

The Place of Understanding in a Phenomenology of You

"Language . . . endures, but it endures as a continuous process of becoming."
— V. N. Vološinov

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Introduction

Do you recall the other day when we met in the campus Quad? As you approached, I put my head down to keep from greeting you too soon. It's tricky, this business of saying hello. Starting our ritual of mutual recognition too early and too far apart, we will wave our hands like idiots. But if I don't respond to your smile until we are upon each other, you will puzzle, "Now what's going on with Miles?" If I wait too late, and we pass, you may decide, "What the hell," cut your losses, and leave me dangling.

Tricky business, like I say. It recalls Erving Goffman's astute observation made some years back. After discussing at length how we theatrically present ourselves to each other, he assured us that of course everyday life is not drama. But then he went on to add that the difference between the two is not always easy to discern (1959).

Tricky business indeed. At times, I wonder how we accomplish our encounters as well as we do. The structuralists among us say, "It's simple Simon semiotics." One sign elicits another and that still another. "Good morning" gets a polite smile and in return, a "Good morning Miles," and if I'm lucky, a slight nod in recognition of my existence.

In semiotics, signs convey not their deep essences, which in any case they do not have, but they bounce off each other in either a complementary rhythm or in antagonistic beat, and thereby structure meaning. Signs beget signs beget signs beget etc. Yet, following the argument of one of its progenitors, Saussure (1986), semiotics' structuring sacrifices the richness of everyday speech, or *la parole*, for the elegant purity of language, or *la langue*. And we, you and I, know we are robust denizens of the planet, full of flesh and blood, and along with our mammalian kin use our hands, our feet, our heads, and, above all perhaps, our faces to trumpet the rhetoric of our being.¹

While not abandoning semiotics' strong suit in revealing how our lives so often conform to words rather than the reverse, it is to phenomenology to which we turn for a wider and deeper consideration of how we establish what it is we

are up to from the “simple” exchanges of “hellos” to the deepest, most heartfelt struggle for significance. Phenomenology suggests that we work to accomplish our efforts through that intensive mixture of experiencing and speaking it calls “understanding.”

“Understanding” is a big, warm, cuddly word that cynics, such as you, may not care for. On the contrary I argue that the word has in its sound the qualities we use to find our way to each other and to the world about us. Understanding does not act apart from experience, as a semiotician would have it, but in accord with the senses (such as smell and sound); organs (such as the foot and the hand); and facilities (such as the symbol) which orchestrate and are orchestrated by us, that is, you and me.

When I get started rolling down this track I feel the urge to pull out all stops and in the true spirit of phenomenology let things unfold as they may. But from past experience I know if I do so, I will lose you and everyone else, so let me lay out in advance the track down which we will roll (if not rock). We will (1) elucidate the nature of understanding. We, or at least I, will (2) dare to lodge understanding in the chain of life’s relatedness. Then we will (3) reposition the I in the “I and you” into the proper binary in which “you” come first, that is “you and I,” or even better, you-I. From there we will (4) scan in a hopelessly inadequate fashion evidence for the emergence of understanding in early hominid evolution. Finally, we, if you are still with me, will (5) end this journey with poetry.

Understanding

When we say “phenomenology, Martin Heidegger will rise—metaphorically of course—and announce “*Achtung!*” Maurice Merleau-Ponty will immediately insist, “Présent.” But Hans-Georg Gadamer, with a glance at the two, will raise his voice in a loud, strongly accented “Here.” With their intellects bright and shiny, each clamors to be heard. But all will speak of how we, you and I, engaged one another “pre-theoretically.” Even as I say “Hi,” and before you respond, “Hey Miles,” we are aware of who we are and have a good idea what each is up to, that is, between us resides “understanding.”

What some might call intuition and others, even divine insight, the three phenomenologists above argue that understanding consists of the symbolic manipulation of the body, hand, face, and voice to form an intertwined, emergent intersubjectivity that goes between the you of you and the me of I. Neither solely experience with a verbal dash nor verbal proclamations with a touch of emotion, understanding constitutes the primary mode of communicating between us, you and me, as members the human species.

