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Negotiation Journal, 19(4), 329–367 (2003)

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link.springer.com/article/10.1023/A:1026094821330

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Abstract

A condition of trust between parties negotiating from positions of separate interest can make the difference between desired and undesirable outcomes, not to mention the processes leading up to them. We posit that trust is multiply determined, relational, and deeply embedded in the psychological processes of individual negotiating parties and the social psychological processes between them. How self and other are experienced, and the personal and cultural processes by which the Other Party becomes perceived as having shared boundaries such that trust is possible, is the topic of this essay. We examine an exchange of email between two members of a Russian and Argentine software joint venture, to illustrate how the sense of Otherness can escalate conflict and decrease trust. Inherent in our exposition are prescriptions for avoiding such escalation and polarizing of self and other parties, through such mechanisms as deliberate contact, respect, and awareness of one's own psychological processes in presenting self and perceiving Other.

Negotiators understand the value of trust. It may not be necessary to trust to negotiate, but negotiations proceed more readily under conditions of trust than of persistent skepticism, suspicion, and doubt about the intentions and behavior of the other. It is easier to share information and jointly explore controversial issues, to understand interests, invent options, and create value, and to deliberate over criteria for distribution when we feel we can trust the other side, even if only provisionally. The tensions that characterize negotiation all become easier to manage. If we are choosing among games, we'd rather play one in which trust is possible than one in which it is not, particularly when the stakes are high.

Negotiators often approach the subject of trust as “common sense,” a quality rooted in direct experience. We experience the palpable transition from conditions of low to higher trust, the moment in which the negotiation suddenly feels different. We feel liberated, less tense. It is easier to communicate; the other side is more understandable; we even express ourselves better. We can work through the tough topics and find the easy ones. We think more clearly and certainly more collaboratively under conditions which we name, often retrospectively, as trust.

Such experiences, valuable as they are, often contribute to insulating trust from examination. It is tempting to treat trust as exogenous; we hope for its benefits and fret over its absence. We codify practical guidelines that outline those steps which our experiences have told us correlate with trust. Through these rites we try to create trust indirectly. In the extreme, we view ourselves as passive recipients of trust or its lack. We may invest in a new future, but whatever steps we may take are oriented to the long term, rooted more in hope than a clear account of agency.

In these approaches, trust is located externally in specific individuals, groups, and organizations. We identify this group as trustworthy; that individual as not. We externalize the

source of trust, and the responsibility for its absence or presence, in the trustworthiness of the Other. Sometimes we associate trust with a shared culture, history, outlook, or interests. We can trust those people there; they are Irish (like us) or sailors (like us). On the other side, trust may become problematic in the face of differences. These expectations, in turn, may affect perceptions of the Other that color our expectations and judgment, allowing us to collect further evidence of how difficult it is to work with them.

This view of trust is problematic — contradicted by our direct experience of the dynamic nature of trust. There are moments in negotiations when trust flowers and we find ourselves making progress, where previously it was difficult or impossible. Negotiation is also marked by moments when things begin to unravel, and we do not know how to hold them together. It feels as if we are “losing our feet” with the other side, and with it, our ability to trust. Thus our experience, if not our logic, shows us that trust can be created in some moments and lost in others. It is dynamic rather than static in quality, if not downright fluid. Even so, moments of trust or mistrust seem to arise within the complexity and contingencies of negotiation in ways that cannot be forecast or usefully analyzed. To a large extent, such moments appear idiosyncratic, even mysterious incidents that offer little to inform our understanding of negotiation or trust, beyond general acknowledgment and broad prescriptions.

In this essay, we present a different perspective, treating the dynamics of trust as open to analysis and, eventually, agency. It helps to understand this move in several steps. First, it involves treating trust as a characteristic of relationships (and therefore of process), rather than individuals, groups, or organizations (and therefore of traits). This does not mean that individuals, groups, and organizations are not involved in the story. But their influence is felt through perceptions and actions that are interpreted, and acquire force in the context of

relationships. Instead of asking, “Can I trust Bob?” the relevant question becomes, “Can Bob and I construct a relationship in which trust is possible?”

Interactions, embedded in relationships, suggest both a level of complexity and a potential for development that have broad implications for negotiators. Of particular note is the role of perception through which action and interaction are interpreted. The dynamic potential that inheres in even simple interactive systems puts trust within the reach of agency. Experience suggests, however, that this reach often exceeds our grasp. Interaction creates a level of complexity that defies analysis and interpretation, particularly in real time. The variables at play in a given negotiation are as stratified as the complexity of the individuals who are involved: one negotiator in a disagreeable mood, or who is naïve to the needs of the other party can have influence that is amplified in interaction with dramatic implications for the outcome of a negotiation. Raise these variables by exponents of context, and the complexity of this game explodes. Two people negotiating whether to have Chinese food or pizza for dinner is different in complexity than the menu for a wedding party. Interests multiply, breed, become incestuous or alienated, and contribute to a chaotic negotiating situation in which a lack of order makes the same human factors that create the potential for development appear unpredictable and ungovernable.

To what do we turn to make sense of human behavior amidst such complexity, never mind translate this understanding into practice? Through family and culture, habits of emotion, thinking, and behavior become embedded, with room for individual variability. The range of forces at play in a field of transactional behavior is broad and idiographic (individualized), and thus hard to predict. This means that good negotiators can, and probably do, anticipate patterns and find regularities in what looks, for all the world, like a chaotic environment. The ability to

recognize and anticipate these patterns optimizes the shaping of the unique, creative, and perspicacious outcomes that we recognize as the products of good negotiation.

To develop a sense of these patterns, the ability to recognize them, and with it the ability to increase trust within the system, we turn to psychology, and particularly to psychoanalytic methods and ideas. The practice of psychoanalysis shares with negotiation the notion of a relationship, the complexities this creates, and the belief that development within a relationship is possible. What psychology further brings is a method and history of inquiry into the patterns that occur in the development of relationships, as well as, in psychoanalysis, a technical propensity to bring these insights to bear in real time interactions.

The relevant evidence from a variety of disciplines including (but not limited to) psychology, linguistics, artificial intelligence, and anthropology is broad. Cognitive and evolutionary neuroscientists, for instance, have demonstrated that human mental activities follow templates. Abstract cognitions such as metaphorical, analogical, and categorical thinking, and emotional trigger mechanisms such as anger, or abandonment anxiety and fear of separation, represent embedded structures that are the products of complexly evolved neural structures (Panksepp 1990 and 1991; Lakoff 1987; Lakoff and Nunez 2000; Rosch and Mervis 1975).¹

The ability to recognize the patterns that build or increase trust, is enhanced by our understanding of the cognitive and psychological mechanisms that underlie their construction. Just as a newborn is cognitively primed to perceive and even seek to perceive a visual pattern of two eyes, a nose, and a mouth, so as a race humans seem primed to perceive differences between the self and others as a prerequisite for survival. In an increasingly globalizing world, doing business means navigating through a complex process of transactions and rapidly fluctuating interests. The success of any transaction in this complex theatre depends surprisingly much on

¹Thanks to discussion and dissertation of David Nelson Gimbel (2002) for enriching this discussion and references.

the human factor; and an indisputable quality of the players who broker these transactions is their idiographic nature: they are unique individuals with distinct personalities and motivations, which are a combination of both those patterns of thought and behavior common to all humans, and unique experiences, history and adaptations. Negotiators who are aware of both forces are more likely to play successfully.

Trust — and its opposite, mistrust — are thus salient negotiating variables. “Mistrust” has a definite negative ring to it as a concept; it is almost concretized as a condition and cognitive set between parties once it has been so named. We prefer, however, to focus on a related condition and process: other-anxiety.² This frame is more compatible with our aim to investigate the dynamics of trust and mistrust at a micro-level where mutative activity may occur, much like studying viruses at the molecular level where the entity (the source of mistrust) tends to seem impenetrable, timeless, and relentlessly toxic. This is the sphere of analysis and action that we feel is most promising for opening issues like trust to analysis and agency. We do not attempt to make the case here that trust and its absence are powerful organizing factors in negotiation. We take its importance as established and move along to its processes.

