THE DUVERSITY

BACKGROUND

Most of this account is from the standpoint of myself and may not do justice to the contributions of several other people.

The story begins with John Bennett. In the 1960s I was privileged to work with him on the last two volumes of his magnum opus *The Dramatic Universe.* In this book, Bennett was laying the foundations for a new approach to human knowledge, based on two fundamental principles. First, that all our knowledge was incomplete and uncertain. Second, that we *understand* what we know through *structures.* It was taken for granted that the scope of the book in its four volumes included all major fields of human activity and experience. The vista of an approach that included all human knowledge and experience, hazard as necessary to intelligence and investigated the intrinsic structures of thought and apprehension made a powerful impact; and it has stayed with me since.

There was a small group of young men around Bennett at that time, each one of whom went on to further the search in their own ways, and we sometimes speculated about a possible 'Dramatic University' where people could study in this all-inclusive and wide-ranging way. Bennett liked to call his approach *integration without rejection* and what he attempted flew in the face of ever-increasing specialization. His vision went far beyond the more usual understanding of inter-disciplinary studies. It included the integration of spiritual methods – as shown in his book *A Spiritual Psychology* – and, most important of all, he enjoined us all to consider *communication with higher intelligence* as a *necessity.*

During this period, various projects were launched, some of which have been mentioned already.

1. The discipline of *Systematics* as the study and practice of basic forms of understanding based on integral number.

2. The technique of *structural communication*, partly based on systematics, designed for communication of *understanding.*

3. The *integration of methods* such as he experimented with and thought about all his life.

4. Research into different kinds of *time*, which was always a hobby of his.

5. Communication with *higher intelligence*, which he considered fundamental.

6. In his formulation of the aims and objects of the *Institute for the Comparative Study of History, Philosophy and the Sciences* he included research into the factors that lead to the progression or retrogression of individuals, groups and societies.

In the 1970s, I worked with Bennett at his International Academy for Continuous Education, right up until his death in 1974, and saw first hand the extraordinary experiment he was making. Around 1990, after exploring other paths and coming across some serious dead-ends, I returned again to these themes. This was first through a contact with the extraordinary work of John Allen and his friends on the Biosphere 2 project, where many of Gurdjieff and Bennett's ideas were incorporated in concrete terms. Then, in a series of seminars given at the Baltimore Center for Holistic Health, through the invaluable support of Jerry Toporovsky, I explored the root ideas to see where they could be taken. During this same period, I began to be assisted by Karen Stefano, who brought her knowledge and experience of the world of psychotherapy with her, that has proved of critical importance. I was also continuing my association with Ted

Matchett, whom I had first met in the 70s and whose insights into creativity remain unequalled.

I had also begun experience of the *dialogue process* and began to practice this with people as much as I could. This engagement was first through the *School of Ignorance* initiated by Anthony Judge, whose Encyclopaedia of World Problems and Human Potential, published by the Union of International Associations, remains an extraordinary accomplishment. But it also brought me back to the work of David Bohm who taught me physics at Bristol University, and who became a foremost proponent of dialogue. Meanwhile, I continued to work at *systematics*. Here, Saul Kuchinsky was extremely helpful in publishing not only my papers but also those of Ted Matchett and many others. In the early 90s, Saul took the name 'Dramatic University' to use for his journal, with my permission.

It was working with various people in experimental seminars that led me into proposing the name *DuVersity.* The word 'dramatic' I thought too misleading, since we might be referring to a university of drama. More importantly, I wanted to express the growing insight I had that *diversity itself* was important and that the general urge to seek out and apply forms of unity was liable to be misguided if not downright manipulative. Somehow playing on the words 'university' and 'diversity' I settled on 'DuVersity', reasoning that it was most unlikely that anyone else would come up with this word! Broadly speaking, the DuVersity is the 'university of diversity'.

In the mid 190s, I started using this term, when I was working with Steve Mitchell and Jason Joslyn, two young men with creative ability, who were foremost in experimenting with the technique of *N-logue* I had developed from experience of dialogue and systematics. Several years ago, we were running experiments via the internet using this technique! It was Karen Stefano who persuaded me to form a non-profit organization to support the work that was unfolding. This was officially done in 1998, just after our first seminar-dialogue (also held due to the help and support of Jerry Toporovsky) called 'All and Everything', in which we returned explicitly to the projects initiated by John Bennett decades before.

