

Goethe and the Refiguring of Intellectual Inquiry: From 'Aboutness'-Thinking to 'Witness'-Thinking in Everyday Life

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Central to the paper below, is an emphasis on the spontaneously responsive nature of our living bodies, and on the special intertwined, dialogic, or chiasmic nature of events that can occur only in our meetings with others and otherness around us. As participants in such meetings, immediately responsive 'witness-understandings' become available to us that are quite different to the 'aboutness-understandings' we arrive at as disengaged, intellectual spectators. I argue that Goethe's "delicate empiricism", far from being an arcane form of understanding, is a deliberately extended version of this kind of witness-understanding – an anticipatory form of practical understanding that gives us a direct sense of how, in Wittgenstein's (1953) terms, to 'go on' with the others and othernesses around us in our daily lives.

There is a delicate empiricism which makes itself utterly identical with the object, thereby becoming true theory... The ultimate goal would be to grasp that everything in the realm of fact is already theory... Let us not seek for something beyond the phenomena – they themselves are the theory.

–Goethe (1988, p.307, quoted in Brady, 1998, p.98).

Man knows himself only to the extent that he knows the world; he becomes aware of himself only within the world, and aware of the world only within himself. Every new object, well contemplated, opens up a new organ of perception in us.

–Goethe (SS, p.39, quoted in Cottrell, 1998, p.257).

In living nature nothing happens that does not stand in a relationship to the whole, and if experiences appear to us only in isolation, if we are to look upon experiences solely as isolated facts, that is not to say that they are isolated; the question is, how are we to find the relationship of these phenomena, of these givens.

–Goethe (in HA, 13, p.17, quoted in Sepper, 1988, p.69).

Does Goethe's contempt for laboratory experiment and his exhortation to us to go out and learn from untrammelled nature have anything to do with the idea that a hypothesis (interpreted in the wrong way) already falsifies the truth? And is it connected with the way I am now thinking of starting my book – with a description of nature?

–Wittgenstein (1980, pp.10-11).

Our everyday ways of thinking are a mystery to us. How is it possible for us to see directly, in the unique, particular circumstances we encounter, certain opportunities and impediments to the actions that uniquely matter

just to us? How is it that we can recognize friends and loved ones merely from the sound of their voices on the telephone¹, or recognize just from other people's facial expressions as we talk to them their reactions to what we are saying? How can we come to know our way around so well inside familiar surroundings? What is involved in our acquiring specialized skills and sensitivities in mathematics, music, carpentry, literary criticism or art criticism, in discriminating shades and hues of colors as a painter, etc., etc. How, when presented with a mathematical proof or a case in a court of law, do we recognize that what we have witnessed is in fact *a proof*? How do we, in hearing a piece of music, seeing a painting, or in reading a text in philosophy, say, see important 'connections' between it and aspects of our lives? How, in our speech and writing, do we recognize just the right word to use in a particular context? How, for that matter, do we recognize the stream of sounds coming from a person's mouth as meaningful speech? How, as any kind of practitioner, do we recognize what the material of our practice *is*, how to move about within in, and how to choose with any surety what it seems best to do in a particular situation before us? How are any of these only once-occurrent, everyday understandings possible? These are the questions I want to explore below, in exploring Goethe's "delicate empiricism."

In his *Discourse on the Method of Properly Conducting One's Reason and of Seeking Truth in the Sciences* of 1637, Descartes (1968) set out a characterization of our "external world" and a method for thinking about its nature that has influenced our thought about ourselves, our surroundings, and the relations between the two ever since. In order, he says, not to be "obliged to accept or refute what are accepted opinions among philosophers and theologians, I resolved to leave all these people to their disputes, and to speak only of what would happen in a new world, if God were now to create, somewhere in imaginary space, enough matter to compose it, and if he were to agitate diversely and confusedly the different parts of this matter², so that he created a chaos as disordered as the poets could ever imagine, and afterwards did no more than to lend his usual preserving action to nature, and let her act according to his established laws" (p.62). Thus here, he establishes the view (which we now take for granted) that the subject matter of our investigations can be analyzed into a set of systematically related, separate, self-contained parts, subject to a certain set of laws or principles governing how they combine into larger wholes – an essentially cause and effect, mechanistic view of reality as a lifeless systematic whole exhibiting a

single order of connectedness. Descartes's world is thus a world of intrinsically unrelated things, of things which are not *internally* related to each other as participant parts of a larger, indivisible whole; to form a whole, they must be 'glued' or 'screwed' together somehow by third entities extrinsic to their own essential nature. It is a world to which we are related only as spectators at a distance, not as involved participants.

What if, however, we were to imagine a very different world, an indivisible unitary world, containing within itself many continuously flowing activities? And what if, in dynamically intermingling and intertwining with each other, they could spontaneously create within it, in the interplays occurring in the regions and moments of their meetings, new forms – new forms, say, like the many dynamic but stable “flowforms” that Riegner and Wilkes (1998) describe, which can be created within the fluid medium of water? “Water adopts a host of forms,” they say, “while always remaining the same, undifferentiated substance... the forms of water showed a remarkable degree of order as if it had life and intention of its own” (p.235). And what if, instead of merely being a spectator of this world, we were active, living, embodied participants within it? Such a dynamic world of continuously unfolding forms would, instead of world of Being, be a world of Becoming, a world in which various dynamic forms would come into existence, perhaps remain in existence (or not) for a while, and then, perhaps, also pass out of existence again in many different ways or styles.³

As living embodied beings, surrounded by such a world of flowing, dynamically changing forms, we could not help but to be spontaneously responsive to the changes continually occurring around us. Then, instead of a focus on the separate *things* around us, on their merely spatial (picture-able) relations, our focus would shift to a study of the intrinsic, i.e., already existing internal relations within them. We would then also be concerned, not so much with “what we do or what we ought to do, but what happens to us over and above our wanting and doing (Gadamer, 2000, p.xxviii).

If we were to imagine such a dynamic world of flowing activities as this, then, I think we might perhaps be approaching the kind of world Goethe experienced himself as living in.

Living beings (bodies) and the chiasmic nature of their meetings

Cassirer (1963) describes Goethe's concern with the coming into being of new forms, their creating, thus: “It was Goethe who first coined the word

‘morphology’... With Goethe’s idea of ‘morphology,’ with his conception of the ‘formation and transformation of organic natures,’ a new ideal of knowledge was created... To put it briefly, Goethe completed the transition from the previously *generic* view to the modern *genetic* view of organic nature... According to him, what we grasp in the [generic view] are only the products, not the process of life. And into this life process he wanted, not only as a poet but also as a scientist, to win an insight...” (pp.68-69). In other words, Goethe sought to understand not simply already existing things nor constructed things – built piece by piece from separate, self-contained parts – but *created* things, things that can come into existence (and, perhaps, pass out of existence again) as *a result of meetings* between forms of life with the other forms around them in their surroundings.

