# AT THE BOUNDARIES OF BEING: RE-FIGURING INTELLECTUAL LIFE

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Abstract: Is there a place to go beyond Social Constructionism? Is there yet further progress to be made? I think there is. But rather than trying to move forward, to bring new forms of relational practices into existence, I think we must move backward. We must first come to a much greater awareness of or sensitivity to the very strange nature of the relational practices already occurring between us and the othernesses around us now, at this very moment. As living, embodied beings (as 'open' systems) we cannot help but be spontaneously responsive to events occurring around us. But, in being responsive in this way, not only is there a complex intertwining of our own outgoing responsive activities with those coming into us from 'out there', but it is just within this intertwining, according to how moment by moment we focus our attention, that a space 'out there' with a 'depth' (of possibilities) to it is created. Strange things happen at the point of contact in two or more different forms of life with each other - another collective form of life with its own unique world and character (a culture?) emerges. As Bakhtin (1984) remarks, it is just in the meeting of a plurality of <u>unmerged</u> consciousnesses, each with <u>its own world</u>, that such a (dialogically-structured) space is created. Just as two different, 2-D monocular points of view are not merged into another 'averaged' 2-D point of view, but into a binocular 3-D 'world' - a 'world' that both offers us certain opportunities for our own chosen actions while also exerting certain calls upon us to which we must, spontaneously, respond - so similar such 'worlds' are created in all our relational practices. Their unique nature can, however, only be experienced and understood <u>from within</u> the practices in which they are created. Thus to investigate their nature, their structure, the calls they exert on us, what is possible for us within them and what is not, we need some utterly new methods of investigation, quite different from the 'onlooker' methods inherited from the natural sciences. The writings of Bakhtin, Wittgenstein, and Merleau-Ponty give us much help in devising such methods. Nothing less than the re-figuring of our intellectual lives together is required if we are to understand the strange nature of our relational practices.

"Man has to awake to wonder - and so perhaps do peoples. Science is a way of sending him to sleep again" (Wittgenstein, 1980, p.5).

Central to everything I want to say here today, will be talk of us as living our lives embedded in a "responsive order" (Gendlin, 1997). While we must study dead forms from a distance and understand them in terms of objective, explanatory theories linking a series of past causes to their present form, a quite different form of engaged, responsive understanding becomes available to us with living forms. They can call out spontaneous reactions from us in a way impossible for dead forms. All the writers who will figure in my presentation - Bakhtin, Voloshinov, Wittgenstein, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, and Goethe - all of them focus on events occurring from within our <u>living</u> relationships with our surroundings. Indeed, they take it that as living, embodied beings, we are always already embedded in an intricate flow of complexly intertwined <u>relationally-responsive</u> activities, spontaneously occurring between ourselves and the others and othernesses around us. Wittgenstein (1981) puts it thus: "Only in the stream of thought and life do words have meaning" (no.173). Although activity of this kind is utterly everyday and commonplace, there in the background to everything we do, conceptually and academically, it is utterly strange to us. Currently, we lack the publicly shared intellectual resources to characterize its nature fully and appropriately.

One way of capturing the complexity of the responsive intertwining involved here, the style of activity, is to say, as Bakhtin (1981, 1984, 1986) does, that it is activity of a dialogical kind. Dialogic or dialogically-structured relations are, we shall find, very strange. They are reducible neither to logical relationships nor to causal ones. They are relations of a two-way kind which can arise only between the outgoing activity of a living, embodied being, and the responsive results coming back to it from its surroundings. They become especially strange when they occur between two or more human beings. Then, although they may all be very different from each other, they can nonetheless form, as Bakhtin (1984) oxymoronically puts it, "a unity of unmerged consciousnesses or voices." Like the complexity produced in the intertwining of different instruments in an orchestra playing a symphony, we each play our own part in relation to all the others around us.

But we do not play it according to a sheet of music, according to any pre-written scripts, rules, or conventions. We improvise. We behave spontaneously, in response to those around us. But, not just anything goes. Although the result is always open to yet further specification, it is already partially specified - so it cannot be developed further in just any old way. It holds together as a unity because it has that mysterious thing we call a style to it.

But how can a unity be formed from unmerged constituents. Shouldn't we more properly call it an amalgam? Like splitting atoms, a contradiction in terms seems to be involved. What could a living unity of unmerged entities or activities be like? And how is a living relation different from the dead, mechanical, logical relations we familiar with? In our current academic practices, we are used only to talking about systems of relations with only a single, static order of connectedness, things we can 'picture' or represent. We want to be able to stand before them in order to contemplate them - or else, how do we know what we are talking about?

