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**VYGOTSKY, BAKHTIN, GOETHE: CONSCIOUSNESS AS *CON-SCIENTIA*,  
AS WITNESSABLE KNOWING ALONG WITH OTHERS**

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**ABSTRACT:** All our higher mental functions are mediated processes, says Vygotsky (1986), and signs are the basic means used to master and direct them. But how can this be if our words and other signs work only in a purely representational, ‘picturing’ fashion, for they still need interpreting as to their meaning? The ‘inner observation’ problem remains unsolved. Our significant expressions must also work on us in another way: by the living expressions of others producing spontaneous bodily reactions from us. Thus the relation between thought and language is not to be found in patterns discoverable in transcripts of already spoken words, but in the dynamic influences exerted by our words in their speaking. Vygotsky (1986) speaks of our utterances as having an *affective-volitional* intonation, while Bakhtin (1993) talks of them as having an *emotional-volitional* tone. This means, as I will elaborate in my talk, that not only it is possible to possess a *transitional understanding* of ‘where’ at any one moment we are placed in relation to another person’s expressions, but to possess also at that moment an *action guiding anticipation* of the range of next ‘moves’ they may make. Thus, as I see it then, thinking and consciousness is a *socially responsive* elaboration of our animal sensitivities to, and awareness of, events occurring in our relations to the others and othernesses in our surroundings. Thus, far from it being a special, private, inner theater or workshop of the mind, its emergence depends completely on the dynamical intertwining or intermingling of our ‘inner lives’ with the ‘inner’ lives of those around us. This view of thinking chimes in with Goethe’s [1749-1832] views quoted below, as well as with his account of a special kind of thinking he calls *exact sensorial imagination*. In this view, our thinking and consciousness becomes no more strange to us than the fact of our ‘livingness’ – a fact that is at once both ordinary, in the sense of being very familiar to us in our daily practical lives, as well as being quite extraordinary to us in our intellectual lives, due to the current inappropriateness of our academic modes of thought and talk. My talk, then, will be just as much concerned with an exploration of the move away from mechanical modes of thought to those appropriate to living processes, as it will be about thinking and consciousness.

“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 Amrine, p.47; Cottrell, p.257).

“The highest thing would be to comprehend that everything factual is already theory... One should not seek anything behind phenomena: they themselves are the theory” (quoted in Brady, p.98, HA, p.432).

At the end of his great work, *Thought and Language*, Vygotsky (1986) remarks: “We cannot close our study without mentioning the perspectives that our investigation opens up. This is even more momentous a problem than that of thinking; what I mean is the problem of consciousness” (p.255).

And he continues this remark by noting that: “If language is as old as consciousness itself, and if language is a practical consciousness-for-others and, consequently, consciousness-for-myself, then not only one particular thought but all consciousness is connected with the development of the word. The word is a thing in our consciousness... that is absolutely impossible for one person, but that becomes a reality for two. The word is a direct expression of the historical<sup>1</sup> nature of human consciousness... A word relates to consciousness as a living cell relates to a whole organism, as an atom relates to the universe. A word is a microcosm of human consciousness” (p.255).

In this, I think Vygotsky is absolutely right, and today I want to explore the whole idea of our consciousness as being *relationally* structured. Thus, it is *from within* the context of our living of our lives together that I want to explore what he means in his claim that a word – which becomes “a reality for two” (or more people), but is an impossibility for one – constitutes a microcosm of human consciousness.

### Speech as living human activity, as expression

I want to begin this exploration by noting the special importance he attaches, not only to focussing on *speech*, the spoken word, but also on taking “the conception of word meaning as “a unit” of both generalizing thought and social exchange” (Vygotsky, 1986, p.9, my emphasis), rather than as “an element.” Where, in making this distinction, he wants to attend to the utterance of a word as playing a ‘part’ in a larger activity. Thus, rather than having its character in itself, it will owe its character to its intrinsic relations with this larger whole. Thus, in choosing word meaning as his *unit*, he wants to identify the “single living cell... the ‘psychological’ cell” (Vygotsky, 1978, p.8) that retains the characteristics of the whole within which it has its characteristic being<sup>2</sup>.

Here, I think, Vygotsky’s thought runs in step with Goethe’s [1749-1832]: “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” (HA, 13, p.17, in Sepper, 1988, p.69).

In taking this approach, he is, as we shall see, very critical of those methods of analysis in psychology that “try to cut through the knot of the problem instead of untying it” (Vygotsky, 1986, p.3)<sup>3</sup>, i.e., that analyze all the different aspects of our mental abilities into a collection of separate and self-contained functions. In particular, as he saw it, “the analysis of verbal thinking into two separate, basically different elements [a linguistic and a behavioral element] precludes any study of *the intrinsic relations* between language and thought” (p.3, my emphasis). When we approach the problem of the interrelation between thought and speech, “the first question that arises is that of intellect and affect. Their separation as subjects of study is a major weakness of traditional psychology, as it makes the thought process appear as an autonomous flow of ‘thoughts thinking themselves’, segregated from the fullness of life, from the personal needs and interests, the inclinations and impulses, of the thinker” (p.10).

It is on the usually ignored *intrinsic relations* that are *already in existence for us*, and on the inclinations and impulses we spontaneously exhibit *between* ourselves and the others and othernesses around us, as we “grow into the intellectual life of those around [us]” (Vygotsky, 1978, p.88), that I want to focus. As Gadamer (1989) put it in his *Truth and Method*, my concern is with “what [just] happens to us over and above our wanting and doing” (p.xviii).

In focussing on Vygotsky’s notion of *word meaning* as a *unit* (but not as an *element*) in our analyses, I also want to link with Bakhtin’s (1986) emphasis on the role of words, not in their finished forms, not in terms of the patterns they make<sup>4</sup>, but as a living activity, as embodied *utterances* or *expressions* which can – first, as other people’s expressions, and later, “when the speaker populates [the word] with his own intentions” (Bakhtin, 1981, p.293) – exert a dynamic influence in shaping and organizing our activities in their moment by moment unfolding out in the world of our everyday practical affairs.

And indeed, as Kozulin, in his editor’s introduction (Vygotsky, 1986, p.lvii), and as the editors in the Minick translation (Vygotsky, 1987, p.v) both make clear, when Vygotsky speaks of language in the title of his book,

is it *speech*, the act of voicing one's words, the responsive effects produced by our expressive activities, that is central to his concerns, not language as a system of static, repeatable forms functioning according to rules in their application.

But here I must add that, along with a focus on a persons's responsive reactions to events in their surroundings, I want also to focus on the way in a person's responsive reactions are always expressive in some way to those around them. Not only are they expressive of the person's attitudes, evaluations, or feelings regarding the events in question, but also of any *efforts* they may be making to cope with those events – we can *see* that the man next to me was 'taken by surprise', that the woman was 'upset'; but we can also see that the man over there was *battling* against the wind, that the girl in the blue dress was *trying* to talk to her boyfriend who wasn't listening, or that the child in the shopping plaza was *wanting* to be picked up, etc.

