

Skepticism has consequences even more dangerous than the death of social inquiry. It leads to doubt about the possibility of rational analyses and solutions to pressing social problems. This doubt in turn encourages either social and political quietism, social withdrawal, self-absorption, and despair, or bellicose insistence on the worth of one's own perspective and culture. Not for nothing have critics of multiculturalism and relativism argued that these philosophical positions inevitably lead to "californization" (in which, to the world's cruelties, passive narcissists can only murmur, "Whatever"), or to "balkanization" (in which armed camps confront each other in mutual incomprehension and antagonism).

Underneath its technical analyses, this book is meant to provide a more adequate vision for a multicultural world. For though it hopes to do justice to relativism and multiculturalism understood as the celebration of difference, it also seeks to show how these views as normally conceived are self-defeating and debilitating. In their place it proposes a new conception of social science in the context of a new conception of multiculturalism—a conception it calls "interactionism" (chapter 11).

The issues raised by examining the nature of social inquiry from within the context of multiculturalism are thus profound, wide-ranging, and relevant to some of the most pressing problems of our time. The primary purpose of this book is to deepen and enliven the conversation about the nature of social inquiry. But beyond this its intention is to provide a view better suited to the exigencies of a multicultural world.

1

Do You Have To Be One To Know One?

1.1 Solipsism

We've all made or heard statements like the following: "You can't know what it was like because you weren't there"; "I had no idea what you were feeling until I had the same feeling myself"; "Only another woman can know what it's like for a woman to walk alone down a strange street at night"; and "I'll never *really* know what it was like to be a knight during the Crusades." These statements – and countless others like them – contain the germ of a thesis which many today think a truism and which many others trumpet as a great discovery that will liberate us from the narrow belief that everyone is just like us. This thesis consists of the claim that in order to understand another person or group one must be (or be like) this person or a member of this group. (Sometimes the thesis includes the term "truly", as in "in order to *truly* understand another one must be this other".) Thus, to (truly) understand women, one must be a woman; or to (truly) understand Catholics, one must be a Catholic oneself. I call this the thesis that "You have to be one to know one." (Its technical name is *insider epistemology*: to know other insiders one has to be an insider oneself.)

This thesis is an instance of a more general philosophical position called *solipsism* (literally "one-self-ism"). Solipsism is the theory that one can be aware of nothing but one's own experiences, states, and acts. If "one" is defined narrowly to mean a single individual person, then the thesis that "You have to be one to know one" becomes the claim that only you can know yourself. If "one" is conceived more broadly to mean those in a particular group, then the thesis "You have to be one to know one" transmutes into the assertion that only those of a certain group can understand members of this group.

We need to examine this solipsistic thesis in both its narrower and broader forms at the very outset because if it were true it would completely undermine the scientific study of human beings, making the term "social science" an oxymoron. The reason for this is twofold. First, science requires that all phenomena be in principle available for inspection and analysis to all investigators; but if only those who are alike can understand each other, then a barrier would exist for those investigators who are not like those being studied. Second, since you could understand only those who are like you, you couldn't even understand the findings of investigators who were unlike you. On both accounts there could be no genuine sharing of knowledge among people of different sorts. We all would be epistemically trapped in our own little homogeneous worlds, mysteries to each other – a condition fundamentally anathema to science.

If the thesis that "You have to be one to know one" were true it would radically affect everything else I want to discuss in the rest of this book; this is why I turn to it first. Besides, it raises extremely interesting questions of special relevance to our multicultural world, and so is an interesting place to commence in any case.

Begin by reflecting on what makes you distinctively you. For instance, what makes you fundamentally different from a door or a virus or a tomato plant? Your answer to this question might begin by noting that none of these things can think or feel or imagine; none of them is aware of its surroundings, or has attitudes toward them. In short, none of them has mental experience. What distinguishes you from them is that you have a mind and are conscious. Indeed, the capacity for consciousness is basic to who and what you are.

An odd thing about consciousness is that you are the only one who actually has your consciousness; only you experience what you feel or see what you see. You may tell others what you feel or see (or believe or desire), but you have to use words to describe your mental states, and how do you know that you mean the same thing as others when they use the same words? You may say that you see a red ball, but how do you know that others see the same thing as you when they say that they see red? There appears to be no way to tell because they cannot have your perceptual color experience nor you theirs. Moreover, they cannot observe your thoughts and feelings, nor you theirs. Mental phenomena are invisible; they take place "inside" where no one else can go. Philosophers have described all of this by saying that each person has privileged access to his or her own mental states and processes.

Both these observations – that your mental life is fundamental to who you are, and that you have privileged access to your own mental life – seem commonplace and uncontroversial. However, if consciousness is funda-

mental to what a person is, and if only that person has genuine access to this consciousness, then it seems to follow that only that person can know him or herself (assuming that to know someone one must know that person's states of consciousness – a plausible assumption given that states of consciousness are fundamental to the identity of persons). This is a rather startling conclusion, making as I have said any notion of a science of human beings completely impossible. So from rather innocuous premises a conclusion follows quite naturally to the effect that social science is a fraud.

Consider a less radical version of this doctrine, one more sociological than psychological. My experience has been deeply shaped by the fact that I am male, a (former) Catholic, American, and middle class. Because of these characteristics I look at the world in a certain way, and people treat me in a particular manner. My Catholic upbringing, for example, gave me a view of myself as fallen and as needing to be redeemed by something other than myself or the natural world; it made me think that certain desires and behaviors are bad, and led me to (try to) repress them; even my body was shaped by certain typical Catholic disciplines (kneeling, for instance). Even when in later life I reacted against this upbringing, I was still reacting against my particular Catholic heritage, and in this way this heritage continues to shape me; it will do so until I die.

