



Dialogism and Polyphony in Organizing Theorizing in Organization Studies: Action Guiding Anticipations and the Continuous Creation of Novelty

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Abstract

Bakhtin's ideas of polyphony and dialogism in language are explored as ways of organizing our thinking in organizational theorizing. Traditionally, language has been thought of as an already established, self-contained system of linguistic communication that sets out a set of rules or social conventions that people make use of in expressing themselves. In this account, what could be called the intellectualist, Cartesian account of language, people understand the linguistic representations contained or encoded in each other's sentences. However, another account – a relationally-responsive, emotional-volitional account articulated by Bakhtin (1981, 1984, 1986, 1993), along with a number of others, such as Wittgenstein, Merleau-Ponty, James, and Bergson – is of a much more dynamic, participatory, relational kind. In it, language and the world are intertwined in a *dialogical* or *chiasmic* relation with each other, in which we are shaped just as much, if not more, by the world, as the world by us. Indeed, in arguing for the importance of an utterance's capacity to call out a bodily response from us, spontaneously, Bakhtin is arguing that our *intellectual* knowledge is dependent for its achievement on a much more fundamental, spontaneously occurring, sensuous attunement to the events occurring in our surroundings – an understanding that occurs in the 'movements' of our expressions, prior to our grasp of their finished forms. Thus, to switch to this very different view of language is also to switch to a very different view of the world in which we live: it is to see it as a living, dynamic, indivisible world of events that is still coming into being. It is also to switch to a form of *complex thinking*, very much as outlined by Chia and his colleagues (Chia 1996, 1998, 2002; Chia and King 2001; Tsoukas and Chia 2002), in which, instead of our thinking retrospectively *about* organizations (assuming we all already know what 'an organization' is), reorients us toward *thinking in duration*, a very different way to organize our thinking in organizational studies.

Keywords: complexity, dialogical, expression, polyphony, responsivity, thinking in duration

But this world-as-event is not just a world of being, of that which is given; no object, no relation, is given here as something simply given, as something totally on hand, but is always given in conjunction with another given that is connected with those objects and relations, namely, that which is yet-to-be-achieved or determined; 'one ought to...'; 'it is desirable that...'. An object that is absolutely indifferent, totally finished, cannot be something one experiences actually. (Bakhtin 1993: 32)

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In fact, we do indeed feel that not one of the categories of our thought – unity, multiplicity, mechanical causality, intelligent finality, etc. – applies exactly to the things of life... In vain we force the living into this or that one of our moulds. All the moulds crack. (Bergson 1911: x)

Below, I want to explore a new way of approaching theory, or better, the *use* of theoretical concepts in organization studies. Overall, the change in style of approach being broached here – from a static to dynamic involvement with the events of concern to us in our surroundings – is not in itself new. Chia and his colleagues (Chia 1996, 1998, 2002; Chia and King 2001; Tsoukas and Chia 2002) have been noting for some time now the limitations in classical, static ways of seeing the world, of seeing our surroundings as consisting in ‘simply locatable’, already completed *things* (Whitehead 1975), subject in their motions simply to positional re-arrangements. But to view *living* movement in this way, as consisting merely in the re-arrangement of a set of elements previously arranged differently, is to try, *per impossible*, to create movement out of a sequence of separated immobilities (Bergson 1911). Living events elude us. We can achieve only an *illusion* of living movement in this manner, just as a movie projector achieves the same illusion on the movie screen by jumping from one immobile frame to the next at 24 frames a second. Thus, if the approach here to the task of theorizing in organization studies had to be summed up in one phrase it would be that: we are searching for a new way of understanding our relations to our surroundings *while still moving around within them*, instead of *viewing them intermittently from fixed points of view* – a new way of understanding that takes the ‘shaped’ sequencing of events in time, rather than the patterning of forms in space, as crucial.

But, as Bergson (1911) remarks, none of our current intellectual habits of mind seem suitable to this task. Our intellects are oriented towards the ends of our actions, ‘thence it comes also that only the goal where our activity will rest is pictured explicitly to our mind: the movements constituting the action itself either elude our consciousness or reach it only confusedly’ (p. 299); they are oriented towards ‘making us in some measure masters of events;... [our intellect] retains of moving reality only eventual immobilities’ (pp. 342–343). In other words, we cannot gain an understanding of what life is like from within our living of it, from within our moving around within the practicalities of our lives, without developing within ourselves certain differently oriented habits of mind. We need to accustom the intellect ‘to install itself within the moving’ (p. 343), to teach ourselves *thinking in duration* (Chia 1998: 359), that is, to think of living events that occur in time, not as a sequence of separate immobilities like beads on a string, but as exhibiting an indivisible flow of activity in which each phase is novel in some respects while retaining the unity of living being’s expression and identity. Thus, as Bergson (1911) puts it, ‘as soon as we are confronted with true duration, we see that it means creation, and that if that which is being unmade endures, it can only be because it is inseparably bound to what is making itself’ (p. 343).

This, as we shall see, is where Bakhtin’s (1981, 1984, 1986) relationally-responsive account of the ceaseless unfolding events occurring in the course of our words in their speaking comes to be of crucial importance to us in organization studies.

For it sets our understanding of the workings of language in our human affairs in motion, in living, continually creative motion. Indeed, it uncovers a (usually unnoticed) realm of ceaselessly occurring, spontaneous inter-activity which, as Bakhtin (1993) puts it, has an *emotional-volitional* tone, and it is this realm of expressive movement that ‘sets the scene’, that is, constrains the possible forms, for our more deliberately conducted intellectual activities.

It constitutes the ceaselessly flowing background of activities from out of which our more deliberately conducted activities can be drawn, and into which their results can return. But as Merleau-Ponty (1962) points out, this means that in everyday effortless talk, listeners do not need to *interpret* a speaker’s utterances to grasp his or her thought, ‘the listener receives thought from speech itself’ (p. 178). It is present in the way in which speakers ‘give shape’ to their utterances. Thus the ‘conceptual meaning’ of a speaker’s words, ‘must be formed by a kind of deduction from a *gestural meaning*, which is immanent in speech’ (p. 179). In effect, we must ask ourselves: What kind of person, in what kind of situation, would say such things? And to whom would they say them? When we do this, if we can reproduce the tone and accent of the speaker, we can begin to feel our way into their existential manner, the way speakers are *using* their words. We can begin to understand the meaning of their words in terms of their role in a particular context of action¹. In fact, all our speech (and writing) carries its relational meaning in its tone. ‘There is thus,’ Merleau-Ponty (1962) concludes, ‘either in the man who listens or reads, or in the one who speaks or writes, a *thought in speech* the existence of which is unsuspected by intellectualism’ (p. 179).

Bakhtin’s turn away from a referential-representational account of language use to a more relationally-responsive account, thus opens up for us a vast new ‘terra incognita’ – the vast sphere of the many different evaluative relations, orientations, or approaches that we might adopt to the others and othernesses around us – that now awaits our further explorations. It is so vast that I will select just two topics upon which to focus: (1) I will explore how our expressive acts in their temporal contouring, that is, in their ‘emotional-volitional tone’ (Bakhtin 1993), can exert an influence on the others around us, thus to shape not only *their* actions but their very *way of being* in the world. And (2) I will also explore how in his account of the responsive, *dialogic* relations between our utterances, that is, of their *anticipation arousing* relations to each other, he also offers us a *polyphonic* account, that is, a multi-voiced account, of how talk that works to organize the overall doing of a practical activity by a group of people might function.