For exposition, we focus on a Harvard Business School case, InterSoft Argentina, in which ordinary human factors subtly enter a negotiation and the powerful confounding factor of culture is thrown in to seriously scramble the wires of communication. Cross-cultural negotiation is charged not only by variation in premises and basic value assumptions (Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner 1998; Schein 1970)³ that are made between parties of different nationalities (or

²Thanks to the comment by Dan Shapiro of the Program on Negotiation at Harvard Law School's Working Group on Psychoanalysis and Negotiation. Dan points out that the term “mistrust” directs the perception outward and reinforces the attention on an external target as being the source of the problem; while other-anxiety directs the attention inward, and more productively, to a fluid and changeable, therefore hopeful, affective condition.

³The topic of how national and organization cultures affect behavior in organization is a topic in itself. Here, we focus on the psychodynamic manifestations of cultural difference; that is to say we bring in the lens considerably closer than would normally be done in an analysis of how culture affects behavior. Yet these are heuristic

other cultural entities), but also because of the ways in which the dynamic of strangeness deepens these tensions.

In the case, two sets of professionals in the information technology industry are brought into interaction by a joint venture (Harvard Business School Publication 9-497-025, 026, 027). An Argentine software development company has acquired a Russian counterpart to expand its software development capabilities. The focus of the venture is the development of a software application that can port or “translate” one of InterSoft’s systems software from a UNIX operating environment into a Windows environment. Design and production requires collaboration that spills over from programming to cooperation at a human level. Designing a software application that can bring two computer operating systems — “cultures”— together is itself a challenge. The effort to build cooperation between two teams divided by language and culture, is obviously and predictably encumbered. The parties must negotiate everything, from how to write code to what to eat for lunch. In this environment, process and outcome can be shaped powerfully by underarticulated micro-negotiations that occur at a tacit level that is often outside the conscious attention and efforts at control of individuals, as well as operating subconsciously at the level of group.

Our analysis traces the erosion of the auspicious beginning of the joint venture, as each side comes to view the other with an increasing sense of alienation. This escalating polarization is poignantly played out in a series of email exchanges where confusion, misunderstanding, and ultimately, hostilities grow until the collaboration has been transformed to blocked communication that puts the venture itself at risk.

distinctions of analysis; in reality culture, psychology, values and organizational norms all work at the same time, and we assume the influence of national and organizational culture differences while we invest heavily on a psychoanalytic level of focus.

To establish a frame of reference, we present a brief synopsis of the case. The email communications that describe the conflict are quoted in full in a subsequent section.

InterSoft Argentina

Two bright and talented computer scientists, Emilio López and Felix Racca, founded InterSoft S.A. of Argentina in the 1980s in response to a gap in the systems software industry. Combining their entrepreneurial acumen with programming talent, they were able to capture 30 percent of the systems software market in their country within ten years. By developing and offering a combination of state-of-art applications not available in Argentina, solid service, and technical support (and charging fair prices) they were able to ride out the economic and political turbulence of the 1980s to establish a solid foothold among the clientele of Argentina's major companies, even against eventual international competitors.

From their origins in the apartment of Emilio López, the two men built a strong team that gradually expanded to a loyal and cohesive group of 200-odd employees in a downtown Buenos Aires office. The case report emphasizes the fact that the company structure was informal and dynamic and had been modified as needed as the company grew. Communication was sometimes lax because of the informality; on the other hand, strong bonds of trust among people who had grown up together produced a system that worked well. In addition to the intellectual aura lent by the founders and the quality of the programmers, InterSoft also had a streak of idealism: its founders chose “inter” for the company name not only to express its international ambitions, but also its interplanetary ones!

The action in this drama unfolds in the programming lab, a quiet and intense center of activity where the elite programmers develop the company's products, mainly behind their computers, without partitions or walls. On the same floor sit Emilio López and Felix Racca, the

founders, and Hernán Otero, the chief programmer. The group's software development process is built around a set of checks and balances that tie individual work to a group to create and finalize products, with oversight by Emilio López. An important part of this rhythm is the acceptance of email as the preferred mode of communication, particularly when communication involved the exchange of programming code. It is also commonplace to forward email; overall, the email mode was seen as efficient and inclusive as needed.

Orgland, the Russian counterpart of InterSoft, had also been started by a group of friends in the turbulent environment of post-communist Russia. Orgland was a few years younger than InterSoft and its corporate resources were slimmer. Orgland had expertise in a form of programming (object-oriented programming and graphical user interface — GUI — designs) that InterSoft wanted to develop. Additionally, the idealistic and entrepreneurial Felix Racca saw an opportunity to contribute to the development of technology in Russia. While the Orgland team was intact and not looking for a merger, they responded affirmatively to the opportunity InterSoft presented and the two firms merged.

Alexey Iskhakov is one of Orgland's newer programmers, hired after the Russian firm was acquired by InterSoft for his GUI expertise. As the case opens, Alexey has just arrived in Buenos Aires where he has been sent to advance the two companies' integration. The case's description of the subjective experience of Alexey powerfully conveys the complex development of mistrust such as is found among strangers, even in the format of a business school case:

Ninety percent of my work time I was on the computer. Most of my contact with the InterSoft staff was “Hi” and “Bye.” I did not understand their Argentine English and they did not understand my Russian English. Ninety percent of my free time I spent alone. I would walk around Buenos Aires and go to museums and movies, but my Spanish was not good enough to understand anything. I had the most social contact with Gabriel because he was originally Russian. But I wouldn't join the rest of the lab for lunch. I hated the food (Harvard Business School 1996:4).

In this context, an email exchange between Alexey, Hernán, and Emilio deteriorates within one working day to the point where Alexey's final message is, to paraphrase, “Whatever else you have to say is of no interest to me. Don't write back.”

Theory and Methodology

The InterSoft Argentina case is nearly devoid of any report on subjective, particularly intra-subjective or intrapsychic, process. What individuals were thinking and feeling must, for the most part, be inferred from their output (that is, what they say to each other), rather than what they themselves know they were thinking and feeling. Hence this essay represents something of a leap between theory and analysis. We venture to do so, however, because the situation is analogous to real-life interactions in general and negotiations in particular, especially formal ones, in which one has no more information about the subjectivities of others, and more likely less. We shall attempt to bridge that gulf by deliberately choosing material that is true to life and mundane, instead of material for which subjective and intersubjective information is available. The next phase of this analysis, just as in the case, is in lessening the “strange-ness” tension between individuals; doing so indeed establishes the utility of psychological understanding of interaction.

Basic Trust and Ambivalence

Trust, from a psychological perspective, is shaped by an ongoing assessment of whether another party shares one's interests or diverges from them. To the extent that interests and agendas are perceived to diverge, wariness and protectionism might be mobilized. In many negotiating moments, divergence of interest may not necessarily raise emotion; however the higher and more personal the stakes, the more warmth and passion may evolve. Trust then bespeaks an affective or emotional experience that we might call safety: to trust is to feel safe in

the presence of another; to trust is to believe that another individual's separateness and different skin, will, body, motivations, and agenda will not impinge on those interests that are critical to our well-being. Development of trust is thus an interpersonal or relational event, firmly established through the experiences of a life that a person uses to teach herself⁴ what to expect in that life. Even before one is aware of one's existence or separateness as an entity, one is learning about how an Other regards and treats one's interests. As an infant those interests are within the scope of that body, that life: she wants to be fed, she wants to be warm; she wants what she wants without knowing what she wants.

It is an interesting fact of human life that it begins with two (or more) beings that are actually one, and which only gradually separate and evolve into two. Within the womb the growing life and its host literally and biologically share a single interest: evolution and biology dictate it. Even after the baby is born powerful hormones among other forces intensely determine the parents' drive to protect the interests of the new life.

Human infants are evolutionarily subject to a long period of dependency, starting with the in-the-womb symbiotic beginning. Although infant research tells us that a newborn and her mother and father have the capacity to discriminate each other rapidly after birth,⁵ in her complete helplessness she is by nature vulnerable and can be picked up by anyone without

⁴Gender referents are in third person singular, with no intent to associate meaning with “he” or “she” except to alternate for ease of reading.

⁵Infant research has demonstrated the ability of an infant to discriminate its mother's breast milk from another woman's at birth; to prefer the tape-recorded voice of its mother over another woman's; the ability to discriminate a mother's face within 48 hours of birth, and for mothers and fathers to be able to discriminate their infants respectively by touching their hands alone, by smell alone and by cry alone; not to mention the wealth of information about both infants and parents to finely discriminate and respond to each others' affective expressions early on (see, for example, Bushnell et al. 1983; Kaitz et al. 1987; Kaitz et al. 1992; Bader et al. 2002; Green and Gustafson 1983; Campos et al. 1983; Tronick 1989).

protest.⁶ Thus it lies within the purview of her protectors to determine whom to trust, who may have access to their baby, who shares their interest in protecting her interests.

