

Practice-based Methods for Practitioners in Inquiring into the Continuous Co-Emergent “Stuff” of Everyday Life

John Shotter¹

“The child begins to perceive the world not only through his eyes but also through his speech” (Vygotsky, 1978, p.32).

“What makes a subject hard to understand – if it’s something significant and important – is not that before you can understand it you need to be specially trained in abstruse matters, but the contrast between understanding the subject and what most people *want* to see. Because of this the very things which are most obvious may become the hardest of all to understand. What has to be overcome is a difficulty having to do with the will, rather than with the intellect” (Wittgenstein, 1980, p.17).

“And here we come on the difficulty of ‘all is in flux’. Perhaps that is the very point at which to start” (Wittgenstein, 1980, p.8).

Introduction

Once we switch away from a view of communication as a one-way flow of information to a back-and-forth, two-way flow of entwined, indivisible strands of spontaneously responsive, expressive, living, bodily activity – a view adopted by all those who see communication as a *dialogic* activity (e.g. Bakhtin, 1981, 1986; Gadamer, 1975, 2000; Wittgenstein, 1953, 1980; along with many others) – everything changes. Straightaway we find, instead of facing simply one kind of difficulty in life – that of solving problems – we face a *second*, much more basic difficulty – that of gaining orientation, of arriving at a sense of *what* the situation *is* that we find ourselves in, prior to our attempts to act well within it. In all theory-driven research, we far too easily act as if the situation is of an already determinate kind of which we are merely ignorant, rather than it being still indeterminate, and as such, requiring an effort on our part to further specify it in one way or another. But how can we start our inquiries ‘from within’ those moments of dis-orientation in our practices, ‘from within’ our bewilderments and confusions, if we don’t start with theories? We can begin from the fact that our bewilderments are not of a general kind, but arouse in us *feelings* of a quite specific kind *in relation to* the unique situation in which we find ourselves placed. And as we ‘dwell in’ and ‘notice’ detail after detail of our surroundings, along with our own responsiveness to our ‘noticings’ – and the differences they can make withing us that matter to us – we gradually gain a ‘sense of place’, the sense of a “real presence” (Shotter, 2003) within us that can guide us in our actions there.

The shift involved here, away from ‘seeing’ finished *patterns* and *forms* existing objectively out in the world, towards a focus on the bodily ‘sensing presences’, and the ‘seeing of similarities’ amongst them, is revolutionary. In the past, the task of science has been to give an account of ‘things’ independently of any *meanings* they might have for us, or of how they appear in our experience. The opposite is the case below. Once we move towards a focus on unfinished processes still open to many different kinds of *expressive* realization, our own acute awareness of the unique ‘time-shapes’ of our experiences becomes crucial. In bringing them to expression, rather than regularities and generalities, we must shift our concerns to dealing with uniquenesses and singularities. Many aspects of this shift are explored in the chapter below.

On coming to a ‘feel’ for a ‘topic’ (topos~place) in human experience

Scientific inquiries are *deliberately conducted inquiries*, inquiries in which we intentionally set out to explain something, some ‘thing’ we think of as being already in existence² awaiting our discovery of it. And

in such inquiries, we make certain *observations* on the basis of what our prior theories predict we should expect to see – where our theories work in terms of *idealizations*³, that is, in terms of events that are brought into being only in the specially prepared conditions of the experimental laboratory, conditions which are hardly ever realized in the hurly-burly of everyday life. In other words, we have far too readily assumed the separateness, and thus already determinate nature of reality: that it already consists of separate, nameable, elemental things in motion according to pre-established laws.

Things in our everyday lives, however, are much more indeterminate, and a lot of our learning is much less deliberate: the development of our sensitivities to thing-like structures in our surroundings; the way our utterances within our mother tongue are intra-related with them; and many other features to do with *being-like* the others in our immediate surroundings, all just seem to *happen* to us. They *co-emerge* in the course of our practical involvements with the others around us. We do not, and cannot as infants (*infans* ~ without speech), set out deliberately to become *this* or *that kind* of person, as if the possibilities for what we can become already exist. We gradually become a unique, autonomous individual of a certain kind by *showing in our behaviour* as we grow up, that we know *what* matters to those around us: that we know *what play is*; *what toys are*, and what are not things to play with; *what it is* to be rude and what is ‘proper’ behaviour; *what* emotionally hurts another and *what is* being kind to them; what it is to assume that one has been *born to rule* (or not, as the case may be); and so on, and so on. We find ourselves making a certain kind of sense of, mostly *relational*, things without our ever having explicitly set out to do so.

Indeed, one of the very first things we learn (or can⁴ learn) is how to take turns: *to be* a looker and listener; *to point* at things⁵ and *to be* attentive to what is ‘pointed out’ to us, as well as also being ourselves a *doer* and a *communicator*. Thus in our first-language learning, we are not simply learning to ‘put our thoughts into words’, nor are we merely learning to link our practical activities in with those of the others around us, thus to coordinate our activities in with theirs in *accountable* ways (Mills, 1940; Scott & Lyman, 1968). We are learning something else much more basic: we are learning what elsewhere I have called “ontological skills” (Shotter, 1984) – skills at *being* certain *kinds* of human beings, able to adopt appropriate *ways* of relating ourselves to the requirements of the situations within which we find ourselves. And this task – of developing a *way* or *ways* of relating ourselves to a *situation* in which we are involved – continues with us even as adults as we enter each uniquely new situation afresh.

Thus our talk is not just a matter of ‘putting into words’ what we individually see or think. As Winch (1958) puts it: “our idea of what belongs to the realm of reality is given to us in the language that we use” (p.15), thus what we are *doing* in *our uses* of language is showing the others around us what *counts* as an aspect of reality for us. And as we grow up, we learn to live within many different realms of reality. So that later, in going on to train as a painter, a builder, a carpenter, a gardener, a farmer, a musician, a mathematician, an academic, a management consultant, the CEO of an organization, and so on, we come to learn specialist ways of ‘seeing’ the world, e.g., in learning arithmetic, we come to know that $1+1=2$ and $5+1=1+5$ (and that the order of the numbers doesn’t matter), and so on. In other words, in learning to do arithmetic we do not learn just a set of facts that can be represented symbolically, or a matter of learning to do something in the same way as our teachers; we learn something much more complicated. We learn to do many different things that can be *judged*⁶ by them *as acting in the same way* – a never ending task in the still emerging, turbulent, indeterminate world of everyday life.

Indeed, in learning to speak, more amazing than the fact that we can use so many different words with a fair degree of accuracy in describing the world around us, is that fact that we can express ourselves and bring off an uncountable number of different practical consequences with such a limited number of words.

Thus before we can conduct anything like *scientific* inquiries, we face the preliminary task of coming to *a sense of*, *a feel for*, “the world or worlds” which we want to explore. Prior to our more intellectual inquiries, we need answers to questions such as: What are the ‘things’ I perceive within it; what are the relations I perceive between them; the values I attach to them; the opportunities for action and understanding my ‘world’ afford me; the nature of my rights, duties, privileges and obligations in relation to the significant others around me in my ‘world’; the ‘grounds’ to which I appeal for the power and the authority of these rights and duties (do I find them ‘in’ myself or ‘in’ my community of which I am a part, or for some, in both places?); its ‘horizon’, i.e., what is not actually at the moment ‘visible’ to me in

my situation but to what I can point to as being reasonable for me to expect in the future; plus the fact that at any one moment, my 'world' is ordered *perspectively* in accord with what I take to be the 'point' (on the horizon of my current landscape of action) constituting the 'end in view' of my current action (intention, aim)⁷.

Thus a good deal of what I will call *orientational learning*, or *orientational work*, is required before we can turn to deliberate, theory-driven inquiries into our everyday lives. For our later ability to say explicitly, "This is an X (but not a Y)," requires our already having come to know, *implicitly in our bodily activities*, what X-ness and Y-ness *is like*. And this capacity to orient towards the 'what-ness of things' in our surroundings as those around us do, and to *judge* that this is indeed an X and not a Y, is not something we acquire through explicit teaching. We learn it spontaneously, in the course of our extensive involvements with those others. It is something a 'good enough' mother (Winnicott, 1988) teaches us, spontaneously, in the course of her being attentive to what she notices in our movements, in many different particular situations, as our indicative of our 'needs'. She thus acts to satisfy the unsatisfied tensions she can perceive us as feeling in the incipient intentions she can see us as *trying* to execute – as she feeds, comforts, plays, and otherwise actively involves herself in our activities⁸. It is our 'tryings' (and our 'failings') that are important to her at this stage in our development, not our actual achievements. And it is precisely in moving away from what is thought to be *ideal* to what can be called 'good enough' ways in which to conduct our research practices – good enough in the sense of meeting practical needs – that I want to explore further below.

To assume, as many theorists do, that *ideally* we should proceed in our everyday affairs as professional scientists do in theirs, is, to my mind at least, to (mis)describe a co-emergent, back-and-forth, essentially hermeneutical process – in which 'I' as a *Subject* experiencing a certain kind of 'thing' in the world, and an *Object* experienced *as* that 'thing', arise together in the act of experience – as a cognitive and epistemological process, concerned merely with our thinking 'about' our bewilderment in a linear, rational manner. Only people who act as if they already know of the basic things making up their world can act in it on the basis of theory-confirming observations; but they cannot gain their knowledge of how *to be* and to act effectively *in the unique situations of everyday life* in the ways required of them by their society, in that manner. The fact is, in our everyday affairs, we simply cannot assume that we already know the 'things' to which to attend in taking effective steps towards a current, particular "end in view" (Dewey, 1910; Wittgenstein, 1953).

