



Newsletter

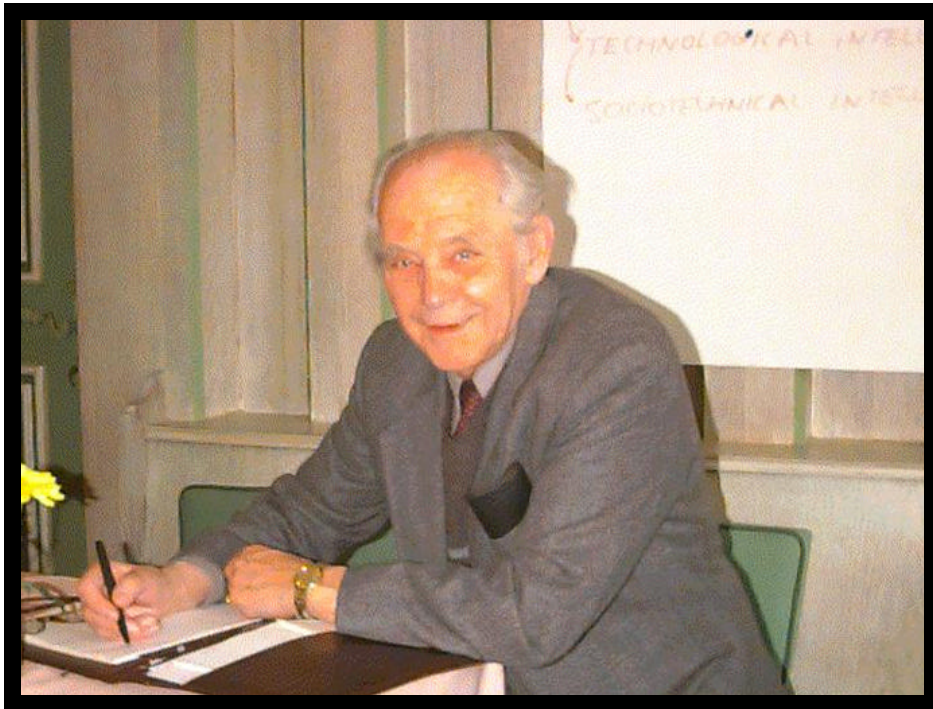
The Official Newsletter of
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G. Chroust: Editor-in-Chief

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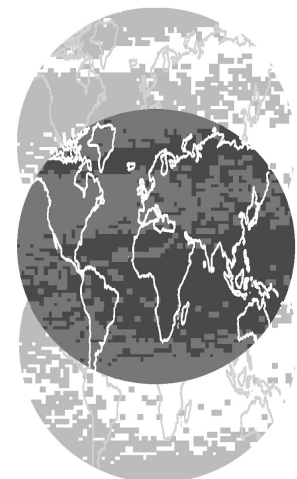
FINAL VERSION

IN MEMORIAM Bela H. Banathy
1919-2003



On September 4, 2003 Bela H. Banathy passed away at the age of 83, at Enloe Hospital in Chico, California, near Reno. Bela was one of the fathers of the systems movement, a man with a long-range view, with deep concern for the future and the generations to come. His name is connected with many institution, where he has been one of the founders (IFSR, ISI, ISSS, Fuschl Conversations and many others). And he managed to inspire at least two generations of systems thinkers.

He was born on December 1, 1919, in Gyula, Hungary, a laureate graduate of the Hungarian Royal Academy (1940). He received a master degree from San Jose State University (1963) and a doctorate from the University of California, Berkeley (1968).



He was a source of inspiration to everybody, a person, a mentor in the best sense, a quiet, helpful person and a model teacher for many, many students. He lived in Monterey, California and only this year he and his wife Eva recently moved to Chico. He is the author of numerous books and articles, mostly on systems theory for global improvement, especially in view of society. In the last years the Agora project received his key attention: trying to recreate a new ideal Agora, supporting social action contexts (public spheres or arenas) in which people can make collective decisions about their future in a democratic discourse. Over his lifetime his ideas were showing alternative and promising ways into the future for hundreds of individuals and were an inspiration to tens of thousands. More can be found on

<http://www.whitestag.org/>
http://oufent2.open.ac.uk/~gordon_dyer/WorldFutures_gdyer_310501.htm
<http://www.ifsr.org/newsletters/nl33/banathy.html>
http://www.ifsr.org/recognitions_anniversaries/#Bela%20H%20Banathy
http://www.evolve.org/pub/doc/ls_guide_banathy.html

Dear Readers!

