm research as one tool in the multifaceted struggles for a more just, loving world."

The phrase "to be of use" is the title of a poem by the novelist and poet Marge Piercy. Patti Lather described her enthusiasm for different ideological positions—Marxism and feminism—but found that "we see the limits to what we have enthusiastically endorsed. . . . The question of why we keep going is a very pressing one. . . . so I hang on to this Marge Piercy point, to be of use." Being of use at the moment has engaged her deeply in work with women with HIV/AIDS. "At present, I am in the situation where I have been invited in to do something. It's a very different world when you don't have to get someone else enthusiastic about what you are doing, but you are in some ways a kind of servant." Being of use in this sense means being deeply involved in the particularity of that situation: You are there because you have something to offer. "Each inquiry is its own situated thing, and it carries its own possibilities and limits with it. And we are a particular kind of person at that particular point of time and in that particular kind of context. So how do we do our inquiries in such a way that we can wrestle with the dilemmas of being of use in that situated inquiry?"

Bill made a similar point. "When I am working with anybody else, my purpose is to help them to get on the track of an inquiry which makes a difference in a day-to-day sense in their life. . . . The research is never separated in my mind from an effort to make a difference. It isn't first you do the research and then you try to make a difference." And Yvonna argued strongly, following Bleier (1984), that there are so many problems on which we need to act that we cannot afford to be asking questions simply for the sake of knowing the answers.

In this sense, quality research is about values and choice: Where can I place myself to be of most use in articulating what I stand for?

INTERRUPT PATTERNS OF POWER

Pat argued that the notion of being of use was of particular importance in looking at power relations. "One of the purposes of inquiry is to tweak the status quo, to tweak power relationships. Who asks the question? Who frames the question? . . . It's not only answering questions, it's. . . recognizing that in inquiry who frames the question has tremendous power and focus. . . . Part of the purpose of inquiry is to be of use in tweaking power relations, looking at them, shifting, poking, prodding, exposing them, seeing where they are, but also helping other people, groups, organizations, small groups, and communities to pose their own questions."

Patti argued similarly. She took from Foucault the question "Is it really possible to have a human science that is not about policing, regulating, normalizing, and commodifying?" and suggested that such a science would be "liberatory, emancipatory, and empowering" and would thus interrupt "patterns of power."

Both Patti and Pat pondered the difference between interrupting patterns of power at a micro level and at a macro level. Patti thought she knew how to interrupt power patterns on a micro level, within a small group or commu-

ntity, but asked "How do you begin to do this odd kind of science in a way that will also be about interrupting macro patterns of power, that will have some purchase for the people who make policy? . . . I refuse to say that in order to affect policy I have got to follow conventional patterns of science, yet when I look at who makes policy, often times there are people who by and large are much more comfortable with listening to conventional forms of scientific knowing. So it's a kind of quandary: How can I both do this blurred genres kind of science and do work that will have some kind of purchase with those that make policy?"

We know from the classic work on the sociology of science that the creation of knowledge follows ideological interests (for a recent discussion, see Ber- man, 1995). In quality human inquiry, this is done purposefully with the intention of raising issues and questions that are habitually excluded from public consciousness.

SPEAK AND WRITE IN A MANNER THAT MAKES PEOPLE THINK

Although most participants were engaged in some kind of action-oriented research, with the aim of being of use to a group or community of people, many were also concerned to influence a wider community and also to influence what is taken as knowledge and the way knowledge is held. Thus the question arose as to how to communicate the outcomes of research not as a fixed truth but in a way that makes people think—in particular, to think about the very process of knowledge making itself. This starts from a concern for what Judi called "making accessible theory. . . expressing things in words that people can use," pointing out that in the gender area in which she works there is a lot of very inaccessible writing. Patti similarly talked of the "politics of accessible language" (see Lather, 1995; Tierney, 1995). The immediate question is about representing the experience of those with whom one has worked in a way that does justice to their lives, addressing what Denzin and Lincoln (1994) call the "crisis of representation" (p. 9).

