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PARTICIPATIVE THINKING: 'SEEING THE FACE' AND 'HEARING THE VOICE' OF NATURE

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In establishing the overall landscape and the horizon within which the explorations conducted in essays in this volume should take place, Yrjö Haila posed two general questions, within the context of an overall goal. The two questions were: 1) What does it mean for we humans to learn from nature? And 2), in what ways is nature *present* in human cultural existence, and what does this teach us? While his overall goal, was to develop a dynamic vocabulary for the understanding of humanity-nature relationships. In this essay, I want to explore these questions in both a negative and positive way. In other words, I want to explore both what it is that prevents us from learning what it is that nature might have to teach us, but to explore also, in line with Haila's overall goal, what is involved in 'entering into' a *conversation* with nature so that we can, so to speak, come to hear its *voice* and to see its *face*, thus to make sense of what it has to teach us.

In line with Chuck Dykes's reference to the claim made by Goethe's Faust – which, incidently, also appears in the quotation I cite from Wittgenstein (1980) below – that it was not the *word* but the *act*, the *deed*, from which our understanding of things began, I also want to explore what it is to understand the 'inner life', the 'spirit' of an Other, from our participating in a joint life with them. This joint life is such that, in Dyke's words, "it lives with us and we with it: in, around, and through each other in a helter-skelter of interactivities of varying profit to us all." As I see it then, it is our immediate, spontaneous, living responses to the others and othernesses in our surrounding circumstances that has been completely discounted and ignored as unimportant in our current, standard forms of rationality. In turning away from active forms of dynamic, *participatory understanding* – what I will call *relationally-responsive forms of understanding* – it has led us to focus all our attention on attaining merely a passive, uninvolved, *referential-representational* kind of understanding. And in seeking such a passive, representational understand[end 106]ing, rather than seeking to do justice to the othernesses around us and to let them teach us about themselves in *their* own terms, we have sought mastery over them, and merely to represent them accurately to ourselves in *our* rather than in *their* terms.

Instead, I want to explore a view of communication, of language, as an extension of our spontaneously expressive-responsive bodily activity, a view that orients us away from language as consisting primarily in terms of words and word forms – forms that can be iterated identically over and over again – and more toward it as an elaboration and refinement of our expressive gestures: both mimetic and indicative. Wittgenstein (1953) captures this aspect of our expressions in his remark, that "meaning is a physiognomy" (no.568). For, as we will find, it is only within our ongoing, dynamic, responsive, living relations to the expressions of the others and othernesses around us, that a sense of their *inner* lives can become *present* to us in our human world. To make such a change around as this, though, is to treat our surroundings, the earth, rather than as a dead mechanism, as an intelligent, living being. It is, as Carolyn Merchant (1983) points out, to return to views similar to those of certain ancient Greek philosophers, or, as Levy-Bruhl (1926) suggests, to the *animistic* or *participatory* attitudes of so-called primitive peoples.

But in this respect, it is Merleau-Ponty (1962) who best expresses the attitude I want to adopt: "To return to things themselves is to return to that world which precedes knowledge, of which knowledge always *speaks*, and in relation to which every scientific schematism is an abstract and derivative sign-language, as is geography in relation to the country-side in which we have learnt beforehand what a forest, a prairie or a river is" (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p.ix). In thinking of nature

speaking to us as to an extent all living things 'speak' to us, I will not, however, go so far as to claim that the earth is in fact a nurturing mother, or that our surroundings are in fact inhabited by spirits and ghosts. But strangely, I will be claiming that the same strands of sixteenth and seventeenth century thought that turned us away from thinking of our earth as alive, and from thinking of life as something uniquely special and as yet not-well-understood, have also led us to ignore important events to do with our own bodies, and their responsive reactions to events occurring around us. As professional academic experts, trained (ideally!) to live in worlds of orderly and systematic theory, we have been trained to ignore the dirty, messy, unique world of particular concrete events and living bodies, the worlds of ordinary everyday life. It is this [end 107] now strange(!) world of bodily expressions, of gestural meanings, and of our spontaneously responsive bodily relations with our surroundings, which has become invisible to us, and to which, once again, we must learn to attend.

On making ourselves deaf to nature's responses

How did we come to be so inattentive to our surroundings? Because, I think, we are heirs to a philosophical tradition with its recent roots in the philosophy of Descartes and Kant.

As Kant (1970) described it in his *Critique of Pure Reason* of 1781, if we are to follow what is accounted as "the true path of a science" (p.17), then we must accept the belief that "reason has insight only into that which it produces after a plan of its own, [thus] it must not allow itself to be kept, as it were, in nature's leading-strings... Reason... must approach nature in order to be taught by it. It must not, however, do so in the character of a pupil who listens to everything the teacher has to say, but of an appointed judge who compels the witness to answer questions which he himself has formulated" (p.20). In other words, as Charles Taylor (1995) notes, our currently agreed way of doing science, indeed, all our modes of intellectual inquiry in the Western world, are deeply and extensively shaped by the inclinations and attitudes implicit in, what he calls, "the epistemology project." It's effects shape "some of the most important moral and spiritual ideas of our civilization... [Such that] to challenge them is sooner or later to run up against the force of this tradition, which stands with them in a complex relation of mutual support. Overcoming or criticizing these ideas involves coming to grips with epistemology" (p.8). What is this tradition?

