Vygotsky, Goethe, Bakhtin, Wittgenstein and Merleau-Ponty – 'Getting It' and the Nature of Dialogical Inquiry

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"In most description and analysis, culture and society are expressed in an habitual past tense. The strongest barrier to the recognition of human cultural activity is this immediate and regular conversion of experience into finished products... relationships, institutions and formations in which we are still actively involved are converted, by this procedural mode, into formed wholes rather than forming and formative processes" (Raymond Williams, 1977, p.128).

"Both in the case of perception and in that of building a skill, a person must actively meet his environment in such a way that he [spontaneously] coordinates his outgoing nervous impulses with those that are coming in. As a result the structure of his environment is, as it were, gradually incorporated into his outgoing impulses, so that he learns how to meet his environment with the right kind of response. With regard to learning a skill it is evident how this happens. But in a sense the perception of each kind of thing is also a skill, because it requires a person actively meet the environment with the movements that are appropriate for the disclosure of the structure of that environment" (Bohm, 1969, p.211).

"The word in living conversation is directly, blatantly, oriented toward a future answer-word; it provokes an answer, anticipates it and structures itself in the answer's direction. Forming itself in an atmosphere of the already spoken, the word is at the same time determined by *that which has not yet been said but which is needed and in fact anticipated by the answering word*. Such is the situation of any living dialogue" (Bakhtin, 1981, p.280, my emphasis).

Let me say, right from the start, that what I have to say may seem very strange to a University audience. For the last 15 years or so, I have gradually been trying to 'cure' myself of being an academic, concerned with trying first to justify my claims in within the terms of an *academic discipline* of some kind – psychology, communication, education, philosophy, or what ever – with the idea that later, once justified, I could later *apply* them our in the world of everyday life. I now think that there are good reasons for why that kind of approach can never succeed – and at some point today, I'll try to give those good reasons, but to try to give them now would be to imprison myself once again in the very prison I want to avoid.

Instead of fellow academics, I have instead begun to orient myself toward the worries and concerns of practitioners, of everyday people who have to think 'in the moment', while 'in motion', both from within the midst of complexity, and in relation to never before encountered, 'first-time', unique events.

Thus, in talking about "dialogically-structured inquiry," I will be discussing, essentially, participatory action research, that is, research that is conducted in the course of researchers' ongoing involvements in certain everyday practices over which they can have very little control, but in which they *can* enter into dialogical relations we those they are trying to help. Indeed, I shall be concerned with a way of acting and a form of understanding – both of which we quite often use in our everyday social affairs without realizing it – in which we, so to speak, 'know what we are doing' while we are doing it, but which we didn't plan in detail before we embarked on it.

In fact, because we are always acting in a *unique* situation, always for "yet another first time," as

Garfinkel (1967) puts it, to an extent, in being unique, our actions must inevitably be *creative* – and any attempts to plan them in accord with a theory or recipe would preclude the occurrence of that creativity. This, however, does not preclude our feeling in such circumstances, at least a degree of confidence (as well as a degree of apprehension) in being able to achieve our aims – in being able to afford the development of a circumstance, a dialogical space, within which those whom one is trying to help come to express

In short, I want to talk about a whole realm of human activities and processes, going on both within us and around us, that occur automatically and spontaneously, over which we have virtually no control, but which exert a major influence in our lives. And to understand their nature, we need to take a very different approach to our inquiries into human affairs than that which is now familiar to us.

Indeed, as a first hint of strangeness in my talk, I want to talk about the ceaseless flow of spontaneously responsive living activity within which we are inevitably embedded in living our lives together with all the others and othernesses around us, as the realm of the *mysterious*, considered as a third category of events subsisting between the realm of *problems* soluble by the methods of reason, and the realm of the *ineffable* that cannot ever be spoken of in any satisfying way. In calling it this, I have a remark of Wittgenstein's (1980) in mind in which he says: "Perhaps what is inexpressible (what I find mysterious and am not able to express) is the background against which whatever I could express has its meaning" (p.16). For we shall find, that although many of the difficulties we face cannot, as *problems,* be *solved* by intellectual methods of *reasoning*, with the help of Wittgenstein's (1953) methods of investigation, we can nonetheless begin to find our 'way around' within the realm of the mysterious, to 'find our feet' within it, so to speak, even though it may never be wholly comprehensible to us.

In other words, and here is a second hint of strangeness, I shall, following Wittgenstein (1980) be suggesting that many difficulties we face as simply not intellectual difficulties, but are difficulties of the will. As he puts it: "What makes a subject hard to understand – if it's something significant and important – is not that before you can understand it you need to be specially trained in abstruse matters, but the contrast between understanding the subject and what most people *want* to see. Because of this the very things which are most obvious may become the hardest of all to understand. What has to be overcome is a difficulty having to do with the will, rather than with the intellect" (p.17).

In other words, the task of switching to a new style of thought – as is required here, today, to switch from thinking within the terms of an academic discipline to thinking within the practical circumstances of a set of practitioners – is not a difficulty that can be intellectually solved like a *problem* in logic or algebra that can be solved by reasoning. From now on I will distinguish between *problems* and *difficulties of orientation* or *relational difficulties*, in short, *struggles* – for unlike problems in which one has simply to plot or calculate a path through already well-known territory, moving for first-time through uncharted territory is often like hacking one's way out of a jungle without even a compass or the sun as a guide.

So, although some of our difficulties can be seen as problems – because we can *solve* them by applying a method of reasoning (often in the form of a theoretical schematism) to them – this is only the case when a clear link can be 'worked out' between what is already well known and the unknown state of affairs. A relational or orientational difficulty presents itself as almost the reverse of this situation – for it is only after we discover how to organize ourselves to attend to certain aspects of our surroundings rather than others, that we can *relate* ourselves to our surroundings thus to know 'where we are', and 'where next we can go'. Otherwise, we are 'all at sea', disoriented, unable to 'get our bearings' – nothing around us makes any sense to us. It is only after one has become properly oriented, that the data relevant to us achieving our goal can be brought to light (and then our problem solving reasoning can, if necessary, be applied).

But my talk today will be about difficulties of orientation, or relational difficulties, or difficulties to do with knowing our 'way about' – sometimes, to do with knowing our 'way about' inside our own capacities.

Once we learn to switch to thinking of what it is like for us always to be involved within the

practical activities at work within in the unfolding development of our meetings with the others or othernesses around us, then a new whole realm of concerns begins to come into view.

Central to everything that occurs in this realm will be a focus on the *responsivity* of growing and living forms, both to each other and to the othernesses in their surroundings, and on *their* own particular and unique ways of coming-into-Being.

Each living form requires understanding in its own way. While we can come to an understanding of a dead form in terms of objective, explanatory theories representing the sequence of events supposed to have caused it, a quite different form of engaged, responsive understanding becomes available to us with a living form. It can call out spontaneous reactions from us in way that is quite impossible for a dead form. It is this that makes these two kinds of understanding so very different from each other.

While we can study already completed, dead forms at a distance, seeking to understand *the pattern of past* events that caused them to come into existence, we can enter into a relationship with a living form and, in making ourselves open to its movements, find ourselves spontaneously responding to it. In other words, instead of seeking to explain a present activity in terms the past, we can understand it in terms of its meaning for us, i.e., in terms of our spontaneous responses to it *in the present moment*. It is only from within our involvements with other living things that this kind of meaningful, responsive understanding becomes available to us (Shotter, 1993). This is what I think is so special about both Vygotsky's and Goethe's methods of inquiry into the development of living forms.

So to repeat, if I was allowed only a few words to state my central theme, it would be that I want to focus on our spontaneously responsive, living bodily activity – and, as an extension of this, on our spontaneous responsiveness to spoken words, whether another's word or our own. If I was allowed a few more words, I would add our spontaneously responsive activities are also expressive to others, and thus everything of importance that I want to talk about today occurs in meetings between us and the others and othernesses around us. Finally, I must add that, as we shall see, due to certain special characteristics of living processes – the fact that they grow and develop irreversibly in time – means that something unique and novel, an 'it', is always created between them when two or more such living beings meet.

This is why I have suggested that at the centre of dialogical inquiry is the phenomenon of 'getting it', a shared foundational experience of that can occur when two or more people – who are members of the same speech community – are momentarily 'struck' by the occurrence of an event in their surroundings. I have called this phenomenon 'getting it', for it is the unique nature of that 'it' that we must somehow grasp and do justice to in our expressions of its nature, without 'stripping it down' to fit it into an already well-known category or framework. This, as I see it, a central aim (among a number of others) in our dialogical inquiries.

Thus, as I see it, such a form of action research is not an experimental science in search of laws, nor is it an interpretative one in search of meaning (e.g. Geertz, 1975, 1983), but a practical one in search of the refinement or elaboration of, or a critical change in, our already existing practices. And such a research process involves – I think we also agree – inserting into the ongoing, routine flow of an everyday activity (often a specific production process), opportunities to take time-out of its taken-for-granted routines, to reflect on them in some way with the aim of refining, elaborating, changing, or otherwise developing them. Where the questions here are to do with the detailed conduct of the activities that might occur in such inserted moments of reflection.

This topic raises an immense number of issues: the criticism of traditional modes of scientific investigation; the need to bring out into the open the immense number of deeply held assumptions that we need to change if we are to adopt these methods; the relations of theoretical talk to practice; moral, ethical, and political issues; global versus local matters; the very idea of distinguishing living processes from dead mechanical ones; and so on and so on.

In the time I have available to speak to you today I am going to pick out just six:

1.   The nature of dialogical processes and what the "only once-occurrent" circumstance of acting is like;

2. what misleads us into "losing the phenomena;"
3. "transitory understandings" and "action guiding anticipations;"
4. the guiding role of 'reminders' (Wittgenstein) and the relation of 'experience distant theoretical concepts' to people's 'experience near' notions (Geertz);
5. the nature of "accounts;"
6. and a new way of talking and thinking (a way of talking and thinking that is in fact already a part of our everyday way of talking with each other) that I am calling "withness-thinking" to contrast it with the "aboutness" kind of thinking we currently do in our reflective activities.

1) The dialogical, joint nature of human activity: Before saying anything about dialogue, or even about the dialogical nature of all human activity, I must just say a word about living, as opposed to dead, mechanical processes.

– First, rather than simply being re-arrangements or re-configurations of separately existing parts, which at each instant in time take up a new configuration (according to pre-existing laws or principles), *living processes* consist in movements of indivisible wholes, each one utterly unique in itself.
– Besides moving around in space, such living wholes can also be sensed as moving *within themselves*. Such *expressive* movements can be sensed as occurring through time, even if the bodies of the relevant living beings stay steadfastly fixed in space – they breath, they make noises, they wave their limbs about, and so on.
– Thirdly, in so doing, they seem to display both short-term expressive 'inner' movements – smiles, frowns, gestures, vocalizations, etc. – the expressions of a 'thou', i.e., of their own living identity, and more long term 'inner' movements, i.e., of their aging.
– Indeed, all such living wholes endure through a whole continuous, sequential life process: A process that begins with their initial *conception* (in a two-being interaction); that leads to their *birth* (as an individual being); then their *growth to maturity* (as an autonomous being); and then their *death*... a process of initial creation, growth, and development that we will find relevant when I turn to a discussion of "forms of life," with their associated "language-games" (Wittgenstein, 1953), in our discussions of expressive-responsive forms of communication below.
– So fifthly, while dead assemblages can be constructed piece by piece from objective parts – that is, from parts that retain their character irrespective of whether they are a part of the assemblage or not – living, indivisible wholes cannot. On the contrary, they grow. And in the course of exchanges with their surroundings, they transform themselves, internally, from simple individuals into richly structured ones. In this growth, their 'parts' are not only a constant state of change[1], but they owe their very existence both to their relations to each other and to their relations to themselves at some earlier point in time. Thus the history of their structural transformations in time is of more consequence than the logic of their momentary structure(s) in spaces.
– Thus sixthly, there is not only a kind of *developmental continuity* involved in the unfolding of all living activities, but all living entities also imply their surroundings, so to speak; in their very nature, they come into existence ready to *grow into* their own appropriate environment, or *Umwelt* (von Uexkull, 1957).