But the question of language and presentation is more than using accessible language and more than making new meanings; it involves questioning the process of meaning making itself. It is about a whole range of experiments in form and text that serve to call into question the nature of the text itself. Patti talked of her "risky practices" and "textual experiments. . . . How can the text look differently? . . . What would a text look like that would be accessible to a broad audience but that would also not simply replicate a realist tale. . . . I'm interested in kinds of textual practice that are accessible to broad audiences but also encourage a kind of thinking about what it is we are reading. How can the text itself both honor . . . how complicated the world is . . . and be put together in such a way that it would begin gesturing toward how layered and contradictory [experience

is]. Orlando's double-column book, *The Double History of the Coast* (see his contribution to this issue), addresses a similar set of issues.

Judi argued that "one of the purposes of research and inquiry is producing a kind of temporary truth that we may test and live by but be willing to let go." She said she was prepared to be "wholly wrong. . . within a systemic view of the world" if what she had written then made people think deeply and from that act to change their world. Thus the potential that people might "react violently" against her work is "just about fine with me, although probably dangerous for my sanity and health and my colleagues have to look after me if people criticize my work too heavily." Research conducted in this way is about "having to voice something in the world and wanting to have the courage to do that and wanting to know whether I have the courage to do that. How to set up research so that I keep on challenging myself?" And again, this is about being willing to ask questions and trying to make others ask questions rather than communicating an abstract truth: "Can I challenge myself to do research while holding ideas lightly so that something I am very excited to express in the world does not become some fixed entity that then I have to pretend is true and have to hitch my career to or have to start saying as if it were true. I may want to say it wholeheartedly, but I may not want to say it as if it is true forever."

David Hamilton suggested that research was not so much a mirror as a prism that reveals reality in a new light. The essential point here is that in quality human inquiry we represent our understandings in a way that calls them into question—for ourselves and for each other. Further than that, we call into question the whole process of our knowledge creation and making sense of our worlds, but in a way that continues to honor the experience of those for whom we speak.

RELATION BETWEEN PRACTICE AND THEORY

The question of the place of theory within participative human inquiry was the subject of much discussion. There is, as Patti pointed out, a tension between the fascination of high theory and the practical needs of the world. Bjørn Gustavsen started the discussion with an argument for staying close to the pragmatic and to the everyday (see also his contribution to this issue). He contrasted traditional social research with its concern for the development of formal theory, with the concerns of conference participants to turn to more practical developments. Because we may no longer accept any "autonomous criteria" against which to judge our research (see Tom Schwandt's article in this issue), we must ask, Bjørn suggested, "Does it work, does it make a difference? We change the focus from the inherent properties of the inquiry to its external functions . . . to help us do things better in practice." In some fields of practice, it is relatively easy to do this (e.g., Is this system of production more productive

than that one?). But in others, where we are concerned with wider and more subtle issues such as the exercise of power, the nature of democracy, or alternative economic systems, it is much more difficult to know whether what we are doing "works" in practice; it is even difficult at times to know what we mean by "works." The danger and temptation, then, is to reintroduce a conventional kind of theory to define where we are and to assess the consequences, and then we are back where we started, with traditional social science. Bjørn argued that "when we move into discussions . . . about power, about commitment, involvement, passion, all the rest of it . . . it is important to take these concepts on a kind of everyday language level and not try to make theory about them. Because if you try to make theory about them, we are back to square one . . . back again to critical theory and vast conceptual constructions. . . . I think we should stay with . . . taken-for-granted concepts that we need to have with us, but we don't need to make more of them than people generally do." This is an important notion that was shared widely: that people's ways of making sense of their world, although "unsophisticated" from an academic perspective, are their theorizing.

This discussion led to questions about what science actually is and whether we are doing science. Morten Levin asked, "Is it necessary to legitimize what we do as science when we actually don't do social science the conventional way? What kind of theories could you use? . . . I would suggest, for instance, if you are interested in psychoanalysis, don't read Freud, but read Ibsen, it communicates much better." To which Patti replied, "I want to claim science as a kind of guerrilla movement. . . . I want to work within science to change science." Maybe we can invent a form of social science that includes Freud and Ibsen and people's everyday perspectives?