There are many strands to this tacit background to our intellectual lives, influencing what we account between us as properly constituted knowledge. One is, that we must conduct all our scientific inquiries as self-conscious, rational subjects set over against a world of objects. Another is our wilfulness, our urge toward mastery, the tendency to treat our own actions as primary, and to ignore what happens to us, events that we ourselves are subject to that come to us from our surroundings – our responses to nature. We think of such responses as being merely subjective, and assign this sphere of human experience to [end 108] the arts, to literature, to poetry or painting, etc., or perhaps to the human sciences, to psychology, sociology, and linguistics. But this leaves all our own prejudices and biases, urges and compulsions, fixations and illusions, what we take for granted as unexceptional unexamined. Indeed, we can see just these attitudes represented in the passage from Kant quoted above. But it was the Descartes who set the whole scene for the version of rational inquiry that motivated Kant's remarks. How?

In his *Discourse on the Method of Properly Conducting One's Reason and of Seeking Truth in the Sciences* of 1637 (Descartes, 1968), he set out a characterization of our "external world," and a method for thinking about its nature, that has shaped our thought about ourselves, our surroundings, and the relations between the two, ever since. By the use of his methods, as he put it, "there can be nothing so distant that one does not reach it eventually, or so hidden that one cannot discover it" (p.41). Indeed, such a method of reasoning – in which we must "borrow all the best from geometric analysis and algebra" (p.42) – could, he suggested, lead us to the discovery of God's established laws, "thereby mak[ing] ourselves, as it were, masters and possessors of nature" (p.78).

Many such Cartesian influences are still at work in our sciences. And as a "form shaping ideology" (Bakhtin, 1984, p.83), these assumptions still, it seems to me, selectively determine both our

aims and the phenomena to which we attend in many of our academic disciplines. Thus – perhaps surprisingly, given its success in many other of our spheres of inquiry and endeavor – for our purposes here, of 'entering into' an essentially communicative relation to nature, thus to 'see its face' and 'hear its voice', I want to reject this whole approach. For, in conducting ourselves in a one-way, mechanical, input-output, cause-and-effect manner, we eliminate from rational consideration, the two-way, *dialogically-structured*, spontaneously responsive activities required for such communicative relations to be possible. They become, so to speak, rationally-invisible to us. As I have already noted above, in leading us to ignore our immediate, spontaneous, living responses to the othernesses in our surrounding circumstances, it prevents us from letting them teach us about themselves in their own terms.

But refusing to allow ourselves to be led by nature in any way, we restrict ourselves to acting only in terms of our own wants, desires, or reasons. We ignore as an importance source of knowledge: our spontaneous responsiveness to the others and othernesses around us. In other words, the form [end 109] shaping ideology implicitly at work in such a one-way style of interaction with our surroundings is, as Bakhtin (1984) terms it, one of a *monological* kind. In transforming the world into a representation arrived at as a result of deductive reasoning, we "inevitably transform the represented world into a *voiceless object of that deduction*" (p.83). We make ourselves "deaf to the other's response" (p.293).

On being bodily responsive to our surroundings

In this section, I want to explore how our disciplinary lives might change if we were to adopt a very different "form shaping ideology" in certain of our inquiries, especially in those involving our living relations to our natural surroundings. What if, rather than as Descartes's self-centered and self-controlled, subjective minds, 'standing' (if that is the right word to apply to such disembodied entities) over against a voiceless, objective world, we begin to view ourselves as living, embodied, *participant parts* of a larger, ongoing, predominantly living whole. Then, as merely participant parts within such a whole, rather than seeking solely to be "masters and possessors" of it, we might also find ourselves subjected as respondents to 'its' requirements as much as, if not more than, we can subject it to our's. If that were so, while still perhaps seeking mastery of some of its aspects – seeking to understand how we might *use* them as a *means* to our own *ends* – we would also need to seek another quite different kind of understanding. We would need to understand 'its' *expressions*, respond to 'its' calls, and so on. For, as an other or otherness to which we must, unavoidably, *respond*, we would need to develop forms of response in which we can *collaborate* or *participate* in with 'it' in achieving our goals.

I cannot emphasize enough the importance of this shift, from focusing our attention on representations of our surroundings, to focusing on our immediate, spontaneous, bodily responses to them. It is in this latter context that Wittgenstein's remark quoted above – that meaning is a physiognomy – should be understood. By it, he means that there is an aspect of our utterances, of our words, that makes them like gestures, like facial expressions, like smiles or frowns, like exclamations of delight or outbursts of dismay, which touch or move the others around us in an immediate way. So although in one sense, something is *said* in the [end 110] repetition of a word-form used, in our unique *saying* of it, in our responsive bodying of it out into the world around us, we are spontaneously expressing something of our unique relation to those surroundings. The same can be said all the events around us that move us, that touch, or strike us – they too can be expressive in the same way!

This means that we should takes our living, spontaneous responsiveness to the expressions of others and the othernesses around us seriously, as a central aspect of us as living in a communicative relation with our surroundings, for at least these two reasons: they provide us both with orientation, and even more importantly, with an access to novelty, i.e., the possibility of uniquely new beginnings. I will treat both of these in turn.