It is this, the focus – not on a world of isolated elements, their properties, and the spatial structure of their external relations at different instants in time – but on the *relations* between the different aspects exhibited in a dynamic world of internally inter-related, continuously changing activities, that characterizes Goethe’s concerns. “There are relations everywhere, and relations are life” (Goethe, quoted in Cassirer, 1963, p.68). The thought we apply in counting, weighing, and measuring things can only be applied to dead phenomena – for counting, weighing, and measuring things requires dividing things up into separate, fixed, and self-contained elements of reality, and no living thing can be thus fragmented like this without dying. While entirely appropriate to the inanimate world, this form of thought – operating within the realm of measurement (to give it a name) – is a form of thought quite inadequate to the understanding of life.

Goethe, as Cassirer (1963) outlines, in making this move from inquiring into the nature of an essentially dead world as a spectator at a distance from it to inquiring into an (at least partially) living world as a participant within it, was crucially influenced by Kant’s (1952/1790) *Critique of Judgment*. In that work, Kant had pointed out that: “It is quite certain that we can never get a sufficient knowledge of organized beings, and their inner possibility, much less an explanation of them, by looking merely to mechanical principles of nature” (p.54).⁴ But such mechanical forms of order – consisting in, as Descartes said, different parts of matter in motion according to established laws – ignored the possibility of them all being already inherently inter-related, and as such, constituting an indivisible whole. In other words, in ignoring all the already existing *relations* between things, and the dynamics of these relations as they unfold through time, might we not be ignoring

a major influence at work on us as participant parts inextricably ‘rooted’ ourselves in such a larger whole? Might we not be able to gain a sense of the organized beings around us and a sense of their inner possibilities *from within* our living relations *with them*? Surely, we can win an insight into the *inner formative movements* responsible for the emergence of such forms into existence by sensing within ourselves – from within our relations to them – the differential responses such movements occasion in us.

In other words, says Goethe, “there is a delicate empiricism, which identifies itself with the object in the most intimate way and thereby becomes actual theory” (Goethe, HA, 12, p.435; Zajonc, 1998, p.24-25). But to conduct ourselves in this manner, we must enter into an intimate interplay with each uniquely new and particular object we encounter. If we do, we will then find that “every new object, well contemplated, opens up a new organ of perception in us” (Goethe, SS, p.39, quoted in Amrine, 1998, p.47).

Thus, what I want to explore below, then, is precisely how we might *relate* ourselves to our surroundings much more than merely as uninvolved and disinterested spectators of a melee of intrinsically unrelated elements. But in doing so, I want also to explore how, in such lived and engaged ways of relating ourselves to our surroundings, a certain kind of *expressive-responsive* understanding becomes available to us that is quite unavailable to us as disengaged spectators – a kind of practical, judgmental understanding that, in providing us with a sense of the “inner form” of created entities, i.e., of the inner formative movements that give rise to them, can in fact afford us an anticipatory sense of how, in Wittgenstein’s (1953) terms, to ‘go on’ with them. In this kind of understanding, it is not just the static, picture-able, spatial relations between things at each moment in time that matters to us in our (principled) knowledge of them, but also our sense of their inner, physiognomic, self-differences, the changes that express the manner of their coming into being. For it is these changes which, in genetically expressing their responsive, living relations to events occurring in their surroundings over time, can give us a practical sense at least of the *style* or *character* of what next to expect – thus, it is toward a better understanding and enriching of our practices in this kind of world (rather than toward our theories about it), that we can expect this inquiry to contribute.

Thus, before turning more directly toward the nature of Goethe’s “delicate empiricism” and to the very different kind of intellectual activities we must undertake in our conduct of it (when compared with our current forms of inquiry), I want to explore some of the special properties of *living*

bodies (as processes) and the very strange nature of the events that can occur in the *meetings* between them and the others and othernesses in their surroundings. For, it seems, something very special happens when living bodies interact with their surroundings that we have not yet (explicitly) taken a proper account of at all in our current forms of thought or institutional practices. The resulting relations have a *chiasmic, intertwined, or entangled* structure (Merleau-Ponty, 1968; Shoter, 2003). It is the *bodily* nature of the relevant processes and what occurs in the meetings between them that have not, I think, been sufficiently emphasized.

Elsewhere (Shoter, 1980, 1984, 1993a&b, 2003), I have explored the special nature of these events extensively, calling the kind of activity involved either “joint action,” “dialogically-structured activity” (following Bakhtin, 1981; and Volosinov, 1986); or “chiasmic” activity (following Merleau-Ponty, 1968). Here, let me remark very briefly on a number of its important characteristics:

1. First, due to the ineradicable, spontaneous responsiveness of our living bodies, when someone acts, their activity cannot be accounted as wholly their own – for a person’s acts are at least partly ‘shaped’ by their being *responsive* to the others and othernesses in their surroundings.
2. As a result of entering into interaction with each other, when they separate, they can no longer be described as before – they are ‘infected,’ so to speak, with the ‘otherness’ of the other.
3. All such meetings, i.e., entanglements, intertwining, or chiasmicly structured events,⁵ are not only uniquely related to the context of their occurrence, but they also have the quality of passing or transitory events; they are not stable, recurrent states, but only “once-occurrent events of Being” (Bakhtin, 1993) or events occurring for yet “another first time” (Garfinkel, 1967) – thus, they cannot be described in terms of an already existing vocabulary depicting ‘finished’ events.
4. To the extent that all the outcomes of such spontaneous, interactivity cannot be traced back to the specific actions of any of the individuals involved, they are experienced by participants in such meetings as due to the presence of an invisible third agency, an ‘it’ with its own requirements – invisible “*real presences*” (Steiner, 1989; Shoter, 2003) with a life of ‘their own’ can emerge in such meetings and we can find ourselves feeling compelled to *answer to* the ‘calls’ they exert upon us..

5. Due to the fact that there is always a kind of *developmental continuity* involved in the unfolding of all living activities, the earlier phases of the ‘its’ activity are indicative of at least the *style* of what is to come later – thus we respond to ‘it’ in an *anticipatory* fashion.
6. This all necessarily occurs *within* living meetings – and can thus only be made sense of *from within* those meetings.

