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Anticipation: Getting Inside One Another

FROM POP PSYCHOLOGY to the Kantian critiques, by way of Wittgenstein, we are interested in the problem of getting inside the other person. To get inside the other person seems to be a most useful way of walking inside his or her shoes, and feeling what it might be like to be that other person. Every kind of extension of sympathy seems to depend on the ability to exercise this kind of getting inside. Is this quest the same as the quest to *know* the other person? To know the other person, as we use such expressions, would seem to mean reaching deeply into the person; formulating a deep account of who that other person is. By this formulation, of course, I don't imply an abstract sketch, but rather a profound personal grasp. By *getting inside the other person* we seem to mean something different from *knowing* the other person, something less profound.

Some conversation can illustrate the process of getting inside another person.

> "Catch the Badger game last night, Mary?"
> "Last half … Go Badgers," she responds, disappearing up
> the track in her pink sweatsuit and zappy gait.

A biopsy of daily speech transaction. I was the questioner. We have not come to the issue of what it means for one person to know another, but I can still start by saying that in no sense of that expression do I know Mary. But don't I exercise a certain getting inside her, when I ask the above question? Don't I have to assume, before posing the question to Mary, that she knows who the Badgers are, that she has some kind of interest in them—serious or incidental—and that she has some kind of attitude toward them—it could be *pro-Badger*, probably is, in view of her 'go Badgers.' Before posing my question to Mary, then, I have to have at least a certain store of facts to build on. Some of these 'facts' may be false assumptions. Maybe deep in her heart Mary wants the Mustangs to crush the Badgers. But at least I have to have some kind of picture of how Mary sees the world we are discussing.

What the supporting facts are, as they play out in consciousness, and what kind of entities they are, are higher order issues. For the moment we can say that 'building on' those facts, I make a move to get inside Mary's mind. I answer with her and for her, because I know certain facts about her.

The cat is out of the bag. A main point, in this essay, is to discriminate between getting inside someone and knowing someone as a person. The 'anticipation' of my title will be the sense of knowing in advance of what Mary responds, something of what she is going to respond to me; anticipation will also be the mode of *knowing* the other person. But I was able to let this cat out, because the whole job of explaining how this anticipation works remains undone, and all I have done so far is to sketch a framework, an assignment. So far all we've got is some facts, a building on them, an appreciation as it were from the inside, of Mary's response, and the condition of anticipation which is my foreknowledge, my leaning forward, toward the inside of Mary's mind.

If the reader accepts the initial premise, that in the gymtrack exchange with Mary I was speaking as though in part from an understanding of what was in her mind, then he/she will agree that much needs to be explained, before the events compacted in that premise can be thought of as actions. What can convert the data—my pre-conversation information about Mary—into that awareness of what is in her mind that will inflect my question to her about the Badgers? This is the raw form of what has to be explained. This is the key to an intelligible conversation about anticipation. The finer points of our explanation will involve accounting for what these 'raw data' about Mary are, and describing how these data can become part of the special kind of empathy my conversation invokes.

I believe that we need to view the raw data about Mary in terms that account for their living presence in a living consciousness. Though I said 'raw data' I meant to refer to the content-residue of themes in emotion/thought, and not to chunks lying around the inner rooms of the mind. (Here the archaic habit of spatializing acts of consciousness comes back to haunt us.) Though I said 'getting inside Mary's mind,' I referred not to actually climbing into her mind—the same old spatializing spectre—but 'doing consciousness with her' for a moment. (How that is different from 'knowing Mary' will be the second dominant assignment of this essay.) So both the data collection process, and the incorporation of that effort into a virtual form of speaking through Mary, as part of expressing myself, are to be taken as acts in process; just as is the enactment of spirit (or energy?) that is my whole taking presence as a human organism.

I am adding a layer of interpretation to the question of anticipation. I use the term 'anticipation' to describe the process of expressing yourself to

another person in a way that includes, in your expression, a sense of what that person would have in his or her head ready to say to you. This may seem a rarefied use of a term for which there might be little use; but I think the reverse is true. We rely so heavily on this anticipatory communication procedure that it becomes the very glue of society.