Very soon though, along with the understanding of herself as a separate being, the baby becomes familiar with trust as that experience that tells her whether she is in good hands or not, and whose hands are good or not. Starting with a sense of separateness of identity, before the age of one, she discovers she prefers her mother's presence over anyone's, and complains in order to assert her ability to choose that presence.⁷ For better or for worse this is the person most familiar to her and the candidate to whom she must entrust her well-being. Others are not-Mother, a class she begins to realize she may not be able to trust. We popularly refer to this as stranger anxiety and most of us have seen demonstrations of it. It is usually a developmentally discrete phase; that is to say we know stranger anxiety in the form described here as temporally limited to an early phase of a baby's life in which she consolidates, in her psychic and cognitive structure, the function of distinguishing between classes of people: mother and not-mother, similar-to-me and different-from-me, trustworthy and not trustworthy. The instilling of such cognitive functioning and emotional development are most obvious in infancy; to some extent, however, iterations function throughout life as the mind and personality mature and each person develops, in his or her own way, in the context of their particular history.

Depending on the specifics of this history, which constitutes the background and upbringing of the individual and the evolution of the relationships implicit in his life, a child may view trust relationships as a default mode, or he may be wary. With the exception of situations of serious pathology of relatedness (whereby “anything goes,” or whereby one might see a

⁶Up to around 5-6 months of age, an infant may switch caregivers with relatively little disruption, e.g., in an adoption. This is partly due to the immaturity of the baby's cognitive development where object constancy — the ability to track an object outside of the visual field — has not yet developed (Colin 1996).

⁷This is preceded by pre-attachment behaviors by which infants 5-6 months old indicate their preference for familiar persons by smiling at and reaching for them more frequently than strangers (Colin 1996).

scrambling, reversal, or confusion of accuracy of discernment as to who should be trusted and who should not), the child normally comes to associate trust with those who share his interests; and learn to mistrust those who oppose them.

So far, we have stated what is thunderingly obvious, and not only obvious but simple. In reality the psychological factors that play into transactions or interactions are infinitely complex, based on a history of relationships that shape the psychology of trust that underlies many transactions. To the extent that this aspect of relatedness is reinforced and relearned over and over again at different levels of life, in different contexts and relationships, the history of trust is likewise quite complicated. For example, in the process psychoanalysts call “identification,” the child may mistrust those individuals whom he sees his parents mistrust, or whom they reject. Depending on the characteristics of the parents, those objects of mistrust may be persons exhibiting certain untrustworthy behaviors and functions (e.g. persons driving too close to one's automobile bumper); or perhaps people with certain physical characteristics that the parents view as untrustworthy. Such identifications may be deeply imbedded, and even if conscious, difficult to reverse. In other words, whether as a function of complex identifications or whether as a function of one's own particular history, what factors underlie a person's propensity to trust another at any given moment or interaction may largely be subliminal and hard to surface or discern, not to mention change.⁸

Whatever specific factors may be important to a given individual (e.g., “you can't trust homosexuals,” “you can't trust lawyers,” “you can't trust Icelanders,” etc.), the expansion or contraction of trust is also characterized by predictable dynamics common to people of all

⁸This pertains to a psychoanalytic concept called transference, which suggests that powerful historical dynamics of early and important relationships may color — or act as a template of — future relationships which are removed from the original ones. For example, if a boy's father became competitive and cold every time the boy showed a position of strength, he may expect negative repercussions to displaying a strong position at the negotiating table.

nations and groupings. When colliding interests combine with these trust factors, parties can become intractably embroiled in views of one another as the opposite of self in interests and identity. We see manifestations of this too painfully in war.

Many transactions between persons can be usefully understood as negotiations of one sort or another, ranging in formality and structure, as well as substantive focus. Regardless of the degree of each, the likelihood of a successful outcome is increased by the level of trust. The level of trust, in turn, correlates positively with the degree of playfulness in an interaction on the one hand, and negatively with the degree of constriction, rigidity, and control at the other. Where there is lack of trust, options become delimited and ultimately polarized, cognition becomes striated, and affect responses tense and predictable. Under stress, humans tend to regress to progressively earlier or base-line levels of functioning, which refer to basic assumptions or embedded patterns of thought. These evoke corresponding anxieties and affect which, in turn, may attenuate logical processes along with flexibility of thinking. Creativity and playfulness operate in inverse proportion to anxiety and fear, which are multiply determined and deeply grounded in individual and groups.

Fear over Differences

In the psychoanalytic literature covering social group processes, particularly those processes pertaining to enmity, ethnic conflict and war,⁹ the theories of Melanie Klein, Anna Freud, Sigmund Freud and Heinz Kohut are most often cited to explain the roots of these phenomena. In brief, from Sigmund Freud comes the concept of the death instinct or the instinct of aggression as being fundamental to human nature as well as a fundamental motive in and of itself. People are inclined to hate as well as to love, and both are part of the human condition.

⁹For example, see Arendt (1979); Fromm (1973); Moses (1996); Lowenberg (1995); Volkan (1994); and Firestone (1996).

According to this theory, we could say mistrust is not an exception but almost a rule: we start from there unless we start elsewhere. First Sigmund and then Anna Freud evolved the theory of ambivalence as an important psychological function. Through ambivalence, we develop the capacity to hold both love and hate within ourselves. From there, we further develop the capacity to comprehend complexity, uniting affect and cognition in a composite mind event. When ambivalence is developed, we see that someone who has harmed us may nevertheless have good in them; someone we admire and trust may nevertheless do something shameful. People with exposure to children of a certain age (as well as adults) may find this familiar. The child goes through a phase of hating someone and finding them all bad; conversely favored people are adored and shine with unassailable virtue.

Melanie Klein is among the most influential theorists who address these dynamics. Most important was her theory of splitting and introjection and projection. In essence, given the default emotions of love and hate in the human mind, the developing individual struggles to reconcile the two. At first this struggle is somewhat crude or basic: only one emotion can be held inside at a given time. At one developmental point the containers are self and other: if I am bad, you are good; if you are good, I am bad.¹⁰ Eventually that bad/good dichotomy may be practiced outside oneself: Mother is good (because she lets me play late); Father is bad (because he tells me “no”). We also saw the thought process in action in certain quarters after September 11th: “all Middle-Eastern men are threatening; and all Americans are innocent.”

Next, Klein's theory of introjection and projection helps explain intolerance among groups. Aggression is not easy to tolerate. To feel aggressive is sometimes confused between

¹⁰This “splitting” of good and bad concepts of self and other can have manifestations in group dynamics and social psychology. In its extreme, whole peoples can be associated as being good or bad. Such splitting may further lend itself to the fallaciously logical next step of moral impunity. “Since we know these people are bad, we can treat them differently (badly) than people whom we know are good.” The point is that the complex array of highly subjective, strongly psychological forces affecting such perceptions and judgments, leading to actions, are usually unexamined.

feeling that another is bad and feeling that oneself is bad. To the extent one feels aggressive and bad inside oneself, one is inclined to direct those feelings outside and attach them to another (projection). A good example of this is shame and blame. If someone treats another badly in some way, one method of tolerating the aggression that generated that ill treatment is to project it. Territory, for instance, is an area that can rapidly activate aggression, both sociobiologically and neurochemically. If I feel angry at someone taking my favorite library spot for the day and (aggressively) move them away, I may feel they are looking daggers at me for the rest of the day. Eventually, I may even festoon them with negative characteristics: not only do I feel (and fear) their aggression toward me, but I also perceive them as unpleasant people aside from their feelings toward me. If I cannot find my pencil, I suspect them of having taken it. Conversely, a realization of the bad thing I did may creep into me and slam me with a feeling of shame about myself (introjection). This will not do, this hurts too much so I hurl those bad feelings back and find a way to blame the other for the situation. Perhaps I find a way to rationalize it: They are new to the library and should not feel entitled to any spot they choose; they did not respect me in choosing and taking that particular space; perhaps there is something wrong with them, with their intelligence, etc. etc.