Indeed, there is something very special about living movement, about *expression*, that makes it very different from the mere physical or locomotive movement of things and objects. For, besides their moving around in space, living wholes as such can also be sensed as moving *within themselves*. And furthermore, rather than being the re-arrangement or re-configuration of separately existing parts which, at each instant in time, take up a new configuration *in space* (according to certain laws or principles), expressive movements are the movements of indivisible, self-structurizing, living wholes *in or through time*. Indeed, such expressive movements, such gestures, can be sensed as occurring through time, even if the bodies of the relevant living beings stay steadfastly fixed in space – they breath, they make noises, they wave their limbs about, and so on.

In so doing, they seem to display both short-term expressive 'inner' movements – smiles, frowns, vocalizations, and other such gestural movements – the expressions of a 'thou', i.e., expressions of their own living identity, as well as more long term 'inner' movements, i.e., manifestations of their growing up, maturing, and aging. In other words, although not necessarily moving around in space at all, all such living processes, inevitably, are always irreversibly 'in motion' in time, and their living motion is expressive of their own unique identity, their own unique way of 'coming into being' and 'becoming older' within their surroundings.

Hence, in focussing on word meaning in Vygotsky's and Bakhtin's sense, we cannot just focus on separable, fixable, or countable entities in our investigations, we must focus on those events or moments in our lives in which we are in an expressive-responsive, living relation with the others and othernesses around us, moments or events when the words we use are merely an aspect of, or a *unit* within, a larger whole – a surrounding situation into which they are complexly interwoven or intertwined.

In other words, in what follows, I will be focussing centrally on our *words in their speaking*, rather than on the *patterns* to be found in our *already spoken words*. The task, then, is to work *from within the still ongoing moment of speaking*, and to study the changing feelings of anticipation created as an utterance unfolds ... not to look back on already completed, past speech acts of speaking for the 'logic' in what was said. This, in my estimation, opens up a vast new 'terra incognita' that now awaits our further explorations.

Central to its study, then, as is perhaps already apparent, is a focus both on the *responsivity* of living and growing, embodied beings, both to each other and to the othernesses in their surroundings, as well as a focus on their *expressions*, on *their own* unique ways of coming-into-Being.

Vygotsky (1986), I think, foreshadowed the importance of this kind of inquiry in setting out "the last step" in his analysis of inner "verbal thought" thus: "thought is not begotten by thought;" he said, "it is engendered by motivation, i.e., by our desires and needs, our interests and emotions" he says. "Behind every thought, there is an *affective-volitional tendency*, which holds the answer to the last 'why' in the analysis of thinking" (p.252, my emphasis). Bakhtin (1993) also makes a similar comment: "... the word does not merely designate an object as a present-on-hand entity, but also expresses by its intonation my valuative attitude toward the object, ... and, in so doing sets it in motion toward that which it yet-to-be-determined about it... Everything that is actually experienced... as something given *and as something-yet-to-be-determined*, is intonated, has *emotional-volitional tone*, and enters into an effective relationship to me within the unity of the ongoing event encompassing us" (pp.32-33, my

emphasis). In other words, as I will try to elaborate in a moment, not only it is possible to possess a *transitional understanding* of ‘where’ at any one moment we are placed in relation to another person’s expressions, but to possess also at that moment an *action guiding anticipation* of the range of next ‘moves’ they may make.

But all these *affects* and *effects* will all only become visible (or hearable) within the unfolding dynamics, within the *effortful* temporal contouring people give their expressions in the ongoing course of their performance. Indeed, more than that: they will all only become visible (or hearable) *within the dynamics* of the spontaneously responsive flow of inter-activity occurring between a living being and the others and othernesses in its surroundings.

### **The spontaneously responsive background at work in the background to our meetings with each other**

I first started to think about this sphere of inter-activity in 1969 (Shotter, 1970); in 1980 (Shotter, 1980) I called it “joint action;” later, under Bakhtin’s (1981, 1984, 1986) I called it “the dialogical” (Shotter, xxx); and now under Merleau-Ponty’s (1968) influence, I call it “the chiasmic – the intertwining” (Shotter, xxx). 1) the volitions, the wilful efforts we put into organizing our utterances, our bodily expressions; and 2) how the utterances of one person, especially in their emotional-volitional tone (Bakhtin, 1993), can exert an influence on another person and come to crucially shape not only their actions, but their very way of being in the world. Before that, however, I must do some scene-setting.

Rather than focussing on word *shapes* or *forms* as serving a representational function, in taking the *activity* of *word meaning* as a microcosm of human consciousness in this expressive-responsive sense — I will not, of course, be exploring the question: “What *is* consciousness?,” that is, I shall not be concerned with the question as to what mysterious kind of substance it is, or could possibly be?

Instead, my exploration will be much more of a Wittgensteinian (1956) kind: thus I shall be exploring the practical details exhibited in the many and various concrete circumstances that incite us to describe a person’s conduct as “conscious” or “unconscious,” as “deliberately executed” or as done “spontaneously.” And at the heart of my Wittgensteinian inquiries will be our own *spontaneously* occurring responsive reactions to certain verbal expressions – to what Wittgenstein calls his “remarks,” and to the remarks of other writers (Vygotsky, Bakhtin, Goethe) “remarks” – and their role in coming to an understanding of the important practicalities of human conduct: for 1) their first function is to draw our attention to aspects or features of events occurring around us that we might not otherwise notice, and then 2) to promote, as Wittgenstein (1953) puts it, that kind of understanding “which consists in ‘seeing connections’” (no.122).

Indeed, in paying attention to those aspects of our behavior in which we act spontaneously, in an animal way<sup>5</sup>, I will be following Vygotsky’s (1978, 1986) major claim, that all our higher, voluntary, mental functions have their origins in lower, spontaneously occurring forms. Higher forms are developed from lower ones by interweaving into them socio-cultural structures of our own human invention, structures passed on to us by those around us, which enable us to deploy the ‘natural’ or spontaneous reactions already available to us – starting with those biologically available to us at birth (and before) – according to our own humanly ‘invented’ ends.

While as individuals, clearly, we develop our own abilities to conduct ourselves in ways that are both intelligible to the others around us, and (for the most part) considered by them to be legitimate, we remain unaware of both the relations amongst our own mental activities and those between them and our surroundings; we are unable to turn around on them, so to speak, to give an account of them to others. It is our being *instructed* by others in such ways of accounting for our own mental activities, i.e., by them relating themselves to our actions in such a way as to draw our attention, in verbal terms, to the relevant relations, that we can come to free ourselves from our own, immediate, impulsive responses to events in our surroundings. In other words, it is through the words, the utterances, of others, that we can come to act in a voluntary, conscious manner, in a way in which we ourselves are responsible, or ‘answerable’, for our own conduct.

In line, then, with this emphasis on the thoroughly *social* nature of consciousness, I also want to conduct

my further explorations in the light of Toulmin's (1982) account of the word's etymology in *con* (with)- *scientia* (knowing) in Roman Law, i.e., in designating a witnessable or witnessing knowing along with others. As he sees it, for the last 350 years, since Descartes's time, a string of practical, concrete terms, all having unproblematic, everyday uses – whether as verbs (“Do you mind?”), as adverbs (“Did you do that consciously?”), as adjectives (“That was a thoughtful act on your part!”) – “have been converted... into so many broad and general abstract nouns, which have then been construed as names for the most personal, private flux of sensory inputs, kinesthetic sensations, and so on” (p.53).