We are just getting started on the anticipation issue. The formulation I am reaching for presumes a view of the nature of consciousness. Consciousness is act. Consciousnesses can in some sense penetrate each other. Societies are bundles of consciousnesses. But in addition to that view of consciousness, I am presuming that consciousnesses incline toward each other. We saw the humblest instance of that 'inclining' in the scene with Mary on the gymtrack. I wanted to ask her about the Badgers. Wanted to? Try putting it another way. Passing Mary on the track was coterminous with a speech action which was what I was. (Though this essay purports to be an 'explanation' of behaviours, and is, of the interactive surface of consciousnesses, it is no explanation of what underlies those behaviours.) As I say, societies rely on this 'inclination.' That's the surface.

The 'getting to know Mary as a person' bit ups the ante of the present social psychology, and yet begs attention here as a way of framing the character of the simpler 'getting inside another person' analysis we have been describing. Knowing Mary as a person is much more profound than just momentarily brushing consciousnesses with her. But the two kinds of knowing must have something in common. Let's say I have known Mary for a long time. I know how she will react in all circumstances: I know that without being able to articulate the details of my acquaintance with her, or of the particular kinds of behaviour she will exhibit under circumstances X or Y. Let's say that my wife (who is not Mary) and I are at home, listening to the radio, when news comes of a Chinese intervention in Tibet. We are shocked. If I know Mary in a certain way, and have for a long time, one of my first thoughts may be: *Mary is going to be terribly disturbed about this development.* I may not say this aloud. I may. But in either case part of my reaction to the news includes a sense of how Mary will react to the news. There may be many elements to this assuming the importance of an event to Mary. It may be that Mary is my sister. We have grown up as foes of injustice, in a family riddled with injustice. Or maybe she is one of my students, or colleagues, and we have long worked on the question of setting up an independent Tibetan government. In either case my inner reference to Mary, upon hearing the radio news, may have been built up out of long acquaintance. 'Built up'? Well there we are back to the issue of 'converting raw data,' which required explanation in discussing my gymtrack exchange with Mary. It is more as though 'Mary and I are parts of one another,' in

the realm of consciousness. She is part of my 'social construction of reality,' as it has been termed. For this description to make sense, we will need to explain consciousness further. How can my consciousness be 'fused with her'? Does consciousness simply provide a 'semblance of fusion? It is hard to say. But for our present purpose we need only note the difference between this 'knowing Mary as a person' and the 'knowing Mary on the gymtrack.' Are these just two different degrees of interpenetration of consciousnesses? Does the latter bid fair to becoming part of another category of interpenetration, like love or hate? Or do *those* terms take us totally outside the descriptive realm in which our discussion is circulating?

The essential common factor, uniting both my gymtrack expression and an act of (in this case) genuine solidarity with Mary, is this: in both cases there is an inclining toward the other consciousness. (If we enlarge the map of this study of anticipation—if we speak in the end also of cognitive hunger, the desire to know, and of love, the desire to unite with—we will simply be enriching the pallette of inclinations toward the other, which is evident already in the 'getting inside' of Mary's head as I speak to her.) We will not escape the core element, in all these outreaches, that in order to 'get inside' or 'love' or 'know' or 'fear' we must add to the inclination outward an anticipation from within us of the co-responsive mindset or cognitive status or conscious pressure in the other we reach both to and from.

For this anticipatory condition to prevail, we have to imagine, in consciousness, one of two states of affairs: 1) '*Le milieu humain*' is swimming in a sea of consciousness, which has fissured off into the minds of all individual living beings, all of which are drawn to the whole from which they have been cut; or 2) The above hypothesis is empty, defying the one thing we have to work with, the individual mind, and must yield to an inductive account, by which we determine it as of the nature of individual consciousness to tend out toward the 'other.' Which of these states of affairs we choose, for our first level of formulation, will perhaps depend on what we can learn from a still closer look at the nature of anticipation.