It seems obviously true that I am in part who and what I am in strong measure because of the groups to which I belong (to which in many cases I had no choice but to belong). If I had been born and raised in New Guinea then I would be quite other than what I am: I would not only describe the world differently, I would experience it differently. I would be a different person who would be living in a different world from the one I now inhabit. Generalizing, everyone's identity is importantly a function of the social and cultural world in which they live.

This means that in a world of social and cultural diversity people are really quite different from one another. Indeed, where these social differences are profound, people must be radically different from one another. A female Pakistani Muslim living in the slums of Lahore has very little in common with an upper-class Protestant white male living in St. John's Wood in London. Their worlds are so different, and have shaped them in such different ways, that it seems clear that what is true about one may well not be true about the other.

If one marries this doctrine of the social identity of people with the doctrine that one has to have a certain experience in order to know this experience, the results for social science are devastating. If one's identity is a function of one's social group, and if only people of like identity can have a certain experience, and if one has to have an experience in order to know

it, then only people who are members of a specific class or group can know the experiences of the members of this class or group. Only African-Americans can really know what it is like to be an African-American, and so only African-Americans can tell what it is to be an African-American. Similarly for other groups: the working class can only be studied fruitfully by those who are themselves members of the working class; only English historians can write a good history of England; only women can describe and explain the actions, feelings, and relations of women. Every group must be its own social scientist.

The idea that every group must be its own social scientist has particular appeal in a world such as ours which is acutely aware of the differences among types of people along ethnic, religious, gender, national, and class lines. Scientific and historical accounts are often used to justify or criticize particular political and social arrangements, and are therefore often weapons in ideological struggles of those attempting to establish their own particular identity and to validate the worth of their own culture and society. Moreover, such accounts have often embodied slanted, prejudiced descriptions of particular groups or types of people; countless histories and anthropologies have run roughshod over those aspects of peoples' lives which make them distinct, ridiculing these aspects or ignoring them. Consequently, groups may want to have only their own members explaining who they are, believing that only their own kind can truly understand their experiences, feelings, and actions.

The doctrines I have been discussing – that only one who has a certain experience can know this experience, and that every group must be its own scientist – are versions of the thesis that “You have to be one to know one.” This solipsistic thesis presently has great currency. In part this derives from the multicultural nature of contemporary social and political life in which differences among groups are stressed (indeed, strenuously insisted upon). But it also derives from certain beliefs about experience and knowledge which seem intuitively unproblematic. The question is, however, whether this thesis is true. I shall try to show in the rest of this chapter in what very limited ways it is and in what more important ways it is not.

1.2 Knowing and Sharing Experiences

For the moment let's assume that the thesis is true, that in fact you have to be one to know one. Then to what are we committed?

In order to understand this thesis, a more precise definition of “know” must be given. “Know” might mean “be able to identify” (as in “I know that they are members of Parliament”); alternately, “know” might mean

“be able to describe and explain” (as in “I know why Italian governments are so unstable”); or “know” might mean “to have the same experiences as” (as in “I know what it's like to give birth to a child, as I too am a mother”). The conception of “know” which most clearly fits the thesis that “You have to be one to know one” is obviously the third of these senses of “know”: if I know another only when I have the same experiences as this other then it seems naturally to follow that in order to know another I must be identical with this other. Assume for the moment, therefore, that “know” means “to have the same experiences as” (later this definition of “know” will be called into question, especially as it pertains to the social sciences).

A little reflection will show that if “know” is parsed as “to have the same experiences as” then ultimately the most that you can know is yourself. Here's why. The nature of an experience is in part a function of the nature of the person having that experience. The experience of visiting Auschwitz, for instance, is likely to be quite different for a Jew from what it is for a gentile; indeed, it is likely to be different for a Jew whose parents died in this death camp from a Jew who had no relatives harmed in the Holocaust. Experiences are in part constituted by what might be called the interpretive assumptions a person brings to a particular situation; that is, they are shaped by the expectations, memories, beliefs, desires, and cultural prejudices which go to make them up. When a small woman walks down a darkened city street it is a different experience from that of a heavyweight male boxer who walks down the same street. It follows that, since your experiences will necessarily be different from my and everyone else's experiences, and since by stipulation we are assuming that “know” means “to have the same experiences as,” therefore you cannot know anyone else but yourself.

Couldn't this conclusion be avoided by your becoming someone else and therefore having their experiences? In *Black Like Me* John Howard Griffin (1961) describes how he put on blackface and travelled as a black man through the American South in the late 1950s. Whites treated him as if he were black, insisting that he use the “colored” drinking fountains, ride in the back of the bus, and keep his eyes cast downward to show proper deference. Griffin did this because he thought that only by becoming black in the eyes of others and thus having the experiences of black people could he know what it was to be a black person in segregated America. Wasn't this a way of having the experiences of others and so a way of coming to know them?

Without in any way demeaning Griffin's efforts, the answer to this question is surely in the negative. For no matter how realistic Griffin appeared to be black he was not black and so could not have the experiences of blacks in the South. For one thing, Griffin knew that at any moment he

could simply wash his blackface off and resume being white. For another, his entire upbringing was in the white world and his sense of himself derived from it. At most Griffin knew himself to be a white person pretending to be black, a pretence he could abandon at any time. (Imagine him being stopped on an isolated road by a bunch of rednecks intent on "baiting the nigger." The truly black person is stuck with his blackness, but Griffin could – if things got rough – simply reveal his identity ("I'm just an actor practicing a role for a film . . ."). The knowledge of this ability fundamentally changes the experience of being racially harassed.) Pretending to be *x*, and knowing that one is pretending to be *x*, is utterly different from being *x*.