To expand upon understanding, we can fortunately turn to a concise statement by Thomas A. Schwandt (1999). Schwandt distinguishes understanding from other modes of human communication through a series of contrasts, which in the interest of specification we may number and subdivide.

1. *Knowing and Understanding*

- a. To know is to engage in conscious deliberation, but to understand takes its meaning literally from to “stand under.” Consequently to understand is “to grasp, to hear, to get, to catch, or comprehend the meaning of something”(452).
- b. In contrast to knowing which asks me, “How do you know that?” understanding asks, “What do you make of that?” In understanding I ask, not assert, “What’s going on with you?”
- c. The quest for knowledge is the hallmark of the species, but in understanding we are. In questing for knowledge we designate, discover, refer, or depict, but when we seek understanding, we disclose ourselves before each other.

2. *Understanding, Reading, and Learning*

- a. Despite those who argue text is a type of discourse (for example, Ricoeur 1979), Schwandt considers reading as too private and too internal to elucidate the qualities of understanding. Learning, on the other hand, more clearly discloses the nature of understanding, especially if we see learning as enactment, performance, or praxes.
- b. Citing Gadamer (1989), Schwandt continues to insist that understanding is not private self-reflection. In our personal trajectories, long before we seek to “find” ourselves, we understand ourselves as those who respond to each other in an open, *self-evident* manner, that is, I find you before I discovered Miles.
- c. Continuing along this line, Schwandt insists that our efforts to articulate, to pronounce, to *say* what we *think* is inseparable from our efforts to understand. When I see you approaching in the quadrangle, you question me, before either of us open our mouths.²

3. *Understanding as Relational and Existential*

- a. Understanding is not a pre-ordained cognitive map that I apply to your actions. Rather understanding exists between us, and since even you—who show yourself as the absolute stranger, a person speaking in a language foreign to me—reveal a familiar side, you and I reside in the existential tension between the two, between the strange and the familiar, between exile and home, between loneliness and joy.³

4. *Understanding at Risk*

- a. A key feature in the mode of understanding is the risk of “getting it wrong.” The very possibility that we may misunderstand what each is up to gives

understanding its objective character. The risk challenges us to adjust our conversations. If the risk did not haunt us, we would enter a completely subjective mode, the mode of always being correct. But the risk of misunderstanding guarantees that we continually adjust our notions of what is going on.

- b. The continual adjustment comes from our mutual involvement. We have not absolute criteria to determine our responses to one another, but that does not mean we give up our search, saying “What the hell.” Nor does it mean that we always dazzle each other with “Congratulations!” It does mean that I continually search for you and you for me, and in that search, that restless search, we find one another—for the moment.

5. *In Conclusion*

- a. In sum, Schwandt insists that understanding is not an epistemology but an existential being in the world, an ontology characteristic of humans.⁴

To Schwandt’s masterful exposition of the nature of understanding we add an important note about presence and place. “Presence” is understanding when we are face-to-face, eye-ball-to-eye-ball, hand-in-hand. Presence extends beyond and deeper than “consciousness.” “Awareness” may be a near synonym. You remember when we stood in front of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial that early spring, overcast day? At our feet were a wreath and an infantry boot. We saw each other, you and me, reflected in black marble, and our hands, on their own, sought a name of a person we did not know, a name among the names, Mary T. Klinder (Richardson and Dunton 1989). Presence does not always carry such a heightened sense, but whenever we meet, in the briefest of glances, we, you and I, are. As the Vietnam Memorial so dramatically informs us, place is the material context in which understanding resides.

The Memorial and we speak to each other. Presence surrounds us. But what else is there, along with presence? Absence. The secret of the Memorial’s sense of presence is the appalling knowledge of absence. Mary Klinder’s name is on the wall, because she is absent. She is dead. She resides in the no-where. A place beyond reach.⁵

Life’s Relatedness

Understanding, we agree, is not a thing, but a relationship. When we call out to one another, we, you and I, exist in the calling out. The we of you and me resides in the presence, in the now, the calling out creates.