In this transition a whole family of words, “whose historic use and sense had to do with the public articulation of shared plans and intentions has been taken over into philosophical theory as providing a name for the most private and *unshared* aspects of mental life... The term ‘consciousness’ has thus become the name for a flux of sensory inputs that is seemingly neither *con-*, since each individual supposedly has his or her own, nor *sciens*, since the sensory flux is thought of as “buzzing and booming” rather than cognitively structured or interpreted “ (p.54). But as Toulmin (1982) points out:

“Etymologically, of course, the term “consciousness” is a knowledge word. This is evidenced by the Latin form, *-sci-*, in the middle of the word. But what are we to make of the prefix *con-* that precedes it? Look at the usage in Roman Law, and the answer will be easy enough. Two or more agents who act jointly – having formed a common intention, framed a shared plan, and concerted their actions – are as a result *conscientes*. They act as they do knowing one another's plans: they are *jointly knowing*.” (p.64).

Thus, in the *con-scientia* view of consciousness that I want to explore here, i.e., of it as witnessable knowing along with others, to say that we are *conscious* in our acting, that we *know* what we are doing in our acting, is to be able to give a verbal account of our actions to those around us who might challenge us. That is: we can verbally describe the component acts that made up the action we have just completed, in terms both of their relations to events in our surroundings and their mattering to us, i.e., their reasons, what we were trying to do in our doing of them.

In brief, to be conscious, is to possess a verbally expressible, reflective awareness of one's own mental processes. Indeed, it is in just *this* sense that Vygotsky (1986) talks of consciousness: “We use *consciousness*,” he says, “to denote awareness of the activity of mind – the consciousness of being conscious. A preschool child who, in response to the question, ‘Do you know your name?’ tells his name, lacks this self-reflective awareness: He knows his name but is not conscious of knowing it” (p.170).

Our project here, then, with respect to those of our utterances in which we make use of the word “consciousness” or any of its cognates, is in line with Wittgenstein's (1953) project when faced with all such philosophically problematic words: “When philosophers use a word – “knowledge”, “being”, “object”, “I”, “proposition”, “name” – and try to grasp the essence of the thing, one must always ask oneself: is the word ever actually used in this way in the language-game which is its original home? What *we* do is to bring words back from their metaphysical to their everyday use” (no.116). And here our task is precisely similar: to bring out into the open the really quite large number of crucial distinctions, both in our responses to our own actions and in our responses to the actions of others, we in fact make spontaneously in ‘going on’ with our practical, everyday affairs with the others around us. It is a kind of ‘philosophical’ investigation that helps to set out “what is possible before all new discoveries and inventions” (Wittgenstein, 1953, no.126), i.e., the usually unnoticed, spontaneous background expectations and anticipations, the responsive expressions, in terms of which we all ‘go on’ with each other in our everyday practical affairs.

#### **‘Inside’ our living activities**

Currently, consciousness is treated by many as a strange, private theater within us somewhere from within which, as individuals, we live out our lives (Baars, 1997). However, when it is conceptualized in this way it seems to confront us with an unfathomable mystery. What, materially, could possibly be the nature of such a special ‘inner space’ and

of the kinds of activity that occur in it?<sup>6</sup> Many, clearly, think of it as being a kind of inner calculation or computation. We can find such a view expressed, for instance, in Haugland (1993) who, in commenting on the fact that artificial intelligence didn't originate with computers or with advances in technology, suggests that this view of what thinking is, arose out of "a central tradition in Western philosophy, [in which ] thinking (intellection) essentially *is* rational manipulation of mental symbols (viz., ideas)" (pp.3-4) – where what is meant by the rational manipulation of mental symbols is the reconfiguring of abstract structural or spatial patterns according to an unambiguous set of rules or principles. But here, of course, Haugland *is* concerned with the goal I mentioned above – that of creating a consciousness, a mind, *de novo*, *ex nihilo*, in something non-living or non-human<sup>7</sup>, i.e., with answering the question: "What *is* consciousness?"

It is not my purpose here to turn to a comprehensive critique of this view and of the Cartesian metaphysics motivating it, but I do, perhaps, need to point out that in the current climate of what is thought of as the appropriate approach to the problem of consciousness, the kind of investigation I am proposing is a somewhat strange and unusual kind of inquiry. But let me press on, let me begin to say something about the *action guiding anticipations* our utterances can arouse.

As both Vygotsky and Bakhtin, in their own different ways note, a primary function of words, of our utterance of words, is to evoke spontaneous reactions in those to whom they are addressed. This is typified in the following remark about the function of words, our uttering of them, in the formation of our higher (socio-cultural) mental processes: "All the higher psychic functions are mediated processes, and signs are the basic means used *to master and direct them*. The mediating sign is incorporated in their structure as an indispensable, indeed the central, part of the total process. In concept formation that sign is the *word*, which at first plays the role of means in forming the concept but later becomes its symbol" (1962, p.56, my emphasis)<sup>8</sup>. In other words, in instructing our children, we rely on them responding in a direct and immediate manner, spontaneously, to certain of our expressions. Where, of course, in using words as the *means* in mastering and directing our highr psychical functions, as the *means* in forming concepts, we not just making cognitive use of word shapes or patterns. With our children we are using exaggerated gestures, facial expressions, and above all, tones of voice, all of which in being intertwined in together with our words provide the affective-volitional or emotional-volitional *directives*, or better, *anticipations* that give our actions their *point*.

In other words, in the invisible 'shape' of the unfolding dynamic of my living relations to an object (even in my simply speaking of it), is the expression of an evaluative attitude toward it – an expression of the way in which it 'matters' to me, the 'weight' or 'force' it can exert in my spontaneous reactions to it. Thus even in my speaking of an object – that 'dog' there, that 'food on the plate' here, that 'picture' in the story book, those 'words' your father said, this 'quote' from Bakhtin, etc., I am never speaking neutrally, indifferently, with no particular attitude, but always with an interested-effective, emotional-volitional attitude which expresses *by its intonation*, not only what is yet to-to-be determined about it, but also how I, as a speaker, expect another to respond to my words. For: "The word in living conversation," suggests Bakhtin (1981), "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" (p.280, my emphases).

And there is a felt tension at work in listening to another, while we wait for them to reach their 'point'. In other words, in listening to the pauses, the silences, in a person's speech, we sense that they are not all the same: some are clearly pauses for further thought, others are for dramatic effect, some while waiting for signs from listeners that they've 'got it', and so on. On the other hand, a certain special kind of pause occurs when, clearly, a speak feels that they have finally succeeded in expressing all they had to say, when at least they feel their utterance has expressed an integrated whole.

It is in these moments, as Bakhtin (1986) points out, that there can be a change in speaking subjects: "This change can only take place because the speaker has said (or written) *everything* he wishes to say at a particular moment or under particular circumstances. When hearing or reading, we clearly sense the end of the utterance, as if

we hear the speaker's concluding *dixi*. This finalization is specific and is determined by specific criteria" (p.76). The 'invisible' finalization of a speaker's utterance is *hearable* as a *transitory understanding* within the unfolding relational dynamics of our dialogical relations with that speaker; and we relate to it accordingly: by beginning our reply to it – until it occurs, although we may interrupt, and say all kinds of other things, we lack the orientation required to intelligibly respond.

