

Appendix:

THE MUSICALITY OF LANGUAGE: KNOWING HOW TO 'GO ON'

“Understanding is like knowing how to go on, and so it is an ability: but ‘I understand’, like ‘I can go on’, is an *utterance, a signal*” (Wittgenstein, 1980b, I, no.875).

“I become involved in things with my body, ... The act by which I lend myself to the spectacle must be recognized as irreducible to anything else. I join it in a kind of blind recognition which precedes the intellectual working out and clarification of the meaning” (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p.185).

“Knowledge in the end is based on acknowledgment” (Wittgenstein, 1969, no.378).

Summary: “Understanding a sentence is much more akin to understanding a theme in music than one might think,” says Wittgenstein (1953, no.527). For if you ‘understand’ it, i.e. a person’s utterance, although you may not be able to say what it is ‘about’, you can (in practice) ‘go on’ from it, you can both ‘follow’ it and ‘reply’ to it with an appropriately ‘expressed’ and timed next step. Indeed, there is something very special that occurs in the unfolding of our utterances, in the unfolding temporal contours of our *words in their speaking*, that is lost in the presentation of *patterns of already spoken words*, something that it is impossible to capture in any codifications taken as representing such patterns. In the past, we have thought of language as merely for the deliberate, self-conscious, one-way transmission of information from speakers to listeners. Thus, what was said was thought of as being more important than the saying of it. This is a mistake. It is

crucial that we communicate with each other in living, spontaneously expressive-responsive, embodied, face-to-face contact. For, what is lost in our deliberate representational codifications, is the “blind recognition,” mentioned by Merleau-Ponty above, that arises in our spontaneous bodily involvements with events occurring around us in our surroundings – a blind recognition (or “acknowledgement” – see LW above) that precedes our “intellectual working out” of things and provides a part of the “background” that makes our more intellectual accomplishments possible. Below, I will explore how this occurs, and why Wittgenstein likens it to our (non-intellectual) ‘understanding’ of a theme in music. What is new and unusual in all of this is the attention paid to our spontaneously occurring bodily activities.

In our meetings with others and othernesses around us, if we cease to set ourselves, unresponsively, over against them, and allow ourselves to enter into an inter-involvement with them – due to the expressive, responsiveness of all the living bodies involved in such meetings – a very different form of understanding becomes available to us in our relationships with living things, a relationship unavailable to us with dead things.

This ongoing, practical understanding of how to ‘go on’ in the interaction, arises 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.

In that interplay at each moment, as in a dance, or a hand-shake, or an orchestral symphony, distinctive, dynamically changing forms emerge, in which all involved are, so to speak, ‘participant parts’. The uniquely distinctive forms emerge in an unfolding sequence of changes (or differencings’), each differencing giving rise to a uniquely ‘shaped’ circumstance which, although invisible, is *felt* by all who are involved as participants within it in the same way.

But what is the nature of the interplays involved here? They are dialogically-structured or chiasmically-structured; they are a complex and intricate intertwining of not wholly reconcilable, mutually influencing movements – with, 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. This 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. Indeed, to the extent that the temporal unfolding of intertwined activity in this realm is shared in by all, it is non-locatable; it is neither ‘inside’ people, but nor is it simply ‘outside’ of them; it is ‘spread out’ or distributed amongst all those participating in it. Indeed, to the extent that it is undifferentiated as to whose it is, we could say that they all have their being ‘within’ it. And to the extent that it is has a temporally unfolding pattern to it — ***/ ***/ ***/ ***/? — it gives rise to a ‘grammar’, to a structure of feeling to do with ‘ways of going on’.

In other words, most importantly, the *invisible forms* created in the interplay of living activity between us are neither wholly alive (as self-maintaining organisms) not wholly dead (as self-contained, inert objects). Taking my lead from George Steiner (1989), I will call these invisible forms “Real Presences,” and following Bakhtin (1986), I have called the kind of understandings to which they give rise, *relationally-responsive* understandings, to contrast them with the *representational-referential* understandings more familiar to us in our traditional intellectual dealings. And what is of crucial importance about a “real presence” and our “relationally-responsive” understanding of it, is not that you ‘get the picture’, so to speak, but that it ‘calls’ you to respond in a certain way to it: we respond with a greeting to a greeting; with an answer to a question; by compliance to a request, and so on... or at least, that is how we are *expected* to respond, and if we don’t, the we must *account* for why we don’t (Mills, 1940; Scott and Lyman, 1968). In short, real presences, although invisible, have agency, and they can exert a force similar to they agency of another person upon us.