Another theory that helps to account for what happened at InterSoft Argentina, and which seems to play a role in every conflict, is the theory of self-esteem. Heinz Kohut's insights¹¹ into the consequences of not having enough self-esteem — not feeling enough self-respect, and not feeling that enough respect has been rendered — are particularly relevant. Briefly, a part of healthy personal growth is the ability to feel good about oneself. This is developed by adequate care and regard of a growing person by his caregivers. It is very difficult to describe the behaviors, attitudes and tone of what such care and regard entails without resorting to cliché; in

¹¹Along with strong support from the quarter of developmental psychoanalysis and infant observation research.

fact, we suspect this is partly the cause of why Kohut's theories have not everywhere accrued the respect they merit. In essence, he says a child develops self-esteem if he is treated with respect and regarded with love. Every little child wants his parent to beam upon his antics, to find him cute, adorable, and worthy. Every child wants to see her own feelings, inclinations, agendas and quirks of personality reflected back with acceptance, pleasure and tender joy. What the child does not want is negation: either the domination or overrule of her own offerings by the personality, will or agenda of the mightier Other (e.g., parent); or the rejection of who she is in terms of her output or self-expression (her emotions, behavior, speech, appearance, ideas, etc.) by scorn, dismissal, belittling and contempt — or rejection and nonresponse, by dull, bored disinterest or apathy, or simple disconnection of a parent who is preoccupied by other needs. Kohut (and others) posits that this thing which children need to develop, healthy self-esteem, can be conceived to some degree quantitatively¹² insofar as one can see the consequences of not getting enough. If we leapfrog into adult life, everyone will recognize this. Recognition, esteem and status are in short supply everywhere and nothing raises the stakes more quickly than a perceived injury to someone's pride. Likewise, in both great and small conflicts, the need to preserve one's pride, dignity, and honor not only plays a part to play in the resolution or continuance of a conflict, but often is also the last burning issue and the most persistent and successful driver of the perpetuation of enmity and violence.¹³

Kohut named this quality narcissism, and associated it with the core of a person's functioning, with not only their sense of self, but indeed as Self. When this quality is not intact or sufficiently installed, the organism functions faultily, like a car whose engine is poorly installed

¹²Hence the name associated with this theory “the deficit model.”

¹³See Jim Gilligan's (1996) book *Violence* in which he documented the tight connection in gang murders between the aggression and the perception of loss of dignity and respect, of being “dissed.” Also note the prominence of this motivation in war and nationalism, in Hitler's call to his people to raise their profile in the eyes of the world; in the failure of diplomatic situations when respect is perceived wanting.

and dragging on the road. Psychologists have observed that healthy or unhealthy narcissism can involve the functioning of all areas of Self, ranging from cognition to emotional capacity to moral development. While all these are interrelated, it is particularly in the latter realm that the problems and consequences of impaired narcissism are the most striking. In the most extreme case, where there is a lack of healthy Self, there can also be a lack of emotional connection and relatedness and its attendant lack of empathy. Correlated are high degrees of aggression, particularly around any issues that may touch off a person's sense of personal insecurity, but also a degree of self-orientation that may just be annoying; or in the case of such malignantly narcissistic and sociopathic personalities and despots (e.g., Milosevic or Stalin) — a capacity to ride roughshod over other people's interests that goes beyond normal and which is certainly amoral.

It is important that we tell the story right in terms of pointing to the centrality of this psychodynamic to basic and ubiquitous human motivation. It can be disastrous to the formation of trust to underestimate the critical, sometimes central role of this need and motivation in most people. Everyone has a right to respect, and most people are quick to perceive when they are not getting it. The way they may perceive getting it has to do with the theory of differences we have discussed. To the extent that the primacy of Self is of a degree or quality that divides one from the other, the sense of Self and Other may be negatively registered. It thus makes one impatient to talk about My Way before listening to Your Way; dismisses Your Contributions while pressing for My Contributions; One of the quickest ways to alienate someone is to underestimate any given person's need for esteem. Next, it seems to be one of those embedded tendencies that when respect is not perceived or received, people respond by getting angry, eventually combative and hostile. This may be another path to trigger cognitive inflexibility and

communication failure. We see this in play at InterSoft Argentina; and a confounding variable can be culture insofar as how respect and inclusion are expressed are meanings that are culturally embedded.

These are highly schematized means of representing what are possibly some of the most profound among human intrapsychic and interpersonal dynamics. Although there is a developmental progression to these dynamics — that is, one stage presupposes another — in reality people can slide back and forth in these processes. For example, Americans saw that struggle after September 11th: America struggled to maintain its tolerance for diversity but, at the same time, some of its citizens attacked Arab-Americans. In the same way, certain circumstances, such as threat or stress, can provoke a regression to earlier forms of integration, or pre-integration or pre-ambivalence.

Finally, many of these dynamics take place in the context of an experience of relationship as discussed earlier, and in an assessment of similarity or difference between self and other. Anna Freud talked about the earliest intrapsychic precursors of the phenomenon psychoanalysts call identification as being rooted in the oral phase of life, the earliest phase. When the infant knows his world (we theorize) in terms of sensation and perception, comfort and discomfort, safety, trust and attachment in a felt-sense of a relationship which is preverbal, his sense of self is closely associated to the experience of that attachment and relationship. That bond, that relationship, the sense of belonging to the group of self and mother and father is the earliest form of group membership. Before the process is articulated, the child is differentiating between himself and the Other, and at the same time identifying with the Other. When it goes well, the interplay between being together and being apart can be just that: playful, creative, with a lot of

space in which to explore the leeway in between.¹⁴ When it goes well, or when there is an overall sense of safety, differences can be tolerated. When there is threat or anxiety, or one is prone to feeling anxious because of one's specific experiences, differences may lend themselves to increasing mistrust.

An Exchange of Email Messages

In the InterSoft Argentina case, there are illustrations of trust and anxiety as a function of differences over interests, over group membership (including culture and ethnicity), over pride and mutual esteem, and behaviors and communications that fail to ameliorate the widening gulf of perceived differences.

We shall present a synopsis of the interchanges between InterSoft's Argentine and Russian players. To reiterate, the three players in question are Hernán, Alexey, and Emilio. Hernán is the host (Argentine) programmer in charge of all programming; Alexey is the Russian programmer hired for his expertise on the desired object-oriented programming language; Emilio is the founder and overall manager. By the start of this exchange Alexey had been in the Argentine office for four weeks working on IDEAFIX programming, a tool to run applications

¹⁴To maximize the potential for creativity, or in Winnicott's terms, to increase the playfulness of the system (because for Winnicott playfulness is not something that occurs alone so much as between beings, in the liminal space that belongs neither to the one nor to the other as much to both of them together) — means to increase the being-ness of being. In turn, when Winnicott refers to being-ness (his term would be play), he means anything to which is brought conscious intention, awareness in the sense of self-consciousness and deliberation. He further suggests in this state of self those experiences in which there is inherent pleasure or enjoyment (his word). We would argue that in this definition of Winnicott's idea could be included a higher-level of “enjoyment” by which is meant the sense of mastery, agency, consciousness and awareness in the realm in which by virtue of these qualities, which lead to a increase of freedom, there is enjoyment, even if the situation or activity itself may be painful. Included in this might be insight in the psychoanalytic or Buddhist sense: whereas the experience (an affect such as grief or mentation such as self-condemnation) might itself be quite painful, creating a larger psychic space than the experience itself renders a sense of expansion or freedom which might be a version of what Winnicott meant. Play is also, though not necessarily exclusively, co-constructed. This is important because for Winnicott, being and play were centered fair and square in the relationship, particularly the relationship between baby and mother from which dynamic both beings can be given cause to arise from the interplay of merger and separation. The delicacy of the dynamics of negotiating this interplay, now being one, now being two, and ultimately and ideally being able to co-construct this lovely play space when both can be neither one nor two but somehow influence the other's being PLAYFULLY seems to us to be crux of so many of our aims, whether it is negotiating and influencing and changing the other, or having the potential to change ourselves.

on Windows, MacIntosh and UNIX operating systems, and which would represent a technical coup for the industry and for this company. In one section of this development one of Alexey's Argentine programming colleagues thinks Alexey is not doing what Emilio wants him to do because he does not agree with him on how to do it. "Alexey might have been right on some points — maybe we weren't doing it correctly." (Harvard Business School 1996:2).