Amongst the many other strands that are woven together in the work of the DuVersity I must give mention to the program of *video-conversations.* This was initiated by Ben Hitchner in 1995 by sponsoring a dialogue between Joseph Rael and myself. It was continued by Steve Mitchell and has now been taken over by Karen. It was Steve who helped us initiate the filming of Edith Wallace, which Karen has vastly extended. One of the other many important people with whom we have had conversations is Patrick de Mare, originator of the median group, which forms one essential component of our *working group process.* Karen has a special link with Patrick and has done a great deal in enabling his work to be followed in the USA.

With the creation and development of our web sites, we now have a public presence. It is not possible to confine the DuVersity to 'fourth way' audiences. Our range of activity is wide.

It is possible to define the DuVersity simply as the sum of what it does or has done to date. This would define it extensively. An intensive definition would be more on the lines of one of Bennett's main 'projects' – *communication with higher intelligence.* This may seem extreme or too 'spiritual'. However, it may prove to be the key. I do not believe that higher intelligence conforms to our ideas about what is 'spiritual'. Higher intelligence means that we do not in fact progress by our cleverness and also that such an intelligence works in a reality in which everything really is connected to everything. This far outreaches all our 'unitary' concepts and models. I believe we have to learn communication with this intelligence not by knowing about it but by *participation.* I also

believe that a time will come in which humanity will – perhaps again – take it for granted that we live in a medium of intelligence as much as we live in a medium of air.

Friends such as the late Ted Matchett or Joseph Rael obviously felt this. So did John Bennett, who said: 'There are higher energies that *work*. We must learn to take part in them.' Our task is to act accordingly. The DuVersity does have an 'esoteric' side but it may be up to each of us how to understand and make use of it.

An important consideration is to see how the historical roots link us with what is roughly called 'the fourth way' while, at the same time, we do not wish to be allied with this corpus of beliefs and methods only. It is possible to claim that what the DuVersity does is making a contribution to an evolution from the fourth way and we have been involved in some controversy because of this. At the same time, we have ranged outside the confines of fourth way thinking to assimilate influences from many sources, in particular those of 20th century research into group psychology.

In one of his first books *The Crisis in Human Affairs* John Bennett refers to Gurdjieff's 'system' as a corpus of methods, implying that it is not an ideology but a way of 'know-how' that serves the interests of anyone who is committed to evolution in whatever form. This is, I feel, of foremost significance for our work. I say that the DuVersity does not align itself to any 'teaching' in the old-fashioned sense of a system claiming to be true. It seems to me that we live a glut of information about almost everything and that what is needed is learning how things work.

THE QUESTION OF DUVERSITY

The DuVersity exists to ask a question. It explores what emerges as a result of this question. It brings into question, possibly, all the answers which have satisfied most people for most of the time.

The question is: How can we live with diversity?

Take any sphere of human interest – as wide ranging as the nature of the universe or as focused as the working of a group. In anything we find of interest, we find diverse and even divergent points of view. We can never fit all the diversity into one view, or come to a conclusion that will accommodate everyone. We say that there is a *real diversity*, which can never be reduced to a single element. It is not only that there are different individuals who might feel, think or sense differently just as a feature of their individuality. We say that diversity is real even when we consider, for example, the natural world.

In the previous historical period, it was assumed that there was one true understanding of the whole, however large or small the whole happened to be. The religious conceived of the One God. The scientific, of the One Set of Laws or TOE – Theory of Everything. It was axiomatic that there could not be anything like a world or universe unless there was some underlying unity. Everything had to derive from One or be held together by One. Diversity was an illusion created within the One or due to the subjectivity of human minds, with their bias and partiality.

In the last few hundred years, humanity has undergone the trauma of becoming conscious of many alternative 'realities' or ways of understanding reality. The cultures of the West and East and of the North and South have come into contact. They have found that there are many kinds of One! It does not require the impact of psychotropic drugs to realise that there are alternative realities. Humanity has begun to see that language and culture are also 'drugs'; and the influences reaching the very young remain with them for the rest of their lives.