But there is something else at work in the ‘orchestrated’ unfolding of the interplays occurring between people in their meetings. Arlene Katz (1991) interviewed clients some three months after listening to the voices of

those responding in a “reflecting process” (Andersen, 1991) to the conversation they had heard so far between the therapist and client in the psychotherapy session. Karen commented on her experience as follows:

- A: So, it was something about their following very closely to what you were talking about?
 K: Yes. For me it was the delicacy and the close attention and caring.

Another woman in a similar circumstance, after the comments of the reflecting team, the wife in a couple offered:

“It’s the tenderness...that’s something that is real easy to lose sight of...It gives me the ability to take a deeper breath and go back into the world... It’s like hearing English again in a foreign country...” (quoted in Shotter & Katz, 1999).

Clearly, there is something at work here simply in people’s tone of voice, in the unfolding tempo of their utterances. Bakhtin (1986) remarks on the role of “tone,” and of “intonation,” in our utterances (and also, in our writing) thus:

- “There can be no such thing as an absolutely neutral utterance. The speaker's evaluative attitude toward the subject of his speech (regardless of what his subject may be) also determines the choice of lexical, grammatical, and compositional means of the utterance” (1986, p.84).
- “One of the means of expressing the speaker’s emotionally evaluative attitude toward the subject of his speech is expressive intonation, which resounds clearly in oral speech... It does not exist in the system of language as such, that is, outside the utterance” (1986, p.85).
- “Here the meaning of the word pertains to a particular actual reality and particular real conditions of speech communication. Therefore here we do not understand the meaning of a given word simply as a word of a language; rather, we assume an active responsive position with respect to it (sympathy, agreement or disagreement, stimulus to action). Thus, expressive intonation belongs to the utterance and not to the word” (1986, p.86).

- “We repeat, only the contact between the language meaning and the concrete reality that takes place in the utterance can create the spark of expression. It exists neither in the system of language nor in the object reality surrounding us. Thus, emotion, evaluation, and expression are foreign to the word of language and are born in the process of its live usage in concrete utterance” (1986, pp.86-87).

And to these remarks I will add a couple of Voloshinov’s comments:

- “The organizing center of any utterance, of any experience, is not within but outside – in the social milieu surrounding the individual being” (1986, p.93).
- “*Intonation always lies on the border of the verbal and the nonverbal, the said and the unsaid.* In intonation, discourse comes directly into contact with life. And it is in intonation above all that the speaker comes into contact with listener or listeners – intonation is social par excellence. It is especially sensitive to all the vibrations in the social atmosphere surrounding the speaker” (Voloshinov, 1976/1987, p.102).

In other words, what Bakhtin and Voloshinov are getting at here is, that as living, spontaneously responsive beings, we cannot but help being responsive as we talk to events occasioned by the others and othernesses around us (unless, that is, we have developed on purpose the self-control required to ‘hide’ these otherwise spontaneously expressed responses). And the way these events affect us, the way they matter to us, is uniquely and unavoidably expressed by us in the unfolding intonational contours of our utterances.

There are, then, a number of different things going on here, within what we might call *the musicality* of our unfolding, embodied utterances as they occur in our meetings with the others and othernesses around us. I will list them:

- First, within the dynamic of the interplay as it unfolds, is the creation of a “grammatical agency” – not a grammatical structure of a fixed and systematic kind, but a social milieu of an agentic kind which “expectantly calls” us in each changing to act next in a

certain way, to act in accord with a certain expected style or genre (Bakhtin) of action, to act *into* a context which, to an extent, is already shaped but which is still open to further shaping.

- But secondly, although it is as if this grammatical agency has a “voice” and can exert an influence on us, its voice is silent; its influence on us is a “felt influence.”
- Sometimes these influences can be felt as “calls,” as “summonses” that we *must* answer; sometimes they can be felt as “judgements” that we must heed and modify our conduct accordingly; sometimes they can be felt as “caring” and as “accepting” so that we feel *at home* in our surroundings; and so on.
- Wittgenstein (1953) has, in particular, concerned himself with those influences we feel as compulsions, as urges, as inclinations, or even as temptations, as things as say we “must” do – for we must act as our circumstances *require* us to act – the circumstances in which we can fall victim to compulsions of our own making.
- But, as the example of Karen above shows, these influences can also be felt as caring, as tenderness, as a kind of trustingness of the others and othernesses around us.
- In short, the felt influences at work on us in unfolding dynamic of the interplay occurring between our own outgoing, responsive *expressions* toward these others (or othernesses) and their equally responsive incoming *expressions* toward us, are an aspect of the quality of our relations with them – whether our relations are close or distant, intimate or official, friendly or hostile, and so on.
- And finally we must note, a kind of ‘truth’ is being expressed in the unfolding cadences of our utterances, a ‘truth’ of a very direct and immediate kind: to do with how closely the unfolding cadences of our utterances appropriately express the ‘shape’ of our relational experiences in our meetings, the ways in which we are related, or are relating, to circumstances in our surroundings.

