

Notes towards:

Ontological social constructionism – the corporeal turn: on coming to know our ‘way about’ inside the relations between ourselves and our world

John Shotter

“We come into the world moving. We’re precisely not stillborn. Indeed, movement forms the ‘I’ that moves before the ‘I’ that moves forms movement” (Maxine Sheets-Johnstone).

“Science manipulates things and gives up living in them. It makes its own limited models of things; operating upon these indices or variables to effect whatever transformations are permitted by their definition, it comes face to face with the real world only at rare intervals. Science is and always has been that admirably active, ingenious, and bold way of thinking whose fundamental bias is to treat everything as though it were an object-in-general – as though it meant nothing to us and yet was predestined for our own use” (Merleau-Ponty, 1964, p. 159).

“The totality of our so-called knowledge or beliefs... is a man-made fabric which impinges on reality only along the edges” (Quine, 1953, p.42).

“To get clear about philosophical problems, it is useful to become conscious of the apparently unimportant details of the particular situation in which we are inclined to make a certain metaphysical assertion. Thus we may be tempted to say ‘Only this is really seen’ when we stare at unchanging surroundings, whereas we may not at all be tempted to say this when we look about us while walking” (Wittgenstein, 1965, p.66).

“But the collective representations of primitives are not, like our concepts, the result of intellectual processes properly so called. They contain, as integral parts, affective and motor elements, and above all they imply, in the place of our conceptual inclusions or exclusions, participations which are more or less clearly defined, but, as a general rule, very vividly sensed. Why, for example, should a picture or portrait be to the primitive mind something quite different to what it is to ours? Whence comes that attributing of mystic properties to it, of whence we have just had an instance? Evidently from the fact that every picture, every reproduction ‘participates’ in the nature, properties, life of that of which it is the image” (Levy-Bruhl, 1926, p.79).

“Those [who know how to think *participatively*] know how not to detach their performed act from its product, but rather how to relate both of them to the unitary and unique context of life and seek to determine them in that context as an indivisible unity” (Bakhtin, 1993, p.19).

Abstract: Central to our idea of a competently conducted inquiry is the assumption that we should have a clear idea of what it is that we seek, a clear vision of our ‘end in view’. Consequently, our adoption of *these* or *those* concepts, *a priori*, i.e., prior to our undertaking the first steps in our inquiries is clearly of importance. Or is it? Besides all the other aspects of current *managerialist* (Dillow, 2007; Taptiklis, 2008) approaches to the organization of our collective enterprises, there is another central and much deeper question to consider: Is the conduct of our inquiries in terms of *ideal* models, theories, or well defined procedures, the best way to organize those of our affairs that matter to us in our everyday lives? Might there not be some other way? The trouble with idealizations is that they are both general *and also* decontextualized; they do not take into account the unique exigencies in the unique situations of our everyday practices. If we are to seek, not the perfections of a tomorrow, but the alleviation of a felt *wrongness* in the present moment, another quite different mode of inquiry

is required. We need to recognize that we face two kinds of difficulty in our lives: those of the intellect and those of the will (i.e., of orienting or of relating). We can formulate intellectual difficulties as *problem* which we can *solve* by creating *a priori* frameworks or perspectives in terms of which to ‘work out’ *solutions* – here we are concerned with *ways of the thinking*. Orientational or relational difficulties require a different approach: We must ‘enter into’ the initial bewilderment, the initial *felt wrongness* we are experiencing; gradually a ‘something’ (we know not what) emerges; this *can* give rise to an image (but not so fast!); for another and another image *can also* emerge; and our overall aim here is to arrive at a landscape of possibilities, to come to know our ‘way about’, thus to know how to ‘go on’ within our current circumstances. It is a form of thinking that proceeds, not from parts to the whole, but from a uniquely sensed already existing whole. Overcoming or *resolving* difficulties of this kind requires us to exercise judgment in conducting – not problem-solving thought – but a kind of inner *imaginative work* aimed at exploring our current situation in terms of particular *criteria* appropriate to the alternative line of action we are considering – a process to do both with *ways of paying attention* (listening, noticing, being open to being ‘touched’, etc.), and with negotiating, in dialogue with others, a line of action recognized by them to be both intelligible and legitimate.

Preamble....

If we are to learn, or to re-learn, how to think ‘participatively’, to start with a felt wrongness now rather than seeking a tomorrow’s-perfection

Some taken-for-granted assumptions we need to overcome: In the background to all those of our everyday activities we take seriously and worry about how we might best conduct them, are a number of unacknowledged assumptions. One important one seems to be that – like Descartes at the beginning of the *Discours* – we must approach each new difficulty we face by formulating for ourselves a symbolic theory or model in terms of which *to think about it*. In other words, although we might already possess some rough ‘rule of thumb’ knowledge of the workings of our world, we straightaway assume it to be inadequate to the difficulties we face. If we are to gain the more ‘solid’, ‘certain’, or ‘trustworthy’ knowledge we need to act for the best within it, *before* going out into our world to do something within it we must bury ourselves in thought and decide upon a line of action. This approach to our inquiries into the nature of things is outlined by Kant (1790) in his *Critique of Pure Reason* as follows:

“Reason, holding in one hand its principles, according to which alone concordant appearances can be admitted as equivalent to laws, and in the other hand the experiment which it has devised in conformity with these principles, must approach nature in order to be taught by it. It must not, however, do so in the character of a pupil who listens to everything that the teacher chooses to say. But of an appointed judge who compels the witness to answer questions which he himself has formulated” (p.20).

In other words, some of us have assumed, since Kant, that knowledge *cannot* be gained simply from what one *sees* before one’s eyes, knowledge must be brought about through a construction of thought, a theory or a model, *idealizations*, made in accordance with *a priori* concepts which are not in the foreground for inspection but which nonetheless determine whatever is relevant to the matter in hand. One of the best formulations of this approach known to me was stated by Hertz in his *The Principles of Mechanics* (orig. German edition, 1894):

“In endeavoring... to draw inferences as to the future from the past, we always adopt the following process. We form for ourselves images or symbols of external objects; and the form that we give them is such that the necessary consequents of the images in thought are always the images of the necessary consequents in nature of the things pictured. In order that this requirement may be satisfied, there must be a certain conformity between nature and our thought” (1954, p.1).

In other words, in almost all of practical activities these days, we assume that our purposes are best served by *taking time out from them* to engage in extensive discussions as to the nature of the most appropriate model or

theoretical schematism within which to conduct our inquiries, and within which to find the guidance we need in conducting our practical actions. We do not assume that we can find the guidance we need by entering into them in a more engaged fashion, by opening ourselves to them “in the character of a pupil who listens to everything that the teacher chooses to say,” to repeat Kant’s phrase above.

Our *a priori* concepts, Kant thought, function, so to speak, as *rules* for the organization of the data we gather in our experimentation. In being there *a priori*, i.e., from the start of our inquiries, they exert a *formative* influence in helping us to gather the incoming fragments resulting from our inquiries into a *unitary whole*. In other words, our *a priori* concepts exert a constitutive function in the institution of a *practical hermeneutics* (Shotter, 1984) in our efforts to make sense of our relations to our surroundings – a process in which fragmentary parts are gathered, step-by-step, into a unitary whole.

For Kant, then (in terms of his mixed metaphors), our reasoning must be two-handed, and the operations productive of knowledge require both hands: with one hand we construct theories of the order of things and events in nature according to our own inner plans; on the other, we frame experiments in accordance with our preformed theories that will put Nature into action and subject our theories, our *idealizations*, to test. But as is evident, we change in this scheme of things from being simple learners benefitting from the experiences we happen to encounter as we live out of lives with the others and othernesses around us, to acting continually as judges with authority to accept or reject events as fitting or not the *laws* we ourselves have deemed as being of importance to us – our knowledge acquisition processes are all processes *deliberately conducted* according to ends of our own devising, i.e., according to our own humanly devised *desires*.