Orientation: The quest for mastery is usually expressed in the desire for *explanations*; we seek sure-fire ways in which we can intervene in ongoing activities causally, i.e., in a one-way, mechanical cause and effect fashion, to influence their outcome in predictable ways. The desire to *understand*, however – as a matter of understanding how, practically to respond to the expressive, *physiognomic*

aspects of our surroundings – is much harder to describe. It is not a matter of something happening to us intellectually, to do with learning a fact, some information, or a skill. Wittgenstein (1953) tries to explicate it in practical terms. For him, in his kind of philosophy, "a philosophical problem has the form: 'I don't know my way about'" (no.123). In other words, the kind of understanding he seeks, shows, manifests, or displays itself in our everyday practical activities. On being shown, for instance, how to follow a cooking recipe we cook a good meal, or on being shown how to execute a piece of carpentry we make a useful piece of furniture, or after a music lesson we play a piece of music well, or on having read in a book we go on to write an insightful book chapter, and so on. In all such instances as these, as Wittgenstein puts it, we are able to justify our understanding to the others around us, by in fact being able to "go on" with our activities in an intelligent, and intelligible, way (see e.g., Wittgenstein, 1953, no. 154). Rather than any precise factual information, what we have gained in such an orientational-understanding, is a sense of where and how we are 'placed' in relation to the others around us within the landscape of possibilities within we are all acting. [end 111]

In being obsessed in our intellectual lives only with objectivity, with being only outside observers of repetitive forms or patterns, we have ignored unique, once-off, novel events which have a fleeting existence only within our living relations with our surroundings, the transitory events within which we gain such orientational understandings. Not only have we dismissed their occurrence, thinking of such events as inessential variations in hidden, underlying, ideal forms. But we have also ignored the 'inner sense' we can gain from their dynamic structure, the shaped and vectored sense of the openings they offer us for our practical movements in relation to them. Yet, if we were to ignore the orientational-understandings we gain in relation to events in our practical lives – while driving, say, or even in walking through a crowded street – we would soon end in a mess. Intellectually, we have persisted in acting *as if* we are mere spectators of a world 'over there', upon which we act only in a one-way manipulative activities, rather than participants in a world around us 'here', to which we must spontaneously and responsively relate if we are to be 'answerable' to its 'calls' upon us.

Novelty: Fleeting though its calls may be, we cannot not be responsive to them. And just as in our practical- or orientational-understandings of questions posed to us, are expressed in our answers to them, so are our relationally-responsive understandings of other events occurring around us. They too are manifested in the responses we give to them But to the extent that such events are uniquely related to the *local*, *particular*, and *timely* circumstances of their occurrence (Toulmin, 2001), they are in some way *expressive* of them. And in our responsive reactions to them, we have a chance of understanding that fact. Indeed, as Wittgenstein (1980) notes: "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). Where, by the word 'primitive' here, he does not mean something way back in history or something simple, but something present to us now, and, as we shall see, something in fact very complex. "What is the word 'primitive' meant to say here?" he asks. "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" (1981, no.541). In other words, Wittgenstein [end 112] not only sees our ability to use and understand words, as emerging out from our natural inclination to be influenced by the gestures, the pantomimes and indications of others, but also finds in our responses to them, the beginnings of possible new ways of acting and thinking.

Thus, rather than seeking value-neutral, *theoretical* knowledge of the structure of our shared surroundings as a passive object of thought, which we must then 'interpret' as to what its meaning is for us in practical action, we face a different task. Our task is, I suggest, to try to make the 'being' our surroundings, as an active, 'living agent' in our lives, 'visibly present' to us, so to speak. If we can do that, then, just as we can keep returning to a major character in a novel who 'lives on' within us long after we have finished reading the book, and who like a good friend responds to our bewilderments and disquiets with offers of guidance and orientation, so we might be able to find the 'living being' of our surroundings helpful to us in the same way. We will be able to 'hear' what its 'voice' calls on us to do, to 'see' the expressions on its 'face' to which we might feel responsive – the expressions of order and command, of invitation and encouragement, of reassurance and support, etc.; as well as of pained disapproval or celebratory affirmation, of bewilderment or disorientation, etc. – informing us of both our current relations to our circumstances (our situation) as well as of the value of our responses to them (the

anticipated meaning of our actions). We can pursue all this with the overall aim of us ultimately coming to know our 'way around' inside its 'workings', to apply them to current problems before us in our consulting activities. In other words, just as we breath a sigh of relief on hearing English spoken on returning from foreign parts – for we know our 'way around' and feel a certain ease of movement in our own country denied us abroad – so we can seek a similar sense of being 'at home' in the surroundings in question.

"Real presences" in a dialogically-structured, participatory world

Central to the exploration into participatory approaches to inquiry that I want to conduct here, then, is a very special phenomenon that occurs *only* when we enter into mutually responsive, dialogically-structured, living, embodied relations with the others and othernesses around us [114] in our surroundings – when we cease to set ourselves, unresponsively, over against them, and allow ourselves to enter into an inter-involvement with them. In the intricate 'orchestration' of the interplay occurring between our own outgoing, responsive *expressions* toward those others (or othernesses) and their equally responsive incoming *expressions* toward us, a very special kind of *felt* understanding of this special phenomenon becomes available to us. The phenomenon in question, is the creation within the responsive interplay of all the events and activities at work in the situation at any one moment of distinctive, dynamic forms – dynamic forms in which all of those involved in them are, so to speak, "participant parts."