In being responsive we are making/creating relations

- “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...” (Bakhtin, 1986, p.72).

- As an other's word, or as my word, "the word is expressive, but... this expression does not inhere in the word itself. It originates *at the point of contact between the word and actual reality*, under the conditions of that real situation articulated by the individual utterance. In this case the word appears as an expression of some evaluative position of an individual person (authority, writer, scientist, father, mother, friend, teacher, and so forth)..." (Bakhtin, 1986, p.88, my emphasis).
- We might understand dialogue as a chain of mechanical reactions, but "this point of view, which is relatively valid as is the linguistic point of view..., does not touch upon the essence of the utterance as a semantic whole, a semantic point of view, a semantic position, and so forth. Every utterance makes a claim to justice, sincerity, beauty, and truthfulness (a model utterance) and so forth. And these values of utterances are defined not by their relation to that language (purely as linguistic system), but by various forms of relation to reality, to the speaking subject and to other (alien) utterances (particularly to those that evaluate them as sincere, beautiful, and so forth)" (1986, p.123).

In other words, if we are not 'putting our ideas into words' in our utterances, what are we doing? Among many other things, we are doing at least the three things listed below:

- i) Responding to each other: Feeling attracted or repulsed; agreeing or disagreeing; imaging examples or scenes; being totally confused and anxious; frightened; wanting to voice one's reply; to elaborate; to test, and so on; obeying; being 'instructed'.
- ii) Relating to each other: In doing all these things, we are coordinating our activities with each other. Or at least, proposing the possibility of it... but in fact, we are doing very much more.
- iii) Creating dialogical realities: We are creating "dialogical realities" with all their strange characteristics as set out in Chapter Two of the Short Book, "The dialogical, joint nature of human activity."

Here, I will repeat some of these strange characteristics, they are:

- *A complex mixture, chiasmically organized*: What is produced in

such dialogical exchanges is a very complex mixture 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.

- *The 'sui generis' nature of dialogical realities*: Thus, such activity is not simply *action* (for it is not done by individuals; and cannot be explained by giving people's *reasons*), nor is it simply *behavior* (to be explained as a regularity in terms of its causal principles); 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"].
- 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.

But how might their moment-by-moment unfolding nature be best described? Early on, I saw the sequential, temporal unfolding of activities as having a very special, ‘musical’ structure to them. In this, I was very influenced by Milic Capek (1961), *The Philosophical Impact of Contemporary Physics*, and here I will include some quotations from that book that especially struck me :

“Let us consider a piece of music – for instance, a melody or better, a polyphonic musical phrase. It is hardly necessary to underscore its successive character. As long as its movement is going on, it remains incomplete and in its successive unfolding we grasp in the most vivid and concrete way the incompleteness of every becoming. At each particular moment a new tone is added to the previous ones; more accurately, each new moment is constituted by the addition of a new musical quality. But here we have to be on guard against the usual arithmetical connotation of the word ‘addition’, and against the creeping spatial connotations that are associated with it. Arithmetical units remain distinct and homogeneous no matter how they are grouped together; their grouping is purely external and does not affect their nature in any way. A ‘new’ unit is added ab externo to other units without modifying them and without being modified by them. Although arithmetical addition – which is merely a regrouping of pre-existing units – takes place, like any other mental operation, in time, its result can always be represented by a spatial symbolism, that is as a juxtaposition of simultaneously existing units. The relation of the arithmetical units to their sum total is the same as the relation to the parts

to the whole in space.

In the musical experience of melody or polyphony the situation is considerably different. The quality of the new tone, in spite of the irreducible individuality, is tinged by the whole antecedent musical context which, in turn, is retroactively changed by the emergence of a new musical quality. The individual tones are not externally related units of which the melody is additively built; neither is their individuality absorbed or dissolved in the undifferentiated unity of the musical whole. The musical phrase is a successively differentiated whole which remains a whole in spite of its successive character and which remains differentiated in spite of its dynamic wholeness. Like every dynamic whole its exhibits a synthesis of unity and multiplicity, of continuity and discontinuity,; but it is not the unity of an undifferentiated simultaneous whole nor is it the plurality of juxtaposed units; it is neither continuity in the mathematical sense of infinite divisibility nor is it the discontinuity of rigid atomic blocs. For this reason, paradoxical as it may sound, the traditional distinction between succession and duration must be given up” (Capek, 1961, pp.371-372).

“Our language, in particular our written language, is made up of discontinuous and static signs whose discontinuity and immutability is unconsciously conferred upon even the dynamic meanings which they express and which are thus distorted. This discrepancy between the lucidity of our temporal awareness and the difficulty of putting it into words was expressed in St. Augustine’s famous saying:

“What then is time? If no one asks me, I know: if I wish to explain it to one who asketh, I know not...”