Many people today strive to incorporate elements from divergent cultures into themselves, as an attempt to find a new kind of unity. But many also feel that we are

very far from having anything like a 'world culture' capable of integrating our historical diversity and modern science and technology. Havel points out that, although the world is becoming globalised, this is relatively superficial and does not address how people feel about themselves. Indeed, we witness a sometimes savage return to the tribalism of pre-modern times. A westerner might feel that they are achieving some kind of cultural unity on an individual basis, but this means that there are potentially as many new cultures as there are people.

Some might imagine that science is converging towards a unified understanding, but this would be a mistake. Although many physicists extol an approaching TOE (theory of everything) what we actually witness is a bewildering plethora of the latest theories. There still remains a significant gap between the two main theories of the twentieth century – relativity and quantum mechanics. Attempts to explain consciousness range through neurophysiology, evolution, language, mysticism and biochemistry.

Astrophysics comes up with ever new and strange entities in the cosmos, black holes and 'dark matter' being just the tip of the iceberg. The accepted story line of cosmic evolution is being rewritten all the time. Even though the mystics have largely withdrawn from competition with the physicists there remain a vast number of people who seek to explain the existence of the universe on religious grounds. The physicist David Bohm argued that *every* theory had its own limited and proper domain of applicability and none had rule over all. Indeed, he sometimes came near to suggesting that there was an 'infinite' range of possible theories.

Thus, in practice, there is no achievement of unity in any sphere of human life and experience. All attempts to 'put it all together' fail. This has been explained by some people, such as Krishnamurti, as due to the fragmenting character of thought itself. Thought must be, in its basic operations, divisive and contradictory. It can only operate by 'cutting up' experience into bits. If this is true, then we might look for some alternative kind of cognition and insight; but such a kind of cognition must integrate thought into itself, or else it is incomplete. There is a 'New Age' mentality which often tends towards some supposed eradication of thinking in favour of the 'heart' but it does nothing to help us understand the arising of thought in the first place. We also notice that appeal to the 'heart' does not resolve any problems of human diversity because the heart is as much the place of attachment as it is of liberation. To put it in other words: how we experience ourselves in relation to the 'heart' is as diverse as anything else. Indeed, we might even take the heart as the principle of our individual existence and experience.

We would state that attachment to unity over diversity is rooted in *authority.* The semantic connection between authority and authorship is important. It suggests that authority 'writes the book', that is: is the source of what things mean. This is true whatever domain a given authority is exercised in. It is true in religion, in science, in politics, and so on. By and large, but decreasingly so, people feel that there are 'experts' who know far more than they do and should be listened to more than 'ordinary' people. The vastness of the human enterprises of religion, science, government, business, etc. is such that we hardly ever dare to confront their authority. Because we feel unable to do this, we are forced to rely on the testimony of the experts in these fields.

Here we must point out the obvious and immense significance in human life of our facility for *being told things.* From an early age we are receiving information and ideas about the world in its various aspects (and ourselves). It is on the basis of this information that we are able to construct a mind in the first place. We may believe this mind to be 'ours' but even this has been imprinted on us from our culture (in previous millennia there was not even the concept of 'mind' let alone 'having' one).

Thought, language and belief support us and divide us. We grow up seeing ourselves as free agents in a world that has been shaped by the descriptions we have

absorbed. Our sense of freedom can all too easily become disassociated from our understanding of the world and become entirely subjective. We might then believe we exist in the same world as others but be deluded. Even what the world 'is' is in question.

What happens if we try to start afresh? Can we start from an acceptance of ignorance? There is enough evidence around in the manifestations of other people to show us that how we see things currently can be entirely contradicted. If we are able to suspend habitual tendencies to dismiss the contrary views of others as due to their lack of intelligence or information, their conditioning (in contrast with our own lack of conditioning), or even their ill will and evil nature – then we are faced with an intractable problem.

It might seem that having different ideas about the world is not so bad since this is just a matter of concepts or forms of thought. However, this self-same thing can erupt into violence and hate. Peoples become divided and at war because of their beliefs about themselves and the land. Who should occupy Jerusalem? Even when people are just sitting in a room and giving voice to the thoughts arising in them, they can come near to hate for each other – when nothing concrete is at stake at all! – as anyone who has worked with large groups left to their own devices can testify.