Rethinking the Role of Language in Organization Studies: From the Static to the Dynamic, From Patterns in Space to Sequences in Time, From Representation to Responsivity

Western habits of mind have a long history². But the idea of a ‘scientific’ approach to overcoming the difficulties we face in life can be seen as beginning with Descartes’ (1968) ‘*Discourse ... on the method of properly conducting*

one's reason and of seeking truth in the sciences' of 1637. And within the tradition of inquiry that has developed since, we have sought to make sense of humanly organized activities in organizational studies in the same way that we have approached all our other scientific inquiries. That is, we have begun by assuming that there are such 'things' as organizations 'out there' in the world, and we have conceived of them as an arrangement of identifiable objective elements, each with its own discoverable properties, each moving according to discoverable laws or principles, so that by a coordinated division of labour, an organization is able to complete tasks that lie beyond the capacities of its single elements. Indeed, it is only in a world of such objective elements (atoms, or particles) in motion that the kind of methodical investigation envisaged by Descartes – with its aim, as he stated it, of 'making ourselves, as it were, masters and possessors of nature' (p. 78) – is possible at all.

This vision of Descartes – of a world of separate, objective elements in motion according to laws – leads on to Heinrich Hertz's (1894/1956) account of the role of theories in our thinking; he states it thus: 'In endeavouring ... to draw inferences as to the future from the past, we always adopt the following process. We form for ourselves images or symbols of external objects; and the form that we give them is such that the necessary consequents of the images in thought are always the images of the necessary consequents in nature of the things pictured. In order that this requirement may be satisfied, there must be a certain conformity between nature and our thought' (p. 1).

The crucial phrase that reveals to us, not only the kind of theory Hertz imagined here, but also the character of his unquestioned attitude to language, is, of course, '*of the things pictured*'. Indeed, what Descartes (and later Hertz) then thought of as the nature of physical reality – of it as essentially *picturable* – has not much changed since. Heidegger (1977), in his 1938 essay *The age of the world picture*, captures our still current intellectual commitments nicely, when he writes: 'Initially, the word "picture" makes one think of a copy of something ... "Picture" means, here, not a mere imitation, but rather ... the matter itself stands in the way it stands to us, before us ... Understood in an essential way, "world picture" does not mean "picture of the world" but rather, the world grasped as picture' (pp. 66–67). Indeed, as Chia and King (2001) point out, despite the linguistic 'turn' in organization studies, organization theorists still think of language as an essentially *representational medium* of communication, that provides a complex, 'taxonomic repository of concepts, categories, terminologies, and symbols, each of which singly, or imaginatively combined with others, can be adequate to the multifarious task of accurately describing and representing organizational phenomena at their experienced level of complexity' (p. 314). And clearly, when as observers we stand before complex phenomena, viewing them in terms of the concepts provided by Cartesian-Hertzian (C-E) style theories, we can undoubtedly see aspects of them – in particular, their orderly and repetitive aspects – as represented by the theories. Chia and King (2001), appositely, call it the 'entitative conception of reality', in which 'clear-cut, definite things are deemed to occupy clear-cut, definite places in space and time' (p. 319).

But, what is missing from this way of intellectually or cognitively relating ourselves to our surroundings, clearly, is any *developmental* account of how we

come to see such phenomena in this *entitative* fashion in the first place. For the terms of such theories are not self-specifying; they do not immediately present themselves to us as appropriate. What was at first seen in one way, that is, in ordinary terms as chaotic, must come to be seen in another, that is, in extraordinary terms as in fact orderly. Creating new theories of any worth is, thus, hard work. As a consequence, learning how to make sense of an academic discipline's special, theoretical vocabulary – how it must be used and applied in practice – is also hard work, the work all new students must do if they are to pass their exams and become socialized into the discipline's theoretical practices, and what professionals must also do on encountering a theorist's new work. Whether it is explicitly realized or not, all theories, all theoretical representations – to the extent that they suggest that things are other than what at first sight they seem to be – must also be accompanied by an informal, *conversational* or *dialogical* kind of account of how the terms in which they are set out should be used and understood.

Representational accounts of language use fail to account for language as being *constitutive* of our ways of seeing (and otherwise sensing) our surroundings as the kind of world in which we live, and hence also, of the kinds of kinds of action we might execute within it. In other words, this conversational role of language as itself working spontaneously to *organize* us into a social group capable of a coordinated division of labour, able to do together what we cannot do apart – whether it be the manufacture of goods, the conducting of a business, or the execution of an academic inquiry in organization studies – goes unnoticed. But, while the mark of success in a normal (Kuhn 1970), or 'finished' science (Hanson 1958), is its production of important empirical findings, the mark of success in an 'unfinished, research' science (Hanson 1958) is its production – in the conversational use of language – of a research community, all oriented toward a common topic of inquiry (Shotter 2007). In other words, the current *language of organization theory* is oriented toward individuals in already organized social groups, that is, towards individuals who already share a common language taking effective practical action. But it is not oriented towards accounting for that kind of understanding of *how language and communication works in the creation of such a group in the first place*.

This conversational use of language cannot, however, as we shall see, be captured in any representational theory of language use. This is where Bakhtin's (1981, 1984, 1986, 1993) *responsive, dialogical* approach to language – with his emphasis on *speech*, on our *utterances*, on our embodied acts of voicing our words and the bodily *feelings* they arouse in others and ourselves, not on language as a formal system of static, repeatable forms functioning according to rules in their application (Saussure 1911/1959) – becomes crucial. Thus central in what follows, will be a focus both on the *responsivity* of living and growing, embodied beings, responsive both to each other and to the othernesses in their surroundings – a switch from thinking about language in terms of how *patterns of already spoken words* might be interpreted by us as to their meaning, to thinking about the spontaneous, bodily effects on us of *words in their speaking*.

This switch – from sentence forms to utterances, from picturable thoughts to bodily feelings, from the mental to the bodily, from the representational to the

responsive – implicitly entails a large number of other changes, many of which will become apparent as we move on. Two interconnected issues, however, need explicit mention now: one is to do with our bodily movements, both our expressive and locomotor movements, while the other is to do with time and temporality.

As Wittgenstein (1965: 66) remarks: ‘To get clear about philosophical problems, it is useful to become conscious of the apparently unimportant details of the particular situation in which we are inclined to make a certain metaphysical assertion. Thus we may be tempted to say “only this can be really seen” when we stare at unchanging surroundings, whereas we may not be at all tempted to say this when we look about us while walking’. For as we move around, we can become sensitive (bodily) to ‘passing events’, to (as I will call them) transitional understandings and action guiding anticipations – events which are crucial to our knowing our ‘way around’ and ‘how to go on’ in an ongoing, practical activity (Wittgenstein 1953), events which, in the classical C-H approach working only in terms of static forms and picturable patterns, are excluded.

Thus, as mentioned above, the overall change in style of approach being broached here, then – from a static to dynamic involvement with the events of concern to us in our surroundings – is not in itself new. But, what is new, to repeat, is Bakhtin’s emphasis on both the spontaneously felt, responsive influences exerted by the unfolding time-contours of a speaker’s utterance upon the bodies of those around them, and on the creation in such dialogically-structured exchanges of ephemeral third agencies within the exchanges, which exert ‘callings’ or *requirements* on those participating in them. Thus it is to Bakhtin’s account of speech communication that I will now turn.

