Point of view

Silent information

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Light seeking light doth light of light beguile.
*Shakespeare**

People communicate with each other by means of speech, countenance, miens, deeds; but they also read each other's thoughts and feelings. This silent interpersonal communication helps me, for example, perceive the presence of another man in my vicinity, capture the attention of the audience when delivering a speech or performing an act, convey my contempt or admiration, pretend, exert authority, guess what I am expected to say or do, ingratiate myself into someone's favour, lend my ear to the argument, etc. The connection of the communicating parties is very accurate and instantaneous, and has a peculiar flair of mutual consent (I know he knows that I know he knows what I have in mind).

Although evident, silent communication eludes dissection and resists straight verbalisation as much as the darkness escapes close examination in full light. If I were eccentric or impertinent enough as to ask people I come in contact with whether a moment ago, before I have questioned them, they felt my contempt, admiration, pretension, authority, sycophancy, alienation, or whatever, I would not learn much. Firstly, I cannot question everyone, but only those people I may expect to be likely to cooperate - hence, my sample would miss enemies, crooks, high authorities, ephemeral acquaintances, and many others. Secondly, why should I trust a verbal or written account of a recent mutual experience rendered by another man, rather than rely on my immediate perception of the encounter in its *statu nascendi*? Should I accept at face value what she or he says, simply because the spoken or written statement is 'objectively verifiable' and available for subsequent study by a third party?

Criteria of the truth

If I decide to rely on my own perception of the silent communication of which I am instantaneously aware, I must make the perception maximally

objective and verifiable. To this end, I have to content myself with operationally reliable data, *ie* with the 'practical truth', rather than search for the esoteric 'absolute truth'. The notions that shall accept as true should be coherent, justified in view of the available information and of my best knowledge, should pass a rigorous internal censorship, and above all, should lend themselves to verification in subsequent observations and trials.

An important objective criterion of the reality and reliability of the silent communication would be the practical impact it exerts on my immediate or subsequent thinking, behaviour or actions. If I have read the other man's thoughts correctly, my public actions resulting from this silently acquired information should produce statistically predictable results that could be verified objectively in the visible, tangible and audible reality.

'No man is an island for itself'

Whenever I make a personal contact with another man, a channel of mutual rapport opens itself between us. The process seems to take place automatically, although it can be promoted or hindered by volition. Once in touch, we can see or guess each other's thoughts, feelings, drives, levels of the arousal and other silent features of the mind. During the process, each of us consents to it, or to the contrary, tries to evade the contact, hiding or decoying the features.

Deceptions and doubts

Perception of the silent communication with another man or woman may simply be my illusion. A phenomenon I claim I perceive in his or her mind might be a mirror image, a projection of the phenomenon occurring in fact in my mind. I may see in the others what I do not see, do not wish to see, or do not dare see in myself, *ie* I project subconscious contents of my mind into them. Hence the apparent 'flow of communication' between me and someone else would be a reverberation of the mental energy between core myself and myself projected into the other one, rather than true sharing.

I may fancy I am part of an all-pervading mental syncytium to which all the people belong, and that I share with them the thoughts, feelings and drives.

**Love Labour's Lost*, Act 1, Sc 1, 77.

but alas, I am only surrounded by an exteriorised myself, imprisoned in a scenery built from the stuff my dreams are made of. Whatever I perceive the people saying, thinking or feeling – it is my words put into their mouths, and it is my thoughts, feelings and drives put into their bosoms. What appears to be a bi-directional flow of the mental energy, a silent sharing between me and someone else, is just a monologue before my image in the mirror. The mental energy that appears to connect me with the people, and all of us into a 'synmentium', only connects me with my image projected into the fellow human beings whom I shall never fathom. I may claim I have read or influenced their minds; but in effect I have beheld myself and changed only myself.

The matters of fact

The idea of being all by myself is eccentric. Other people certainly do exist, and I do interact with them – sharing, giving and receiving. I offer to them my services and skills, and in return use theirs – I live in the house built by them, eat the food they produced, have them take care of me when I fell sick. I certainly do not do all that by myself.

I talk to people, and comprehend what they communicate to me and to each other. On their faces I read joy, anger, sorrow, pride, contempt; their movements are gentle or nervous; in their eyes I behold love or hate; and behind, I catch glimpses of unselfishness, hypocrisy, determination, innocence, folly.