Indeed, in our rejoinders to each other's utterances within an ongoing dialogue, many other *transitory understandings* are *hearable* within the unfolding dynamics of our relations with a particular speaker. As Bakhtin (1986) remarks: "[While] each rejoinder, regardless of how brief and abrupt, has a specific quality of completion that expresses a particular position of the speaker, to which one may respond or assume, with respect to it, a responsive position... But at the same time rejoinders are all linked to one another. And the sort of relations that exist among rejoinders of dialogue – relations between question and answer, assertion and objection, suggestion and acceptance, order and execution, and so forth – are impossible among units of language (words and sentences), either in the system of language (in vertical cross section)<sup>9</sup> or within utterances (on the horizontal plane)" (p.72).

In other words, besides their cognitive, representational use, our words can have another use, an orientational or relational use: "Our experimental study proved that it was the functional use of the word, or any other sign, as means of focusing one's attention, selecting distinctive features and analyzing and synthesizing them, that plays a central role in concept formation... Words and other signs are those means that direct our mental operations, control their course, and channel them toward the solution of the problem confronting us," says Vygotsky (1986, pp.106-107)<sup>10</sup>.

Crucial, then, in our *relations* with the others around us (and in our being able to instruct our children into being members of our community), is our expressive-responsive use of our words, our utterances, both to influence their behaviour spontaneously, by exerting a direct and immediate effect on how they direct their attention, organize and shape their actions, and so on, and also, in indicating our 'motivations' to them, what we are *trying* to do in our doings. "To understand another's speech, it is not sufficient to understand his words – we must understand his thought. But even that is not enough – we must also know its motivation. No psychological analysis of an utterance is complete until that plane is reached" (Vygotsky, 1986, p.253).

Here, perhaps, given Vygotsky's very different attitude to word meaning, i.e., to our *use* of words, is a suitable point to mention Nagel's (1982) famous exploration of consciousness in his paper: "What is it like to be a bat?" For he seems, at first sight, by raising the question of consciousness in a different form – that "there is something that it is like to *be* that organism – something that it is like *for* the organism" (p.392) – to be suggesting a quite new approach to the problem: in terms of "an objective phenomenology not dependent on empathy or the imagination... [whose] goal would be to describe, at least in part, the subjective character of experiences in a form comprehensible to being incapable of having those experiences" (p.402). In other words, as he puts it, bats clearly have experience and a point of view, and we can experience them as exhibiting their 'point of view' on the world in their actions – we can experience the *efforts* of a will at work.

But let us look at the complexities of what is involved here at little more closely: Firstly, to confront other *living* beings, is to confront beings which, *in relation to us*, clearly have, so to speak, 'a life of their own'<sup>11</sup>. But there is a difference here between bats and other human beings: to ask: "What is like to be a bat?" is a quite different kind of question from, "What is it like to be a mathematician?" For, we can ask mathematicians to *tell* us, in a way that we cannot ask a bat. And they can at least *try* to tell us of the nature of *their* world (according to their own degree of eloquence) in *their own terms*. For we can expect, when addressing mathematicians with such questions, that they will respond with various kinds of living, expressive reactions, to which we in turn will be responsive.

And, as we shall see, it is in the 'volitional contours' of the dynamic unfolding of people's spontaneous responsiveness to events in their surroundings, in the sequentially unfolding nature of their *1<sup>st</sup>-person living expressions*, that they can display their own unique 'inner' lives to the others around them (Johnston, 1993; Mulhall, 1990) – empathy or imagination on our part is not needed. Indeed, it is only 'from within' the living interplay occurring between them and us, that they can communicate to us what they 'think' and 'feel' about events in our

common surroundings.

Thus, even when we are unmoving in space, as I intimated above, we can be sensed by others as making – indeed, as *intentionally* or *effortfully* making – expressive movements over time, expressive movements that, in an anticipatory fashion, reach out toward the future.

### From ‘orchestration’ to ‘polyphony’

In his use of the expression “emotional-volitional tone,” Bakhtin is suggesting that at every moment, as we voice an unfolding utterance, there is an element of personal choice as to the turns we take: “The word in language is half someone else’s. It becomes ‘one’s own’ *only when the speaker populates it with his own intentions*, his own accent, when he appropriates the word, adapting it to his own semantic and expressive intention. Prior to this moment of appropriation, the word does not exist in a neutral and impersonal language (it is not, after all, out of a dictionary that the speaker gets his words!), but rather it exists in other people’s mouths, in other people’s contexts, serving other people’s intentions: it is from there that one must take the word, *and make it one’s own*” (Bakhtin, 1981, pp.293-4, my emphases). Indeed, what makes a person’s words *their own words*, are the efforts (the intentions) they exert, and that we can sense them as exerting in their speech, to make their talk conform to a ‘something’ they are *trying* to express – we can hear these *efforts* ‘in’ their utterances, in the time-contour of the emotional-volitional tone of their expressions.

Thus in the simple statements: 1) “*I* want to tell you something;” 2) “*I want* to tell you something;” 3) “*I* want to tell *you* something;” and so on, with many other different emphases, each *volitional* tone, each emphasis, leads you to relate or to orient yourself toward me differently in listening responsively to what I have to say. And, as I intentionally shape at least some aspects of the unfolding time-contour of my utterances, so can you as a listener, in being continuously ‘moved’ or ‘touched’ in this way and that, sense the ‘inner’ turns I take, the choices I make at each choice point in *populating* these very common, shared words with *my* intentions.

Let me try another simple experiment:

a) [Quick with flat intonation again] “The cat sat on the mat. The mat was red, the cat was black” – I get the picture... so what?

But b): “The cat... sat... on the mat... the mat.. was *red*... the cat... was *black*...” – the beginning of a ghost story, a detective story?

Clearly, it is in arousing anticipations of the not-yet-said – vague and undifferentiated ones in the first case, and more well differentiated ones in the second – that the two very different ways of intoning these words arouse two very different transitory understandings of these words, two very different ways of ‘going on’ from them. The first arouses us to say: “OK, I get the picture, but... so what?” While the second tantalizes us into suspenseful waiting for what will come next.

There is thus in all our truly lived, and thus answerable, acts – if not in our merely “theoretical and theoreticized world” (Bakhtin, 1993, p.20)<sup>12</sup> – what Bakhtin (1993) calls a “compellent ought,” that is, in setting itself up as something-to-be achieved, it sets up before a ‘call’, an ‘urge’, or ‘enjoinment’ to action, a sense of something that is required or demanded of the action. And what we can ‘see’ and ‘hear’ expressed in the *emotional-volitional tone* of a person’s expressions (and those of other beings and things) are their *efforts* to reply to, to be answerable to, these calls.

Indeed, it is in the temporal unfolding of an utterance, as each new word uttered gains its individuality, *both* in contrast with, *and* in relation to, the words already said, that an utterance is shaped or organized as expressive of a certain state of affairs. For there are no instant like silences separating two successive words in an utterance. Two successive moments in an utterance, two ‘passing or transitional moments’ are not simply separated<sup>13</sup> by *their qualitative differences*, by the differences made by a speaker that are indicative of a speaker’s intentions, but are also

related to each other in that the earlier parts of an utterance function to *motivate* the later parts<sup>14</sup>.