So many of us still believe that there must be some 'higher sphere' of perception in which the evident differences of values, perspective, belief are reconciled. There are countless numbers who believe that they are privy to such a sphere and, by being so, are themselves privileged. It does not matter whether this is taken politically, as in conspiracy theories, or religiously as in mysticism, or scientifically as in mathematical physics. Such allegiances amount to a belief in some kind of 'higher power'. This power can be seen as the 'history' of the Marxists or the neocapitalists, or the 'angels' of the Christian fundamentalists, or the 'sorcery' of the shamanists. The fact remains that there is an immense diversity in our conceptions of the 'higher powers'.

For someone who has come to a state of 'conversion' concerning belief in a higher power, it comes as something of a shock to realise that others refuse to share in such a conviction. Even the genius who comes to some new idea about reality finds himself in a battle with the 'ignorant' or the 'enemy'.

Whenever a conviction about Unity comes to someone it proves to be a new source of contention.

For the person with the conviction, they feel that they see from a higher level. For others, this is not true at all: the conviction of the person appears just as another contender in the field. The person with the conviction feels he has made progress and arrived at a superior state and *it is almost impossible for him to realise that this is not true in the eyes of others.* It must be recognised, however, that without conviction, no one would *make efforts* to further their vision by taking it further and trying to persuade others. It is the disbelief of others that leads to taking pains. It is sometimes said that 'Truth comes out of argument'.

This must not be forgotten. Our approach to diversity does not mean a blank acceptance of everyone's opinion. Indeed, we might state here and now that it necessarily involves everyone being enabled to *express more and more clearly and strongly what they wish to say.* It is only when people can express what they want to say that they can come to see how they differ. Otherwise, it is all too vague. The pursuit of diversity, then, entails the articulation and, as a consequence, the *bearing* of difference.

We must also accept that the process of articulation and argument can never come to a stop. As the process goes on, so what people want to express changes. Even when someone has 'won the day' what has been raised along the way remains. Whatever is 'forgotten' in consciousness continues to play a part.

Meaning is in search of truth.

We see people as 'generators of meaning'. Meaning, as Bohm suggests, does not have to be true. However, when we come together, we are faced with questions of truth. Truth appears to us as that which we can have in common. But the word 'truth' has no special value here. It simply means *that in and through which we can discover agreement*. Before we come together, we may not have any idea as to what this is. It does not mean that we have to come to believe in the same thing! It is not a matter of voting for a version of reality. People can remain as divergent as ever – and yet there can be agreement. How to explain this?

We explain it by saying that the people come to realise what their agreement *is*. It is *disclosed*. It may never be revealed in the same way twice. Every gathering of people – or some equivalent – brings into access its own form of agreement. The nature of the agreement can process and evolve throughout the engagement of people with each other. And this means that what the agreement is 'about' can subtly change from moment to moment.

Even if people argue, they can agree to argue in a certain way. Any process of engagement begins to reveal what the engagement is. That is why, for example, it is often said that the 'proper' subject of dialogue *is dialogue.* To discover something about agreement is not to stop arguing or conversing in any way. Only one thing is important: that no one lays claim to the agreement as 'theirs'. By its very nature, it must be a property of all involved. Their truth, then, is in what is really going on in the conversation. Every person present has a totally valid access to this and none can be taken as superior to any other.

'Agreement' has been understood in various ways. An important example is called the 'participation mystique' – the mutual enfolding of everyone in everyone. But is this not just another pretence about Unity? We say not. The participation or agreement has no number and is neither one nor many nor both at once. It is not over and above the diversity and argument but a way of living with diversity.

AIMS

The DuVersity is an enterprise that holds all authorities, ideologies, systems and methods to be questionable and only, at best, partially effective within limited circumstances. It investigates what is possible when such forms are suspended as 'all-embracing' and people come together with diverse views and perceptions to discover what they can do together, drawing on their diversity.