Alexey considered himself as knowing more about aspects of this than his colleagues and he could foresee problems in the future. However, Alexey's programming colleague was nevertheless concerned Alexey might not understand what was required of him and told Hernán of his concerns, by email. All three programmers were sitting on a bench of computers only several seats from each other. Hernán responds by sending Alexey email spelling out what he thought Alexey needed to know. Alexey says about this:

I was receiving two messages a day from Hernán in which he explained to me things I already knew. I found his argument context 'empty.' An empty letter describes a problem in detail without addressing how to fix it. A letter that recommends a technical solution has more worth than an empty one. I had been responding to his letters, but every letter was taking me an hour to read and an hour to reply (not including the time to think about the reply). After a few days I stopped responding to his 'empty' letters since it took too much time, yet Hernán still continued to email me. Finally I wrote Hernán a letter than I considered 'empty.' I hoped he would think my letter was a joke as well as a hint to stop e-mailing me. Unfortunately, [Hernán] did not get the joke. (Harvard Business School 1996:2)

Following are the text of a series of emailed messages, all quoted and represented as they appear in the Harvard Business School Case (1996). Our observations appear in brackets.

From: Hernán
To: Alexey
Date: Thursday 27 July 14:43
Subject: Confusion

Alexey:
I think (I've been trying to think what is that makes it hard to understand each other) that you misunderstood IDEAFIX's design. {Hernán then draws a diagram to explain it, followed by an explanation of his diagram.}

According to the case, it was Hernán's "general practice to share his emails both to and from Alexey (as well as the rest of the team) with Emilio, so after sending the above message to Alexey, he forwarded a copy to Emilio. About an hour later, Hernán received the following response:"

From: Alexey
To: Hernán
Date: Thursday 27 July, 16:03
Subject: Re: Confusion

Hernán!
>I think (I've been trying to think what is that makes it hard to understand each other)
> that you misunderstood IDEAFIX's design.
O k, really, from the beginning, I understood the IDEAFIX's design.
All that's I want to explain is:
1). There are no reason to mix physical/logical events with commands.
2). If we will represent commands as interface to loaded thing, ...
{etc.}

When Hernán received Alexey's response on July 27, he forwarded it to Emilio, who discovered it when he returned to his desk. Emilio could scarcely believe what he was reading and hurriedly typed his response to Alexey. He paused a moment when he finished, reviewed what he had written and the sent the following message:

From: Emilio
To: Alexey
Date: Thursday 27 July, 17:02
Subject: Re: Confusion

Alexey:
I don't want to continue discussing, about how IDEAFIX must be work. IDEAFIX was designed 7 years ago, and the schema we developed showed tremendous advantages for us. Remember IDEAFIX is not a new product.
Then I'm the person that take the final decision of how things are done. After 4 days of Byzantine discussions I don't want to continue arguing why we have to change our design, that cannot be perfect for a new one that can also have drawbacks.
We need to concentrate in developed the final product, so please try not to be so stubborn and JUST DO IT.
If you personally feel very uncomfortable with our design, just tell us, and you can then concentrate on another part of the project.
Regards:

Emilio López.

From: Alexey
To: Emilio
Date: Thursday 27 July, 17:18
Subject: Re: Confusion

O'k! I'll be DO IT!
Regards!
ALEXEY....

From: Alexey
To: Hernán
Date: Thursday 27 July, 17:21
Subject: Re: Confusion

>From: Emilio@isoft.com.ar
^^
????????????????????????????????????
You are change name?
>Subject: Re: Confusion
^^
I replied only for you letter.
>
>Alexey:
>
[skip]
>Regards:
>Emilio López
No comments!
—
ALEXEY.....

Hernán quickly wrote a message to clarify that it was Emilio, not himself, who sent message three. He then forwarded Alexey's email (Message 5) to Emilio, who was dismayed at what he saw on the screen. Emilio immediately composed his response to Alexey:

From: Emilio
To: Alexey
Date: Thursday 27 July, 17:25
Subject: Re: Confusion

Alexey: Hernán bounce your answer to me.
I don't feel offended by your answer. All of us have our own heart in our ideas, what I want was just to concentrate our abilities on production more than on speculation.
SINCERELY Regards:
Emilio

From: Alexey
To: Emilio
Date: Thursday 27 July, 17:40
Subject: Re: Confusion

This letter was not for You, so it was written in 5 minutes and one was only reply for not argumented letter of Hernán. So this letter was only 'intimático' and it's not have any arguments or critic, and I really Confused by forwarding ones to You. No I think that the discussion must be finished. I'll will try to develop any task in any form, with any technical proposals.
Best regards,
Alexey

From: Hernán
To: Alexey
Date: Thursday 27 July 18:33
Subject: Understand me please!

Alexey:

Please let me explain myself. Emilio is a director who gets really involved in all his projects. He works with us all the time, programming, debugging and most of all discussing. All, *absolutely all* mails that I receive regarding the project and in which I would like to get his opinion are forwarded to him.. In this case, it is even more necessary to see written text because we have a language problem and it is hard for us to understand one another when we speak.

I don't like to have tight relations with my co-workers... and it really worries me that you are upset with me... please! Believe me! I had no bad intentions by forwarding your mail to Emilio! ... Given that in the spoken discussion we can't understand each other well enough, I wanted to maintain a written discussion. I really didn't think that it was a private mail. I don't consider any mail related to my work as private correspondence. And, most of all, I didn't think that by forwarding the mail to Emilio I would upset you.

Please forgive me if it did upset you... and please believe me that it had absolutely no bad intentions.

I hope you accept my apologies.

Regards,
Hernán

PS: I would normally speak this with you, but I feel that I can express myself better in written English and that you will understand me better.

From: Alexey
To: Hernán
Date: Thursday 27 July, 19:21
Subject: Re: Understand me please!

Hernán!

>Please let me explain myself..

Last three days we are discussed the handler problem, as you understand I have some different from Emilio point of view. I have no opportunity to explain it to you in Spanish, so because of I like the more complete and described technical proposals. I say that I will write letter. It is my style of work, I like to Think before Doing!

When you bounsed my letter to Emilio, he receive the "pure speculation: letter, because ones had no arguments or analysis.

And Emilio makes the right decision – he say me that I am only
"empty speculator" and point me for my place in social scheme.
It's all right. In such case my behavior will be analogous.
>In this case, it is even more necessary to see written text
>because we have a language problem...
Let us consider the last incident, you send me "empty speculation
letter", I send you an "empty speculation reaction" what I can to
explain in 5 minutes? But you forwards this "esr" to Emilio, in
our country it is named as PROVOCATION.
>I don't like to have tight relations with my co-workers...
>Please forgive me if it did upset you... and please believe me
> that it had absolutely no bad intentions.
I forget this collision!
Regards.
—
ALEXEY.....

From: Hernán
To: Alexey
Date: Thursday 27 July 19:31
Subject: Re: Understand me please!

>Hernán!
>
>Let us consider the last incident, you send me "empty
speculation
> letter", I send you an "empty speculation reaction" what I can
to explain
> in 5 minutes? But you forwards this "esr" to Emilio, in our
country
> it is named as PROVOCATION.
The "empty speculation letter" I sent you was send by me *and*
Emilio!
I wrote that letter, sent it to Emilio for revision (to see if he
wanted to add
something or change something) and only when he said that he
agreed did
I send the letter to you...and once you replied it I also showed
Emilio the
reply! In our country this is not called PROVOCATION! It is
called
WORKING!!!
Hernán

From: Alexey
To: Hernán
Date: Friday 28 July 10:11
Subject: Re: Understand me please!

Hi Hernán!
>>Let us consider the last incident, you send me "empty
speculation
>> letter", I send you an "empty speculation reaction" what I can
to explain
>> in 5 minutes? But you forwards this "esr" to Emilio, in our
country
>> it is named as PROVOCATION.

>The "empty speculation letter" I sent you was send by me *and* Emilio!
 >I wrote that letter, sent it >to Emilio for revision (to see if he wanted to add
 > something or change something) and only >when he said that he agreed did
 >I send the letter to you...and once you replied
 In this letter I find not any good and fruitfull arguments, moreover,
 I find not any meaning of Emilio. So, I get the letter from You, but
 not from You and Emilio. If you begin letter such:
 I and Emilio.....
 Or
 Emilio say.....
 I will write for you and Emilio, and the content will be another.
 Are you show all letters for Emilio. Really? Does it mean that you
 never have own point of view? Or Emilio are main CENSOR?
 >it I also showed Emilio the reply! In our country this is
 > not called PROVOCATION! It is called >WORKING!!!
 ^^^^^^^^^^^
 under CENSORING
 NO COMMENTS!!!!!!!
 I say that forot this confustion!
 If you have another view of this collision, It is not interest for me.
 If you have not wishes to forget it strange collision, it is you bysiness, but please not send letters about this.
 It is not interest for me.
 And, if you send letter, which was Emilio, begin it as
 Hi Alexey,
 Emilio says.
 Chau!
 —
 ALEXEY.....