The we is fragile it seems. It vanishes when the calling out between you and me ceases. Yet, the we is hardy. It comes forth instantly in the next encounter of you and me. In that encounter, in that understanding, the you of you and the I of me are reborn in the we. *We* are, once again.

Understanding in these words appears so delicate, so precious, so ephemeral, that it is a mystery, a secret, an ineffable. Yes, it is. It is all of those, but it is also a relationship. As a relationship it is common, a known, a spoken. It is a constituent of our be-ing. If that is the case, it is nothing more or nothing less than a fixture of life.

As a fixture of life, understanding lies within the net that all life forms reveal. It is but a special characteristic of life itself. Just as the we exists in relationship between you and me, life exists in the interaction among life forms. From its very beginning, life was not bounded, isolated molecules, but it was the interaction among them. Living systems differ from non-living ones in that information occupies the central role in their maintenance and in their replication. This means the maintenance and replication processes are less than completely random, that is, they are capable of evolving (Rasmussen et al. 2004). The dynamics of the self-organizational material produces inheritable variations that in the presence of one another ensure both continuity and innovation, stability and flux.

“We need to move from the molecules to an understanding of the interaction network in a cell” (Bishop 2002:E-79). Metazoan organisms essentially are networks on interacting cells, and they exist in ecosystems featuring the physical environment to be sure, but that environment is heavily populated by members of the same and different species. Not only that, but the physical environment itself changes because of the information, maintenance, and replication feedback system, and those changes beget changes. You have only to breathe to recognize the contribution of earlier life forms to your existence. And even as we speak, our speaking interaction contributes to additional changes—global warming.

When we met in Quad, we, you and I, joined the live oaks, the mocking birds, the squirrels, and the azaleas to constitute the aboveground biota linked to the below ground community of fungi, nematodes, microarthropods, insects, and earthworms, the belowground biota (McNeill and Winiwarter 2004). The words exchanged between us in our greetings were but links in the great chain of beings be-ing.

Communication among life forms constitutes a core feature of life itself. Paradoxically, individualization of life forms, by increasing the separateness of life, challenges communication to develop attributes that will put these individuals in contact with one another, one that penetrates their growing individuality. Consider vertebrates. Physically, they present a case of distinctive individuals that separate off from each other through thick barriers of bone, muscle, and skin. Consequently, communication in turn develops signals that “increase efficiency and facilitate detection and recognition” (Johnstone 2202:1059). To distinguish themselves from background noise, (1) the signs become conspicuous; (2) they channel themselves into a relatively few, stereotyped displays or sounds; (3) they themselves grow redundant; and finally (4) they begin with a series of sounds, frequently loud, or colors frequently brilliant, to alert each other that messages are on the way.

We humans also employ a number of body gestures that constitute part of the informational-maintenance-replication system by following the above pattern. We also speak. Speaking also, particularly ritual discourse, sets itself the task to accomplish detection and recognition, but by being under cortical control, speaking, of course, opens up a world in which we become “you” and “I.” We move inside our words and live our dreams within their boundaries.

You-Me

Within the world of symbolic discourse, we, to survive, must continue to find one another. We have compounded an already difficult task. Our interaction is now symbolic interaction. When we speak, the materiality of words, the sound of the signifier, emerges as our first “reality.” “Subjectivity must be approached not as the point of origin but as the *effect* of . . . discourse” (Easthope 1983:1983, my emphasis). The “I” that I claim to be emerges out of your words. When you call “Miles?” the experiential I, so dear to my heart, comes to be as the response, “Yeah?” The signifier “Miles?” calls forth the signifier “Yeah?” Clearly (!), we see each other “through a glass darkly.”⁶