I have to apologise for having been unable to produce a Newsletter in 2002. There were many reasons, important ones and less important ones, some served only as an excuse to postpone the next Newsletter – until it was too late for 2002.

I think the saddest information is the passing away of our mentor, advisor, guide and human conscience, the fatherly figure of Bela H. Banathy. He was the person who brought me to systems thinking in the true sense, not only in the technical sense. Computer people also think about systems, but Bela meant it in the true sense of seeing the big picture of the world, the people therein and the generations still to come. During the Fuschl Conversations there was always an empty chair standing in front of the audience to remind us of the future generations for whom we build – or destroy – a beautiful world. Although he did not attend the last two Fuschl meetings in person – he was there.

Now we only can live in our memory, but this is an honour for us.

But now to a more mundane topic: After discussing the pros and cons, especially in view of the available Internet services, the Executive Committee of the IFSR decided to stop printing the Newsletter in large quantities for our member societies. Modern technology has made the Newsletter less useful – we will continue to produce it, but we will put it ‘only’ on the IFSR website. For documentation purposes we still will print a few Newsletters, two for each member society, a few additional ones for our VIPs, and some for official use. From now on we invite you to visit IFSR’s homepage <http://www.ifsr.org> to read the Newsletters. This means a considerable reduction of IFSR’s expenses, which we will use for other more effective activities.

This Newsletter is devoted to the preparation of the next Fuschl Conversation (April 18 to 23, 2004) – a key IFSR activities.



See also IFSR’s Web Site : <http://www.ifsr.org>



Fuschl Conversation 2004 (April 18 – 23, 2002)

Fuschl – 24 years of history

The first Fuschl conversation was held in 1980 in Fuschl. . In the meantime some 40 Fuschl-style *conversations* have been held in many places around the globe. Fuschl is a beautiful, romantic little Austrian village on a small lake (Lake Fuschl) in lovely Salzkammergut, near Salzburg. It is surrounded by mountains of approx. 1600m height, see www.fuschlseeregion.com/de/orte/fuschl.shtml In summer it is beaming with life and tourists, in April its is quiet and sleepy, a good place to speak, to listen and not to be disturbed by hectic, sightseeing tourists.

Gordon Dyer with our hostess, Ms. Idinger



Why conversation and what form do they take?

The main reason for conversations as initiated by the IFSR was a dissatisfaction with the conventional style of conferences: An individual writes a paper, has 20 minutes to present it and then 10 minutes of questions. After that the conference is virtually over for the individual. Clearly, this format is not the most effective way to progress in the exchange and development of ideas on pressing major issues.

The experience we will have during the week at Fuschl is of quite a different nature. It is in the form of a *conversation*. Bela Banathy defined a conversation as follows:

A Conversation is

- a collectively guided disciplined inquiry,
- an exploration of issues of social/societal significance,
- engaged by scholarly practitioners in self-organized teams,
- who select a theme for their conversation,
- which is initiated in the course of a preparation phase that leads to an intensive learning phase.



On the terrace of Seehotel Schlick (Alan Combs and Soeren Brier)

At Fuschl we will spend 5 days in intense discussion around our chosen themes and triggering questions. A major concept of a conversation is its being a process engaged in by self-organized teams who select their own theme for their conversation

The theme is initiated in the course of a preparation phase, that leads to the intensive learning phase: the 5 day conversation itself.

The teams follow a set of conversation rules that guide their action (they generate their own

rules during the initial stage of the conversation). They document and share their findings, prepare a team report, and reflection papers that present their own findings. The IFSR will publish the outcome of the conversation in the form of proceedings.

Members take the message of their experience with them and apply what they have learned in their own contexts of life. The conversation process never ends.



A plenary meeting at Fuschl

Steps in the Fuschl Conversation

Preparation Phase

The preparation phase for Fuschl 2004 is now underway. The five basic themes have been selected, but teams now need to work on refining these towards a set of agreed upon trigger questions for their conversation. To do this potential participants and team co-ordinators are asked to proceed as defined by the key dates below:

1 January 2004

Latest date for potential participants to submit (e-mail) their input paper with the application form to the team co-ordinator of their intended theme, with a copy to Gerhard Chroust, the Secretary of the IFSR (gc@sea.uni-linz.ac.at). The input paper should be between one and four pages long and should suggest the directions for the discussion within the topic area of the team and offer some associated trigger questions for the team.