Anatomy of Escalation

If we were to construct a maze from a shoebox and put ants in it, lifting the lid, it would be obvious to the observer which way the ants must go and the behavioral patterns that help and hinder their efforts to find their way. Day-to-day interactions more often resemble life from the ants' perspective, however. We do not have the advantage of seeing the whole picture as much as the limited perspective of the wall — or in this case the computer screen — in front of us. With that narrowness of scope, perceptions of differences can become amplified; reactions, as we saw,

are quick and dirty and the consequences immediate. Under conditions of even mild threat or in the processes of escalating alienation, there is a tendency for the process to run away, and for the dynamics of polarization to mutually reinforce perception, cognition, and expectations such that, without conscious intention, one gets deeper and deeper into a trench by which the barrier between self and other, us and them, hardens and get folded into the basic assumptions we use to make sense of the evolving interaction.

The sense of separateness or estrangement is played out by the members' physical distance. At first, email is utilized as a form of convenience; but when the tension rises, the distance is not closed by face-to-face contact but amplified, given the tense nature of Alexey and Hernán's exchange. Without direct contact, the barriers of computer permit greater opportunities to stereotype, project negative qualities, and assume the worst. (In other cases, negotiators may not retreat to their computers, but dynamics of escalation often correlate with the erection of other barriers that diminish the incidence and intimacy of contact.) Moreover, without direct interaction and with the feedback of affective cues as well as modulation and amelioration of aggressive social exchange, the electronic medium permits greater venting of negative emotions, fueling the escalation.

We suggest that an intermediate perspective, between the ant's view and a full “top-off-the-box” perspective, is possible and is useful in such dynamics to the extent that it provides a reminder of how, under tension, fear or resentment, qualities of empathy, curiosity, or even neutral rationality may cede to inaccurate assumptions about the intentions of the Other. This may create a vicious spiral of mutually reinforcing mistrust and attack. One of our goals in this essay has been to make the case for stepping back in such instances; attempting to avert mistrust

from mutually escalating at a minimum; and, at a maximum, with increasing awareness of these dynamics, reverse the vicious cycle to a virtuous one of increasing trust and collaboration.

Table One is our review of the messages, with comments in the right-hand column detailing what we think might be occurring. By annotating it in this way, we imply a third-party stance. We do not really know nor purport to “read the mind” (at least not accurately) of Alexey or Hernán; therefore it is not annotated in the first person. Nor do we suggest that solidifying assumptions about what is in the mind and heart of the other — to annotate in second person — would belie our cautionary message, which is as follows: In interactions we do make assumptions about what the other is thinking or feeling and intending. To fail to do so; to fail to read signals, particularly affective signals would cripple us in interaction.¹⁵ Indeed cognitive evolution has primed us to at least attempt to schematize one another's thoughts and intentions, or read each other's mind.

This concept, more commonly referred to in cognitive science as “Theory of Mind” describes the ability of humans (and perhaps many other animals as well) to interpret, predict, and formulate fast responses to particular types of social messages and transmissions, which may range from seemingly autonomic semiotic responses such as facial gesture, or other bodily movements, to much language and other complexly evolved forms of social interaction. Mind-reading is a process that all societal members must constantly engage in and we may assume that the evolution of the schematized or frame-like cognitive templates that govern mind-reading were probably favored on an evolutionary level, specifically because they enhanced the fluidity response of cognitive domains related to social interaction (Gimbel 2002). However, to the

¹⁵For example, in the pathological condition called akinetic mutism, where parts of the brain's frontal lobe (and with it the capacity to experience emotion) is ablated, clinical observation and research has associated massive shutdown of intelligent and intentional functioning, including cognitive and motor functions. (Doug Watt, personal communication in the Boston Psychoanalytic Society and Institute's Working Group on Psychoanalysis and Neuroscience, 2000)

extent there is “noise” in the system, that our predictions are inaccurate, we lower our odds in the survival game. To fail to recognize and use our perceptual and interpretive apparatus as an error-correcting system is to fail to correct errors.

This exchange was launched because Hernán was worried that Alexey did not know what needed to be done, sending Alexey “empty” letters. This was probably Hernán trying to reduce the separation between them since Alexey was acting like a “stranger,” doing his own thing. Indirectly he was trying to tutor Alexey into “our way.” From Alexey's side, he seemed to perceive these efforts as condescending: “he explained to me things I already knew.” In other words, Hernán is not understanding him, Alexey, and thereby he is emphasizing the difference between them.

Table One
An Analysis of an Email/Interaction

Message	Actual Text	Analysis
Message 1 Hernán to Alexey	I think (I've been trying to think what is that makes it hard to understand each other) that you misunderstood IDEAFIX's design.	Hernán is explicit in his condescension in his zeal to bring around Alexey. (He risks offending Alexey's pride of work and therefore pride of self; and showing disrespect.)
Message 2 Alexey to Hernán	O k, really, from the beginning, I understood the IDEAFIX's design. All that's I want to explain is: 1). There are no reason to mix physical/logical events with commands. 2). If we will represent commands as interface to loaded thing, ... {etc.}	Alexey understands Hernán's efforts to bring Alexey around to Hernán's view, and expresses irritation obliquely. (Alexey is indeed injured in his pride and must restore his good standing.) He makes the content of their difference explicit, but “subtly” chastises Hernán's tendency to send “empty” messages by replying in kind: a message without solutions or explanations. This oblique method backfires on Alexey once Hernán sends it to Emilio.
Message 3 Emilio to Alexey	I don't want to continue discussing, about how IDEAFIX must be work. IDEAFIX was designed 7 years ago, and the schema we developed showed tremendous advantages for us. Remember IDEAFIX is not a new product. Then I'm the person that take the final decision of how things are done. After 4 days of Byzantine discussions I don't want to continue arguing why we have to change our design, that cannot be	Emilio does not know the context of this exchange but he picks up the content as pointing to Alexey operating with a different agenda than his own. He perceives Alexey's sarcasm and opposition and comes down on him authoritatively. As Alexey says in the next message, Emilio “point me for my place in social scheme.” (Alexey's pride [self-esteem] is even more wounded.)

Message	Actual Text	Analysis
	perfect for a new one that can also have drawbacks. We need to concentrate in developed the final product, so please try not to be so stubborn and JUST DO IT.	
Message 4 Alexey to Emilio	O'k! I'll be DO IT! Regards! ALEXEY.....	Alexey is both angry and compliant toward Emilio at being put in his place.
Message 5 Alexey to Hernán	You are change name? I replied only for you letter. ... No comments! — ALEXEY.....	Alexey vents his anger more freely, albeit obliquely, toward Hernán. He is sarcastic in his anger at having had their exchange forwarded to Emilio without Alexey knowing. In this message, Alexey also makes assumptions about his communication. This is an email equivalent of a nonverbal communication; he expresses strong affect and assumes Hernán will understand the source of his irritation, namely at bringing Emilio, the authority, into the picture. (Perceived injury to self-esteem and embarrassment can give rise to intense anger and retaliation.)
Message 6 Emilio to Alexey	Alexey: Hernán bounce your answer to me. I don't feel offended by your answer. All of us have our own heart in our ideas, what I want was just to concentrate our abilities on production more than on speculation.	This assumption misfires in its intent, because rather than correcting Hernán so that he does not do it again, he does it again. Hernán and Emilio are at this point as one; it is Alexey who is outside, as this pattern shows (Inclusion and exclusion dynamics). Emilio stays close to the content of Alexey's position and does not reflect on the entire interaction. He sees Alexey has been riled up but views it in terms of the differences between their positions, not as a response to his own or Hernán's behavior. However instinctively he attempts to soften his hard line toward Alexey. (Ambivalence)
Message 7 Alexey to Emilio	This letter was not for You, so it was written in 5 minutes and one was only reply for not argumented letter of Hernán. So this letter was only 'intimatico' and it's not have any arguments or critic, and I really Confused by forwarding ones to You. No I think that the discussion must be finished. I'll will try to develop any task in any form, with any technical proposals.	Alexey is surprised, if anything, more than ever, at having Emilio weigh in. The mail to Hernán was collectively (and against Alexey's wishes) read by Hernán and Emilio. He is forced into a disadvantageous position and is forced to try to recover face and also appease Emilio. Rather than having the lines of grouping occur between hierarchical levels, he is finding, painfully and belatedly, that in this case it is occurring elsewhere. (Loss of pride and exclusion)
Message 8 Hernán to Alexey	Please let me explain myself. Emilio is a director who gets really involved in all his projects. ... I don't like to have tight relations with my co-workers... and it really worries me that you are upset with me... please! Believe me! I had no bad intentions by forwarding your mail to Emilio! ... Please forgive me if it did upset	Hernán attempts to appease Alexey, closing the distance between them. He makes an effort to explain their position so that Alexey will understand, and with his apology he shows Alexey of his intent to include him and his desire to be on the same side. (Widening the circle of inclusion) Here is a turning point in the