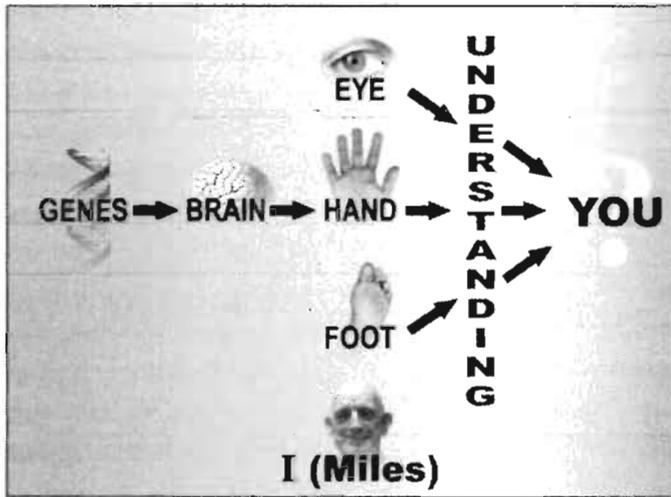
When we see each other, who sees first? When we look at one another, whose look starts our looking? The answer, I believe, is you and yours.

Johnny Weissmuller made a serious mistake when in 1932 he thumped his chest and shouted, “Me Tarzan” and then pointed straight at Maureen O’Sullivan and confidently announced, “You Jane.” A much more accurate picture would have him pointing breathlessly at Maureen and say, “You Jane,” and then with a shuffle of his feet and a blush on his face, whispering, “Me Tarzan.”

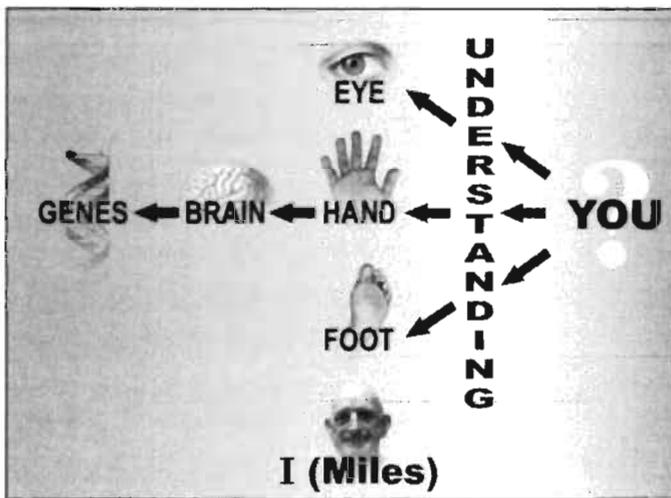
But Johnny was in good company. René Descartes set himself to doubt everything, even if he were truly doubting. At the end all of his doubting he came to know that the one thing he could not doubt was that he thought, therefore he concluded, in Latin, “*Cogito ergo sum*,” usually translated as “I think, therefore I am.” Another Frenchman, several centuries later, concluded that Descartes had it backward, and so Jean-Paul Sartre led us into existentialism with, “*Je suis, conséquemment je pense*” A Spaniard, Miguel de Unamuno, concurred in that behind or within every label we could apply to each other there stood “*un hombre de carne y hueso*—a man of flesh and bone.” All three thinkers prefaced their assertion on an “I.” It was “I” who thought, it was “I” who claimed an existence, it was “I” who protested every label applied to him. Could it be that they were wrong? Could it be they put the wrong person first? Could it be that the “first person singular” pronoun should give way to the “second person singular”? If “you” came first, then would “I” be the consequence of “your” actions? Precisely. “You are, consequently so am I” (Figure 1).

How can I say this? On what basis can I assert that contrary to Johnny and his intellectual betters, “You are, then I am”?