Thus, imagine a speaker, an academic (like any one of us), facing the task of organizing a long, sustained, and complex utterance – a talk like this, say. They face the task of sequencing each contributory-utterance in such a way that, on the one hand, it will ‘point’ toward the ultimate conception of an integrated whole, with each contributory-utterance being responded to, on the other hand, in terms of the whole that is *motivating*. This is only possible, of course, if there is something in a person’s talk that allows one to orient toward, as Bakhtin (1981) puts it, “that which has not yet been said,” but which is nonetheless present, and determinative of, the ‘shape’, the time-contouring, of a speaker’s utterance.

An often employed metaphor to describe the complexly organized unfolding of a person’s “higher mental activities,” is to describe them as “orchestrated,” as organized so that a number of seemingly independent component performances do not just accidentally occur together in any old order or sequence (like cards being shuffled into a new arrangement), but occur in relation to a commonly *felt* sense, not only of where one has *been* but also of where one is *headed*. We often say that when we are understanding another person, we are ‘following’ them – but if the approach here is correct, it would be better to say that we are “anticipating” them. The unfolding temporal contouring of a person’s performance – in music, the tempo – is the guiding element. In Wittgenstein’s (1953) terms, if we are ultimately to achieve an understanding of another person’s utterances, by testing and checking their ‘point’ – and not misunderstand them – we must at a lower level “know how to go on” (no.154).

The “orchestration” metaphor is, I think, a very powerful one, and very relevant to the task faced by a single speaker, or single thinker concerned to think logically or systematically, concerned to deliver in a single, integrated utterance, a single integrated thought – as is my task in delivering this talk.

But once we move on into Bakhtin’s (1984) work on Dostoevsky’s “form-shaping ideology” (p.97), we shall find not only even greater complexity, but also a qualitatively different form of organization – what, following Merleau-Ponty (1968) I have called a *chiasmic* form of organization, and what Bakhtin (1984) calls *polyphonic*.

Instead of a form of composition in which each voice is simply fitted harmoniously or systematically into the whole so far constructed, polyphony works in terms of two or more independent melodic voices being related to each other contrapunctually. Thus instead of an integrated, harmonious unity, we shall find, as Bakhtin (1984) puts it, that what unfolds in Dostoevsky’s novels, is “a *plurality of independent and unmerged voices and consciousnesses, a genuine polyphony of fully valid voices...* not a multitude of characters and fates in a single objective world, illuminated by a single authorial consciousness; rather a *plurality of consciousnesses, with equal rights and each with his own world*, combine but are not merged in the unity of the event” (p.6). Where we can imagine the combining that occurs, as being like, say, the combining occurring in the optic chiasma, where the different points of view of our two eyes are combined, but not merged, to provide us with a bodily sense of “depth,” i.e., of things being near to, or far from, us. In other words, by not being merged, but by being related in terms of their differences, there is the creation of a uniquely new *relational dimension*, a new way of relating ourselves to our circumstances, a new way of ‘seeing connections’.

For Bakhtin, then, the orchestration metaphor is *too* continuously harmonious, is too homogeneous or monophonic. Not only can we talk dialogically, but in our own inner speech we can think dialogically – in terms, not only of many different voices with different ‘logical’ points of view, but also with many different affective or emotional-volitional tones. Thus, rather than the dynamics of our consciousness being of a harmonious, ‘orchestrated’ kind, a unified activity occurring in a unified consciousness, we can imagine them as taking on a stranded, intertwined, polyphonic organization.

Philosophically, Bakhtin (1984) is contrasting his polyphonic account of consciousness with “the faith in the self-sufficiency of a single consciousness” that he sees as “a profound structural characteristic of the creative ideological activity of modern times” (p.82), as an aspect of the quest for a unified truth. But, as he points out: “the single and unified consciousness is by no means an inevitable consequence of the concept of a unified truth. It is quite possible to imagine and postulate a unified truth that requires a plurality of consciousnesses, one that cannot in

principle be fitted into the bounds of a single consciousness, one that is, so to speak, by its very nature *full of event potential* and is born at a point of contact among various consciousnesses. The monologic way of perceiving cognition and truth is only one of the possible ways. It arises where consciousness is placed above existence, and where the unity of existence is transformed into the unity of consciousness” (Bakhtin, 1984, p.81).

If the attainment of a unified truth within a single consciousness is impossible, then what does that mean for us in sharing the living our lives with others? It means, I think, that we can achieve common understandings, only from time to time, in practice. It means that only at certain moments do we need everyone involved to move as one – as one mind, or better, as one body. It means, I think, as both Vygotsky (1986) and Wittgenstein (1980) put it: “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). In other words, as they both see it, the beginnings of our new ways of talking and thinking, our unique understandings of the unique people and circumstances we continually encounter in our daily lives, arise out our new, embodied, spontaneously expressed, ways of acting – in the beginning was not the word, but our spontaneous responsiveness to our circumstances. Our embodied practices, which begin in our meetings with the others and othernesses around us, are primary. Thus: “E pluribus unum” (out of many, one.) is best, then, thought of as a dynamic unity of heterogeneity rather than a unity of homogeneity (Prigogine, 1980)<sup>15</sup>, an effortful achievement rather than the naturally occurring outcome of people simply living together.

### **The temporal structure of our living activities, “unit analysis,” and “losing te phenomena”**

Let me straightaway add here, that my concern with this kind of ‘knowing from within’ (the situation) resonates directly with Vygotsky’s (1987)<sup>16</sup> remarks, on the differences between the analysis of a whole into its separate *elements*, and what he calls “unit analysis.” In making this most important distinction he notes: “The first of these forms of analysis begins with the decomposition of the complex mental whole into its elements... The essential feature of this form of analysis is that its products are of a different nature than the whole from which they are derived... Since it results in products that have *lost the characteristics of the whole*, this process is not a form of analysis in the true sense of the word. At any rate, it is not ‘analysis’ *vis a vis* the problem to which it was meant to be applied” (p.45, my emphasis).

And he continues: “Because it causes the researcher to ignore the unified and integral nature of the process being studied, this form of analysis leads to a profound delusion. The internal relationships of the unified whole are replaced with external mechanical relationships between two heterogeneous processes... In our view, an entirely different form of analysis is fundamental to further development of theories of thinking and speech. This form of analysis relies on the partitioning of the complex whole into *units*. In contrast to the term ‘element’, the term ‘unit’ designates a product of analysis that possesses all the basic characteristics of the whole” (p.46)<sup>17</sup>.

His distinction here, then, between the complex, *internal relations* characteristic of a living whole, and the heterogeneous, *external relations* characterizing a mechanical whole, is crucial to my whole account here. As he puts it, the nature of the whole – that makes possible the meaningful use of our words, our utterances, in shaping, directing, and organizing people’s behavior, our own included – is lost in any analysis of it into only externally related elements. In fact, strictly, to still call the word-forms we arrive at as a result of such an external analysis “words” is, as he remarks, is to make ourselves victims of “a profound delusion.”