But what if we follow Merleau-Ponty (1964), and take the spontaneous intertwining of the two monocular views from our two eyes as a paradigm for what can happen when two separate activities intertwine in a living relation to each other? As we know, in the intertwining, rather than a blurred and averaged, and still two-dimensional view, we become the beneficiaries of a three dimensional, binocular view of the scene before us, not blurred but one with a greater resolution to it. We can pick out details in it more easily because in fact we see 'a space in depth'. This, I think, is amazing! Rather than simply standing over against a static and dead 2-D picture at which we can only stare blankly, as we look over the scene before us, we find our bodies spontaneously constructing for us, a shaped and vectored sense of how we are placed in relation to a whole range of other possible places in our surroundings that we might be. Indeed, more than that, as we all know from our experience as car drivers, not only do we find the space around us offering us 'openings' for our movements, but we also find it issuing 'compellent calls' to us to act - 'avoid that car which is coming toward us too fast and over the center line' - 'calls' to which we spontaneously react. More than just being, as a space of possibilities, open to our actions, it also has its own requirements.

In providing us with a shaped and vectored sense of our spatial surroundings, an orientation, a dynamic sense that enables us to gauge the relational consequences of our own movements in the course of their performance, the two, two-dimensional views from our two eyes are not mechanically mixed or merged, but are as if 'in conversation' with each other, each telling the other how things are from their 'point of view'. And this is precisely, I think, what Bakhtin (1984) means when he talks of the kind of unity that emerges in dialogically-structured living relations, thus: It is "unity not as an innate one-and-only, but as a dialogical concordance of unmerged twos or multiples" (p.289). Just as the events important to us in driving our cars, occur not in our heads but 'out in the world' in the living relations occurring between us and people in the other cars

around us, so in our other everyday activities out in the world. What is important for us, is "not that which takes place within, but that which takes place on the boundary between one's own and someone else's consciousness, on the threshold" (p.287). The dialogical intertwining of two or more unmerged consciousness, voices, points of view, creates in the boundary space between them - in which their intertwinings are 'orchestrated' - a dynamic sense of 'a space with depth (1)', a space of 'compellent calls' and possibilities in which all can participate, and of which all are a part.

Wittgenstein (1953) notes our embedding within such a responsive order, and the importance of our spontaneous reactions to what goes on around us, in many ways. One simple and crucially way in which he draws our attention to its importance is thus: "Our attitude to what is alive and what is dead, is not the same. All our reactions are different" (no.284). It is the character of our reactions to living things that matters if we what to understand our relational practices better. A form of engaged, responsive understanding becomes available to us with living forms quite unavailable to us with dead ones. While we can only study dead forms from a distance, seeking to understand the pattern of events in the past leading up the present form of their existence, with living forms, we can enter into a relationship with them, and, if we open ourselves to their movements, find ourselves spontaneously responding to them. In other words, instead of seeking to explain a present activity in terms the past, we can understand it in terms of its meaning for us, i.e., in terms of the spontaneous responses it 'calls for' from us in the present moment. Elsewhere, I have called this kind of relationally-responsive knowing a knowing from within to contrast it with knowing-that and knowing-how, both of which have conceptualized as version of representational-referential knowing (Shotter, 1993).

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This focus on our spontaneous reactions, then, is crucial for us. For all of us here at this conference, with our interest in social construction, also share in a set of concerns and endeavors to do with developing a whole new set of relational practices. And the focus on our spontaneous reactions to the events around us will give us, as we shall see, a new point of departure for our practices of academic and intellectual inquiry. Instead of talking of people's beliefs and desires, of their thoughts and ideas, of things hidden from view inside their heads, we must take Wittgenstein's (1953) maxim - that "Nothing is hidden" (no.435) - to heart, and begin with what is readily 'visible' in some sense between us. And in a moment, as a part of my contribution to this movement, I want to explore some methods - methods that my colleague Arlene Katz and I, among others, have called the methods of a "social poetics" - that might help the co-practitioners of a practice also become, between themselves, co-researchers into it, thus to develop it according to their own concerns, rather than having an order alien to it imposed upon them by outsiders (Katz and Shotter, 1996; Shotter and Katz, 1996; Katz and Shotter, 1996; and Shotter and Katz, 1998).