Today we know the cause of this discrepancy. As long as our attention is shifted from our auditory experience of melody to the visual marks by which it is symbolized on a sheet of paper – as long as we shift our attention from any experienced temporal whole to its static symbolism – such discrepancy is inevitable” (p.372).

“Every musical structure is by its own nature unfolding and incomplete...” (p.372).

“... a note of music is nothing at an instant, but also requires its whole period to manifest itself” (Whitehead, p.54, quoted in Capek, p.373).

“... in concrete temporal experience the emergence of novelty is possible, so to speak, only on the contrasting background of its immediate past; in a similar way a new musical quality of the (provisionally) last tone acquires its individuality in contrast to, as well as in connection with, its antecedent musical context. There are no instant like boundaries separating two successive moments of the experienced duration; only when in our imagination we stretch a fictitious geometrical line underneath the qualitative continuum of duration are we tempted to posit such boundaries, without realizing that they belong not to the temporal process itself, but only to its symbolical substitute” (p.373).

Wittgenstein ‘reminds’ us of the ‘musicality’ of language in the remarks listed below:

“The way music speaks. Do not forget that a poem, even though it is composed in the language of information, is not used in the language-game of giving information” (Wittgenstein, 1981, no.160).

“There is a strongly musical element in verbal language. (A sigh, the intonation of voice in a question, in an announcement, in longing; all the innumerable *gestures* made with the voice.)” (1981, no.161).

“But isn’t understanding shown, e.g., in the expression with which someone reads the poem, sings the tune?” (1981, no.171).

“Understanding a musical phrase may also be called understanding a *language*” (1981, no.172).

“Doesn’t the [musical] theme point to anything outside itself? 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 field of our language-games.

If I say for example! Here it’s as if a conclusion were being drawn, here as if something were being confirmed, *this* is like an answer to what was said before, — then my understanding pre-supposes a familiarity with inferences, confirmation, with answers” (Wittgenstein, 1981, no.175).

“Structure and feeling in music. Feelings accompany our apprehension of piece of music in the way they accompany the events of our life” (1980a, p.10).

“One speaks of a feeling of conviction because there is a *tone* of conviction. For the characteristic mark of all ‘feelings’ is that there is an *expression* of them” (1981, no.513, my emphasis).

“Sometimes a sentence can be understood only if it is read at the *right tempo*. My sentences are all supposed to be read *slowly*” (1980a, p.57).

A work of art: “... conveys ‘a feeling’. – You really could call it, not exactly the expression of a feeling, but at least the expression of feeling, or a felt expression. And you could say too that in so far as people understand it, they ‘resonate’ in harmony with it, respond to it. You might say: the work of art does not aim to convey *something else*, just itself” (1980a, p.58).

“A [musical] theme has a facial expression just as much as a face does...” (1980b, I, no.434).

The unfolding of a sequential event can work in us, spontaneously, in terms of the differences that it can make in our lives.

“A ‘bit’ of information is definable as a difference that makes a difference” (Bateson, 1972, p.286).

“Actually I should like to say that... the words you utter or what you think as you utter them are not what matters, so much as the difference they make at various points in your life... Practice gives words their significance” (Wittgenstein, 1980a, p.85).

But how should we think about this process of ‘difference making’? Does it fall into the already well-known category of cause-and-effect processes? Or, give its ‘living’ nature, does the fact that it has its ‘life’, so to speak, in the *relations* between a living being and the others and othernesses in that being’s surroundings, mean that we have to think of some other kind of process in which it might take place?

Already, as I set out elsewhere and above, we have seen that the processes involved in “joint action,” the “dialogical,” or, in Merleau-Ponty’s (1968) terms, the “chiasmic,” have a strange *entangled* or *intertwined* nature that cannot be captured in linear, cause-and-effect terms. How might we make sense of them?

Well, our usual move is to try to assimilate the unfamiliar to the familiar. Here, we can again draw on our own bodily experience of our relations to events occurring in our surroundings: touching a fragile wine glass and ‘just knowing’ how it will sound if I drop it, and it smashes on the floor, or if I let drop the floppy feather cushion I am holding.

When two or more of our ‘channels’ (if that is the right word) of contact with the world come into communicative contact with each other, then they must orient us toward our surroundings ‘in concert’ with each other, in ways which do not confuse and bewilder us. A heard sound of movement should be sensed as coming from the same place as the seen movement that harmonizes with it (i.e., that ‘differences’ as the movement ‘differences’); a hardness felt in our fingertips should be sensed as the hardness of the object we see our fingertips touching; and so on. Classically we have ignored these complexly interwoven contributions of our bodily capacities to our ways of making a unified sense of our surroundings.