Assuming that you cannot literally become another, couldn't you be sufficiently *like* others to have the same experiences as they do? Maybe you are not a tennis player and so cannot experience directly what it is like to play at Wimbledon. But perhaps you are a boxer; couldn't you thereby have a sufficiently similar experience of competing face-to-face against another in a sports match to know indirectly what it is like to play at Wimbledon? But the problem is that you are more than just a boxer; you may also be a white male; a former Catholic; a Californian born of Irish and Alsatian parents one of whom was extremely violent; tall; middle class; graduate-schooled in the United Kingdom; and so on. All these factors will color what you see and feel, including your sense of athletic competition; your experience of Wimbledon may be quite different from mine or any one else's. Literally countless personal characteristics shape your experience; the more these are taken into account the smaller the pool of potential like-experiencers. Ultimately the pool will be so precisely refined that only one member will be left of the class of which you are: namely, you. Only you possess all the relevant details which make your experiences what they are, so ultimately only you can have your experiences. So if "know" means "have the same experiences as," then only you can know yourself.

But the situation is even more restrictive than this. You are what you are only at a particular time (call it *t*). The moment *t* passes you are different from what you were at *t* (in part because of your experiences at *t*). At a certain time in my life my wife and I had a child. This experience fundamentally transformed me: I was attached to this small creature and this small creature to me in a way that gave me a connection to future generations (and past generations) which I never had before. It also made me vulnerable in a way I found very upsetting: at any moment something I could not control could injure this creature I loved so much. These changes are permanent in me in that they will not disappear when my child grows up and becomes an independent adult: she will always be my

offspring, and my sense of myself will always reflect this fact. Prior to her birth I experienced the world in a way deeply different from the way I experience it now. The same sorts of transformative experiences have undoubtedly happened in your life.

What you experience at time *t* you can only experience at that particular time and not at some later time (call it *t* + 1). Your experiences at *t* + 1 are quite different from those at *t* just because you are different at these two times. Thus, I experienced my relationships with my parents quite differently at the age of thirty from what I did at the age of ten. Indeed, at the age of thirty I simply could not have the experience of my parents which I had when I was ten (in part because I had the experiences I did at that age, and in part because of all the other experiences I had since then). As Thomas Wolfe said, "You can't go home again."

Could this difficulty be overcome simply by remembering what you experienced in the past and in this way re-experiencing it? No. How you remember an experience which occurred in the past is importantly affected by the experiences you have had since then. Remembering the past is a function of where you are in the present. Think of how you remembered your school days when you had just graduated and compare it with memories you have of them now. How you imagined them then and how you imagine them now undoubtedly are different because your sense of significance has been altered as a result of all you have experienced in the meantime. (Just the other day I read an entry in my journal recorded ten years ago which described a memory of an event in my childhood; I was struck by how much my current memory of the same event differs in crucial ways from the recorded one.) Memory involves interpretation, interpretation involves rendering the significant and meaningful, and such rendering is in part determined by your current understandings and interests. Thus, memory cannot be a way to gain direct access to past experiences. (We will pursue the notion of interpretation more fully in chapters 6, 7, and 9.)

But all this implies that if "know" means "to have the same experiences as" then, since you cannot have the experiences at *t* + 1 that you had at *t*, and you can't rely on your memory at *t* + 1 to duplicate what you experienced at *t*, at *t* + 1 you cannot know even yourself at *t*!

If the thesis that "You have to be one to know one" is true then the only one who can know you is you yourself, and all that you can know is yourself at this very moment. You cannot know yourself as you were in the past, even the immediate past. But this conclusion is very troubling: it is tantamount to saying that no one, not even you, can know you (given that you are an entity which extends beyond this present instant). The thesis that "You have to be one to know one" implodes: it presents itself as an

account of what it means to know someone but it ends with the conclusion that such knowledge is impossible. Something is wrong.

Perhaps we defined "know" too strictly. Instead of "to have the same experiences as," perhaps it should be defined as "to have the same sorts of experiences as." If defined in this way perhaps others (including yourself at a later time) who are sufficiently similar to you could know what it is like to be you and so could know you. This might occur if through empathy another sufficiently close to you could feel the same kind of feelings as you do, and so could grasp your experiences.

But what does "sufficiently close" mean here? A black female slave who loses her daughter to sickness may very well understand a similar loss experienced by a white slaveowner even though in virtually all other respects they are not close to one another. Here people who are very different from one another seem to be able to have experiences which are similar.

But doesn't this example show only that "one" needs to be defined in terms of having the same kind of experience (so that both the black slave and the white slaveowner are "one" in the sense that both have experienced the death of a child)? But at what level of generality is "kind of experience" to be specified? In important respects the death of the child of the two parents must be shaped by their different social situations and the different prospects of their respective children; but if these factors are to be ignored in order to focus on the similarities of their experiences, then there must be some basis on which to make this decision.