– There is thus a distinctive 'inner dynamic' to living wholes not manifested in dead, mechanical assemblages, such that the earlier phases of the activity are indicative of at least the *style* of what is to come later – we can thus respond to their activities in an *anticipatory* fashion.
– Thus seventhly, in always giving rise to what we might call *identity preserving* changes, they and their 'parts' are always 'on the way' to becoming more than they already are. This is why their special, living nature cannot be captured in a timeless, 'everything-present-together', spatial structure or a single order of logical connectedness.
– And finally, eightly, when two or more such forms of life 'rub together', so to speak, in their *meetings*, they always create a third or a collective form of life which a) they all sense themselves as *participants* within it, and which b) has a *life of its own*, with its own *voice*, its own way of 'pointing' toward the future.

Let me explore this last phenomenon more fully:

– **Collective action, 'our' action**: As living beings, we cannot *not* be *spontaneously* responsive both to those around us [others] and to other aspects [othernesses] of our surroundings.
– Thus, in such spontaneously responsive sphere of activity as this, instead of one person first acting individually and independently of an other, and then the second replying, by acting individually and independently of the first, we act jointly, as a *collective-we*.
– And we do this bodily, in a 'living' way, spontaneously, without us having first 'to work out' how to respond to each other.
– This means that when someone acts, their activity cannot be accounted as wholly their own activity – for a person's acts are partly 'shaped' by the acts of the others around them – this is where all the strangeness of the dialogical begins ("joint action" - Shotter, 1980, 1984, 1993a and b).
– Our actions are neither yours nor mine; they are truly 'ours'.

– **Hence, meaning is present in all our inter-activity**: "The mechanism of meaning is present in the social act before the emergence of consciousness or awareness of meaning occurs. The act or adjustive response of the second organism gives to the gesture of the first... the meaning it has"(Mead, 1934, pp.77-8).

– **Involvement obligations**: If we are to sustain the sense of a collective-we between us and the answerability to a common rhythm, we find ourselves with certain *obligations* to 'our' joint affairs:
– Only if 'you' respond to 'me' in a way sensitive to the *relations* between your actions and mine can 'we' act together as a 'collective-we'; and if I sense you as not being sensitive in that way, then I feel immediately offended in an ethical way - I feel that you lack respect for 'our' affairs.
– Indeed, "[if] the minute social system that is brought into being with each encounter [becomes] disorganized... the participants will feel unruled, unreal, and anomic" (p.135).
– Thus, as Goffman (1967) puts it: a participant "...cannot act *in order* to satisfy these obligations, for such an effort would require him to shift his [sic] attention from the topic of the conversation to the problem of being spontaneously involved in it. Here, in a component of non-rational impulsiveness - not only tolerated but actually demanded - we find an important way in which the interactional order differs from other kinds of social order" (p.115).

– **A complex mixture, chiasmically organized**: What is produced in such dialogical exchanges is a very complex intertwining of not wholly reconcilable influences – as Bakhtin (1981) remarks, both 'centripetal' tendencies *inward* toward order and unity at the center, as well as 'centrifugal' ones *outward* toward diversity and difference on the borders or margins.
– "... a multiplicity of complex conceptual structures, many of them superimposed upon or knotted into one another, which are at once strange, irregular, and inexplicit, and which [an analyst] must contrive somehow first to grasp and then to render... the task of trying to read a manuscript – foreign, faded, full of ellipses, incoherencies... written not in conventional graphs of sound but in transient examples of behaviour" (Geertz, 1975, p.10)... written in transient examples of behaviour...
– The dialogical meeting together of two or more slightly different – but not too different activities – has a chiasmic quality to it, which can be liken to what happens in the optic *chiasma* in binocular vision, in which the 'relational dimension' of depth is created... in being *chiasmically* related or dynamically intertwined, two or more influences can be united into a unitary whole that provides us with a "shaped and vectored sense" of both *where* we 'are' and *where we might go next*.
– This is the only once-occurrent circumstance of contextually related action.

– **The 'sui generis' nature of such dialogically-structured activity**: Thus, such activity is 1) not simply *action* (for it is not done by individuals; and cannot be explained by giving people's *reasons*), 2) nor is it simply *behavior* (to be explained as a regularity in terms of its causal principles); 3) it constitutes a distinct, third sphere of activity with its own distinctive properties.

- This third sphere of activity involves a special kind of nonrepresentational, sensuous or embodied form of *practical-moral* (Bernstein, 1983) understanding, which, in being constitutive of people's social and personal identities, is prior to and determines all the other ways of knowing available to us.
- Activities in this sphere lack specificity; they are only partially determined.
- They are a complex mixture of many different kinds of influences.
- They are just as much material as mental; they are just as much felt as thought, and thought as felt.
- Their intertwined, complex nature makes it very difficult for us to characterize their nature: they have neither a fully orderly nor a fully disorderly structure, neither a completely stable nor an easily changed organization, neither a fully subjective nor fully objective character.
- While they can exhibit progressive changes, they can also exhibit retrogressive ones too.
- They are also non-locatable - they are 'spread out' among all those participating in them.
- They are neither 'inside' people, but nor are they 'outside' them; they are located in that space where inside and outside are one.
- Nor is there a separate before and after (Bergson), neither an agent nor an effect, but only a meaningful, 'enduring' whole which cannot divide itself into separable parts – a whole that, in enduring, dynamically sustains itself in existence ["duration"].

 "How could human behavior be described? Surely only by sketching the actions of a variety of humans, as they are all mixed up together. What determines our judgment, our concepts and reactions, is not what *one* man is doing *now*, an individual action, but the whole hurly-burly of human actions, the background against which we see an action" (Z. no.567)... (cf also 1980, II, no.629).

- Indeed, it is precisely their lack of any pre-determined order, and thus their openness to being specified or determined *by those involved in them*, in practice - while usually remaining quite unaware of having done so - that is their central defining feature. And: *it is precisely this that makes this sphere of activity interesting*... for at least two reasons: 1) to do with *practical investigations* into how people actually do manage to 'work things out', and the part played by the *ways of talking* we interweave into the many different spheres of practical activity occurring between us; but also 2) for how we might refine and elaborate these spheres of activity, and how we might extend them into novel spheres as yet unknown to us.

- **Wholeness**: "Sawing and dancing are paradigm cases of dialogical actions. But there is frequently a dialogical level to actions that are otherwise merely coordinated. A conversation s a good example. Conversations with some degree of ease and intimacy move beyond mere coordination and have a common rhythm. The interlocutor not only listens but participates with head nodding and 'unh-hunh' and the like, and at a certain point the 'semantic turn' passes over to the other by a common movement. The appropriate moment is felt by both partners together in virtue of the common rhythm" (Taylor, 1991, p.310)... not in virtue merely of a common rhythm, but in virtue of each move in the interplay 'satisfying' at each moment an appropriate *constitutive* expectation, thus to constitute a 'sensed whole or unity'.

- **The situation as agentic**: because the overall outcome of any exchange cannot be traced back to the intentions of any of the individuals involved, the 'dialogical reality or space' constructed between them is experienced as an 'external reality', a 'third agency' (an 'it') with its own (ethical) demands and requirements: "The word is a drama in which three characters participate (it is not a duet, but a trio)" (Bakhtin, 1986, p.122)... a third agency is at work in dialogical realities.

- **The specificatory function of language**: Thus, "human discourse takes place in and deals with a pluralistic, only fragmentarily known, and only partially shared social world" (Rommetveit, 1985, p.183).
- "...vagueness, ambiguity, and incompleteness - but hence also versatility, flexibility, and negotiability - must for that reason be dealt with as inherent and theoretically essential characteristics of ordinary language" (p.183).

- 'There is hardly any more efficient way of *evading* the complexities of ordinary language use than to disassociate it from actual use and explicate its syntactic and semantic rules under stipulated 'ideal' conditions" (p.185).
- Thus, in such circumstances, "even apparently simple objects and events remain in principle enigmatic and undetermined *as social realities* until they are talked about" (p.193).
- It is only *from within* a living involvement in such an ongoing flow of dialogical activity, that we can make sense of what is occurring around us.
- These are not understandings *of* a situation, which allow it to be linked to realities already known to us, but new, first-time understandings which are *constitutive* for us of what counts as the significant, stable and repeatable forms within that flow.

Above, then, I have set out the special nature of the what happens *only* when we enter into mutually responsive, dialogically-structured, living, embodied relations with the others and othernesses around us – when we cease to set ourselves, unresponsively, over against them, and allow ourselves to enter into an inter-involvement with them all.

The special phenomenon that occurs, is the creation, within the responsive interplay of all the events and activities at work in the situation at that moment, of an emerging sequence of distinctive changes (or differencings'), of certain dynamically changing forms, each one with its own unique 'shape', a shape which, although it is invisible, is nonetheless *felt* by all involved as participants within the ongoing interplay in the same way.

It is here, in the intricate 'orchestration' of the interplay occurring between our own *outgoing responsive expressions* toward those others (or othernesses) and their equally *responsive incoming expressions* toward us, that both very special *transitory understandings* and *action guiding anticipations* become available to us.

In such understandings, we grasp the expressions of these others and othernesses, not as passive and neutral objects, but as giving rise to "real presences (as agencies)" (Steiner, 1989; Shotter, 2003), toward which we must adopt an "evaluative attitude" (Bakhtin, 1986, p.84). We shall call these *relationally-responsive understandings* to contrast them with the *representational-referential understanding* more familiar to us in our traditional intellectual dealings. But, to repeat, such understandings do not occur in all conversations, only in truly reciprocally or mutually responsive ones.

"Losing the phenomena"

I want to begin this section with a number of quotations from other writers. The first two are from a very important chapter – *Structures of Feeling* – in Raymond Williams's (1977) Marxism and Literature. He remarks on a pervasive tendency:

> "In most description and analysis, culture and society are expressed in an habitual past tense. The strongest barrier to the recognition of human cultural activity is this immediate and regular conversion of experience into finished products... relationships, institutions and formations in which we are still actively involved are converted, by this procedural mode, into formed wholes rather than forming and formative processes" (p.128).

> "Perhaps the dead can be reduced to fixed forms, though their surviving records are against it. But the living will not be reduced, at least in the first person; living third persons may be different. All the known complexities, the experienced tensions, shifts, uncertainties, the intricate forms of unevenness and confusion, are against the terms of the reduction and soon, by extension, against social analysis itself" (pp.129-130).