However, before trying to say something about re-figuring our intellectual lives together, I must say something about the pervasiveness of what we might call The Tradition - the tradition of intellectual inquiry that has been culturally passed down to us, via Descartes [1637], the British empiricists, Hobbes [1651], Locke [1690], and Hume [1739], via Kant [1781], and up to and including such writers as Dennett (1979) and Searle (1983) and the cognitivists of the present day. To seek properly useful knowledge, The Tradition tells us, we must follow, as Kant (1970) put it in 1781, "the secure path of a science" (p.17). To follow such a path, we must elevate Reason - or a person's individual ability to reason - to a central place in our lives. For, as Kant put it: "reason has insight only into that which it produces after a plan of its own, and it must not allow itself to be kept, as it were, in nature's leading-strings, but must show itself the way with

principles of judgment based upon fixed laws, constraining nature to give answer to questions of reason's own determining" (p.20). Kant's stance here, clearly, follows on from that of Descartes (1968/1637), who, in promoting his proposed method of inquiry, celebrated it as resulting in making us "as it were, masters and possessors of Nature" (p.78).

Now I haven't the time here to detail every aspect of what this Ramboesque way of conducting our intellectual inquiries into the others and othernesses around us means for how we relate ourselves to them. But, as many of us here are already beginning to cope with issues and problems arising in our lives, and the lives of others, in ways quite different from those bequeathed to us by The Tradition, I must say something about why it is so difficult to 'disinfect' our intellectual practices from its disabling influences upon us.

I can, perhaps, illustrate how its 'infects' our practices by reference to a phenomenon with which we are all familiar: We talk of "flavor of themonth" therapies, or caution: "Better use the technique straight away before its effects wear off," and so on. Somehow, although we are all responsively 'fired up' by new suggestions - by talk of 'narratives', 'externalizing conversations,' 'multiple voices', 'unique outcomes', 'not-knowing', and so on - after a while, gradually, things seem to settle down, and interactional sclerosis again sets it. Why?

Because, I think, a deeper(2) change is needed, a change not in how we-talk-the-talk, but in how we-walk-the-walk - we need, physically and bodily, to live our intellectual lives differently, not just to change how we talk about them. Indeed, just a moment ago, to make a point, I knowing let myself talk in idiom I knew to be unsuitable, that I knew violated Wittgenstein's maxim that "Nothing is hidden:" I talked of our two eyes as if being 'in conversation' with each other. Such talk not only reduces something amazing and wonderful to something familiar, it also sends us in our research back to seeking something hidden inside people - indeed, it could easily motivate current cognitive neuro-scientists to research into activities in the optic chiasma in, as I see it, a pseudo-attempt to explain our seeing in depth.

Instead, as I shall try to make more clear in a moment, I meant it in a quite different way. Rather than as a prelude to an attempted scientific explanation, I meant is as an aid in becoming more aware of the strange structure of our own relational practices. I meant it as an aid to noticing something already happening within us and around us, to noticing how, in a dialogue with others, a shared sense of a unique 'landscape of possibilities' emerges as the dialogue progresses between us.

To return to the phenomenon of a new therapy at first producing results which then gradually wear off: The new results occur, I think, because Wittgenstein (1980) is right in saying that: "The origin and the primitive form of the language game is a reaction; only from this can more complicated forms develop. Language - I want to say - is refinement, 'in the beginning was the deed'" (p.31). Where, as he sees it, the word 'primitive' is meant here to indicate that the reaction is "the prototype of a way of thinking and not the result of thought" (1981, no.541). While we are in this initial, relationally-responsive stage of our new practices, we are attentive and responsive to all kinds of new details in our client's behavior. And this is what we need to hold on to: it is in the noticing of new reactions that new practices can begin. A living practice consists in beginnings and beginnings and beginnings.

But gradually, The Tradition exerts its authority over us. Gradually, we feel once again the urge to develop a certain systematic kind of knowledge, a kind that we can justify to academically trained professional colleagues and whihc gives us kudos among them. We feel we have to be able to argue with, and to silence, intellectual critics in seminar rooms. To do that, we have to talk

about our practices in terms of their systems of thought, in terms of categories which make sense to them. The Tradition is at work again. We have to tell them of our assumptions, talk of our thoughts, ideas, or theories, say whether the static states of affairs they represent are true or not, and so on - in other words, they ask us to justify our practices to them in terms again of events inside people's heads. Gradually we are drawn back inside The Tradition.

But we didn't start our new practices as The Tradition demands (nor did they, actually). We didn't start as isolated Robinson Crusoes, with just a single new idea, but as participant parts embedded in an ongoing flow of dialogically-structured activity occurring between ourselves and the others around us, and what we contributed was to do with a change in that flow. Let me explore this effect that The Tradition exerts on us in our seminar rooms, conference halls, and classrooms further. For it is so easy for us to get caught up in it.