Making sense from within the flowing, turbulent "stuff" of everyday life

I have started the discussion of *methods* in this way – with a focus on what it is like for us in learning our first language, rather than assuming that we start our more professional forms of inquiry at a much later point in time, when we are all already linguistically competent – because I think it is much more in line with the everyday realities within which we actually live our lives, and must conduct our inquiries, particularly within our currently much more turbulent times. The dream of the ancient Greeks – that the task of Reason (rationality) is the unveiling of the *ideal forms* hidden behind appearances – which has shaped Western thought for the last 2500 years, is at last being relinquished. We are beginning to take appearances, the particular situations themselves that we now find ourselves inhabiting, seriously. Thus currently, from within the midst of experiencing the turmoil of a political (and physical) *weather-world* seemingly out of our control, we seem to be involved in a slow but inexorable shift away from a focus on forms and structures, away from 'seeing' finished patterns existing objectively out in the world, and to be moving towards a focus on the bodily 'sensing of similarities', towards a focus on unfinished processes still open to many different kinds of *expressive realization*.

Whilst the interest in flowing processes is not new (James, 1890, 1912; Bergson, 1922, 1974), interest in them is now acquiring momentum, a distinct presence as more and more voices are joining in (e.g., Gibson, 1979; Law & Mol, 1994; Barad, 2007; Gergen, 2009). But what we will find it hard to do, in turning in this new (or not so new) direction, is to give up a deeply rooted urge in our Western *uses of language*: to give a *name* or *names* to "the stuff" we continually deal with in our everyday affairs. But give it up we must. As Lao Tzu (1967), who lived in the 6th century BCE in China, suggested: "The way that can be named/ Is not the constant name;/ The nameless was the beginning of heaven and earth" (p.57). For

clearly, as is obvious, the very search for “nameable things” commits us to finding *only* what is in some sense we already have names for, our ‘methods’ of inquiry act back on our thinking to *construct* the ‘realities’ we claim to be discovering to ourselves. Hannah Arendt (1959) describes the process thus: “The world of the experiment seems always capable of becoming a man-made reality, and this, while it may increase man's power of making and acting, even of creating a world, far beyond what any previous age dared to imagine in dream and phantasy, unfortunately puts man back once more – and now even more forcefully – into the prison of his own mind, into the limitations of patterns he himself created” (p.261). To avoid the continual rediscovery of sameness and to turn to the task of bringing to light genuine innovations, previously unexpected, novel steps forward, we need another mode of inquiry.

So, although we cannot easily give proper names to what we are dealing with, this does not mean that what we need to deal with is forever inexpressible. Far from it. For as we shall find – and come to deal with in terms of what I will call “Performative Understandings” or “Performative Knowing”⁹ (in contrast to the “Objective” or “Propositional Understandings” we usually seek) – giving expression to their nature is not in fact at all difficult. We can enact such understandings in our ‘doings’ out in the world¹⁰, and we can begin to say what such doings *are like* by the use of what Wittgenstein (1953) calls “objects of comparison” (no.130)¹¹ – where, by their use, as he remarked, we can “establish an order in our knowledge of the use of language: an order with a particular end in view; one out of many possible orders; not the order” (no.132).

In other words, we can begin to say *what it is like*¹² to have a particular experience, to be involved in an activity of a certain kind. So, although our use of this method – the method of showing the nature of the influences at work in shaping our behaviour in our descriptions of them, what we might call “showing in our sayings” – may not help us achieve a final solution to the many *general* problems bothering us, e.g., the problem of what meaning *is*, or of what the mind *is* – and a whole crowd of other such general problems of the form “What *is X?*” It is a method, as we shall see, that can nonetheless lead us to a whole lot of particular, i.e., limited and partial, results that are in fact related to the situation of our concern, results related to a particular end in view. For the *performative* understandings we can express in such “showing sayings” can *move* the others around us towards re-relating or re-orienting themselves to their surroundings to ‘see’ in them possibilities previously unnoticed.

Witness-thinking

What, then, is it like in this manner, to think from within a kind of inner dialogue *with* a felt sense, the presence of a yet unknown something being there in one’s surroundings which has not yet been given adequate linguistic expression? Elsewhere (Shotter, 2005, 2006), I have described such *witness* (dialogical)-thinking, as I have called it, experientially as follows: The back-and-forth interplay involved gives rise, not to a visible seeing, for what is ‘sensed’ is invisible; nor does it give rise to an interpretation (to a representation), for our responses occur spontaneously and directly in our living encounters with an other’s expressions. Neither is it merely a feeling, for it carries with it as it unfolds a bodily sense of the possibilities for responsive action in relation to one’s momentary placement, position, or orientation in the present interaction. Instead, it gives rise to a *shaped* and *vectored* sense of our moment-by-moment changing involvement in our current surroundings – engendering in us both unique “transitory understandings” as to ‘where’ we are within the landscape of possibilities open to us in our acting, along with “action guiding anticipations” as to what-next we might expect *in relation to* the actions we might take. We need to answer to what the situation we are in ‘calls’ on us to do. In short, we can be spontaneously ‘moved’ toward specific possibilities for action in such thinking. It is a knowing to do with one’s participation within a situation, with one’s ‘place’ within it, and with how one might ‘go on’ playing one’s part within it – a knowing in which one is as much affected by one’s surroundings, perhaps, even more than one affects them. And we can, of course, quite easily find ourselves ‘out of place’ – when an ‘upper-class’ person, say, finds themselves with a broken down car in a ‘working-class’ district.

We can distinguish this kind of dialogical, *witness*-thinking, strongly, from what I have called *aboutness* (monological)-thinking: such thinking works in terms of a thinker’s ‘theoretical pictures’ (mental representations), but, even when we ‘get the picture’, we still have to interpret it, and to decide, intellectually, on a right course of action; thus in *aboutness*-thinking, “(in its extreme pure form) another person remains wholly and merely an object of consciousness, and not another consciousness...

Monologue is finalized and deaf to the other's response, does not expect it and does not acknowledge in it any *decisive force*" (Bakhtin, 1984, p.293). In other words, in working simply in terms of forms of 'pictures', it is unresponsive to another's expressions.

In more homely terms, we might express the contrast between two by saying: In aboutness-thinking, we live, so to speak, *inside* our theories, and look out at the world with the expectation of seeing only the shapes and forms they make available to us. Whereas, in witness-thinking, we are living in the world *alongside* a set of 'good enough' friends, who like our 'good enough' mothers, draw our attention to noticeable features in our surroundings that might be of concern to us, and introduce us to bits of vocabulary that might be useful in giving linguistic expression to them.

Knowing 'from-within'

In witness-thinking, then, we are not thinking *about* things *from the outside*, the 'thinking' involved is not solely, or even primarily, a cognitive process; it inevitably involves our *acting into situations*, and as we do so, developing our thinking – in a back-and-forth, from part-to-whole and from whole-to-part, hermeneutical process – as our acting unfolds. Thus, ontologically, we become a 'participant-part' of the very situation that we are inquiring into, and we need to teach ourselves how to think *from within* that unfolding involvement.

To those of us taught that theory-driven modes of inquiry are basic, this, at first, may seem a disorienting thought. As Richard Bernstein (1983) notes, it might arouse in us what he calls "the Cartesian anxiety" (p.16), the fear that if we do not have *certain*, i.e., *proven*, knowledge, we have no knowledge at all. But, to repeat, this is how, as children, we learn both our first-language, and how to be autonomous members of our local community able to account for ourselves in *its* terms (Shotter, 1984). Recognizing that there is this other kind of knowledge, what we might call "insider's knowledge," "agent's knowledge" – or what above I have called *performative* knowing, the knowing that makes what we call "objective knowledge" possible – is crucial to our conducting our inquiries from within our own everyday involvements out in the world.

Scientific inquiries, as I noted above, are deliberately conducted, theory-driven inquiries in which we set out to explain something we think of as being already in existence 'over there' awaiting our discovery of it. But to assume that this is the case in our everyday lives, that our bewilderments are merely a matter of our ignorance as to the *real*, the already determined but hidden nature of the circumstances facing us, is to make, as Ryle (1949) calls it, a serious "category mistake." In describing our efforts at *making sense* of what is before us, we continually use "achievement-verbs," he points out, when we should provide an 'orchestrated' sequence of "task-verbs," along with their criteria of satisfaction¹³. In other words, in talking of *hearing* such and such, or *seeing* this rather than that – instead of talking of *listening* or *looking* with certain expectations in mind – we are continually talking of 'arrivals' and/or 'achievements' when really we should be speaking, not only of the 'journeyings' and/or the 'tryings' (as well as of the satisfactions we achieve or not, as the case may be, by each step we take along the way), but also of the overall *guiding tension* initially aroused within us by each new bewildering situation that motivates our efforts at 'bringing it into focus', so to speak. We far too easily act as if the situation is of an already determinate kind of which we are merely ignorant, rather than it in fact being indeterminate and open to our efforts to determine it in one way or another. But how can we start our inquiries 'from within' our bewilderments if we don't begin with theories?