While being “focally aware” of the responsive whole resulting from us ‘looking over’ what is before us, we have ignored the background structure of anticipations (of which we are only “subsidiarily aware”) that

guide us as we actively ‘do’ the relating of ourselves to our surroundings. As a result, not only has the amazing complexity of our perceptual processes, and their flexible adjustment to the situation of their functioning, been ignored, but also their orchestrated ‘inter-workings’ - how, for example, in watching a movie, or a ventriloquist’s dummy, we ‘see’ people’s voices as issuing from that place in our surroundings that is moving in synchrony with the tempo of the sound we hear.

Those aware of Polanyi’s (1958, 1963) work will recognize the source of the notions of “focal awareness” and “subsidiary awareness” being used here, as well as the ‘from-to’ vocabulary used above. Indeed, Polanyi’s (1963) account of our body’s part in giving us a certain kind of ordered access to our surroundings is in close agreement with Merleau-Ponty’s account: “Our own body is the only thing in the world which we normally never experience as an object, but experience always in terms of the world to which we are attending from our body. It is by making this intelligent use of our body that we feel it to be our body, and not a thing outside” (p.16).

Let me turn now to the way in which both Merleau-Ponty (1962, 1968) and Bateson (1979) make use of binocular vision and what seems to happen in the optic chiasma (in our brains) as a way of ‘entering into’ the strange world of chiasmically-structured processes – Merleau-Ponty (1962) first:

“We pass from double vision to the single object, not through an inspection of the mind, but when the two eyes cease to function each on its own account and are used as a single organ by one single gaze. It is not the epistemological subject who brings about the synthesis, but the body, when it escapes from dispersion, pulls itself together and tends by all means in its power towards one single goal of its activity, and when one single intention is formed in it through the phenomenon of synergy” (p.232).

“On passing from double to normal vision, I am not

aware of seeing with two eyes the *same* object, I am aware of progressing towards the object *itself* and finally enjoying its concrete presence. Monocular images float vaguely *in front of* things, having no real place in the world; then suddenly they fall back towards a certain location in the world and are swallowed up in it, as ghosts, at daybreak, repair to the rift in the earth which let them forth” (p.233).

“My experience at these different stages is bound up with itself in such a way that I do not get different perspective views linked to each other through the conception of an invariant. The perceiving body does not successively occupy different points of view beneath the gaze of some unlocated consciousness which is thinking about them... We can no more construct perception of the thing and of the world from discrete aspects, than we can make up the binocular vision of an object from two monocular images. My experiences of the world are integrated into one single world as the double images merge into the one thing, when my finger stops pressing upon my eyeball. I do not have one perspective, then another, and between them a link is brought about by the understanding, but each perspective *merges into* the other and, in so far as it is possible to speak of a synthesis, we are concerned with a ‘transitional synthesis’” (p.329).

And now Merleau-Ponty (1968):

“The binocular perception is not made up of two monocular perceptions surmounted; it is of another order. The monocular images *are* not in the same sense that the things perceived with both eyes *is*... they are pre-things and it is the thing” (1968, p.7).

“The monocular images cannot be *compared* with the synergic perception: one cannot put them side by side; it is necessary to choose between the thing and the

floating pre-things. We can effect the passage by *looking*, by awakening to the world; we cannot witness it as spectators. It is not a *synthesis*; it is a metamorphosis by which the appearances are instantaneously stripped of a value they owed merely to the absence of a true perception. Thus in perception we witness the miracle of a totality that surpasses what one thinks to be its conditions or its parts,... it is by *looking*, it is still with my eyes that I arrive, at the true thing, with these same eyes that a moment ago gave me monocular images – now they simply function *together* and as though *for good*. Thus the relation between the things and my body is decidedly singular...” (p.8).

In other words, it is in the sequential ‘looking over’ a visual scene, fixation point by fixation point, that the ‘difference’ made available in the two eyes working together, that ‘things’ are seen as the things they are, and seen to in ‘depth’, in a space that is known to us in terms of our bodily capacities to reach out to touch things, or to move nearer toward them.

§

Let me now turn to Bateson’s (1979) comments on the binocular. He says:

“Let us consider another simple and familiar case of double description. What is gained by comparing the data collected by one eye with the data collected by the other? Typically, both eyes are aimed at the same region of the surrounding universe, and this might seem to be a wasteful use of the sense organs. But the anatomy indicates that very considerable advantage must accrue from this usage. The innervation of the two retinas and the creation at the optic chiasma of pathways for the redistribution of information is such an extraordinary feat of morphogenesis as must surely denote great evolutionary advantage...

The binocular image, which appears to be undivided, is in fact a complex synthesis of information from the left front in the right brain and a corresponding

synthesis of material from the right front in the left brain. Later these two synthesized aggregates of information are themselves synthesized into a single subjective picture from which all traces of the vertical boundary have disappeared.