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As we know, central to the set of features characterizing its nature, is the claim that our fundamental relation to our world - the world we sense as surrounding us and as being open to our actions within it - is as a set of isolated, self-contained subjects, set over against an independent, objective world, made up of a whole set of mechanically organized parts. The Tradition has it that we make sense of this 'outside' or 'external' world by means of 'inner mental representations' or 'theories' which, when they are true, can be put into practice and will lead to right action. But we do not just 'believe' differently; we already act in a way which makes it difficult for anyone to claim that we might hold such a belief. Yet, confronted by critics, how are we to act? Should we begin by arguing against The Tradition, and then to use such a critique as a justification for proposing an alternative to it?

This, I think, is useless. The achievements of the natural sciences are undeniable. And what can be achieved solely by argument amongst a group of people like us, sitting in a room like this, is, I think, limited. (Indeed, the very fact that we are still sitting like this, listening just to a continuous piece of talk, is a mark of the strength of The Tradition's hold over us). But even if I could produce a knock-down argument against The Tradition, against cognitivism, against Dennett and Searle and their followers, I think such an achievement would be empty. To the extent that I would still be functioning within their Tradition, in terms of whether a 'picture' I was offering was a correct picture or not, such an argument would be "after the fact," and "beside the point." It would not give us what we seek.

It would be beside the point, because to us as practitioners, no matter how accurate or correct, a static picture would not give us access to a more workable practice. It would not help us attend to the particular, moment-by-moment changing details crucial to us criticizing, modifying, refining, and elaborating our current practices from within our own conduct of them. Such a picture would orient or point us in the wrong direction. Because, in arguing from facts, The Tradition works retrospectively, after the fact, in terms of what already exists, in terms of what we have already done. Whereas, as practitioners, we are interested in new possibilities, in what has not yet actually occurred but which, in a particular circumstance, could occur. And, as Wittgensteinians, we are also interested in the 'compellent calls' our current circumstances exert upon us.

In other words, much of our linguistic terminology comes on the scene when it is already too late. Rather than playing a part in the gradually emergence of our capacities to act self-consciously and deliberately from what we do spontaneously and unreflectively (Vygotsky, 1986), it itself is a product of that process. As Wittgenstein (1980, I) puts it: "The facts of human history that throw light on our problem, are difficult for us to find out, for our talk passes them by, it is occupied

with other things" (no.78). Our publicly shared terms refer mostly to things, processes, and entities, which have their existence within our already constructed and settled ways of being or forms of life (3).

Although we do, of course make use of linguistic expressions in the process. But we do so in unique and unusual 'poetic'(4) ways. Thus, when we do so, we cannot draw on an already publicly shared terminology. Nor can we use them to refer to already publicly shared things or objects. Indeed, socially, we remain deeply ignorant of such developmental processes, not because the 'assumptions', 'theories' or 'ideas' in terms of which we conduct them are too deeply buried within us to bring out into the light of day, but because the formative influences shaping our conduct are not wholly there in-our-individual-heads to be brought out. At the early stages in the development of our relational practices, there is nothing - there are no things between us - to talk about. What is crucial, is the already existing spontaneous flow of activity between us, and the use of an expression in relation to it at precisely an appropriate moment. "We must concentrate," says Wittgenstein (1966), not on [the actual words used]... but on the enormously complicated situation in which the... expression has a place, in which the expression itself has almost a negligible place" (p.2).

Where, then, should we <u>begin</u>? What events can help us gain the kind of access to our own conduct of our own practices that is actually of help to us, in bringing us to an awareness of how we might refine, elaborate, or otherwise modify them? And having once gained that access, how should we then proceed? Is there another way of using talk amongst a group of people, not to convince them of the truth of something in their reason, but to influence them in their perception, so that they come to see features of their own ways of being in the world that previously had passed them by unnoticed.

I think there is. The clue lies, I think, in remarks of Wittgenstein that I have already quoted, that "the origin and the primitive form of the language game is a reaction" (1980, p.31), where the reaction is "the prototype of a way of thinking and not the result of thought" (1981, no.541). For what we want, is a more systematic - and thus discussable and teachable - version of the ordinary everyday ways of noticing, connecting, and ordering that we already use amongst ourselves, spontaneously. We want to be able to create within ourselves, ahead of time, not just a static 'picture' of a single state of affairs in the world, but an inner, shaped and vectored sense of the space of other possible places around us that we could be. As Wittgenstein (1953) puts it, we want to "know our way about" inside the dialogical spaces in which we are participant parts along with the others around us; given the living events that have occurred for far within them, we want to know how, in a relationally-responsive manner, to "go on" within them. We would like, so to speak, to be 'at home', not just in our own houses and towns, but in the world at large.

