

Dialogicality and Being: A Fragment

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I

Dialogicality, Imagination and Literature

The phenomenon of imagination manifested in literature (as in other art forms) is one of the devices the human subject (in this case the writer) uses to confront and to possibly get rid of his (her) dialogical existence.¹ The possibility of getting rid of the dialogicality of existence by confronting it with an act of imagination lies essentially in the process through which works of literature are created. The crucial point for analysis, as such, is the process rather than works of literature.

What is it, in this process, that enables the imagining subject to confront and get rid of the dialogicality of his existential or life world? It is the fact that the process comes to signify a re-creation of his world. Simultaneously, the process mediates the re-creation. Although the work is the end-product of this process and is a world in itself, it is merely the coincidental adjunct of the process. The subject thus is not out to 'produce' a work; what interests him, whether he is aware of it or not, is the very fact of the existence of the process.

The existence of the process is analogous to a 'path' that leads to the 'clearing', so to speak, in the 'woods'.² The clearing is the re-created or the no-longer-dialogical world where the subject is surrounded by the dialogical world but is not in confrontation with it.

One must note at this point the precariousness of the existence of the non-dialogical world thus created, for this world exists only so long as the process that mediates it is progressing. The moment this process comes to an end and thus ceases to exist, it takes away with it the non-dialogical or the re-created world. It is thus that the path that leads to the clearing assumes a likeness to the clearing itself, for it is the inching forward of the path in simultaneity with which the clearing exists.

This likeness, however, is not just an illusion. For in the process of re-creating his world the subject also re-creates himself—a re-creation that inheres in the path that seemingly leads to the non-dialogical world but is actually *itself* the re-created world. This explains why the writing subject always wants to be in the midst of the process of writing and his unhappiness is the greatest when this process plays truant.

Why is it that this process does not last, thus throwing the subject back into the dialogicality of the existential or life world? Why does the process come to an end, only to begin again later? The answer to these questions is rooted in the very nature of the being of the process; it is rooted in the fact that the process brings an end to, or at least reduces, the dialogicality of a potentially writing subject. Since this potential inheres in the very dialogicality of the subject's life world, and gives birth to the process in the first place, the process cannot last once the potential has been realised and the dialogicality of the subject's life world brought to an end.

The being of the process thus is of a very ephemeral nature. It inheres in the writing potential of the subject. It takes form and remains in existence when the potential is being realised, and it slips back into non-being when the potential is no longer there due to the transformation in the nature of the world of the subject.

There are times, nevertheless, when the process does not re-start at all; when it refuses, so to say, to come back into existence. This need not necessarily be an indication of an extinction of the dialogicality of the subject's life world through means other than or analogous to writing. Rather, it may signify a loss of will on the part of the subject to struggle against the received dialogicality of his world. Such loss of will puts an end to the writing potential of the subject and embodies an appropriation of his subjecthood by the world in which he lives.

This reveals a hidden dimension of the nature of the subjecthood, or rather it imbues this subjecthood with an altogether different nature: namely that a being is a subject only when it possesses a will to fight and rid itself of the dialogicality of its being—a dialogicality that is bestowed upon it by the existential or life world into which it is born. On this view, subjecthood is different from subjectivity, and a subject is other than a subjective being: while the latter has succumbed to the demands of a dialogical world and has become one with the being of this world, the former views his beinghood as an independent thing and struggles to preserve its being.

It is this being of the beinghood of this subject that becomes active in the process of writing and that chooses the movement of this process to preserve its own beinghood. A subject—as different from a subjective being—has thus two beings within him fighting to destroy each other: one is the being that is 'born' with the subject and that makes him which he essentially is; the other is the being of the dialogical world that enters into him, as it were, from without. The beginning and the continuing journey of the movement of the process thus symbolise the triumph of the 'original' being of the subject. It is also as this movement

lasts that this being comes fully into its own, for this movement unleashes the hitherto suppressed potential of this being to continue to become all the greater what it already is.