The pervasive nature of “organizing ideas”

Our existence as *participants* in such processes is not only very difficult for us to recognize – due to point 4 above – but it is even harder for us to accept (as the distinct individuals we are) that we ourselves exist only in such continual processes of change – see point 2 above. As responsible individuals, held to account (Mills, 1940, Scott & Lyman, 1968) for our intentional acts, it is not easy to accept that what happens to us, over and above our wanting and doing (Gadamer, 2000), is in fact of greater importance to us than our actual wantings and doings. It exhibits a third kind of activity, uncharted in a Western philosophy of only external causes and individual’s reasons for actions (Shotter, 1993a).

Someone who has studied this lacuna in our approaches to communication is Voloshinov (1986). As he notes in his investigations into the “organizing center” of our utterances in daily speech, these two foci – individual’s *reasons* and external *causes* – have, in the past, given rise to two main theories: In one, that he calls *individualistic subjectivism*,⁶ the individual psyche is thought of as the source of order in our talk; while in the other, *abstract objectivism*,⁷ it is *language as an artifactual system of self-identical forms* that shapes our speech. But as he points out, if this were so, whichever of these two views we take, we cannot account for the spontaneous but uniquely detailed responsiveness of our talk to the circumstances of its use. Instead, as Voloshinov (1986) sees it: “The location of the organizing and formative center is not within... but outside. It is not experience that organizes expression, but the other way around – *expression organizes experience*. Expression is what first give experience its form and specificity” (p.85).

To the self-conscious, thinking, autonomous individuals we are – as adults! – this seems completely contrary to our experience. But, as adults in the Western world, what we ignore, even in our study of ourselves, is the coming into being of things. We tend to think in terms of finished things, like solid objects. We are not well versed in methods for thinking

about unfinished things, things still open to yet further development, fluid things. But in studying language, Vygotsky (1978)⁸ claims, "... we need to concentrate not on the *product* of development but on the very *process* by which higher forms are established" (p.64). If we do, then we will discover that: "*An interpersonal process is transformed into an intrapersonal one. Every function in the child's cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level; first, between people..., and then inside the child... All higher [mental] functions originate as actual relations between human individuals... The internalization of cultural forms of behavior involves the reconstruction of psychological activity on the basis of signs*" (p.57). As a result of this process, says Vygotsky (1978), "the child begins to perceive the world not only through his [or her] eyes but also through his [or her] speech" (p.32).

This accounts for what we might call *accountable seeing*, that kind of seeing in which we can directly tell others what we see. But clearly, not all of our seeing is of this kind. As Bortoft (1996) makes clear, long before we can account to others for our 'observations,' in many spheres our 'looking' must go through a developmental process in which, often, we only slowly arrive at the appropriate "organizing idea" – and after that we can still have great difficulty in linguistically expressing it in a way that crucially influences others. Not only did Galileo at first see only "spots of two sorts" on the moon when later he saw "mountains and valleys" (Bortoft, 1996, p.140), but in his 'observations' of Jupiter, it took him quite a while to 'make sense' of what he saw: on Jan 7th, 1610, seeing three stars close to it, he said he believed they were "among the number of fixed stars;" on Jan 8th, he began to wonder if Jupiter had changed its direction of movement; only on Jan 10th and 11th did he arrive at the view that "in the heavens there are three stars wandering around Jupiter like Venus and Mercury around the Sun" (quoted in Bortoft, 1996, pp.140-141).

As Bortoft (1996) puts it: "The transformation which Galileo describes is a change in the way of seeing as a result of the action of an organizing idea – the *change* in the way of seeing *is* the action of the idea" (p.141). Instead of the meaning of *what is seen*, Galileo (and now we instructed by him) directly *see the meaning* of the events in the night sky – just as we directly hear the meaning of a person's speech. "The role of the organizing idea in cognitive perception," Bortoft (1996) adds, "is of such an active kind that if the idea changes, then *what* is seen changes. In this case what is seen is changed *from within the seeing itself* and not by the addition of a further sensory factor.

The new organizing idea makes it possible to see what has not been seen before. The transformation can be quite dramatic” (p.142). Why have we been so blind to the role of such organizing ideas in our perception? Why has it taken us so long to acknowledge their existence and what is involved in their development?

As Wittgenstein (1953) notes, like Vygotsky, a *picture*, a *way* of talking that lies in our language, can hold us captive, and we cannot get “outside of it,” for our language repeats it to us “inexorably” (no.115) – and we fail to notice the degree to which we see the world through our *ways of talking* (speech). And because we have come to embody our speech by the *chiasmic* route outlined above, we cannot easily untangle the inter-related processes involved by our usual analytic methods. Indeed, it is the very methods we think of as being most powerful in our intellectual lives that disable us here.

Central in what follows, then, will be a focus on the expressive-responsiveness of growing and living forms, both to each other and to the othernesses in their surroundings, and on their own particular and unique ways of coming-into-Being. Each requires understanding in its own way. While we can study already completed, dead forms at a distance, seeking to understand the pattern of past events that caused them to come into existence, we can enter into a relationship with a living form and, in making ourselves open to its movements, find ourselves spontaneously responding to it. In other words, instead of seeking to explain a present activity in terms its past, we can understand it in terms of its meaning for us, now, in the present moment, in terms of our spontaneous responses to it. It is only from within our involvements with other living things that this kind of meaningful, responsive understanding becomes available to us.

Two styles of thought: ‘withness’- versus ‘aboutness’- thinking

Bakhtin (1986) has outlined for us the nature of this everyday, spontaneous kind of understanding that occurs between us in our speech. Rather than it being to do with the static patterns in our already spoken words, it occurs in our living, embodied speakings with each other, as our actual utterances unfold: “All real and integral understanding is actively responsive,” he says. “And the speaker himself is oriented precisely toward such an actively responsive understanding. He does not expect passive understanding that, so to speak, only duplicates his or her own idea in someone else’s mind...

Rather, the speaker talks with an expectation of a response, agreement, sympathy, objection, execution, and so forth...” (p.69). In other words, crucial in our everyday, spontaneously responsive talk is its orientation toward the future, toward *what has not-yet-happened*: “The word in living conversation is directly, blatantly, oriented toward a future answer-word; it provokes an answer, anticipates it and structures itself in the answer’s direction. Forming itself in an atmosphere of the already spoken, the word is at the same time determined by *that which has not yet been said but which is needed and in fact anticipated by the answering word*. Such is the situation of any living dialogue” (Bakhtin, 1981, p.280, my emphasis). It is this – the generation in us of an embodied anticipatory sense of what has not yet happened but which is expected to happen – that I think is so special about Goethe’s methods of inquiry into the development of living forms.