This basis cannot simply be: if objectively the two events are the same, then assume that the experiences are roughly the same. People experience the same events in different ways: an indifferent mother may not experience the death of an unwanted child in the same way a loving mother will. Moreover, quite similar experiences may occur even though they are provoked by objectively quite different circumstances. Perhaps the grief I experience when my child moves away from home to live far away is not unlike the grief you felt when your child died, even though objectively the situations are not the same (recall the remarks of the father in the story of the Prodigal Son who had run away but who returns: "... this brother of yours was dead and has come back to life" [Luke 11:32]). The issue is the similarity of experiences but no one-to-one correlation exists between objective circumstance and inner experience. So the basis for determining whether two experiences are sufficiently similar such that one person can understand another cannot be objective circumstance.

Perhaps one might respond: the *experiencers* must be like one another in the relevant respects. But what constitutes the relevant respects? It certainly cannot be having the same basic sort of experience, for this would be

utterly circular. This impasse is quite general: the whole point of the thesis that "You have to be one to know one" is that another cannot know what your experiences are unless he or she is like you in the relevant respects. So to define these respects on the basis of having similarity of experience is completely unhelpful.

This leaves us in the following position: people who are quite different from one another and who live in quite different situations may well have experiences sufficiently similar such that one can understand the other. The basis for deciding whether this is the case is not whether they are objectively from the same group or class, nor whether they are objectively in the same circumstances, but whether their experiences themselves strongly resemble each other. This can only be determined by a detailed description and examination of their experiences. But note: this kind of examination can go forward only on the assumption that people who are *unlike* can have similar experiences.

Such an assumption undermines at least one version of insider epistemology. By allowing that others objectively quite unlike you might still have experiences enough like yours to allow them to know what you are experiencing is to admit that others quite unlike you may understand at least part of you. In other words, others do *not* even have to be like you — let alone be you — to know you. But if to be one is defined as having a particular experience, and if knowing a particular experience consists in having it, then doesn't this support that version of insider epistemology which claims that to know someone you must have the same experiences as that person?

The answer to this question is yes, assuming that "know" is parsed as "to have the same sorts of experiences as." But is this the best way to construe "know"? Does knowing an experience consist simply in having it? To these questions we must now turn.

1.3 Knowing and Being

The thesis that "You have to be one to know one" posits a strong connection between being one and knowing one. In the first place, the thesis explicitly claims that being one is a *necessary* condition for knowing one: it says that only if you are one can you know one. Moreover, it suggests (although it does not imply) that being one is *sufficient* for knowing one: if to know one is to have the same experiences as one, and if to be one is precisely to have the experiences of one, then it seems that simply by being one you thereby know one. But as reflection will now show, being one is neither a sufficient nor a necessary condition for knowing one. This reflec-

tion will also introduce a different and more appropriate conception of the concept "know" than we have been employing up till now.

Start with the claim that being one is sufficient for knowing one. Consider the situation of being a member of the Catholic Church. Assume that you attend church every Sunday as you have since childhood; you do so because it seems "right" to do so. Assume that you positively respond to the music in the services, but that your mind wanders during sermons and biblical readings. Assume that the liturgy is still being said in Latin, so that most of it is utterly incomprehensible to you. Confession is of course in English, but perhaps you go only twice a year, and your sins aren't very interesting or troubling to you. Now, in what sense do you know what it means to be a Catholic?

In one sense you may *not* know what it means even though you practice being one: you may not know much about Catholicism, its history, its dogmas, the meaning of its practices, the values of its symbols. If asked to describe the Mass to a non-Catholic you may be halting, unsure of what follows what, rather unclear about the meaning of the Offertory or the Agnus Dei. You also may not know what other members of your church think or believe or feel about the church. You may not know what is characteristic or unique or essential to Catholicism.

But to this you might respond that there is one evident way in which you know what it means to be a Catholic: you experience being a Catholic while you are at Mass. But what does this experience actually mean? Indeed, what actually is the experience that you have? Attending Mass seems "right," but beyond that you may not be able to say very much: not be able to say in what sense it is right, or what "right" means in this context. You have certain fairly vague feelings, and you are aware that you have them, but you may not be able to identify, or describe, or explain these feelings. Perhaps they are connected to your childhood and your parents; perhaps they have only to do with habit; perhaps they indicate a spiritual longing about which you are ignorant or only dimly aware. *You have the feelings you do, but it does not follow that you thereby know what these feelings are.*

But isn't just having an experience *ipso facto* to know that experience? At first it may seem odd to answer this question in the negative, but further examination of certain characteristic experiences supports this answer. Consider the question, "What do I feel at this moment?" I often ask this of myself. I do so because though I am experiencing a certain feeling this isn't sufficient in itself for me thereby to know the nature of this feeling. The legitimacy of the question shows the gap between "have the experiences of" and "know the experiences of": though I'm feeling something, I don't therefore know what I'm feeling. I'm quite certain that you have found

yourself in exactly the same situation of not knowing what you feel or think.

This can be generalized by saying that the mind does not have an unmediated knowledge of itself. Every experience is like a sign whose meaning must be derived from seeing how it is connected to other experiences and the situations in which they are located. My daughter returned last week from a two-week trip to England; today she said to me, "I wish I were still in England." When I inquired further about her feelings it became clear that she did not know what they actually were: did she miss England itself? her cousins? the continual round of activity? visiting new places? being with young adults who made a fuss over her? some of the above? all of the above? She couldn't sort out the experience of . . . what? Knowledge of what we are experiencing always involves an interpretation of these experiences. In this self-knowledge is like other forms of knowledge: it is a discursive state in the sense that it involves being able to say something about its objects.