This coming of the original being of the subject fully into its own; this ceaseless becoming in the movement of the process that symbolises its triumph over the dialogical world; this concretisation of the will of the subject to overcome the inherited dialogicality of his being, do not embody a fulfilment of the 'will to power' of the Nietzschean subject. For the trajectory of the being of the Nietzschean subject runs from powerlessness to power, as its vision remains imprisoned in and does not penetrate beyond the dialogicality of the life world. The trajectory of the being of the subject discussed *here*, on the other hand, is willed to encompass a perpetual state of *non-powerness*.

To the degree this trajectory is made to deviate from its original course, the subject experiences a diminishing of his being. The diminishing is caused by the compulsion of the subject to pass through the dialogical world and to acquire, in the passing through, a measure of its dialogicality. Thus what imbues the Nietzschean subject with the 'will to power', impels the subject *here* to recapture his original state of non-powerness. This is the state in which the subject is neither *powerful* nor *powerless*, nor does he wish, unlike the Nietzschean subject, to gather power. All he wants is, as it were, to be and to keep becoming. And in the case of the writing subject this being and becoming occur in the process of writing.

Yet, if the subject has, in the process of writing, regained his original being; if he has gotten rid of the dialogicality of his inherited world which he had to pass through during the deviated trajectory of his being—why does the work which the subject brings into existence remain peopled with the images of the dialogical world? And even when the work houses a different, a non-dialogical world, does it not constitute, still, a reverse reflection of, an upturned meditation, as it were, on this the dialogical world? Why should the now non-dialogical subject venture into a world, even in imagination, the very make-up of which represented, a few moments earlier, a being contrary to the being of the subject? Does not this venturing, this coming back into the life world, now in imagination, signify a lingering presence of this world in the re-created subject? Does it not embody a deep longing of the being of the subject for the world it has wilfully abandoned?

What these questions do not take into account is that the work of literature possesses a being of its own while being an incidental adjunct of the process, and that the work is at work through this being. What obtains within the realm of the work, therefore, is, to a large extent, its

own doing, quite independent of the doing of the subject who acts as the vehicle through which the work brings itself into being. This realm the subject can fully enter only as a reading subject after he has slipped back into the dialogicality of his inherited existence—a slipping back he repeatedly experiences and which represents the moments between the end and the beginning of the process of writing. It is the images the subject gathers during these 'in-between' moments that the work often chooses to house in its being. The work, therefore, is, in a sense, the author of its self. This part authorship of the work by the work, nevertheless, is not the same thing as the 'death of the author', for the being of the writing subject constantly hovers in the house which is the being of the work, in the form of the images plucked, as it were, from the world of his imagination.

This still does not answer the question: why does the world of imagination which is present in the work carry within it so many images of the dialogical world? Needless to say, this question presumes that the images from the dialogical world, which one finds in the world of imagination, are dialogical images and this is how they constitute a lingering presence of the dialogical world in the re-created world of the subject. What this question fails to notice is that the images in the world of imagination cannot, by the very nature of this world, remain dialogical once they have entered into and become part of it. For, the world of imagination is brought into being for the very purpose of getting rid of the dialogicality of the life world through its re-creation. The images of the dialogical world that we find in the world of imagination are, therefore, re-created images; they only resemble in appearance similar images of the dialogical world.

What is it, nevertheless, that makes these images essentially different from those in the dialogical world? What happens to these images in the world of imagination that they become non-dialogical? One way to answer this is to talk of a world which is neither the world of imagination nor the re-created world of the subject. For, whereas the world of imagination *houses* these images, with their transformed essence they contribute to the *making up* of the re-created world *without deriving their meaning from it*. This meaning they derive from a world which may not actually exist but which has the power to imbue, even in its 'nonexistence', the images of the world of imagination with an element which gives them, so to speak, an aura of 'non-worldliness'. It is this aura, this non-worldliness, which makes these images different from those in the dialogical world and which infuses them with a non-dialogicality they did not own before.