Below, I want to propose a two-stage process: A set of first steps to do with moving from a bewildering, confusing, indeterminate situation towards its gradual clarification or determination as the unique situation it in fact *is* – a process that we can perhaps liken to bringing a severely blurred scene into focus. We can then outline a set of possible next steps to do with *noticing* openings and incipient beginnings within it that might afford its innovative development, the emergence of new inner articulations within it – a process that we might liken, say, to the development of a cultivated olive tree from a wild tree, by selective pruning, to produce an abundance of fruit.

Investigations into how we do in fact relate or orient ourselves toward the situation we find ourselves to be 'in', and *resolving* on a line of action to take within it, can be called, following Wittgenstein

(1953) and Bateson (1979), 'grammatical' investigations. For, as Bateson (1979) says, all our understandings arise out of our relations to a context, and "without context, there is no meaning,... [and] contextual shaping is only another term for *grammar*" (p.27). Thus for Bateson, as also for Wittgenstein, a 'grammatical investigation' entails our imaginatively 'entering into', so to speak, the circumstances surrounding a person's actions to gain a sense of the way in which their surroundings (in an agential fashion) can influence the 'shape' of their utterances and other expressions. Thus rather than trying to analyze, i.e., break down, what is unknown to us into its elemental units, we can begin to move around within it, and by 'opening' ourselves to being spontaneously 'moved' by it, we can begin to 'enter into' an active, back and forth, dialogically-structured relationship with it – a relationship within which we can gain, if we go slowly and allow time for the imaginative work that each response can occasion in us to take place, a sense of the 'invisible landscape of possibilities' confronting us to become "visibly-rational" (Garfinkel, 1967, p.vii) to us.

Noticings

Once oriented, as 'participant parts' within the very situations we are investigating, rather than trying to begin with 'good ideas', or allowing ourselves to be *theory-driven*, we must begin our investigations with *noticings*, with *sensing* when a next step *different from an expected or wanted* next step might be taken. Let me list some 'noticings' in summary form:

1. *A first kind of noticing* – 1) being 'struck by' an event or happening;
2. *A second kind of noticing* – '*incipient forms*': 2) "A community or a *polis* is not something that can be made or engineered by some form of *techné* or by the administration of society. There is something of a circle here, comparable to the hermeneutical circle. The coming into being of a type of public life that can strengthen solidarity, public freedom, a willingness to talk and to listen, mutual debate, and a commitment to rational persuasion presupposes the incipient forms of such communal life" (Bernstein, 1983, p.266).
3. *A third kind* – '*what is not being said*' (the elephant in the room): As Billig (1999) points out in *Freudian Repression* – in relation to the case of Herr K. (an older man rejected by his wife) and Dora (the young daughter whose father was having an affair with Herr K's wife) – how people can use shared "dialogic routines" (p.101) to avoid raising those issues between them that would result in devastating conflicts – whereas, Freud had understood that "repression took place in the head [of individuals], not outwardly in conversation" (p.102).
4. *A fourth kind* – '*telling moments*': moments when 'collective narratives or ideologies' begin to be revealed, e.g., when people begin to say: 'This is how we do things around here'.
5. *A fifth kind* – *disquiets*: a feeling that there is still a 'something more' that has not yet been captured in all the articulations of 'sensings' that we so far produced.

This last 'noticing' is a most important one, in at least the following three senses: (1) In one, it is central to Kuhn's (1962) account of scientific revolutions: "Discovery commences with the awareness of anomaly, i.e., with the recognition that nature has somehow violated the paradigm-induced expectations that govern normal action" (pp.52-53) – when something occurs that wasn't expected within the theory-shaped ways of sense-making adopted by inquirers, new steps have to be taken. (2) In another, as William James (1912) says: "Our fields of experience have no more definite boundaries than have our fields of view. Both are fringed forever by a *more* that continuously develops, and that continuously supersedes them as life proceeds. The relations, generally speaking, are as real here as the terms are..." (p.71). In other words, no matter where we draw the boundaries around a focal noticing, in relation to a particular end in view, we will not have exhausted all the possible influences at work in the situation of our concern; other ends in view will lead us bring other influences to light. (3) But finally, ethically and politically, as we will see when I turn to Amartya Sen's (2009) work below, trying to work *from situated disquiets*, rather than *towards general ideals*, gives us a far more sure basis for our inquiries than we can ever arrive at from general, one-size-fits-all considerations.

Resolving an unclarity: arriving at a "real presence"

John Dewey (1910) describes the organizing role of having an *end in view* in relation to our thinking thus: "A question to be answered, an ambiguity to be resolved, sets up an end and holds the current of ideas to a

definite channel. Every suggested conclusion is tested by its reference to this regulating end, by its pertinence to the problem in hand. This need of straightening out a perplexity also controls the kind of inquiry undertaken. A traveller whose end is the most beautiful path will look for other considerations and will test suggestions occurring to him on another principle than if he wishes to discover the way to a given city. The problem fixes the end of thought and the end controls the process of thinking” (p.12).

In other words, there is an overall pervasive quality to the *situations* within which we conduct our inquiries, a felt *tension* of a ‘something’ that we need to seek, which can act like a sensed ‘compass’ guiding our explorations into each bewildering situation we face – for the bewilderment we face is not any old bewilderment, but a unique bewilderment in relation not being able to even take a first step toward to a unique end in view, towards the needed resolution of our otherwise unclear situation. It is a matter, we could say, of bringing a feeling, a sensing, a ‘something’ which – prior to you making an effort at making it more determinate – is still not identifiable as a specific ‘this’, as an event, issue, or situation which offers you a specific way forward, a clear way to ‘go on’ within it. To illustrate what I mean here, I suggest that the next few statements are read very slowly, making use of a ‘poetic’ style of inner speech, with time taken at the end of each to imagine a particular, remembered, concrete situation :

- You enter a new situation;
- You are at first confused, bewildered, and don’t know your way about;
- However, as you ‘dwell in’ it, as you ‘move around’ within the confusion, a ‘something’, an ‘it’ begins to emerge;
- Although invisible, such an ‘it’ can function as a “real presence” (Shotter, 2003) in shaping our subsequent behaviour;
- It emerges in the ‘time contours’ or ‘time shapes’ that become apparent to you in the dynamic relations you can sense between your outgoing exploratory activities and their incoming results;
- Within this two-way, back-and-forth exploratory process, an image comes to you, you find that you can express aspects of this ‘something’ in terms of this image;
- But not so fast, for you can find another, and another image, and another – Wittgenstein uses a city, a toolbox, the controls in the driving cab of a train, and many different types of games, all as metaphors¹⁴ for different aspects of our experiences of the use of language;
- Having gone through a number of images, you can, perhaps, come to a more comprehensive sense of the landscape of possibilities giving rise to them.

And my purpose, of course, in asking you to speak to yourself slowly and expressively was both to arouse in your tone of voice more extreme responsive movements within you as readers than is usual in more intellectually oriented texts, as well as to allow time for the ‘shape’ of such movements to *resonate* within you, thus to “remind” you of something that might be already familiar to you (Wittgenstein, 1953, no.89)⁵¹ – to ‘call up’ one or two or more previous experienced concrete episodes whose ‘time-contours’ are similar to those traced out in the unfolding dynamics of my utterances – for the sensing of similarities within one’s own experience is a very basic human capacity, and lies at the bottom of our seeing objective patterns out in the world.

The process involved here – in ‘dwelling in’ and ‘moving around within’ each new situation we encounter, while inter-relating the details noticed in the back-and-forth between our outgoing activities and their incoming results – is, of course, a hermeneutical one. In such a process, in the back-and-forth between ‘part’¹⁶-and-whole, and whole-and-‘part’, in that *developmental* flow of undivided activity, a uniary whole comes to *presence*; indeed, both whole and ‘parts’ *emerge* together as reciprocal determinants of each other (see Shotter, 2003). In this *way* of seeing, listening, etc., then, unique, uncompleted ‘time-shapes’ thus become more important to us in our inquiries than nameable, completed spatial-shapes, i.e., forms or patterns out in the world. They become more important because they arouse *tense feelings* within us, unique *expectations* as to what we next *need* to make contact with as we move around in our surroundings, if we are to relieve the *felt* tensions they arouse in us; they can thus both *motivate* and *guide* us in our conduct of our inquiries. Indeed, as we move around and gain a sense of familiarity within such landscapes, we can come to feel confident of knowing our way around within them, to feel ‘at home’ within them, and thus to more easily *resolve* on ways of *going on* within them.

Thus the process of *resolving* on lines of action within such initially *unique* situations, cannot simply be a matter of calculation or decision making, to do with choosing among already existing possibilities. The situations would not be unique if such possible next steps already existed within them. They involve *judgments*; a need to move around within the landscape of possibilities; while being *spontaneously responsive* to the consequences of each move; and judging (valuing) which one (or combination of moves) best gives rise to an orientation that provides a way of resolving the tension aroused in one's initial confusion – for, to repeat, we are operating here, not in the realm of actualities but of possibilities.

