Insight Dialogue 1

Instructions:
All students need a partner in this exercise (the person on your right or on your left): connect for a moment with your partner. If you have not met your partner before, take a moment to introduce yourself. The instructor will take care of timekeeping, so there is no need for you to check your watch.

First 4 minutes: As the instructor signals the beginning of the exercise, immediately start reading the excerpts on the other side of this page. Read carefully and swiftly, noticing what grabs your interest and makes you react the most. Feel free to underline, highlight, or make notations.

Next 2 minutes: At the instructor’s signal, stop reading. Turn your attention inward and notice your personal reaction to what you read. What do you remember the most? Perhaps one excerpt had more effect on you than the others? Notice all that comes to mind… thoughts, emotions, memories. Stay with what comes up… do not worry about making your thoughts pretty, or acceptable!

Next 2 minutes: Again, at the instructor’s signal, the first person of the pair talks continuously and expresses emotions, sensations, thoughts, memories, words triggered by the excerpts -without editing!. The listener just witnesses/listens attentively: no speaking, nodding, making faces… whatsoever (it is NOT a conversation). Thus, it is not a matter of agreeing or not, or of sounding deep or educated or sophisticated; it is a matter of expressing whatever awareness the speaker has in the moment, and of being deeply listened to.

Next 2 minutes: At the signal, switch speakers.

Next 2 minutes: When the instructor signals the end of the “dialogue,” go back to silence. Perhaps close your eyes, and notice what changed in your thinking or reaction to the excerpts after you spoke and after you listened…
Principles of Economics in a Nutshell
Lorenzo Garbo, Dorene Isenberg, and Nicholas Reksten

➢ From Adam Smith (1759) *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, 1st ed. (Part I, Section I, Chap. I; p.1)

How selfish soever man may be supposed, there are evidently some principles in his nature, which interest him in the fortune of others, and render their happiness necessary to him, though he derives nothing from it except the pleasure of seeing it. Of this kind is pity or compassion, the emotion which we feel for the misery of others, when we either see it, or are made to conceive it in a lively manner. . . . Pity and compassion are words appropriated to signify our fellow-feeling with the sorrow of others. Sympathy . . . may be made use of to denote our fellow-feeling with any passion whatever.

➢ From Adam Smith (1776) *The Wealth of Nations* (Book I, Chapter II; pp. 26-7)

But man has almost constant occasion for the help of his brethren, and it is in vain for him to expect it from their benevolence only. He will be more likely to prevail if he can interest their self-love in his favour, and shew them that it is for their own advantage to do for him what he requires of them. Whoever offers to another a bargain of any kind, proposes to do this. Give me that which I want, and you shall have this which you want, is the meaning of every such offer; and it is in this manner that we obtain from one another the far greater part of those good offices which we stand in need of. It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker, that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest. We address ourselves, not to their humanity but to their self-love, and never talk to them of our own necessities but of their advantages.


This disposition to admire, and almost to worship, the rich and the powerful, and to despise or, at least, to neglect, persons of poor and mean condition . . . is . . . the great and most universal cause of the corruption of our moral sentiments. That wealth and greatness are often regarded with the respect and admiration which are due only to wisdom and virtue; and that the contempt, of which vice and folly are the only proper objects, is most unjustly bestowed upon poverty and weakness, has been the complaint of moralists in all ages. We desire both to be respectable, and to be respected. We dread both to be contemptible, and to be contemned. But, upon coming into the world, we soon find that wisdom and virtue are by no means the sole objects of respect; nor vice and folly, of contempt. We frequently see the respectful attentions of the world more strongly directed towards the rich and the great, than towards the wise and the virtuous. We see frequently the vices and follies of the powerful much less despised than the poverty and weakness of the innocent. . . . Two different roads are presented to us, equally leading to the attainment of this so much desired object; the one, by the study of wisdom and the practice of virtue; the other, by the acquisition of wealth and greatness. Two different characters are presented to our emulation: the one, of proud ambition and ostentatious avidity; the other, of humble modesty and equitable justice.
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Insight Dialogue 2

Instructions:
All students need a partner in this exercise (the person on your right or on your left): connect for a moment with your partner. If you have not met your partner before, take a moment to introduce yourself. The instructor will take care of timekeeping, so there is no need for you to check your watch.

First 2 minutes: As the instructor signals the beginning of the exercise, immediately start reading the excerpts on the other side of this page. Read carefully and swiftly, noticing what grabs your interest and makes you react the most. Feel free to underline, highlight, &c.

Next 2 minutes: At the instructor’s signal, stop reading. Turn your attention inward and notice your personal reaction to what you read. What do you remember the most? Perhaps one excerpt had more effect on you than the others? Notice all that comes to mind… thoughts, emotions, memories. Stay with what comes up… do not worry about making your thoughts pretty, or acceptable!

Next 2 minutes: Again, at the instructor’s signal, the first person of the pair talks continuously and expresses emotions, sensations, thoughts, memories, words triggered by the excerpts -without editing!- The listener just witnesses/listens attentively: no speaking, nodding, making faces… whatsoever (it is NOT a conversation). Thus, it is not a matter of agreeing or not, or of sounding deep or educated or sophisticated; it is a matter of expressing whatever awareness the speaker has in the moment, and of being deeply listened to.

Next 2 minutes: At the signal, switch person.

Next 2 minutes: When the instructor signals the end of the “dialogue,” go back to silence. Perhaps close your eyes, and notice what changed in your thinking or reaction to the excerpts after you spoke and after you listened…
In 1964, the economist Kenneth Boulding proposed a system of marketable procreation licenses as a way of dealing with overpopulation. Each woman would be issued a certificate (or two, depending on the policy) entitling her to have a child. She would be free to use the certificate or sell it at the going rate. Boulding imagined a market in which people eager to have children would purchase certificates from (as he indelicately put it) ‘the poor, the nuns, the maiden aunts, and so on’.

The plan would be less coercive than a system of fixed quotas, as in a one-child policy. It would also be economically more efficient, since it would get the goods (in this case, children) to the consumers most willing to pay for them. Recently, two Belgian economists revived Boulding’s proposal. They pointed out that, since the rich would likely buy procreation licenses from the poor, the scheme would have the further advantage of reducing inequality by giving the poor a new source of income.

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1 Michael J. Sandel is the Anne T. and Robert M. Bass Professor of Government at Harvard University. Author of several books on ethics and markets, his writings have been translated into eighteen languages; in 2010, China Newsweek named him “the most influential foreign figure of the year” in China.