Consider the distinction between active and reactive responses. This is one of the most important distinctions in our lives. (Spinoza made this distinction a cornerstone of his *Ethics*.) You are active when what you do or say stems from your own inner needs and beliefs; you are reactive when you act or choose on the basis of how you think others want you to act or choose. In being active your actions are generated from within; in being reactive they are a response to something outside you. Activity is necessary for freedom and maturity: only when you are active are you self-determining and do you act as you are (instead of how others want you to be), are you an independent agent rather than a passive puppet. But even though this distinction is crucial it is extremely difficult to draw in the particular events which comprise our lives. You decide to take a new job; what is the character of this decision? Is it from your own inner sense that you need a change, that you want employment more challenging and rewarding? Or is it from your sense that others think you ought to be employed in a more "important" position? Is your move a matter of pleasing yourself or pleasing others? It is extremely difficult to say (as I am sure you will discover if you ask about the nature of some important decision in your own life). Perhaps the decision is an admixture, but even if it is not you cannot feel very confident in your assessment of your motives: to discover the nature of complex mental states requires subtle interpretation and a deep sense of the ways we often mislead ourselves to make ourselves look better. Our lives are littered with cases of having certain intentions, desires, and beliefs but being unable to know precisely what they are.

Being one thus is not a sufficient condition for knowing one. You can be a member of a certain group or be a certain type of person and not know

much if anything about this group or this type. More vividly, you can have your own experiences and not know what they are. You are yourself and yet this is not enough to insure that you will know yourself. This might be put somewhat dramatically by saying that just because you are you it does not follow that you know yourself.

If being one isn't sufficient for knowing one, is it necessary? Certain experiences – childbirth, orgasm, surfing a wave, and falling in love come to mind – suggest that it is. How can you know the experience of orgasm, for instance, without actually having had it? Descriptions, portrayals, poems, and discussions all fail to do the trick: they might tell you what orgasm is *like*, but only in a metaphorical and analogical way. Can a blind person who has never experienced sight know what it is to see? Imagine a sense other than the ones you currently possess, and pretend that an alien is trying to describe it to you; how could the alien succeed? Or try to describe the sounds of a bluejay to someone who has no sense of hearing. In all these cases it appears that to know experiences you must have actually had them.

Of course a great deal rides on how "know" is defined. If "know" simply means "to have the same experiences as", then obviously having the experience of x is necessary for knowing x: it's true by definition. In this case one could not "really know" what an orgasm is without having actually experienced one.

But what actually is the experience of having an orgasm – or seeing, or surfing, or falling in love? This question points to the inappropriateness of defining "know" as "to have the same experiences as." Knowing an experience requires more than simply having it; knowing implies being able to identify, describe, and explain. The classical Greeks thought spectatorship superior to participation in athletics precisely because athletes couldn't get sufficient distance from a competition to know its character. The truth of this Greek insight is revealed in the modern failure to draw a proper distinction between doing and knowing. We moderns assume that if someone is able to perform a task well he or she will know what is involved in this task and so will be well qualified to be a media commentator about it. We also assume that only if one is adept at an activity can one know this activity. Thus we assume that only great footballers can be television commentators on football games. Unfortunately, neither of these assumptions is true: many former footballers are terrible commentators because they haven't digested the experience of playing, haven't figured out what is essential or special about it, haven't reflected on its role or meaning, and in the end can't say much about it. Knowing football has to do with being able to speak about rather than being able to perform it. Put another way:

footballers may know *how* to play football but may not know *that* football is such and such an activity.

Of course sometimes knowing how can be an aid in knowing that, but not always. Moreover, sometimes *not* being one can facilitate knowing another. All of us have had the experience in which others – sometimes friends, sometimes enemies – know us better than we know ourselves. Often these others are not even like us; indeed, their differences from us often assist in helping them see what we are thinking or feeling. Consider de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*. No other book gets to the heart of being an American more deeply; many Americans who read it experience a shock of recognition as it not only points out characteristic patterns of behavior, ways of relating, and modes of feeling, but also explains why these are as they are. Yet de Tocqueville was not only not an American but was an aristocratic Frenchman who thought of himself as quite different from Americans and who was out of sympathy with many of the characteristics he observed in them and thought essential to their identity as Americans.

In some instances great social science is like great art: it takes intensely inchoate experiences or relations and renders them clear by giving them a lucid form. Think of the *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. In it Weber uncovered and disentangled the nexus of feeling, belief, and action which served to motivate proto-capitalist behavior – a nexus which was opaque to those who experienced it. Weber was undoubtedly clearer about the inner lives of certain sixteenth-century Protestants than they were themselves. Arguably it was precisely because of his distance from the sixteenth century that Weber could accomplish this.

How can others, especially others quite different from us, know us better than we know ourselves? At least four reasons suggest themselves. First, we are often too enmeshed in the flow of our own activity and feeling to grasp what this flow is all about. Precisely because doing or being and knowing are different, and because knowing requires a certain distance from being or doing, being immersed in a certain way of living or acting may prevent one from knowing what one is.

Second, the activities and feelings which make up our lives are often confused and therefore confusing. About many things we feel ambivalent, both desiring or valuing them and, at the very same time, spurning and devaluing them. Also, our motives are often mixed, indeed sometimes contradictory. We want to accomplish many goals with the same act but not all of them are compatible. Moreover, our feelings and desires are often muddled because complex, rich, and overlapping. Because of these endemic features of human experience we often cannot sort ourselves out. We

find it difficult to read ourselves. Others, not so caught up in these ambivalences, admixtures, and confusions can sometimes see through the complexities of our experiences in ways we cannot.

3 Third, often others can more readily grasp connections between our feelings and experiences on the one hand and external situations and prior events on the other. They can more easily detect causal patterns, influences, and effects because they have a wider view than we who often only see what is immediately in front of us.