The default level of consciousness is not easy to characterize, for as soon as we turn attention onto it, it is no longer on the default level; it is in the engaged mode. We are forever cut off from describing that condition on which our very ability to describe depends. What we believe we know, from being it, is that consciousness meets our awareness in a condition already enacted. We are already on the way toward satisfying our hunger or tying our shoes or petting a kitten. In other words, we are en route toward something, So far it sounds congenial to locate anticipation as embedded in the outgoing act of consciousness. As we develop this formulation, though, and address situations like that in which I anticipate what Mary thinks, as I

address her, indeed in order that I *can* address her, we meet an inexplicable barrier; we may be reaching out to Mary with speech, but what in this action justifies the injection of that reverse English, by which my speech to Mary anticipates her speech to me? It is easier to address that reverse English issue, is it not, by the hypothesis that all individual consciousness is a fissure in a single block of consciousness. Mary and I both share that totality of consciousness, and are thus privileged *ab ovo* to understand what the other 'would say to them.' By advancing this daring model of global consciousness we facilitate the understanding of our 'reverse English.' But do we do so in words alone, and with cavalier disregard for what can be observed?

We need to anatomize the issue of 'reverse English.' Is it only applicable to interactions among human consciousnesses? Would the cognitive process in general invoke 'reverse English'? Would falling in love, or being in love, invoke 'reverse English?' And how does this phenomenon relate to the kind of presence consciousness is?

Let's take these questions into the heart of a second social transaction. This time I turn to a recent lunch with an 'old friend.' I consciously choose a meeting in which banked memories, in both the participants, thicken the discourse, enlarging its reference points.

X and I were at one time—now thirty years ago—colleagues at the same university. Some twenty years ago I left that university to go to another one, while he stayed at the first. I then returned, about ten years ago, to the first university. We renewed our acquaintance, which had been punctuated by an absence of some ten years from one another. We are in the process of reminiscing, catching up, assessing the aging process, and looking into the future. The food is Indian, the place a small Midwestern college town, the time noon.

"Wife back?"

"Decided to stay a couple weeks more."

"Thought that was the point of your trip, going up to get her."

"It was. But when I got up there, she'd gotten involved with her family again. It was the problem with her sister."

"Her sister?" My interlocutor then fills in a relationship of which I had no knowledge.

"How do you feel about that?"

"At first I was pretty pissed, coming back without her …"

From which we move into the topic of our marriages, take several labyrinthine turns, as old conversers do, and part. On the way home I, and I assume he, take some intermittent stock of the conversation.

Presenting this conversational snippet, from out of the course of a long acquaintance, may seem like juxtaposing consciousnesses, as in a novel. X listens to Y, processes what Y says, and responds accordingly, from X's standpoint. But embedded in these transactions is the reverse English effect we saw in miniature in the word exchange with Mary, at the outset. The transaction is much more convoluted than it appears.

Start with 'Wife back?' X poses this question in a setting. First of all, even in speaking with the knowledge that Y is interested in whether his own wife is back, X speaks with a knowledge of Y's realm of consciousness. He knows something of what is in Y's mind. This 'knows something' could be an assemblage of data, as those we described earlier, in the case of the exchange with Mary, but in that case X would be simply a recorder of data provided him (previously) by Y. For X to know the affective weight of his question, 'Wife back?', he must know more than the meaning of those two words in English, He must be able to include, in the tonality of his query, a recognition of the way the words of the query sound in the consciousness of Y. Without that inclusion, the question he is asking is simply trained manipulation of phonemes! How, though, is it possible for X to ask this question of Y, while at the same time, as it were, hearing the mind or attitude of Y, and embodying that tonality in his own question? We are at the heart of the 'reverse English' phenomenon, and once again have to say that some kind of interaction of consciousnesses is in play. X is querying Y with a phrase testifying both to X's interrogation and to Y's field of domestic concerns.

If we review the above snippet of dialogue, we see that it is balanced toward the working mind of X, who is Y as well as X when he is questioning Y. On this slightly more global level, of several lines of dialogue, we may see more clearly a counter-argument to which we need to attend; another account, than the one I am giving, of the kind of transaction that takes place on the interpersonal level. Why not settle for a flat behaviourist account of the transaction in this X-Y dialogue? We sketched that account a few lines back; but let's lay it out. The behaviourist account would run like this: X hears certain sounds from Y, incorporates them in the meaning and form shapes of a system which is his language, and converts this new network of symbols into a meaningful whole; he listens to Y make sounds in that same sound and meaning system, and he 'understands' Y; he draws conclusions about what Y is telling him; he understands Y through Y's language, and he formulates responses to Y, based on his, X's, experience of life. There is no need to posit an interpenetration of consciousnesses, between X and Y. But what, in that case, accounts for the understanding of Y's mental tone, as distinct from the syntactical shape of Y's words? Can we say that X is able

to extrapolate that mental tone from the words he hears from Y? Or would that extrapolation be sufficient to recreate the tone world Y is coming from? If that extrapolation would be sufficient, wouldn't it be hard to distinguish it from an interpenetration of consciousness between X and Y? One way or the other, X would be understanding Y from within the standpoint of Y.