***Two kinds of inquiry aimed at overcoming two different kinds of difficulty:
orientational difficulties and problem-solving***

This need to contextualize – to situate the words we use, particularly those we try to use as the indicative names of basic 'things' – gives rise to a perhaps surprising consequence: It not only means that there are *two* kinds of difficulties we can face in our lives, not just one. Indeed, as Wittgenstein (1980) has made very clear to us, many of our difficulties in our practical lives are *not* of the form of *problems* that we can, by the application of a science-like methodology, solve by reasoning; nor are they are "empirical problems" that we can solve by discovering something already existing but currently unknown to us; they are difficulties of a quite another kind. They are *relational* or *orientational* difficulties, to do with discovering how to 'go out' towards an initially indeterminate state of affairs in our surroundings with certain expectations and anticipations at the ready, so to speak, appropriate to our finding our 'way about' and to 'going on' within them without (mis)leading ourselves into taking inappropriate next steps.

***Grammatical investigations, 'philosophy' – the results
of contextualized, practice-based inquiries***

Indeed, as has now, perhaps, begun to be clear, the kinds of philosophical investigations Wittgenstein (1953) calls grammatical investigations – aimed at gaining a sense of the contextual influences at work in shaping our actions in this or that particular situation – are not merely *another* mode of investigation available to us, but are necessarily prior to all other kinds of inquiry. As Wittgenstein's (1953) put it in describing the nature of his own investigations: "Since everything lies open to view there is nothing to explain. For what is hidden, for example, is of no interest to us./ One might also give the name 'philosophy' to what is possible *before* all new discoveries and inventions" (no.126) – thus for him, the term 'philosophy' takes on here a very special kind of contextualized, practical meaning.

This because, for us, each new situation we face is initially indeterminate. Experientially, at least, we seem to find ourselves – especially in our visual fields, in our hearing, in our conscious experience – immersed in a continuous, irreversible, *flow* of activity, of ceaseless unfolding movement. Obsessed in the past with starting from already determined situations made up of configurations of already named entities, "it is just this free water of consciousness," says William James (1890), "that psychologists resolutely overlook. With it goes the sense of its relations, near and remote, the dying echo of whence it came to us, the dawning sense of whither it is to lead... We all of us have this permanent consciousness of whither our thought is going. It is a feeling like any other, a feeling of what thoughts are next to arise, before they have arisen" (pp.255-256).

Let me repeat those last two, seemingly paradoxical phrases: a feeling of what thoughts are next to arise, before they have arisen. In other words, such feelings are not bounded entities with a clear beginning and a clear end, but, as he put it earlier, they are "*feelings of tendency*, often so vague that we are unable to name them at all" (p.254), and as feelings *still in process*, so to speak, they can, as we shall see, serve the most important function of guiding us in our exploratory imaginings of the possible next steps we might take in our practical actions. They can function, James (1890) says, as "*signs of direction* in thought¹⁷, of which we have an acutely discriminative sense, though no definite sensorial image plays any part in it whatsoever" (p.253). In other words, any aspect of it that we pick out as a figure against a background, is "*fringed forever by a more*" that, although perceptually invisible to us, is influential in determining the figure's performative meaning for us – how it can nonetheless motivate and guide us in our actions *in that situation*. Thus such *orientational* difficulties are *resolved* by the gradual emergence of a

'local best' action, a best way forward which develops, hermeneutically, within our tentative exploratory movements as we sense and evaluate the incipient "signs of directions in thought" that they give rise to within us.

This ignoring of the larger context within which the focal things of our attention have their being – James' "more" – is crucial. As Bateson (1979) noted, "without context, words and actions have no meaning at all" (p.24) – they exist simply as empty, meaningless forms. So, although we continually talk of *solving* problems by thinking about them within a well-defined, rational framework in order to arrive at a plan or strategy which we then try to put into action, such 'problems' can only be *solved* if the situations we face already consist in a set of determinate, separate entities awaiting our 'arrangement' or 're-arrangement' of them. This is precisely not the case with relational or orientational difficulties. Here, we cannot plan, we cannot by a cause-and-effect process bring an innovative circumstance into existence just when we want to. But what we can do, just as a 'good enough' (but not a perfect, *idealized*) mother can act at appropriate times to help her infant develop his or her *first* language, so can we come to an understanding of the appropriate dialogic circumstances are in place (Shotter, 2010b), to *occasion* or *circumstance* such innovative developments¹⁸.

Thus rather than being aimed at reliable and repeatable results that can be made accessible in some published form, so that they can be both publically criticized and tested, and thus generalized to apply in indefinitely many different contexts, the practitioner-relevant inquiries I want to outline here have a quite different aim. They are practice-oriented and practice-based. They are concerned with our gaining a sense of 'where we are' in relation to our immediate surroundings, and of the surrounding field or 'landscape' of real possibilities open to us for our next steps. Thus, unlike the idealized and de-contextualized nature of 'coolly rational' research, practitioner inquiry is concerned with *details* in our surroundings that are crucial to the performance of our actions. As Wittgenstein (1953) remarks, acting in idealized surroundings is like trying to walk on 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!" (no.107).

Rather than resulting in nameable, objective 'things' out in the world, in objective knowledge, the results of practice-situated inquiries come to be registered in, and to accumulate in, our embodied capacities and sensitivities. As Bateson (1979) puts it (see Shotter, 2010a), they contribute to a practitioner becoming better "calibrated" in "the *setting* of his nerves and muscles" (p.211) which, in practical terms, means that the practitioner can come to act automatically and spontaneously, i.e., without conscious deliberation by anticipating the direction of a client's next steps, i.e., the 'point' of their actions or utterances, before their actual expression of them.

On coming to think systemically – reversals in our expectations

Coming to think in this *relational, contextualizing, or ecological* manner – what we might call "thinking systemically" – entails abandoning many of the preoccupations of the Enlightenment, abandoning especially what we might call the 'coolly rational' approach to inquiry in which we take "analysis" – the breaking down of a whole (as a mechanism) into its cause-and-effect functioning parts, as a basic first step in our inquiries. At the heart of this approach is the aim, enunciated by Descartes in 1637, of putting certain aspects of what is natural available to us in our surroundings "to all the uses for which they are appropriate, and thereby make ourselves, as it were, masters and possessors of nature" (Descartes, 1968, p.78) – a process in which even Darwin was led to assume that human progress was a matter of humanity struggling to overcome the limitations of nature. Abandoning these presuppositions of inquiry is not easy.

Our assumed need to think rationally about the difficulties we face in our lives, to think almost in a linear fashion, almost mathematically, wholly within what we might call a single order of logical connectedness, makes the back-and-forth, hermeneutical task of thinking *systemically* or *ecologically* – doing *witness*- rather than *aboutness*-thinking – hard to adopt. However, because it can lead us into many really quite surprising and disorienting situations and directions, we badly need to make ourselves a bit more aware of the easily unnoticed or ignored 'inner moves' we execute within ourselves and amongst us in arriving at a sense of something as being a 'thing' (Heidegger, 1969) for us in our surroundings. Thus,

before proceeding any further, I would just like to list in note form some of these 'surprises', some of the 'reversals' in our taken-for-granted ways of thinking about how our inquiries might best be conducted:

- 1) *A first important reversal*: our bodily movements out in the world are more important to us than our thinkings¹⁹.
- 2) *Another*: what just happens to us is much more important to us than what we achieve in our wanting and doing, it provides the 'background' from out of which our wantings and doings emerge and into which they return to exert their influence.
- 3) *Another*: emotions as judgments (Nussbaum, 2001)... beginning with *feelings* rather than calculations... the sense of a 'something' of importance and value here...
- 4) *Another*: (Merleau-Ponty, 1964)... it is as if *what* I as an agency thought *I* was 'bringing forth' begins to act in me as itself an agency to teach me a new 'way of looking', or a 'new way of thinking'... a new style of painting comes on the scene, we are at first disoriented, but later we find that *it* has taught us a new 'way of looking'²⁰.
- 5) *Another*: Mechanistically we talk of stimuli *causing* responses, yet it is the living responses of organisms that constitute, i.e., give not form but value to, the stimuli that they orient towards.
- 6) *Yet another*: Rather than building up from simplicity, we must start from our emersion in complex situations and our gaining orientation within them...
- 7) *And finally*: Rather than arriving at an intellectual *certainty* by *proving* a theory true on the basis of evidence gathered in its favour, we can arrive at a '*sure footedness*' in our acting within a situation by "doing justice" in our appraisals to *all* the phenomena of relevance to it that we encounter within it.

The temptation to move 'outside' and to talk 'about' self-contained systems 'over there' is pervasive in all 'coolly rational' approaches to scientific inquiries into social affairs. William James (1890) described the fallacy to which such a temptation gives rise as '*The Psychologist's Fallacy*:' "*The great snare of the psychologist is the confusion of his own standpoint with that of the mental fact* about which he is making his report. I shall hereafter call this the 'psychologist's fallacy' par excellence... The psychologist... stands outside of the mental state he speaks of. Both itself and its object are objects for him... The most fictitious puzzles have been introduced into our science by this means... Crude as such a confusion of standpoints seems to be when abstractly stated, it is nevertheless a snare into which no psychologist has kept himself at all times from falling, and which forms almost the entire stock-in-trade of certain schools. We cannot be too watchful against its subtly corrupting influence" (pp.196-197).