Bakhtin, Responsivity, and the Influence of the Not-yet-said

Central to Bakhtin’s (1981, 1984, 1986, 1993) whole approach to language and communication is his emphasis, both in *literature* and in our everyday *speech*, on the living influences which work to give ‘shape’ to our embodied acts of expression, our *utterances*, whether they are at work in our actual voicing our words, or in an author writing sentences on the page. He is critical of Saussure’s (1911/1959) approach to language as a system of static, repeatable forms functioning according to rules in their application. As he sees it, the organizing centre of an actual expression is neither in a speaker’s nor an author’s individual psyche, nor in the linguistic system, but is ‘in’ the surroundings of the expression at the moment of its expression. Thus our expressions can be given shape by the circumstances to which we are responsive.

But here I must also add, that along with a focus on a person’s spontaneously responsive reactions to events in their surroundings, we must also focus on the way a person’s bodily activities are also 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 the intentional *efforts* they may be making to cope with those events – thus we can see that the man on the beach was *battling* against the wind, that the girl in the blue dress was *trying* to talk to her boyfriend who wasn’t listening, that the child in the shopping plaza

was *wanting* to be picked up. But sometimes, we simply notice a person's spontaneous, uncontrolled reactions: that the man over there was 'taken by surprise', that the woman next to him was 'upset', etc. But irrespective of their intended or unintended aspects, most of the time, we do not need to explore possible interpretations of the expressions occurring before us; most of the time, we *see* these events directly; responses to them occur within our bodies as *feelings* spontaneously, in a pre-reflective manner. And sometimes, with respect to such feelings, we talk of being 'struck' by certain events. However, whether we are struck by them or not, such feelings within us will come to play, as we shall see, an important role in accustoming our intellects to install themselves within the moving, and in learning to think of living events as occurring within an indivisible flow of activity in which each phase is unique while still being an aspect of the same event.

There is something special, then, about our relations to living events compared to dead things. While we study dead things as external observers of their behaviour, seeking to understand the pattern of past events that *caused* the current arrangement of their parts, and representing that arrangement as a pattern in terms drawn from an objective, explanatory theory, a quite different form of engaged, responsive understanding becomes available to us in our encounters with living, embodied beings. We can enter into a two-way, dynamic relationship with them, and, in allowing ourselves to be open to their expressive movements, find ourselves spontaneously responding to them in ways quite impossible with dead entities. Thus, particularly with those like ourselves who are especially responsive to the utterances we intertwine into our interactions with them, different forms of engaged, responsive understandings become available to us from within such dynamic, two-way relations with embodied, living beings that are not simply the individual knowing of facts, nor the individual knowing of skills, but a third kind of knowing, quite different from the knowing of facts or skills. It is a moment-by-moment changing *felt* kind of practical knowing to do with how to *organize* or *manage* our own behaviour *from within* our lives together with the others around us like ourselves. But, because the words I make use of in *my* utterances are *our* words, that is, they belong just as much to those others over there as belonging to you and me over here, my utterance intertwined activities inevitably take into account (and are accountable to, i.e. make sense to) the others around me.

There is, however, a further feature of such an utterance intertwined third kind of knowing that is of the utmost importance. It is brought out in the following quotations from Bakhtin's works. As he notes: 'All real and integral understanding is actively responsive ... He does not expect passive understanding that, so to speak, only duplicates his or her own idea in someone else's mind. Rather, he expects response, agreement, sympathy, objection, execution, and so forth ... Moreover, any speaker is himself a respondent to a greater or lesser degree ... Any utterance is a link in a very complexly organized chain of other utterances' (Bakhtin, 1986: 69). In other words, central among the many other features of such responsive talk is its orientation toward the future: 'The word in living conversation is directly, blatantly, oriented toward a future answer-word; it provokes an answer, anticipates it and structures itself in the

answer's direction. Forming itself in an atmosphere of the already spoken, the word is at the same time determined by that *which has not yet been said* but which is needed and in fact *anticipated* by the answering word. Such is the situation of any living dialogue' (Bakhtin, 1981; 280, my emphases). In other words, there is a marked difference between the actual *use of words* in a living conversation and our *representational* theories as to the working of our words.

The importance of the distinction between active responsive forms of understanding and passive representational forms can be brought out by the following little experiment. Say to a friend the following sentence, with a quick, flat intonation: 'The cat sat on the mat. The mat was red, the cat was black'. Probably their reaction will be: 'OK, I get the picture ... so what?' In other words, a picture by itself can seem dead, it can be variously interpreted, 'it does not point outside itself to a reality beyond' (Wittgenstein, 1981: 236). Whereas, if you now repeat the utterance with very pregnant pauses and appropriate strong emphases: 'The cat ... sat ... on the mat ... the mat ... was *red* ... the cat ... was *black*', the friend's reaction will in all likelihood exhibit a suspenseful waiting for what next is to come: is it the beginning of a ghost story, a detective story? Clearly, it is in arousing anticipations of the not-yet-said – at first vague and undifferentiated ones, and later, more well-differentiated ones – that the two very different ways of intoning these words can create the dynamical events giving rise to the two very different transitory understandings of them, the two very different ways of 'going on' from them. These events disappear in any retrospective representations of the living utterances in sentence forms on the page. But it is in the anticipations that such dynamical events can arouse that we can gain a *shaped and vectored sense* of where at any one moment in a situation we *are*, as well as where *next* in that situation we might go (Shotter 1993).

Let me emphasize here, then, that in the very course of our listening to other person's words we are being bodily inclined, in an anticipatory fashion, toward responding to them in a certain way, so that if we do not respond as they expect, then, to use terms from Conversational Analysis (CA), a 'repair' will be needed (Nofsinger 1991). Indeed, so pervasive are the anticipations we arouse in our talk, that they can be seen as the 'glue' – albeit, at each juncture, a very locally specialized glue – holding a complexly organized chain of utterances together as an intelligible conversation or discourse of some kind. As workers in CA put it, the *first pair-part* of an *adjacency pair* establishes a *conditional relevance* in terms of which, whatever is said in response, it will be inspected to see how it can possibly serve as the *second pair-part* of the relevant adjacency pair³. In other words, we not only hear the sounds made by another person as a *response* to our sounds, we hear them as *sounds of agreement*, of *objection*, of *compliance*, and so on. We have both a *transitional understanding* of what they have said (the semantic aspect of their utterance) and an *action guiding anticipation* of how to respond (the orientational or relational aspect of their utterance).

But our sensibility in such exchanges is even more subtle and shaded than this. If the sounds we hear are sounds of *agreement*, we can hear them as *sympathetic agreement*, as *patronizing agreement*, as *hurried agreement*, as *inconsequential agreement*, as *reluctant agreement*, as *unexpected* or *surprised agreement*, and so on. Similarly with all other heard responses.⁴ They are all

subtly shaded, nuanced, or intonated in such a way as to enable us, mostly, to ‘go on’ with those to whom we must respond in reply, with at least decorum and courtesy, and sometimes, to ‘go on’ in ways appropriate to more complex aims: ‘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, toward what is desirable or undesirable in it, and, in so doing sets it in motion toward that which it yet-to-be-determined about it, turns it into a constituent moment of the living, ongoing event. Everything that is actually experienced,’ says Bakhtin, ‘is 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’ (Bakhtin 1993: 32–33, my emphasis).

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

Thus in his use of the expression ‘emotional-volitional tone’, Bakhtin is suggesting that at every moment, as we voice an unfolding utterance, there is a degree of personal choice as to the different turns we might take, the intonational time-contouring we might give our utterances. So, ‘the word in language is half someone else’s’, he notes (Bakhtin, 1981). ‘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: 293–294, my emphases). Indeed, what makes a person’s words *their own words* are the efforts they exert in their expressions of them, the efforts we can sense them as making in their speech to make their talk conform to ‘a something’ they are *trying* to express – and we can hear these *efforts* ‘in’ their time-contouring of their intoning of their expressions.