The role of thought constructions, i.e., idealizations, in our inquiries: Strangely, however, it is only in recent times that this remarkable aspect of knowledge – the role of both the *a priori* and of thought constructions (theories, models, etc.) – has been taken seriously in the natural sciences (Popper, Kuhn, etc). Heisenberg (1958) put the issue very nicely when he commented: “... the objective reality of the elementary particles has been strangely dispersed, not into the fog of some new ill-defined or still unexplained conception of reality, but into the transparent clarity of a mathematics that no longer describes the behavior of the elementary particles *but only our knowledge of this behavior*” (p.15, my emphasis). In other words, what we now *account* as ‘objective’ knowledge in our lives is something which we ourselves *judge* to be the case (the role of judgement, to which I will return in more detail in the notes, has been strangely ignored in recent times). The acknowledgment of the role of socially assembled thought constructions in our psychological lives has been even more recent (Berger & Luckman, 1966; Shotter, 1970; Gergen, 1985; etc.). But such a form of knowledge oriented social constructionism now seems to be the current focus of much current effort in social inquiry.

One consequence of this view of the importance of thought constructions in our conduct of our own affairs is obvious in the amount of time we now spend in class-rooms, seminar rooms, and conference halls discussing the merits and demerits of various models, theories, concepts, or other kinds of symbolic constructions viewed as necessary preliminaries to the conduct of our inquiries into the better conduct of our practical affairs. We feel these discussions to be necessary as we feel we need to formulate, if not an *accurate* account of the difficulty we face, at least an *adequate* account of it. Without knowing *what* we face, we feel that we cannot formulate any plans for dealing with it.

Now it is not so much that I think that this view of things is wrong. Indeed, it is clearly very right with respect to those spheres of our lives in which we do desire to take effective *instrumental* action, in which we are concerned to satisfy certain desires of our own devising. But, as I see it, it is limited in a number of important respects.

But first, it ignores the importance of those spheres of activity in our lives in which, as Gadamer (1989) puts it, we need to concern ourselves with, “not what we do or what we ought to do, but [with] what happens to us over and above our wanting and doing” (p.xxviii). Thus what I want to outline in these notes is what is involved in our attempts to inquire into the nature of the *happenings* that can occur to us in this sphere of our own human activities, a focus that emphasizes our perceptual rather than our cognitive capacities. Secondly, it is limited in another respect, in that it ignores the fact that we have bodies, living bodies in continual living movement, bodies which have *needs* of their own if we are live in and to move around within our surroundings

with ease and surety. Indeed, what I take to be a previously unrecognized feature of our human being in the world, is Todes (2001) account of our bodies' *need* to, so to speak, come to *feel at home* in whatever circumstances we might find ourselves. Thus, instead of Descartes' aim in the *Discours* – for us to become “masters and possessors of Nature” with the aim of exploiting Nature in the satisfaction of our own *desires* – we can bring to recognition a previously unacknowledged *need* at work in us: our need to develop a *poised resourcefulness* oriented towards coping with or dealing with whatever contingencies that might arise as a result of each turn we take in our movements as move about in our surroundings, a resourcefulness that is sensed by us as placing or situating us within a *world*, a human world.

“Language is not just one of man's possessions in the world; rather, on it depends the fact that man has a *world* at all... To have a world means to have an orientation (*Verhalten* – *attitude*) towards it. To have an orientation towards the world, however, means to keep oneself so free from what one encounters of the world that one is able to present it to oneself as it is. This capacity is both the having of a 'world' and the having of a language. Thus the concept of 'world' (*Welt*) or 'environment' is in opposition to the concept of 'surrounding world' or 'habitat' (*Umwelt*), as possessed by every living thing” (Gadamer, 1989, pp.443-444).

Thus, instead of the Cartesian aim of mastery and possession, entailed in the *a priori* orientation or attitudes we adopt in our inquiries is, of course, a much more *ecological* stance towards our ways of being in the world. Instead of seeing ourselves as manipulators (and exploiters) of an external world 'over there' whose character depends on *our* judgements as to its nature, instead of as wholly agents concerned with our own doings, we are here viewing ourselves as participant parts within a larger whole – with a *life of its own* – upon which we depend to an extent *for our nature*. To that extent, our surroundings must be seen as 'determining surroundings' in that they determine us just as we determine them.

Indeed, to go even further: Working in terms of idealizations, as we have done in the past, leads us to ignore, or dis-attend to, the felt urgency of *something-not-being-right* in our current circumstances. We can 'put-off' attending to it on the grounds that once we have achieved the *ideal* understanding we seek, it will be dealt with then – “You couldn't have it if you DID want it,” the Queen said. “The rule is, jam to-morrow and jam yesterday - but never jam to-day.” “It MUST come sometimes to 'jam to-day',” Alice objected. “No, it can't,” said the Queen. “It's jam every OTHER day: to-day isn't any OTHER day, you know.” (*Alice through the looking glass*).

As Wittgenstein (1953) notes: “The more narrowly we examine actual language, the sharper becomes the conflict between it and our requirement. (For the crystalline purity of logic was, of course, not *a result of investigation*: it was a requirement.)... The preconceived idea of the crystalline purity can only be removed by turning our whole examination around. (One might say: the axis of reference of our examination must be rotated, but about the axis of our real need.)... [which is the need to 'know our way about' in our own human world, a need that isn't satisfied by the presumed discovery of an 'ideal order']... We are talking about the spatial and temporal phenomenon of language, not about some non-spatial, non-temporal phantasm” (nos. 107, 108). If we are to seek, not perfections tomorrow, but to deal with issues we can tackle *now*, then we face, Wittgenstein (1981) suggest, the following kind of situation:

“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) (no.447).

“The more narrowly we examine actual language, the sharper becomes the conflict between it and our requirement. (For the crystalline purity of logic was, of course, not *a result of investigation*: it was a requirement.) The conflict becomes intolerable; the requirement is now in danger of becoming empty. – We have got on to slippery ice where there is no friction and so in a certain sense the conditions are ideal, but also, just because of that, we are unable to

walk. We want to walk: so we need friction. Back to the rough ground!” (1953, no.107).

“The preconceived idea of the crystalline purity can only be removed by turning our whole examination around. (One might say: the axis of reference of our examination must be rotated, but about the axis of our real need.)... [which is the need to ‘know our way about’ in our own human world, a need that isn’t satisfied by the presumed discovery of an ‘ideal order’]... We are talking about the spatial and temporal phenomenon of language, not about some non-spatial, non-temporal phantasm” (1953, no.108).

Preparing ourselves for inquiries of this kind is what is at issue here: Understanding what is involved in our developing such a set of embodied-readinesses-to-respond, spontaneously, to a whole range of socially significant occurrences, in ways which the others around us *will recognize* as both intelligible and legitimate, and which are *ecologically* satisfactory to us, is the task of what I am here calling an *ontological social constructionism*.

The need to ‘jolt’ our memory into action – remembering what we already know: These notes, then, are necessary, for in outlining a whole new realm of inquiry, they are meant to work as ‘dramatic reminders’, as jolts to our memories to bring to mind, in Wittgenstein’s (1953) sense, something that is “already in plain view. For *this* is what we seem in some senses not to understand” (no.89). Only what ‘strikes’ us, that ‘moves’ us in ways that we do yet move ourselves, that brings us to a new recognition, to an acknowledgment of a ‘something’ previously unknown to us, can bring to us an *otherness* that can make us other than we already are – otherwise, in pursuing plans of our own devising, we are simply in the business of the continual re-discovery of sameness (knowledge formulated in our own already possessed terms).