Its approach is based on four main sources, or types of inspiration: (1) the postulate of the uncertainty and incompleteness of all our views, (2) methods of structural thinking, or thinking in patterns, such as the Systematics created by John Bennett, and its evolution into LogoVisual Technology (3) the Dialogue process as pioneered by David Bohm and others, together with the wide-ranging research over the last century into the 'meeting of minds' as in Group Analysis; and (4) the 'direct empiricism' exemplified by George Gurdjieff, such as in the practice of 'self-remembering'.

It seeks to foster collaborative efforts between people and groups that differ amongst themselves in beliefs, methods, practices and agendas. This is undertaken within the limits set by the requirement to acknowledge the provisional and uncertain character of all our knowing. The main purpose of the DuVersity is, to use the words of John Bennett again, to work for: "Integration without rejection".

To this end, the DuVersity proposes to:-
1. Foster the dialogue process by both practical and theoretical means.
2. Design and run joint ventures in which understanding can be co-created.
3. Publish books, articles, etc. expounding its approach.

4. Discover new methods of thinking and acting appropriate to the spirit of the present times; and investigate existing and emergent methods for their possible relevance.

5. Investigate the relevance of different forms of representation, including those deriving from information technology, the visual arts, music, movies and dance.

6. Research into the theory and practice of communication with 'higher intelligence', however this is described; that is with different levels of intelligence to those we at present recognized in individual humans.

CENTRES OF MEANING IN OUR WORK
This material was generated through an LVT process during a Psyche Integration event held in Delaware in 2007. They represent hopes rather than facts.

GROW OUR OFFERING
Develop applications of DuV method to specific problems
Create sacred journeys
Re-introduce conferences
Strengthen ties between psychology, systematics, pilgrimages, LVT
Offer a new program in developing imagination

WE MUST BE EXPLORERS
Develop new language
We aim to open the mind to new frontiers
Erase linear thinking
Continue to acquire new wisdom from others

GROW SIZE OF DUV ORGANISATION
Increase participation in PI
We need to acquire more money, members and
Discover how to attract more people to events
Continue PI gatherings
To increase membership

VALIDATE METHODS
Obtain data on the benefit to society of our work
Improves understanding
Pray for help
Refine methods that enhance self-knowledge

DISCOVERING AND EXPRESSING WHAT DUV IS ABOUT
Articulating politics and values of DuV
Eradicate obtuseness for dummies
Uncover most elementary form of DuV

What is the tradition of DuV? Was a question added afterwards especially in relation to 'Discovering and expressing what DuV is about'.

ESTABLISH DUV REPUTATION
Form a think tank of leaders in the field
Provide a recognisable service
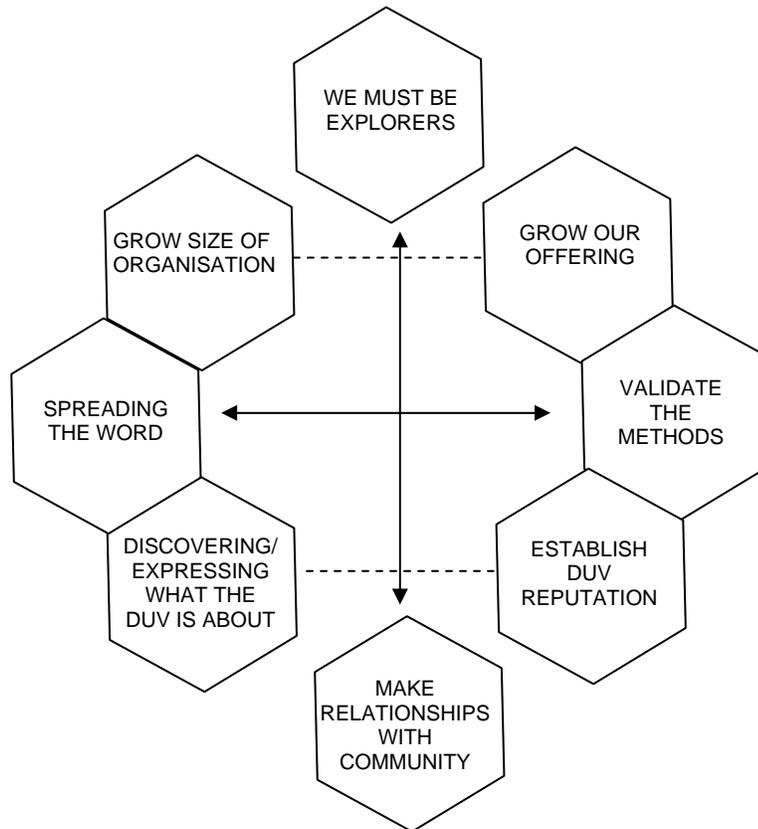Write technical papers