As already mentioned above, as professional academics, we have all been trained into a certain style of ‘rational’ thought, a style modeled on thinking in the physical sciences, aimed at discovering a supposed ‘reality’ hidden behind appearances. One of the best expressions of it known to me is that outlined by Heinrich Hertz (1894/1954) in his *The Principles of Mechanics*: “We form for ourselves images or symbols of external objects,” he says, “and the form we give them is such that the necessary consequents of the images in thought are always the images of the necessary consequents in nature of the things pictured...We do not know, nor have we any means of knowing, whether our conceptions of things are in conformity with them in any other than this *one* fundamental respect”(p.1, p.2). In other words, it is a form of thought that itself works ‘mechanically,’ in terms of static shapes, instantaneous configurations, patterns or forms, that can be ‘fitted’ onto or into each other. Here, movement is conceived of as a sequence of minuscule ‘jumps’ from one identifiable stationary state to another. Thus, when confronted with a perplexing (or astonishing) circumstance in the sciences, we take it in this form of thought that our task is to analyze it (i.e., dissect it) into a unique set of separate, unchanging elements; to find an unchanging or fixed pattern among them; and then try to invent a theoretical schematism (functioning in terms of rules, laws, or principles) to account for the sequence of static patterns so observed. Or in the arts, we express this method by seeking ‘the content’ supposed to be hidden in the ‘forms’ appearing before us, by offering ‘interpretations’ supposed to ‘represent’ this content. In short, we formulate the circumstance in question as a ‘problem’ requiring a ‘solution’ or ‘explanation.’

To the extent that this style of thought is based in *mental representations* of our own creation, it leads us into adopting a certain relationship to the phenomena before us: Instead of leading us to look into them more closely, to try to get a sense of the detailed inter-relationships in terms of which they actually have their unique being, we do the opposite – we at first turn ourselves away from them while we cudgel our brains in an attempt to construct an appropriate theoretical schematism, i.e., an order constituted of homogeneous parts into which to fit them (see Hertz above). We thus impose our own framework upon the phenomena before us, a framework that is not itself a part of nature at all, and in doing so, we eradicate all the already existing internal relations within them – we reduce them to a (picture-able) system of parts that are external to each other. Only after we have done this do we then turn back again toward them, but now *with an action in mind* suggested to us by our theoretical representation of their nature, actions concerned with making “ourselves, as it were, masters and possessors of nature” (Descartes, 1968, p.78).

Such a knowledge of *facts*, however, is a very inadequate form of knowledge. It achieves, as Quine (1953) realizes only too well, only a very limited, selective account of nature: “the totality of our so-called knowledge or beliefs... is a man-made fabric which impinges on reality only along the edges,” he says (p.42). In the unique circumstances of our daily lives together, such a knowledge, when set over against us as a mere form or shape (a picture), fails to provide us with an *evaluative* sense of how we should place or position ourselves with respect to it (or of it in relation to ourselves). Nor does it help us in our everyday practices when acting in relation to each other to *anticipate* what next we should do for the best in our lives. We need to *interpret* it. But here again we lack a *shared guiding sense* of how we should do this in relation to the others around us. In short, such knowledge fails to provide us with an *orientation* in our daily lives. In possession of it, embedded within the landscape of possibilities surrounding our lives, we remain as disoriented in relation to the others and othernesses around us as before.

But there are more inadequacies to it than it merely failing to provide us with orientation. Clearly, the form of analysis to which it gives rise is a violent procedure that ignores all the intrinsic *living relations* already in existence in virtue of which living things grow, develop, flower, and die, only to reproduce others of their kind, to continue the unbroken stream of life on our planet. It is a style of thought that not only ignores the possibility

of *expressive* movements by living things, but has no way at all of accounting for the *intermingling* or dynamic inter-influencing of such movements. Indeed, instead of inquiring into how such inter-influencing might occur, living wholes are torn asunder (“We murder to dissect” – Wordsworth), and all the living activities between us are excluded from our considerations. Indeed, it is a whole style of thinking that, in ignoring the expressions of living bodies, ignores the possibility that people’s meanings and understandings might be found *within* the inter-influences occurring in their reciprocally responsive expressions.

In Goethe’s delicate empiricism, however, in which, to repeat, our thought “makes itself utterly identical with the object,” we do not think *about* an object from afar but think *with* it as if feeling over its contours, in a comprehensive, responsive exploration of its living, expressive, surfaces. In what follows below, following Goethe, while resonating also with Wittgenstein, Bakhtin, and Merleau-Ponty, I want to explore this kind of participatory thought further.

Let me begin with Wittgenstein having warned us that: “The basic evil of Russell’s logic, as of mine in the *Tractatus*, is that what a proposition is is illustrated by a few commonplace examples, and then pre-supposed as understood in full generality” (1980, I, no.38). He also remarks that nonetheless the urge for generality is so overwhelming within us that we are still tempted, even when everything has already been described, to say something further: “Here we come up against a remarkable and characteristic phenomenon in philosophical investigation: the difficulty – I might say – is not that of finding the solution but rather that of recognizing as the solution something that looks as if it were only a preliminary to it. ‘We have already said everything. – Not anything that follows from this, no, *this* itself is the solution!’ This is connected, I believe, with our wrongly expecting an explanation, whereas the solution to the difficulty is a description, if we give it the right place in our considerations. If we dwell upon it, and do not try to get beyond it” (1981, no.314).

But how can this be? How can a mere description be of help to us? To what kind of difficulty is a description – in which the word ‘*This!*’ plays a central part – the solution? And what is involved in “dwelling” upon it?

To understand what he is getting at here, we need to understand that the difficulty in question is more, in Wittgenstein’s (1980) sense, a matter *of the will* than *of the intellect*,⁹ a matter of *orientation* rather than of information, a matter of whether, as an investigator into an event or circumstance, one

knows how to ‘orchestrate’ or ‘organize’ the complex sequence of ‘mental moves’ required *within oneself*, if one is to ‘see’ (i.e., experience) what humanly matters in the sphere of one’s investigations. In other words, it is a difficulty that needs to be overcome, not by applying an already well mastered practice to “a problem,” but at a much earlier stage, a difficulty that arises in the process of acquiring and developing the practice in the first place.

Think of what might be involved in becoming an art critic or a music critic: one must learn how to actively relate oneself to a piece of music or to a painting, to compose oneself in such a way as to first notice within one’s own living, spontaneous, inner responsive movements the subtle nuances of expression present in the work, thus later to express them in some intelligible way to others. To do this, one must listen to many musical performances or look over many paintings – dwell upon them or within them – to such an extent that one comes to embody a ‘something’ that acts within one as a guiding or directing agency in one’s listening and looking, a something that gives one a *way* of listening and looking. A ‘something’ quite other than scientific knowledge would seem to be required, a something that can be gained in the kind of philosophical inquiry Wittgenstein outlines. For, as he puts it: “A philosophical problem has the form: ‘I don’t know my way about’” (Wittgenstein, 1953, no.123).