Figure 1



The J. Weissmuller et al. hypothesis



The M. Richardson hypothesis

Several famous investigators of the human condition have come close to the position. Charles Cooley (1922) refers to you as the “looking glass self” in which in you, I see my actions. George Herbert Mead (1934) all but concurs in his argument that the meaning of a gesture lies in its response. The secret “I” that I am can only become a public Me when I take the role of the other (i. e., you) and reflect back upon myself. Martin Buber argues for an even closer connection when he replaces the “and” in “I and you” with a hyphen, that is, “I-You” to support his assertion that one side calls forth the other (Buber 1987).

We have a specific case before us. It is your reading that lets this text live. Until you read what I write, the text on which I have worked with such diligence and such conviction just lies on the paper. It must have your refreshing eye to live. The “I” you see right after the “The” in this sentence depends upon your reading.

Only in your reading, does that “I” live (See reader response theory: Suleiman and Crosman [1980]; as well as Deborah Tannen [1989]).

If you need additional arguments to be convinced that “You are, consequently I am,” here is one that clinches the case. It is your death that comes first. Only when you die, do I know death. When you die, your death assures me that death is not only a word, but an event, a biological process, I cannot escape. I understand now that I too will follow you. The abyss opens.

The Emergence of Understanding

The place of understanding in the ongoing exchange between you and me testifies to its primal nature. It would appear to even be more fundamental than language in the narrow sense, to be a feature that antedates verbs and nouns, and, broadly considered, to be a feature congruent with the human condition itself.

Where in the fossil record do we find the human condition? How can we infer from paleontological record of us the emergence of understanding?

First, let us review the nature of understanding. To repeat, the quest for knowledge is the hallmark of the species. For many of us in many situations, knowledge controls. Through knowledge we *master* the world, and if the cards fall right, each other. But in understanding we, you and I, are. Through revealing ourselves in the presence of each other we gain not mastery over each other but the unfolding, continual *mystery* of you, by which I am.

Understanding, consequently, exists between us, and since even, or especially, you, show a dark, stranger streak to your familiar face, we, you and I, reside in the existential tension between us, between the strange and the familiar, between exile and home, between loneliness and joy. Gadamer himself affirms in italics, “*The true locus of hermeneutics is this in-between*” (1992:295).

Given that understanding resides in our constant negotiation between the strange and the familiar, how we locate this “site” of constant negotiation in the archaeological record of human be-ing? How can we recognize such a “site” amidst the detritus of the past, the cast-offs, the left-overs, of centuries? Fortunately, Wendy Ashmore, in her distinguished lecture before the Archaeological Division of the American Anthropological Association in the fall of 2000, encourages us to do just that, to interpret the spatial display of the archaeological record *socially*, to recognize *place* as a component of dispositions and decisions (2002:1172-1183). Thus encouraged, let’s proceed.