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Let me begin with a very simple example to which you may be able to 'enter into' and thus understand responsively, re-calling the 'inner feels' involved: We sit facing someone, looking at them, they look back at us, we smile, they smile, and so on. We sense that they are 'with' us, and sense that they sense us as being 'with' them. Activity goes out from our eyes toward them, and they are responsive to it in such a way, that we can sense the activity coming back from them as being in accord with ours toward them - we might say that we experience it as a <u>resonance</u>, as an incoming <u>answer</u> to our outgoing activity toward them. But as soon as that resonance ceases, as soon as their looking at us is not in answer to our looking at them - as soon as we sense them looking over our shoulder at others, or, as looking at the surface of our eye-ball like an eye-doctor - then we know that, although they are still bodily before us, their 'involved-withness' with us has

disappeared. Oliver Sacks (1985) noted this with Dr P. - the man who mistook his wife for a hat. It was the "the failure in the normal interplay of gaze and expression" (p.8) that gave Sacks his first clue to the strange nature of Dr P.'s neurological problem.

This 'withness' of other people with us, is not the mere physical, side-by-side withness of a cup with a saucer, or a chair with a table, giving rise to a static unity made from externally related objective parts - that is, of parts which have their own character irrespective of whether they are a part of a whole of not. Rather, it is a dialogically-structured, existential withness, a withness within which our own being is at stake. For as a participant parts of a living whole, we owe not just our character but our very existence as human persons to our relations to our surroundings - not just to our momentary relations to them but to their temporal trajectory, to our part in shaping their past, as well as in shaping how they might develop in the future. I cannot continue being me without you, I cannot continue to be a speaker without listeners, a smiler without someone to smile at. The living wholes within which we are participant parts are thus quite unlike the constructions which engineers nut-and-bolt together or carpenters screw and glue together. As relational wholes, they do not need "intermediate joining objects" (like Democritus's atoms required "hooks") to hold them together as a unity. All their 'parts' (if parts is the right word, for they have neither an independent character nor existence apart from their participation in the whole) are thus internally related. For, living wholes hold themselves together as unities by their participant parts all, so to speak, continually 'calling for' their neighbors, for they owe their very existence to them. No wonder, as Heidegger (1962) points out, that we can find the beginnings here of what we talk of as care and concern, as well as anxiety, along with many other features of our everyday ways of being in the world that are not well represented within The Tradition.

In becoming involved with each other in this living, responsive way, in which we each spontaneously play a part-in-which-we-call-on-others-to-play-theirs. Indeed, although we utterly fail to notice it, we have a very special kind of almost paradoxical obligation to be involved with each other in this unceasing, spontaneous, relationally-responsive manner. Here, now, with me speaking to you, I need to look at you, to see you responding to me, and you need to see me responding to you - if I turn to talk to someone outside the room, you sense my lack of 'involved-withness' with you. Thus we find in our "joint spontaneous involvements," as Goffman (1967) calls them, something very strange, we find "a component of non-rational impulsiveness - [that is] not only tolerated but actually demanded - [and this is] an important way in which the interactional order differs from other kinds of social order" (p.115).

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Here, along with all the other clues we have received from Bakhtin, Merleau-Ponty, and Wittgenstein, Goffman gives us another clue as to how we need to proceed in developing new relational practices between us. The interactional order, or responsive order, as I called it above, is very different from other kinds of social order. Schooled, as we have been ever since the Greeks, in the worth of individual contemplative thought prior to planned and effortful action, (rather than, as in some parts of the East, in the value of refined and sensitive ways of acting effortlessly), the nature of such joint spontaneous involvements, the dialogical, is alien and strange to our modern, western sensibilities. As something we do spontaneously, unthinkingly, and unself-consciously, we fail to notice its existence, we fail to notice its amazing creativity. It remains ignored in the background to all our activities together. Thus, just like fish being the last to discover water, so it is with us and our embedding within the flow of spontaneous, relationally-responsive activity unceasingly occurring between us and the others and othernesses around us.

Only very recently, with the aid of writings by such people as Wittgenstein, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, Bakhtin, Voloshinov, Vygotsky, Dewey, James, G.H. Mead (and now also Goethe), have we begun to pay attention to the everyday 'practicalities' of our lives together, to the character of this responsive order.

In fact, as soon as one living being spontaneously responds to the activities of another, and thus acts in a way that <u>depends on</u> their acts, then their activities can never be wholly their own. The influences shaping their activities are spread out in the relations between them and their surroundings. This is a way of being quite different from those we have so far studied in the Social Theory and the Human Sciences. The two great realm of activity that have so far occupied our attention are those of Behavior and Action.