Others have also explored what is involved in acquiring these kinds of embodied, spontaneously expressed understandings. David Bohm (1965) describes the process involved as follows: “Both in the case of perception and in that of building a skill, a person must actively meet his environment in such a way that he coordinates his outgoing nervous impulses with those that are coming in. As a result the structure of his environment is, as it were, gradually incorporated into his outgoing impulses so that he learns how to meet his environment with the right kind of response. With regard to learning a skill it is evident how this happens. But in a sense *the perception of each kind of thing* is also a skill, because it requires a person actively meet the environment with the movements that are appropriate for the disclosure of the structure of that environment” (p.211, my emphasis). In other words, if we are to see or hear an entity as the entity it *is* – the unique voice of a friend, say, on the telephone – it is not a matter of our *following* its contours, but of our looking and listening *in anticipation of them*. Hence, the possibility of our being surprised when – if an unfamiliar voice answers our call – events do not occur as we expect.

But such embodied understandings do not develop within us in an instant; they take time. If we are to paint the scene before us, we must 'look over' it again and again. Merleau-Ponty (1964) discusses Valéry's and Cézanne's reflections on the activity of oil painting: "The painter 'takes his body with him, says Valéry. Indeed we cannot imagine how a *mind* could paint. It is by lending his body to the world that the artist changes the world into paintings... 'Nature is on the inside,' says Cézanne. Quality, light, color, depth, which are there before us, are there only because they awaken an echo in our body and because the body welcomes them. Things have an internal equivalent in me... I would be at great pains to say *where* is the painting I am looking at. For I do not look at it as I look at a thing; I do not fix it in its place. My gaze wanders in it as in the halos of Being. It is more accurate to say that I see according to it, or with it, than that I *see it*" (p.163, p.164). Rather than looking *at* it, I enter into an interplay *with* it. In so doing, I begin to look *beyond* it or *through* it to see other things in my world in its light; it can become, one could say, a guiding or directing agency in my looking; it gives me a new and unique *way* of looking. I look at other things now *with it* as my guide. This is not to say that I see other things by *following* its contours, but I see them in accord with the same *invisible* anticipations it responsively arouses in me. Thus, as Steiner (1989) suggests, "the streets of our cities *are* different after Balzac and Dickens. Summer nights, notably to the south, have changed with Van Gogh (p.164)... It is no indulgent fantasy to say that cypresses are on fire since Van Gogh or that aqueducts wear-walking shoes after Paul Klee" (p.188).

Withness-thinking: its foundational nature

There is, then, a form of mental activity, of intelligent inquiry, available to us of a kind quite different form than outlined by Heinrich Hertz above. In line with Goethe's maxim that "every new object, well contemplated, opens up a new organ of perception in us," we find many others outlining a kind of embodied, spontaneously responsive understanding of the dynamics of events occurring around them in similar terms. I will call the kind of mental activity involved here 'withness-thinking,' to contrast it with the more usual forms of thought we pursue in our intellectual lives that I will call 'aboutness-thinking.'¹⁰

As I see it, *withness (dialogic)-thinking* is a form of reflective interaction that involves our coming into living contact with the living (or moving)

being of an other or otherness – if it is a meeting with another person, then we come into contact with their utterances, their bodily expressions, their words, their ‘works.’ Involved is a meeting of outsides, of surfaces, of ‘skins’ or of two kinds of ‘flesh’ (Merleau-Ponty, 1968) such that they come into ‘touch’ with each other. They both touch and are touched, and in the relations between their outgoing touching and the resultant incoming responsive touches of the other, the sense of a ‘touching’ or ‘moving’ *difference* emerges. In the interplay of living movements intertwining with each other, new possibilities of relation are engendered, new interconnections are made, new ‘shapes’ or ‘forms’ of experience can emerge. These reflective encounters are thus not just simply a ‘seeing,’ for what is sensed is invisible; nor are they interpretations (or representations), for they arise immediately, directly and uniquely in one’s living encounter with an other’s expressions; neither are they merely feelings, for carried with them as they unfold is a bodily sense of the possibilities for responsive action in relation to one’s momentary placement, position, or orientation in the present interaction. In short, we are spontaneously ‘moved,’ bodily, toward specific possibilities for action in this kind of thinking. They provide us with both an *evaluative* sense of ‘where’ we are placed in relation to our surroundings, as well as an *anticipatory* sense of where next we might move.

While *aboutness (monologic)-thinking* works simply in terms of static ‘pictures’ set out in terms of separately identifiable elements and the supposed laws of their interconnection. Thus, even when we ‘get the picture,’ we still have to decide, intellectually, on a right course of action regarding them. As Bakhtin (1984) puts it, in such a style of address, “(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*” (p.293).

In ignoring all the already existing intrinsic (internal) relations between the others and othernesses around us, it remains up to us as isolated individuals as to how we act. But we are not perhaps as free to act in relation to this form of thought as it seems. We need to remember Descartes’s (1968) goal in his original outlining of his new method (of properly conducting our reason in the sciences). It was aimed at “knowing the power and the effects of fire, water, air, the stars, the heavens and all the other bodies that surround us, as distinctly as we know the various trades of our craftsmen,” such that, “we might put them in the same way to all the uses for which

they are appropriate, and thereby make ourselves, as it were, masters and possessors of nature” (p.78).

And in our modern age, we have become “bewitched,” as Wittgenstein (1953) puts it, by this image or picture of what constitutes proper knowledge of natural processes: it is obtained only by proposing *theories* of the ‘hidden’ causes supposedly responsible for outcomes we observe and by seeking evidence in favor of (or against) them. Goethe’s whole approach, however, is oriented toward showing us that in adopting this approach, we are misleading ourselves in ways that can in fact have quite disastrous consequences for us. Instead of us achieving that kind of easy familiarity to do with knowing our ‘way around’ inside our own activities – that kind of familiarity we can have when feel ‘at home’ in or ‘know our way around’ inside a place or circumstance – we achieve the power of manipulation and control instead.

While this power of mastery and control is not without its attractions, it still leaves us ignorant of the ordinary, everyday ways in which we do in fact relate ourselves to the others and othernesses around us, the ways in fact in which we first learned to be functioning members of the everyday communities within which we live our lives. Indeed, it can work to separate us from our surroundings in such a way that we cease to *experience* them directly and must cognitively ‘work out’ what is happening around us.