Thus the emotional-volitional tone of a person’s utterances is not something just tacked onto them as an optional extra, but is crucial to organizing the pragmatic conduct of all our communicating – one cannot give another person a piece of information (without insulting them) until one has set up an *information giving* relationship with them – an expectant orientation toward something yet to come – first (Schegloff 1995). Indeed, as we shall see in a moment, all complex human activities which involve in their organization both the sequencing and the simultaneous combining of a whole multiplicity of different, (often) individually performed activities, requires – as in the performance of a piece of music by an orchestra – the continually re-orienting and re-relating of these many different activities with each other. I will pursue this further in the last section of the article when I turn to Bakhtin’s (1984) account of *polyphonic* forms of organization. For the moment here, I want to explore further those forms of talk that can work in aiding people in coordinating their actions in with each other in the pursuit of a common goal.

'Transitory Understandings', 'Feelings of Tendency', and 'Action Guiding Anticipations'

Crucial in a number of people organizing their inter-activities with each other is their being able, as they act, to arouse in each other, *transitory understandings* of 'where' so far in their activities they have 'got to', and *action guiding anticipations* of 'where' or 'how' next they are likely 'to go on'. In other words, it is only *in* the course of their actions that they can *organize* their conduct of them, not before by planning them, nor after by criticizing them. We are not used in our classical, objective modes of thought of thinking of objects as dynamical events, as arousing in us such action guiding feelings within us. But the fact is, in our living relations to events in our surroundings, no objects are given to us as totally indifferent, as completely irrelevant to who we are and what we are trying to do in our lives. 'Insofar as I am actually experiencing an object,' says Bakhtin (1993), 'even if I do so by thinking of it, it becomes a changing moment in the ongoing event of my experiencing (thinking) it, i.e., it assumes the character of something-yet-to-be-achieved. Or, to be exact, it is given to me within a certain event-unity, in which the moments of what-is-given and what-is-to-be-achieved, of what-is and what-ought-to-be, of being and value, are inseparable. All these abstract categories are here constituent moments of a certain, living, concrete, and palpable (intuitable) once-occurrent whole – an event' (Bakhtin 1993: 32).

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 both the expression of an evaluative attitude toward it – the way it 'matters' to me, the 'weight' or 'force' it can exert in my spontaneous reactions to it – as well as a sense of my 'point' in relating to it, what its role in my overall project is. Thus even in my speaking of an object, of, say, a 'business plan', a 'spreadsheet', a 'person', an 'organization', or even a 'quote from Bakhtin', etc., I am never speaking neutrally, indifferently, with no particular attitude, but always with 'an interested-effective attitude' (p. 32). Thus our talk of objects does not merely refer to objects as a present-to-hand things, it also expresses *by its intonation* our evaluative attitude toward them, and in so doing, sets in motion our relations toward them, orients us toward that which is yet to-to-be determined about them. Thus, to repeat, what is expressed in the emotional-volitional tone of a person's utterance is an anticipated 'something' that is going to be achieved in our future actions in relation to the objects in our surroundings.

In other words, our talk always points beyond itself to a not-yet-determined something, to a 'world', to the unity of the event encompassing us within which it *will* have its meaning. And if I orient toward a person's words as merely a pattern of already completed objective forms, as a set of already made objects at hand (as in a transcript, say), instead of toward the expressive movement of their words in their speaking, I will 'lose the phenomena' (Garfinkel 2002: 264–267); that is, I will lose my sense both of the transitory understandings and of the action guiding anticipations of the yet-to-be-determined, generated in both speakers and listeners alike in the dialogical dynamics at work in our dialogically-structured exchanges.

Other workers have expressed similar intuitions in different terms: Polanyi (1958) has pointed out that if we want to understand our conduct of a practical

activity, instead of thinking with a *focal awareness* of the finalized structures of a process in mind, we must make use of a *subsidiary awareness* of certain felt experiences as they occur to us from within our engaged involvement in the activity, for these *inner feelings* play a crucial role in guiding, in being constitutive of, our actions. Polanyi (1958) introduces the action guiding character of such subsidiary awarenesses thus: ‘When we use a hammer to drive a nail, we attend to both nail and hammer, but in a *different way* ... When we bring down the hammer we do not feel that its handle has struck our palm but that its head has struck the nail. Yet in a sense we are certainly alert to the feelings in our palm and the fingers that hold the hammer. *They guide us* [my emphasis – js] in handling it effectively, and the degree of attention that we give to the nail is given to the same extent but in a different way to these feelings ... They are not watched in themselves: we watch something else while keeping intensely aware of them. I have a *subsidiary awareness* of the feeling in the palm of my hand which is merged into my *focal awareness* of my driving in the nail’ (Polanyi 1958: 55).

Similarly, William James (1890), like Polanyi, directs our attention to the pervasive but misleading tendency at work in our conduct of our inquiries to ignore such transitory feelings and to focus only on final outcomes. He calls it ‘the Psychologist’s Fallacy’: ‘The *great snare* of the psychologist,’ he says, ‘is the *confusion of his own standpoint with that of the mental fact* about which he is making his report ... The psychologist ... stands outside the mental state he speaks of. Both itself and its objects are objects for him’ (James 1890:196), and this can easily (mis)lead him (or her) to suppose that our process of thought ‘knows it in the same way in which he knows it, although this is often far from being the case. The most fictitious puzzles have been introduced into our science by this means’ (James 1890: 196).

Indeed, what is lost when an event in the stream of thought is taken to be an object is precisely the ‘action guiding’ function of subsidiary awarenesses in providing us with an anticipatory sense of at least the *style* of what is to come next. Indeed, like Bakhtin above, James (1890) points out that in the stream of our living relations with our surroundings, we do not simply find ourselves confronting neutral objects whose meanings we must ‘work out’ cognitively if we are to react to them appropriately. We also directly experience ‘inclinations’ or ‘tendencies’ in relation to them, inclinations that just happen within us as an intrinsic result of our living interactions with them. Such ‘tendencies are not only descriptions from without,’ he says, ‘[but] they are among the *objects* of the stream, which is thus aware of them from within, and must be described as in very large measure constituted of *feelings of tendency*, often so vague that we are unable to name them at all’ (James 1890: 254). Yet, as James emphasizes, vague and unnameable though they may be, ‘we nevertheless have an acutely discriminative sense’ (p. 253) of their direction, thus such tendencies are central in ‘shaping’ our everyday activities. ‘It is, in short,’ he says, ‘the re-instatement of the vague to its proper place in our mental life which I am so anxious to press on the attention’ (p. 254).

As illustrative here of the *feelings of tendency* that can occur in the intoning of an utterance, and their consequences for our understanding of an utterance, let me as above suggest a couple more little experiments:

(1) Lets us take the following few lines from T. S. Eliot's (1944) *Four Quartets*: 'What we call the beginning is often the end/ And to make an end is to make a beginning. /The end is where we start from ...' (*Little Gidding*, p. 47), and try the following three intonings on a friend:

(a) [With a quick, with a flat, monotonic intonation] 'What we call the beginning is often the end, and to make an end is to make a beginning. The end is where we start from ...' [an objectivist/logical positivist reading] ... likely to provoke the reaction: 'What!/? That's garbled nonsense; and surely it's not logical!'