The second writer I want to mention is Henri Bergson (1911). He notes that:

> "Instead of attaching ourselves to the inner becoming of things, we place ourselves outside them in order to recompose their becoming artificially. We take snapshots, as it were, of the passing reality, and, as these are characteristic of the reality, we have only to

string them on a becoming, abstract, uniform and invisible, situated at the back of the apparatus of knowledge, in order to imitate what there is that is characteristic in this becoming itself...Whether we would think becoming, or express it, or even perceive it, we hardly do anything else than set going a kind of cinematograph inside us" (pp.322-323).

"It seems then that, parallel to this physics, a second kind of knowledge ought to have grown up, which could have retained what physics allowed to escape... This second kind of knowledge would have set the cinematographical method aside. It would have called upon the mind to renounce its most cherished habits... it is the flow of time, it is the very flux of the real that we should be trying to follow... by accustoming [the mind] to install itself within the moving, but by developing also another faculty, complementary to the intellect, we may open a perspective on the other half of the real... a *life* of the real" (pp.343-344).

Often, these days, we hear of the need to 'theorize' a certain topic appropriately, prior to setting out appropriate styles of empirical research into it: such topics as "process," and "practice" (Schattzki, Knorr Cetina, and von Savigny, 2001) being cases in point. On the face of it, from a rational point of view, this would seem to be both a highly desirable aim as well as a quite unexceptional one. What else could possibly be one's goal in the proper conduct of one's research? Prior to our inquiries into a something, we need to know *what* that something *is*, and surely, that is best accomplished by the systematic formulation of an explanatory theory as to its nature... isn't it?

Well, perhaps not. Let me now talk about what I see as some major difficulties with the adoption of this approach when we are concerned with processes within which we ourselves are, or at least can be, embedded as practitioners.

As I see it, as (action) researchers, as co-practitioners along with those with whom we are conducting our inquiries, our task is to develop styles of thought and talk that allow those primarily involved in the particular processes in question, to uniquely affect the flow of these processes from within their own unique living involvements with them. Thus, to pose the difficulty we face as that of *theorizing process in relation to empirical inquiry*, may be wholly misleading: it can lead us into beginning our inquiries with a quite inappropriate orientation toward our own overall aims. For, if as action researchers we are interested in adopting a more collaborative or participatory approach in our inquiries, it can lead us instead to seek *our own* wilful, manipulative, and individualistic control over the processes in question – for this, after all, is the practical aim of scientific investigations (see Shotter, 1999).

But more than this, it can mislead us in our inquiries to arriving on the scene too late and to looking in the wrong direction with the wrong attitude in mind: *too late*, because we take the 'basic elements' in terms of which we must work and conduct our arguments to be already fixed in existence; *in the wrong direction*, because we look backward toward supposed already existing actualities, rather than forward toward possibilities; and *with the wrong attitude*, because we seek a static picture, a theoretical representation, of a phenomenon, rather than a living sense of it as an active agency in our lives. In short, in Garfinkel's (2002, pp.264-267) terms, we "lose the phenomena."

We lose the phenomena because mainstream theory-driven research portrays practitioners as people who simply choose and reflect (or reflect and choose) in the performance of their actions. It fails to portray them as participants already caught up in a ceaselessly ongoing process who – in the face of the constraints and limited resources it affords them, as well as the responses it 'calls for' from them – must produce *from within* that ongoing process, both recognizable sounds and movements, and legitimate and accountable actions and utterances.

Here, then, we have the clear tension expressed by Williams (1977) above – as he noted there, "all the known complexities, the experienced tensions, shifts, uncertainties, the intricate forms of unevenness and confusion [experienced in our actual living of our lives], are against the terms of... social analysis itself" (p.129-130) – for currently, in both our everyday discussions of decision-making, and in mainstream theory-driven research, we assume that when people act, they do so by making decisions in the face of the conditions confronting them, and that they progressively correct their decisions and their

actions accordingly as additional information turns up, i.e., we assume that they simply choose and reflect (or reflect and choose) in the performance of their actions. But is this so?

As we have seen, as already participants in ceaselessly ongoing processes, they *can only* act in relation to the constraints and limited resources locally afforded them within such processes, as well as the responses they 'call for' from them. In so doing, like, say, tournament tennis players[2], they often act simply as best they can, given the exigencies of their local circumstances – in other words, they hardly make any self-consciously deliberated decisions at all!! They simply act spontaneously, in terms of their experienced judgment. In moving on inside a world that is making them whilst they are making it, they are not able to reflect on that world as a finished object: they know *what* they are doing, i.e., they can account for it to others if challenged; they know *why* they are doing it, i.e., they have a reason for it; but what they still don't yet know, is *what* their doing *has done* – it may in the end all turn out badly. In other words, in representing people's actions as a sequence of rational decisions, we forget both the irreversible flow of time, and that a *successive* or *expressive* movement has continually, in each of its successive moments, to *struggle* to come into existence – for, at each moment of its realization, it is, so to speak, a matter of navigating in an often unpropitious and often overwhelming sea of other possibilities, to all of which it must be *interrelated* in its own unique realization[3]. As a consequence of which – as we have seen in the dialogically-structured activities discussed above – people can in fact have no reflective understanding at all of the local conditions that determined their actions; it can only be seen *as* resulting from a 'correct decision' after their actions have been taken. Thus, only in retrospect can they formulate *what they must have done* in order to make their supposed 'decision' a correct decision. And they need to do this to give their decision *legitimacy*, i.e., they need to show how what they did *fits in with* the agreed overall aims and values of the organization in which they have a decision making role. Why do they do this?[4]

Garfinkel (1967) provides a now classic account of how jurors make their decisions "while maintaining a healthy respect for the routine features of the social order" (p.104). He highlights in his account just the tensions and ambiguities we have been highlighting here: that between the decision making methods of everyday life and acting in conformity with the "official juror line" (p.108). There is not space to go into this study in great detail, but a number of details are worthy of mention here. First, is the fact that jurors were themselves very aware of these tensions, and of the fact that they had retrospectively 'modified' their reasons for their judgments. But, "such selective 'redeliberations', as 'solutions' to the ambiguities in their situations of 'choice', were uneasily held and were productive of incongruity. But such discrepancies were privately entertained. Publically, jurors either described their decisions as having been arrived at in conformity with the official line or they preferred to withhold comment" (p.112). Indeed, "when, during the interviews, their attention was drawn by interviewers to the discrepancies between their ideal accounts and their 'actual practices' jurors became anxious. They looked to the interviewer for assurance that the verdict nevertheless had been correct in the judge's opinion" (p.113).

In other words, in everyday life, people face two distinct tasks in their actions: (1) the practical, prospective task of realizing an achievement, step-by-step in relation to exacting local conditions, and (2) the ethico-political task of retrospectively accounting to others for the legitimacy of the final outcome of their actions – two tasks that need bear very little relation to each other. As Garfinkel (1967) puts it, after having discussed the tensions at work here: "If the above description is accurate, decision making in daily life would thereby have, as a critical feature, the *decision maker's task of justifying a course of action*" (p.114). In other words, in our everyday activities, we are much more likely to be preoccupied with the problem of assigning a legitimate history to the *outcomes* of our actions than with trying to attend to the local details relevant to the *process* of their fashioning. As Wittgenstein (1980b) remarks: "The *facts* of human history that throw light on our problem, are difficult for us to find out, for our talk *passes them by*, it is occupied with other things" (vol.I, no.78).

But such 'official' retrospective, justificatory accounts fail to account for the myriad situated details to which an actor must attend and respond in their struggles to creatively produce their actions in the first place. Thus what I must emphasize here is, literally, the world of difference between these first-time achievements and their second-time reproduction, the fact that they occur in two very different worlds: (1) one in the precursor world of our ceaselessly flowing, just happening, dialogically-structured

activities, in which everything occurs in spontaneous response to previous occurrences, and (2) the other in the modernist, Cartesian world of thoughtful individual agents who act deliberately by putting their intentions into action.

It is at this point that the second epigraph quotation from Raymond Williams (1977) above become relevant. As he puts it, if we are to present an alternative to the received and fixed forms in terms of which official culture presents a *mythicized* account of the supposed causal history leading up to our actions, we must turn away from the kind of thought and talk separated from feeling that is currently required of us in our intellectual inquiries, toward "thought as felt and feeling as thought: practical consciousness of a present kind, in a living and inter-relating continuity" (Williams, 1977, p.132). We need a kind of feelingful thought that can function in relation to an *embryonic phase* of our activities while they are still 'in growth', so to speak, before they become 'fossilized'.

Such transitory, embryonic understandings are, of course, exactly what we have been discussing in the two sections above. But, as Williams (1977) makes clear, if we are to translate them from their original local context and to bring them into the everyday world of public life in ways that are beneficial to others, then we have to approach them, not as scientific discoveries, but as we approach works of art. For, although works of art "... really are, in one sense, explicit and finished forms – actual objects in the visual arts, objectified conventions and notations (semantic figures) in literature. But it is not only that, to complete their inherent process, we have to make them present, in specifically active 'readings'. It is also that the making of art is never itself in the past tense. It is always a formative process, within a specific present" (p.129). In other words, we have to *bring them to life* in some way, to realize them as an 'it' with agentic force in our ways of relating ourselves to our surroundings. But to do that, to make such transitory understandings *present* and able to exert a formative influence on us in our actions, we need a form of talk, a use of language at the appropriate moment in time, that *directs* our attention toward crucial aspects of our surroundings that we would not otherwise notice, aspects which can arouse in us the uniquely appropriate "action guiding anticipations" that can enable us to 'go on' to respond to them appropriately.

This, I take it, is precisely the function of Wittgenstein's (1953) "philosophical remarks."[5] They are "reminders" of what in fact is already very familiar to us within our everyday lives, but which – like Garfinkel's jurors – for various reasons we nonetheless leave disregarded in the background to our lives together.

Theory-driven research, however, approaches the process of people acting as a sequence of already completed actions, and reflects back on them with the aim of mastering their rational reproduction. In so doing, their sequential unfolding is represented as a sequence of static, well-defined, already existing states or positions, occurring juxtaposed with each other like beads on a string (with time being seen as a fourth dimension of space). It fails to account for the myriad situated details to which an actor must attend and respond in their *struggles* to creatively produce their actions in the first place – and I will use the word 'struggle' from now on to indicate the overcoming of a unique difficulty for a first-time.

Cunliffe (1997) reports the comments of Steve, the Vice-President of a New England power company in America, when being interviewed about the multidimensional complexities and uncertainties of his job:

> **Steve:** "The worst part of my job is that every decision I make is 20-20 hindsighted by everybody: by the Utilities Commission and by my supervisors. December of '89 was my worst nightmare. We began on Thanksgiving day with 40 consecutive days of the coldest temperature ever recorded. We were having a new pipeline installed that was scheduled to be completed November 1st – with the new supply coming in – it didn't get completed until December 18th. I had planned to go out and use other supply that was running through. Our propane supply ship coming into XXX [our dock here] got hit with a hundred foot sea on December 22nd – was scheduled to be in on the 25th coming over from Algeria. It took a huge crack in the bow and two people got killed. I didn't anticipate that. Then by December 22nd I was a certifiable genius – I was the only one in a six State

Region with any propane left. I got a call at home from Governor YYY at 8:30 at night to tell me I'd be in his office at 9:00 the next morn[end 160]ing. I was either going to give him 100,000 gallons of my propane or he was going to take 500,000 gallons – 'Have a nice night! See you in the morning!' We had to call the Attorneys, I was up all night: 'Could he do that'? – 'Yes'. ... Then it was the warmest January ever recorded, the warmest February ever recorded .... then we went from not enough to too much. I sat on the witness stand (at the Utilities Commission who wanted to disallow $1,000,000 from the Company) for twenty two and a half days explaining every decision I made."