For Vygotsky, then, each *unit*, each ‘part’ of a living whole, retains as a microcosm all the essential characteristics of the macrocosm. This is clearly not the case with the parts of a mechanism. The parts of a machine are, so to speak, objective parts, which have their own character, irrespective of whether they are parts of the machine or not; they owe none of their characteristics to their intrinsic relations with any of the other parts. But the ‘parts’ of a living whole cannot exist in isolation like this, apart from all the others with whom, quite literally, they have grown into existence. Indeed, the living whole within which they have their being has itself grown from a simple living ‘cell’ into a richly structured one in such a way that, at any one moment in time, all its ‘units’ or ‘parts’

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

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

Instead, it is important for us to accept that in all living activities, there is always a kind of *developmental continuity* involved in their unfolding, such that earlier phases of the activity are indicative of at least the *style*, the *physiognomy*, i.e., the unique living identity, of what is to come later. There is a characteristic ‘shape’ to their unfolding in time. Thus, just as acorns only grow into oak trees and not rose bushes, and hens’ eggs only produce chickens and not rabbits, so all living activities, it seems, give rise to what we might call *identity preserving* changes or deformations – their possible ends are already ‘there’ in their beginnings. In other words, our spontaneous, expressive-responsive bodily activities, our words in our uttering of them, always ‘point beyond’ themselves, toward a limited set of possibilities in the future. Thus, in having *internal* rather than *external* relations to their surrounding circumstances like this, they have an indicative or mimetic, i.e., a *gestural*, relation to them (even if their surroundings are invisible to those witnessing only the activities) – in other words, rather than simply ‘add-on’ extras, they are always ‘participant parts’ in a larger whole. It is the intrinsic developmental continuity of all our living activities that, to repeat, provides us with the usually unnoticed background of expectations and anticipations we arouse in each other by our responsive expressions, the spontaneous expectations and anticipations in terms of which we all ‘go on’ with each other in our everyday practical affairs.

And it is this that makes it possible for them to link their actions in with our’s in an intelligible manner. For they also live out their lives *from within* the same surroundings as us, and are, or can be, oriented toward the same features in the same way as ourselves. Indeed, it is a central part of what it is for us to be a member of a linguistic community, that we are able to use (to express) a word with the anticipation that the others around us will respond to our use of it just as we expect. If they don’t, then we wonder whether they are in fact ‘one of us’.

This effect of our expressions, to be able to ‘point’ in at least a partially specified manner, from a past toward a future, is crucial, as we shall see, in understanding how another’s words can be constitutive of our own, conscious activities, and is something quite inimical the Cartesian approach to change and movement. That approach, as is well-known, considers change and movement only as changes in the configuration of a set of independently existing, externally related, independently existing *elements*, in Vygotsky’s terms – an account of change that by its very nature, loses all the phenomena that arise in our of our living, expressive-responsive relations with the others and othernesses around us. For it is this non-representational, expressive-responsive use of our words that allows them to be both the *means* in forming our concepts, *and to be the mediational means used in mastering and directing higher mental functions*, or consciously performed activities – for in applying our words to ourselves, we cannot not be spontaneously responsive to their use.

### Goethe’s exact sensorial imagination

So far I have a lot to say about Vygotsky and Bakhtin, but what has all of this got to do with Goethe? Well, I slipped in at the beginning of my talk that I wanted to explore the whole idea of our consciousness as being *relationally* structured, *from within the context of our living of our lives together*. And the main point of my presentation here today, has been to try to show how much is in fact ‘seeable’ or ‘hearable’ by us as living beings *from within* the dynamics of our engaged involvements with the others and othernesses around us.

Indeed, more than that: my aim has been to show how much is seen and heard and spontaneously acted upon by us, all the intrinsic relations already existing between language and thought, language and action, and so on, without our noticing *the facts* of these already existing relations.

In doing this, in conducting this kind of inquiry, I have, of course, been heavily influenced by the later Wittgenstein (1953). As he saw it, the task here was not one of *explaining* something of which we were ignorant. It is not a matter of finding out any *new* facts. It requires bringing something that already lies open to view, but resides unnoticed in the background to our activities, into the foreground – the precise function, as I see it, that Vygotsky (1962) assigned to our utterances when they are used to master and to direct our psychic functions (p.56). And just as the overall result for a child, who is subjected to the appropriate kind of instructive involvements in the language intertwined activities of his or her group, comes to feel ‘at home’ in the group, and to know their ‘way about’ and how to ‘go on’ in most practical affairs, so we too can gain a similar such *inner* understanding of this vast, previously unnoticed background to our lives. Thus, as he said, we are not concerned to “to hunt out new facts; it is, rather, of the essence of our investigation that we do not seek to learn anything new by it. We want to understand something that is already in plain view. For this is what we seem in some sense not to understand” (no.89).

But how might such an inquiry be conducted? And an even more problematic question: how should its results be presented in such a way that others can benefit from the results achieved by another individual?

This, at last, is where Goethe comes in: In seeking the kind of exact inner understanding we require if we are to know our ‘way around’ inside the immense landscape of our myriad uses of language, Wittgenstein was following Goethe and his method of attempting to come to an inner grasp of the ‘developmental movement’ of plant forms as they metamorphose from seedlings, through the fully grown plant, to the time when they also produce seeds. As Waismann (1965) put it, in *Logik, Sprache, Philosophie*, the work on which he collaborated with Wittgenstein:

“Our thought here marches with certain views of Goethe's which he expressed in the *Metamorphosis of Plants*... [Goethe's] conception of the original plant [Ürpflanze] implies no hypothesis about the temporal development of the vegetable kingdom such as that of Darwin. What then is the problem solved by this idea? It is the problem of *synoptic presentation*. Goethe's aphorism ‘All the organs of plants are leaves transformed’ offers us a plan in which we may group the organs of plants according to their similarities as if around some natural centre... We follow this sensuous transformation of type by linking up the leaf through intermediate forms with the other organs of the plant.

That is precisely what we are doing here. We are collating one form of language with its environment, or transforming it in imagination so as to gain a view of the whole space in which the structure of our language has its being” (pp.80- 81).

Indeed, to be able, imaginatively, to move with ease, backwards and forwards, through the whole unbroken, developmental flow of a plant forms, we must, Goethe claimed, *participatively* understand the overall movement of a plant's growth in 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 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).

To see a developing whole in this indivisible way, is to see the various possible next steps in its development as *necessary* steps, i.e., as being open to further specification, but only of an already specified kind. In seeking this kind of exactitude, Goethe had in mind the kind of thinking we employ in mathematics, where we can (if we are

sufficiently expert) have an inner vision of the sequence of steps required to make a proof before us, all-at-once, as in our beholding of a visual landscape:

“From the mathematician we must learn the meticulous care required to connect things in unbroken succession, or rather, to derive things step by step. Even where we do not venture to apply mathematics we must always work as though we had to satisfy the strictest geometricians,” he says (quoted in Amrine, p.38; quoted in Bortoft, 1996, p.229).