2 February 2004

During January the IFSR Secretary will liaise with the team co-ordinators to select those who will be sponsored by IFSR to attend the Fuschl conversation.

Invitations to the accepted participants will be issued by 2 February 2004.

Logistical and financial considerations restrict the number of participants to about 29. Selection will depend on a number of factors. Most important will be how well the input paper

contributes to the theme. The need for a wide geographic spread of participants and the wish to introduce a proportion of newcomers to the conversation will also be taken into account.

1 March 2004

Team coordinators to prepare a short summary of key ideas from the input papers, including the selection of a coherent range of trigger questions from the suggested ones. This draft summary should be sent to members of the team by 1 March 2004, inviting their comment and /or endorsement. This summary should also be passed to the IFSR Secretary for posting to the Fuschl 2004 web-site.

1 April 2004

Team co-ordinators to revise the summary input in the light of comments and send this to the team by 1 April 2004. This paper represents an important part of the conversation process. It is the collective effort of preparation and will hopefully provide a firm basis on which the team's conversation (learning phase) at Fuschl can proceed.

Learning Phase: the Conversation (Fuschl, April 18-23, 2004)

On April 18 the learning phase begins in Fuschl at the Seehotel Schlick. The participants follow their course of Conversation, reporting to the other teams and

preparing an initial document of the outcome of their conversation.

At the on-set of the Conversation in Fuschl the teams review their agenda and choose specific triggering questions that guide their conversation. At the end of each day, the teams report on their progress. On Friday morning the teams present their findings. Plans are developed to accomplish the Dissemination Phase.

There might be deviations from this over-all plan depending on the specific needs of the individual conversation teams.



Doug Walton, Alan Combs, Len Troncale, Magdalene Kalaidjieva, Soeren Brier

Dissemination Phase

It is our duty and the explicit wish of the IFSR that the outcome of the Conversations be disseminated to a wider audience. This will be done by publishing a preliminary report in the IFSR Newsletter and by later by issuing proceedings of the Conversation under the auspices of the Austrian Society for Cybernetic Studies.

15 July 2004

For each team an Intermediate team report is sent by the Team Coordinator to the Editors (G. Chroust and C. Hofer) for inclusion in the IFSR Newsletter.

September 2004

The Team reports are published in the IFSR Newsletter.

15 October 2004

The final papers of the teams are sent to the Editors by the Team Coordinators. Individual supporting papers should also be submitted.

November 2004

Proceedings of the Fuschl Conversations are published as a Report of the Austrian Society for Cybernetic Studies, Vienna with an ISBN-Number. Each participant and the member Societies of the IFSR will receive a copy.

Call for Participation Twelfth Fuschl Conversation

Sunday, April 18 to Friday, April 23, 2004
at Seehotel Schlick,
Seepromenade 35
5330 Fuschl am See, Austria

The Fuschl 2004 Conversations will – to a large extent – be the continuation of the Conversations held in 1996 through 2002 and will comprise the following five teams, each led by a Team Coordinator.

Team 1: New Agoras for the 21st Century: Conscious Self-Guided Evolution

Coordinator: Patrick M Jenlink, PJenlink@sfasu.edu

The Agoras of the City States of the Classical Greeks were public spheres where true democracy was lived by citizens who made collective decisions about issues affecting their daily lives. Reconsidering the idea Agora in society today, and creating an ideal of the New Agora is a metaphor for social action contexts (public spheres or arenas) in which people can make collective decisions about their future. These contexts would be forums of democratic discourse. People in the settings of their families, neighbourhoods, community groups, organizations, and institutions have the potential to organize

themselves as evolutionary design communities. These New Agoras could link up with each other and engage in evolutionary conversation in order to bring to life the Guided Evolution of the Society. The dual purposes of the New Agora project are to first create and sustain an Agora community of stewards who will then support the right of people to take part directly in the decisions that affect their lives and to guide their own destiny. The New Agora would guide the conscious evolution of civil society on local, national, and world levels. This goal will be achieved by creating knowledge bases for evolutionary inquiry; developing resources for evolutionary learning; and exploring approaches, methods, and technologies toward the establishment of New Agoras. These purposes are grounded in the belief that the right of people to take part directly in making decisions that affect their lives and to guide their own destiny is a fundamental human right.