Here, then, in dealing with the kind of circumstances Steve describes, there is nothing comparable to the solution of a logical or mathematical problem, in which we merely face a "brain-teaser," in which we have to cudgel our brains to work out something unknown from something already known about the situation in question. Problems of that kind can be solved by 'calculation' because they are already well defined as such. "Problem solving" of this kind entails the application of what Schön (1983) calls a "technical rationality." But, as Steve's case makes clear, involved as an aspect of people's struggles to creatively produce their actions in the first place, is what Schön (1983) calls "problem-setting," which is: "the process by which we define the decision to be made, the ends to be achieved, the means which may be chosen... Problem-setting is a process in which, interactively, we *name* the things to which we will attend and *frame* the context in which we will attend to them" (p.40). It is in situations of practice that "problem setting" becomes so crucially important, because, as Schön pointed out, "the situations of practice are not problems to be solved but problematic situations characterized by uncertainty, disorder, and indeterminacy" (pp.15-16).

In other words, as we pointed out above, what we face in practice is not a problem presenting itself as something already well-defined in relation to the kind of technical ingenuity required for their solution, but a situation in which a *struggle* to realize an effective outcome in the face of often unpropitious circumstances is required.

I have called it a struggle rather than problem-solving because, as we have seen, in expressing each sequential movement in an ongoing course of action, we have to *struggle* with, i.e., *navigate* within, an often overwhelming sea of unique details, and to take all of these somehow into account in the unique course of action we actually take.

As Bakhtin (1993) puts it: "The performed act concentrates, correlates, and resolves within a unitary and unique and, this time, *final context* both the sense and the fact, the universal and the individual, the real and the ideal, for everything enters into the composition of its answerable motivation. The performed act constitutes a going out *once and for all* from within possibility as such into *what is once-occurrent*" (pp.28-29). In other words, we just act, we just do in the circumstances what, given all our accumulated experience, seems to us to be for the best at that moment... *Here I stand. I can do no other. God help me. Amen* (Martin Luther) – as Steve remarks, "the worst part of my job is that every decision I make is 20-20 hindsighted by everybody..."

Wittgenstein (1953) captures the ease with which we can mislead ourselves into adopting such inappropriate ways of thinking about and looking at the phenomena around us, and within us, in our inquiries – so that a first-time *creative* process gets respecified as a second-time *rational decision making* process – in the following remark:

"How does the philosophical problem about mental processes and states... arise.? – The first step is the one that altogether escapes notice. We talk of processes and states and leave their nature undecided. Sometime perhaps we shall know more about them – we think. *But that is just what commits us to a particular way of looking at the matter*. For we have a definite concept of what it means to learn to know a process better. (The decisive movement in the conjuring trick has been made, and it was the very one that we thought quite innocent.) – And now the analogy which was to make us understand our thoughts falls to pieces. So we have to deny the yet uncomprehended process in the yet unexplored medium. And now it looks as if we had denied mental processes. And naturally we don't want to deny them" (no.308, my emphasis).

So, if we want to "attach ourselves to the inner becoming of things," as Bergson (1911, p.322) suggests we should, if we want to gain a more direct apprehension of the passing reality within which we have and live our lives, what can we do?

As I see it, there is an important distinction to be made between what, loosely, we might call *the relation* of useful *conversational* talk to the conduct and development of organizational processes, and the attempt to formulate rigorous (scientific) *theories* appropriate to these tasks. Indeed, I want to go so far as to argue for the inappropriateness of strict, systematic theories and special terminology in attempts to understand and to produce change in organizations, and for the appropriateness of everyday conversational talk (Shotter and Cunliffe, 2002). For, as I see it, such theoretical talk works to *un-relate* us to the very events occurring around us that – if we were to *re-relate* ourselves appropriately to them – could in fact provide us with the "action guiding" sensibility we require if we are to 'go on' to respond to such events appropriately. But clearly, for everyday conversational talk to be useful in this way, it must be related in certain crucial ways to the processes within which it can exert its influence. It is to the nature of these special relations, and how they have in fact been already illuminated by a whole galaxy of concerned writers, that I want to turn next.

Transitory understandings within the dynamics of dialogically-structured activities

About our everyday talk, Bakhtin (1986) remarks:

> "All real and integral understanding is actively responsive... And the speaker himself is oriented precisely toward such an actively responsive understanding. He does not expect passive understanding that, so to speak, only duplicates his or her own idea in someone else's mind. Rather, he expects response, agreement, sympathy, objection, execution, and so forth... Any utterance is a link in a very complexly organized chain of other utterances" (Bakhtin, 1986, p.69).

In other words, every one of our utterances is "oriented toward a future answer-word; it provokes an answer, anticipates it and structures itself in the answer's direction. Forming itself in an atmosphere of the already spoken, the word is at the same time determined by *that which has not yet been said but which is needed and in fact anticipated by the answering word*" (Bakhtin, 1981, p.280, my emphasis).

An interesting example of a specific anticipation that can be aroused at a particular point in a person's speech, involves the pauses, the silences, in their speech. Clearly, not all silences are the same; some are clearly pauses for further thought, others are for dramatic effect, some while waiting for signs from listeners that they've 'got it', and so on, while a certain special kind of pause occurs when, in the course of a conversational exchange, a speaker has finally succeeded in expressing all they had to say. It is in these moments that, as Bakhtin (1986) points out, there can be a change in speaking subjects: "This change can only take place because the speaker has said (or written) *everything* he wishes to say at a particular moment or under particular circumstances. When hearing or reading, we clearly sense the end of the utterance, as if we hear the speaker's concluding *dixi*. This finalization is specific and is determined by specific criteria" (p.76). The 'invisible' finalization of a speaker's utterance is *hearable* as a *transitory understanding* within the unfolding relational dynamics of our dialogical relations with that speaker; and we relate to it accordingly: by beginning our reply to it.

Indeed, in our rejoinders to each other's utterances within an ongoing dialogue, many other *transitory understandings* are *hearable* within the unfolding dynamics of our relations with a particular speaker. As Bakhtin (1986) remarks: "[While] each rejoinder, regardless of how brief and abrupt, has a specific quality of completion that expresses a particular position of the speaker, to which one may respond or assume, with respect to it, a responsive position... But at the same time rejoinders are all linked to one another. And the sort of relations that exist among rejoinders of dialogue – relations between question and answer, assertion and objection, suggestion and acceptance, order and execution, and so forth – are impossible among units of language (words and sentences), either in the system of language (in vertical cross section)[6] or within utterances (on the horizontal plane)" (p.72).

Let us explore the *transitory understandings* that are *hearable* within the unfolding dynamics of

our relations with a particular speaker who, say, asks us a complicated question. For example: "XXXXXXXX" In answering any such question, we must continually think with the question's voice in mind to guide us in our attempts to write out an answer (our response) to it; and of course, as soon as we begin the process of producing our answer, we must also think with what we have already written in mind as well, to guide in our further thinking as to what an appropriate answer requires. And it is in each voicing of the question to ourselves that we, in responding to it dialogically, create another new transitory understanding from which we can begin, in Wittgenstein's (1953) terms, a new "language game." Indeed, we repeatedly *voice* the question to ourselves in the hope of it *calling* yet further such new responses, i.e, transitory understandings, from us – as I must keep reminding myself of my overall question here: "How is the creation of a new common sense among disparate groups of people possible?"

Thus, to *hear* another's utterance with a transitory understanding of it as posing a unique question *requiring* a unique answer from us, and to hear it (to feel it) as also as spontaneously calling out specific responses from us, is to experience it as providing us with unique *action guiding anticipations* as to how we might go on to respond to it. Similarly in hearing another's utterance as a greeting, as an assertion, as a suggestion, as an order, and so on[7], is also to hear it as providing us with one or another action guiding anticipation as to how we should go on to respond to it. It is precisely these unique action guiding anticipatory understandings arising out of our acting with, say, a question in mind – which arise, in fact, in our continually voicing the question again and again to ourselves in our "inner speech" (Vygotsky, 1986) – that are lost when our unique, once-off, creative responses to the 'questions' posed to us by the others and othernesses in our surroundings are refashioned as a willfully planned de-contextualized actions. What originally occurred as a unique answer to a unique question coming to us from an other or otherness in our surroundings, is re-composed into an action that can be executed by any isolated individual, anywhere, at anytime.

It is at this point it will be convenient to turn from Bakhtin's work to Wittgenstein's, for he makes a number of crucial comments regarding the beginning of new language games. "The origin and primitive form of the language game," he says, "is a reaction; only from this can more complicated forms develop. Language – I want to say – is a refinement, 'in the beginning was the deed'[Goethe]" (Wittgenstein, 1980a, p.31). And elsewhere he remarks: "But what is the word 'primitive' meant to say here? Presumably that this sort of behavior is *pre-linguistic*: that a language-game is based *on it*, that it is the prototype of a way of thinking and not the result of thought" (Wittgenstein, 1981, no.541). In other words, what Wittgenstein wants to do here is to suggest that at least a primitive, first-time means of communication can be found in our spontaneously expressed, responsive bodily reactions to the events occurring around us. Irrespective of our professed thoughts about a particular event, others can *see* what an event means to us in how we spontaneously react to it. But most importantly, we can also find, within our own initial spontaneous responses to it, action guiding anticipations as to how we might go on next to respond to it. Indeed, among all the other features of responsive, dialogically-structured talk, is its orientation toward the future, as we have already seen above.... "Forming itself in an atmosphere of the already spoken, the word is at the same time determined by *that which has not yet been said but which is needed and in fact anticipated by the answering word*. Such is the situation of any living dialogue" (p.280, my emphasis).

It is, of course, the transitory understandings hearable within the unfolding relational dynamics of our dialogical relations with the others around us, that enable us to respond, in practice, to a speaker's meaning, i.e., to relate ourselves to it accordingly, by beginning to reply to it. But these, both as *joint creations*, and as fleeting, only once-occurrent events, do not and cannot figure in any of the retrospective accounts we give others of our actions when they ask us *why* we acted as we did.

As Mills (1940) and Scott and Lyman (1968) noted, when others are puzzled by our actions and do not know how to coordinate their own actions with our's, they expect us to tell them of the reasons or motives for our actions, to *account* for them, to justify (or to excuse) ourselves for acting as we did. Why? Because, as a member of a particular society, to qualify for the right to act as an autonomous individual, one must be accountable and take on the duty of sustaining that society's norms in one's conduct (Shotter, 1984)[8]. Thus, it is always in relation to the 'official' norms of one's culture that one must account to others for one's conduct – this may not be very useful instructing others as to how *in fact* one acted in *these local conditions* in the achievement of a joint outcome along with others, but it is crucial in ensuring that one's actions are *related to by others*, as being in accord with societal norms. However, this means that it is

often the case that a person defines *retrospectively* the 'decisions' they supposedly made: whereas, in fact, *the outcome occurred before the statement of the 'decisions' accounting for it*. No wonder such talk has no *locally useful* action guiding force to it.