We can find a model for such *felt* forms in, say, the 3-D 'spiral' that we can see stretching out in depth before us as we scan over one of the 2-D random-dot-stereograms that were popular a few years ago. We may move our two eyes over the page before us as we please, but the dots on the page are arranged in such a way that, if we can let our eyes work like a camera with automatic focus, as we look in one direction we can find a convergent focus at *this* distance, in another direction at *that* distance, in another at *another* distance, and so on, so that we continue to scan over the page, we gain in the course of our looking, the felt sense of a spiral form before us – a felt sense that is identical for everyone. But our embodied sense of it as a 3-D form does not emerge in an instant. Only in the unfolding temporal course of our visual involvement with the special patterning of the dots on the 2-D page does 'it' emerge; and it is only 'there' in our orchestrated interaction with the *whole distribution* of the dots on the page, 'it' cannot be found hidden in just a selected few [1]. It is as if we must 'feel over' what is before us with our eyes, place by place, just as we must in feeling something with our fingers. Rather than simply looking *at* it, it would be more accurate to say that I see *according* to it, or *with* it, for 'it' is a guiding-agent in my looking.

As Merleau-Ponty (1968) puts it: "The look...envelops, palpates, espouses the visible things. As though it were in a relation of pre-established harmony with them, as though it knew them before knowing them, it moves in its own way with its abrupt and imperious style, and yet the views taken are not desultory – I do not look at a chaos, but at things – so that finally one cannot say if it is the look or if it is the things that command" (p.133). Indeed, if we are to see the spiral – and this is not easy to do – we must let 'it', the 'spiral' to be, control our looking. And when we do see it, we locate 'it' neither 'on' the page, nor 'in' our heads, but in fact 'out' in the space between us and the page, out in the world. For that is where, dynamically, the different 2-D views from my two eyes cohere into a 3-D unity. But clearly such forms, apart from their moment-by-moment emergence within the unfolding flow of activity in which they subsist, have no substantial existence in themselves. Yet, nonetheless, in being 'out there' as distinctive othernesses in their own right, so that only if we *address* them appropriately, i.e., in a way *answerable* to their nature, do they *answer* to our inquiries[2], such forms have the character of a "real presence" (Steiner, 1989). But although they are invisible, and exist only in a felt form, they are, nonetheless, 'somethings' that are independent of our wishes and opinions, of our beliefs and desires, indeed, we cannot interpret them as we please; thus, in this sense, they are clearly real.

Although we often fail to acknowledge the fact, it is such 'somethings', such dynamic forms, that constitute the background 'landscape', so to speak, to all our exchanges with the other people around us – including our academic disciples. Understanding their nature affords us a sense, not only of 'who' the

others around us 'are', but also of 'where they are coming from', and of how we are 'placed' in relation to them. It is a kind of understanding we express by saying that we are 'on a footing' with them, or that we understand how to 'go on' with them. In short, more than merely a sense of another's nature in itself, we come to a sense of their expressions *in relation to* a larger landscape of possibilities, in relation in fact to the "world" within which our relationship with them has its being.

Someone who struggled with the difficulties of giving expression to such dynamic forms, was William James. In his famous "The Stream of Thought" chapter (James, 1981), he discussed their nature in a way similar to the discussion above, and pointed out a number of mistakes we tend to make – if our thoughts have in fact such a character – in trying to describe them. We fail, he suggested, to register "the transitive parts" of the stream and succumb to an "undue emphasizing of [its] substantive parts [i.e., its resting-places]" (p.237), i.e., we focus on static or stable forms in the flow and ignore its relationally-responsive movement. Indeed, in so doing, we tend to confuse "the thoughts themselves... and *the things* of which they are aware... [But, while] *the things* are discrete and discontinuous... their comings and goings and [end 115] contrasts no more break the flow of thought that thinks them than they break the time and space in which they lie " (p.233, my emphases). In other words, he suggests, we should think of *the variations* within the stream of thought as the truly important parts, but they are, regrettably, "in very large measure constituted of *feelings of tendency*, often so vague that we are unable to name them at all" (p.246).

James's comments here about our vague feelings of tendency are, I think, of great importance. And, except that the momentary dynamic forms I want to focus on are not hidden in a stream of thought inside people's heads, but are out within the larger flow of inter-activity between them and their surroundings, I want to follow his promptings. Once we make this move though, we should note that, vague though the feelings of tendency may be that emerge in our interactions with our surroundings, to the extent that all can adopt a similar way of responding to them, all – as in seeing the same '3-D spiral' in a random-dot-stereogram – can orient toward the *same* real presence.