(b) [With pregnant pauses and appropriate emphases]: 'What we *call* the beginning ... is often *the end* ..., and to *make* an end ... *is to make* a beginning ... The end is where we start from ...' [a social constructionist reading].

(c) [Again with pregnant pauses and appropriate emphases]: 'What *we* call the beginning ... *is* often the end, and to make an end ... *is* to make a beginning. The end *is* where *we* start from ...' [a more realist reading].

Invisible in each of these three readings, but nonetheless hearable in each, is a speaker's evaluative attitude toward what he or she takes 'reality' to be, that is, what Bakhtin (1984: 83) would call a different 'form shaping ideology'.⁵

(2) Another little experiment: Take the simple statements: (i) 'I want to tell you something', (ii) I want to tell *you* something', and (iii) 'I want to *tell* you something', and so on with many other different emphases. Each *volitional* tone, each emphasis, would lead you as a listener to relate or to orient yourself toward me differently, as you hear what I have to say. Thus, 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 one way or another, sense the 'inner' turns I take at each moment in *populating* these very common, shared words with *my* intentions.

Indeed, we can have an immediate responsive sense of similar such 'inner turns' or choices in people's non-verbal expressions, in say, the vigour or lack-lustre of their handshakes, or the 'droopiness' or 'vitality' of their walk. Even the 'expressive' movements of non-human animals can 'move' us (as we find in the currently popular film: *March of the Penguins*). In other words, what we talk of as the pragmatics, the politics, the art and the ethics of our communications with each other, are all expressed, and bodily appreciated, that is, *felt*, within the (sometimes invisible) personally shaped time-contours of the events occurring between us: the authority, the care, the urgency, the inflexibility or flexibility, the precision or looseness, the sympathy, the insults, the humiliations, etc., are all felt in listening to the emotional-volitional tone expressed in another person's expressions, in their utterances and other bodily expressed movements.

Difficulties of the Will (Orientational Difficulties) and Difficulties of the Intellect

In the light of the discussion above, it becomes clear that there are two very different kinds of difficulty we can face in our attempts to understand something expressed in language: there are those difficulties we can call *problems* because we can arrive at a *solution* to them by the application of a method or process of

reasoning (often conducted within a theoretical framework or schematism of some kind), and those that here I will call *difficulties of orientation* or *relational difficulties*, difficulties in which we need to *resolve a line of action*, a *style*, an *approach*, or *way* of proceeding with respect to an other or to a circumstance – Wittgenstein calls these difficulties, respectively, difficulties of the intellect and difficulties of the will: ‘What makes a subject hard to understand ... is not that before you can understand it you need to be trained in abstruse matters, but the contrast between understanding the subject and what most people *want* to see ... What has to be overcome is a difficulty having to do with the will, rather than with the intellect’ (Wittgenstein 1980: 17). And as Chia and his colleagues make clear (Chia 1996, 1998, 2002; Chia and King 2001; Tsoukas and Chia 2002), what we *want to see* in organization studies, that is, orient ourselves toward understanding – or at least, are sorely tempted into wanting to see – is an already organized world of arrested, simplified, and stabilized entities that, in a Cartesian-Hertzian manner, can be theoretically thought of as a collection of elements whose changing arrangements can be captured in a lawful sequence of pictures, that is, in descriptions stated in a propositional form⁶.

This distinction is not easy to grasp, for the differences between difficulties of orientation and difficulties of the intellect cannot be captured formally, that is, in a picturable manner; it can only be captured in practice with respect to practical criteria – in other words, like the examples exploring the effects of different emotional-volitional tones above, the criteria relevant for judging whether a difficulty is difficulty of the intellect or of the will can only be judged in terms of how an interaction plays out in practice. Indeed, to the extent that it is to do with reflecting on one’s own reactions to events, on one’s own expectations and ways of seeing things, it entails a good deal of intellectual labour, the learning of a new intellectual practice – requiring no doubt our continual placing of ourselves within a number of exemplary circumstances. But in trying to rethink the role of language in constituting our thinking in organization studies, it is absolutely crucial that we identify such relevant criteria, for it is only too easy to let ourselves fall back into the same Cartesian-Hertzian trap as before: that of giving a retrospective account of a circumstance in terms of its current form or patterning, that is, in picturable terms, instead of providing a prospective account of it that can arouse action guiding anticipations within us of possible future ways of ‘going on’ within the circumstance.

Indeed, to the extent that Wittgenstein saw these kinds of difficulties as orientational difficulties, rather than as problems to be solved by reasoning, he wrote of them as having the form: ‘I don’t know my way about’ (no. 123). Thus one’s need in such a circumstance is not to be able to say, ‘Now I see it’ (i.e. the solution to the problem), but to be able to declare to others, ‘Now I know how to go on’ (no. 154). For ‘to see’ something is to be able to assimilate it to an already existing and known category, which in most practical situations is to ignore its unique and often important deviations from the already well known. While being able to ‘go on’ is to be able to do something *for a first time*. In other words, the resolution of an orientational difficulty is achieved, not at an intellectual level, as something one can talk about to others, but at a practical level,

as something that is manifested or shown in one's unique way of being *responsive* to the unique details of a situation by one's actions within it.

Wittgenstein introduces this distinction between these two kinds of difficulties as an aspect of his overall struggle 'against the bewitchment of our intelligence by means of language' (Wittgenstein 1953: 109), that is, against the sometimes (but not always) misleading constitutive role played by our language in shaping, not only our intellects but also our perceptions, actions, judgments of value, and above all, our spontaneous understandings of people's utterances. Its role in this respect is hard to notice because we can no more step out of our everyday uses of language – and experience what life might be like as a language-blind individual – than out of our skins. Our ways of proceeding, our methods, or the steps we must take in relating ourselves to these two very different kinds of difficulty are, however, themselves quite different. For those difficulties we can call *problems*, it must be possible to describe an initial state of affairs in terms relevant to an already well-known process of reasoning, and to 'work out' a clear link between the known and the unknown but desired states of affairs. A relational or orientational difficulty, however, presents us with almost the reverse of this situation – for it is only *after* we discover a way of *relating* ourselves to our surroundings, a way of organizing or orienting *ourselves* to attend to certain aspects of our surroundings rather than others, that the data relevant to our achieving our goal can be brought to light (and then, and only then, can our problem solving reasoning as such, if still necessary, be applied). Thus, suggestions that actionable knowledge is propositional in form, that it makes explicit the causal processes required to produce action (Argyris 2003), could not be further from the point. What we require is a form of talk oriented toward *organizing* a group of people into a social group capable of a coordinating their disparate actions into the achievement of a shared, overall goal.

Thus to repeat something said earlier: Whether it is explicitly realized or not, all theories, all theoretical representations must also be accompanied by an informal, *conversational* or *dialogical* kind of account of how the terms in which they are set out should be used and understood. So, although it is often said that, if causal reasoning is common in scientific thinking, it is even more common in everyday sense making, what is being suggested here, following Bakhtin (1981, 1986) is that in fact ordinary everyday sense making – if it is to do with making sense of a person's living activity – is not at all a matter of causal reasoning, not at all a matter of the intellect, at least, not initially. As Wittgenstein remarks: '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]' (Wittgenstein 1980: 31). In other words, our spontaneous bodily reactions are basic. On encountering a new circumstance, our spontaneous bodily reactions to it can give us the beginnings of a new way of talking, of a new way of thinking. Such reactions *can* function, as Wittgenstein (1981) remarks elsewhere, as 'the prototype of a way of thinking and not the result of thought' (no. 541).