Two Kinds of Relation Between General Concepts and Concrete Practices: Wittgenstein's Methods and Geertz's Hermeneutics

1) Wittgenstein's methods: the role of 'reminders' in withness-thinking
> "If I had to say what is the main mistake by philosophers of the present generation, including Moore, I would say that when language is looked at, what is looked at is a form of words and not the use made of the form of words" (1966, p.2).

Reorienting, re-postioning, re-relating oneself to one's surroundings, and to one's goal within them: becoming a 'participant' agency rather than a 'masterful' agent

The change in attitude we need, if we are to begin to understand Wittgenstein's methods, is to begin to focus, not on what we do consciously and deliberately, but on what just happens to us, spontaneously and unconsciously in our everyday living involvements in which language is *used*, i.e., on our spontaneous reactions to people's *use* of words, including our own reactions as well as those of others.

In other words, we must focus centrally on our *words in their speaking*, rather than on the *patterns* to be found in our *already spoken words*. The task is to work *from within the still ongoing moment of speaking*, not to look back on completed, past speech acts.

The everydayness of his methods in his "grammatical investigations:" 'instructive', 'attention directing', 'new expectation creating' talk:

> "Grammar is not accountable to any reality. It is grammatical rules that determine meaning (constitute it) and so they are not answerable to any meaning and to that extent are arbitrary" (**PG**, 1974/1978, no.133, p.184).

> "*Essence* is expressed by grammar" (!953, no.371).

> "Grammar tells us what kind of object anything is" (1953, no.373).

What, then, is the kind of understanding are we seeking here? What does "grammatical" mean for Wittgenstein?

It will be useful to remind ourselves that he wants "to bring words back from their metaphysical use to their everyday use" (1953, no.116).

But what holds our everyday use of words together, so to speak? When I say: "Pass the salt, please," and you do (and also feel I have been polite to you too), what makes such an exchange possible? Clearly, when as children we grow 'into' the communal life of those around us, we come, literally, to *embody* a whole background of shared *expectations* and *anticipations*, shared "*feelings* of *tendency*, often so vague that we are unable to name them at all" (James, 1890, p.254).

So, as I see it, what Wittgenstein means by his "grammatical investigations," are investigations which bring to light the shared 'valencies' or 'structurizing tendencies' always already at work in all those situations into which we *all*, spontaneously, interweave our use of language, and which lead us into interlinking our use of words at one moment with how we might use of them in the next moment – but not in terms of their *forms*, but in terms of their *uses*, their *meanings*, what we are *doing* in our uses of them.

His "grammatical" investigations can, thus, be seen as part of a "living tradition" – *our* tradition – as a special "reflective" insertion into the very tradition by which, and within which, we all in fact live our daily lives. Where this living tradition cannot be found either in "official ideological rhetorics," nor in the

store of facts we can learn in schools and libraries, but only out in all the different practical activities in terms of which we actually conduct our daily lives together..

Thus, the methods of "grammatical investigation" he is trying to teach us, orient us towards how we understand our *use* of words in this, that, or some other unique and particular context... they are methods for confronting 'once-off', 'first-time', unique events in all their detailed uniqueness... and for drawing our attention to the fact that in coming to an understanding of how to 'go on', we make use of many of these details without usually noticing that fact... his methods work to draw our attention to what we normally 'expect' and/or 'anticipate' in such ongoing, everyday circumstances, and need to anticipate, if we are to act correctly – but such anticipations occur (happen) to us only when we are 'in motion', in the course of 'going on'. If we stop or are stuck, they disappear, and we become disoriented.

The task is, to get back in motion!!! His methods are thus responsive, descriptive and creative... and they work in terms of continually offering concrete, detailed, and sometimes extraordinary examples...

Thus, what he offers us are not assertions, prescriptions, or aphorisms; he is not giving hints for possible explanations, offering hypotheses, or describing actualities..., etc... but making "*remarks.*" In other words, he is *voicing utterances* that draw our attention to what usually goes unnoticed; and it is crucial that we are in a responsive relation to him and his writings for his remarks to 'call out' appropriate responses within us.

> **Remark / / v. & n** (*from the Concise Oxford English Dictionary*):
> v.
> 1 tr. (often foll. by that + clause) a say by way of comment. b take notice of; regard with attention.
> 2 intr. (usu. foll. by on, upon) make a comment.
> n.
> 1 a written or spoken comment; anything said.
> 2 a the act of noticing or observing (worthy of remark). b the act of commenting (let it pass without remark). [French remarque, remarquer (as re-, mark1)]

Thus our 'hearing' his 'voicing' of his remarks is important too: For, to repeat, he is not giving us *patterns of already spoken words*, patterns that are important to us because of their form or content. The 'point' of what he has to say is there, in his words, *in his speaking of them*, and, *in our responses to them*!!!

But crucial to our being able to respond to them, is our sharing of a 'background' set of anticipations and expectations to other people's use of words – in, as I remarked above, our sharing of a 'living tradition' with him. Hence is remark that: "The investigation is to draw your attention to facts you know quite as well as I, but which you have forgotten, or at least which are not immediately in your field of vision. They will all be quite trivial facts. I won't say anything which anyone can dispute. Or if anyone does dispute it, I will let that point drop and pass on to say something else." (Wittgenstein, 1976, p.22).

This is why he calls his remarks "reminders," for, "something that we know when no one asks us, but no longer know when we are supposed to give an account of it [cf. Augustine], is something we need to *remind* ourselves of" (1953, no.89).

In other words, what Wittgenstein wants to draw to our attention in his remarks, in his "grammatical investigations," is that, if we are to gain the kind of *practical* understanding he seeks, we can in fact make use of some of the very same methods we used in gaining that practical kind of understanding in the first place. Thus, in his remarks, in wanting to draw *our* attention to how people in fact draw each other's attention to things, he can use the self-same methods as they themselves use!... as can we in our own investigations!!!

This, then, gives us a first clue to Wittgenstein's methods. For, although they are as many and as various as those we use in life itself, they are all related in that they work in just the same way as our 'instructive', 'directive', and 'organizational' forms of talk in everyday life work. For example, we continually ask questions ("What are you doing?", "What are you thinking?", "What's your idea?", and so on); we 'point things out' to people ("Look at this!"); 'remind' them ("Think what happened last time"); 'change their

perspective' ("Look at it like this"); 'place' or 'give order' to their experience ("You were very cool... or: you acted like a madman); we 'give commands' ("Do this," "Don't do that"); 'organize' their behavior ("First, take a right, then... ask again..."); and so on.

These are all *instructive* forms of talk that 'move' us, in practice, to do something we would not otherwise do: in 'gesturing' or 'pointing' toward something in our circumstances, they cause us to relate ourselves to our circumstances in a different way – as if we are continually being 'educated' into new ways of relating.

Indeed, in one of his very first remarks (questions), he asks how we were first taught our words. For, among other things, such a consideration brings to our attention the original circumstances of the teaching, where "one thing that is immensely important in teaching is exaggerated gestures and facial expressions" (1966, p.2), that emphasize the "characteristic part [they play in].. a large group of activities... the occasions on which they are said..." (1966, p.2).

It is the gestural function of these instructive forms of talk – they are both 'indicative' (i.e., pointing) or 'mimetic' (i.e, expressive gestures) – that is their key feature, that gives them their life: for they 'point beyond' themselves to features in the momentary context of their utterance... in the context of our doing something in the actual everyday living of our lives (see the comments on them working within a 'living tradition' above).

The 'everydayness' of his concerns cannot be emphasized enough. Having been taught in our school learning that 'proper', 'rational' forms of thought must be *general, objective, and disinterested*, and work within or being 'framed' within, *logical systems*, we feel somehow awkward in talking in everyday concrete terms... as if somehow jejune, as if we were not properly competent thinkers.

But he cannot be *there* with us in our actual everyday circumstances, helping us deal with our actual concrete muddles. So how can his writing in a book, many years ago help us? Wittgenstein uses his 'instructive' or 'educative' forms of talk to draw our attention to what is there *for us*, in *our* circumstances, what there before our eyes, that we fail to see, in the circumstances of *our own* talk... his remarks are not aimed at drawing our attention to *his* circumstances, to *his* version of things... they work to draw our attention to what is, in fact, already known to us.

Hence, whatever event we may talk of, *we* must put it in its 'home' surroundings. "One cannot guess how a word functions. One has to *look* at its use and learn from that. But the difficulty is to remove the prejudice that stands in the way of doing that. It is not a *stupid* prejudice..." (no.340).

Bewitched by the images that 'itch at our ears' into thinking that various other events *must* be at work if we are to *explain* the event that troubles us, we look in the wrong place for an understanding of how next to act. Wittgenstein's methods are aimed at releasing us from our bewitchment, at showing us that – at particular detailed moments in our actions – other possibilities *were* or *are* available to us: "Our investigation is not directed toward phenomena, but, as one might say, towards the '*possibilities* of phenomena" (1953, no.90).

Further methods:

This then gives us some further clues to some of his other methods. Below, I list a set of five methods, and the goal they seem at which they are aimed, which we can see as working in sequence:

-        *1) Deconstruction:* First, his remarks can work to *arrest* or *interrupt* (or 'deconstruct') the spontaneous, unself-conscious flow of our ongoing activity, and to give "prominence to distinctions which our ordinary forms of language easily make us overlook" (1953, no.132).
-        Thus his talk is full of such expressions as "Think of...," "Imagine...," "It is like...," "So one might say...," "Suppose...," and so on, in which he confronts us with a concrete scene or vignette featuring a particular aspect of human conduct. Where these are all designed "to draw someone's attention to the fact that he [or she] is capable of imagining [something]... and his *acceptance* of the [new] picture consists in his now being inclined to regard a given case differently: that is, to compare it with *this* rather than *that* set of pictures. I have changed his *way of looking at thing*"

(1953, no.144).
- Thus, in provoking us to bring new responses to our words and actions into play, he shows us further possibilities in a circumstance that previously we had overlooked. Alone, however, such a move could be more confusing than clarifying.

- *2) Questions:* Wittgenstein uses questions (in response to what he sees as 'philosophical' questions, i.e., decontextualized, general questions) to help us remember, or recall to mind, the 'grammar', or to put it in other words: the detailed inter-relationships between our use of words and concrete features in their surroundings at the moment of their use, in coming to an understanding of each other in particular everyday life settings.
- His questions redirect our inquiries away from the abstract to the concrete, and challenge us to resolve our questions – the events that trouble us – in the context in which they were first experienced.
- In so doing, he not only directs our attention toward unnoticed details in our surroundings, but he also redirects our expectations regarding the kind of answers we expected from our inquiries.
- Often, he does this simply by showing us that we can *rephrase* the question in other words, thus to arouse other expectations.
- For example, we are less perplexed by the expression 'the use of a word' than by 'the meaning of a word', because the description of the first expression involves both words *and the actions into which they are interwoven*, and is thus less likely to lead us to look for an entity or process which we might call 'meaning'.