Regional geographies like the above do not settle easily across strict boundary lines. Interpermeation of consciousnesses serves as the underlying premise for any account of how interpersonal dialogue takes place. With this concession, to the hypothesis of cross-personal consciousness, can we say that the human dialogue model can be extended to an account of intellectual knowledge gaining, *cognitive activity*, on the one hand, and on the other to the case of *deeper affective engagements*, like love or hate or the shadings of significant emotion that interrelate individuals? With our fuller appreciation of the issue of 'reverse English' we should be able to readdress this wider set of questions.

Cognitive processes, say, in the practice of social or natural sciences, involve the patient establishing of fields of attention—*coleoptera* in Borneo, dating patterns among Spring Break youth in contemporary America, inter-national monetary transactions—and then reasoning, or reasoning/feeling your way to some fresh perspective onto them, a perspective which can validate itself either by even fresher instances of discovery, within the field, or by practical consequences—a new trade program, a pest eradication strategy, a counseling service for youthful infractions. Does the cognitive process in question, in examples like these, involve a monolithic relation between knower and known, or does it allow—as does interpersonal knowing—for a permeation of knower and known? In other words, does the diffusion of consciousness issue come up anew, in assessing cognitive processes?

In the interpersonal knowing process there is 'empathy' or *sympa-theia*—coordination of pathos, or feeling—between the two participating centers of consciousness. Is there anything comparable to this empathy when the scientist is addressing a mass of seemingly inchoate gluons, a carpenter assessing a palette of woods for use in a cabinet, or a mechanic considering the possible causes for a new leak in his 2008 Honda? Does problem solving of these orders involve any active feedback from the body of material to be understood?

To know such a body of material we need to get inside it, but not in the way I needed to get inside Mary's mind before I addressed her as I did, and not in the way X needed to be interior to Y at the same time as addressing Y from 'outside' Y. We have a cognitive goal, as we work with our scholarly material. That goal is to see/feel the material declaring form and meaning from within itself. (Meaning: coherence, design, shape.) That

material is permitting meaning to emerge from within it, at the maieutic of the physicist, carpenter, or auto mechanic. Can we speak of the 'material' as co-incorporated in the way the human interlocutor is included in the queryer's investigation or conversation? All we can say in that direction, in the present setting, is what Goethe said: *Wie koennte man die Sonne sehen, wenn er nicht die Sonne waere*? (How could we see the sun if we were not the sun?) Congruence between knower and known is the working assumption of the cognitive process. To fine tune the difference, of this knower/known relation from that in human interactions, is to reassess the human milieu. It is to rediscover the uniquely reciprocal nature of human interrelations.

Which brings us to the more or less delayed issue of 'knowing the other person,' which in its strong sense connotes the highest reach of intensity in the human domain. We have talked about 'inclination,' and 'anticipation,' hoping thereby to label a strong intrapersonal leaning, which characterizes our species. In the condition we call 'love' this anticipation reaches a fervor which exceeds all human emotions, with the possible exception of hate, which also ravishes the whole person. In either of these conditions, love or hate, we realize intensely that getting inside the other which was first mentioned here in connection with Mary on the gymtrack. The character of this insiding, in the present case, needs special discussion, for while love might seem to fit the case, by nature, the example of hate, love's antonym, might appear harder to describe as an insiding.

The reverse English twist to the interpersonal is again the key to the mystery of person-joining, and will in a now-familiar form raise again the question of the apportioning of consciousness throughout the noosphere. Of love it is often said, that nowhere does interpermeation of consciousnesses occur more convincingly. It would seem that the complete lover should be both totally him/herself, and at the same time completely the other. To argue this convincingly is to face at its most uncompromising the issue of surmounting the self in order to join with the other, while at the same time remaining totally the self. The kicker in this dynamic is that in becoming the other, the lover becomes the other thinking of the lover; while the beloved—in a symmetrical love—is performing the same action in reverse, blinded with a love, for him/herself, that is the lover's love of the other him/herself. The perfect symmetry of such a twinning, which carries anticipation to its highest realization, is perplexingly equaled by the power of hate. At first, it seems that the specular energies of loving will be absent from hate. Hate seems more univocal, and less evidently to bind the hater to the hated than is supreme love bound to the beloved. There is reason to doubt this; the strongest proof may be hidden in the truism that hatred is unsparing toward the hater. What could better explain this pop psychology