Indeed, *this* is how it has been in the past: It has been as if we had to hunt out new facts, to learn a piece of *new* knowledge that we did not previously know – this is the situation as set by Kant above, in which we act as self-appointed judges compelling witnesses to answer questions which we ourselves have formulated. Whereas, now we are in quite a different situation: we are not seeking *solutions to problems* which we ourselves have formulated. The difficulty is, suggest Wittgenstein (1981), “not that of finding the solution but rather that of recognizing as the solution something that looks as if it were only a preliminary to it... This is connected, I believe, with our wrongly expecting an explanation, whereas the solution to the difficulty is a description, if we give it the right place in our considerations. If we dwell upon it, and do not try to get beyond it. The difficulty here is: to stop” (no.314). In other words, no matter how confusing one’s current situation might be, you are already ‘at’ or ‘in’ where you need to be. There is no necessity to ‘go beyond’ your present circumstances – the way to ‘go on’ can be found ‘there’, from within the midst of one’s confusion, if one is prepared to *actively* dwell within it, to take time to move around within it in an exploratory fashion.

But to do this is unusual, it can also be frightening: Given our very basic *need* to feel ‘at home’(Todes, 2001) in our surroundings, we must confront our worst fear – to be ‘all at sea’, as we often term it. Descartes (1968) characterized the extreme anxiety he felt at being overwhelmed with the complexity of the issues involved thus: “The meditation of yesterday filled my mind with so many doubts that it is longer in my power to forget them. Yet I do not see how I shall be able to resolve them: and, as though I had suddenly fallen into very deep water, I am so taken unawares that I can neither put my feet firmly down on the bottom nor swim to keep myself on the surface” (p.102). Descartes’ (1968) anxiety was especially acute as he was seeking – as is well-known – to arrive at a geometric form of reasoning from first principles, a *single order of connectedness*, of such a kind that, by “those “long chains of reasoning, quite simple and easy, which geometers use to teach their most difficult demonstrations... there can be nothing so distant that one does not reach it eventually, or so hidden that one cannot discover it” (p.41). With such an aim as this in mind, there is a seemingly irresolvable complexity if things are related but not in a way that can be assimilated into a computational system, if events do not occur within a simple linear sequence in time, and if different phenomena share a space that cannot be represented or ‘pictured’ in purely spatial terms.

No wonder he felt, and all of us with these classical aims in mind still feel, anxious, for with these aims in mind there is no *resolution* of the difficulties we face in our lives. Yet strangely, we do not feel such a degree of extreme anxiety in every sphere of our lives. Why is this?

A basic bodily need – the urge to ‘feel at home’ in the world: Let us turn to our bodily experience of each unique situation within which such an anxiety is felt: Each unique situation arouses in us a unique set of spontaneous responses, a set of responses with its own unique character, experienced by us as a felt tension with its own unique quality – a tension that we feel motivated to seek to *resolve*, i.e., to bring to an initially confused and bewildering situation a clarity of structure of such a kind that one can both know, in Wittgenstein’s (1953) terms, both one’s “way about” (no.123) and “how to go on” (no.154). In this, our bodies play a crucial role in carrying forward the unique quality of the initial tension as we satisfy it, step-by-exploratory-step, so that we can be guided by the felt changes occurring within it as we take each such step in our efforts to resolve it – where, as is clear above, a resolution consists in gathering together a whole welter of seemingly incommensurable features of an in fact uniquely unitary situation into a *sensed* or *felt* unity (an achievement that, as we shall see, is only possible when all the relevant features are brought into a *dialogical* or a *chiasmic* relationship with each other).

Unusually, what we have here, then, is a focus on unfolding dynamical events occurring through time, events with their own qualitatively unique character, a focus on the unique qualitative nature of the ‘time-contours’ of events (Whorf, 1956; Stern, 2004) – ‘unusually’, because usually we seek *repetitive patterns* that we hope will provide us with orientation ahead of time as how next we should act, whereas now we seem to focusing on something ephemeral, on as Bakhtin (1993) terms them “once-occurrent events of Being” (p.2). Unusually too, we are focusing (if that word can be used at all) on *invisible* events, on *felt* events. Even more unusually, we are also focusing on complex events with an organic unity to them, such that although distinct *strands* of activity can be distinguished with them, in no ways can the strands be considered in isolation from each other – they all have their character due to their relations to each other as they occur *in the running* (see Dewey quote below) of a living activity.

Many years ago, John Dewey (1896) – in his criticism of the conception of reflex arc as a sequence of radically separate occurrences – described the nature of such dynamically intertwined relations thus: “Just as the ‘response’ is necessary to constitute the stimulus, to determine it as sound and as this kind of sound, of wild beast or robber, so the sound experience *must persist as a value in the running*, to keep it up, to control it. The motor reaction involved in the running is, once more, *into*, not merely *to*, the sound. It occurs to change the sound, to get rid of it. The resulting quale [qualitative situation – js], whatever it may be, has its meaning wholly determined by reference to the hearing of the sound. It is that experience mediated. What we have is a circuit, not an arc or broken segment of a circle. This circuit is more truly termed organic than reflex, because the motor response determines the stimulus, just as truly as sensory stimulus determines movement. Indeed, the movement is only for the sake of determining the stimulus, of fixing what kind of a stimulus it is, of interpreting it” (p.363, my emphasis).

To repeat: The purpose of the notes below, then, is to motivate the much needed *imaginative work* (not theorizing) required if we are to bring to mind our own inner bodily activities as they occur – as they *happen* to occur – as we come to a new perceptual grasp of ‘where’ we are, along with our possibilities there for our own further movement, in each new turn we take in our practical activities in the world.

Our direct, spontaneously responsive, bodily involvements in with our surroundings – the ‘dialogical’ nature of a ‘practical hermeneutics’: Overall, within them, I want to explore the possibility of there being for us, as living beings, a much more immediate and unreflective, bodily way of being related to our surroundings than the ways that become conspicuous to us in our more cognitive reflections, a *way of relating* or *orienting* toward our surroundings that becomes known to us only from within the unfolding dynamics of our engaged bodily movements within them. Primordially, we are in a dialogically-structured relationship with our surroundings. Thus, both in the case of perception and in that of building a skill, we must actively go out to meet events in our surroundings in such a way as to coordinate our outgoing activities (or nervous impulses) with those that are coming in. As a result, structures in our surroundings can influence the emergent time-contours of our outgoing activities in such a way that they can gradually become incorporated into them so that we can learn how to meet events in our surroundings with the right kind of response ‘at the ready’, so to speak. With regard to learning a

skill it is *evident* how this can happen; but in a sense the perception of each kind of thing is also a skill because it requires us also to actively to meet aspects of our surroundings with *movements* appropriate to the disclosure of their structure – in other words, there is an active, skillful aspect to perception, it is not a purely passive affair.

“Every new object, well contemplated, opens up a new organ of perception in us” — Goethe

Thus, thus to possess an anticipatory sureness that we will still be able ‘to-‘follow’-what-is-to-come’, or better, ‘to-be-responsive-to-what-is-to-come’, we must take the time needed to develop the relevant skill by undertaking the *exploratory movements* required – what we call ‘looking over’, or ‘looking closely’ at the ‘something’ in question. In the process, we come to embody, to incorporate, certain *ways* of looking, certain *ways* of hearing, of feeling, etc.. Such *ways* of relating or of orienting ourselves towards events occurring around us, become known to us in terms of the embodied anticipations and expectations with which we approach the things, people, and events occurring in the world around us.

Indeed, as I see it, it is the role of this (what I will call) *orientational* understanding that is basic to the further development of both our everyday *and* our professional practices. Below, however, I want to go further, to suggest with Todes (2001) that without this multi-stranded, embodied ‘background’ (perceptual) understanding of the specific field of possibilities in which, in each changing moment, we are embedded, we would not only lack all *orientation*, but in not knowing ‘where we are’, we would also, literally, ‘not know what to do next’. In other words, it is a kind of understanding to do, not with facts or information, but with *what kind of context* we are in, with what our current surroundings *require* of us, with the ‘calls’ they exert upon us to respond within them in *appropriate* ways, as well as with the opportunities for action they *afford* (Gibson, 1979) us – a kind of knowing that shows up in our *readinesses to respond* in certain ways, spontaneously, according to the anticipations embodied in our *approach, attitude, or stance* toward a particular circumstance.