From this elaborate arrangement, two sorts of advantage accrue. The seer is able to improve resolution at edges and contrasts; and better able to read when the print is small or the illumination poor. More important, information about depth is created. In more formal language, the *difference* between the information provided by the one retina and that provided by the other is itself information of a *different logical type*. From this new sort of information, the seer adds an extra *dimension* to seeing...

We now proceed with the search for other cases under this general rubric and shall specifically look in each case for the genesis of information of new logical type out of the juxtaposing of multiple descriptions. In principle, extra “depth” in some metaphoric sense is to be expected whenever the information for the two descriptions is differently collected or differently coded” (pp.79-81).

- There are other ‘phase difference’ effects... in audition: “surround sound”... In vision: random dot stereograms... etc...

§

The use the word “depth” metaphorically:

- To gain “Insight”... Probing into ‘the depth’ of a phenomenon... creatively probing into its ‘inner’ relational dimensions... entering into a chiasmic relation with it...
- Gaining that kind of “understanding which consists in ‘seeing connections’” (Wittgenstein, 1953, no.112).
- Spencer Brown... the active making of a distinction (which is also the making of a relation) within a passing moment... the sense of a

moment as having passed: a “felt change of consciousness” (Barfield).

“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” (Merleau-Ponty, 1973, pp.18-19, Prose of the World).

(See also – Primacy of Perception, 1964, pp.118-119, in the child’s perception of others)...

What Merleau-Ponty is doing above, is raising the question of the puzzle we face when we reflect, intellectually, on our everyday understandings of events occurring around us – as St. Augustine reflects on his understandings of time – and find that they seem to occur within us ‘by themselves’, so to speak, without us having ‘intellectually’, to ‘work them out’. How can this be? Below is an extract from an earlier book of mine in which – under the influence of Capek’s (1961) account of temporally unfolding processes – I suggest how this might occur, i.e., how we might find ourselves spontaneously ‘resonating’, so to speak, with the unfolding ‘temporal contours’ of events occurring in our surroundings.

The perception of expression and the perception of objects (from Shotter, J. (1984) *Social Accountability and Selfhood*. Oxford; Blackwell, pp.58-60).

A classical problem of perception is at issue here: (1) do we perceive people's psychological states in some direct 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 (see discussions in Shotter, 1984, chapters 6, 7 and 11 of 'direct' perception). As the child reacts differentially to human expressions of joy and anger, friendliness and hostility *before* he reacts differentially to colours and other thing- characteristics (Koffka, 1921), it would seem to be the former. But this suggests that ostensibly 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 primary. The resolution of this issue involves a matter of (1) access to the relevant data; (2) the determination of its significance; and (3) the determination of its source, so I will discuss each of these in turn.

(1) Take joy, for instance: anyone can, in principle, report on whether a person is behaving joyfully or not, but only the person herself can say whether she is aware of being joyful. Thus it seems that two distinct kinds of criteria are involved here, one private and the other public. And in the past [end 58] both philosophers and psychologists have supposed that, as the seemingly private criteria are not open to scrutiny, only the public ones can be used as a basis for ascribing psychological predicates to people. But this, Harre and Secord (1972, p. 121) point out, is mistaken; both criteria are necessary and *are* available for scrutiny: 'There are always some situations for any state-of-mind predicate where others have some degree of access to that state of mind, even in another person.' Our feelings, moods, beliefs, intentions, etc., are, due to their intentional nature, shown in our actions, and although they may not involve reference to objective criteria, they do nonetheless involve readily observable criteria which can be made 'logically adequate' (Harre and Secord, 1972, pp. 14-123) as required, i.e. they are negotiable. What has misled philosophers and psychologists, Harre and Secord argue, is their failure to distinguish between access and authority, although a person is often (but not always) the best authority on what she is doing – for she is, after all, her own closest observer -- she is not the only one to have access to the relevant data. One way or another that is made available in her behaviour for all to grasp, and indeed, when it comes to her assessing the nature of her own behaviour, i.e. satisfying Mead's

criterion, she is in no better position than anyone else. Only as her intentions issue in performance is she able to judge whether she is successfully executing them or not -a point we shall take up again when later we discuss talking- and she may, as they occur, realize that they require correction, amplification, etc. While people usually (but not always) know what they intend, they can only judge the adequacy of their own performances as others do, i.e. as they occur. For it is only in their actions that agents' intentions are revealed and completed as the intentions they are. And it is 'in' the ability of agents to specify, in a moment-by- moment fashion, regions of the world beyond their actions, that their 'direction' of their actions is revealed, and thus both their intentions and their personalities made manifest (Shotter, 1980a).