Triggering questions:

What is the role of the New Agora project in addressing societies problems?

What would be the design of a "New Agora" that would serve as an evolutionary guidance system for improvement and peace of the world?

How could the "New Agoras" contribute to the conscious evolution of the human species?

In what ways can the "New Agora" serve humanity through creating and sustaining a society based on knowledge?

What can Information Technology do to support the collective learning and thus support Agoras?.

Team 2: Designing Systems for Human Betterment

Coordinator: Arne Collen, acollen@saybrook.edu

This conversation group continues its focus, which began in 1998. Having discussed a range of topics on the theme, we shall give attention to globalization in its relation to systems design.

Our world promises to be a more holistic, interconnected, and interdependent global community of human beings. Whether we like it or not, we are entrusted from now on as the stewards of all life on the planet. Therefore, our concern for the design of systems of human betterment must be inclusive of the ecological, ethical, humane, and participatory dimensions in their broadest meanings.

There are many encouraging as well as disturbing trends accompanying the globalization of humanity, which seems inevitable. What does systems design mean in such a complex context? What does it mean to come to terms with a global community and a global ethics? How are we individually and collectively to cope and contribute to this inevitability? In what ways can we contribute to human betterment? What is betterment in this regard? Is globalization to be shaped by an ethics yet to be known and articulated? These are some of the trigger questions that may prompt our team toward productive conversation to culminate our series of conversations on this theme. Our intention will be to take up these and related questions, answering them in terms of evidence we can provide in our experience and knowledge of systemic changes of everyday living relevant to globalizing trends. Our challenge will also be to consider various designerly changes for betterment that may impact these trends.

Team reports of our 1998, 2000, and 2002 conversations are available upon request, and they will be available on site to inform and facilitate our forthcoming conversation.

Team 3: Foundations of Information Science: What comes after Enlightenment Rationality?

Coordinator: Søren Brier, sbr.lpf@cbs.dk

European culture stands in a watershed when it comes to make the final step into a knowledge based society. Either we can stay with our understanding of knowledge and rationality that we developed through the Renaissance and made central to our civilization and culture in the Enlightenment or we can deepen the foundation into human embodiment and life world practice.

From the Greeks we inherited the idea of a well-ordered and mathematically beautiful Cosmos, which we - for instance Galileo - build the foundation of the new mechanical physics on. It is the belief that rationality and the order of the world fits through the divine order of logic and mathematics. As Prigogine showed from Laplace onward the belief was founded that the physical world you be explained in one mathematical formula. - a 'world formula'. This was what Laplace took out of the Enlightenment thinking (D'Alambert was his teacher). That is one of the reasons that

Russell and Whitehead tried to unite them logic and mathematics in their Principia- and that Gödel's incompleteness proof was such a shock.

Physics has continued the search for the world formula. Steven Hawking is one of the most well known exponents for it. The paradigm has "spilled over" into the search for the genetic algorithms and artificial intelligence. As Lakoff has shown that this has created a myth of abstract un-embodied intelligence as the highest goal of knowledge (The Greeks considered mathematics to be divine and the heavenly bodies to move in perfect circle and classical physics hoped to find exact, deterministic context free eternal laws of nature). This has lead to worshipping computers as being the ideal of intelligence, of religious ideas of our future possibility of 'going over' into the Internet and live there forever as pure intelligences, plus the belief that robots can be intelligent in the same way as humans. The most famous example is 'Data' in the Star Trek movies. In the last on (Enigma) his intelligence is transferred to another robot some days before he (it?) was destroyed on a mission.

This idea of intelligence and knowledge based on the Turing machine has carried us a long way. It is now called the information processing paradigm of cognitive science. Its usefulness has run out for the modern complicated problems and systems we have to deal with. One of them is of course the human-computer interaction and how to integrate the computer, Internet and robots in our culture in a way that supports human development and does not destroy the centre of European culture which is its respect for the uniqueness and rights of the individual human being.