than the observation that hate involves investing oneself completely in the other as a hater of oneself? That this psychological twist should obtain, in the case of an emotion that is harmful, like hate, might seem counter-intuitive, and to bear less structural resemblance to love than is implied by the comparison of the two emotions. Observe closely, though. And note that we may have to nuance the symmetry under discussion. The hated does not precisely return the hater's hatred incorporated in the hated. The hated endures a negation of itself, with which it occludes the hater, through the incorporation of the hater. It is thus, I think, that we should call hatred, not love, blind.

The 'reverse English' phenomenon needs contextualization. Does it serve a purpose? Does identifying this phenomenon help us to discover or describe other aspects of our world setting?

The effect, if not the purpose, of this phenomenon is to hook the knower/converser/social member/lover/hater to the known/addressed/co-operated with/beloved/hated with which it co-exists in a setting of mutual definition. To advance from ascribing this effect to imputing purpose to the phenomenon is bold and quantum; takes us to the brink of the kinds of conundrum on which the issues of evolution, for example, teeter. (Does the perfection of chance, which evolution embodies, imply a conscious coordination, or is it just chance?) So without hastily imputing purpose to the reverse English effect, let's say that it so manifestly affects and effects humane interrelations that some kind of programmatic usefulness must be assumed to be at work. That usefulness needn't be what we normally call 'purpose,' and can in fact simply be random behavior, but if so it has its uses. If we prefer 'effect' to purpose, we can at least say that the impulse to *social organization* lurks in this anticipatory tilt, with its 'reverse English' implications. Not only are the members of society hereby brought by inclination into one another's orbit, but the fruition of that inclination returns onto them with interest, importing the awareness, value, and energy of the other. A social fabric can be sewed up, for as little as this, and though we know the conflicting goods and ills of society, we will hardly doubt that cooperative behaviours are indispensable to security, mutual aid, and basic needs of shelter and food.

The identification of the reverse English phenomenon, in interpersonal relations, can help us to characterize the nature of our species. The addiction to this reverse return, in acts of conscious intention, extends to non-human dimensions of intelligibility. It is for this reason that I exemplified cognitive activity by fascinations with object clusters or types which were only thereby brought into the sphere of human discourse. Our hunger to classify beetles, or gluons, or stamped amphora handles is no hunger

for a returning touch of the human, but is evidence of our in principle anticipatory intention toward the whole intelligible world. That desire to know, which Aristotle highlights at the beginning of the *Metaphysics*, is connatural to us, and though it is heralded by the curiosity and insight of many of our fellow creatures, it is one of the defining traits of *homo sapiens*. But of course the knowing desire grows keener as we rise from cognition of the objective, through the levels of otherness which is of our own genus. To amass a significant body of knowledge, about the molluscs of Java, I need a procedural program, a collection apparatus, and a disciplined setting in which to carry out my investigation. It is much easier for me to know what is inside the other of Mary, on the gymtrack—though of course to know deeply what is deep in Mary would be no small job. For X to know Y, and to reap the rewards of a reversal of other onto self, is to move deeply inside the '*milieu humain*.' The scholar of molluscs will feel, at the end of a long career of synthesis and analysis, that the other, the significance of the now-understood materials before him, has bestowed itself on him/her as meaning, and has thus been transformed into a reverse English springboard, which redounds to the richness of the investigator.

The levels of scientific investigation, and of interpersonal dialogue within the human milieu, seem to some to be superseded by the knowledge of a divine milieu, or if not that of a higher than human milieu. In *The Degrees of Knowledge*, Jacques Maritain charts a detailed geography of the knowable regions which transcend the human milieu. Accepting that 'higher order of knowledge,' if even on the level of psychological fact, we can anticipate one of the rewards of religious or meditative thought; that in it we activate a higher order of intelligibility, which exists as a return of the other onto the knower. The delights of this manipulative strategy assure to the higher religions a role as determinants of the human.