Message	Actual Text	Analysis
	you... and please believe me that it had absolutely no bad intentions. I hope you accept my apologies.	exchange. If Alexey accepts, the tension could be defused and the parties could work toward mutual cooperation.
Message 9 Alexey to Hernán	Last three days we are discussed the handler problem... It is my style of work, I like to Think before Doing! When you bounsed my letter to Emilio, he receive the “pure speculation” letter... And Emilio makes the right decision — he say me that I am only “empty speculator” and point me for my place in social scheme. ... Let us consider the last incident ... in our country it is named as PROVOCATION. ... I forget this collision!	Alexey is too angry to accept Hernán's apology. Or rather, he does accept it, but not before scolding him about the whole matter. Alexey felt quite wounded at having lost face before Emilio, appearing to not know what he was doing in terms of programming; having his quarrel with Hernán exposed. He was forced to appease Emilio and now he vents his anger on Hernán by belittling him, “I like to Think Before Doing!” Now that he can fully explain to Hernán his grievances and why Hernán's actions have injured and offended him, he does not hesitate to do so, cathartically eager to bring Hernán into his own sphere, his own subjectivity and therefore into his own group. (Alexey wants to be heard and seen on his own terms; a fundamental Self need.) Once he has done so he “forgives” Hernán and suggests they wipe the slate clean.
Message 10 Hernán to Alexey	The “empty speculation letter” I sent you was send by me *and* Emilio! I wrote that letter, sent it to Emilio for revision ... and only when he said that he agreed did I send the letter to you...and once you replied it I also showed Emilio the reply! In our country this is not called PROVOCATION! It is called WORKING!!!	Hernán does not agree to wipe the slate clean. He emphasizes the difference between them which Alexey has already raised, by talking about the habits of each country. (Emphasize self-other differentiation) He responds to Alexey's anger by being angry in turn.
Message 11 Alexey to Hernán	In this letter I find not any good and fruitfull arguments... Are you show all letters for Emilio. Really? Does it mean that you never have own point of view? Or Emilio are main CENSOR? ... under CENSORING NO COMMENTS!!!!!! I say that forot this confusion! If you have another view of this collision, It is not interest for me. ... Chau!	More of the same as Alexey now escalates the insult and belittles Hernán, the subtext of this message being something like: “Are you Mama Emilio's little boy?” Again Alexey is stung by the “we” of Hernán and Emilio to which he feels excluded; and he cruelly makes fun of Hernán, suggesting that he has no separate identity. At this point, affect and reactivity have taken over the exchange and both have become polarized in their positions (splitting). Alexey exaggerates the situation by calling it one of censorship, a familiar if sinister implication that is peculiarly Russian. (Blurring of individuality into category; stereotyping) Having taken the battle as far as possible, he concludes the interaction by “signing off” on the relationship, saying something like: “whatever you say or think is of no further interest to me,” and “don't write back.”

Although there are many similarities between Hernán and Alexey, between Orgland and InterSoft, and between Russians and Argentineans, under certain circumstances the differences are emphasized, experienced sharply, and irritate viscerally. Both parties' attitude and behavior about each others' food is both a metaphoric and concrete manifestation of their rejection of each other, rooted in the earliest phases of identification and incorporation, rejection and projection (see A. Freud 1996). The case describes how both Hernán in Russia and Alexey in Argentina avoided eating each other's food, avoiding meals with each other to avoid the cuisine.

Stereotype pushes into the picture with both groups characterizing the other as exhibiting high-power distance (Hofstede 1991): “[Russians] are more anarchical and hierarchical. . .” and “the average Argentine tends toward subordination. . .” (Harvard Business School 1996:9). Because of their anxiety the fear of each other's strangeness is manifest as worry over differences, particularly concern that Alexey disagreed with and had a different idea from Emilio's aims for the project. Thus, Alexey is believed to not share the group's goals, will not cooperate to advance them, and is not a culture/group/family member in that he shares mutually understood meanings and interests, in this case in terms of programming. This worry is accepted and assumed as fact, so that Hernán proceeds by treating Alexey as if his interests/agenda are different and using that as a starting point.

On a Wider Playing Field

These dynamics are obviously not only in play in dyadic and small group interactions, but can also apply in large group conflicts; wherever boundaries of Self and the Other are articulated, ingroup and outgroup membership is identified. Rubin, Pruitt and Kim (1994) succinctly described the phenomenon of escalation of conflict in large groups in their book *Social Conflict: Escalation, Stalemate and Settlement*. Just as at InterSoft, groups seem to be

vulnerable to the dynamics leading to escalation of conflict and polarization of positions and identities, when they are under threat of some sort, real or perceived; and prey to the anxiety that is the affective concomitant of such threat. Loewenberg (1995) surveys history in terms of periods of such threat, and associates social regression to gross violence as a function of fear during such periods.¹⁶

Rubin, Pruitt, and Kim describe seven aspects of negative attitudes and perceptions that promote escalation of conflict, of which we list four here. First, when something unpleasant happens, someone must be found to blame. If it is ambiguous who the culprit should be, the party whom one least likes and who is most distant from oneself will be blamed. Second, when someone is not trusted, if they are a stranger, then their actions are viewed as being threatening when they are in fact ambiguous. Therefore initially, Alexey's position about how the IDEAFIX design should be programmed was at best ambiguous and understated, but Hernán and his colleagues were quick to perceive Alexey as being oppositional. Third, inhibitions against aggression are diminished, allowing further polarization of negative attitudes. This we saw in Alexey's thinly disguised hostility toward Hernán. People are unwilling to do battle with those in their own party, or against people they like, even when they are to blame for a problem; contrarily, they are quite willing to be aggressive against people they do not like. If such aggression degenerates into name-calling, inhibitions against aggression are even more likely to disappear: "Name-calling strengthens the impression that the other is morally inadequate and dissimilar to oneself." Although Alexey did not introduce name-calling of the person of Hernán per se, he implied them by suggesting Hernán was Emilio's minion, and by introducing

¹⁶For example, Lowenberg includes the Age of Renaissance as a time of changing ethos, where the Great Plague and ravaging wars in Europe occurred simultaneously. Similarly he associates the Protestant Reformation and its challenge to the social fabric of Christian society with the Inquisition and the widespread practice of torture. Closer to home, he points to the internment of Japanese Americans to the anxiety of the country during its involvement in World War II.

provocative, galvanizing terms (in upper case letters) like “PROVOCATION” and “CENSORSHIP,” at which point the affect in their email exchange became markedly more combative.

Finally, a significant factor in the escalation of negative attitudes and perceptions is the avoidance of communications. “People tend to avoid those toward whom they are hostile.” What started as a convenient mode of communication (email) evolved into avoidant communication. As the controversy increased and misunderstanding grew, more, not less, information was needed to be exchanged to allow the two parties to find enough common ground between them again. This need must have been glaringly obvious and equally glaringly missing as these two or three continued their controversy behind their computer screens, all within a few feet from one another. Such circumstances could allow greater deindividuation than was necessary since one's words on an email convey considerably less than the person of one's self.

Observations

The individuals involved in a negotiation like Alexey, Hermán and Emilio are constantly discriminating and making on-the-spot judgments in a psychologically complex field, some of which is partially accessible and much of which is virtually opaque. Behavior and perceptions in negotiating situations (in ways we venture to say are ubiquitous) are shaped by our (human) condition, psyche, and personality in modes of operation that are intrinsically rooted in habits of relating. Rather than providing a uniform background against which negotiations play out, these human characteristics create a shifting and charged field in which acts that remain ambiguous to the agent can quickly be mobilized and acquire a force and significance that is discontinuous with their origins. The felt significance of these acts may only become apparent after a substantial delay as they become active in the dynamics of strangeness. By the time such effects

are felt, the act which triggered them will often be part of an interpretive snarl that is difficult to sort out.