We need to know more about the relation between human meaningful information and the meaningless algorithmic processing of information. We need to know much more about human embodied information. How embodied and un-embodied information differ, and we need to know more about the interaction between culture and embodied knowledge.

Knowledge seems to be both in the body, in the mind and in the conscious use of language. These three levels seem to interact. Human knowledge is embodied and is therefore rooted I our evolution and genetic make up and our ecological interactions preserving our body and its procreation. But Second order cybernetics, autopoiesis and triadic semiotics are some of the tools that can help us make better models of signification, cognition and communication.

Team 4: "Being" Social Systems: Awareness and Enactment

Coordinator: Gary Metcalf (gmetcalf@interconnectionsllc.com)

This Fuschl conversation will continue a theme that was begun at the 2000 meeting. Its intent is to build upon and further the possibilities for social systems design, which is the core theme of the conversations as introduced by Bela H. Banathy.

While the goals of social systems design through conversation are admirable, the systems communities as a whole have yet to articulate any meaningful and coherent understanding of human social systems, as such. Efforts to affect systems, from family units to international economic and political systems, tend to borrow from an array of disciplines for theory and insight, but typically fall short or fail at the point of implementation (or at the least, fail in any ability to explain and replicate successes.) Conversation has thus far not succeeded as an alternative process at significant levels.

This particular conversation team will continue to explore human social systems specifically, including the emerging realm of "virtual" systems, in an effort to understand how we as individuals participate in them (consciously or not) and to search for means by which we might affect them purposefully and positively.

Triggering Questions: What does it mean to "be" part of a social system? How can we become more consciously aware of our participation in them?

Team 5: Y3K and a Meta-System Design Field

Coordinator: Gordon Dyer, G.C.Dyer@open.ac.uk

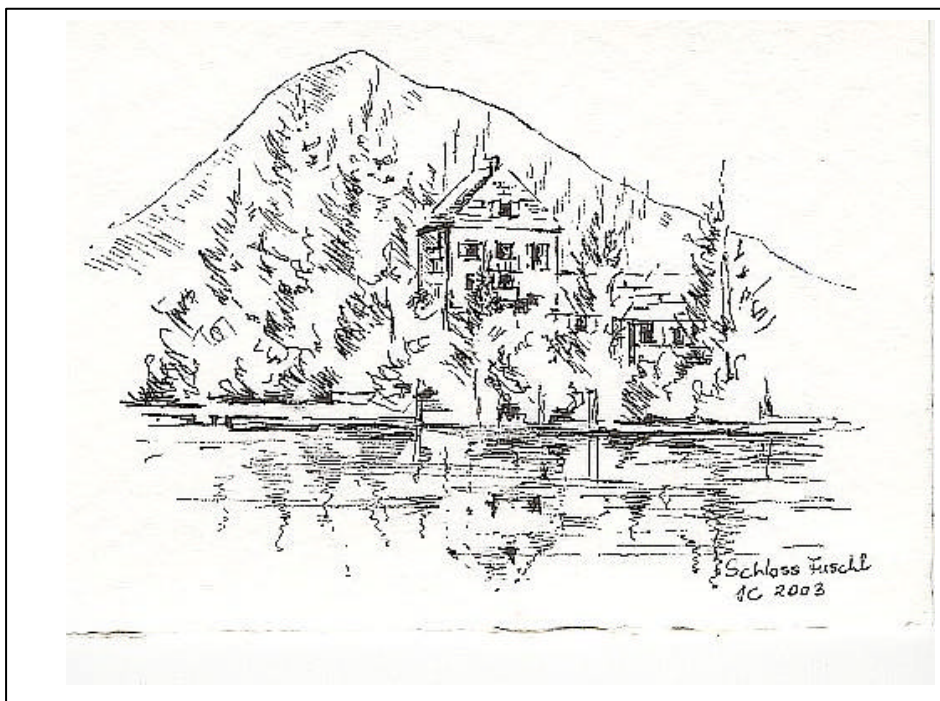
The term Y3K is used at Fuschl as a metaphor for a more desirable long term future to which we as systems designers might wish to aspire. It does not literally mean the Year 3000. However, with this long term focus it prevents us saying that nothing can be done. It also allows us to think of steps that we can begin to take now towards a Y3K vision and not move further away from that vision.