We can draw on Kuhn (1970, pp.190-191) to reinforce this point. He discusses the relations between: 1) Galileo's seeing of a ball rolling down a slope and up to the same height on the opposite slope, as related to the swing of a pendulum; 2) Huygens's solving of the problem of a pendulum's center of oscillation by imagining it as being composed of point-pendula, like Galileo's balls rolling down a slope and up the other side; and 3) Bernoulli's use of these "ways of seeing" aspects of the physical world to solve the problem of "the speed of efflux" of a jet of water from a tank as a function of the descent of the center of gravity of the water in tank and jet. He gives his reason for the example thus: "[It] should begin to make clear what I mean by learning from problems to see situations as like each other, as subjects for the application of the same scientific law or law-sketch. Simultaneously it should show why I refer to the consequential knowledge of nature acquired while learning the similarity relationship [as] thereafter embodied in a way of viewing physical situations rather than in rules or laws... [This] sort of learning is not acquired by exclusively verbal means. Rather it comes as one is given words together with concrete examples of how they function in use; nature and words are learned together " (pp.190-191). In other words, it comes, as we shall see, from the fact that, as Kuhn notes, we enter into a dialogically-structured form of participatory, rela[end 116]tionally-responsive understanding with certain crucial, initial concrete exemplars.

Some methods for participatory forms of inquiry

Currently, in accord with the unidentified and unremitting Cartesianism implicit in our current forms of inquiry, at least the following four major themes have been dominant in our attempts to understand ourselves and our surroundings: 1) We have supposed that the situations which confront us have the form of 'problems' to be solved by the self-conscious application of our own powers of individual thought; 2) that to understand a problem correctly, we must posses a correct picture, a *theory*, an accurate representation of it, in the sense that every element in reality, and the relations between them, are matched by elements in the representation; 3) that all such theories or representations are constituted as a single order of connectedness, such that a single source of influence can be said to be at

work in producing the 'problematic' phenomena – a system of rules, laws, or principles, for instance; and 4) that such representations must be arrived at by public argument and debate – concerned with the conceptual coherence of the proposed theory and the empirical evidence in its support – with the aim both of achieving universal agreement, and of eliminating any errors that there may be within it. If we are to arrive at some new, participatory forms of inquiry, we need to consider changes in relation to each of these four themes. I will consider them in reverse order, turning to the last first.

From argument to dialogue:

If we are interested in adopting a more participatory approach in our inquiries, as arguers and debaters, concerned only to criticize the systematic theories of others and to replace them with our own, we arrive on the scene too late, and then look in the wrong direction, with the wrong attitude: *too late*, because we take the 'basic elements' in terms of which we must work and conduct our arguments to be already fixed, already determined for us by an elite group of academically approved predecessors; *in the wrong direction*, because we look backward toward supposed already existing actualities, rather than forward toward possi[end 117]bilities; and *with the wrong attitude*, because we seek a static picture, a theoretical representation, of a phenomenon, rather than a living sense of it as an active agency in our lives. Or, to put it another way, this kind of critical concern with theories, is both beside the point and after the fact. It is *beside the point*, as our aim is to understand the (as yet non-existent) activities involved in approaching nature differently, and that cannot be done simply by proving a theory true. It is also *after the fact*, for in orienting us toward regularities, toward already existing forms, it diverts our attention away from those fleeting moments in which we have the chance of noting new reactions in ourselves, previously unnoticed responses that might provide the new beginnings we seek.

This is not to dismiss the importance of the scholarly work that has been done so far in the academies. Indeed, all the attempts to represent nature as crucially exhibiting *this* or *that* order or organization, have exerted a tremendous influence, not only on what we think of as being its character today, but also on the openings we can still see for its possible further structuring. But none of them have been wholly successful. Kuhn's (1970) work, as already mentioned above, being here just such a case in point. Yet, as he himself notes: "By focusing attention upon a small range of relatively esoteric problems, [a] paradigm forces scientists to investigate some part of nature in a detail and depth that would otherwise be unimaginable" (p.24). And, as I indicate above, this has been of great importance.

However, while such work has brought to our attention detailed features of our surroundings that we would never have noticed otherwise, in another role, that of influencing social and environmental policies for implementation by central, state governments, this kind of theory-driven, systematic science has been disastrous (Bernstein, 1984; Berlin, 1962; Scott, 1998). Why? Because in line with theme 3, when such theory-driven work is *applied* in the world outside the research community, it is not passed on in terms of its "paradigm" within the research community, but only in terms of a set of principles, i.e., a linguistic account of a single order of connectedness. Instead of the "real presence" of a historically rich, shared landscape of research possibilities, what is passed on is a set, to use a phrase of Scott's (1998) phrase, of "necessarily simple abstractions" (p.262). No wonder, as Sir Isaiah Berlin remarks, that while many of our "great liberating ideas" initially open up a surge of new opportunities, they "inevitably turn into suffocating strait[end118]jackets, and so stimulate their own destruction by new, emancipating, and at the same time, enslaving, conceptions" (Berlin, 1962, p.159).

