Chapter 21 Boje Stories of Voice of the Voiceless

Background

FOUR VOICES OF DIALOGUE. We focus here on the ethics (3rd voice that is categorical or practical) and most of next chapter is on the 4th voice (voiceless, a different sort of ethics).

A theory of leadership I developed to explain the Z-dimension of participation and ethics is called the Four Voices of Dialog.

• One voice monologue – the leader tells everyone what is what, and there is no real feedback. Very autocratic, not a listener when it comes to participation.

• Two voiced dialogue – leader speaks to the Other (in their head); there is an internalized Other who is dialogic, at least empathetically to the leader. Leader may or may not participate with this Other outside his or her own head.

• Three voiced dialogic – Moral Ethics! Maxims: “Thou shall not lie”; “Thou shall not steal”; “Thou shall love thy neighbor as thyself.” The Third Voice is ethical; it is what Adam Smith (1723-1791) called the voice of the internalized “impartial spectator.” The leader participates with an internalized ethical voice, one learned at Mother’s knee, or in socialization at church, temple, or other organized religion.

• Four voiced dialogic – This next voice is the voice of the voiceless; the voices of silence; it’s a voice present by its absence; examples: the animals, insects, human, or environment that is unable to speak. This is an internalized voice that is ethical and more aesthetic.

Dialogue, a conversation of participation among several people, in the same time and place, is not the same as “dialogic” (or dialogism). In the four voices model, 1st voice is monologue, and is neither dialog or dialogic. 2nd voice is internalized dialogue (better form of participation would be to meet the Other in face-to-face dialogue). 3rd and 4th voice are dialogic (& beyond simple face-to-face or imagined dialog). 3rd voice is the internalized spectator of one’s ethical voice (a transcendental voice), which is dialogic with the first two voices. 4th voice is voice of silence, one that speaks by its silence; it would speak if it were able or un-oppressed. 4th voice is dialogic to the other three voices. In 4th voice we expect an answer, but it does not come; yet the 4th voice leader invites its participation, opens oneself to voice of silence, and hears an aesthetic response.

Two key Ethics concepts:

1. Dialogism – we live in dialogic worlds, where multiple voices, here and now, before and anticipated, in dreams and ‘real’ time, interact. The ethics of dialogism is recognition of being in worlds where ours is not the only voice. It is a responsibility to notice, hear, and respond in action to those voices around us, especially the ones so easy to tune out, to ignore, to treat as not there at all.
2. Answerability – we are answerable. In my Turtle and Mosquitoes story, I am answerable for killing turtle, as tourist on the ferryboat, and as tourist swatting mosquitoes on nature preserve trail. I am complicit, a part of the relationship of species on Gaia, and am to blame for what happens, because I am a co-participant in the events of the island, by being there. I can turn my back on answerability, on the ethics of being the one person in the situation, looking at dead turtle, dressed in netting to cut back on the mosquito killing I do.

For example, I imagine what the old growth forest (nature preserve, in my story) spoke to me before it was clear-cut (to make way for more tourists). I imagine what this silent x-forest says to me, to my children’s children who will never see such forest. Dialogic is Bakhtin’s (1973, 1981) concept, and can take several forms that are beyond “dialogue” of the simple here-and-now face-to-face conversation. I think my story illustrates this.

**STORY IN 3 SCENES** – The story that follows illustrates some points about ethics, and themes in this chapter.

**SCENE 1: Turtle and Mosquitoes on Ocracoke Island**

Narration: Ocracoke Island is in the Outer Bank area of North Carolina. It’s Aug 07 and I am on vacation there. I am exploring the marshy side of the island
Guest: “I see you are prepared for the mosquitoes.”

David: (dressed in two layers of mosquito netting, broad brimmed straw hat, long sleeves, long pants, with backpack) “I’m headed to the marsh side of the island, to a conservancy areas, thick with mosquitoes. Today I’ll hold them off. My eyes used to swell shut, when I was ten years old, living in Alaska. Would wake up and think I’d gone blind. Still allergic to them, but don’t swell as much.”

Guest: “Never seen so many mosquitoes here. Highly unusual.”

David: (everyone says that, I say to myself. I walk doing the Tai Chi walk, Master Lee taught to me in Manchester England, a few days ago. I head down the trail to the marshy side of the island. It is a forest thick with all kinds of trees called ‘Springer’s Point Nature Preserve’).

SCENE 2: Man versus Mosquitoes

David: (out loud, talking to mosquitoes): “Today I am prepared. You will not penetrate my defenses. I am going to sit under this tree, in the swamp, and meditate.”

Mosquitoes: (of course they don’t talk, but I imagine this, as a swarm army comes my way) “We’ll see about that.”

David: (don’t believe it. They are getting in between the layers. Me being a Jain, I am not allowed to kill even an insect. Still, I think it is a commandment I will break, if they sting me, that rules is out)

Mosquitoes: (the swarm attacks in greater number. A flank to left and right, and hitting Boje high and low)

David: “That’s it. Most of you did not get through. A few bits, but only a few. I’m moving on”
SCENE 3: David Meets Turtle

David: (I make my way to the shore, away from the forest, to where the wind blows and the swarm can not light on my body. As I walk along the shore, I look for sea-shells, find some interesting feathers to make quill pens, then I spot it).

Turtle: (does not speak. It’s dead. It’s hind legs are missing)

David: (looks to the dredge barge, the one that keeps the channel deep enough for the car-ferry boats to bring tourists, and I am one of them, to this island. David decides to make this image, but with 4 legs, the image of Turtle Island in his leadership book).