As I have already made clear, involved here is a sphere of activity that is usually left in the background to all our other more deliberately conducted activities – oriented, as we tell ourselves, only toward what we deem to be ‘objective’ knowledge. Rather than seeking ‘objective’ knowledge in the service of satisfying our own desires, our concern here is with seeking a *poised resourcefulness* appropriate to our being able to ‘go out to meet’ whatever contingency we might encounter with an appropriate response to it ‘at the ready’, so to speak. From an *external* world that we have approached in the past with the aim of “mastery and possession” (Descartes), I am setting out below a more *ecological* stance, an approach which assumes that we are merely a *participant part* of a larger, living whole – a living whole that *lives us* as much as we *live it*.

“Our spontaneously responsive, living, bodily activities are ‘form-giving’ to whatever they take as ‘given’ to them.”

Some notes....

The living body alive in the world

- \$ spontaneously exploratory living movement
- \$ spontaneously responsive, expressive, living movement
- \$ the chiasmic intertwining of living, exploratory movement with ‘things’ in the world
- \$ all living movement also occurs in irreversible time, it entails growth and development
- \$ we learn to inhabit our bodies in the course of learning to inhabit the world
- \$ all living movement entails change, the *creative discovery* (Todes, 2001) of our body’s capacities in relation to features in our surroundings
- \$ all such changes are *identity preserving* changes, thus we can *anticipate* at least the *style* of what is to come from each in the future
- \$ we act in relation to a deep bodily *need* to feel ‘at home’ in our surroundings (Todes, 2001)
- \$ the surroundings of our responsive expressions – or, their *background* – must be accounted as “determining surroundings” in that they exert ‘calls’ upon us to act *responsively* in relation to them in ‘fitting’ ways, in ways responsive to our need to feel ‘at home’, to ‘know our way about’, to know how to ‘go on’ (Wittgenstein, 1953)

§ we act ‘into’ our surroundings just as much as ‘out of’ our own inner plans and desires (Dewey, 1896)

Events in meetings between two or more such living beings – the ‘livingness’ of things

§ the *chiasmic* nature of the dialogical

§ the ‘weird’ nature of the dialogical: neither subjective nor objective, neither orderly nor disorderly, containing past, present, and future in ‘moments of now’ (Stern)

§ *internal* versus *external* relations – relational dimensions versus quantitative properties

§ ‘double description’ (Bateson), different logical types, chiasmic relations, and the dialogical

§ the inevitably ‘creativity’ of the dialogical

§ only known as such ‘from within’ by those within it

§ the right, duties, obligations, and privileges of 1st and 2nd persons within it, compared with 3rd person external observers

Two kinds of difficulties: difficulties of the intellect and difficulties of orientation or relating

§ Two kinds of difficulty: of the intellect and of the will (of orienting or of relating).

§ Intellect: Solving, framework, perspective, ‘working out’ – to do with *ways of the thinking*

§ Orienting and relating: Initial bewilderment, confusion, a ‘something’ I know not what, the emergence of an image, another image, a landscape of possibilities, knowing one’s ‘way about’, knowing how to ‘go on’.

§ The exercise of judgment in *imaginative work*, and the importance of *criteria* and one’s checking one’s *situation* in the current scheme of things – to do with *ways of paying attention* (listening, noticing, being open to being ‘touched’, etc.)

§ Negative capability (Keats), *living* the questions (Rilke) – The difficulty here, “I believe, [is] with our wrongly expecting an explanation, whereas the solution to the difficulty is a description, if we give it the right place in our considerations. If we dwell upon it, and do not try to get beyond it. The difficulty here is: to stop” (Wittgenstein, 1981, no.314).

§ ‘Witness’- versus ‘aboutness’-thinking, speaking, acting, etc...

The dialogically- or chiasmically-structured nature of all expressively responsive, living, human bodily activity

§ Bakhtin (1993)... “once-occurrent becoming,”... “once-occurrent events of Being,” ...

§ Bakhtin, active responsive understanding, and the dialogical... Bateson, ‘double description’, different ‘logical types’, and own creation of ‘relational dimensions’ (depth)

§ Chiasmically organized: binocular vision (Bateson, Merleau-Ponty) as a paradigm... looking over a visual field... seeing as the picture before us ‘wants us’ to see it... the creation of new “relational dimensions,” i.e., depth

§ Speaking in anticipation...

§ Bateson on ‘calibration’...

§ Wittgenstein, language games, forms of life, beginnings in ‘reactions’... his ‘methods’

§ First reactions – just as only oak trees grow from acorns, and only chickens from eggs, our ‘first reactions’ in our meetings are the ‘seeds’ only from which events in the meetings can grow

§ Wittgenstein... knowing one’s ‘way about’.. And how to ‘go on’

§ Some of Tom Andersen’s thoughts on Life, Language, and Therapy

§ Why we need to ‘go into’ *big words*

§ Achievements (outcomes) and the sequence of tasks that go into their achievement

§ *Ways* of looking and listening... transitory understandings and action guiding anticipations

§ Seeing *this* or *that* in ambiguous figures... different *ways* of looking-for

The emergence of ‘higher forms’ out of ‘lower forms’

§ Vygotsky (1986): The claim that all *higher mental functions* have their origins in lower forms, and that what constitutes a higher form is a socio-cultural *organizational* structure within which the ‘natural’ or ‘lower’ abilities available to human beings can be deployed according to humanly ‘invented’ purposes.

§ *Lower* abilities are abilities that are expressed immediately and spontaneously, under the control of the immediate environment.

- § “In the elementary form something is remembered; in the higher form humans remember something. In the first case a temporary link is formed owing to the simultaneous occurrence of two stimuli that affect the organism; in the second case humans personally create a temporary link through the artificial combination of stimuli” (Vygotsky, 1978, p.51).
- § Ontological developments: “We could not describe this new significance of the whole operation otherwise than by saying that it is *mastery of one’s own process of behavior*. It is surprising to us that traditional psychology has completely failed to notice this phenomenon which we can call mastering one’s own reactions” (1966, pp.33-34) – an issue to do with the ‘will’, with difficulties of orientation and relating, not with possessing (or not) knowledge of facts!
- § Vygotsky (1962)... one of the basic laws of development “... is that consciousness and control appear only at a late stage in the development of a function, after it has been used and practiced unconsciously and spontaneously. In order to subject a function to intellectual and volitional control, we must first possess it” (p.90).
- § Dreyfus (1967), in countering the *urge* to seek formal theories that focus only on the *computational* capacities of our brains, remarks: “... what if the work of the central nervous system depends on the locomotor system, or to put it phenomenologically, what if the ‘higher’, determinate, logical, and detached forms of intelligence are necessarily derived from and guided by *global and involved* ‘lower’ forms?” (p.15, my emphasis).
- § Dewey (1896) too emphasizes that to *act in a situation* is to act within a complex situation that is held together as a unity despite its internal complexity, by the fact that it is dominated and characterized throughout by a single quality.
- § For example, in discussing the seeing of, say, a visual event, he notes that if we look into it closely as a living event, “we find that we begin not with a sensory stimulus, but with a sensori-motor coördination, the optical-ocular, and that in a certain sense *it is the movement which is primary*, and the sensation which is secondary, the movement of body, head and eye muscles determining *the quality* of what is experienced” (p.358).
- § In other words, the real beginning of a perceptual event is with the act of looking out toward our surroundings in a certain *way*, a *way* that results in a ‘seeing’ of a certain kind.
- § Further, the *way* of looking was initiated by a felt tension of a ‘something-there’ to be seen, and it is this initially felt, distinctive qualitative sense that persists in motivating and guiding our movements (eyes, head, and the rest of our body) – while both the developing sensation (feeling) and the consequent movement *lie inside*, not outside the act.

Thus for all concerned here, Vygotsky, Dreyfus, and Dewey, rather than dead, unresponsive mechanisms that move only when ‘stimulated’, we are living beings which, besides being spontaneously responsive to events occurring around them, are also active and move around in the world.