From an explicit, single order of connectedness and sublime essences to "real presences:"

Currently in our academic inquiries, we feel under a compulsion to seek a systematic or logical framework, an accurate cognitive view, in terms of which to conduct our reasoning as to what, in particular practical circumstances, we should do. Thus at the moment, it seems perfectly rational to us to turn away from the practical contexts in question, to convene meetings in conference or committee rooms, and to hold "decision making meetings." And in such meetings, as we have noted above, to conduct debates as to which system of principles, which theoretical structures, we should attempt to implement. A number Wittgenstein's remarks are apposite here. One is: "Giving grounds, justifying the evidence, comes to an end; - but the end is not in certain propositions striking us immediately as true,

i.e., it is not a kind of *seeing* on our part; it is our *acting*, which lies at the bottom of the language-game" (Wittgenstein, 1969, no.204). In other words, he is trying to remind us here, as Kuhn is in his talk of paradigms, that theoretical structures alone cannot shape our actions – indeed, it is only in the context of shared practices that a theory can be applied without misunderstanding. Such shared practices – what Kuhn (1970) later came to call, as we noted above, a "disciplinary matrix" – while leading us to respond spontaneously to events around us in certain, standardized ways, also carry with them certain irresistible urges, cravings, inclinations, and compulsions to respond events also in self-misleading ways.

Central among such cravings is our "craving for generality" (Wittgenstein, 1965, p.17), or, "the contemptuous attitude [we have] towards the particular case" (1965, p.18). Bewitched or charmed by the methods of science, "we are under the illusion that what is sublime, what is essential, about our investigation consists in grasping *one* comprehensive essence (Wittgenstein, 1981, no.444)[3]. The tendency to generalize the case seems to have a strict justification in logic: here one seems *completely* justified in inferring: 'If *one* proposition is a picture, then any proposition must be a picture, for they must all be of the same nature'. For we [end 119] are under the illusion that what is sublime, what is essential, about our investigation consists in its grasping *one* comprehensive essence" (Wittgenstein, 1981, no.444).. We *must*, we feel – as professionals trained into a discipline – seek *regularities*, *patterns*, or *orderliness*, if we are properly to understand a phenomenon. Rorty (1989) also notes something similar in talking of our compulsive need, as he puts it, to "eternalize" or "divinize" the ideology of the day in a quest to find a basis for our actions somewhere "beyond history and institutions" (p.198). In other words, what Wittgenstein and Rorty are noting here, is the powerful influence that the linguistic generation of a "real presence" can exert on us in our exchanges with each other. But when words are used in this way, in a purely speculative or theoretical fashion, without being (mimetically) responsive to the contours of a practical context of use, or (indicatively) pointing to any of its features, then, we might say, following Wittgenstein (1953) that language has gone "*on holiday*" (no.38).

From theoretical "real presences" to real "real presences:"

While we still may feel that, nonetheless, all the talk and writing of theoreticians *must* represent *something* that is real, we need to remember that, whatever it is, it is connected to our natural surroundings only discontinuously, in terms of a number of points. Or, to put it another way, a theory, in being tested in a series of discrete experiments, gives rise to a knowledge-framework which, as Quine (1953) has put it, is "a man-made fabric which impinges on experience only along the edges" (p.42). The possibility of people being 'present' both to each other and to their surroundings, and of being touch with all the unique 'contradictory' complexities of each, is eliminated in this discontinuous, 'out of touch' approach to the acquisition of knowledge. We need a way of being in a more continuous contact with the others and othernesses around us; we can only gain the kind of understanding we need, in dialogically-structured circumstances[4].

If we are ever to mount the required form of participatory inquiry, instead of a single order of connectedness, supposedly proved to be true by a small group of experts to the exclusion of everyone else, a dialogically-structured community is needed. Indeed, just as Kuhn (1970) claims for a shared paradigm, which is taken by a scientific community, [end 120] for a while at least, as giving it correct answers to what its fundamental research objects are, so we might say about a shared, dialogically-structured, living 'truth' within such a community: it too may determine for a whole community what, simply, its reality "is." Indeed, in this connection, Bakhtin (1984) notes that: "It is quite possible to imagine and postulate a unified truth that requires a plurality of consciousnesses, one that in principle cannot be fitted within the bounds of a single consciousness, one that is, so to speak, by its very nature *full of event potential [sobytiina*] and is born at that point of contact among various consciousnesses. The monologic way of perceiving cognition and truth is only one of the possible ways. It arises only where consciousness is placed above existence. (p.81). And further, such a shared and living truth, in being *full of event potential*, does not, like value-neutral, *theoretical* knowledge, require *interpretation* if we are to implement it in practical action. In giving us a *living* sense of the actualities of our lives, it shows us their partial, still uncomplete nature, and thus their openness to being further specified by us. Indeed, such a 'truth', as a real presence, as an agent in our actions, acts as a powerful other embodied within us, and 'calls' us into action, issues 'action guiding advisories' along the way, and then judges our subsequent

actions accordingly by the 'facial' expressions it directs toward us after their completion.