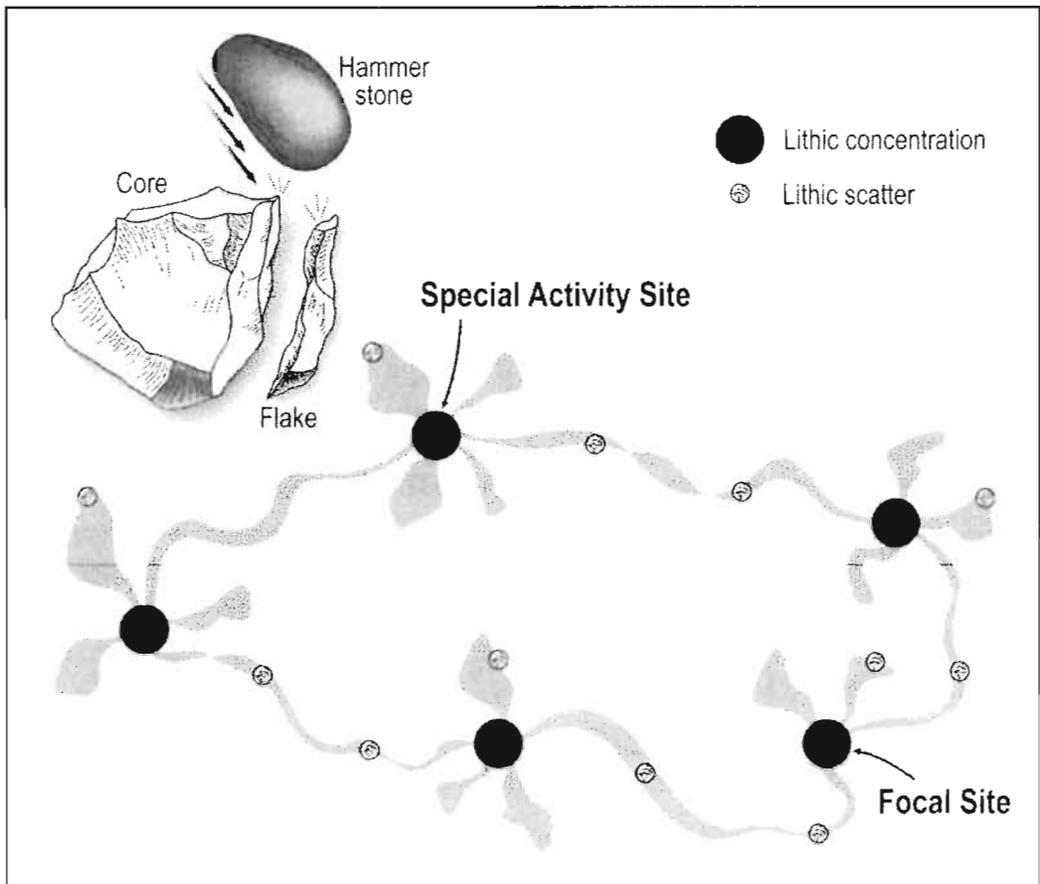
If understanding is constituent of being human, then naturally we search the record for the first “humans.” Humans in the broad consideration here, I would argue, antedate *Homo sapiens*, *Homo erectus*, and even the genus *Homo*. We find humans wherever we see primates who walked erect and who communicated symbolically. This puts us roughly 2.5 millions years into the past among bipedal creatures who transformed pebbles into tools, collectively known as the australopithecines.⁷ Short

in statue, small in brain, with brow ridges, prognathic face, and big molars, they would win no Mr. or Miss Universe prize, until we looked at their hands.

The hands of a variety of australopithecines share commonalities, such as longer and more robust thumbs that suggest control and manipulative skill comparable to that of modern *H. sapiens* (Susman 1994; Panger *et al.* 2003). While pebble tools are not always found in association with each of the varieties, the commonalities suggest they engaged world with the hand.

Engaging the world with the hand implies that these creatures, small brain notwithstanding, stood, and were transforming in the manner that authors diverse as Karl Marx (1972) and Anthony Gibbens (1984) insist as characteristic of human be-ing. In so doing they were not only making tools but also making the landscape and each other.⁸ As we move forward from the oldest tools at 2.5 million years ago to the interval between 2.0 and 1.5 million, we find not only an abundance of pebble tools but also a distribution of them in alternative patterns of relatively dense clusters and thin scatters. This spatial arrangement seems to indicate a social arrangement of concentrated living/activity areas with relatively empty spaces in between, or more directly, homes bases to which the australopithecines return again and again (Figure 2). This interpretation, which was first put forward in the 1970s

Figure 2



and 1980s (e.g., Quiatt and Kelso 1985), has been revisited and reinvigorated. Lisa Rosa and Fiona Marshall (1996) have argued that meat, a high quality, moveable resource, that, the early hominids secured through hunting and scavenging, was transported repeatedly to areas associated with water, trees, and plant food. From there the short, bipedal hominids defended themselves cooperatively from the large carnivores that threatened these small, relatively slow moving creatures whose bipedality presented their vital organs in full view of carnivores' sweeping paws or searing fangs.