- *3) The continued use of 'particular examples':* "Not only rules, but also examples are needed for establishing a practice. Our rules leave loop-holes open, and the practice has to speak for itself" (OC, 1969, no.139).
- Living concrete examples – as a counter to the 'images' in a tradition whose voice 'itch at our ears' – can work to 'call out' new, first time responses in us.
- "The origin and primitive form of the language game is a reaction; only from this can more complicated forms develop. Language – I want to say – is a refinement, 'in the beginning was the deed'[Goethe]" (1980, p.31). "But what is the word 'primitive' meant to say here? Presumably that this sort of behavior is *pre-linguistic*: that a language-game is based *on it*, that it is the prototype of a way of thinking and not the result of thought" (Z, no.541).
- Works of art also have something to teach us.
- He connects art and pedagogy. In contrasting the spirit of his writings with the spirit of his times he writes, "people nowadays think that scientists exist to instruct them, poets, musicians, etc., to give them pleasure. The idea that these have something to teach them - that does not occur to them' (CV 36e)... the greatest art offers us images by which to imagine our own lives... within which to see ourselves...
- Thus LW's writings are *inclusive* in the sense that they invite *response* through both their tone and form; the reader is never the recipient of an (artificially) completed philosophical theory or system, but a participant in the investigation, along with LW... a failure to respond appropriately is like a failure to understand a piece of art, rather than understanding facts or theories... one hasn't got wrong, one simply hasn't 'got it'...

- *4) Images, pictures, metaphors:* This suggests to us a fourth method that is often of importance: By the careful use of selected images, similes, analogies, metaphors, or 'pictures', he also suggests new ways of talking that not only orient us toward sensing otherwise unnoticed distinctions and relations for the first time, but which also suggest new connections and relations with the rest of our proceedings.
- Indeed, the idea of language-games falls into this category: "Language-games are the forms of language with which a child first begins to make use of words... If we want to study the problems of truth and falsehood, of the agreement and disagreement of propositions with reality, of the nature of assertion, assumption, and question, we shall with great advantage look at primitive forms of language in which these forms of thinking appear without the confusing background of highly complicated processes of thought. When we look at such simple forms of language use the mental mist which seems to enshroud our ordinary use of language disappears. We see activities, reactions, which are clear-cut and transparent" (1965, p.17).

- *5) Comparisons:* This brings us to a fifth and perhaps most important of his methods, making comparisons: using various kinds of *objects of comparison*, e.g., other possible ways of talking, other "language games" both actual and invented, etc., he tries "to throw light on the facts of our language by way of not only similarities, but also dissimilarities" (1953, no.130). For, by noticing how what occurs differs in a distinctive way from what we otherwise would expect, such comparisons can work, he notes, to establish "an order in our knowledge of the use of language: an order with a particular end in view; one of many possible orders; not *the* order" (1953, no.132).
- The importance of the use of comparisons - often the comparison, or the bringing into living contact, of different *scenes* (see note 15) - cannot be overemphasized.
- Such dialogical juxtapositions work in a living way to create a circumstance in which differences are realized and articulated: *here*, we use our words like *this*; *there*, we use them like *that*. That is, in providing new occasions for the realizing of new differences, they create a new 'movement' of thought, a new 'gesture'.
- Indeed, if we turn to some remarks of his on how we understand the theme in a piece of music, we find him likening the music's movement to human speech and other gestural movements. "... the theme... is a new part of our language; it becomes incorporated into it; we learn a new gesture" (1980, p.52). But: "Doesn't the theme point outside itself?," he asks. "Yes, it does! But that means: - it makes an impression on me which is connected with things in its surroundings - e.g., with our language and its intonations; and hence with the whole filed of our language-games" (1981, no.175).
- In other words, such dialogical juxtapositions bring to life new gestures, new ways of pointing beyond our immediate circumstances to bring to light new connections and relations between and within them. Indeed, as we cross boundaries and 'move' from functioning within one language game to an other, we can experience the changed commitments, urges, wants, desires, and temptations, as well as the ways of handling, looking, and evaluating, associated with each.

- *6) übersichlichte Darstellung:* Where the point of all these methods, and the slow and painstaking exploration of the landscape of our uses of language they engender, is expressed in his notion of a "perspicuous representation or simply a *clear overview* (Ger: übersichlichte Darstellung):" "A main source of our failure to understand is that we do not *command a clear view* of our use of words. - Our grammar is lacking in this sort of perspicuity. A perspicuous representation produces just that understanding which consists in 'seeing connections'" (1953, no.122).
- If we are 'to find our way about' inside our own linguistically shaped forms of life, we need to grasp the 'landscape' of their internal relations, or their 'grammatical geographies', so to speak.
- But to achieve such a synoptic sense of its immense complexities, as well as curing ourselves of the many temptations to see it as much more simple than it in fact is, we also have to explore its grammatical geography close up, in detail, without end.

Further remarks of relevance to his methods:

"Nothing is hidden" (1953, no.435).

"... it is, rather, of the essence of our investigation that we do not seek to learn anything *new* by it. We want to *understand* something that is already in plain view. For *this* is what we seem in some sense not to understand" (no.89).

"We must do away with all *explanation*, and description alone must take its place. [For] these are, of course, not empirical problems; they are solved, rather, by looking into the workings of our language, and that in such a way as to make us recognize those workings: *in spite of* an urge to misunderstand them" (1953, no.109).

"When philosophers use a word - 'knowledge', 'being', 'object', 'I', 'proposition', 'name' - and try to grasp the *essence* of the thing," he comments, "one must ask oneself: is the word ever actually used in this way in the language-game which is its original home? - What *we* do is to bring words back from their metaphysical to their everyday use" (no.116).

"The problems are solved, not by giving new information, but by arranging what we have always known" (1953, no.109). "Philosophy may in no way interfere with the actual use of language; it can in the end only describe it. For it cannot give it any foundation either. It leaves everything as it is" (1953, no.124).

"It is the business of philosophy, not to resolve a contradiction by means of a mathematical or logico-mathematical discovery, but to make it possible for us to get a clear view of the state of mathematics that troubles us: the state of affairs *before* the contradiction is resolved... The fundamental fact here is that we lay down rules, a technique, for a game, and then when we follow the rules, things do not turn out as we had assumed. That we are therefore as it were entangled in our own rules.
   This entanglement in our own rules is what we what to understand (i.e.. Get a clear view of).
   It throws light on our concept of *meaning* something. For in those cases things turn out otherwise than we had meant, foreseen. That is just what we say when, for example, a contradiction appears: "I didn't mean it like that."
   The civil status of a contradiction, or its status in civil life: there is the philosophical problem" (no.125).

"Since everything lies open to view there is nothing to explain. For what is hidden, for example, is of no interest to us" (no.126).

 "The great difficulty here is not to represent the matter as if there is something one *couldn't* do. As if there really were an object [*a mental state or process, a social structure or set of rules or norms, an oppressive State apparatus*], from which I derive its description, but I were unable to show it to anyone. – And the best that I can propose is that we should yield to the temptation to use this picture, but then investigate how the *application* of the picture goes" (Z, no.374, my additions).

"Disquiet in philosophy might be said to arise from looking at philosophy wrongly, seeing it wrong, namely as if it were divided into (infinite) longitudinal strips instead of into (finite) cross strips. This inversion of our conception produces the *greatest* difficulty. So we try as it were to grasp the unlimited strips and complain that it cannot be done piecemeal. To be sure it cannot, if by a piece one means an infinite longitudinal strip. But it may well be done, if one means a cross-strip. - But in that case we never get to the end of our work! - Of course not, for it has no end. (We want to replace wild conjectures and explanations by the quiet weighing of linguistic facts) (1981, no.447).

2) GEERTZ: OBJECTS (SOMETIMES INVENTED ONES) OF COMPARISON:

"FROM THE NATIVE'S POINT OF VIEW:
ON THE NATURE OF ANTHROPOLOGICAL UNDERSTANDING"

Geertz (1986): "Whatever sense we have of how things stand with someone else's inner life, *we gain it through their expressions*, not through some magical intrusion into their consciousness. It's all a matter of scratching surfaces..." (Geertz, 1986, p.73, my emphasis).

Coming to an understanding of other people's 'inner lives', is not a matter of extraordinary empathy, but a matter of working from the readily observable expressions informing people's lives, informing their everyday activities. Geertz's article is important to us, I think, for the following reasons:

–   The methodology he sets out - what we can do with people's expressions, 'scratching surfaces'
–   The 'movement' needed - oscillating between parts and wholes, not a single fixed perspective – comparisons with 'experience-near' and 'experience distant' concepts

He begins his methodological discussion with an outline of past, failed attempts to depict or portray things from *the native's point of view*:

–   None succeed in bridging the gap between inside and outside, between subjective and objective, between meaning and form, between actor's and observer's knowledge.
–   But... if we cannot feel through a special form of *empathy* what they feel, perceive what they

perceive, what it is that the investigator can perceive?

– Here, we are on familiar ground, for:

"The ethnographer does not, and, in my opinion, largely cannot, perceive what his informants perceive. What he (sic) perceives, and that uncertainly enough, is what they [his informants] perceive 'with' - or 'by means of', or 'through'... whatever the word should be" (p.58).

A people 'show' the uses of their own everyday concepts in their spontaneous, everyday, colloquial activities.

– Distinguish between *experience near* and *experience distant* concepts: e.g. Love vs Object cathexis; cast vs. social stratification; fear vs, phobia
– If anthropological understanding does not involve *empathy*, i.e., feeling and experiencing a world as those native to it do, what does it involve? – perceiving what they perceive 'with', or 'through'(ref. Vygotsky, and the 'tool', or 'mental instrument' aspect of our actions).

But what *is* different, of course, is that we, as Geertzian investigators, view *their* ways of life 'through' or 'with' *our* experience-distant concepts.

Where we "grasp concepts that, for another people, are experience-near... [by placing] them in *illuminating connection with* experience-distant concepts theorists have fashioned to capture the general features of social life" (p.58, my emphasis).

This is the crucial feature of Geertz's method to which I wish to draw attention: by the use of invented concepts (orderly forms of talk), we can draw our attention as investigators to significant differences between such forms and a people's way of making sense of their lives.

But we can go further, and make use of the illuminated provided by comparisons with such invented concepts:

– For Geertz does not talk of experience-distant concepts as being used like theoretical representations at all, that is, as supposedly corresponding to a true but hidden state of affairs.
– They are for a quite different use, for a quite different purpose.
– They are meant to be deployed "to produce an interpretation of a way a people lives" (p.57).

But how can they be used to do that? Well, a part of the task is the familiar hermeneutical one, of:

"hopping back and forth between the whole conceived through the parts that actualize it and the parts conceived through the whole that motivates them" (p.69).

And we can come to a sense of what the uses to which they put their experience-near concepts, by gaining a sense of the general form of their life as a whole, and by 'placing' the parts such uses play (in relation to each other) within that whole.