- However, what occurs in this realm of jointly produced activity, cannot be accounted as <u>action</u>, for it cannot be explained by giving individual people's <u>reasons</u> for so acting - for in acting spontaneously, in response to the others and othernesses around them, we cannot hold any individuals responsible for what occurs.
- Yet, we cannot account it as <u>behavior</u>, for it cannot be explained as a naturally happening regularity in terms of externally imposed causal principles - for it is produced only by those concerned responding to each other, without that it does not occur.
- What is produced is a strange, third realm of activity of its own unique kind.
- It is a very complex mixture of not wholly reconcilable influences.
- This makes it very difficult for us to characterize its nature: it has neither a fully orderly nor a fully disorderly structure, a neither completely stable nor an easily changed organization, a neither fully subjective nor fully objective character.
- Indeed, we could say that its very lack of any finalized human order, and thus *its openness to being specified or determined yet further by those involved in it, in practice*, is its central defining feature.

To gain an access into its nature, I have been talking of things with which we have a ready familiarity, I have been trying to talk in ways which
'invite', which 'call for', an everyday, direct responsive understanding on your part. I have carefully avoided talk that would tend to drive you
back into The Tradition, so that rather than 'entering into' and sharing a dialogical space with me here, now, you would have been forced to
think of possible theoretical frameworks in terms of which to interpret my talk. In this, I have been trying to follow lessons learned from
Wittgenstein (1953).

The Tradition suggests to us that everything of importance in our intellectual lives, to repeat, lies in the power of our <u>reasoning</u> prior to our actions, and if we can deliberate well in conference rooms of this kind, others are impressed and give us power: they are impressed by us being able to give seeming indubitable or unquestionable <u>explanations</u> (in terms of already shared categories) for acting in one way rather than another, when faced with a problem, and <u>they</u> start to try to put <u>our</u> plan into action. Wittgenstein orients us quite differently.

He remarks on our overwhelming temptation - the 'compellent calls' coming to us from our academic surroundings - to find 'solutions' to problems in attempted explanations, whereas, he suggests, "the difficulty... is not that of finding the solution but rather that of recognizing as the solution something that looks as if it were only a preliminary to it... This is connected, I believe, with our wrongly expecting an explanation, whereas the solution to the difficulty is a description,

if we give it the right place in our considerations. If we dwell upon it, and do not try to get beyond it" (1981, no.314).

In other words, when faced with a problematic circumstance, rather than turning away from it, and burying ourselves deep in thought in an attempt to mentally and imaginatively construct a way to explain it in ways already familiar to us - like Descartes retiring into the warmth of his stove, of Hume the warm of his study - we should stay 'with it'. We should then look it over as we look over a painting or a sculpture. We should respond to it from up close, from a distance, from this angle and that, until we can begin to gain a shaped and vectored sense of the space of possibilities it opens up to us in the responses it 'calls' from us. And we should do this in collaboration with the others involved with us in the practice in question. This kind of collaborative 'surveying' of our practices from within our conduct of them is a quite different kind of activity from thinking about them theoretically. It leads also, to a quite different way - a way I have in fact been using - for us to communicate between us about our practices.

Talk on how to think about them, is useless to us. As I commented earlier - on why, even if I could logically disprove the claims of cognitivists, deliberative success of that kind would still not give us the kind of access to our relational practices we seek - so here too: like language, our social shared practices, cannot emerge "from some kind of ratiocination" (Wittgenstein, 1969, no.475). We cannot communicate the nature of a relational practice by giving explanations of it in terms of the rules, conventions, or principles seemingly governing the practice. Being able to 'talk about' a practice in this way is only of use to those already to an extent skilled in it. To communicate or teach a practice, as Wittgenstein (1953) notes, "examples are needed, for our rules leave loop-holes open, and the practice has to speak for itself" (Wittgenstein, 1969, no.139). The enacting or staging of examples works 'to call out' new responses from us, it works the create the beginnings of a new practice, beginnings which can then be further refined and elaborated by further pointings out, further inter-relating, and ordering.

This is a rather different way of understanding the function of examples than that familiar to us. Usually, we see an example as representing an already existing state of affairs. This is to see it as an example <u>of</u> something, and to make use of it cognitively, as an aid to thought. The active staging or enacting of an example, however, in eliciting certain spontaneous reactions in those who witness the enactment, works in a different way. It works perceptually, as an example <u>for</u> a way of looking and acting, as, to repeat Wittgenstein's (1981) phrase, "the prototype of a way of thinking."