But in all of this, Goethe was not prepared to conduct his investigations in terms of theories or hypotheses. “If I am to be consciously articulate about these circumstances [his botanical studies], let the reader think of me as a born poet, who, in order to do justice to his subjects, always seeks to derive his terminology directly from the subjects themselves, each time anew” (quoted in Brady, pp.92-3; Goethe’s *Botanical Writings*, pp.159-60). To work within a ready-made terminology would, as he saw, result only in a kind of mosaic made up of separate, self-contained pieces; it would never create a single organic whole; something like an utterance that one could understand and answer to.

We can study already completed, dead entities at a distance, in a *disengaged* fashion, seeking to understand from their configurations in a set of disconnected instants, the pattern of past events that might have *caused* them to come into existence, and by representing that pattern in terms of an objective, explanatory theory. However, as embodied beings, a very different kind of understanding can become available to us, if we can allow ourselves to become *engaged* with certain of the entities around us. For, in entering into two-way dynamic relationships with them, and, in allowing ourselves to be open to *their* movements, to *their* expressions, we can find ourselves spontaneously responding to them in ways quite impossible for us with dead entities.

Indeed, in spontaneously responding ourselves to the effortful time-contours expressed in the actions of *others*, we can find ourselves understanding, not only how we are *placed* with them, but also how next we might *go on* with them. But these understandings are only available to us from within the dynamics of the living, embodied, *engaged* inter-activity occurring between us and the others and othernesses around us – indeed, one thing that is special about them is that these kinds of understanding *just happen* to us, spontaneously, within the dynamics of a two-way flow of spontaneously responsive inter-activity; as long, that is, that its flow remains spontaneously responsive and thus unbroken. We cannot deliberately seek them.

This different kind of spontaneously occurring, engaged, responsive understanding, that only becomes available to us from within our dynamic, two-way relations with the others around us, is not simply the individual *knowing of facts*, nor is it the individual *knowing of a skill* (Ryle, 1949); it is a third kind of moment by moment changing *felt knowing* to do with how to *shape* or *organize* our own behaviour *from within* our engagements with the others (like ourselves) around us. As such, it is a kind of knowing which both 1) takes into account (and is accountable to) those others, and which, 2) because of its anticipatory nature, provides us with a *shaped and vectored sense* of where at any one moment we *are*, as well as where *next* in that situation we might go (Shotter, 1993). It is its action guiding, anticipatory nature that makes this kind of understanding (of living activities, of *expressions*), so very different from our understanding of the mere movements of dead things.

### **Conclusions: ‘getting inside’ our own shared ways of witnessable knowing along with others**

What we have discovered, then, in our explorations above, is that by turning ourselves outward, toward others, rather than inward, toward our own supposed inner workings, we have found aspects of our relations with the others around us that are crucial to us becoming more conscious (more *con-scientia*) in our relations with them. Thus, far from the others around us being ‘other minds’ whose inner lives are closed to us, without our access to the emotional-volitional tone expressed in their responsive actions toward us, we would lack the *resources* we need to refine or articulate the ‘inner structure’ of our own consciousnesses further. This, then, is the influence of other’s utterances on us, of their spoken words. They can exert a constitutive effect on our consciousnesses – especially the words of our predecessors and ancestors, our parents and other teachers, the writers and artists around us. Indeed,

just as they gave themselves over to the ‘calls’ exerted upon them by the words of others in their surroundings, so can we, if we give ourselves over to *their* ‘calls’, come to be influenced by their words in the same way – the importance of Vygotsky’s and Bakhtin’s words here, being precisely a case in point.

Indeed, Vygotsky sees our consciousness, that is, our deliberate and voluntary control over our own behaviour, as developing – not simply by our ceasing to be spontaneously reactive to events in our surroundings – but by our still being spontaneously responsive, but by our learning to *master our own spontaneous reactions*, by deliberately giving ourselves appropriate verbal instructions at appropriate moments. “It is surprising to us,” he remarks, “that traditional psychology has completely failed to notice this phenomenon which we can call *mastering one’s own reactions*. In attempts to explain this fact of ‘will’ [traditional] psychology resorted to a miracle, to the intervention of a spiritual factor in the operation of nervous processes, and thus tried to explain the action by the line of most resistance, as did, for example, James in developing his theory of the creative character of the will” (Vygotsky, 1966, pp.33-34, my emphasis).

In this dynamic view of consciousness, then – described as witnessable knowing along with the others around us – to say that we are *conscious* in our acting is not simply to ‘explain’ a person’s actions in terms of a special ‘inner theater’ or ‘inner workshop’ (Baars), nor in terms of the ‘rational manipulation of symbols’ (Haugeland). It is to explicate the concept of consciousness in terms of living units of word meaning (Vygotsky), in terms of utterances (Bakhtin), so that, as an aspect of our lives with others, we can understand, *and recount to others*, the *reasons* for our own myriad, different uses of the word ‘consciousness’ in an unconfused manner – where we must remember that a verbalization to be considered an utterance, it must be experienced as a meaningful whole to which one can meaningfully respond.

Primarily, then, in acting consciously, we are acting we are not only acting voluntarily and deliberately, as we ourselves require, rather than as our circumstances require, but in so doing, we are controlling our own initial spontaneous reactions to events in our surroundings by the linguistic direction of our own reactions. Thus an aspect of our being able to do this, is our being able to linguistically describe *the units* into which our actions are partitioned, and to correct ourselves if we seem (in publicly shared terms) to be acting incorrectly. In other words, in acting *con-scientia* in this way, we can ‘answer for ourselves’, offer ‘justifications’ and ‘excuses’ for our actions, ‘plan’ and ‘deliberate’ on our actions, ‘cultivate a critical conscience’, and so on.

In short, we can act in both an ‘accountable’ and ‘recountable’ manner; that is, we can account to the others around us, in verbal terms, for our actions if so required – thus to demonstrate that others can be witnesses to our claims to know *what* we are doing.

To be able to do that, however, requires us to be reflexively self-aware, not only of the features in our surroundings to which we are being attentive, including the relations and connections<sup>18</sup> between them we think important, but of many other aspects of our own inner functioning also. In other words, as a mediating sign that we use *to master and direct* our own responses to the actions of the others and othernesses around us, our task *is* to describe the (indefinitely) many roles the word “*consciousness*” (as a unit of word meaning) can play in our lives. This is an enormous project and in a short talk like this, I have been able to give only a few of the main reasons why we say that a person is acting consciously, rather than unconsciously, or impulsively, or unthinkingly, etc.

However, I hope that when it comes to thinking about thinking, and its relations to language, and to the rest of our lives, that I have been able to show how little theories and hypotheses are of importance, or at least, how we cannot begin our thinking with theories and hypotheses: we must somehow get a grip on the already existing, intrinsic relations between thinking and speech. Or perhaps better, I should have said, explicitly formulated and doggedly followed theories, for as Goethe (1988) noted: “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” (p.307). Indeed, as we have already seen, the simple fact of calling a person’s vocalization an utterance, depends on our sensing it and responding to it as having constituted an intended whole by a speaker – something that is not objectively visible to a 3<sup>rd</sup>-person outside observer, uninvolved with the 1<sup>st</sup>-person speaker in question.