Yet, under the influence of our Cartesian, mechanistic heritage, as Dewey (1896) pointed out, “instead of interpreting the character of sensation, idea and action from their place and function in the sensory-motor circuit, we still incline to interpret the latter from our preconceived and preformulated ideas of rigid distinctions between sensations, thoughts and acts” (p.358).

Instead of thinking that we are acting in what is for us a world of already determined things, I want to follow Merleau-Ponty (1962) when he suggests that: “Apart from the probing of my eye or my hand, and before my body synchronizes with it, the sensible is nothing but a vague beckoning... Thus a sensible datum which is on the point of being felt sets a kind of muddled problem for my body to solve. I must find the attitude which *will* provide it with the means of becoming determinate... I must find the reply to a question which is obscurely expressed” (p.215).

Further, I want to call what Merleau-Ponty describes here as the practical seeing of a relay to a practical question, a *practical hermeneutics* (Shotter, 1984), for I want to suggest, following Todes (2001), that as we move around in the world, step-by-step, our bodies have the capacity to form for us, from a set of situationally inter-related fragments, a world of meaningful *wholes* around us that are also inter-connected with a whole realm of other such wholes – an outcome that our body can, on occasion, of course, fail to achieve.

The perception of expression and the perception of objects

- § Are static forms, or are unfolding dynamical movements most influential in our perceptual experiences?
- § Or to state the question differently: (1) do we perceive people’s ‘psychological states’ in some direct

and immediate way; or (2) do we perceive them indirectly, by, say, a process of ‘unconscious inference’ (Helmholtz) from data about the objective characteristics of their expression?

§ A classical problem of perception would seem to be at issue here.

§ As children react differentially to human expressions of joy and anger, friendliness and hostility *before they* react differentially to colours and other thing-characteristics (Koffka, 1921), it would seem to be the former.

§ But this suggests that seemingly more complex judgements are made at an earlier age than apparently more simple ones – simpler, that is, if one holds to the classical image of people in which *cognition* is taken as primary.

§ How can this be?

§ It can be so because the ‘evidence’ – the *criteria* (LW) – involved in assessing people’s psychological states is not private; people *show* their psychological states ‘in’ the temporal organization of their behaviour.

§ *Events unfolding in time*: In what, then, does the difference between our *perception of expression* and our *perception of objects* reside?

§ If we accept that all the experiences of our surroundings occurring *within* us originate from *outside* us, this distinction can only be a function of the way in which we *determine* these two categories: one aspect of our experience is *determined* as ‘outer’ and ascribed or attributed to an object (in space), the other is *determined* as ‘inner’ and ascribed as a feeling to ourselves (in time) – space and time being, respectively, the forms of ‘outer’ and ‘inner’ perception (Kant) in this ‘manner of speaking’.

§ But why?

§ *Objects*: In attempting to determine the nature of a real object it does not, so speak, answer back; it neither acts nor reacts. Thus, in this case, the categories of ‘outer’ perception can be made as determinate as an investigator pleases.

§ *Non-objects*: However, a non-object, a source of expression, cannot be determined as one pleases, for it does answer back – so there is an essential indeterminacy associated with categories of perception in this case which can only be resolved by negotiation and agreement with the source being investigated.

§ So the essential difference between the processes involved in the perception of expression and the perception of things seems more to do with the way in which these categories are made determinate than anything to do with the perceptual process itself.

§ The criteria of ‘inner’ perception involve negotiation and agreement with the source (or are otherwise left indeterminate, and people do not know exactly their feelings), while those of ‘outer’ perception, at least in their objective paradigm form, do not involve such negotiation.

“As an embodied subject I am exposed to the other person, just as he is to me, and I *identify* myself with the person speaking before me. Speaking and listening, action and perception, are quite distinct operations for me only when I reflect on them... When I am actually speaking I do not first *figure* the *movements* involved.... If I have any tact, my words are both a means of action and feeling; there are eyes at the tips of my fingers. When I am listening, it is not necessary that I have an *auditor perception* of the articulated sounds but that the conversation pronounces itself in me. It summons me and grips me: it envelops and inhabits me to the point that I cannot tell what comes from me and what from it” (M-P, pp.18-19, 1973, *Prose of the World...* see also, cf. M-P, The child’s perception of others, in *Primacy of Perception*, 1964, pp.118-119).

Cartesianism and ‘Why have we not noticed these things before?’ ‘What casts a veil between us and our embodied being?’

§ The search for a method for obtaining *certain* knowledge.

§ We are *only* a thing that thinks.

§ Representations: not our spontaneous bodily responsiveness

§ Geometry: long chains of reasoning

§ New world of separate parts in motion... work in terms of *idealizations*...

- § Aim: Mastery and possession
- § God tells us of our ideals, perfection... ordinary world full of less than *ideal* circumstances...
- § Other's bodies are perceived by the intellect alone.
- § No emergence, no growth, no development – a dead, mechanical world
- § No living surroundings – if space and time are needed, they are needed only as neutral, abstract containers

The view from nowhere (Nagel): "... seeing that I could pretend that I had no body and that there was no world or place that I was in, but that I could not pretend that I did not exist, and that, on the contrary, from the very fact that I thought of doubting the truth of other things, it followed very evidently and very certainly that I existed... I thereby concluded that I was a substance, of which the whole essence or nature consists in thinking, and which, in order to exist, needs no place and depends on no material thing..." (Descartes, 1968, p.54).

Losing the phenomena:

- § Once we accept Bakhtin's (1986) notion of an *active, responsive* understanding of people's utterances and other expressions, we realize that all their expressions arouse in us, in our bodies, an anticipatory tension, a felt expectation of a *something-next-to-come*.
- § What is lost in all recordings or other transcriptions of people's expressions are these 'inner' movements in which the 'work' of *responsively understanding* an expression is done.
- § Merleau-Ponty (1964) puts what is lost thus: "The presence of those who were speaking, the gestures, the physiognomies, and the feeling of an event which is coming up and of a continuous improvisation, all are lacking in the recording. Henceforth the conversation no longer exists; it *is*, flattened out in the unique dimension of sound and all the more deceptive because this wholly auditory medium is that of a text read" (p.57).
- § Vygotsky's (1986) remarks on the differences between an analysis of a whole into its *separate elements (partes extra partes)*, and what he calls "*unit analysis*" – an analysis in which the 'units' of analysis all retain "the basic properties of the whole which cannot be further dived without losing them" (p.4).
- § Dewey (1896), in discussing the failings of the *reflex arc* concept in modern psychology, makes a similar point in comparing "distinctions of existence or between distinctions of existence, but teleological distinctions, that is, distinctions of function, or part played, with reference to reaching or maintaining an end" (p.365).
- § Garfinkel (2002, p.28, 33, 47, pp.147-167, 264n2, 265-66, 276) talks "instructably reproducible achievements" (p.153), for example, people clapping *in time with* a metronome... it takes a while, an amount of embodied 'work' to arrive at the *achievement* required... it is done by realizing that one must clap in such a way that one *cannot hear* the metronome...
- § But the achievement cannot be "instructably reproduced" by a pupil by asking him or her to achieve a "rhythm."
- § Indeed, "as David Sudnow points out, pedagogies for musical performances have never lacked descriptions of musical achievements of phrasing, pace, duration, emphasis, rhythms. But in the absence of local apprenticeships these pedagogies remain intractable to instructibly reproducible achievement" (pp.152-153).
- § Although the clapping is *not directed by* the metronome, it is *accountable to* it.
- § The pupils task is to *make the time* needed to complete the task, a hand clap, a *prospective* activity; analysts working with the recorded achievement *mark off or measure time*, a *retrospective* activity.
- § In other words, the pupil has to work at *developing* a synchrony with the metronome, but this *developing synchrony* is quite different from the *already developed synchrony* heard in a recording.
- § The relevant phenomena are, of course, only available to the living, embodied, unfolding, dynamical relations between the active (and also to an extent passive) agent, the 'doer' of the activity in question.