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But, to allow oneself to be influenced in this way - that is, not to function as "an appointed judge who compels the witness to answer questions which he himself has formulated" (p.20), as Kant (1970/1781) put it, but to be a wimp and to allow oneself to be "kept... in nature's leading-strings" - is to follow an utterly different set of methods. It is to follow a set of methods first developed by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe [1749-1832].

Aware of the fact that Descartes's and Kant's Ramboesque Reason placed the scientist in the position of "the task-master of nature, [who] collects experiences, hammers and screws them together and thus, by 'insulating the experiment from man,... attempt[s] to get to know nature merely through artifices and instruments... [and never leaves] the gloom of the empirico-mechanico-dogmatic torture chamber" (Goethe, quoted in Heller, 1952, pp.17-18), Goethe sought a more gentle approach. His sought, as he put it, "a delicate empiricism which makes itself utterly identical with the object, thereby becoming true theory... The ultimate goal would be to grasp that

everything in the realm of fact is already theory. Let us not seek for something beyond the phenomena - they themselves are the theory" (Goethe (1988) p.307, quoted in Brady, 1998, p.98).

I do not have the time left to go fully into the details of Goethe's methods. But it is important to note at least these three points: i) one is, to repeat, that they depend on the fact that we can become relationally involved with living forms in a way quite impossible with dead ones; ii) another is, that when we come to look into the historical influences at work on the thought of Wittgenstein and Bakhtin, we find that they were in fact very heavily influenced by Goethe's "delicate empiricism;" and finally, iii) in that they are to do with processes of first-time creation {Gr poiesis = creation}, with, as Bakhtin (1993, p.1) calls them, "once-occurrent events of Being," or, as Garfinkel (1967) puts it, events which occur for yet "another first time" (p.9), it is appropriate to call these methods 'poetic' - and it is in outlining the nature of these poetic methods of inquiry that I would like to finish. In doing this, I will focus mostly on methods we find in Wittgenstein's writings (the influence of Goethe on Wittgenstein is documented in Monk, 1992).

We can list some of Wittgenstein's (1953) practical 'poetic' methods (drawn from our ordinary, everyday uses of talk in practice) as follows:

i)      noticing in practice: 'stop' 'look', 'listen to this', 'look at that' (pointing out features of the flow from within the flow) (nos 132, 144).
ii)     connecting and relating: use new metaphors to reveal new possible connections and relations between events hidden by the dead metaphors in routine forms of talk (no.115).
iii)    continue to gather examples ("don't think, but look!" - no.66).
iv)     begin to order by making comparisons using (sometimes invented) "objects of comparison which are meant to throw light on the facts of our language by way not only of similarities but dissimilarities " (no.130)
v)      where all this will help us "to establish an order in our knowledge of the use of language: an order with a particular end in view [so that we can all participate in discussions toward that end]; one out of many possible orders, not the order" (no.132).

For what we seek here is, to repeat, that inner shaped and vectored sense of a circumstance that we have when we are 'at home' in it, when we all know our 'way around' inside it. Except now, we seek more: We want to be to share that 'at homeness' with the others around us, so that we can all talk with each other about possible moves within it without confusing and misleading each other - without becoming "as it were, entangled in our own rules" (Wittgenstein, 1953, no.125).

In this set of methods that I have drawn from Wittgenstein, we can, I hope, all see our ordinary ways of noticing, connecting and relating, and ordering - this way for one purpose, that way for another - now set out in something of a systematized fashion. And when we pursue them in this way, to build new relational practices between us from small, previously ignored beginnings in fleeting, only once-occurrent, spontaneous responses - we find, as Wittgenstein (1953) puts it, that: "Problems are solved, not by giving new information, but by arranging what [in some sense] we have always known" (1953, no.109). And as a result of our arranging, we arrive at "just that understanding which consists in 'seeing connections'" (1953, no.122) - uniquely new connections that now, because we now know the importance of seemingly once-off trivialities, we can begin to take notice of, and keep returning to in seeking to refine and elaborate them between us.

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To sum up then, and to make good on my title: What is involved in re-figuring our intellectual lives together so that we are able, between us, to refined, elaborate, and to modify our relational practices in ways which tap into - rather than eliminate - the unnoticed, and thus unused, resources for new possible ways forward we are continually creating between us?

Crucial, as I have already said, are our living responses to the others and othernesses around us. Till now, our intellectual lives together have been configured by a sequence of steps derived from the dominance of Reason in The Tradition. The sequence of steps goes like this: i) Treat any newness or strangeness as a problem to be solved; ii) analyze it into already known elements; iii) find a pattern or order in them; iv) hypothesize an agency responsible for the order (call it, say, some such mysterious 'stuff' as 'THE MIND'); v) find further evidence for THE MIND; vi) enshrine it in a theory; vii) manipulate the strangeness (now known in terms of our theory of mind as INNER MENTAL REPRESENTATIONS) to produce and advantageous outcome. We thus arrive at what we call a 'solution' to the problem. Following Bakhtin (1984), we could call this process; the continual, monological rediscovery of sameness. In our refusal to be led by nature's "lead-strings", we only ever find answers to questions of a kind already known to us.