Being sensitive to our own spontaneously felt reactions to a circumstance, *thinking in duration* as (Chia 1998: 359) puts it, is not easy to describe. It entails the peculiar kind of 'logical' or 'grammatical' investigations undertaken by the

later Wittgenstein (1953). Such an investigation ‘takes its rise, not from an interest in the facts of nature, nor from a need to grasp causal connections: but from an urge to understand the basis, or essence, of everything empirical. Not, however, as if to this end we had 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 senses not to understand’ (no. 89). Thus about his kind of ‘philosophy’ we might say that it investigated ‘what is possible *before* all new discoveries and inventions’ (no. 126).

Organizationally, then, the kind of talk (and writing) used to *resolve* on a way of relating to a situation cannot be a merely propositional, representational form of talk, that is, talk of facts, of stable, of locatable objects. It must be of the much more expressive-responsive kind outlined above, talk (and writing) that manifests in its unfolding time contours as it is listened to (and read) an emotional-volitional tone; the ‘movement’ in it is capable of moving us, not just in our intellects, but in our very way of being. It is a kind of talk that, like a piece of music, can work to link a group of people together in a common ‘movement’. And only this kind of talk can work to link all the participants involved in a group project together as co-participants in a common circumstance; only this kind of talk can work to create a group of people who all know, understand, and evaluate events occurring within that circumstance in a like manner, and can work together to bring it to a shared *evaluative conclusion*.

From ‘Orchestration’ to ‘Polyphony’

My likening the effects of the emotional-volitional tone of an utterance (or of a piece of writing) to the playing of a piece of music is not innocent. Indeed, an often used metaphor to describe the sequential unfolding of a complexly organized activity, is to describe it as ‘orchestrated’, as organized so that a number of seemingly independent component performances occur, not just accidentally in any old order or sequence (like a pack of cards being shuffled into a new arrangement), but all occur together in ‘ensemble,’ that is, they all contribute to the achievement of a single effect. In doing this, they all act in relation to a commonly *felt* sense, not only of where an activity has *been*, but also of where next it is *headed*. The unfolding temporal contouring of the performance (in music, its *tempo*) is the guiding element. Taking this into account, although we often say that when we are understanding another person, we are ‘following’ them – if our approach here is correct, it would be better to say that we are also, to an extent, ‘anticipating’ them. It means also that, in Wittgenstein’s (1953) terms, if we are ultimately to achieve an understanding of another person’s utterances, by testing and checking their ‘point’ so as to avoid them ‘misleading’ us, we must *at a lower level* ‘know how to go on’ (no.154) with them, that is, we must be *attuned* to their ways of acting. For our *understanding* of them is an ultimate achievement, a developed and still developing event while we are in contact with them, not an instantaneous occurrence.

The 'orchestration' metaphor is, thus, a very powerful one, and very relevant to our task of understanding how to organize the complex interweaving of many strands of differently sequenced activities unfolding in time. Indeed, our concern with *ways* of seeing, speaking, listening, etc., should remind us that little comes to us in our human activities 'ready-made', so to speak: as Ryle (1949) terms it, they are *achievements*⁷. To see something we need to have developed a *way of looking*, to hear something we need a *way of listening*, to touch an object (rather than just a 'something') we need a *way of feeling* (it over), to think within an academic discipline a *way of thinking*, and so on. Our experience with visually ambiguous figures tells us this much: our *ways* of looking, listening, etc. work in terms of anticipations of what next we can expect to see or hear, given what we have seen or heard so far⁸. But once we move on into Bakhtin's (1984) work on what he calls Dostoevsky's 'form-shaping ideology' (p. 97), we not only find an even more complex form of organization, but also a qualitatively different one – what, following Bakhtin (1984), we can call a *polyphonic* form of organization (or following Merleau-Ponty, 1968, we can also call a *chiasmic* one).

Unlike orchestrated forms of composition, in which each voice is simply fitted harmoniously or systematically into the whole so far constructed, musically, polyphonic forms work 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 that, as Bakhtin (1984) puts it, what unfolds in Dostoevsky's novels, is '*a plurality of independent and unmerged voices and consciousnesses, a genuine polyphony of fully valid voices is in fact the chief characteristic of Dostoevsky's novels.* What unfolds in his works is not a multitude of characters and fates in a single objective world ... 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' (Bakhtin, 1984: 6–7) – where the crucial phrases here are those indicating that the influences at work on each other are all 'combined but not merged' in 'the unity of the event'.

An example of where such unmerged combining occurs to form a special kind of unity, is the combining that occurs in the optic chiasma of the brain. There, the different points of view of our two eyes are combined, but not merged, to provide us, bodily, with what we call a sense of 'depth,' that is, a unified sense of how things are arrayed around us, with some of them as being near to us, within our reach, and others being far off and out of our reach. In other words, by not being merged, but nonetheless by being dynamically related to each other in terms of their differences, the views from the two eyes work spontaneously to create a uniquely new *relational dimension*, a new unified way of relating ourselves, bodily, to our circumstances, a new way of 'seeing connections' that matter to us in terms of our embodied relations to them. Similar spontaneously experienced effects of *combining without merging* can occur in hearing, as those with 'surround sound' on their hi-fi sound systems that can deliver the ambience of a 'concert hall', 'discotheque', 'open air', etc., will attest. In short, the essence of a dialogic relation, as we can see from binocular and binaural examples given above, is that *one* unfolding influence is combined

with *another other than itself* in such a way as to create in a recipient's body a sense of orientation, a sense of how bodily we might relate ourselves to such combined influences.

The examples above, of processes in which two or more influences are 'combined but not merged in the unity of an event', can perhaps help in our grasping the very strange, bodily nature of *dialogical* relations as Bakhtin (1984) outlines them. As he points out: 'Language lives only in the dialogical interaction of those who make use of it ... Dialogic relationships are reducible neither to logical relationships nor to relationships oriented semantically toward their referential object, relationships *in and of themselves* devoid of any dialogical element. They must clothe themselves in discourse, become utterances, become positions of various subjects expressed in discourse, in order that dialogic relations might arise among them' (p. 183). In other words, when we act in a spontaneously responsive manner in relation to the sayings and doings of those around us, it is not a matter of our first acting, individually and independently of these others, and then of them replying to us by also acting individually and independently. We all act jointly, as a *collective-we*, and we do this bodily, in a 'living' way, without our first having 'to work out' how to respond to each other (Shotter 1980). This means, of course, that when someone acts/speaks, their activity/words cannot be accounted as wholly their own activity/words – for their acts/utterances are partly 'shaped' by the acts of the others around them. So, although I may *populate* (Bakhtin) my words with my own intentions, the words I use are inevitably *our* words, words that can also occur in other people's mouths, in other people's contexts, serving other people's intentions. Thus, as such, most importantly, I can rely on them to arouse in others, who are spontaneously responsive to them, similar *action guiding anticipatory feelings* as those that they arouse in me in my speaking of them. But to repeat the point already made above, such anticipatory feelings are only available to us in the particular dynamics of particular interactions, as soon as our interactions cease, they cease also. Thus our utterance of a word is not the ephemeral occurrence of a self-contained object, but is, à la Bergson, the occurrence of a certain 'event-unity, in which the moments of what-is-given and what-is-to-be-achieved, of what-is and what-ought-to-be, of being and value, are inseparable' (Bakhtin, 1993: 32).