Non-dialogicality, then, is an element which comes from a world

which the subject knows only through intuition or, what is more accurate, which he knows because he himself has invented it. The original being of the subject, too, in this sense, can be said to be an invented being — invented to confront the inherited world and to get rid of its dialogicality. The apparent contradiction between the 'original' and the 'invented' is thus dissolved, for the original becomes that which is not of this world, which is untainted of its dialogicality even if it has to be invented.

II

The Original and the Invented Being

If there is no contradiction between the original and the invented being, and if the original being of the subject might also, simultaneously, be an invented being, then it is the 'inventedness' of this being, rather than its non-dialogicality, that becomes significant. For, not only is non-dialogicality predicated on inventedness, due to this predicatedness 'inventing' becomes synonymous with this being; it becomes the very condition of its existence.

Apparently, this synonymy of the original being of the subject with its own inventing does not turn it into a tragic being even in the ordinary, limited sense of that term. For, inventing is not something the subject is compelled to do; rather, it is a thing that he cannot help doing. And yet, neither is the inventing a thing the subject might want to do if the inherited being of the subject were also his original being. So that it is as if the subject is *condemned* to invent an original being for himself. This condemnation makes the existence of this being truly tragic, because from the moment it comes into existence, it becomes the *only being that matters*. The inherited being of the subject *ceases to matter* without actually ceasing to be, thereby putting an end to the very need for the invention of an original being.

What makes the existence of this being doubly tragic is that it must be invented from *moment to moment* in a way that the act of inventing replaces and itself becomes the invented being of the subject. It is thus that the original being disappears even before it has been brought into existence: it exists without existing, and its beingness materialises and is made manifest only in its non-being which is the act of inventing it. This act, performed anew at each moment of the existence of the inherited being of the subject, emerges in this process as a labyrinth, an endless circuitous corridor that keeps the subject apart from his original being. Thus this being, now in its non-beingness, assumes a likeness to an alien being, one more 'other' facing the subject.

This shared otherness, however, fails to put the original being of the subject in the category of the inherited being. For, whereas the latter is oppressive in its immediacy and substantiality, the former is so because it is distant and cannot be grasped. But what makes the original being much more intolerable is that it does not appear to be what it is. On the contrary, it appears to be precisely what it is not: its ephemerality and insubstantiality—its very non-being—give it the illusion of being close and inviting. So that this alien acquires the form of an intimate; this other seems to be one's very own.

The power of this illusion is shown by the fact that a Rimbaud gives up writing and becomes a trader. A Wittgenstein chooses to be a hospital orderly but chooses nevertheless. This shift in trade, this deliberate preference for one occupation over another, which signifies for its protagonists a turning away from the original being, remains, in essence, a different way of approaching it. It is just another means to carry on its inventing.

The original being of the subject, thus, can neither be relinquished, nor appropriated. Nor can one escape its terrible ubiquity. Surrounded by its everywhere-ness, the subject struggles to possess it; tormented by its nowhere-ness, he merely manages to effect the act of inventing it. It is thus that this inventing lacks the character of possession, and this struggle deprives the subject of the pain, the bitterness of longing. Clutching an unwanted being of inheritance, in the throes of the non-being of a wanted being, the subject moves from the one to the other.

Yet one cannot say that this movement denotes nothing; the nothingness of a struggleful yet fruitless existence. What cancels out the nothingness is this very movement, and the fact that the subject is in the midst of this movement. The movement, because it is the movement of a perpetually moving subject (for whom all else is nothing and this movement has become everything), acquires a body, a thingness that replaces the once potential nothingness. It is *in* and through this movement that the act of inventing the original being of the subject stops short of confronting him as a dialogical phenomenon despite being an alien, an other. Thus the other is not in this case *truly* an other. Or, what is only a different way of putting it, it is not in every case imbued with an otherness that makes it simultaneously a dialogical other.

Could it be, then, that in the act of inventing an original being for himself, the subject attempts to invent, too, a non-dialogical, 'benign' other? And that—what only follows from this—the subject refuses to exist without a non-dialogical other; that he accepts his existence only because there is the possibility of the existence of this particular other?