But 'mental states' are more than merely objects, they arise within us *in* our relations to our surroundings, and as such have a *meaning* for us which we display in our living responses events occurring around us. We must continually re-relate ourselves to our surroundings in the course of our performing of our actions, not least, in relation to the changes that we ourselves bring about within them. Thus as holistic, systemic beings, the *meaning* of a present situation for us is manifested in the way in which we continually adjust our activities to fit into each new occurring event we confront as we move about. And its *meaning* is present in the 'shape', so to speak, of our performances in response to it before any consciousness awareness of it as *having* an objective meaning as such occurs. As above, following Austin (1962), we can say that, primarily, it has a *performative* meaning, and it is in the performative meaning of people's responses to the events around them that we can begin to get a sense of what the inner landscapes of their lives *is like* (Nagel, 1974).

Bringing out the differences between the two forms of inquiry: thinking about systems and thinking systemically

1) Aboutness approaches

As qualitative forms of research develop, we can now begin to discern two kinds of what I will call aboutness-approaches: (1) more traditional theory-based approaches and (2) now methods-based approaches.

(1) Traditional theory-based approaches: In thinking *about systems*, as subjects, as agents, we actively attempt to characterize them within a system of logically interconnected theoretical propositions as objective things 'out there' or 'over there', in a part of the world separate from ourselves. Theory driven research is something we *do*, and it is the results of our 'doings' that matter; what just happens to us plays no part in the proceedings. And strictly, to count as a *scientific* theory, we should take care to ensure that each proposition in the theory should have:

- (1) *Explicitness*: A theory should not be based on intuition and interpretation but should be spelled out so completely that it can be understood by any rational being.
- (2) *Universality*: Theory should hold true for all places and all times.
- (3) *Abstractedness*: A theory must not require reference to particular examples.
- (4) *Discreteness*: A theory must be stated in terms of context-free elements - elements which make no reference to human interests, traditions, institutions, etc.
- (5) *Systematicity*: A theory must be a whole in which decontextualized elements, (properties, attributes, features, factors, etc.) are related to each other by rules or laws.
- (6) *Closure and prediction*: The description of the domain investigated must be complete, i.e. it must specify all the influences that affect the elements in the domain and must specify their effects. Closure permits precise prediction.

In other words, our theories must stand before us as themselves objective entities. If these requirements are not met, if our theories cannot be publicly understood and criticized, then we have mere 'theoretical-talk', which is hardly different from the 'opinions- or good-ideas-talk' of specific individuals.

But the fact is, no so-called 'theories' in the social 'so-called sciences' come anywhere near to fulfilling these requirements. Further, the very requirements of explicitness, de-contextuality, and closure, etc., work to strip out the *relational* aspects of all living phenomena and as a consequence we 'lose the very phenomena' of our central concern: how our activities come to 'hang together' as meaningful wholes whose 'point' can be sensed by other in such a way that they can come to co-ordinate their activities with ours.

(2) Methods based approaches: In the turn away from theory-driven and theory-testing research, there is now a turn now towards a concern with *methods*, towards qualitative methods of inquiry. But does this turn work to move us away from thinking *about* systems to thinking more systemically? I think not at all. For the organizing assumption, if I may call it that, of all these more methods-based approaches is still to think that there are definite processes already 'out there' in the world awaiting our discovery of their workings. In other words, they are again, implicitly, theory-driven. But what if, perhaps counter intuitively, specific, determinate realities as such do not exist without – or outside of – the sets of practices we use in our attempts to investigate them, including the inscription devices²¹ and the larger networks within which think of them as being located?

But what if the 'systems' within which we think of ourselves as being embedded are not only still open to further development, but also multi-dimensional, so that it is only when we 'interrogate' phenomena occurring in our surroundings within the confines of, as Karen Barad (2007) calls them, a particular "material-discursive practice" – i.e., an intra-twined set of ways of talking and ways of acting that materially affect the world within which it takes place – that events occurring in the world around us come to take on a determinate form?²² Indeed, what if much of the world in which we live is vague, fluid, unspecific, diffuse, slippery, ephemeral, elusive or indistinct, emotional, what if it changes like a kaleidoscope, or like the intra-mingling streams of hot and cold air in the atmosphere, or it doesn't really have much pattern at all, then where does this leave the social sciences, with their aim of 'discovering' the supposed already existing orders and patterns determining our behaviour? Chasing chimera of their own devising it would seem.

As Foucault (1972) put it in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* quite a while ago: We face "a task that consists of not – of no longer treating discourses as groups of signs (signifying elements referring to contents or representations) but as practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak. Of course, discourses are composed of signs; but what they do is more than use these signs to designate things. It is this *more* that renders them irreducible to the language (*langue*) and to speech. It is this 'more'

that we must reveal and describe" (p.49). It is this 'more' that we must try to bring to light and describe in a fashion that does justice to it.

Thus what can be called thinking in the these two 'aboutness' approaches?: To grasp a bit more clearly what is involved here, let me examine the sequence of steps involved in both these two *problem-solving* approaches: 1) approaching a newness or strangeness as a problem to be solved requires us to first analyze it into a set of identifiable elements; 2) we must then find a pattern or order amongst them; and then 3) we *hypothesize* a hidden agency responsible for the order (call it, the working of certain rules, principles, or laws, or the working of a story or narrative, or the shaping of a practice by 'themes', or suchlike). We then seek further evidence for *its* influence, thus to enshrine its agency in a theoretical system or framework of thought. And we then go on to make use of such frameworks in our further actions.

As investigators, we ourselves remain unchanged in the process; we remain *outside* and *separate* from the other or otherness we are investigating; rather than being engaged or involved in with it we are 'set over against' it; in acquiring extra knowledge *about* it – in the form of facts or information – our aim is to gain *mastery* over it.

2) Systemic or witness thinking

At the heart of the difference between the two forms of inquiry, as two sides of the same coin, is on the one side, the Cartesian subject/object split, and on the other, the peculiar nature (disparaged by rationalists) of *participative* thinking. In witness- thinking or thinking systemically, one functions as a participant within the very phenomena one is inquiring into. As a result, the placement of the subject/object split becomes highly variable, a matter of placing the divide within different regions of a phenomenon according to one's overall end in view. For, in deciding that we want to bring about a change in one aspect of our surroundings, we must leave ourselves open to being affected in an uncontrolled fashion by the rest of our surroundings, and as we turn to produce an intended effect elsewhere, we open ourselves to being affected by the very original aspect of our concern. Thus what we treat as being set over against us as an 'object' at one moment, becomes itself at the next an agency able to affect us.

Systemic thinking or thinking systemically: Thinking systemically is to think as a 'participant part' within the very systems we think of ourselves as investigating. But what is it to think "participatively" in this fashion? According to Bakhtin (1993), it can only be done by "those who know how not to detach their performed act from its product, but rather how to relate both of them [both the process and product of their thought] to the unitary and unique context of life and seek to determine them in that context as an indivisible unity" (p.19, footnote). In other words, understandings of this kind need to be lived within the context of a practice before they can be described, and their descriptions need to be voiced within that practice – as, in fact, a dynamic stability within that ongoing flow of activity – if they are to come to function as 'orienting landmarks', so to speak, in the landscapes of possibility we encounter in our relational practices.

And we ourselves, as investigators, as we saw above, are changed in such encounters. For, in becoming involved with, immersed in, the 'inner life' of the others or othernesses around us, everything we do can be partly shaped by being in response to what *they might do*. Thus, rather than an objective *knowledge* of their nature, we gain an *orientation* toward them, we grasp how to 'go on' with them in terms of the *possible* ways they might respond to us. Although at first we can be wholly 'bewitched' (Wittgenstein, 1953, no.109) by their 'voice', as our familiarity with them grows, their voice can become just one voice among the many other voices within us, and we can become 'disenchanted' with what they 'call' us upon us to do. However, we can never gain complete mastery over them – they can always surprise us, no matter how familiar to us they have become. Our constant vigilance is required; the precise words we use are important – for their *grammar* commits us *now* to what is expected of us in the future.

In other words, in more general terms, as we dwell in and move around in each new situation we face, a gradual growth of familiarity with *their* 'inner shape' can occur; we can then begin to gain a sense of the *value* of their *yet-to-be-achieved* aspects – the prospects they offer us for 'going on' within them. Thus, as we gain orientation, a sense of being 'at home' within them, we can come to find our 'footing', our

placement or *who we can be* within such situations. And this, as was clear from your responses to my bulleted utterances above, can be done imaginatively, by undertaking appropriate imaginative work. And in so doing, make sense of our current circumstances by thinking *with*, or in relation to, certain of our past experiences. This is what I would like to call *systemic thinking* or *thinking systemically* in such situations as these, and it is these situations – of initial disorientation or bewilderment – that we can sense (in Heidegger's, 1979 terms) *what calls for systemic thinking*.

***Relational stances and styles:
to our 'subject matter' and to each other***

"... philosophy ought really to be written only as a *poetic composition*" (Wittgenstein, 1980, p.24).

As we see it, there are two quite different styles of speaking and writing within which we, as academics, relate to the people around us:

- i) *Professional*: one way is the supposedly 'objective', 'realistic', 'formal' or 'professional' style of speech or writing within which we currently present to our colleagues, the theories and the true facts our studies are meant to reveal;
- ii) *Conversational*: the other is a more 'informal' or 'conversational' style that, traditionally, is thought to be in tension with it.

They each involve the adoption of a quite different *relational stance*, i.e., a different set of both methodological and ethical commitments, not only to those to whom we address ourselves, but also to the supposed subject matter of our talk.