Each *unit*, each 'part' of a living whole, retains as a microcosm all the essential characteristics of the macrocosm. This is clearly not the case with the parts of a mechanism. The parts of a machine are, so to speak, objective parts, which have their own character, irrespective of whether they are parts of the machine or not; they owe none of their characteristics to their intrinsic relations with any of the other parts. But the 'parts' of a living whole cannot exist in isolation like this, apart from all the others with whom, quite literally, they have

grown into existence. Indeed, the living whole within which they have their being has itself grown from a simple living ‘cell’ into a richly structured one in such a way that, at any one moment in time, all its ‘units’ or ‘parts’ owe, not just their character, but their very existence both to one another *and* to their relations with the ‘parts’ of the system at some earlier point in time – that is, their history is just as important as the ‘logic’ of their relations in their growth. Because of this, it is important to add, it is impossible to picture, i.e., to represent, living wholes in spatial diagrams, for such wholes contemplated at a given moment are always incomplete. They are always, even in all their ‘parts’, always on the way to being other than they are. Thus all its ‘units’ or ‘parts’ – if we are justified in using such inadequate terms at all – have, necessarily, both a temporal as well as a spatial aspect and thus, by their very nature, ‘point’ both from a past and toward a possible future (see Shotter, 1984, pp.42-43).

In other words, time and temporality are central to the nature of people’s living activities, to their meaningful expressions. Thus, to attempt to analyze them into a sequence of instantaneous, merely spatial configurations, into a sequence of separate, objective parts, each *lacking* an intrinsic *before* and *after*, would, to repeat Vygotsky’s comment above, result in “products that have lost the characteristics of the whole.”

No “determining settings”... Cartesianism leads us to ignore the fact that our surroundings determine us just as we determine them.

Preparing versus planning activities

(An ancient ‘reminder’): “Well begun is half-done”

- § Genuine innovative changes in institutions and organizations are ‘deep’ changes, in the sense that they are changes in our ‘ways’ of thinking, ‘ways’ of seeing, of hearing, ‘ways’ of ‘making connections’ between events, ‘ways’ of talking, and so on - in short, they are changes in our ‘ways’ of being someone, changes in the kind of person we are, changes in our *identity*, ontological changes, not epistemological ones.
- § They are changes in what ‘we think with’, changes in how we relate to, or orient ourselves toward the situation we find ourselves to be ‘in’.
- § Hence, these kinds of changes cannot be produced by following intellectually devised plans, procedures, or protocols; they cannot be done, intentionally, by people taking deliberate actions - this is because the coordinated execution of planned actions depends upon all concerned *already sharing* the set of existing *concepts* relevant to the formulation of the plan, thus all new plans depend on old concepts – the process results in the “continuous rediscovery of sameness.”
- § Nor can these kind of changes be produced by exhortation, by being *persuaded* to change – the simple fact is: people do not know how to ‘guide’ themselves toward the desired end; they have not yet embodied the norm against which they can ‘measure’ they own achievements ‘so far’ (are they ‘on the way’ towards success or not?).
- § Yet change can, under certain conditions, happen! How?
- § It can happen, because crucial to all our routine, taken-for-granted, skillful actions, lookings, listenings, etc., is a usually unnoticed *anticipation* of what next should occur.
- § Such anticipations are the ‘glue’ holding all our ‘habitual’ actions together. Crucial to ‘deep’ change happening, i.e., changes in how our more basic skills are ‘glued’ together in constituting more complex skills, is the occurrence of events that ‘touch’, ‘move’, or ‘strike’ us in such a way that we respond, spontaneously, in a bodily manner, in a new way.
- § Suddenly, something unexpected, unanticipated, ‘shows us’ a new, previously unnoticed possibility.
- § Such events give us a new feeling, a feeling that has a ‘shaped’ temporal contour to it, it arouses a ‘something’ that, at first, is unnamable, a bewildering sense of something happening that matters, even if at first ‘we know not what’ that something *is*)... crucial historical events have this character!
- § *Active exploratory activities, imaginative work, bodily movements, all aimed at ‘reminding’ us of aspects of what we already know – but so easily allow to lapse back into the ‘background’ – activities in which we ‘get ourselves ready’ to go out to meet the kind of contingencies expected with the right kind of responses.*

Phases of, or moments in, preparation:

§ In a participatory culture (native-american Hopi – Whorf, 1956), moments of time are not like beads on a string, time is not a motion in a space (so that what is here today will not be gone tomorrow), but is a holistic ‘getting later’ of everything together in a shared moment of now.

§ Thus, what we treat as several *different* moments in time, they treat as the continual successive reappearances of the *same* time – thus an emphasis on preparation, on persistence and constant repetition, on the cumulative building up of a whole state of being from the accumulation of innumerable details, makes sense for them, even if not for us.

§ Consider, say, certain important communal events, the visitation of an important stranger, perhaps, or the sowing of next season’s seeds...

§ *announcing* – all in the community know of the issue, know of what is required

§ *outer preparation* – ordinary practicing, rehearsing, getting resources and implements ready, introductory formalities, preparing of special food, intensive muscular activity (thought to increase intensity of events), ‘magic’, great cyclic ceremonies and dances (always coming back to the ‘main point’, the ‘issue in hand’)

§ *inner preparation* – prayer, mediation, good wishes, good will... The power of desire and thought: these are the earliest and therefore the most critical and crucial stages of preparing... Awareness of effort and energy in desire and thinking (merely ‘wanting to write’ is no use if one doesn’t expend effort in ‘working through’ to the innumerable details involved in the project!)

“It is no more unnatural to think that thought contacts everything and pervades the universe than to think, as we do, that light kindled outdoors does this. And it is not unnatural to suppose that thought, like any other force, leaves everywhere traces of effect” (Whorf, p.149).

“To be effective, the thought should be vivid, definite, steady, sustained, charged with felt good intentions... [rendered as] ‘concentrating, holding in your heart, putting your mind on it, earnestly hoping’. Thought power is the force behind ceremonies... The prayer pipe is regarded as an aid to ‘concentrating’. Its name *na ’twanpi*, means ‘instrument of preparing’” (Whorf, p.150).

§ *covert participation* – the mental collaboration of people who do not take part in the actual affair - announcements seek to enlist their support – a sympathetic audience (knowing: “We both will be received in Graceland”)

§ *persistence* (the continual “performance of meaning” (E. Bruner, 1986)): “A sense of the cumulative value of innumerable small momenta is dulled by an objectified, spatialized view of time like ours, enhanced by a way of thinking close to the subjective awareness of duration, of the ceaseless ‘latering’ of events” (Whorf, p.151)... a “synopsis of trivialities” (LW).

“Our objectified view of time is, however, favorable to historicity and to everything connected with the keeping of records, while the Hopi view is unfavorable thereto. The latter is too subtle, complex, and everdeveloping, supplying no readymade answer to the question of when ‘one’ event ends and another ‘begins. When it is implicit that everything that ever happened still is, but is in a necessarily different form from what memory or records reports, there is less incentive to study the past. As for the present, the incentive would be not to record it but to treat it as ‘preparing’. But our objectified time puts before imagination something like a ribbon or scroll marked off into equal blank spaces, suggesting that each be filled with an entry... Just as we conceive our objectified time as extending in the future in much the same way as it extends in the past, so we set down our estimates of the future in the same shape as our records of the past, producing programs, schedules, budgets...” (Whorf, p.153).