In the philosophy of science, this becomes an issue if, as Hanson (1958) notes, we switch our attention from the study of finished scientific systems like planetary mechanics, optics, or electromagnetism, to the study of unsettled, dynamic, unfinished research sciences like microphysics. Then the central issue becomes, not that of theory-using but of theory-finding, not the testing of hypotheses but with what in fact constitutes an appropriate hypothesis in the sphere of research in question. Thus, cautions Hanson (1958), if we are not to distort our inquiries into how dynamic, research sciences are in fact conducted, we must examine, “not how observation, facts and data are built up into general systems of physical explanation, but how these [general] system are built into our observations, and our appreciation of facts and data” (p.3). For in a growing research discipline, the task is not to understand how old facts and explanations can be rearranged into new more elegant formal patterns but the discovery of new possible patterns of explanation altogether – for different thinkers can think *with* them, i.e., put such systems *to use* in their thought, in different ways.

To bring out what he means here, he compares Mach's use of a formulaic proposition in carrying out a calculation with Hertz's use of it. Both would, he shows, get exactly the same answers. But while Mach "construed dynamical laws as summary descriptions of sense observations," Hertz treated them as "highly abstract and conventional axioms whose role was not to describe the subject-matter but to determine it" (p.118) – the difference between an 'after-the-fact' (Mach) and a 'before-the-fact' (Hertz) *use* of the formula. This would mean that, "though they get the same answer to the problem, the difference in their conceptual organization guarantees that *in their future research* they will not continue to have the same problems" (p.118, my emphasis). The difference between them – to do with the connections and relations they sense as existing within the phenomena of their inquiries – would show up "only in 'frontier' thinking – where the direction of new inquiry has regularly to be redetermined" (p.118).

As Hanson (1958) puts it: "People, not their eyes see" (p.6). "...there is more to seeing than meets the eyeball" (p.7). Just like Goethe's claim that "everything in the realm of fact is already theory," Hanson (1958) also notes that "there is a sense, then, in which seeing is a 'theory-laden' undertaking" (p.19). And by this, he means *all* our seeing, our seeing in everyday life included: "We do not ask 'What's that?' of every passing bicycle. The knowledge is there in the seeing and not an adjunct to it" (p.22).

In other words, our communal ways of acting are the source of the various normative 'pressures' on us that 'motivate' us to act in ways that are accountable to those around us (Mills, 1940, Scott & Lyman, 1968). The *shaped and vectored* pressures they exert on us, that Wittgenstein (1953) describes in terms of them as having a "grammar" or as "founded on convention" (no.355), function as the *foundations*, the *grounds*, in term of which we can judge each other's actions as necessarily correct or fitting. No other deeper or stronger necessity than that which structures our spontaneous ways of responding to each other's expressions is needed or required – for how else could we judge its validity other than by the agreements between us expressed in our shared, judgmental responses to it. So, although it may also seem odd to say it, this means that Physics does not derive its legitimacy from its rooting in physical realities, but from its rooting in agreements amongst physicists about the theoretical equations that select certain formal aspects of physical reality, i.e., those that appropriately idealize these aspects as being lawful. We work in terms not directly of our knowledge of physical reality but indirectly in terms of the knowledge that depends on our ways of knowing that reality.

The everydayness of witness-thinking

We can get a feel for the nature of these problems of orientation, problems to do with the *attitudes* or *stances* required in *approaching* other people or circumstances that are strange to us, from an examination of Wittgenstein's (1993) critique of Frazer's *Golden Bough* (first vol. pub. in 1890).¹¹ "Frazer's account of the magical and religious views of mankind is unsatisfactory," he says, "[because] it makes these views look like *errors*" (p.119). And he continues: "The very idea of wanting to *explain* a practice – for example, the killing of the priest-king – seems wrong to me. All that Frazer does is to make them plausible to people *who think as he does*... But it will never be plausible to say that mankind does all that out of sheer stupidity" (p.119, my emphases). If we are to grasp what is going on here, what it is that is organizing the practice, we need another approach: we need a sense of the original feelings shaping the experience of the people in question. Mere cognitively held ideas, beliefs, or opinions do not possess sufficient compelling weight to account for the compulsive power of religious ceremonies in all their strange detail. We need a sense of that power if we are to understand the source(s) of people's detailed activities within them – the rational justifications they may offer for them after the fact do not give us any access to that power. Such rationalistic, functionalist explanations are, so to speak, far too 'thin,' they do not satisfy us. "Compared with the impression which the thing described makes on us [the killing of the priest-king of Nemi], the *explanation* is too uncertain... No *opinion* serves as the foundation for a religious symbol. And only an opinion can involve error" (p.123). "Nothing is so difficult as doing justice to the facts" (p.129).

To see how misleading Frazer's explanatory accounts are, how beside the point they are in capturing the emotional power expressed in religious rituals, Wittgenstein (1993) suggests, we can "easily invent primitive [ritual] practices" ourselves, "and it would be pure luck if they were not actually found somewhere" (p.127). For instance: "Recall that after Schubert's death his brother cut some of Schubert's scores into small pieces and gave such pieces, consisting of a few bars, to his favorite pupils. This act, as a sign of piety, is *just as* understandable to us as the different one of keeping the scores untouched, accessible to no-one" (p.127). Indeed, in acting in these different ways, we would be expressing to those around us how we stood in relation to a person's death; we would be spontaneously 'displaying' certain relational possibilities to them for 'going on' with us, in practice; we would

be offering them certain, momentary invitations, discouragements, openings, resistances, and suchlike for responding to us in this special time.

Thus, as Wittgenstein sees it, in seeking *hypotheses* to explain the strange practices of other peoples, Frazer is looking in the wrong direction for the solution to our puzzlement. Instead, “one must only piece together [*richtig zusammenstellen* – correctly interrelate] what one *knows*, without adding anything, and the explanation follows of itself” (1993, p.121). Thus, instead of looking behind appearances for something hypothetical (like the people’s ‘wrong’ beliefs), Frazer should be seeking their *Weltbild*, the *Urphänomen* that ‘shapes’ their world as ‘shown’ in the grammar of their practices. And this is got by relating or connecting the nature of their practices with certain feelings and experiences of our own: “Indeed, if Frazer’s explanations did not in the final analysis appeal to a tendency in ourselves, they would not really be explanations” (1993, p.127). And Wittgenstein demonstrates this by reference to his use of the word “ghost” in Frazer’s remark that certain superstitious observances “are dictated by fear of the ghost of the slain seems certain...” (Frazer, quoted in Wittgenstein, 1993, p.131). Frazer seems to want a *solution* to a mystery when he already shows in his own use of words, says Wittgenstein, that in fact he has the solution: “He evidently understands this superstition well enough, since he explains it to us with a superstitious word he is familiar with” (p.131). And Wittgenstein (1993) continues to make the point already made above, that: “If I, a person who does not believe that there are super-human beings somewhere which one can call gods – if I say: ‘I fear the wrath of the gods,’ then that shows that I can mean something by this or can give expression to a feeling which is not necessarily connected with that belief” (p.131). That is, people’s practices do not issue from any views, opinions, or beliefs that they might hold in their individual heads: Their “practice and these views occur together, the practice does not spring from the view, but they are both just there” (p.119). In other words, the *Weltbild* in question is not an abstract terminus for our solving of *our* problems in *our* terms, but a point of departure for our development of a practice (perhaps of inquiry) in relation to them that we can conduct in *their* terms.