III

The Non-dialogical Other

More than anything, this idea, if it is valid, illuminates an aspect of the behaviour of the subject which lies at the core of his existence as a dialogical being, namely, the desire to love and to be loved. For, it makes it possible to say that the desire *to love* stems from this basic need of the subject to invent a non-dialogical, benign other. By targeting a particular other, whether it physically exists or does not any more, the subject attempts to imbue this other with a non-dialogicality—a benignity—which is found missing in the dialogical world but is an attribute of his own original or invented being. It follows that the desire *to be loved* stems, in turn, from the need to nurture the non-dialogicality of the original being of the subject.

A. Love 1: Seen in this light, love appears, at first sight, as a paradox: it embodies a turning away from but into the subject. However, the turning away is from the dialogical other residing within the subject, while the turning in is towards the non-dialogical (created or invented) other residing within the same. Far from being a paradox, love emerges in this double movement as a rejection of the inherited world, representing at the same moment a step towards the realisation of that non-dialogical existence which is the goal of the individual subject. To the degree this existence is concretised in love, love denotes a movement towards the closure of the dialogue.

But this is not the only thing that love accomplishes. For while it initiates the closure of one, it opens up another, a different dialogue. Only, the tenor of this other dialogue is non-dialogical, where the non-dialogical stands for the original or the invented. It is as if love launches the beginning of a new, 'true', dialogue, the only kind of dialogue that there ever should have been. In this sense, love appears here as a subversive being that challenges the received dialogicality of the being of the world.

Is it any wonder, then, that love has existed in corners, in nooks and crannies, and the darker, the better? Some of these 'crannies' abound in literature, in the arts generally, and in philosophy—disciplines of a 'suspicious' kind—and the 'lovers' turn to these repeatedly. Some of these lovers, in turn, themselves create these corners, these 'clearings' on the periphery (this tract being one of them) to take shelter there.

B. Love 2: It turns out that there are not one but two kinds of dialogue. One is the dialogue that goes on in the inherited world (what we may call dialogical dialogue). The nature of the other dialogue is non-dialogical and it takes place in the created or invented world. The

former is never, even in most intimate of relationships, without an element of confrontation or, to be more precise, *friction*. The latter, because it is carried on with the non-dialogical, benign other brought into existence by the subject himself, lacks this friction and is therefore the dialogue he desires.

The loved one, the object of loving attention, when and so long as it is so, is the creature of the invented world and *is not to be found in the dialogical world*. It is, as such, one of the subjects with whom the non-dialogical dialogue comes into play.

But there is a need for deliberation here. Speaking of the loved object, we said: 'when and so long as it is so'. This qualification was intended to differentiate love from a 'love relationship' as it is known in the dialogical world. For, not a single love relationship remains suffused with love *all the time*, that is, is devoid of friction. Which means that in a love relationship love exists only at *some of the moments*. The 'moments of love' therefore are the only moments when the loved object is actually an object of love. These moments, because they are moments of love, lift themselves out of the dialogical world and settle in the non-dialogical, leaving the rest of the love relationship (*now* no longer a relationship of love) in the dialogical world as a dialogical phenomenon. These are the moments when the other remains imbued with that non-dialogicality, that benignity which is brought to it by the loving subject and which then makes it a fitting object for love. What we have called the non-dialogical dialogue takes place here.

C. Love 3: *She picked up the rajai and went to the other room leaving me cold in the night air:* 'I thought she was ready for love, but she was not'. Let us ponder over this statement.

In essence, the statement says that not all objects of love may behave like one at a given moment. Which means that while the subject is ready (feels the necessity) to imbue them with that non-dialogicality which would turn them into a loved subject, they are not yet ready to receive it, and house it, and then give it back in an equal measure. Implied here is a rejection of love and, in a larger canvas, of a non-dialogical existence.

Where does this leave our contention that love is brought to the other by the subject himself, that the loved other is created or invented by the loving subject? For, the behaviour of the loved object shows an agency, a subjectivity that resists the 'advances' of the 'anxious lover'.