But if we are ever to mount the required dialogical form of inquiry, how can we do it? For, as Bernstein (1984) notes, all attempts to implement "the idea that we can make, engineer, impose our collective will to form such communities [have been] disastrous... [for] the coming into being of community already presupposes an experienced sense of community" (p.226). James C. Scott (1998) adds a rider to such comments, to explain why such centrally imposed plans are so often disastrous: "It is," he suggests, "a characteristic of large, formal systems of coordination that they are accompanied by what appear to be anomalies but on closer inspection turn out to be integral to that order... [a] nonconforming practice is an indispensable condition for formal order" (Scott, 1998, pp.351-352). Indeed, it is precisely the "specific variability[5]" in a human order that allows us still to sustain it in the face of quite unpredictable circumstances. So how can we begin to help dialogical communities develop, if we cannot do it through deliberate planning and the implementation of principles. What way or ways are available that will not prove disastrous? [end 121]

The role of exemplary conversations in constituting shared practices:

While Kuhn's limited focus on ideally scientific contexts can be criticized (see Fuller, 2000), what he says about the role played by concrete examples in our learning of scientific practices is, I think, important. He notes, to repeat, that learning to perceive "similarity relationships," is "embodied in a way of viewing physical situations rather than in rules or laws," and that this "sort of learning... comes as one is given words together with concrete examples of how they function is use; nature and words are leaned together" (p.190). Indeed, Wittgenstein (1969) makes a similar remark: "Not only rules, but also examples are needed for establishing a practice. Our rules leave loop-holes, and the practice has to speak for itself" (no.139). In other words, a shared practice arises in a set of shared circumstances in which a group of people exhibit a set of shared responses to a set of shared events. It is the function of a set of shared examples or exemplars to evoke such a set of shared responses – the examples give orientation in the learning, as Wittgenstein (1953) puts it, of a "technique." Where, "to understand a language means to be master of a technique" (no.199).

Such examples are not illustrative of the practice in question, but constitutive of it, in the sense that they, spontaneously, call from us the new responses required for us to begin new language-games, new ways in which we may make sense together of whatever it is that our forms of shared expression are responsive to.

Is there a classical example here to which we can refer as a signpost, so to speak, pointing out to us the direction in which we must go? Yes, there is: Goethe's study of plant forms. As is well-known, Goethe claimed – but not as a matter of actual fact, but as a way of orienting oneself toward entities in one's surroundings with the aim of acquiring a sense of 'their' life – that all the organs of plants (from cotyledons to stem leave, stem leaves to sepals, sepals to petals, petals to stamens, and so on) are leaves transformed. To acquire this sense, to be able, imaginatively, to move backwards and forwards, through the unbroken, developmental flow of plants forms with ease, we must, Goethe claimed, understand the overall movement of a plant's growth through a process of "exact sensorial imagination." Goethe outlined the nature of this process thus: "If I look at the created object, inquire into its creation, and follow this process back as far as I can, I will find a series of steps. Since these are not [end 122] actually seen together before me, I must visualize them in my memory so that they form a certain ideal whole. At first I will tend to think in terms of steps, yet nature leaves no gaps, and thus, in the end, I will have to see this progression of uninterrupted activity as a whole. I can do so by dissolving the particular without destroying the impression itself" (quoted in Hoffman, 1998, p.133). Such a process is, he says, "a delicate empiricism which makes itself utterly identical with the object, thereby becoming true theory." To which he adds the comment: "But this enhancement of our mental powers belongs to a highly evolved age" (quoted in Brady, 1998, p.98). This is where finally, we must come to a reconsideration of our first theme above: our traditional orientation to an encountered other or otherness as a 'problem' to be solved by being explained.

As Goethe makes plain, rather than problems requiring explanation, thus to add yet more

knowledge to what we already are. The shift or move we require, is to turn such encounters into opportunities to acquire a sense, so to speak, of the unfinshedness of our surroundings, and of the openings they offer us to become more than we already are. Thus, as he puts it, our task is: "Whatever great, beautiful, or significant experiences have come our way must not be recalled again from without and recaptured, as it were; they must rather become part of the tissue of our inner life from the outset, creating a new and better self within us, forever as active agents in our *Bildung* [self-development]" (quoted in Brady, 1998, p.109).

Conclusions

In the classical tradition, we begin our inquiries by orienting toward any newness, strangeness, or disquiet we encounter, *as a problem to be solved*. We then approach it in terms of specific sequence of steps: we first treat it as an entity that can be analyzed into a set of already well known elements. We then search for an order or pattern amongst them; hypothesize a causal agency responsible for that order (we may call it, say, "the Synergy of Nature"); and then go on to find further evidence of its existence. Indeed, we then begin to develop further theories as to the nature of such a "Synergy," and attempt in terms of such theories, indirectly, to manipulate the "Synergy's" operations to produce what we see as out[end 123]comes advantageous to us. But we only call such theories 'solutions' to our problem, if they enable us to achieve mastery over the agency hypothesized within them.