But we cannot begin to introduce ourselves to such a *way of thinking* merely by thinking *about* the particular phenomena in question in terms of general schemes already well-known to us. We cannot do it by sitting all alone as a spectator at them or merely through our contemplation of them. If we are to gain a sense of them as the uniquely *created* objects they

are, if we are to gain a sense of the steps required for them to emerge into existence as the *unique indivisible wholes* they *are* – the steps which are not now, of course, visible – then we must find relational features or aspects within them, or between them and their surroundings, that will, as Goethe puts it, work to “open up a new organ of perception in us.” In other words, the development of a (participatory) practice is required – the chiasmic intertwining of a way of seeing with a way of acting with a way of thinking, all from within an embedding of ourselves in a living way in the same surroundings as the relevant phenomena so that we too allow ourselves to be responsive in a spontaneous bodily fashion both to them and to them in relation to their surroundings. We need to enter into the kind of engaged relationship that consists in an active interplay of activity in which, by our going out to meet them in this way and that, moving both up close and away, looking from this angle and that, and so on, and so on, so that, as Bohm (1965) puts it above, “the structure of his environment is, as it were, gradually incorporated into his outgoing impulses, so that he learns how to meet his environment with the right kind of [anticipatory] response” (p.211, my addition). In other words, as I noted above, in such lived and engaged ways of relating ourselves to our surroundings, a certain kind of *expressive-responsive* understanding becomes available to us that is quite unavailable to us as disengaged spectators – providing us with a sense of the inner formative movements that give rise to them, that can in fact afford us an anticipatory sense of how, in Wittgenstein’s (1953) terms, to ‘go on’ with them.

The involvement of our bodies in such participatory practices – their spontaneous expressive-responsiveness to the events occurring around us – cannot be over emphasized. To repeat Goethe’s words already quoted above, with respect to sensing the *character of passing events*, “the human being is the greatest and most precise scientific instrument that can exist.” From within our participatory immersion in the interplay of outgoing and incoming activity occurring between ourselves and the others and othernesses around us, ‘striking,’ ‘touching,’ or ‘moving’ *differences* spontaneously emerge. And as I commented above, they can provide us with both an *evaluative* sense of ‘where’ we are placed in relation to our surroundings, as well as an *anticipatory* sense of where next we might move. It is these ‘striking’ moments that matter, for they can provide us with the new beginnings we need if we are to enter into spheres of creative activity previously utterly unfamiliar to us. As Wittgenstein (1980b) notes (quoting from Goethe’s *Faust*): “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]” (p.31). The primitive reaction here is a bodily reaction of almost any kind; it may have been an intake of breath, an increase in heart beat, a glance, a turn of the head, a grimace, a smile, a sudden sense of relaxation or tension; we might even have spontaneously uttered a word or words or any other expressive response. Whatever it was, what is crucial about it is that the event provoking the response both ‘moved’ us to action and provided us with a (at least a vague) sense of what next to *expect*. Thus, as Wittgenstein (1981) notes: “But what is the word ‘primitive’ meant to say here? Presumably that this sort of behavior is *pre-linguistic*: that a language-game is based *on it*, that it is the *prototype* of a way of thinking and not the result of thought” (no.541, my emphasis).

What Wittgenstein sees in these primitive reactions, these prototypes for new language games, is, it seems to me, what Goethe sees in *Urphänomenen*. They are not just simply something with the status of an explanatory hypothesis, but something with the constitutive capacity to provide us with an embodied anticipatory sense of what might not yet necessarily have happened in a sphere of inquiry but which must, sooner or later occur within it if it is to retain its being as an indivisible, created (and still, possibly, growing) whole.

Conclusions: from ‘aboutness-thinking’ to ‘witness-thinking’

There are two ways in which we can respond to a difficulty: cognitively or bodily. Cognitively, there is a tendency to treat circumstances we find bewildering or disorienting, situations that are strange and new to us, as posing a *problem* for us. Thus cognitively, we respond to such events by seeking a *solution* to them, by trying to *explain* them. The solution consists in a sequence of steps: We begin by analyzing ‘the problem’ into already readily identifiable, self-contained elements, elements that stay identifiable as the elements they are, irrespective of where they are ‘placed’ with a larger whole. We then seek a pattern among them. On finding an order in that pattern, we hypothesize an agency responsible for it (we often say that ‘rules’ or ‘principles’ are at work in its production). We enshrine them, both rules and elements, within a general theory or theoretical framework that allows us to make predictions, and we now seek to find further evidence in their support. Such frameworks work for us in terms of ‘pictures,’ representations,

to which we can refer whether in the presence of the relevant phenomena or not. In existing *prior to* our inquiries, they can become central in giving shape to our actions, and can work to concentrate our “gaze” (Foucault, 1975) so that we attend only to the features relevant within the already adopted framework.

But let us also note this about such a process: As far as we as investigators are concerned, we remain unchanged as the people we are in the process. We remain ‘set over against’ or ‘outside’ the other or otherness we are inquiring into; we are not engaged or involved with it. We acquire extra *knowledge* about it in the form of facts or information with the purpose of gaining *mastery* over it. We do this by searching for regularities in its behavior, by establishing a *single order of connectedness* among what we take to be the stable, identifiable elements making up its nature. But these stable ‘elements’ are parts of a cognitive framework of our own creation that we impose on the phenomena in question from the outside. As such, they have their being for us within the already well-known realm of measurement, thus to elaborate it further. But also as such it is a form of thought that eliminates the inner dynamics, inner complexities, and internal relations in terms of which both created and self-creating beings come into existence and have their being there. Such reductions of complexities to simplicities can sometimes occur in an instant, in a flash of insight!