We may get a clue to an answer in this statement: 'The more I said "you are beautiful", the more beautiful was your face. Also, the more vulnerable. Suddenly now I realise where that beauty came from: it came from your growing vulnerability. In those moments you wore your melting heart on your face.'

In other words, the object of love that does not accept or reflect back the attention of the loving subject, is the 'heart' that has not yet fully 'melted', has not become fully 'vulnerable'. In this sense, vulnerability becomes here another name for non-dialogicality, for benignity, and the as-yet-invulnerable 'loved other' still lives partly in the dialogical world. To bring this other into the non-dialogical should properly be called the 'labour of love'. The creation or invention of the loved other is the 'fruit' of this labour *over time*.

D. Love 4: *She was liking it so much she has to stop it. The touch of the lover. Next day (or month or year) she wanted it again. And stopped it a little further up. Or down:* The 'surrender' to the non-dialogical begins in a somewhat similar fashion. The 'lover' is an idea the object of love creates or invents (discovers) in search of its own subjecthood. It 'touches' the lover and wants to believe that the lover has 'touched' it. This reluctance to accept its won subjecthood-in-the-making is the pull of the dialogical world it's on the point of breaking. There are 'pangs of conscience'. The now 'object-subject' gropes and fumbles. Moves forward. Steps back.

And 'calls' for the lover again.

Is the lovers waiting for the 'call'?

More than an idea, he is a presence. He was around. He never went away. Sitting in the heart of the object-subject, he was merely weaving his 'mystique'. His patience has no limits. He has *no* patience. It's his destiny to create in his own image. His image breaks into many shapes. Including this here shape-in-the-making who has 'called'.

E. Love 5: *'You fill me with an emptiness only you can fill.'* *'The emptiness is of your own making, you who have just made me':* It would appear from this dialogue that the non-dialogical comes into play with the presence of the loved subject: presence which is present in this dialogue; dialogue which would not come to be without this presence. This, indeed, is true. But the presence of the loved subject in this dialogue also denotes an absence, its own absence, an absence which inheres in its very presence. Why is this so? This is so because this presence does not obviate the need for the continuous *making*, continuous *weaving* of the loved subject, the condition of the presence of the loved subject being this very making, this very weaving of its being.

The making of the loved subject, and therefore of love, is, thus, a continuous process. It is a process that never ceases to be, that can never come to a ceasing without bringing love, too, to a ceasing, without its disappearance. The presence of love, then, is not just the presence of the loved subject; it is its continuous making, a making which is implied in the dialogue quoted above.

What makes this making possible? Or what makes *impossible* the presence of the loved subject without its continuous making? This impossibility comes from the ever-present possibility of the non-dialogical (loved) subject *slipping back into its dialogical existence*—an existence which hovers at, is never very far from, the edges of the non-dialogical. That is why being in love, being in moments when love has been realised, has been consummated, so to say; that is why the experience of love is such a formidable thing. And only the bravest of the subjects, who have tempered themselves in the ephemeral fire of non-dialogicality, dare to stay there.

That is why, too, love is tragic. What makes it tragic is not its 'impossibility'. For, love is not impossible. What makes it tragic is the process of *making it possible* and then *keeping it so*; it is the condition of keeping this process continually in motion, or living without love.

NOTES

1. By 'dialogical existence' we mean that dimension of the existence of the human subject which is brought into being and finds expression in an essentially political interaction with the other human subjects where the interaction or, more appropriately, dialogue includes but is not confined to merely verbal communication. Thus the term 'political' is used here in a much broader and more deeply diffused sense than what is commonly understood by it. And this meaning of the term 'political', or what we will now call 'dialogical', stems from the belief of this author that the larger part of the struggle a subject wages for existence takes place at the level where he (she) has to encounter and confront the other human subjects including the ones with whom he is most intimate. It is at this level of his existence that the subject gets alienated from his life world. The element in this world which is at the root of this alienation and which makes this world what it is is the 'dialogicality' of this world.
2. The metaphor of the 'path', the 'clearing' and the 'woods' we have taken from Martin Heidegger.