4 Last, and most insidiously, is self-deception. Sometimes we hide ourselves from ourselves out of fear, guilt, or self-protection. In a way extremely difficult to disentangle we actually make ourselves opaque to ourselves, preventing ourselves from knowing what we are really feeling or doing. One doesn't have to be a Freudian to grasp the extensive role which self-deception plays in our lives. It is often others, including professionals trained in this area, who can help break us out of this tunnel of self-induced ignorance.

Given that others may know us when we do not know ourselves, it follows that being one isn't a necessary condition for knowing one. But if being one is neither a necessary nor, as I showed above, a sufficient condition of knowing one, then the deep assumption of the thesis "You have to be one to know one" is mistaken: no strict connection exists between being and knowing. This should not be too surprising once you think about it. Knowing a mental state or process (or anything else, for that matter) involves reflection about this state or process, a stepping back from it to grasp what it is. In much of our lives this second-order thinking goes hand in hand with first-order experiences. But not always: sometimes we have an experience but we are unclear as to its meaning. We may not even know what the experience is. At these times the difference between being and knowing makes itself evident.

Once the difference between being (or experiencing) and knowing reveals itself, the definition of "know" as "to have the same experiences as" appears deeply inadequate. This definition makes sense only if one presupposes that having an experience is at the same time to know this experience. But knowing involves some sort of reflective element which merely having an experience does not require. An adequate definition of "know" has to include this reflective element as one of its essential features.

Consider a simple mental event like perception. For instance, a friend drives my car past me on the road and I say, "There goes my car!" What constitutes my knowing that was my car? The obvious answer is that I saw it. But note that seeing is not just a case of having some pure visual stimulation; it involves a mental act of *recognition*. That is, a successful act of seeing my car requires more than certain light rays hitting my eyes; it

demands an act of identification in which an object is distinguished and is recognized as mine. (I may not have expected my car to pass by me this way, and so though I may have visually observed the car I may not have recognized it as mine. Alternatively, I may think that a particular car is mine when in fact it is not. In neither case can I justifiably say "I am seeing my car" precisely because the relevant judgment has not properly occurred.)

Suppose you are walking hand in hand with your lover. You have had a wonderful day together, and are presently bathed in the pleasurable sense of your lover's presence. You might very well say (perhaps to yourself) "I know I am loved." Is this a case of just having an experience, and this experience being sufficient for knowledge? The answer is no: the judgment that you are loved involves a great deal of interpretation on your part, of at least two types: first, you must interpret the glorious but vague feeling as one of being loved; second, this interpretation itself rests on another, that your lover does indeed love you. Once again, mental experience of the sort requisite to warrant the verb "know" involves a cognitive component consisting of an interpretive judgment.

This cognitive component is more evident in other cases of knowing. Consider the claim "I know Hitler." What could be meant by this? I could be claiming that I can recognize Hitler (here "know" would mean "be able to identify"). I could be saying that I can recite many facts about Hitler's life (here "know" would mean "be well informed about"). I could mean that I can identify the sort of person Hitler was (here "know" would mean "be able to classify and describe"). Or I could be asserting that I know what made Hitler tick, what motivated him or concerned him (here "know" would mean "be able to explain"). In all these cases (and there are surely more) claims to know someone involve being able to determine features of his or her mental and behavioral life and to grasp their significance.

With any of these senses of "know" it is obvious that you do *not* have to be one to know one. You don't have to be Hitler, or even to be like Hitler, to be able to identify, classify, describe, or explain Hitler, his actions, his relations, or his emotions. On the basis of his classic book *Hitler: A Study in Tyranny*, Alan Bullock could plausibly claim to know Hitler. Bullock reveals a remarkable range of facts about Hitler, both external (his early years and political intrigues) and internal (his strategic thinking and his desires). Bullock's book also offers credible explanations for why Hitler believed and acted as he did. In none of this would Bullock's claims to knowledge imply or rest on the assertion that he had himself had similar (sorts of) experiences as Hitler.

That knowledge does not require or consist in sharing similar experiences can be seen in the debates over the merits of Bullock's interpreta-

tions, debates which have raged ever since the publication of Bullock's book. Bullock interpreted Hitler as more or less in the mold of *realpolitik* — power-driven, cynical, scheming, opportunistic; others (notably H. R. Trevor-Roper (1951)) picture Hitler as a true believer — possessed, demonic, committed to a vision of history as to a religion. The point here is not which of these two (or other) approaches is correct, but of what correctness consists. The claim to know Hitler is *not* a claim to have experienced what Hitler experienced, but rather to be able to make sense of his experiences. The question is not who has more empathetically experienced the world like Hitler, but who can more adequately describe, identify, and explain Hitler's feelings, thoughts, actions, and relations.

Most telling is that the historians in this dispute have probably all known Hitler better than Hitler knew himself. Hitler was a person at the mercy of violent, undigested emotions that erupted over him like hot lava. He knew how to exploit these rages to his own advantage, but he never showed any sense that he understood these inner explosions, that he grasped what they were all about. Indeed, a lot of evidence suggests that Hitler wanted his inner life to be a mystery to himself, that he thought of this mystery as a source of power with which he did not want to tamper. As a consequence Hitler was willfully self-ignorant; he was filled with all sorts of exceedingly complex, grotesque emotions which he hid from himself, and about which he knew little.