At Fuschl 2000 the team discussed the Y3K issue i.e. what would we as systems designers wish to see for humankind for the Year 3000. By the end of the conversation we had obtained some insights towards six principles, which constitute an Evolutionary Guidance System (EGS), for the Year 3000, or similar long-term future. We also identified some markers in terms of desirable behaviour patterns for the Year 3000. These desirable behaviours provide a basis for considering future education and human development programmes in future conversations.

At Fuschl 2002 we examined what kind of systems thinking would be necessary to make major advances towards our vision of Y3K. We concluded that contemporary systems design was developed primarily for industrial society within a western-based scientific rationality, which is not a universal framework for all kinds of problem solving or task-fulfilment. Rather, there could be numerous cultural frameworks besides the large-scale industrial system, even for people's lives in developed nations, where notions of time and other culturally interpreted phenomena will vary. What we suggest is now needed, as humankind, is to accept such a broad area/framework of human activities, and develop systems "meta-design" concepts for various cultural settings. Only then could we say that systems design offers a comprehensive framework.

At Fuschl 2004 we wish to explore further the domain of meta-systems design either in terms of possible new dimensions to the model or within the time and culture dimensions that we already identified. Here are some initial triggers for our conversation:

- What further insights can we generate on the concept of the meta-design field, either in terms of new dimensions, or within the time and culture dimensions already identified?
- How can the conceptual frameworks that we generated at Fuschl 2000/2002 be further explored to facilitate meaningful actions?
- What specific actions can we and others take over the next several years as first steps towards the types of ideals that were identified?



Schloß Fuschl
at Lake Fuschl

Rules for the Fuschl Conversations:

- The overall thematic responsibility is vested in the Fuschl Committee of the IFSR. It selects the topics for the individual Teams and the Team Leaders.
- Attendance at the Conversation is by invitation only and is only available to a severely limited number of participants.
- Applications will be considered by the Programme Committee with a strong voice from the Team Coordinator. Your input paper stating your potential contribution to the Conversation plays a decisive role.
- Persons interested in participating should immediately e-mail the attached registration form to Gerhard Chroust (GC@sea.uni-linz.ac.at) and to the Team Coordinator whose team they wish to join. DEADLINE is January 1, 2004.
- You will be informed of acceptance/rejection by February 2, 2004 at the latest.
- You will be contacted again by the Programme Committee and asked for additional information.
- The registration fee is € 100 and should be paid to account no.: 0023-7631700 "International Federation of Systems Research" at Creditanstalt (CA) - Wien, bank-identification 11000 by February 15, 2004. Your payment is not refundable.
- The IFSR will pay for hotel accommodation, breakfast and dinner from Sunday (April 18) evening until Friday (April 23) morning.
- Lunch and drinks will have to be paid by yourself.
- You are required to supply the necessary input papers, contribution to proceedings etc. as requested by your team coordinator.
- The proceedings will be published under the auspices of Austrian Society for Cybernetic Studies, Vienna with an ISBN-Number. You will be asked to contribute to the proceedings
- You may take your partner along, at your own cost. The additional cost for half pension (breakfast and dinner) is approx. € 55 per night.
- If you have further questions please contact (Christian Hofer or Gerhard Chroust (CH,GC)@sea.uni-linz.ac.at)

Application Form

The form is your commitment to attend, if selected, and the basis for making reservations for you at the hotel. A follow-up memo will be send early February. .

Please complete and return this form together with your input paper, by January, 1st, 2004 at the latest:

- 1) *to Gerhard Chroust, Kepler University Linz, 4040-Linz, Austria, e-mail GC@sea.uni-linz.ac.at AND*
- 2) *toThe team Coordinator whose team would be your first choice of joining.*

Application for Participation at the Fuschl Conversation

*I have read and I accept the rules as given in the attached memo.
I also agree to pay a registration fee of € 100 by February 15, 2004 to
account no.: 0023-7631700 "International Federation of Systems Research" at
Creditanstalt (CA) - Vienna, bank-identification 11000, and to pay for your lunch and
drinks yourself.*

Nam.: _____

Address: _____

e-mail: _____

My partner will accompany me

First preference of Conversation Team: _____

second preference of Conversation Team : _____

I plan to make contributions to the Conversation in the following area(s):

My input paper is attached

My input paper has been sent separately on _____

Other Comments: _____