The sequence of steps in 'poetic' methods followed in the less rampant, more delicate empiricism of Bakhtin and Wittgenstein, perhaps under Goethe's influence, goes like this: i) treat the othernesses one encounters as radically unknown to us - approach not like an appointed judge but with care, respect, and anxiety; ii) 'enter into' dialogically-structured, reciprocally responsive relations with it; iii) we must be 'answerable' (partially) to its calls, just as it is (partially) answerable to ours - we must allow it to display its being to us; iv) an 'it' appears between us, produced neither solely by us or by the otherness - the 'it' is our it: poiesis is at work between us - the sensed creation of form; v) the form has a shaped and vectored sense to it - we can develop a sensitivity or sensibility of the other's responsive relations to us; vi) as we continue our commerce with the otherness, there is a gradual growth of familiarity with its 'inner shape or character'; vii) as we 'dwell on, or within' our relations with the otherness, we gain a sense of the value of its yet-to-be-achieved aspects - the prospects it offers us for 'going on' with it.

Rather than a solution, rather than information, what gain in this process is orientation, we find our 'footing' or come to know how to 'go on' in relation to the otherness concerned. Indeed, rather than bringing what was 'a problem' to us to an end, the process above gives us only beginnings and beginnings without end. But gradually, with patience and persistence, we can come to feel more 'at home' with what was at first a radically strange other or otherness. And this means that we could - if both they and we desired - turn to collaborating in implementing the methods of inquiry bequeathed to us by The Tradition. But my own interests and concerns lie elsewhere. The Ramboesque application of The Tradition in so many spheres of our relations to the others and othernesses around us, has produced a dominant world-picture of only dead and mechanical things, in which nothing new ever occurs - the continual rediscovery of sameness. No wonder dinosaurs are so popular at the moment. But I for one am tired of it. We need a new shared world-picture. One with a bit more life in it! What would the world around us look like if we were re-figure it in Bakhtin-Wittgensteinian-Goethean terms? If we were to take a number of our grand terms - like Truth, Consciousness, Idea, Knowledge, and so on, and see through them a new living world of unceasing, spontaneously responsive relationships, in which unities were formed and held together for a moment by their participant parts, just for a while' calling on each other, and then, at the next moment, regrouping to form new unities, and so on. What an amazing world!! Bakhtin (1984) gives something of such a revisioning in his account of TRUTH seen dialogically:

"It should be pointed out that 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 only when consciousness is place above existence, and where the unity of existence is transformed into the unity of consciousness" (p.81).

The dialogical-poetic re-figuring of many of our grand terms will, I think, awake us (as William Blake put it) from "single vision and Newton's sleep" (put me right if that is slightly off). And this is the crucial point in my talk today - if we can just desist for a while from asking questions as 'appointed judges', and allow ourselves to be responsive to the others and othernesses around us, the world suddenly becomes a wondrous place. Is there still a task for university intellectuals in all of this? You bet! But rather than the noble seclusion of the ivory tower, they will have to open themselves up to world around them if they are to undertake it. Let the re-figuring being....

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1. We might say that whenever extra relational dimensions are brought into existence in our understanding of a circumstance, the change in the quality of our understanding is a change in its 'depth'.

2. By 'deeper' here, a space of more relational dimensions, of more possibilities, is meant.

3. Searle (1983) puts the issue thus, in a somewhat more technical language, calling our studies of what I am calling the background flow of spontaneous relationally-responsive activities in which we are embedded, our second-order investigations: "Our second-order investigations into the

first-order phenomena quite naturally use the first-order vocabulary, so we can be said quite naturally to <u>reflect</u> about reflection or to have <u>beliefs</u> about believing or even to <u>presuppose</u> presupposing. But when it comes to examining the conditions of the possibility of the functioning of the mind, we simply have very little vocabulary to hand, except the vocabulary of first-order Intentional states [of mind]" (pp.156-157).

4. Again, I put the word 'poetic' in scare quotes, as using language poetically, is something usually done by special people, in an already highly developed society, we call poets. To say we are all, now, poets, seems to an extent a misuse of language. Here again, we are drawing on a term for a more deliberately conducted activity to draw attention to the more spontaneous source activities in which it in fact has its origins.