- I) *Cognitive*: While the former works in terms of us understanding them intellectually, as if from afar, in terms of representations, i.e., in terms of supposed similarities of form.
- ii) *Intuitional*: The latter works in terms of us *sensing* in our living, embodied relations with them, up close, differences, differences that arise as they respond to our actions with actions of their own, differences that, initially at least, we can only voice poetically and metaphorically.

In other words, in the second, our understanding of other people comes about through a quite different route than that through which we understand them in the first: it comes about *dialogically*, in a way which we are all responsive in a living, embodied way to each other, and in which the others can respond back to us in way denied them in the first.

- I) *Closed*: While the first way of talking, in which people relate themselves to each other cognitively and intellectually, can be thought of as a closed, finalized, monologic way of talking, functioning in an already existing and sustained 'disciplinary space', making use of fixed and finalized concepts.
- ii) *Open*: The other, in which people are in a more sensuous contact with each other, is an open, unfinalized, responsive form of talk in which new 'spaces' may be opened up, and others closed down, freely, moment by moment.

Until recently, this second, nonconceptual, nonrepresentational, nondisciplinary, everyday form of talk has been very unfamiliar to us. We have been captivated by the picture of ourselves as isolated individuals, inhabiting an otherwise inert, mechanical body that, as a 'mind' we, so to speak, 'animate'.

But let us turn now to how our methodological and ethical involvements with each other, both with those we study as well as our professional colleagues, are played out in these two different styles of writing and talking:

- 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.

- 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.

To contrast with the aim of the previous style, we might say that it is not aimed at explanatory theory, but at providing *practical theory*, or, at giving what are best called *avowal-accounts*: account-talk is talk that is useful in a tool-like way to those involved in a situation; it enables those involved to make and to notice differences in their activities, thus affording them with opportunities to coordinate their activities in with each other in an intelligible way.

Thus in these two styles, although you as the addressee of our writing might seem to be the same you, our 'positioning' of you would be different; and our 'ethical stance' toward those who are the 'subject matter' of our talk/writing is quite different too:

- I) *Uninvolved writing*: In monological-retrospective-objective writing, we would have no need (at least, not immediately) to be accountable or responsive to the absent others of whom we speak. Indeed, we look upon them as if from a distance, as if we have a God's-eye view of them in some way.
- ii) *Participatory-involved writing*: While in dialogical-prospective-relational writing, as a part of us being involved with those others, we cannot not be accountable to them; we have a sense of our responsibility toward them. And if asked by them as to why we make the claims we do about them, we feel we must respond to their request; we must justify ourselves to them in ways that they can accept (or can give good reasons for rejecting).
- I) *Responsibility to colleagues*: Thus, in the former style, our first (ethical) responsibilities are to you as a professional reader and to our shared discipline, and we must write in a way justifiably connected with our supposedly shared theoretical interests (as sociologists, anthropologists, psychologists, historians, etc.).
- ii) *Answerable to those others or an 'otherness'*: While in the latter style, one of our major responsibilities is toward those others, or othernesses, *of whom* or *of which* we speak and write. Thus in this dialogical-prospective-relational writing, we cannot write simply in relation to a fixed and constant theoretical interest; we must write in a way that *respects* our currently shared but changing conversational or dialogical relations to them, or to 'it', that respects 'who' they 'are' or 'what' it 'is'.

***Dialogic Listening (experiencing),
arriving at "Real Presences," and Imaginative Work***

“The ‘otherness’ which enters us makes us other” (Steiner, 1989, p.188).

“But no matter how the form may vary, the fact that an organism has conscious experience *at all* means, basically, that there is something it is like to *be* that organism” (Nagel, 1974, p.436).

We seek new experiences. We wonder what it would *be like* to fly like a bird – we swim under water, we suddenly find ourselves moving over an edge, from shallow into deep water, *as if* now ‘up in the air’; is *this* what it’s like? We listen to a speaker telling us what we can all read on a PowerPoint, and we struggle to stay awake and to ‘take in’ the *information*; we listen to an anguished parent of an abducted child, they speak ‘from their heart’ and we are ‘touched’, ‘moved’, and we remember the ‘event’ of it years afterwards, their expressions ‘enter us’ without our having to ‘grasp’ them – we know what it is *like* to be bored, or to feel another’s anguish. Experiencing, sensing such similarities – whether we like it or not – seems to be very basic to what it is for us to be a human being among a group of others like ourselves.

Clearly, knowing *what it is like* to ‘get’ a joke, to ‘understand another’s gesture’ (a raised eyebrow, a ‘hurry up’ movement, a ‘look’ in a certain direction, and so on), a ‘tone of voice’, what a ‘fact’ is; or *what it is like* to be in debt, to be in love, to be jealous, angry, sad, distraught, overwhelmed, etc.; to wonder *what it would be like* to be a criminal, to be a (shameless) banker, to be completely ‘at peace’ with oneself – clearly, all these experiences are a part of what it is for me *to be* a person among others of my kind. But knowledge of this kind is *qualitatively* distinct from knowing certain facts: that my house has three bedrooms, that Mr X is prime minister, that the UK has a Queen, the speed of light is approximately 186,000 miles per second, and so on. Facts are known as such anywhere at any time. They are context independent. Similarities, however, are sensed *from within* the happening of a relationship, *from within* the unfolding dynamics occurring within particular meetings between ourselves and the others and othernesses around us, in *this* place, at *this* time – although, as we shall see, *what* our in fact *unique* experiences *are like* is not always easy to ascertain.

We know what a ‘fact’ *is*. As an aspect of our growing up into a Western culture as competent adults, most of us have, as William James (1890) puts it, “an acutely discriminative sense” (p.253) of whether *what* someone is telling us *is* a fact or not. We thus know how to ask them appropriate questions about it, how to test their claims, and so on. And it is in the unfolding course of the *responsive*, dialogic, back-and-forth interplay occurring between them and us that we can (hermeneutically²³) come to conclude that what they are telling us is indeed a fact (or not). But how shall we arrive at what only becomes known to persons *from within* their relations to the others and othernesses in their surroundings?

A ‘dialogic’ hermeneutics: arriving at an account of an other’s ‘inner life’

In ascertaining whether a ‘fact’ is indeed a fact, we are functioning in accord with an already existing, inner guiding sense of what a claim *must be like* to be awarded the status of a fact; thus we only seek ‘answers’ to questions asked in relation to this already existing sense. However, a quite different state of affairs exists when we allow ourselves to relate to others in a *dialogic* fashion, when we allow ourselves to be in *reciprocally equal* relationships with them – to meet them “more or less outside the framework of the social hierarchy and social conventions, ‘without rank’, as it were” (Bakhtin, 1986, p.97), and to ask our questions, not in accordance with such a pre-established sense, but *in response to* what *they* themselves express.

It is this that makes these two kinds of understanding – monologic²⁴ and dialogic – so very different from each other; in the first, I am seeking *information*, in the second I am seeking a new experience. I am seeking to arrive at an ‘inner sense of a unique *otherness*’, something that I have not experienced before.

We can call what I am seeking in the second a “real presence” (Steiner, 1989) in the sense that, although it is invisible to us – like our sense of what a fact *is* – and quite intangible, it can exist as an *organizing* ‘something’ which can both motivate and guide our questionings. And it is in that sense that it

can be quite real to us – not in the sense of an already established fact, but as a *real* or as a “necessary possibility” (Steiner, 1989, p.3) – and as such, not only can it provide us with a sense of what a next question should be, but also with a sense of whether the answer we are receiving is satisfactory or not.

Thus a real presence is not an ‘object’ or a ‘thing’ that can have its own separate existence from all else that there is. It is a virtuality, an incipency, the still indeterminate beginning of a possibly later, more determinate outcome, a ‘seed’ that can – if surrounding circumstances continue to be appropriate – grow into a ‘plant’.

Thus in our inquiries, we need to proceed *as if* a finalized, definitive sense of the ‘inner landscape’ of an other’s life is a possible achievement. We must *try* to attain it. Consequently, as is becoming clear, in our efforts to achieve a *dialogic* understanding of an other, we need to function in just as *deliberate* a fashion as in our earlier, more information-oriented aims. In our efforts at dialogic listening (and speaking) we must also make efforts to pursue a particular ‘end in view’ – and indeed, as we shall see, the efforts are sometimes very great indeed.

Here, although there may be many different ‘ends in view’ in dialogic listening, I am interested in just one: “What is it *like* to be the person one is currently talking with (research interviewing, being a therapist for, helping to become more clear about their own lives, etc.)?” What is the ‘inner landscape’ of their life like? What *is it like to be* the stranger that you are now confronting in your inquiries? While we might also be concerned to become more clear in relation to a difficult situation we *both* now face and must act into; or, to get clear *what*, historically, say, the background situation was like for early psychologists, facing the taunts that psychology was not yet a proper science; and so on – but these (also very important concerns) are not my concerns here.