Forms of talk and writing relevant to making practices into “instructably reproducible achievements”

§ In notes elsewhere (Oslo notes), I have outlined the difference between: (i) *Monological-retrospective-objective writing*: In our official, academic style, we would be talking/writing to you as fellow professional academics, about what happened earlier, when we were involved with those whose activity is now the topic of our talk. We would provide you with a linguistic representation of the nature of that activity, but now *from outside* that involvement, looking back upon it as a completed

process. In separating the activity from the people whose activity it was, and from its surrounding circumstances, we would be separating it from the practical part it played in their lives, its point from them. But this is not our concern. *Our* concern is with what logically ‘can be said’ about the patterning or form of that activity, an *order* that we can claim to have ‘discovered’ in it. We shall call this kind of writing, *monological-retrospective-objective* writing. Here, what we say or write is located in our professional relationship and is directed toward identifying that to which, as professional observers with a certain set of professional methodological commitments, we should attend. It is aimed at producing *explanatory theories*, i.e., representations of states of affairs that enable those in possession of them to predict and control the events they represent.

§ And: (ii) *Dialogical-prospective-relational writing*: In the other style, we would be talking/writing to you of the character of our ongoing involvements with certain other people, *from within* that involvement - while both looking back on what had been achieved so far, and forward prospectively, toward the possibilities open to us for our next ‘steps’. Our concern in such talk/writing would be with attempting to ‘show’ or ‘make manifest’ to you (metaphorically) how you might, *justifiably* be able to make sense of the character of such involvements. I shall call it *dialogical-prospective-relational* writing. What I say originates in the interactive relationships from within which I speak, and is directed toward instructing you, as ordinary everyday persons now involved in the relationship in some way (perhaps watching a videotape of it, or reading a transcript, or whatever), in noticing and making within in similar such connections and distinctions.

§ In this second style of writing the use of ‘striking images’, ‘concrete examples’, ‘specific scenes’, ‘direct speech (voices)’, ‘poetic forms (strange juxtapositions of usually unrelated notions) – to give it ‘life’ – is crucial

Developing new practices from old by ‘putting a new dialogically structured practice’ into them

§ Pointing out unnoticed details, ‘marking out’ distinctive ‘experiential’ events, serves to create a shared knowledge of these details, to get them ‘out there’ into a public space.

“Here,” says Charles Taylor (1985), “we have an expressive use of signs, which is unconnected with a characterizing or representative use... Thanks to this expression, there is now something *entre nous*” (p.264).

§ Those involved in such a space have something distinctive before them, a set of ‘topics’ or ‘commonplaces’ that they can return again and again, to discuss them and to further elaborate them in detail.

§ Thus, even if not everything is known about such commonplaces, they can serve as ‘orientation marks’, as ‘signposts’, indicating places to go, as well as their relation to other places, on a whole landscape of resources shared by those in the community of the practice.

§ This shared field of creativity within which both researchers and practitioners alike are engaged, emerges incidentally in the collaborative activity between them.

§ In their responsive conversations together - workers, managers, civil servants, action researchers, and yet others -may shift between moments in which details of work practices are articulated, moments of teaching, and research moments, with each informing and specifying the other.

§ As the details of the different moments are spelt out, the non-separable character of the different aspects of their nature becomes apparent: the doing, the commentary, the sharing, the elaborating, the critiquing, the teaching, the researching, the relating of the work practice to the other crafts and practices surrounding it, to economics, to its administration, and, especially, to people’s everyday lives, etc., are all intermingled in together.

§ Indeed, in this process, practitioners become co-researchers, and researchers become co-practitioners, as each articulates what they have been ‘struck by’ in the unfolding process.

§ As a result, work practices, research, and teaching are all enfolded with each other, as one in-forms and creates the other in a evolving, generative fashion (see Shotter and Katz 1966, and Katz and Shotter, 1996).

Getting to know one’s ‘way about’ on Wittgenstein’s ‘city landscape’

It is as if in his writings, Wittgenstein is trying to display to us a vast city in a fog: he confronts us with this and

that striking landmark, draws our attention to its different aspects according to the direction from which we approach or depart from it, and then leads us on to other such landmarks – occasionally properly out to us that where we are now is the same as where we were earlier, only we have approached it from a different direction, so the aspect it now presents to us is different. Imagine trying to get to know a old city – not a new city New York with its grid-plan, but an old city like London – in this way: although possible it would not be easy; we would have to tramp the streets; but once in possession of an inner “perspicuous representation” of its ‘grammatical geography’, even if the fog never lifted, we could still know our ‘way about’ inside it with confidence.

This idea of us as facing the task of getting to know “an immense landscape” (1980a, p.56) in a “fog” (1980a, p.66), is precisely the poetic image Wittgenstein himself uses to characterize his ‘method’, what ‘the devil he thinks he is up to’. It involves, a special kind of understanding which cannot at all be to do with us grasping something as an instance of a general category; it is clearly of a quite different kind, to do with us grasping a vast and complex something in all its unique particularity. Rather than a representational-referential kind of understanding, it leads us to an understanding of a relational-responsive kind - a kind of understanding which, as Wittgenstein (1953) puts it: “which consists in ‘seeing connections’” (no.122) - whose product is in fact, to use another phrase of Wittgenstein’s (1980b) “a synopsis of trivialities” (p.26). In other words, it leads to us feeling more ‘at home’ with our own creations.

But cities, like language and culture, are continually growing and changing - the synopsis can never be completed. To properly orient ourselves in the city, we need to know the sites of demolition and new building; we moderns cannot just take it that what is here today will still be the same tomorrow – we will need to revisit some sites over and over again to get a sense of the direction in which they are changing. In other words, on some occasions we will need to ‘dwell on’ certain ‘parts’ of the city to see what they are ‘on the way toward’ – to look into those semi-conductor laboratories, and space-labs, to get a sense of where we are going next. Here is where another of Goethe’s ideas – of Urphänomenen or, in Wittgenstein’s words, “origins” and “primitive reactions” – becomes of importance. These once-off, often fleeting events are of crucial significance to us, for: “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]” (Wittgenstein, 1980a, p.31). Where, the point of noticing details – trivialities not previously noticed – is that the primitive reactions beginning new language-games can be of many kinds: an intake of breath, a shifting of posture, a tone of voice, “a glance or a gesture, but it may also have been a word,” Wittgenstein suggests (1953, p.218). Where, what he means by using the word ‘primitive’ in this context is, he says: “... 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 itself the result of thought” (1981, no.540). In other words, these “originary reactions” do not depend on us understanding something (in any self-conscious sense), but our self-conscious understanding of something depends on them! All meaning and understanding originates for us in our spontaneous, living, responsive, dialogically structured reactions to each other and the othernesses in our surroundings... and is further developed and refined by us sustaining our dialogical relations with each other in various different forms of life with their associated language-games.

In fact, to give a proper account of what something is – of what it is to be, say, a language, a person, a culture, etc. – neither a theory nor a model of a language, of persons, or of a culture 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 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. *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.

To connect with our beginnings outlined above, this illustrates another way in which our approach to our own self-understanding by use of models and theories is deficient: they lead to fragmentation, not integration.

At the moment there is a near chaos of different models and 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 I now hope is clear, they all contain 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 we all now know well, 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.