Whatever I perceive in their minds is actually there, displayed publicly (or concealed incompletely), and anyone else would have perceived it in the same manner as I do. I align all the elements I have perceived – the spoken words, the mien, the eye expression, the demeanour, the motives behind – and then make my judgement and plan action. I act together with the people, or against their resistance; or I choose not to act.

My senses apparently provide enough information I can trust to and use for practical, operative purposes. An apple is an apple – the real thing I smell, touch, taste and use as food. Operationally, I do not care what is an apple-in-itself, an absolute apple; whether my senses convey to me genuine attributes of that thing; and whether an apple-idea exists beyond the actual space and time in a *supra*-individual, collective mind. I accept the existence of that very apple as it presents itself to me. On the basis of the available information, I try to decide whether and how to use this thing for practical purposes. Many people would have surely perceived and used this thing in the same way I did.

Likewise, the thoughts and feelings of the fellow human beings that I perceive directly, are indeed there in the people's minds, as the genuine features.

Many people in my place would have perceived and discerned them in the same way as I do.

Looking at myself, I know I frequently dim my true thoughts, feelings and motives, and decoy myself by putting forward pretensions. In this way I am less transparent and may keep the freedom of the thought and action. Since the other people are likely to do the same, I must take care to distinguish fake features from the genuine ones, pretensions from honesty, misperceptions and mistakes from reliable readings. Before my perception sharpens, and before I acquire the experience and recognise my prejudices and biases, I must treat my readings with due reserve.

The principle of indetermination

An appropriate instrument by which to explore the mind interactions is evidently the mind itself. But inasmuch the instrument (*ie* the mind) cannot remain fully disengaged during the process of observation, since it enters into an interaction with its object of observation, I must pay homage to the principle of indetermination.

This principle has been recognised in subtle physical measurements. Properties of minute and elusive objects can be learned by sending suitable probes to hit them. The probe and the object (*eg* a proton and an electron) interact, leaving their states of 'solitude', and manifestations of the interaction can be recorded by appropriate instruments. But the information thus acquired only pertains to the behaviour of the probe and of the object at the interaction. I learn nothing about them as they were in their 'solitary' states. All I can say is that under the given experimental circumstances, the object and the probe express properties recorded by the instruments employed, and that in repeated experiments they would be likely to behave in typical, statistically predictable fashion. Instruments gauged against a commonly accepted standard should record similar results.

If such reasoning is applied to the subject of silent communication in human interactions, I realise I should gauge my 'instrument' of intuitive perception against a commonly accepted standard of common sense. This is, in effect, what we all do in 'acquiring the experience' in the wordly affairs. A man of experience, for instance, intuitively recognise a crook, whereas the naive ones will be fooled by his honest appearance.

For the special purposes however, for the exploration of the less common, exceptional or pathologically distorted forms of the silent communication, I must largely rely upon myself. I should try to make repeated 'readings' with the tool I have got, and by means of the sequential comparisons find out the regularities, arrive at the generalisations and form the hypotheses. These I could subsequently test by suitable experiments. I

should also attempt to define the behaviour of the instrument in the uncommon situations, and compare it with the typical 'readings' in the common situations of life. This method is, for example, used by the psychiatrists in interpreting the transfer and countertransfer relationships with their patients, by the investigators dealing with criminals, etc. The criterion of the reliability of the information acquired in that manner would be, as laid out above, its appeal to the intrinsic sense of the truth, but particularly its practical utility in real life.

Conclusion

Silent communication exists as my personal experience and as the experience of the people involved. Like the dream, it is elusive: invisible

when looked for by the light of the reason and attention, but clear and evident when let go. The scientific approach to this subject would be to formulate operational principles and laws on the basis of repeatedly observed phenomena, and to verify them in reality. If the consequences of an ostensible action that was based on the intuitively acquired information fulfil the prediction based on the same information, it is allowed to conclude that the reasoning was correct, the action carried out correctly, but also that the information was genuine. A sceptical point of view would be, of course, that the consequences of the action confirmed the premise simply because the both belonged to the same hermetic system of self-deception, projected into the reality so vigorously that it is completely distorted.