What is it like to be me? – the always unfinished, incomplete nature of my life

Turning to the task of what is involved in getting a sense of what other person’s ‘inner life’ is like, we can, perhaps, begin with ourselves, with our own inner lives. Thus, if someone were to ask me: “What is it like to be *you*?” I might begin to reply by describing ‘my situation’, ‘my surroundings’, ‘my world’ along the following lines:

- i) the ‘things’ I perceive as central to it;
- ii) the relations I perceive amongst them,
- iii) the values I attach to them,
- iv) the reactions I have towards them;
- v) the opportunities for action and understanding ‘my world’ affords me;
- vi) the nature of my rights, duties, privileges and obligations in relation to the significant others around me in ‘my world’;
- vii) the ‘grounds’ to which I appeal for the power and the authority of these rights and duties (do I find them ‘in’ myself or ‘in’ my community of which I am a part, in both or in some other place(s)?);
- viii) its ‘horizon’, i.e., what is not actually at the moment ‘visible’ to me in my situation but to what I can point to as being reasonable for me to expect in the future;
- ix) plus the fact that at any one moment, ‘my world’ is differently ordered *perspectively* in accord with what I take to be the ‘point’ (on the horizon of my current landscape of action) constituting the ‘end in view’ of my current action (intention, aim).

This (to the extent that I am both encouraged and permitted to fill it out in detail) is my *identity*, who ‘I’ am *at this moment*. Indeed, my very use of the word ‘I’ – in such expressions as ‘I think I may be able to see a solution’, or ‘I feel I have placed myself in difficulties here’ – allows me to talk about what it is like, in my unique ‘position’ at the moment within different, changing, socially constructed situations, to be me.

But the person questioning me might want to go further, and also begin to ask me what do I ‘see’, i.e., ‘take’, my culture to be? My answers, of course, would depend on my *sense* of the word ‘culture’ – which I take to be the usually taken-for-granted, unnoticed (until drawn upon in our actions) ‘background’

that we have been trained into as we grow up amongst all the others around us, and which we all as members of our *culture* use in relating ourselves:

- x) to *each* other
- xi) to *older* and *younger* generations
- xii) to yet others: *strangers, foreigners, and many other others...*
- xiii) to the *past* (history)
- xiv) to the *future* (and one's own *death*)
- xv) to the *earth*
- xvi) to the *extraordinary, the unusual...*
- xvii) to certain *absolutes*: freedom; truth; human dignity

In other words, the questioning involved, although unsystematic, is extensive and detailed – even though it is not driven by a theory, model, or any other kind of rational framework, it needs to be guided by one's *sense* that one has still not yet gained a clear, inter-connected sense of what 'their world' is *like* for them.

Trying to achieve that clarity is one's 'end in view', but it is not easy. We need to 'wander around' extensively among both the back alleys as well as the main streets of an other's inner life before we can claim to have arrived at a unified (but still not yet wholly articulated) sense of its nature. Indeed, unlike the 'thin' account yielded by a 'check list' set of questions – as in a diagnostic interview, or by our use of *theoretical idealizations* as a guide in our research questioning – we must function more like a novelist conducting research for a novel concerned to set out the trajectory of the unfolding movements in the 'inner life' of someone strange to them²⁵. Unlike diagnosticians or research scientists – who *systematically* gather a specific set of data points at specific instants in time – the novelist must spend continuous time just observing and observing, to such an extent that, when it comes to writing, they can write *with* the unified 'thereness' of their experience, as a *real presence*, to guide them in their writing.

Wandering around in the 'back alleys' and 'main streets' and 'suburbs' of a person's inner life.

In our trying to arrive at a proper account, then, of what it is *like* to be *this* or *that* particular person, although a theory or a model of persons in general might suggest *one* or *another* line of questioning to us, allowing ourselves to remain solely within its confines will be to demean them. If we are to talk in relation to a person as being the unique and particular person that she or he *is* – which indeed *is* a crucial part of what it is for a human being to be treated as a person – then we must not talk about them as really being *just or only like* something else, as being to an extent *just or only like*, say, as information-processing device. For, in all other respects, they are not actually like an information-processing device at all – indeed, to treat people in this 'thin' manner, although one easy source of information 'about' them, is a travesty²⁶.

But the alternative is not easy. Extensive work is involved. For we must collect together in the dialogic explorations outlined above, what the stranger before us, as a competent, autonomous member of our society, must already know in their relations to themselves and the others and othernesses around them – rather than them needing to seek any further evidence, they themselves can be the source of it. Our task, then, in our dialogic listening to them, is to ask them the kinds of questions that will prompt them to recall events in their lived experience that they have not yet, perhaps, linguistically articulated out loud in any detail. We speak in order to listen, to help them move their experiences from the realm of indeterminate, inarticulate 'stuff' to the realm of knowing *what* they are taking of. We do not speak in order to hear into what *categories* already well-known to us their experiences will fall (as we might in seeking to *diagnose* them, or otherwise *judge* them). As they speak, in our efforts to understand them and to help them understand themselves, we might offer metaphors – was your experience *like* this, or *like* that – or simply to ask them to 'say more' – thus to fill out the context, and thus to clarify further the meaning of their experiences.

As we listen to the accounts they give of themselves, we invite them to draw more and more upon the knowledge they already possess of the nature of their own lives, of their own lived experiences. And in so doing, we help them to craft a narration which, in its telling, 'moves' us this way and that through the current 'terrain' of their personhood sufficiently for us to gain a conceptual grasp of the whole, even though we initially lacked a vantage point – perspective or point of view – from which to view it. As we

'move' and are 'move around' within the 'inner landscape' of their lives, we have a view of it '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.

What, then, is dialogic listening (and the speaking that goes along with it) like? Rather than being guided by an already existing sense, so that we 'know what we are doing' ahead of time, we need to allow ourselves to be guided by our moment-by-moment sensing of the unfolding meaning of a person's expressions, and it must be that sensing, not a pre-existing scheme, that must be the source of our next questions. Their formulation thus entails our continually oscillating between listening carefully to a person's *wording* of their expressions, while also noting the 'felt movement' they occasion within us. But as clarity of *felt* meaning is our concern – for we want to be able to 'feel into' the invisible nature of their inner lives as if it was visibly arrayed out before us – we must continually ask them to fill out the details, to 'say more', to offer them images and metaphors, to ask 'might it be like *this?*', to explore 'what other words might be right', and so on. And then, because our questions are *both* formulated in relation to our overall 'end in view' – that of gaining a sense of the 'inner landscape' of an other's form of life, what their 'inner world' is *like* – and formulated *in response to* what has already been expressed, we will find – in the course of a 'dialogic' hermeneutical process – an inter-related, unitary sense of the landscape of their inner lives emerging. This is the value of the memory and imaginative entailed.

So, although dialogic listening is very demanding and requires effort and attention, and can seem to be time consuming, and can never lead to a final, complete, objective account of a person's nature, when a person's *uniquely* individual nature is at stake, then the limited, partial, and situated results that we *can in fact obtain* – which unlike the 'one-size-fits-all' approach of diagnosticians and academic researchers – will in the end, I believe, will turn out to be, perhaps surprisingly, to be of far greater practical use and value to us. For in the process – with the 'otherness' of the other making us other – we would develop into a very different kind of human being: one who comes to know what, actually, *it is like* to be a human being. Something that currently our more *rationally devised ways* of relating to each other in our organizations, businesses, and health care institutions seem to have ignored or forgotten.

Moving on from where we actually are – relinquishing utopian dreams

To turn now to what all this means for how we can conduct our inquiries into the nature of our own human affairs within our academic disciplines, and especially in psychotherapeutic, organizational, and communication disciplines: It means, I think, instead of working in terms of what people *argue* are the *ideally* are 'the best' ways, ideas, theorizations, or practices – and seeking to discover in our inquiries what we take to be these pre-existing, ideal things.... we must accept that we ourselves continually bring such 'things', the subject matter of our studies, into existence.

This, however, is an unusual orientation. As intellectually active adults, our focus is more usually on knowledge as conceptualized, on propositional knowledge – as Argyris (2003) has noted, "actionable knowledge requires propositions that make explicit the causal processes required to produce action" (p.444). But as young infants, we lack such well-defined forms of knowledge; if we are later to gain this kind of 'knowledge' of the 'things' around us, we must first be able to recognize them and move around in relation to them in our everyday practices as the 'things' they 'are', that is, as the 'things' they are taken to be by the others around us – and such practical recognitions cannot be taught us at this stage by trying to teach us propositions or by offering us facts linguistically.

So, although we may continually talk of our understandings as coming into existence as a result of our *prior* "thoughts," "ideas," "knowledge," or "deliberate plans or decisions" – and that, as a result, it seems perfectly reasonable to seek the nameable causal processes responsible – the fact is, such processes can *only* be seen as *having been at work* in people's performances, *after* they have been completed²⁷.

And this, it seems to me, is the case with many more of our named topics of study in the behavioural sciences and communication disciplines: what are in fact *outcomes* of a person's actions, *after* those actions have been performed, are taken as components of the overall process within which they are

produced, and as a result, the *theories, models*, etc, that we produce are, to put it academically, are *after the fact*, and *beside the point* – they set us ‘looking backwards’, and ‘repeating the past’ as if the indeterminate future we now face was already determined. Indeed, as ‘nameable things’ they are often, in fact, *foreshadowed* in the very ways in which, prior to our investigations, we commit ourselves to a particular way or ways of looking into the phenomena before us. Thus, as I see it, ‘something else’ altogether guides us in the performance of our actions than the nameable things whose nature we seek to discover in our inquiries. So how can we proceed?