(2) Now, if the criteria involved in the assessment of psychological states are not private, and people do show their psychological states 'in' the temporal organization of their behaviour, how do we determine these states? Consider for a moment a related situation. We distinguish a joyful person outside us from the feelings (of joy or otherwise) which he occasions within us. If, however, we accept that all our experiences originate from 'outside' us, this distinction can only be a function of the way in which we determine these 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' (see chapter 10). Returning [end 59] to our problem, I want to suggest that when confronted by a person it is open to us to determine the aspects of his behaviour similarly.

Now when 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 (and his categories of 'inner' perception are idiosyncratic and irrelevant to all except himself). 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 – to approach a point about negotiation made by Harre and Secord (1972, p.161) from another direction.

So the essential difference between the processes involved in the

perception of expression and the perception of things seems to do more 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.

3) Now if the process of 'inner' perception works on expressions and determines them irrespective of whose they are, the classical theories of our experience of other minds are quite redundant (if not quite wrong – see chapter 10). It is unnecessary, usually, even unconsciously to infer people's beliefs, intentions, etc., from sequences of behavioural events objectively perceived in 'outer' perception. We can perceive or apprehend mental activity directly in what I have called here our 'inner' sense. But, if this is the case, as in our interactions with other people, there must be a continuous flux of activity within us, undifferentiated as to theirs or ours, the problem becomes one, not of appreciating the nature of the mental activity in others, but of distinguishing that which has its source in us from that which has its source in them. And this, I think, is the problem young infants face in their period of 'psychological symbiosis'. They have to discover for which, of all things happening, they are or can be responsible, and which originate in sources beyond themselves.... [end 60]

My claim above, then, is that spontaneously at work in us, is kind of 'resonance', in which we find ourselves, will-nilly, moving *in accord with* the unfolding movements of others (and othernesses) around us. Merleau-Ponty (1962) describes the process thus:

“Thus speech, in the speaker, does not translate ready-made thought, but accomplishes it. *A fortiori* must it be recognized that the listener receives thought from speech itself. At first sight, it might appear that speech heard can bring him nothing: it is he who gives to words and sentences their meaning, and the very combination of words and sentences is not an alien import, since it

would not be understood if it did not encounter in the listener the ability spontaneously to effect it. Here, as everywhere, it seems at first sight true that consciousness can find in its experience only that which it has itself put there. Thus the experience of communication would appear to be an illusion. A consciousness constructs – for x – that linguistic mechanism will provide another consciousness with the chance of having the same thoughts, but nothing really pass is between them. Yet, the problem being how, to all appearances, consciousness learns something, the solution cannot consist in saying that it knows everything in advance. The fact is that we have the power to understand over and above what we may have spontaneously thought. People can speak to us only a language which we already understand, each word of a difficult text awakenings in us thoughts which were ours beforehand, but these meanings sometimes combine to form new thought which recasts them all, and we are transported to the heart of the matter, we find the source. Here there is nothing comparable to the solution of a problem, where we dis[^{end 178}]cover an unknown quantity through its relationship with known ones. For the problem can be solved only if it is determinate, that is, if the cross-checking of the data provides the unknown quantity with one or more definite values. In understanding others, the problem is always indeterminate because only the solution will bring the data retrospectively to light as convergent, only the central theme of a philosophy, once understood, endows the philosopher's writings with the value of adequate signs. There is, then, a taking up of others' thought through speech, a reflection in others, an ability to think *according to others* which enriches our own thoughts. Here the meaning of words must be finally be induced by the words themselves, or more exactly, their conceptual meaning must be formed by a

kind of deduction from a *gestural meaning*, which is immanent in speech. And as, in a foreign country, I begin to understand the meaning of words through their place in the context of action, and by taking part in a communal life – in the same way as as yet imperfectly understood piece of philosophical writing discloses to me at least a certain ‘style’ – either a Spinozist, criticist or phenomenological one – which is the first draft of its meaning. I begin to understand a philosophy by feeling my way into its existential manner, by reproducing the tone and accent of the philosopher. In fact, every language conveys its own teaching and carries its meaning into the listener’s mind” (p.179).....“There is thus, either in the man who listens or reads, or in the one who speaks or writes, a *thought in speech* the existence of which is unsuspected by intellectualism” (p.179).

Central here, then, is the role of the bodily expressed *gestures* in our speech, to role of tone and accent, of the temporal ‘shape’ of the unfolding utterance, and the *relational* work done by such gestures in indicating (i.e., in pointing to) a speaker’s attitudes and values, their way or style of making judgements.

“The meaning of a gesture thus ‘understood’ is not behind it, it is intermingled with the structure of the world outlined by the gesture, and which I take up on my own account. It is arrayed all over the gesture itself – as, in perceptual experience, the significance of the fireplace does not lie beyond the perceptible spectacle, namely the fireplace itself as my eyes and movements discover it in the world” (p.186).