Thus, even though Hitler obviously had all the experiences of Hitler, he did not thereby know himself, nor did his having his experiences in itself qualify him as possibly knowing himself. Being Hitler was insufficient for knowing Hitler. Moreover, it wasn't necessary either; indeed, it is probably a downright impediment for doing so. Hitler was systematically unclear to himself and this unclarity was a fundamental ingredient of his personality. Thus, being Hitler, far from being necessary in order to know him, would be an obstacle to knowing him. In this and similar cases *not* being one is required in order to know one.

1.4 Knowing and Meaning

When we want to know someone or some group, what is it we want? I hope it is clear that we do not necessarily want to *be* others, or to have identical or even similar experiences to them. Subjective psychological identification is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for knowledge of others. Indeed, in some cases this sort of identification can be a hindrance. Psychological experience is not what we are after, but rather an understanding of this experience. By "understanding" I mean a *sense* of it, a grasp of what it

means. It is not feeling but meaning which we must have to be said to know someone (even ourselves). ✱

The thesis that "You must be one to know one" mistakenly equates understanding with empathy or psychological closeness or transcultural identification. But we understand others not when we become them (something we cannot do in any case), but only when we are able to translate what they are experiencing or doing into terms which *render them intelligible*. When Freud wished to understand the nightmares of the Rat Man, it was not necessary that Freud have these nightmares himself. Moreover, even if he had managed to have dreamt them through some sort of empathetic identification this would not have been sufficient: the Rat Man himself didn't understand his dreams even though he obviously had experienced them. Freud understood the Rat Man when he was able to interpret the meaning of the Rat Man's dreams, was able to grasp their symbolic content by fitting them into the context of the Rat Man's psychic and social economy.

To know someone else or even ourselves requires not the ability to psychologically unite with them or ourselves at an earlier time but the ability to *interpret the meaning* of the various states, relations, and processes which comprise their or our lives. We will take up what is involved in such interpretation in chapters 6 and 7 but even at this preliminary point it ought to be obvious that interpretation is not psychological identification but exegetical translation in which an entity's or event's meaning is uncovered and rendered comprehensible.

(In this book devoted to explicating the knowledge relevant to the social sciences we will focus on discursive forms of interpretation — those cases in which one is able to *say* in words what the meaning of a person's or group's experiences, relations, and activities is. But note other forms of knowing which are interpretive but not discursive. For instance, the knowledge a dancer possesses of a certain emotion, or the knowledge good portrait painters have of their subjects are also ways of knowing which involve interpreting meaning and translating it into intelligible forms (in this case into movement or lines on a paper) even though these forms are not linguistic.)

The interpretation of meaning is rather like the process of trying to decipher a difficult poem rather than trying to achieve some sort of inner mental union with its author (which may or may not help in such deciphering). To know T. S. Eliot's *Four Quartets* does not require that we become T. S. Eliot (if only imaginatively) — an expatriate American, a poet, a white male, an Anglican, someone who actually believed that "Love is the unfamiliar Name/ Behind the hands that wove/ The intolerable shirt of flame/ Which human power cannot remove." Indeed, even if we could do

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this it would not guarantee understanding this poem, anymore than it guaranteed that Eliot himself understood his own poem. Poets themselves can be mystified about what they have written, and can be enlightened by others who see meanings closed to the authors themselves. (Of course, sometimes poets are able to interpret their poems very insightfully, just as sometimes agents themselves know best what they are doing. Being an insider or an outsider is not the key element here, but whether one has the requisite openness, sensitivity, and acuity to grasp the significance of activities, experiences, and their expression in literary or other texts.)

In interpreting the meaning of experiences, actions, or their products must interpreters be like those being interpreted? Not if likeness is construed in any very definite way. Hitler's biographers needn't be Hitlerian to write illuminating biographies of him; anthropologists who study the Ilongot needn't be headhunters themselves; nor must studies of women in politics be confined to female political scientists. The ability to make sense of others' behavior and its results sometimes is enhanced by similarity between interpreter and interpreted, but sometimes it is not.

This does not mean that interpreters and interpreted can be radically alien to each other. As we shall see in chapter 5, the interpretation of meaning does require a likeness understood in a very general and abstract way between interpreters and interpreted. To grasp the meaning of an action interpreters must assume that its agent is like the interpreter in being able to have experiences, to think rationally, to feel, to intend, and so forth. Put succinctly, both interpreters and interpreted must be persons. (Wittgenstein wrote: "If a lion could talk we couldn't understand him" (1968, p. 223). By this he meant that differences between our form of life and that of lions is so great that we could make no sense of lions' utterances – indeed, we would be unable even to claim that the noises they emitted were in fact utterances as opposed to mere expressions of biological urgency.)

That interpreters and interpreted must both be persons – and in this sense must both be "one" – is an innocuous point because the "one" here is so abstractly characterized. All those which insider epistemologists wish to separate – men and women, blacks and whites, colonizers and colonized, religious and nonreligious – are all "one" in the general sense of being persons characterized by certain basic capacities. That for you to understand others requires that both you and them be persons, and in this – but only this – sense be "one," is no comfort for insider epistemology.

Insider epistemology claims that knowing others is equivalent to having their experiences, and assumes on this basis that only those alike in all relevant respects can know one another. But once it is clear that knowing others is being able to interpret the meaning of their acts, then psychologi-

cal identification becomes otiose. Moreover, the only kind of similarity required for the interpretation of meaning is the harmless one that interpreters and interpreted share certain basic capacities and dispositions common to persons as such. Interpreters may be quite unlike those interpreted in all manner of important respects and still be able to grasp the sense of what they do.