Someone who has been very clear about the need to adopt such a method – a method that *he* in fact calls a “method of comparisons,” in which we articulate what an experienced phenomenon *is like* – is Amartya Sen (2009) in his book, *The Idea of Justice*. He begins it by quoting Charles Dickens’s who, in *Great Expectations*, put these words into the mouth of the grown up *Pip*: “In the little world in which children have their existence, there is nothing so finely perceived and finely felt, as injustice” (p.vii) – where the grown up *Pip* is recollecting a humiliating encounter with his sister, *Estella*. In other words, he wants to begin his inquiries, not by asking what a perfectly just society would look like, but from our *felt sensing of a something being* unjust, from our *disquiets*, from our feelings of *things being not quite right*.

Why? Because: “What moves us, reasonably enough,” he remarks, “is not the realization that the world falls short of being completely just – which few of us expect – but that there are clearly remediable injustices around us which we want to eliminate” (p.vii). Thus, as I suggested above, by situating ourselves within a particular practical situation within which we can gain a *shared sense* – along with all the others around us – of a particular *injustice* at work; there is a real chance of us all, working together, of arriving at a way of remedying it. For we can all find in such a situation both, a guiding motivation, and, as we mentally move about within it, *ways to bring to light* the resources we need to move on from that injustice – where the *ways* we need will involve our *theories....* to be used, not as explanatory devices, but as *objects of comparison* to help us in coming to a *felt sense* of what the particular injustice in question *is like*.

So here – if we want to focus on injustices and the ethics at work in our *relations* to each other – we end with a new *orientation* towards our inquiries in the communication discipline, compared with it as to do with the transmission of messages within the context of social interaction: a practice-based rather than a theory-based approach. An approach that does not exclude attention to ‘relational things’ like its theory-based cousin. And as such, it will give rise to a whole new set of expectations, a new horizon of future goals and endeavours. However, unlike its more instrumental, theory-based cousin, we will not be able to expect any *final* answers to our *general* questions – we will never know *what* actually communication *is* – for our way of proceeding will *not* be to do with ‘seeing patterns’ out in the world, but with ‘sensing similarities’ within our lives together.

This will not mean, however, that we can do away with *theory*; we will still need it; but instead of our arguing with others over which is a *best ideal*, all our theories will find a *use* – a metaphorical and/or poetic use – in bringing to light similarities (and differences) within our task of clarifying what a particular sensed injustice *is like*.

In setting out the possibility of this new *orientation* for our studies in communication in this fashion, I am reminded of how Thomas Kuhn (1970) ended his account of *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*; he said: “We are all deeply accustomed to seeing science as the one enterprise that draws constantly nearer to some goal set by nature in advance. But need there be any such goal? If we can learn to substitute evolution-from-what-we-do-know for evolution-toward-what-we-wish-to-know, a number of vexing problems may vanish in the process” (p.171).

And this, of course, is what I am proposing here: that we relinquish the still unfulfilled – and, as I see it, *forever unfulfillable* – dream of gaining the very general results we desire in our inquiries, and to be content with the limited, partial, and situated results we *can in fact obtain* – which, in the end, will, I believe, perhaps surprisingly, turn out to be of far greater practical use and value to us. Indeed, as each new result is obtained and each small change in our surroundings effected, if Bateson (1979) is correct about the nature of co-emergence, then we can expect human cultural development to exhibit similar, unpredictable, co-emergent, innovative outcomes to those that occur on a smaller scale everyday amongst us in our dialogically-structured practices. And in our practices, we will alter (develop) new

environment(s) within which the others around us (and our children) will develop their mentalities. Hoping, in the past, always for jam tomorrow, we have ignored too much of what is readily available to us, all of us, today... and today... and today (Shotter, 2013).

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Notes:

1. Emeritus Professor of Communication, Department of Communication, University of New Hampshire, Durham, NH 03824-3586, U.S.A. and Research Associate, Centre for Philosophy of Natural & Social Science (CPNSS), London School of Economics, London, UK.
2. In physics, the behaviour of a wave or particle, in the social and behavioural sciences, a person's meaning, attitude, personality, or abnormality of some kind.
3. As is well known, friction, air resistance, and other contextual details are usually ignored in physical theories, just as Chomsky (1965) talked only of "an ideal speaker-listener" (p.3), and again, ignored in his theories of linguistic competence how we shape our utterances to the circumstances of their utterance.
4. I say 'can' here, as I begin to suspect that in today's somewhat chaotic environments, basic turn-taking skills may sometimes not be being well learnt.
5. See comments in Vygotsky (1978) on the genesis of children's pointing gestures in mothers' reactions to their reaching movements: "from an object-oriented movement it becomes a movement aimed at another person, a means of establishing relations. *The grasping movement changes to the act of pointing*" (p.56).
6. As Wittgenstein (1953) notes, "if language is to be a means of communication there must be agreement not only in definitions but also (queer as this may sound) in judgments" (no.242), i.e., in the values people sense in what is happening around them.
7. See Kuhn (1970, pp.4-5) for an account of the questions to which a scientific community has to have answers to before effective scientific research as such can begin.
8. See note 4: Implicit in a good enough mother's facial expressions, tones of voice, and other more informal aspects of her expressions, are, of course, her valuations, her judgments as to *what* is in fact taking place.

9. Here, of course, I am straightaway, seemingly, giving a name to a range of as yet un-well-known phenomena; however, I am using a noun phrase contrastively, as an indicative name, to highlight a distinction within a context.
10. I have taken the term 'performative' from John Austin (1962, 1970), who pointed out that all our utterances 'do things' out in our social world, even those that merely seem to be stating facts.
11. "The language-games are rather set up as *objects of comparison* which are meant to throw light on the facts of our language by way not only of similarities, but also of dissimilarities" (no.130).
12. "Conscious experience is a widespread phenomenon... But fundamentally an organism has conscious mental states if and only if there is something that it is to be that organism – something it is like for the organism" (Nagel, 1974, p.436).
13. Our "tryings" are of a different *logical type* (see Bateson, 1979) from our "achievements," in that they are invisible, non-locatable, *relational things* rather than objective things that can be pointed at and located in a place at a point in time.
14. For we must remember that metaphors can conceal as well as reveal (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980).
15. Wittgenstein (1953): "Something that we know when no one asks us, but no longer know when we are supposed to give an account of it, is something that we need to *remind* ourselves of. (And it is obviously something of which for some reason it is difficult to remind oneself.)" (no.89).
16. It is necessary to put the term 'part' in scare quotes, because until one has a sense of the whole, it is utterly unclear as to what can in fact *be seen as a part* of it.
17. Elsewhere (Shotter, 2005), I have called these *signs of direction* in thought, "action guiding anticipations."
18. Winnicott(1988) with respect to mothering, called it a "facilitating environment" (p.24).
19. "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).
20. "The origin and primitive form of the language game is a reaction; only from this can more complicated forms develop. Language – I want to say – is a refinement, 'in the beginning was the deed'[Goethe]" (1980, p.31)... "But what is the word 'primitive' meant to say here? Presumably that this sort of behavior is *pre-linguistic*: that a language-game is based *on it*, that it is the prototype of a way of thinking not the result of thought" (1981, no.541).
21. As Geertz (1973) notes: "The ethnographer 'inscribes' social discourse; *he writes it down*. In so doing, he turns it from a passing event, which exists only to its own moment of occurrence, into an account, which exists in its inscriptions and can be reconsulted" (p.19). Inscription devices are thus a set of practices that work to provide visible traces of the sequences of events that go to making up the otherwise invisible unfolding of dynamical events. Indeed, a major part of our task in our inquiries into our everyday affairs consists in devising situations within which such traces can become available to us.
22. What Barad (2007) has in mind here is Niels Bohr's resolution of the wave-particle duality paradox by noting that "wave" and "particle," as classical concepts, i.e., metaphorical terms referring to entities 'out there' in the external world, are only given determinate meanings in relation to different, indeed mutually exclusive, apparatuses, and that as such they refer to different, mutually exclusive *phenomena*, not in fact to independently existing physical objects. Bohr thus leaves it open as what the 'real' nature of physical reality actually *is!* This, of course, is in line with Wittgenstein's (1953) claim that all our 'name' words only have determinate meanings within the confines of specific language-games.
23. Such understandings are not arrived at 'in an instant', but emerge as the result of a back-and-forth process between an initial sense of the existence of an indeterminate but specific global whole and its gradual internal articulation into a more determinate form.
24. "With a monologic approach (in its extreme pure form) *another person* remains wholly and merely an *object* of consciousness, and not another consciousness. No response is expected from it that could change anything in the world of my consciousness" (Bakhtin, 1984, pp.292-293).

25. While developing the character of Harry Perowne, the neurosurgeon in his 2005 novel, *Saturday*, Ian McEwan the novelist actually spent two years shadowing a neurosurgeon at work, which included spending time in the operating theatre. As critics commented, "in every sentence, McEwan inhabits Perowne's restless intelligence with uncanny plausibility" – we feel as we read, the real presence of a *possible* way of being human.

26. Shannon and Weaver (1949) were interested *only* in the *formal* properties of messages, meanings were irrelevant to them: "Frequently the messages have meaning; that is they refer to or are correlated according to some system with certain physical or conceptual entities. These semantic aspects of communication are irrelevant to the engineering problem" (p.31). Yet, it is the meanings of messages that are primarily understood, their formal properties are often hardly noticed – the difficulty of remember *exactly what* a person said, rather than just what they seemed to mean.

27. James' (1890) "Psychologist's Fallacy" (p.196) again.