“The linguistic gesture, like all the rest, delineates its own meaning. This idea seems at first surprising... It seems in the first place impossible to concede to either words or gestures an immanent meaning, because the

gesture is limited to showing a certain relationship between man and the perceptible world, because this world is presented to the spectator by natural perception, and because the way the intentional object is offered to the spectator at the same time as the gesture itself. Verbal ‘gesticulation, on the other hand, aims at a mental setting which is not given to everybody, and which it is its task to communicate. But here what nature does not provide, cultural background does. Available meanings, in other words former acts of expression, establish between speaking subjects a common world, to which the words actually being uttered in their novelty refer as does the gesture to the perceptible world. And the meaning of speech is nothing other than the way in which it handles this linguistic world or in which it plays modulations on the keyboard of acquired meanings” (p.186).

The essence of music can only be grasped by listening to music. We have a certain feel for music, which is also, according to the musicologist and philosopher Victor Zuckerkandl, our sense of time:

“There is hardly anything that can tell us more about time and temporality than can music ... Music is temporal art in the special sense that in it time reveals itself to direct experience.” Thus: “the truth of music, like that of mathematics, consists in this, that it serves us as a key to understanding the world we live in.”

So a dialogue between music and science is, in this very profound sense, fruitful and meaningful. An element of dialogue in music itself can be found in the relation between the tune and words of a song:

“Words that are sung are not empty. Something that

remains silent in word merely spoken [in an unresponsive, 'official' communication – js] begins to flow, to vibrate; the words open and the singer opens to them. It is as though the tones infuse the word with a force that reveals a new layer of meaning in them, that breathes life into them..."

Words can express a situation of "standing over against each other," whereas tones express togetherness. In the tones, things that are separated meet, and person and thing – the speaker and the spoken word – come into direct contact. The tone added to a word does not cancel out the word, but makes it penetrate to a greater depth, down to a layer where their separateness becomes togetherness. Zuckerkandl says that:

"The dimension disclosed by the tones can certainly be called 'inner life', but this is not the inner life of the subject as opposed the object; it is not the inner world of the self but of the world, the inner life things. This is precisely why the singer experiences inner life as something I shares with the world, not as something that sets him apart from it ... Music prevents the world from being entirely transformed into language, from becoming nothing but object, and prevents man from being nothing but subject."

"Words divide, tones unite. Music prevents the world from being entirely transformed into language, from becoming nothing but object, and prevents man from being nothing but subject" (Zuckerkandl, *Man, the Musician*).

I haven't yet had chance to read Zuckerkandl in the original... these are quotes from another source...

- Getting into other people's 'inner lives'... resonating with, moving together with, finding the same inner, unfolding

movements taking place within oneself as in another, while 'engaged' or 'engrossed' with them...

- Bodily expressions... feelings... "One speaks of a feeling of conviction because there is a *tone* of conviction. For the characteristic mark of all 'feelings' is that there is an *expression* of them" (Wittgenstein, 1981, no.513).
- "If it passes, the it was not true love'... we test love for its *inner* character, which the immediate feeling does not discover... Love, what is important, is not a feeling, but something deeper, which merely manifests itself in the feeling" (Wittgenstein, 1980b, I, no.115).
- What matters here is not "the feeling" *in itself*, but what the feeling *connects with*... see William James (1890) *Chapter IX: The stream of thought*, in *Principles of Psychology*, on "feelings of tendency"...
- These "feelings of tendency" arise in the 'chiasmic' intertwining of *our* outgoing activities *with* the incoming responses from an *other*... [see Chap XX for accounts of 'transitions', and 'passing or moving moments']
- In our involvements with an other, we can gain that kind of "understanding which consists in 'seeing connections'" (Wittgenstein, 1953, no.112).
- Gaining "insight"... probing into 'the depth' of a phenomenon... creatively probing into its 'inner' relational dimensions... entering into a chiasmic relation with it...
- Witness-thinking again...

What a lot of things a man must do in order for us to say he *thinks*...I, no.563

Instead of the unanalysable, specific, indefinable: the fact that we act in such-and-such ways, e.g., *punish* certain actions, *establish* the state of affairs thus and so, *give orders*, render accounts, describe colors, take an interest in other's feelings. What has to be accepted, the given – it might be said – are facts of living" [cf. PI, p.226d] I, no.630

Comparison of bodily processes and states, like digestion, breathing, etc., with mental ones, like thinking, feeling, wanting, etc. What I want to stress is precisely the incomparability. Rather, I should like to say, the comparable bodily states would be *quickness* of breath, *irregularity* of heart-beat, *soundness* of digestion and the like. And of course all these things could be said to characterize the behavior of the body. RPP, I, no.661; cf 284, and LW II, p21b

“... doing is something that one can give an *exhibition* of,” RPP, I no.655

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