Alternatively, however, in seeking a participatory, orientational-understanding, the sequence of steps we would follow would be quite different: We would begin by treating any otherness we encounter as radically unknown to us - we would approach it, not like Kant's "appointed judge," but with care, respect, and anxiety. We would then 'enter into' dialogically-structured, reciprocally responsive relations with it. To do so, we must (partially at least) be 'answerable' to its calls, just as it (partially at least) would be answerable to ours. As a result of the interplay between us and it, another 'it', a real presence would appear between us, produced neither solely by us or by the othernesses, an 'it' within which both they and we have our being. This 'it' is not my it, but 'our' it. Thus I do not gaze at it as I might at an object for use, I do not see it as having a place within an ordered perspective. My looking wanders around within it, in accord with the 'calls' I receive at each point of fixation to move my looking next to its neighbors – and where, like the two 2-D monocular views from our two eyes are merged into the unity of a binocular view with *depth* to it, so all of these points of fixation merge into the unity of a world. 'It' directs my looking as must as I do myself. Rather than simply seeing 'it', I see 'with' its help. Thus, just as a person's facial expression, which with its smile gestures us to approach or with its scowl repels us, has a similar 'directive' or 'instructive' physiognomy, so we can develop a sensibility of, or sensitivity to, many other 'its' that can emerge in our responsive engagements with our surroundings. And I can do this because "my body is not only an object amongst all other objects,... but an object which is *sensitive* to all the rest, which reverberates to all sounds, vibrates to all colors, and provides words with their primordial significance through the way in which it receives them.... [The body] is that strange object which uses its own parts as a general system of symbols for the world, and through which we can consequently 'be at home in' that world, 'understand' it and find significance in it" (pp.236-237).

And as we continue our commerce with the othernesses around us, there can be a gradual growth of our familiarity with the 'inner' shape or character of the real presences created between us. And as we 'dwell on', or 'within' its nature, we can gain a sense of the *value* of its yet-to-be[end 124]-achieved aspects – the prospects 'it' offers us for 'going on' with it. We come to feel 'at home' with it, to 'know our way around' within it, in the way we find our way around inside towns of houses familiar to us. Thus what we gain here, rather than a solution, rather than further information, is a shaped and vectored sense of how 'to go on' in relation to the otherness concerned, and be 'answerable' to the mute judgements of the living world around us – a sense that cannot be measured by any mechanical instruments, which is available to us only in our living, moving, responsive engagements with our surroundings.

Above, then, I have explored just some of the possible features of a participatory way of thinking – as distinct from the *disengaged* or *detached* forms of thought and discourse we currently employ in the

academic and intellectual spheres of our lives – which gives us a chance of the 'face' and the 'voice' of our natural surroundings becoming *present* to us. But I say only a *chance*, as such a full responsiveness is not easy to achieve. Only if we are prepared to return, like little children, to our primordial commerce with the world, to a pre-Cartesian way of being in the world in which we approach it not as self-conscious, self-contained, individual thinkers and deliberate actors, but as living responsive, participant parts of a larger whole. Aware of the Cartesian dangers we have been exploring above, Merleau-Ponty (1968) attempted to describe a new task for philosophy. Noting that modern philosophy "prejudges what it will find" (p.130), he suggested that to overcome this tendency, philosophy "once again... must recommence everything, reject the instruments reflection and intuition had provided themselves, and install itself in a locus where they have not yet been distinguished, in experiences that have not yet been "worked over," that offer us all at once, pell-mell, both "subject" and "object," both existence and essence, and hence give philosophy resources to redefine them" (p.130).

But to make such a change as this – which is, as Wittgenstein (1980) remarks, "a difficulty having to do with the will, rather than with the intellect" (p.17) – is not at all easy. For, as the whole tenor of this chapter suggests, it is not an intellectual change that is required, but a bodily one – a very different kind of project for those of us used to "the life of the mind." Above, I have tried to answer Haila's questions and to suggest something of what is needed, if we are to fashion the kind of vocabulary needed to relate ourselves, dynamically, to the dynamic phenomena around us. But if we are to walk the walk of this new and changed way of [end 125] talking, major changes in the whole institutional life of academe are required. Only if we can learn to see the 'face' and to hear the 'voice' of our own current, local, intellectual institutions, will we each be able to see the particular and unique openings they offer us. To act globally, we must each act in our own precisely local ways, as the 'voice' and the 'face' of nature allows.

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Notes:

[1] See Shotter (1996) where this phenomenon is discussed at length.

[2] Compare Bakhtin's (1993) claim – "My participative and demanding consciousness can see that the world of modern philosophy, the theoretical and theoreticized world of culture, is in a certain sense actual, that it possesses validity. But what it can see also is that this world is not the once-occurrent world in which I live and in which I answerably perform my deeds" (p.20) – with Kant's quoted above. As he sees it, we must not allow reason "to be kept...in nature's leading-strings;" only if we are *not* answerable to nature can we be truly rational!

[3] The full quote is worth repeating here, for it illustrates the extent to which we are subject to an extensive sequence of interconnected compulsions: "We now have a *theory*, a 'dynamic theory' of the proposition; of language, but it does not present itself to us as a theory. For it is the characteristic thing about such a theory that it looks at a special clearly intuitive case and says: '*That* shows how things are in every case; this case is the exemplar of *all* cases.' - 'Of course! It has to be like that' we say, and are satisfied. We have arrived at a form of expression that *strikes us as obvious*. But it is as if we had now seen something lying *beneath* the surface.

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

[5] I take this term from Voloshinov (1986), who uses it to outline how a supposedly normative, linguistic form, can be uttered in different ways in different circumstances to take on different meanings: "Thus the constituent factor for the linguistic form... is not at all its self-identity as signal but its specific variability; and the constituent factor for understanding the linguistic form is not recognition of 'the same thing', but understanding in the proper sense of the word, i.e., orientation in the dynamic process of becoming and not 'orientation' in some inert state" (p.69). It is its *novelty* not its *repetition* that is significative of a speaker's *unique* meaning.