We need to become more visible
Offer to give talks to various organisations about our offering
Foster international connections
Participate in conferences

SPREADING THE WORD
Obtain funding to publish existing material
Increase internet exposure and language
Prepare tabulation of media to publish
Develop media campaign
Write a blog
Publish in other media
Create streaming video and audio promo

FIND RELATIONSHIPS WITH COMMUNITY
Foster relationships with educational institutions
Donate copies of publications to public libraries

WE MUST BE EXPLORERS

GROW SIZE OF ORGANISATION

GROW OUR OFFERING

SPREADING THE WORD

VALIDATE THE METHODS

DISCOVERING/ EXPRESSING WHAT THE DUV IS ABOUT

ESTABLISH DUV REPUTATION

MAKE RELATIONSHIPS WITH COMMUNITY

PARTICULAR INNOVATIONS

The DuVersity has evolved a general method of opening to holistic operations called *Psyche Integration.* Programmes based on this have been run in the USA, UK, China, Turkey and Mexico.

In researching dialogue, a new method called *N-logue*, which offers disciplines in conversation based on systematics as applied to dialogue.

The DuVersity has adopted the term *logosafari* from the late Edward Matchett to designate a method of 'journeying in meaning' through historical landscapes, parallel to dialogue, which promises to reveal a science of what used to be called 'pilgrimage'.

As part of Psyche Integration but also something in its own right, the DuVersity has developed the practice of 'inner exercises' transmitted by Bennett into *Experiencing*, a strictly phenomenological kind of meditation.

ALLIANCES AND KINDRED SPIRITS

The DuVersity has a special relationship with the methods of structural thinking initially developed by John Bennett. These centre on systematics, structural communication and LVT.

Systematics has an archival site at www.systematics.org and runs a discussion forum. A yearly Gathering is sponsored by the DuVersity to further the method. Structural communication is explained and demonstrated at www.structuralcommunication.org. This method has given rise to LogoVisual Technology (LVT), which is being developed with the Centre for Management Creativity headed by John Varney, a one time student of Bennett, see www.logovisual.com

It also has a special relationship with Patrick de Mare and Gordon Lawrence, who were both in the Tavistock Institute for Human Relations and represent the forefront of practical insight into group process aimed at creativity and understanding.

Patrick de Mare has developed the approach of dialogue in his *Median Group* practice, see http://www.groupintervisual.net/hosting/ga-special-issue/papers/pat.htm.

Gordon Lawrence has revived the power of dreaming for social welfare in his *Social Dreaming Matrix*, see www.socialdreaming.com

Over the years, the DuVersity has been linked with the work of: Edward Matchett, a teacher of creative design,

see http://members.aol.com/johndkirby/TedSite/contenthome.htm;

Edith Wallace, a Jungian analyst and artist,

see http://tissuepapercollage.net/ptc-history.html;

Joseph Rael (Beautiful Painted Arrow) an Amerindian visionary,

see http://www.peacechamber.com/joseph.htm;

John Allen, creator of Biosphere 2, scientist, poet and visionary,

see http://www.biospheres.com/keyallenbio.html;

William Pensinger, thinker and novelist, see http://www.geocities.com/moonhoabinh;

Robert Fripp, leader of King Crimson and creator of Guitar Craft, see http://www.elephant-talk.com/wiki/ETWiki_Home;

all of whom have been inspired by the work of John Bennett.

In relation to *logosafaris* the DuVersity has drawn on the work of: John Anthony West, Egyptologist, see http://www.jawest.net/links.htm;

William Sullivan, leading expert on the Inca civilisation of Peru, see http://www.channel4.com/history/microsites/E/ends/inca10.html; and

Richard Heath, systems designer and leading thinker on astro-archeaology and ancient systems of number, see http://sacrednumber.squarespace.com.

Again, these people have all been connected with the fourth way tradition, particularly through Bennett.