Returning to the same area and uniting to drive off predators intensified the general primate sociality. Such a home base deepened knowledge of particular individuals—who to challenge, who to avoid, and who to cuddle up with—and gave security to young—who to run to, who to play with, and who to run from. Such enhanced solidarity led, perhaps inevitably, to a division between home base, the inside zone with its friendship, squabbles, and sex, and the opposite, the outside arena of insecurities, likely misfortunes, and life-threatening dangers. Consequently, the concentration of tools in one general place lays the foundation not only for the experience of community in all of its immediacy, but by its very enhancement, the experience of its opposite, the lack of exchange outside, in all of its distancing.⁹

Let me hasten to affirm that the intense social exchange within the community and its absence outside, in the “not-community,” is some distance from symbol exchange of the here and of the there. To bridge between social exchange and symbol exchange requires an account of the origin of symboling. This task, difficult though it may be, is at least more modest than the much larger one on the origin of language.

My attempt follows the path led out by Terrence Deacon's book, *The Symbolic Species: The co-evolution of language and the brain*. Here, to start, come two extraordinary quotes from this extraordinary book: “The remarkable expansion of the brain that took place in human evolution . . . was not the cause of symbolic language but a *consequence*” (340). “It is simply not possible to understand human anatomy, human neurobiology, or human psychology without recognizing *they have been shaped by . . . symbolic reference*” (410; my emphases). Consequently, to take a strictly evolutionary approach to symbolic communication, we must see it as part of the adaptive radiation of humans subsequent to the ape-human split of roughly 5 million years ago. Symbolic communication differs from gesturing in that in gesturing the tie between the gesture and the object gestured at is indexical—the male peacock's display of his tail feathers indexes his overall physical state to the female in question.¹⁰ In symbolic communication the tie between the symbols take precedence over the physical tie to the referent. The relation between symbols is abstract and categorical. Saussure-like, Deacon insists that the interplay between symbols produces their signification. The question of the shift from exclusive social exchange to symbol exchange is a shift from purely indexical to symbolic communication.

Deacon then advances his argument to ritual communication. Ritual *embodies* social exchange. The experiential performance of the ritual is very much part of its power—an argument paralleling that of Roy Rappaport (1999). The energy among participants as they reciprocally wheel and bow transmits the information portrayed by their stylized movements in such a direct, muscular fashion that words, for all their ethereal elegance, cannot achieve.

In addition, Deacon points to the widely recognized power of ritual to convey information by reversing the message: to establish peace, act out war; to enhance solidarity, act out alienation; and to promote fidelity, act out betrayal.

This reversing works out a discursive logic of

Self	Other
Here	There
Us	Them

And transforms the social exchange occurring at the home base into symbolic exchange among early humans. The concentration of pebble tools produced by hominids become the place, like the quadrangle, where we, you and I, encounter one another with understanding, even before either of us speaks a word.

Journey's End

From a casual encounter in the Quadrangle, we, you and I, have elucidated understanding, lodged it in life's fundamental relatedness, positioned you before me, and, brashly and without class, scanned the emergence of understanding in hominid evolution. Exhausted and uptight, I go for solace in

Poems
a Usted

and Hence
à Moi

Vološinov Poetics

“A word is territory
shared by both addresser and addressee,
by the speaker and his interlocutor.”

If I say Miles, does the M stay
with me, and the s go to you
and the l to the love we said we'd share?

**How Is It Where
You Are?**

I reach for you.
You reach for me.
We touch—

When it doesn't rain,
and it's not too hot.
Here, in Louisiana,
that ain't often.

How Much Like You!

In some strange state, the other day
I heard the words of a Cuban bolero.

*Siempre que te pregunto
que cuándo, cómo, y dónde,
tú siempre me respondes
quizás, quizás, quizás.*

“Always when I ask you,
When? How? Where?
Always you respond,
Perhaps. Perhaps. Perhaps.”

The Pair Tree

In life's backyard,
planted by circumstance,
a lone tree with a single leaf
and on that stem, one fruit.