Yvonna followed Bjørn's argument in making the distinction between local theory, which she defined as "theory that doesn't travel very well," and grand theory. Rupe Chisholm argued that people make their own theory anyway as a natural part of making sense of their world. And Jack Whitehead argued strongly for the creation of living educational theory, referring to his work with teachers in helping them address the question, "How do I improve my practice in the classroom?" (Whitehead, 1989).

For some participants, the notion of theory was less relevant. Binoy thought that in participative research there was no debate on theory and practice: "I think it is our practice that is relevant and that the experience that might be valid in one situation might not be valid in another situation. I don't want to enter into the whole question of theorizing the whole practice." For Orlando, "Theory seems to be a Western thing," and he questioned whether abstraction would help us understand our world better. He thought that maybe this is why the "Southern voice may sound differently from the Northern interpretation." Jenny wondered whether we could "do this kind of social science without theory," for whereas theory might help in providing a perspective on practice, after a while it loses its impact. She noted that in development work in a Third World

setting, "very quickly theory is completely enveloped by the debilitating heaviness of oppressive conditions" and may become irrelevant. She thought that theory had a romantic pull, certainly for intellectuals, and that we might fall into the old trap of seeing theory in the end as "really more important than practice."

Inke asked whether theory and practice had to be separated, suggesting, as had Orlando, that the cerebral use of theory was an expression of the divisive Western mind. Her experience in South Africa suggests more an experience of unity: "What if you and your theory are actually inseparable and grow together? What if you actually only discover a theory by having the experience and by living through something?" Bill argued similarly that theory was not necessarily disconnected from the everyday world. "For me, the purpose of inquiry is in part to construct the theory, and the theory is not just to conceptually embrace the world but rather to connect me to a preconceptual world . . . and to connect me to my practical action as much as possible." This kind of theory helps him "best know whether I am speaking in a mutually enhancing way or a dominating way every time I open my mouth and whether I am listening or not, and it helps me to produce a kind of a tension that can also see the effects [of my actions] . . . through forms of inquiry. . . . So the purpose of inquiry is to expand the personal social awareness of actual practice." From his own practice, he had found that developmental theory was a large idea that helped "carry people closer and closer to their own questions."

The participants, although expressing it in different ways, seemed to agree on the primacy of practice over theory and that it was important for local theory to make sense of practice. There was a suggestion that theory and practice did not need to be divided but that a more comprehensive theory emerges out of practice, as argued by John in his contribution to this issue. At the same time, there was an ambivalence about metatheory or high theory, which led us later in the conference to ponder on the changing role of the intellectual in a postmodern world. There is far more work to do here in developing notions of pragmatic theory that are integrated with practice.

HEALING OUR WORLDVIEW

Brian Goodwin and I both saw the purpose of inquiry in part as contributing to a revisioning of the dominant Western view of knowledge. I argued that the Western worldview is coming to the end of its useful life and that "a very fundamental point of doing research is to be changing that worldview, actively, practically, in real terms changing the way we experience our world and our lives." This aims is not at odds with the practical and political aims espoused by others because "there is something which is immensely practical which is about changing the way we experience the world." I quoted Matthew Fox as asking what an ecological religion would look like because "humankind has been involved in a gross desecralization of the planet, of the universe, and of our own souls

for the last three hundred years" (Fox, 1995, p. 32). This leads to the question of "what an ecological science would be like and what that could look like to unpick our secular and disenchanting world." I suggested that "human inquiry is one path toward creative experience of the world which includes experience of the sacred whole, representation of that experience in ways that bring beauty, understanding and framing that experience in ways that are not alienated, and action and engagement to heal ourselves and our planet" (see Reason, 1993). This raises the question of whether we can develop a form of human inquiry that is about "unpicking patriarchy, unpicking the world we've been in, and creating another one which does recognize and is prepared to trade in such notions as beauty and healing." Thus a key purpose of human inquiry is to heal our relationship with each other and our world. To heal means to make whole. We can only understand our world as a whole if we are part of it; as soon as we attempt to stand outside, we divide and separate.