In Goethe’s “delicate empiricism,” however, there is an altogether different way of responding to the difficulties and disquiets facing us: Instead of treating the phenomena in question as consisting only in configurations of separately existing parts, they are treated as created or self-creating entities. As such, they possess a kind of indivisible wholeness denied to configurations of separately existing parts. It is this that is crucial. For a certain kind of *expressive-responsive*, bodily understanding becomes available to us in relation to such wholes that is quite unavailable to us as disengaged spectators – a kind of practical, judgmental understanding that, in providing us with a sense of the “inner form” of such created entities, i.e., of the inner formative movements possibly giving rise to them, which can ‘teach us’ an anticipatory sense of how to ‘go on’ with them. But we can only gain this embodied, anticipatory sense by ‘entering into’ a dialogically- or chiasmically structured relationship with them. And, as we ‘dwell upon or with’ them for a while in this manner, we can gradually gain an orientation toward them as their ‘inner nature’ becomes more familiar to us. But this kind of understanding cannot be acquired in a flash of insight. Much as we get to

know our ‘way around’ inside a new city which is at first unfamiliar to us, say, by exploring its highways and byways according to the different projects we try to pursue within it, we must take the time required to approach the phenomena of our inquiries in many different directions. In attempting to understand the ‘inner’ inter-connections and relations within them, we must take our time. For we are not seeking the solution to a problem but, so to speak, to find our ‘way around’ inside something that is a mystery to us – an unsolvable mystery that might remain so.

In becoming familiar with something in our surroundings in this way, we can come to know them, not just their inert, objective nature, but to know them in terms of a whole realm of possible responsive, living relations that we might have toward or with them. We can orient toward them in terms of their yet-to-be-achieved *values*, the (grammatical) ‘calls’ they might exert on us to ‘go on’ with them in one way rather than another. The development of a sensitivity to such calls is not a part of the problem-solving process.

Although Goethe, in introducing his idea of a delicate empiricism, wrote that it was an “enhancement of our mental powers [that] belongs to a highly evolved age” (Goethe, 1988, p.307, quoted in Brady, 1998, p.98), as I see it, the kind of witness-thinking, witness-seeing, and witness understanding and action to which it gives rise, is in fact an everyday affair. But what Goethe – along with Wittgenstein – shows us is how an already spontaneously executed everyday inter-activity can be instituted between us deliberately. To many, there are only two categories of difficulties facing us in the world: problems which can eventually be solved and mysteries which cannot – and as Wittgenstein (1922) suggested in the *Tractatus*: “Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent” (7, p.180). But what Goethe and the later Wittgenstein show us is that there is a third category: mysteries that we can ‘enter into’ and begin to find our ‘way around’ inside of. And that there is a ‘poetic’ way of talking and writing here – what we might call ‘witness’-writing (see Shotter, 2004) – within which we can express what we find in our criss-cross journeyings over these often befogged landscapes. Ways of talking and writing that, like signposts erected at recognizable landmarks, can ‘point to’ what next to expect out in the world of our everyday, practical affairs.

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Notes

1. Helen Keller (2003), unable to sense people's character through visual or auditory cues, sensed it through their hand movements in shaking their hands: "It is interesting to observe the differences in the hands of people. They show all kinds of vitality, energy, stillness, and cordiality. I never realized how living the hand is until I saw [encountered in touch] those chill plaster images in Mr. Hutton's collection of casts. The hand I know in life has the fullness of blood in its veins, and is elastic with spirit. How different dear Mr Hutton's hand was from its dull, insensate image. To me the cast lacks the very form of the hand. Of the many casts in Mr Hutton's collection I did not recognize any, not even my own. But a loving hand I never forget. I remember my fingers in the large hands of Bishop Brooks, brimful of tenderness and a strong man's joy. If you were blind and deaf, and could have held Mr. Jefferson's hand, you would have seen in it a face and heard a kind voice unlike any other you have known. Mr. Twain's hand is full of whimsies and the drollest humors, and while you hold it the drollery changes to sympathy and championship" (pp.16-17).

2. Such parts are thought of only as "solid bodies," notes Bortoft (1996, p.61), where a fundamental characteristic of solid, self-contained bodies is the *external* nature of their relations to each other, i.e., their ability to retain their character irrespective of their relations to other 'parts.'

3. Such a world is not wholly unfamiliar to us. Whorf (1956) described the world of the native-american Hopi thus: "The Hopi microcosm," he wrote, "seems to have analyzed reality largely in terms of EVENTS (or better 'eventing')... [Where] events are considered the expression of invisible intensity factors, on which depend their stability and persistence, or their fugitiveness and proclivities. It implies that existents do not 'become later and later' all in the same way; but some do so by growing like plants, some by diffusing and vanishing,

some by a procession of metamorphoses, some by enduring in one shape till affected by violent forces. In the nature of each existent able to manifest as a definite whole is the power of its own mode of duration: its growth, decline, stability, cyclicity, or creativeness. Everything is thus already 'prepared' for by the way it now manifests by earlier phases, and by what will be later, partly has been, and partly is in the act of being so 'prepared'" (p.147).

4. This famous quote continues: "Indeed, so certain is it, that we may confidently assert that it is absurd from men even to entertain any thought of so doing, or to hope that maybe another Newton may some day arise, to make intelligible to us even the genesis of but a blade of grass from natural laws that no design has ordered. Such insight we must deny mankind" (p.54).

5. Such events are often described as "blendings," but this cannot be so. The most obvious example of a chiasmic event is our perception of *depth* in binocular vision (see Shotter, 2003a; Bateson, 1979; Merleau-Ponty, 1962). Just the opposite of a blending takes place. There is no blurring, averaging, or mixing. Instead, there is the seemingly paradoxical forming of a unity of *unmerged* views from the two eyes!

6. Linked with the 19th century Romantic movement – the most important representative of this trend is Wilhelm von Humbolt, says Voloshinov (1986, p.48).

7. The main protagonists here are Saussure (1911), and, in recent times, Chomsky (1965).

8. In fact, Vygotsky was influenced much by Goethe – but that is another story (see Shotter, 2000).

9. "... it 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).

10. Elsewhere (Shotter, 2003), I outlined these two different styles of thought and under understanding by contrasting *relationally-responsive* forms with the *representational-referential* forms much more familiar to us in our intellectual lives – with the idea in mind of picking up on Bakhtin's (1986) emphasis on the spontaneously responsive forms of understanding that occur to us in our daily relations with each other.

11. Frazer, James George, Sir, 1854-1941 *The Golden Bough: a Study in Magic and Religion*. Imprint [New York, The Macmillan Company, 1935]

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