A green You lobed, with veins
branching shaping a claw.
A red Me filled, with skin
bursting, voicing a cry.

Crazy Miles

Fighting the simulacra
he planned to blow holes
in the classroom walls
so they could have real windows.
In the end, they led him away,
but not unkindly.

Acknowledgments

My debt continues to Mary Lee Eggart for her wonderful art work, and I thank Helen Regis for her gracious encouragement. Julie Hanebrink and Frank Fillibeck contributed their editorial eyes, but any remaining sloppiness and uneven phrasing are mine.

Notes

1. Forgive me, but I cannot let these words stand without honoring my debt to *el hombre de carne y hueso* himself, Miguel de Unamuno, and his lifelong “agony” to comprehend himself as a creature of flesh and bone and as speaker of the sanctifying word (1974)

2. Do we say what we think, or do we think what we say? Growing up as countryboy in East Texas, I was more non-verbal than verbal. So English teachers drove me up the wall with their “Proper speaking reveals a thoughtful mind.” To this day, I remain suspicious of “proper speaking.”

3. For earlier but still pertinent expositions, see Buttimer (1976) and Seamon (1980). In his presentation of us as inhabiting the world as interpretative beings, Schwandt quotes Kerderman (1998) “The existential tension between ‘home’ and ‘exile’ at once distinguishes our human situation and ... makes understanding [that situation] possible.” I have recently attempted to expand on that tension between being-in-place and being-out-of-place (2003).

4. In a broader treatment, Schwandt succinctly sums up the matter, “Understanding is participative, conversational, and dialogic” (2000:195; my emphasis).

5. In his critical work on structuration in which he stresses the “essentially transformative character of all human action,” Giddens refers to locations as providing the physical setting for human action but perhaps even more importantly they offer the contextuality necessary for the transformative to occur. As we see here, locations are places whose settings offer the contextuality for us to understand (always hesitantly) where we are, who we are, and what are we up to (1984:119).

6. The paragraph itself appears darkly, and I apologize. At this stage in this text, I have to relay on your familiarity with Ferdinand de Saussure (1986 [1966]), Jacques Derrida (1976; 1978), and Anthony Easthope (1983), which, with the possible exception of Easthope, I know you possess.

7. In the older terminology, Hominidae (humans) contrasted with Pongidae (the three great apes). Because of the molecular evidence that shows chimpanzee more closely related to humans than either to the gorilla, one version of the newer terminology based on molecular comparisons places both chimps and humans in Hominidae, with subfamily distinction, Homininae, for humans. Having nothing against chimps, but because of the profound morphological and the behavior differences between the two, I stick with the older classification, with hominid being any primate that walks up right, and human any bipedal primate that communicates with symbols. Presently, four fossil genera antedate the australopithecines. From youngest to oldest, these are Kenyapithecus (3.5 MY), Orrorin (6 MY), Ardipithecus (4.4-5.8 MY), and Sahelanthropus (7 MY). Discussion continues concerning their bipedal status.

8. In contrast to those who might suggest that the makers produced Oldowan tools by more or less randomly pounding one pebble against another, Semaw et al. (1994) argue that

knappers of the Gona, Ethiopia tools—the oldest on record—knew what they were doing. The large number of well-struck flakes with conspicuous bulbs of percussion indicated a clear understanding of fracture mechanics. In addition the knappers preferred trachyte to other material for its better flaking properties.

9. Such an interplay immediately brings to mind Derrida's intertwining of presence and absence, with presence being but absence deferred and absence being but presence deferred (1973), or in general, the play of discursive logic, by which symbols, whose very presence, standing for objects not there, makes absence possible.

10. Just for fun, let me mention a case of experimental male plumage enhancement among barn swallows. The scientists, diabolically of course, darkened the ventral feathers of selected males already mated with females and found that the manipulated males were the preferred object of choice of females not only among the original females but among others as well. Those males without enhancement lost out, that is, they have fewer offspring (Safran et al. 2005).

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