Thus the understanding of the dialogical relations existing between our utterances, between our words in their speaking, offered us in Bakhtin's (1984, 1993) work, can not only illuminate our living responsive relations to the others and othernesses around us, but also, strange as it may seem, our ways of relating ourselves to and within ourselves. In other words, it offers us the possibility that, in our very utterance of words to ourselves in our own inner speech, we can also *think* not only dialogically, but also polyphonically – in terms of many different 'voices' with different 'logical' points of view, and also with our different inner expressions being related to each other with many different affective or emotional-volitional tones.

The orchestration metaphor is both too continuously harmonious, and too homogeneous or monophonic. It does not highlight sufficiently the different

dialogic relations occurring between two or more distinct agents involved in an ongoing inter-activity. Thus, it does not give us a sense of how they might all be placed in relation to each other, and of us to them; but even more importantly, it does not give us a sense of how they can, within the unity of an event held in common, retain their individuality while creatively combining their activities to produce between them the shared sense of a *relational dimension* uniquely suited to them all orienting toward the common task of organizing a sequence of fragmentary events into a certain kind of unitary whole.

Philosophically, then, Bakhtin (1984) is contrasting his polyphonic account of human activities with 'the faith in the self-sufficiency of a single consciousness' that he sees manifested in the quest for a single, unified truth that is 'a profound structural characteristic of the creative ideological activity of modern times' (p. 82). 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: 81). Thus, rather than the dynamics of our consciousnesses being also of an 'orchestrated' kind – a unified activity occurring within a unified medium – we can imagine our mental activities also as taking on a stranded, intertwined, polyphonic organization.

Similarly, as long as the relations between all the different participants are dynamic, dialogically-structured ones, and not of a static, monological kind, we can think of our organizing of our organizations as functioning similarly.

Conclusions

As academics, as trained researchers, it is only too easy to make ourselves unwittingly into the ventriloquists of other people's words. In such a process, as Bakhtin (1986) remarks, there is the 'gradual obliteration of authors as bearers of others' words. Others' words become anonymous and are assimilated (in reworked form, of course); consciousness is *monologized*' (p. 163). When this happens, 'another person remains wholly and merely an *object* of consciousness, and not another consciousness. No response is expected from it that could change anything in the world of my consciousness ... Monologue is finalized and deaf to the other's response ... and therefore to some degree materializes all reality' (Bakhtin 1984: 293). Thus clearly, the fact that we relate ourselves to the others and othernesses in our surroundings as we relate to dead, mechanical things, that is, in a one-way fashion, without any expectation of being able to enter into a two-way, dynamic relationship with them, shuts us off from the kinds of responsive understandings that can become available to us, if we can allow ourselves to

be open and responsive to their expressive movements. Unwittingly, we still seem to be influenced by Descartes' words, and still feel compelled to pursue the as yet still unrealized project of knowing the world intellectually, as a system of 'separate thoughts ... that can by themselves be true or untrue, depending of their relationship to the subject and independent of the carrier to whom they belong. These "no-man's" thoughts, faithful to the referential world, are united in a systemic unity of a referential order' (Bakhtin 1984: 93).

But to proceed like this, we must follow a number of steps: we must first suppress the ordinary, everyday connections of felt thought to the people and things around, as well as the responses in our voices to those things and people; we must then try to recapture these relations in an ideal structure that we can express in an ideal ordering of precise expressions, thus to make them open to calculable manipulations.⁹

Chia (1996) describes this way of thinking as 'downstream thinking', that is, thinking in terms of already-made entities, and he contrasts it with 'upstream thinking', that is, thinking in terms of entities still in the making, and argues that we cannot just study language and organizations as both ready-made entities that need to be *applied* to each other, so to speak.¹⁰ For almost all our language intertwined activities 'do' organizing. Thus, instead, he has argued that we need to study how everything that we take for granted in organization theory – organizations, analysis into elements, ordering, representational theories, the application of principles, etc. – need studying within the flow of reality itself. To do that, he has suggested the need for a new thought-style, what he calls 'complex "decentred" thinking', to be contrasted with the 'centred thinking' still at work in the new *sciences of complexity* (Chia 1998). As he notes, centred thinking is marked by the overwhelming tendency to spatialize time, movement, and change – while decentred thinking involves, as mentioned above, 'a method of *thinking in duration*' that involves '*temporally* synthesizing the multiplicity of fleeting images into a coherent whole' (p. 359).

Following Bryson's (1983) account of differences between Western and Eastern traditions of painting, Chia (1998) captures something of the contrast between these two styles of thinking in his discussion of the 'logic of the gaze', in which seen-events are described (or painted) without any involvement of the describer, and the 'the logic of the glance', in which there are *deictic* indicators of the bodily location of the describer (or painter) in the descriptions provided (or paintings displayed). While the whole aim in Western painting is to erase the temporal development of the brush-work involved in producing the finally displayed image, in Eastern (Chinese) painting the painter's responsiveness to the subject matter of the painting is readily visible in the brush-work – indeed, whatever the subject matter might be, 'equally the subject is the work of the brush in "real time" and as an extension of the painter's own body' (Bryson 1983: 89). Thus, to the extent that the painting expresses an event in 'real time', 'it cannot be taken in all at once ... since it has itself unfolded within the *durée* of process' (Bryson 1983: 94). Thus, paradoxically, unlike the gaze, a glance does not 'take in' an immobility in an instant, but provides us with all the complexity of a *duration* (Casey 2000).

Similarly, with respect to Wittgenstein's (1980) remarks quoted above – that 'the origin and primitive form of the language game is a reaction', and that such bodily reactions can function as 'the prototype of a way of thinking' (1981 no.541) – we can now note the importance of events that 'strike' us, events in which an *otherness* (that might not be previously known to us) can call upon our attention spontaneously and elicit a reaction from us spontaneously. For it is only as a consequence of such events as these that the kind of re-orientation Chia describes – of learning to think in duration – can begin.¹¹

But if we are to do more than just begin, if we are to feel 'at home' in thinking *from within* such a polyphonically organized world of activities, to 'know our way about' with it, then there is a major tendency in our current forms of thinking that we must overcome. For as Bergson (1911: 299) notes: 'The function of the intellect is to preside over actions'. Thus our whole way of acting in the world currently is to *attend from* these vague, inner, *feelings of tendency*, 'often so vague that we are unable to name them at all' (James 1890: 254), and to *attend to* 'the qualities of things outside' (Polanyi 1967: 14) that these effortful inner movements 'point to' or anticipate. What we must resist is the temptation of thinking (and talking) as if our still embryonic feelings of tendency need to be *completed* to be grasped intellectually. For the difficulties we face are orientational difficulties, not intellectual ones. Thus, as Wittgenstein (1981) notes, we often mislead ourselves by '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. The difficulty here is: to stop' (no. 314). There is no need to 'go beyond' our present circumstances – for the way to 'go on' must and can be found 'there'.

What I have tried to show above, then, is that the task of devising such a new method, of teaching ourselves a new style of thought is not a simple intellectual task that can be *solved* by thought alone. We cannot re-relate or re-orient ourselves towards the relevant phenomena by the application of a process of reasoning. We need to be re-related or re-oriented by language that expresses in its own speaking, that is, in the dynamics of its temporal contouring, something of the relations we ourselves need to adopt. In Bakhtin's (1993) terms, it is the emotional-volitional tone of a person's utterance as it unfolds that sets in motion our relations to those around us, that orients (and can re-orient) us towards what is yet to-to-be determined in our relations to them, that provides us with action guiding anticipations as to 'where' to go next in 'going on' with them.