Narration: late hat night, awakening from dream

David: (writes in his notebook). ‘I dreamed of a green turtle. A gentle turtle, not the snapping kind. I could see it was green, in my dream. I will think on turtle as my spirit guide animal and learn what turtle ways I can. Like not to snap, to be wise in ways of having a shell to withdraw to, to return to the island.’

THREE STORY APPLICATIONS TO THIS CHAPTER

1. **Kant’s Categorical Imperatives versus Practical/situation ethics** – It is to not lie, to not kill, and all the other commandments. As Catholic, I know that the ‘don’t kill rule’ is interpreted situationally (what Kant calls practical ethics), but as a Jain, its pretty categorical, you don’t kill any being, even the mosquito (as scene 2 illustrates). Still, I am not perfect, and have killed a few. I swat in a reflex.
2. **Voices** – 1\(^{st}\) voice I hear is my own. 2\(^{nd}\) voice I dialogue with the guest. 3\(^{rd}\) voice, I hear the ethics of my Catholic upbringing and my more recent Jain (12 years now). 4\(^{th}\) voice is voice of the voiceless turtle, laid slaughtered on the shore, and the voice in dream of the Green Turtle, as soft-shelled turtle. I reckon the dream is an answer to meditation to find spirit guide animals (part of my native tradition, not something everyone does, could do, or is allowed to do by their categorical imperatives)

3. **Dialogism** – It’s a word Mikhail Bakhtin coined. It means the answering of one another, not just in conversation (e.g. guest and me in scene 1), but in anticipating conversation (like this one I writing, and why I had photos to include for you), and the dialogism between species (humans & turtles or mosquitoes), and the internalized dialogism between voice of my varied spiritualities, and the wisdom to be gained by listening to the voiceless (animals and humans).

SECOND STORY

**STORY IN 3 SCENES – The Labyrinth of Dialogue**

**SCENE 1 Shy Mask (High School Classroom, Shadle Park High, Spokane)**

Teacher: “I asked you. Did you do the homework? Do you have the answer?”

David: (refusing to speak, shakes head in no gesture, but inside his head): ‘I did the homework. I know the answer better than most everyone here. I don’t speak in class. I am a shy, silent person. So I will keep my shy mask on. Beware I have power of Tiger within!)

Teacher: “I am giving you an F for this assignment. That’s three in a row. Guess you’ll end up an auto mechanic.”

David: “Whatever!”

Teacher: “What did you say? I did not know you could speak. Well that is going to cost you.”

**SCENE 2 Chain Collision (Reflecting back to grade school, Catholic school, 2\(^{nd}\) grade, Spokane, Washington)**

The sow and reap proverb is very pervasive. If I sow a thought, reap an action. Sow an action, reap a habit. Sow a habit, reap a destiny!

Nun: “David, stop asking questions. Do not come up here and ask until you think”
David: “OK” (so I am not supposed to talk. I guess I will speak when spoken to)

Narration: Boje learns to not speak, ever. Does not say another word in school, in class, until the incident in high school. He is labeled shy, but in his head there are many voices, entire dialogues).

**SCENE 3 Burlington County College – take off that mask**

Advisor: “David, you don’t talk much.”

David: “Never saw the need. Just gets you into trouble with teachers.”

Advisor: “David, if you don’t speak in class, you will get the same C-average you had in High School”

David: “I learned to speak up a bit in the Army. Being in a war zone (Vietnam) will do that to you.”

Advisor: “Take off the shy mask. Its no longer useful.”

David: “How?”

Advisor: “Put on a new mask. You could be a Shaman”

David: “What is that?”

Advisor: “You could be more narcissist. Try this. Take the center of attention, once during every class you are in, each and every day. Come back in a week and report on your progress.”

David: (a week goes by): “Wow, that is really tough. I raised my hand in a class of 300, and asked a lame question. Was easier in a small class.”

Advisor: “Keep at it. Follow the rule, speak up in every class, at least one time, no matter what size class.”

David: (a week later, in Geography class): “May I ask a question?”

Teacher: “Sure, what is it?”

David: “Who speaks for the trees?”

Teacher: “What do you mean?”

David: “You keep saying the rainforest is disappearing. Who speaks for trees? Who speaks for the animals?”
Teacher: “Rainforest Watch, Earth Watch, maybe PETA for the animals. These are great questions. I’m giving you extras participation credit.”

Two years go by. Boje is standing in line at graduation. His father and step-mother are in the audience, with Boje’s wife and daughter.

Provost: “Is there a David Boje in line?”

David: “That’s me.”

Provost: “Congratulations, you have the highest grade average in the college, a perfect 4.0. Sorry, we screwed up. That should be you giving the speech to the graduating class. A clerk made an error. Too late now. I’ll announce you as top grade, but the student on stage will give the speech.”

David: “OK. Was a time when I was too shy to speak, especially to such a huge audience, like this one.”

Provost: “Keep up what you do in class. I hear you ask a lot of questions.”

David: “Actually, I only ask one per class, but do so in all my classes, every day.”

Provost: “Well, keep that up and guarantee you will be valedictorian at the next college. Where are you going?

3 APPLICATIONS TO THE CHAPTER

1. Voice of the Voiceless (4th voice): There is a voice inside the head, and even the shy person has one. I had one in scenes 1 and 2. In scene 3 I got my voice in the head to match what I said outward to others.

2. Masks – Its true I wore a shy mask. Would not know it now. I have changed masks. Going for the Shaman mask. Tuning into more spiritual voices, listening to them, responding. Not that I am narcissistic. Well I am. But, its more that a shaman heals people, balances energies.

Speaking for Animals and Trees: Who speaks for the trees is a phrase my friend Bob Gephart uses. Its important to notice how animals and trees, rocks, and streams, the Gaia is being treated. If earth is a living organism, then it has a voice to be heard. I now ask questions of people, how they treat Gaia.