The approach to consciousness, then, that I have taken here, is that consciousness is a *socially responsive*

elaboration of our animal sensitivities to, and awareness of, events occurring in our relations to the others and othernesses in our surroundings. Thus, far from it being a special, private, inner theater or workshop of the mind, its emergence depends completely on the intertwining or intermingling of our ‘inner lives’ with the ‘inner’ lives of those around us. In this view, our consciousness then becomes no more strange to us than the fact of our ‘livingness’ – a fact that is at once both ordinary in the sense of being very familiar to us in our daily practical lives, as well as being quite extraordinary to us in that we haven’t the faintest idea as to what makes the difference between living and dead forms.

In my talk, then, I have been trying to reorient our current intellectual focus away from cognitive matters, away from our deliberately planned and executed activities, and toward those occurrences that happen to us over and above our wanting and doing (Gadamer) – a focus on our spontaneous ways of acting, and the anticipations and expectations to which, in the course of their flow, they give rise. To do this, we must of necessity, try to ‘get inside’ them as they occur; we try to know them, intellectually, ‘from within’ in the same way as they are known spontaneously, from within a person’s acting. This task of ‘getting inside’ our own shared ways of witnessable knowing along with others, is something of a wholly new kind of project for psychological inquiry.

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**Notes:**

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1. By the term ‘historical’ here, Vygotsky does not mean we must study events in the past that might have something to do with consciousness now. But: “*To study something historically means to study it in the process of change;*” he says (Vygotsky, 1978, p.75), “...to encompass in research the process of a given thing’s development in all its phases and changes - from birth to death - fundamentally means to discover its nature, its essence, for ‘it is only in movement that a [living] body shows what it is’” (p.75).

2. Here, he claims to draw his inspiration from Marx: “The whole of *Capital* is written according to the following method: Marx analyses a single living ‘cell’ of capitalist society - for example the nature of value. Within this cell he discovers the structure of the entire system and all its economic institutions... Anyone who could discover what a ‘psychological’ cell is - the mechanism producing even a single response - would find the key to psychology as a whole” (Vygotsky, 1978, p.8).

3. “Why is philosophy so complicated?... Philosophy unties knots in our thinking.... but to do that it must make movements which are just as complicated as the knots” (PR, para 2, 52).

4. Bakhtin (1986) notes that: “All real and integral understanding is actively responsive, and constitutes nothing more than the initial preparatory stage of a response (in what ever form it

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may be actualized). 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 (as in Saussure's model of linguistic communication mentioned above)" (p.69). Indeed, let me add here, that Voloshinov (1986) notes that for Saussure's structural linguistics, it is a "system of self-identical forms that becomes the essence of language" (p.56, my emphasis).

5. "In the history of the child's cultural development we met with the concept of structure twice. First, this concept arises in the very beginning of the history of the child's cultural development, forming the initial factor or point of departure of the entire process; secondly, the very process of cultural development must be conceived as a change of this initial, basic structure and a rise, on its basis, of new structures characterized by a new correlation of the parts. The former structures we shall call primitive; they are the natural, inborn psychological whole conditioned mainly by biological characteristics of the mind. The latter structures arising in the process of cultural development we shall call the higher structure because they represent a genetically more complex and higher form of behavior" (Vygotsky, 1966, p.31).

6. Wittgenstein (1953) remarks: "The feeling of an unbridgeable gulf between consciousness and brain-process: how does it come about that this does not come into the considerations of our ordinary life? This idea of a difference in kind is accompanied by slight giddiness, – which occurs when we are performing a piece of logical sleight-of-hand... When does this feeling occur in the present case? It is when I, for example, turn my attention in a particular way on to my own consciousness, and, astonished, say to myself: THIS is supposed to be produced by a process in the brain! – as it were clutching my forehead. –...But I did not utter the sentence in the surroundings in which it would have had an everyday and unparadoxical sense. And my attention was not such as would have accorded with making an experiment. (If it had been, my look would have been intent, not vacant.)" (no.412).

7. As he puts it, to the extent that computers can manipulate arbitrary 'tokens' in any specifiable manner whatever, "we need only arrange for those tokens to be symbols, and for the manipulations to be specified as rational, to get a machine that *thinks*... Indeed, if that traditional theory is correct [that intellection is essentially the rational manipulation of symbols], then our imagined computer ought to have 'a mind of its own': a (genuine) *artificial mind*" (Haugeland, 1993, p.4).

8. This paragraph is missing from the 1986 Kozulin translation, but appears on page 126 of the Minick translation.

9. Bakhtin has in mind here Saussure's (1959) linguistics, in which for the purposes of a scientific analysis of *language* he made a distinction between *synchronic* (vertical cross section) and *diachronic* (horizontal plane) linguistics – a distinction Bakhtin thinks is impossible in living *speech*.

10. Not present in the 1962 Hanfman & Vakar translation.

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11. This distinction is to do with the way in which we deal with our sense of how something is *real* for us, of how its nature is not just open to any interpretation we wish to put upon it. While scientific or objective *realism* wants to talk of things in our surroundings as having a life of their own *independent* of us. The distinction is to do with the way in which we deal with our sense of how something is *real* for us, of how its nature is not just open to any interpretation we wish to put upon it. While scientific or objective *realism* wants to talk of things in our surroundings as having a life of their own *independent* of us. I want, following Rudd (2003), to talk of them as having a life of their own *in relation to* us. Rudd (2003) calls this “expressive realism,” and as I see it, it is quite consistent to hold to an *expressive realism* within the context of a thoroughgoing *social constructionism* (Shotter, 1984, 1993a&b).

12. “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” (Bakhtin, 1993, p.20).

13. The very word “separation” as such is misleading; it suggests separation in a spatial sense – we need to realize that the qualitative differences of successive moments cannot be captured in spatial imagery; to differ qualitatively and to be distinct in space are two quite different notions.

14. As Mead (1934) notes: “That process... of responding to one's self as another responds to it, taking part in one's own conversation with others, being aware of what one is saying and using that awareness of what one is saying to determine what one is going to say thereafter-that is a process with which we are all familiar. We are continually following up our own address to other persons by an understanding of what we are saying, and using that understanding in the direction of our continued speech. We are finding out what we are going to say, what we are going to do, by saying and doing, and in the process we are continually controlling the process itself” (p.140).

15. Goffman (1967) very nicely puts it in advising: “Not, then, men and their moments. Rather moments and their men” (p.3) – everything of importance to us will occur in “once-occurrent-events-of being” (Bakhtin, 1992, p.2).

16. Here, I will quote from Minick's (1987) translation, as this issue is spelt out there in much more detail. Indeed, with regard to the three translations of Vygotsky's *Thought and Language*, or *Thinking and Speech*, I will mostly quote from Kozulin's 1986 translation – it being now perhaps the most accessible to everyone. But I will quote from the other translations when I think (for my purposes) the phrasing is more evocative. (Given Vygotsky's account of the meaning and the sense of words, he would have much to say about the effect of different translations on our actual, practical responses to his written words.)

17. See note 2 on Vygotsky's (1978) concern to “discover what a ‘psychological’ cell is...,” and his thought that this would lead to “the key to psychology as a whole” (p.8).

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18. “A main source of our failure to understand is that we do not command a clear view of the use of our words. – Our grammar is lacking in this sort of perspicuity. A perspicuous representation produces just that understanding which consists in ‘seeing connections’...”  
(Wittgenstein, 1953, no.122).