"The concept of the person is, in fact, an excellent vehicle by means of which to examine this whole question of how to go about poking into another people's turn of mind. In the first place, some sort of concept of this kind, one feels reasonably safe in saying, exists in recognizable form among all social groups... And for Java, Bali, Morocco, at least, that idea [of what selfhood is] differs markedly not only from our own but, no less dramatically and no less instructively, from one another " (p.59).

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These are also two of Wittgenstein's (1953) central methods: 1) the giving of examples, and 2) the use of comparisons:

1) "I wanted to put that picture before him, and his *acceptance* of the picture consists in his now being

inclined to regard a given case differently: that is, to compare it with *this* rather than *that* set of pictures. I have changed his *way of looking at thing*" (1953, no.144).

2) Using various kinds of *objects of comparison*, e.g., other possible ways of talking, other "language games" both actual and invented, etc., he tries "to throw light on the facts of our language by way of not only similarities, but also dissimilarities" (1953, no.130). For, by noticing how what occurs differs in a distinctive way from what we otherwise would expect, such comparisons can work, he notes, to establish "an order in our knowledge of the use of language: an order with a particular end in view; one of many possible orders; not *the* order" (1953, no.132).

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(Geertz, 1983, p.161) "The problem of the integration of cultural life becomes one of making it possible for people inhabiting different worlds to have a genuine, and reciprocal, impact upon one another. If it is true that insofar as there is a general consciousness it consists in the interplay of a disorderly crowd of not wholly commensurable visions, then the vitality of that consciousness depends upon creating conditions under which such interplay will occur. And for that, the first step is surely to accept the depth of the differences; the second to understand what these differences are; and the third to construct some sort of vocabulary in which they can be publicly formulated - one in which econometricians, epigraphers, cytochemists, and iconologists can all give a credible account of themselves to one another."

Giving accounts

"The ethnographer "inscribes" social discourse; *he writes it down.* In so doing, he turns it from a passing event, which exists only to its own moment of occurrence, into an *account*, which exists in its inscriptions and can be reconsulted" (p.19).

Accounts can be distinguished from theories in this sense: an account of an action or activity is concerned with talking about the action or activity as the activity it *is;* it works, if it works at all, to render the activity, to those who confront it or are involved in it, as something 'visibly-rational-and-reportable-for-all-practical-purposes, i.e., 'accountable', as organizations of commonplace everyday activities' (Garfinkel, 1967, p. vii). In other words, an account is an aid to perception, functioning to constitute an otherwise indeterminate flow of activity as a sequence of recognizable events, i.e. events of a kind already known about within a society's ways of making sense of things.

A theory, on the other hand, is not concerned with activities as they are; it is not simply an aid to those confronted with raw appearances, in making sense of them. It is a cognitive device in terms of which people may reshape and reproduce events which already make one kind of sense to them, and talk about them as being other than what ordinarily they seem to be. Unlike an account, which is addressed to the second persons involved in a situation with first persons, a theory is of use to third-person outsiders, to those unconcerned with the personal situation of first and second persons; rather than context-dependent and personal, a theory may thus (to an extent) be context-free and impersonal. However, a theory must always be accompanied, it would seem, by an account of how it should be understood and used -unless, that is, it can be formulated as a set of specifications for a certain pattern of result-producing activities (Stapp, 1972). Then, the distinction between theories and accounts [end 3] collapses, and theories degenerate, so to speak, into accounts.

Theories do not reach down and anchor themselves in a fundamentally neutral, physical reality (Stapp, 1972) - indeed, whenever we speak of atoms and molecules, and the laws of nature, we are speaking of what we mean, by the expressions 'atoms', 'molecules' and 'laws of nature' (Winch, 1958); they are all expressions associated with a particular way of 'seeing' the world and of manipulating it by the means it provides. Theories are grounded, as Kuhn (1962) makes clear, in the activities which give research practices their reproducibility: namely, their accountability amongst those conducting them.

But notice how this accountability is achieved. Participants begin by appreciating how, given the practical phenomena confronting them, theoretical categories can be used to constitute them as events of a recognizable kind -the research practice provides an account as to how a theory should be used and

applied (Stapp, 1972). Such categories are used as an unquestioned (and unquestionable) resource in organizing one's perception of events within the research paradigm (Hanson, 1958). And it is in this sense that one is entrapped: for by conducting all one's further activities in terms of a set of categories - grasped by, as Stolzenberg (1978) puts it, 'initial acts of acceptance as such in the domain of ordinary language use', and then suspended from all further doubt- necessitates one having to assimilate all further activities to a pre-established set of categories. There is no possibility of a hermeneutical development of new categories; the transformation of one's perceptual categories in the course of dialogue is denied. Consider, by comparison, the process of listening to an account: if the facts so far are unsatisfactory, incomplete or even bewildering, one waits for later facts and uses them in an attempt to decide the sense of the earlier ones; what sense there is to be found is not decided beforehand, but is discovered in the course of the exchange within which the account is offered.

In fact, to give a proper account of what something is; of what it is to be a person, say, neither a theory nor a model of persons will do: if we are to talk about persons as persons (which indeed *is* a part of what it is for human beings to be treated as persons), then we must not talk about them as really being something else, as really being entities requiring an unusual description in special theoretical terms; nor can we talk about persons as being to an extent *like* something else (information-processing devices, say) which, in other respects, are not actually like persons at all. For both these ways provide only partial views, ways of 'seeing' from within [end 183] instrumental forms of activity, and our task is to talk about persons as persons. We must collect together in an orderly and systematic manner what people must already know as competent, autonomous members of their society - and to do this, they do not need to collect evidence as scientists, as competent persons, they should be a source of such evidence (Cavell, 1969).

Drawing upon the knowledge we already possess, what we need is an account of personhood and selfhood in the ordinary sense of the term 'account': as simply a narration of a circumstance or a state of affairs. Something which in its telling 'moves' us this way and that through the current 'terrain' of personhood, so to speak, sufficiently for us to gain a conceptual grasp of the whole, even though we lack a vantage point from which to view it - it is a view 'from the inside', much as we get to know the street-plan of a city, by living within it, rather than from seeing it all at once from an external standpoint. It is a grasp which allows us to 'see' all the different aspects of a person as if arrayed within a 'landscape', all in relation to one another, from all the standpoints within it.

This illustrates another way in which our approach to our own self-understanding by use of theories is deficient: they lead to fragmentation, not integration. For at the moment there is a near chaos of different theories about ourselves all clamoring for survival. Could an all-embracing theory be developed to encompass them all? No, for it is in the very nature of what theories are that even if they were all 'good' theories (in the sense of producing when applied the results they predict) they still could not all be combined into *one* good theory. Because as Marie Jahoda (1980, p.185) has pointed out, 'each contains an extra theoretical element: the choice of the basic question the theory is meant to illuminate.' That is a non-rational matter: there being no single, basic question – such as 'Life, the Universe, and Everything?' – from which all other questions can be logically derived. In other words, as mentioned before, all properly scientific questions are rooted in a particular research tradition or 'paradigm' to use Kuhn's (1962) term, where the number of such paradigms is indeterminate, and where there is no possibility of a 'neutral' or 'superordinate' style of activity which includes in some simply logical sense all the rest. Living continually necessitates the making of value choices; it is here that the difference between theories and accounts becomes acute: accounts may depict value choices; theories suppress them. [end 184]

Conclusion: "Withness-thinking" versus "aboutness-thinking"

Indeed, it is precisely their lack of any pre-determined order, and thus their openness to being specified or determined *by those involved in them*, in practice – while usually remaining quite unaware of having done so – that we can take as their central defining feature. And it is precisely this that makes this sphere of activity of empirical interest to us, for at least the three following reasons: We can investigate in practical detail 1) how people actually do manage to 'work things out' in their *responsively interconnected* activities; 2) the part played by the ways of talking we interweave into the many different spheres of

practical activity occurring between us, and the different functions of these different forms of talk; and 3) how we might refine and elaborate these different spheres of activity and extend them into novel spheres as yet unknown to us.

We can, perhaps, now begin to see why a non-representational, allusive, gesturing or groping form of talk – a form of talk that is both indicative and mimetic – is required if we are to capture the nature of such developing but always unfinished, indivisible wholes. And we can also, perhaps, begin to see why some of our current ways of talking, in terms of well ordered systems and structures, in terms of separable and 'picturable' component parts, are quite inadequate to the task. For, as I have tried to make clear above, under both the influence of our separateness from each other within the "individualism" of the day, and the "logical atomism" into which we have been trained in most of our more academic practices, we 'picture' the systems and structures, the processes of which we talk, as objective entities, as assemblages of externally related parts. And we seem to think that if we possessed their 'blueprint', we could build them from the ground up, so to speak, piece by piece. Indivisible wholes, as we have seen are quite different. They have a life of their own (in actuality or at least in essence)! Thus, what kind of talk might be of use to us in our inquiries into 1) their nature, and 2) influencing changes in their nature?

As we have seen, if we can enter into living, dialogically-structured relations with such beings, events or circumstances, and allow them to call out spontaneous reactions from us, then an engaged, responsive understanding becomes available to us *from within* the unfolding dynamics of such relationships – a kind of understanding that is utterly unavailable to us if we adopt only a monological approach to them and treat them as dead forms. As I hope has now become very clear from the preceding chapters, I have tried to clarify the differences between these two forms of talk, these two very different ways of relating ourselves to our surroundings, in terms of the difference between 'aboutness-talk/thinking' and 'withness-talk/thinking'.

Central to our experiences in withness-thinking, is it giving rise to a *'shaped'* and *'vectored'* sense of our moment-by-moment changing placement within our current surroundings, a sense that provides us with both unique anticipations as to what next might happen to us, along with certain 'action-guiding advisories' as to what actions we next might take. In short, we can be spontaneously 'moved' toward specific possibilities for action in such thinking.

I have only just recently become aware of withness-thinking as a distinct style in people's "inner movements of thought" – although, as I shall recount below, in an implicit way, it has been 'known' to me for some time. It works, not in terms of static images or pictures, in terms of fixed shapes or forms, that can be 'seen' to correspond to, or to be 'like' a state of affairs out in the world, but in terms of another kind of 'likeness' altogether. It works in terms of dynamic 'likenesses' that arise for us within sequences of unfolding 'movements', the unfolding 'interplays', that occur when, in some sense, we *resonate with*, or move *in accordance with*, or follow in *a musical, rhythmic sense*, the temporal contours another's expressive 'movements'.

Withness-thinking becomes available to us, I think, only as a result of our spontaneous responsiveness, as living-growing-embodied beings, to temporally unfolding events occurring around us. As living-growing beings, we cannot not be bodily responsive to these events in this direct and immediate, unthinking fashion.

For the moment, I will mention four important features of the movements (more will be mentioned in the chapters below) in which such spontaneous responsiveness is manifested:

- 1) in their very occurrence, they 'place' us, bodily, *in one or another style or kind of relationship to* such events;
- 2) the bodily movements we exhibit in response to such events are *expressive* in some way to the others around us;
- 3) they are expressive of both *what* the relevant events *'are'*, and, in what way they *matter to us*, i.e., in being expressive in this way, they 'point beyond' themselves;
- and 4) they are what we might call *identity preserving* movements, in that the concomitant changes occasioned in us by their occurrence do not lead – as they might in a machine – to our

'wearing out' or to our physical degradation. In fact, just the opposite, they in fact lead to our becoming more able to 'fit' ourselves to our surroundings. Indeed, we could call all living activities *telic* activities in that they all aim, so to speak, at becoming in their activity more fully themselves.