References:

- Andersen, T (1991) *The reflecting team: Dialogues and dialogues about the dialogues*. New York: Norton.
- Andersen, T. (1993) See and hear, and be seen and heard. In S. Friedman (Ed.), *The new language of change: Constructive collaboration in psychotherapy*. New York: Guilford Press.
- Andersen, T. (1995) Reflecting processes: acts of informing and forming. In S. Friedman (Ed.), *The Reflecting Team in Action*. New York: Guilford Press.
- Andersen, T. (1996) Language is not innocent. In F.W.Kaslow (Ed.) *Handbook of Relational Diagnosis and Dysfunctional Family Patterns*. New York: John Wiley.
- Andersen, T. (1992) Reflections on reflecting with families. In McNamee, S. & Gergen, K.J. (Eds.) (1992) *Therapy as Social Construction*. London: Sage Publications.
- Bakhtin, M.M. (1993) *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*, with translation and notes by Vadim Lianpov, edited by M. Holquist. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.
- Bakhtin, M.M. (1984) *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*. Edited and trans. by Caryl Emerson. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Bakhtin, M.M. (1981) *The Dialogical Imagination*. Edited by M. Holquist, trans. by C. Emerson and M. Holquist. Austin, Tx: University of Texas Press.
- Bartlett, Sir F. (1932) *Remembering: a Study in Experimental and Social Psychology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bartlett, Sir F. (1958) *Thinking: an Experimental and Social Study*. New York: Basic Books.
- Bateson, G. (1972) *Steps to an ecology of mind*. New York: Ballantine Books.
- Bateson, G. (1979) *Mind in Nature: a Necessary Unity*. London: Fontana/Collins.
- Berger, P. and Luckman, T. (1966) *The Social Construction of Reality*. New York: Doubleday and Co.
- Bruner, E.M. (1986) Experience and its expressions.. In Turner, V.W. and Bruner, E.M. (Eds.) *The Anthropology of Experience*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press.
- Cassirer, E. (1960) *The Logic of the Humanities*, trans. C.S. Howe. New Haven and London: Yale University Press.
- Cassirer, E. (1963) *Rousseau, Kant and Goethe*, trans. J. Gutman, P.O. Kristeller, and J.H. Randall, Jr. New York: Harper Torchbook.
- Descartes, R. (1968) *Discourse on Method and Other Writings*. Trans. with introduction by F.E. Sutcliffe. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.
- Dewey, J. (1896) The concept of the reflex arc in psychology. *Psychol. Rev.*, 3, 13-32. Reprinted in W. Dennis (Ed.) *Readings in the History of Psychology*. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1944.
- Dreyfus, H.L. (1991) *Being-in-the-World: A Commentary on Heidegger's Being and Time, Division 1*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Dreyfus, H.L. (1967) Why computers must have bodies in order to be intelligent. *Review of Metaphysics*, 21.

- Gadamer, H-G (1989) *Truth and Method*, 2nd revised edition, trans J. Weinsheimer & D.G. Marshall. New York: Continuum.
- Garfinkel, H. (1967) *Studies in Ethnomethodology*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall.
- Garfinkel, H. (2002) *Ethnomethodology's Program: Working out Durkheim's Aphorism*, edited and introduced by Anne Warefield Rawls. New York & Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Gergen, K.J. (1999) *An Invitation to Social Construction*. London: Sage Publications.
- Gibson, J.J. (1979) *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception*. London: Houghton Mifflin.
- Hanson, N.R. (1958) *Patterns of Discovery*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Heidegger, M. (1962) *Being and Time*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Heisenberg, W. (1958) *The Physicist's Conception of Nature*. London: Hutchinson.
- Hertz, H.H. (1956) *The Principles of Mechanics*. New York: Dover (orig. German pub. 1894).
- Husserl, E. (1969) *Cartesian meditations: an introduction to phenomenology*, trans. Dorion Cairns. The Hague: Nijhoff.
- James, W. (1890) *Principles of Psychology*, vols. 1 & 2. London: Macmillan.
- Johnson, M. (1987) *The Body in the Mind*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Johnson, M. (2007) *The Meaning of the Body: Aesthetics of Human Understanding*. Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press.
- Kant, I. (1970) *Critique of Pure Reason*, translated by Norman Kemp Smith. London: Macmillan's St Martin's Press.
- Kant, I. (1952) *Critique of Judgement*, trans J.C. Meredith. Oxford: Clarendon Press (first pub. 1790).
- Koffka, K. (1924). *The Growth of the Mind*. (R. M. Ogden, Trans.). London: Routledge & Kegan Paul. (Original work published 1921). (Reissued, Transaction Publishers, 1980).
- Kuhn, T.S. (1962) *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Levy-Bruhl, L. (1926) *How Natives Think (Les Fonctions Mentales dans les Sociétés Inférieures)*, trans. by L.A. Clare. London: George Allen and Unwin.
- Luntley, M. (2003) *Wittgenstein: Meaning and Judgement*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Merleau-Ponty, M. (1964) *Signs*, translated by Richard M. McCleary. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.
- Merleau-Ponty, M. (1962) *Phenomenology of Perception* (trans. C. Smith). London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Polanyi, M. (1958) *Personal Knowledge: Towards a Post-Critical Philosophy*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, also New York: Harper and Row Torchbook, 1962.
- Polanyi, M. (1967) *The Tacit Dimension*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Quine, W.V. (1953) Two dogmas of empiricism. W.F. Quine, *From a Logical Point of View*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Rorty, R. (1979) *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Ryle, G. (1949) *The Concept of Mind*. London: Methuen.
- Sheets-Johnstone, M. (Ed.) (1992) *Giving the Body its Due*. Albany, NY: State University Press.
- Sheets-Johnstone, M. (2009) *The Corporeal Turn: an Interdisciplinary Reader*. Charlottesville, VA & Exeter, UK: Imprint Academic.
- Sheets-Johnstone (unpub) *The Imaginative Consciousness of Movement: Linear Quality, Kinesthesia, Language, and Life*.
- Shotter, J. (1970) Men, the man-makers: George Kelly and the psychology of personal constructs. D. Bannister (Ed.) *Perspectives in Personal Construct Theory*. London and New York: Academic Press.
- Shotter, J (2005) Goethe and the refiguring of intellectual inquiry: from 'aboutness'-thinking to 'witness'-thinking in everyday life. *Janus Head: Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature, Continental Philosophy, Phenomenological Psychology and the Arts*, 8(1), pp.132-158.
- Shotter, J. (1984) *Social Accountability and Selfhood*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Shotter, J. (2005) Inside processes: transitory understandings, action guiding anticipations, and witness thinking. *International Journal of Action Research*, 1(1). pp.157-189.
- Shotter, J. (2008) Dialogism and polyphony in organizational theorizing: action guiding anticipations and the continuous creation of novelty. *Organization Studies*, 29(4), pp.501-524.
- Shotter, J. (2006) Understanding process from within: an argument for 'witness'-thinking. *Organization Studies*. pp.585-604.
- Shotter, J. (2001) Wittgenstein and his philosophy of beginnings and beginnings and beginnings. *Concepts and Transformations*, pp.349-362.
- Shotter, J. (in press) Inside our lives together: a Neo-Wittgensteinian constructionism. In S.R. Kirschner & J.

- Martin. *Socio-Cultural Perspectives in Psychology*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Stern, D. (2004) *The Present Moment: in Psychotherapy and Everyday Life*. New York: W.W. Norton.
- Taylor, C. (1980) "Understanding in Human Science," *Review of Metaphysics*, 34, pp.25-38.
- Taylor, C. (1985) *Human Agency and Language: Philosophical Papers I*. London; Cambridge University Press.
- Taylor, C. (1995) *Philosophical Arguments*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Todes, S. (2001) *Body and World*, with introductions by Hubert L. Dreyfus and Piotr Hoffman. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Vygotsky, L.S. (1978) *Mind in Society: the Development of Higher Psychological Processes*. M. Cole, V. John-Steiner, S. Scribner, and E. Souberman (Eds.) Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Vygotsky, L.S. (1966) Development of higher mental functions. In A.N. Leontyev, A.R. Luria and A. Smirnov (Eds.) *Psychological Research in the USSR*. Moscow: Progress Publishers.
- Whorf, B.L. (1956) *Language, Thought and Reality: Selected Writings of Benjamin Lee Whorf*. Ed. J.B. Carroll. Cambridge, Mass: M.I.T. Press.
- Wittgenstein, L. (1953) *Philosophical Investigations*, translated by G.E.M. Anscombe. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Wittgenstein, L. (1980a) *Culture and Value*, introduction by G. Von Wright, and translated by P. Winch. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Wittgenstein, L. (1980b) *Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology*, vols. 1 and 2. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Wittgenstein, L. (1981) *Zettel*, (2nd. Ed.), G.E.M. Anscombe and G.H.V. Wright (Eds.). Oxford: Blackwell.
- Wittgenstein, L. (1965) *The Blue and the Brown Books*. New York: Harper Torch Books.