1.5 Summing Up

Do you have to be one to know one? If "know" is defined as "having the same experiences as," and the deep differences in people's experiences are insisted upon, then an affirmative answer to this question is initially quite plausible. Only people very like me appear capable of having my characteristic experiences, and so only people like me can understand me. The same is true for you. Thus the doctrine of insider epistemology: you have to be one to know one.

But consider the case of the middle-class journalist reporting on the life of poor southern sharecroppers. Or that of a respectable, sane professor depicting the lives of mental patients institutionalized in asylums. Or a middle-aged anthropologist revealing the joys and pains of old age. Or that of a twentieth-century Frenchman detailing the experience of children in the Middle Ages. In these cases the subjective experience of those being portrayed is so deeply different from those picturing them that trying to capture it seems a Holy Grail doomed forever to be elusive.

And yet James Agee did write *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* in which he disclosed the texture of the lives of poor southern sharecroppers in the 1930s with a sensitivity and power that cannot be denied. Erving Goffman did the same for institutionalized mental patients in *Asylums*, as did Barbara Meyerhoff for old people attending a day-care center in *Number Our Days*, and Phillippe Ariès for medieval childhood in *Centuries of Childhood*. These are all classic works in which the lived experience of others is revealed in its density and complexity, in its ambiguity and ambivalence, in its emotionality as well as its rationality. How could such books have been written if "You have to be one to know one"?

The answer to this lies in distinguishing knowing from being. I may be myself but this doesn't mean that I therefore *know* myself. Knowing an experience doesn't just mean having it: it means being able to say what it is (in some broad sense which includes both discursive and non-discursive expressions). *Knowledge consists not in the experience itself but in grasping the sense of this experience.* For this reason knowledge is not psychic identification but interpretive understanding: knowing ourselves and others is an instance of

decoding, clarifying, and explicating rather than an instance of psychic union.

Precisely because knowing is grasping meaning rather than merely experiencing, being one is neither necessary nor sufficient for knowing one. Not sufficient because you can be one and still not know what the life of one is all about; not necessary because you can sometimes grasp the meaning of an experience even if you haven't had it yourself and even if you are quite different from those having it. Indeed, sometimes it is easier for those not "one" to grasp this meaning because they have the requisite distance from the experience to appreciate its significance.

Still, though you needn't actually be one to know one, you surely must be sensitive to them to know what their lives are all about. People are experiencing beings whose activities and relations are deeply affected by their thoughts and feelings. Social scientists simply cannot understand the actions and relations of people unless they can appreciate the nature of these mental events and states, and they cannot do this unless they are sensitive to their lived character. Often by interacting with others or having experiences broadly similar to theirs this sensitivity can be heightened. Historians immerse themselves in their historical sources, anthropologists do extensive field work, psychologists listen to their patients by the hour as ways of gaining insight into the experience of their subjects.

* Sensitivity heightened by shared experience is often an important step in understanding the lives of others: this is the truth contained in the thesis that "You have to be one to know one." But genuine understanding goes beyond sensitivity. To know others — indeed to know oneself — is to be able to make sense of their experience. For this one needs, in addition to sensitivity, the ability to decipher the meaning of their experiences. For this you needn't be them or be very much like them (except in the innocuous sense of being able to have experiences and to think and feel in ways persons do).

Further Reading

The philosopher who stands behind my arguments in this chapter is Wittgenstein (1968 and 1980). The commentary by Pitkin (1972) offers an interesting elaboration of Wittgenstein's thought in this regard. Ricoeur (1992) also provides a deep but difficult meditation on the questions of this chapter.

For "insider epistemology" as central to current debates and thinking in history, see Novick

(1988), chapter 14. Novick also offers an excellent discussion of the philosophical background for insider epistemology in chapters 15 and 16 of this work.

Insider epistemology is buttressed by the doctrine of *verstehen*, which holds that knowledge in the social sciences either consists in or depends upon empathic understanding. For classic statements of this doctrine see Dilthey (in Rickman (ed.), 1976, part III) and Weber (1949 (1905)). See also Collingwood (1946, section 5.4). For a discussion of Dilthey's views, see Hodges (1969). For Weber's rather complex ideas about *verstehen*, see Runciman (1972). A good collection of classical and contemporary essays is Truzzi (1974). An excellent overall discussion of *verstehen* can be found in Outhwaite (1975).

For a discussion of understanding others with special reference to questions of ethnocentrism, see Taylor (1981), Geertz (1983), and Hoy (1991). The literature about the rationality of the practices of foreigners is also relevant in this regard; see the classic collections of essays in Wilson (1979) and Hollis and Lukes (1986), and the survey by Ulin (1984). Rosaldo (1989) discusses understanding the Ilongot headhunters in the context of multiculturalism, postmodernism, and anthropology. For a good collection of essays on the topic of understanding other persons, see Mischel (1974).

For a discussion of self-knowledge and its difference from mere experience, see Shoemaker (1963) and the essays by Gergen, Hamlyn, Toulman, and Harré in Mischel (1977). The position developed in this chapter is directed against the Cartesian idea of clear and distinct ideas in which the meaning of (some of) our mental states is immediately apparent. Ruth Garrett Millikan calls this "meaning rationalism"; she discusses this and criticizes it in Millikan (1984). This topic is related in interesting ways to the internalism and externalism debate in the philosophy of mind ("are meanings in the head?"); on this see Putnam (1975), Burge (1979 and 1986), and Kripke (1971). Dennett (1991) offers an ingenious account of self-monitoring and self-representation which does not entail meaning rationalism.

For self-deception, see the classic by Fingarette (1969).