As is perhaps now readily apparent, almost everything of interest in the study of such spontaneously responsive living activities, is apparent out in the *relations* occurring between such activities and their *surroundings*. Hence, perhaps surprisingly and unexpectedly, we end up being interested in the uncanny amazingness of our living bodies, rather than in mysterious minds hidden inside people's heads – the deep enigmas of our lives together lie in what is in fact *visible* before us, not in what the invisible and in what is hidden from us.

Arlene Katz and I (see Katz & Shotter, 1998) have set out some methods for doing this – the methods of a "social poetics" – that focuses on the noticing of "striking moments" in an interactions, moments when the people in an interchange respond in a distinctive manner to events..

Continuing here with the focus on 'striking' or 'moving' moments, let me begin to end this short introduction to the work contained in this 'pre-book' by pointing out, that in chapter 10, I discuss in detail what, possibly, is involved in being influenced, 'touched', 'moved' or 'struck', by an other's words. In it, I compare what I call withness-thinking with aboutness-thinking:

- • *Withness (dialogic)-thinking* is a dynamic form of reflective interaction that involves coming into living contact with an other's living being, with their utterances, with their bodily expressions, their words, their 'works'. It is a meeting of outsides, of surfaces, of 'skins', or of two kinds of 'flesh' as Merleau-Ponty (1968) puts it, such that in coming into 'touch' with each other, in the dynamics of the interaction at their surfaces, another form of life in common to all, in which all participate, is created. All both touch and are touched, and in the relations between their outgoing touching and resultant incoming, responsive touches of the other, the felt sense of a 'moving' sequence of difference emerges, a sequence with a shaped and vectored sense to it. In the interplay of living movements intertwining with each other, new possibilities of relation are engendered, new interconnections are made, new 'shapes' of experience emerge. A reflective encounter of this kind is thus not simply a 'seeing' of objects, for what is sensed is in fact invisible; nor is it an interpretation (a representation), for it arises directly and immediately in one's living encounter with an other's expressions; neither is it merely a feeling, for carries with it as it unfolds a bodily sense of the possibilities for responsive action in relation to one's momentary placement, position, or orientation in the present interaction. In short, we are spontaneously 'moved' toward specific possibilities for action in such thinking. And this where another thinker's *words in their saying* can be helpful – in entering into our inner dialogues, they can help to orient us, help us to be responsive to what we might otherwise ignore.

- • While in *aboutness (monologic)-thinking*, "(in its extreme pure form) another person remains wholly and merely an object of consciousness, and not another consciousness... Monologue is finalized and deaf to the other's response, does not expect it and does not acknowledge in it any *decisive* force" (Bakhtin, 1984, p.293). It works simply in terms of 'pictures', thus, even when we 'get the picture', we still have to decide, intellectually, on a right course of action.   But in thinking 'with' an other's voice, with their utterances, in mind, we can begin to see another very different way in which what we call 'theory' can be an influence on us. Literally, the words in which the theorist expresses his or her theory can, by moving us this way and that, 'instruct' us in our practical actions out in the world of our everyday, practical affairs. Then, if we respond to their words is *this* way, instead of turning away from the events of importance to us to bury ourselves in thought, in order to think of an appropriate theoretical scheme into which to fit them in order to respond to them, we can turn ourselves responsively toward them immediately. Indeed, we can begin an intensive, i.e., in detail, and extensive, exploratory interaction with them, approaching them *this* way and *that* way... 'moved' to act in *this* way and *that* in accord with the beneficial "reminders" issued to us by others to us, as a result of their explorations. In other words, seeing *with another's words in mind* can itself be a thoughtful, feelingful, way of seeing, while thinking *with another's words in mind* can also be a feelingful, seeingful, way of thinking – a way of seeing and thinking that brings one into a close and personal, living contact with one's

surroundings, with their subtle but mattering details.

Here, then, we can begin to see another way in which what we call 'theory' – but I will call 'theory-talk' – can be an influence in our practical actions out in the world of our everyday, practical affairs. The words of the theorist, i.e., his or her *utterances,* can 'instruct' us, can 'direct' our attention toward *this* or *that* aspect of events occurring around us in our surroundings. Like the child in Vygotsky's (1978) remark – "The child begins to perceive the world not only through his [or her] eyes but also through his [or her] speech" (p.32) – we also as adults can come to see the world around us *through* our speech. Hence, instead of turning away from such events, and burying ourselves in thought in an attempt to *explain* them within an appropriate theoretical scheme (thus to respond to them in *our* terms), we can turn ourselves more responsively toward them, to open ourselves to responding to aspects of them *in their own* terms. Indeed, we can begin an extensive and intensive, i.e., in detail, two-way exploratory interaction with them, approaching them *this* way and *that* way... while being 'moved' to act in *this* way and *that* in accord with the beneficial 'reminders' (Wittgenstein, 1953, no.127) or 'pointers' donated to us by those who have found them useful in their similar such explorations.

In other words, seeing *with another's words in mind* can itself be a thoughtful, feelingful, way of seeing, while thinking *with another's words in mind* can also be a feelingful, seeingful, way of thinking – a way of seeing and thinking that brings one into a close and personal, living contact with one's surroundings, with their subtle but mattering details. Hence, this is a style of seeingful and feelingful thought that can be of help to us in our practical daily affairs, and in further explorations of our own human lives together. It can be used in ordinary interpersonal communication, psychotherapy, intercultural communication, management, administration, government, etc., and, in fact, we need to note, *it is also needed in science*, in understanding how 'aboutness (monological)-thinking' can actual work.

The specific words of another, if they are uttered at a timely moment as a 'reminder' as to the possible character of our next step within an ongoing practical activity, can thus be a crucial influence in the development and refinement of that activity. The kind of knowledgeable inquiry involved here begins with our being "struck," with our noticing of, to repeat Bateson's (1979) phrase, "differences that make a difference" (p.453). Elsewhere in this pre-book, I have discussed in particular the suitability of Wittgenstein's (1953) methods for inquiries of this kind – inquiries into unique, only once-occurrent circumstances, in which participants within them are concerned to elaborate and refine. And I have also that Dr. Arlene Katz and I (Katz and Shotter, 1996; Shotter and Katz, 1996; Katz and Shotter, 1996a; Shotter, 1998), by making use of Wittgenstein's remarks (along with remarks from any others), have begun to develop a set of methods that we call the methods of a "social poetics."[9]

The overall aim of these methods is the development (within a collaborating group of practitioners) of appropriate 'ways of looking', i.e., of paying attention, to subtle and fleeting once-occurrent events of importance in their shared practice, along with an appropriate vocabulary for not only creating and sustaining these 'ways of looking', those sensitivities, but also for sustaining the open, dialogical forms of relationship within which such forms of spontaneous responsivity are possible. If they can be sustained, then, in such forms of co-operative, synergistic, or collaborative practices, it is possible to develop self-reflecting, self-critical, self-researching, and thus self-developing practices. But to say this, is not to say anything very revolutionary, for such a form of 'research' is already a part of our everyday practices[10]; it is only revolutionary to recognize that fact.

We have here, then, a process of inquiry in which practitioners become co-researchers, and researchers become co-practitioners, as each articulates what they have been 'struck by' in the unfolding process. It is a process in which both researchers and practitioners alike are engaged in creating *with* each other an "action guiding" sense *from within* their lived and living experience of their shared circumstances. But such an action guiding sense can emerge only in the collaborative dialogical activities occurring between them; once it ceases, such a guiding sense ceases to exist. While it is in existence, practice, teaching and research can all be enfolded within each other, while one in-forms and creates the other in a ever evolving, generative fashion. Both inquiry and learning in this process thus becomes a matter of "practical authorship" (Shotter, 1993) in which teachers and students, managers and workers, researchers and practitioners, all co-construct that which they create and learn together. But in such a process, it is not only the participants' shared circumstances that are refined and further developed, participants also change in their identities – for the changes within them are not only epistemological,

they are also ontological (Shotter, 1984). It is our spontaneous, embodied ways of seeing and acting in the world that we change.... we change in who we 'are'.

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Notes:

1. Hence the need to put the word 'parts' in scare quotes. While, perhaps, analytically separable, the 'parts' of a living, indivisible whole cannot be substantially separated.

2. Classically, Bartlett (1932) in discussing his idea of the 'schema', the "active organization of past reactions... which must always be supposed as operating in well-adapted organic response" (p.201), took making a stroke in a quick game of tennis as an example: "How I make the stroke depends on the relating of certain new experiences, most of them visual, to other immediately preceding visual experiences and to my posture, or balance of postures, at the moment. The latter, the balance of postures, is a result of a whole series of earlier movements, in which the last movement before the stroke is played has a predominant function. When I make the stroke I do not, as matter of fact, produce something absolutely new, and I never merely repeat something old. The stroke is literally manufactured out of the living visual and postural 'schemata' of the moment *and their interrelations*. I may say, I may think that I reproduce exactly a series of text-book movements, but demonstrably I do not... " (pp.201-202, my emphasis).

3. This is not a struggle of all *against* all (á la Hobbes), but a struggle of all *with* all with a hoped for benefit to all.

4. See note 7.

5. "What we are supplying are really remarks on the natural history of human beings; we are not contributing curiosities however, but observations which no one has doubted, but which have escaped remark only because they are always before our eyes" (Wittgenstein, 1953, no.415).

6. Bakhtin has in mind here Saussure's (1959) linguistics, in which for the purposes of a scientific analysis of *language* he made a distinction between *synchronic* (vertical cross section) and *diachronic* (horizontal plane) linguistics – a distinction Bakhtin thinks is impossible in living *speech*.

7. Within the discipline of Conversational Analysis (CA), terminology has it that the "first-pair part" (FPP) of an "adjacency pair" sets up a "conditional relevance" that the "second pair part" (SPP) is "normally expected" to satisfy, where it is the *expectation*, not the mere adjacency in time, that meaningfully links the second-pair part to the first-pair part (Schegloff, 1995) – and we can find all kinds of "insertion sequences," and so on, occurring between the utterance of a first-pair part and the final satisfaction of the expectations, the "preference structure," it spontaneously arouses in both speaker and listener by the uttering of the second pair part. What makes my concerns here very different from those in CA, is my focus on the once-off, uniquely new aspects of our utterances, rather than on the repetitive orderliness of our conversational exchanges.

8. In Shotter (1984) I explore the question: "Rather than individuals, why not take particular interpersonal relationships as the units productive of action in a society: the speaker/listener as a unit; the teacher/pupil; mother/child; master/slave; boss/worker; husband/wife, etc.?," And I suggest: "The answer, I think, lies in the fact that a society, if it is to remain a society, must amongst other things be able to maintain a social order. For that to be possible, the elementary units in that order must be able to detect whether that order has been transgressed or not, and if so, be able to act in some way towards its restitution" (p.148). In other words, our adherence to an 'official' order must always trumps our relations to a local order. I will return to this issue in the final section of this article.

9. Ann Cunliffe (2001) has developed these methods extensively also in managerial settings.

10. Tom Andersen (pers. comm.)