Thus, what Bakhtin's (1981, 1984, 1986, 1993) *dialogical* account of speech communication shows us, I think, is that if we are to renounce our monologizing habits of thought and to come to feel 'at home' in a Bakhtinian-Dostoevskian polyphonically organized world, then we cannot continue thinking in terms merely of causing re-arrangements in a set of inert and separate elements. We must *teach* ourselves to think not only dialogically, but polyphonically. That is, we must think dynamically, in terms of *anticipating the responses to our actions*, as well as thinking in terms of *anticipating the responses of other people to each other*. To do this, as I

indicated above, we have to ask ourselves such questions as: What kind of person is involved here? What kind of person is involved there? What kinds of things would they say or do in this situation, in that situation, or in some other situation, and so on? And also, go on to answer these questions concretely so as to reproduce the tone and accent of the speakers involved, thus to imaginatively enter into their world to grasp the way in which they are *using* their words.

And we must read our texts too in the same way as we listen to the voiced utterances of other, that is, as having an emotional-volitional *tone*, a tone that tells us of the (bodily) relations of the author to the topic of the text (Shotter 2006) – see also in this connection endnote 1. Thus, rather than logical, systematic, theoretical structures ‘picturing’ puzzling states of affairs, our texts must have ‘eventness’ – they must provide us, not with solutions to problems, but with possibilities for the resolution of orientational or relational difficulties. We must be able to sense in them possible first time understandings of ‘how to go on’ in otherwise disorienting or bewildering circumstances, that arise out of our responsive reading of what they have to *say* to us in the emotional-volitional contours of their expression, that is, in the *style* of their writing. And clearly, a major way of doing that, besides the provision of metaphors and other figures of speech, is the quotation of people’s actual utterances, along with detailed descriptions of the actual surroundings within which they utter them. Indeed, if we are interested in people’s possible relations to each other, then our texts must be multi-voiced, polyphonic texts.

But to do this, to recognize and to make use of the relational and orientational influences that *can be* at work in the emotional-volitional tone of our talk and texts, then, even though it is perhaps the hardest thing to do, we must teach ourselves to be sensitive to and to think in terms of *feelings*. We must think in terms of *imageless dynamical patterns*, that is, in terms of the unique, unfolding time-contours aroused in us by the use of particular words in particular circumstances. This what, I think, Wittgenstein (1953) is doing in his grammatical investigations when he asks himself over and over again: In what kind of circumstances would we say or do this, in relation to what kind of people, with what kind of end in mind? – with the insistence that we answer these self-imposed questions *in detail*, while *moving about*, while engaged in practical action. For in our practical dealings with each other, it is the complex detail that shapes our human understanding; it is when we fail to take notice of ‘apparently unimportant details of the particular situation’ that we are ‘inclined to make a certain metaphysical assertion’ (Wittgenstein 1965: 66). Thus what we need is not feeling separated from thought, but thoughtful feeling and feelingful thought in a living and inter-relating continuity with each other, with each allowed to remain in an embryonic phase without being, falsely, treated as fully articulate and defined. ‘What is most difficult here,’ said Wittgenstein, ‘is to put this indefiniteness, correctly and unfalsified, into words’ (1953: 227). But if we can do this, then more than being mere neutral thoughts residing ‘in our heads’ as ‘pictures’ (propositional representations), we will be able to allow that our ‘thoughts’, *as voiced words*, to arouse within

us, in the same way as the actual voices of others, action guiding anticipations constitutive of that not-yet-fully-determined 'world' on the horizon, within which our present actions *will* have their meaning.

Notes

- 1 'In the same way,' Merleau-Ponty (1962) continues, 'an as yet imperfectly understood piece of philosophical writing discloses to me at least a certain "style" – either a Spinozist, criticist or phenomenological one – which is the first draft of its meaning. I begin to understand a philosophy by feeling my way into its existential manner, by reproducing the tone and accent of the philosopher' (p. 179).
- 2 'As long as there continues to be a verb "to be" that looks as if it functions in the same way as "to eat" and "to drink", as long as we still have the adjectives "identical", "true", "false", "possible", as long as we continue to talk of the river of time, an expanse of space, etc. etc., people will keep stumbling over the same puzzling difficulties and find themselves staring at something which no explanation seems capable of clearing up' (Wittgenstein 1980: 15).
- 3 Here are some types of adjacency pairs that have been extensively studied: assertion–assent/dissent; question–answer; summons–answer; greeting–greeting; apology–acceptance/refusal; compliment–acceptance/rejection; threat–response; challenge–response; assessment/agreement; accusation–denial/confession; boasting–appreciation/derision (see Nofsinger 1991).
- 4 'One cannot ... understand dialogic relations simplistically or unilaterally, reducing them to contradiction, conflict, polemics, or disagreement. *Agreement* is very rich in varieties and shadings. Two utterances that are identical in all respects ("Beautiful weather!" – "Beautiful weather!")', if they are really *two* utterances belonging to *different* voices and not one, are linked by dialogic *relations of agreement*. This is a definite dialogic event, agreement could also be lacking ("No, not very nice weather;" and so forth)' (Bakhtin 1986: 125).
- 5 'The deeper layers of this form-shaping ideology,' says Bakhtin (1984: 83), 'which determine the basic generic characteristics of artistic works, are traditional; they take shape and develop over the course of centuries'. What is special about Dostoevsky's form-shaping ideology is that it works in terms of internally related 'parts', that is, parts that owe their very character to their relations with others parts in a dynamic, growing, changing network of inter-relationships..
- 6 Indeed, we can still find Argyris suggesting that actionable knowledge is propositional in form: 'Propositions that are actionable are those that actors can use to implement effectively their intentions' (Argyris 2003: 423), and it is the way in which such propositions make explicit the causal processes required to produce action that he sees as the key to the implementation of such actionable knowledge.
- 7 We use the word 'achievements' here with Ryle's (1949) account of the relation between 'achievement verbs' and 'task verbs' in mind. As he points out, to arrive at a certain achievement it is often necessary to complete a sequences of tasks. Thus, even if there is not a process of organic development involved, there is often a step-by-step process of 'journeying' towards it.
- 8 With the well known faces/vase or duck/rabbit figures, for instance, to use Michael Polanyi's (1967) terminology, we first look *from* a forehead *to* an expected eye region, and then *to* an expected nose region, and so on, looking eventually *from* all these details (if each of these expectations is fulfilled) *to* the overall perception of a face. Similarly, with a vase way of looking, we look *from* a bowl region *to* a stem region *to* a base region. About our acts of seeing, Wittgenstein (1953: 212) remarks: 'We find certain things about seeing puzzling, because we do not find the whole business of seeing puzzling enough'. It is precisely the feeling that we need to puzzle over our acts of seeing that we wish to arouse here.
- 9 This sequences is set out by Marx and Engels (1977) in *The German Ideology*, in terms of three tricks for the construction of ruling illusions.
- 10 But to do this is to arrive on the scene *too late*, and then look in the *wrong direction*, with the *wrong attitude*: too late, because we take the 'basic elements' in terms of which we must work and conduct our arguments to be already in existence, awaiting precise determination by an appropriate, academically approved, theoretical structure; in the wrong direction, because we look backward toward supposed already existing actualities, rather than forward toward possibilities entertained in peoples' expectations and anticipations of what is to come; and with the wrong attitude, because we seek a stable, static theoretical representation, a picturable image of a phenomenon, over there, rather than a living sense of it as an active agency within our lives now.
- 11 With respect to the complexity of the event of being 'struck', Wittgenstein (1953) remarks: 'Is being struck looking plus thinking? No. Many of our concepts *cross* here' (p. 211).

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