Brian argued from his own perspective as a biologist that "we have an incredibly sharp distinction between what you might call truth and meaning." He thought that the quest for truth had led to a loss of meaning and that his aim of revisiting biology as a science was to "heal myself and in the process to recover the relationship with nature, the sense of the sacred that has been lost by the separation of truth and meaning. It's necessary to recover the person with passion, with love, with a sense of the sacred . . . and for me this whole process of inquiry is a process of healing. We are always trying to generate a whole, some kind of meaningful whole, in our relationships with each other, in our relationships with nature."

HETERODOXY

Finally, as Tom pointed out, "The danger might be that we develop another orthodoxy and decide that certain people are not going to be legitimate." Bill suggested that we might share a "concern with a false univocality, a one-voicedness and therefore the one standard of judgment. . . . A work that does not discover and play with and work with multiple voices, multiple perspectives on the world, is not a work that is engaging difficult questions, is not a work that is discovering the deep stuff of the human world." Orlando agreed, saying that this would be a contradiction of the very notion of participation, and he spoke for "heterodoxy . . . as a way of life."

IN CONCLUSION

By way of conclusion, I wish to briefly compare this exploration of the purposes of human inquiry with the Susman and Evered (1978) article. It is sobering to ask, "Where have we come in the past 17 years?" for many of the arguments made by Susman and Evered about how action research could act

as a "corrective to the deficiencies of positivist science" (p. 589) would not have been out of place in our dialogue. They argue that action research is "future oriented, dealing with the practical concerns of people creating a more desirable future"; that it is collaborative and implies development of the competencies of those involved; that it generates theory "grounded in action"; that it is subject to "reexamination and reformulation" at each cycle; and that it is situational, depending on "how particular actors define their situation" (pp. 589-590).

Although our concerns clearly are closely related to those of this classic model of action research, it is important to note the subtle yet significant shifts. The Susman and Evered (1978) article is titled "An Assessment of the Scientific Merits of Action Research" and much of the article is devoted to an exploration of the crisis in organizational science and a critique of positivist science. Although the ghost of positivist science still haunts the corridors of academia (especially perhaps for graduate students), we can in this postmodern age fully accept Lincoln and Guba's (1985) firm assertion that "positivism is passé" (p. 25); certainly for practitioners the questions of positivism are truly irrelevant. At the Bath conference, we were not concerned about how to fit our inquiry practices into a positivist academic science or to revision that science but rather to explore how the processes of human inquiry might address a wide range of human purposes: personal action, political action, education, liberation, the aesthetics of meaning, and the healing of our relationship to our world. So our first, and perhaps most important, concern is to legitimate asking the question, "What is the purpose of my/our inquiry?" It is a question that should be explored fully in every research proposal and every Ph.D. thesis. This article indicates some of the lines along which such an exploration might follow.

A second difference from the classic action research model is that we were much more concerned about how to *integrate* knowledge and action. In the classic model, the aim is expressed in terms of meeting two distinct goals: that of the situation and that of social science. From our perspective, the error is to separate these two; rather, we seek a living knowledge or action inquiry in which we act with knowledge and reflection; we seek knowledge that is useful to us and others *in action*. Further, whereas some participants were unsure what the goals of our social science might be beyond the immediate situation, calling theory building into question unless it facilitates reflective action, for others the outward face of research is to inspire forms of representation that prompt and provoke revisioning and new understanding of our world.

A third difference from the classic model is that our human inquiry places more emphasis on taking sides; it attempts to be both self-critical and partisan, concerned for the needs of oppressed and disadvantaged people and also concerned for ideas, perspectives, and values that are "written out" of mainstream culture.

Finally, although the classic model recognizes the "deficiencies of positivist science," we are more concerned to correct what we see as the devastating consequences of the positivist worldview on the planet, its life, and its people.

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