These “fields” are not balanced, but charged locally. In some regions, the local character may lend itself to identification, making it more likely that individuals will find the kind of common experience and cause in their interactions that makes it more likely that trust can develop spontaneously. The neighborhoods in which negotiation takes place, however, are more often marked by group distinctions, tensions, and histories of contention that charge the field in ways that highlight differences and produce experiences of alienation and disrespect that both trigger and enhance the development of the dynamics of strangeness that we have elaborated. These dynamics are shaped at a micro-level in interactions, but are felt as other-anxiety and mistrust and, at this level, have marked tangible effects on the outcome of negotiations.

By calling attention to the psychological depth of the processes at play in negotiation we neither wish to bemoan personal experience — nor condemn negotiators to worry the pitfalls of other-anxiety. The diversity and complexity of individual experience is part of our human condition, and the capacity to fear and mistrust is continuous with the capacity to find commonality, to play, to trust, and to love. To revile or reject certain aspects is to also reject our ability to learn, to reason, and to understand.¹⁷ If the capacities and tendencies that create the potential for the instigation and rapid escalation of dynamics of strangeness are part of our human experience, they are not all of it. Our experience is also characterized by the ability to reflect, to make disagreements meaningful, and to develop relationships in which understanding and trust are possible.

¹⁷We echo Rawls' (1993) comments in his discussion of “reasonable pluralism” as a natural outcome of the operation of human reason under free institutions. “We expect deep differences of opinion, and accept this diversity as the normal state of the public culture of a democratic society. To hate that fact is to hate human nature, for it is to hate the many not unreasonable expressions of human nature that develop under free institutions.” p. 249 (emphasis added).

In this reflexive capacity, we find new depth in established propositions like “separate the people from the problem.” The desire for distance expressed in this prescription is understandable since people factors are insuperably complex, often intractably unforgiving, and capable of escalating the problem into something considerably larger and unsolvable than the immediate situation. As others have pointed out, however, people cannot be separated from the problem since, in many cases or in important respects, the people are the problem.¹⁸

We do not think such a literal reading is required, however. We can also understand Fisher, Ury, and Patton's (1991) admonition to connote the kind of reflexive capacity we have been drawing on and suggesting is important for the development of negotiation practice. Reflecting on experience and practice involves a kind of distancing that allows us to see negotiation problems in terms of relationships, patterns of communication, and other characteristics of the process that are distinct from the people involved. This is consistent with the move we stressed earlier from seeing trust as a characteristic of individuals, groups, or organizations (and therefore of traits), to seeing trust as a characteristic of relationships (and therefore of process). This reflective distancing is essential in our ability to perceive patterns in our own experience and to act on the insights this provides. If we treat ourselves as part of the people, then the distance implied by common sense statements such as “get perspective” invoke a reflexive awareness that is also distancing and essential to the development of practice and the ability to engage problems like other-anxiety that operate at a tacit level.

This insight raises the question of whether self-conscious, reflective negotiators, with a more developed vocabulary of trust, might, by making trust “studied,” also contribute to its development (Sabel 1992). For instance, a greater appreciation of the depth and complexity of other-anxiety and the dynamics of strangeness creates the opportunities to shape the development

¹⁸Michael Wheeler has made this point eloquently as part of the PON working group discussions and elsewhere.

of a relationship in ways we favor. Alexey may not have liked Hernán's food, but if he had realized the significance of his reaction he may have been willing to try it (opening the further possibility that he might actually like it). The effect of such an act may extend beyond neutralizing a source of tension. As much as the rejection of food resonates with and amplifies perceptions of difference, the sharing of food may work in the other direction, building a sense of intimacy and commonality.

Here we may see additional significance to the off-line conversations that many analysts suggest are good for negotiation. Beyond the suspension of rules and commitments that are often associated with openness and insight, the seemingly incidental attributes of such “walks in the woods” may provide low-level perceptions of commonality and the sense of sharing an experience that can provide traces of intimacy and comprehensibility. In other words, these off-line “walks” may provide an affective or emotional experience in the presence of another in which the other's separateness and different skin, will, body, motivations, and agenda do not impinge on those interests that are critical to our well-being. It might bring an interpersonal or relational event into experience that teaches a person to expect something new that is consistent with the development of trust.

Such moments receive attention in a broad range of literature. One of the most captivating is Michael Piore's discussion of the cocktail party.¹⁹ Prior to discussions (negotiations in our terms) in which a lot is at stake, he suggests it is important to have discussions in which nothing is at stake. These are not to be informal or extracurricular discussions of the same issues we will return to in the morning. They should be moments of interaction that, like a good cocktail party, are convivial and engaging enough to distract participants from whatever limited

¹⁹Michael Piore, personal communication at Centre de Philosophie du Droit, Université Catholique de Louvain, October 1997.

stakes have not been bracketed by the organization of the event and allow them to meet one another.

When these off-line conversations succeed, they may not only forestall the development of other-anxiety and mistrust, but also contribute to the ability of negotiators to open a sphere of play. When negotiators develop enough common ground and points of identification to haggle without fear of hurting each other or being hurt, they may be able to share information well enough to invent options, and vicariously and fluently transpose positions with one another. By separating inventing from committing, negotiators can reach a pass, whether it is over formal issues or the negotiation of pure mutuality, in which they might be said to know joy, in Winnicott's sense. This would be joy as in en-joy-ment when one knows the full mettle of one's own agency, can reach out and manipulate and create and be manipulated and created without any fear of loss or destruction. In contrast, to the extent one's expectation of trust is conditional upon specific variables of associations and history (as it is for all of us), we might expect a panoply of factors or independent variables to affect the dynamics of trust between two or more negotiators.

In a related vein, we may come to see additional significance in advice like invent options for mutual gain. The creation of value is generally commended both as a way to bridge divisions by increasing the pool of resources that is available and as demanding a reorientation from strategic interaction to collaborative problem-solving. From the perspective we have outlined, mutual gains take on a new significance rooted in the interesting way they balance the subtle dynamics of inclusion and exclusion.

Inclusion and exclusion, as we have discussed them, are linked, two sides of a coin. Any act of inclusion draws a boundary that some others are outside. In negotiation these boundaries

are often tangible and laden with skepticism about motivations given seemingly incompatible ends. Absent mutual gains, the satisfaction of material interests is an act of exclusion: I benefit to the extent you lose. In this context, negotiation becomes a strategic effort to secure value at the expense of the other, that often extends (at least at the margin) to a willingness to sacrifice understanding in the service of our distinct ends.

Mutual gains disrupt the alignment between these dynamics and may offer a way to balance inclusion and exclusion. Mutual gains permit the inclusion of the other in a (perhaps provisional) “we” that not only does not come at the cost of me, but in which I can be seen to prosper distinctly only to the extent that you also prosper. Thus mutual gains may provide both ground and evidence for a subtler balancing of self and other in negotiation.

If we consider the importance of self-esteem as emphasized by Kohut, another layer of significance is added. The benefits that “deals” provide can also serve as tangible, and therefore durable, expressions of respect. To the extent they respond to the needs and interests of the other, they acknowledge the Other's status as legitimate. Bargains are particularly interesting in this respect since they provide an important option in the development of a relationship or a broader negotiation. Bargains provide tangible benefits that also function as evidence of respect before understanding of the other is developed. As such, they undercut the development of mistrust and provide the kind of “shingling,” or bootstrapping, between securing tangible benefits and developing understanding that is important in the development of trust and relationships.

This emphasis on respect also calls attention to the character of negotiation as communicative action. Speech may be seen as a material practice that provides numerous points

in which parties will demonstrate either respect or disrespect.²⁰ This characteristic of speech has been emphasized in the development of communicative ethics. Simple and ordinary acts like listening, giving reasons, and taking turns acknowledge the status of the other as someone who can be understood and a legitimate participant in the moral-practical conversations in and through which negotiations play out.²¹ Rather than trivial, such acts have a status of demonstrating moral respect rooted in universal communicative competences and commonplace experiences.²² If the derivation of these speech acts as inherently ethical seems remote, the effects are decidedly direct and immediate. Individuals are sensitive to the various and subtle ways in which conversational acts can acknowledge or undercut one another's status and demonstrate respect or disdain. Both the organization and practice of negotiation offer a wide variety of opportunities to demonstrate the kind of respect that can ameliorate the influence of other-anxiety and contribute to the development of trust relations.

Finally, the analysis calls attention to the importance of organizational processes and extends the account of their significance. Interpersonal dynamics are not all that is at play in the

²⁰Consider the comments of Watzlawick, Weakland, and Frisch (1974): "It is difficult to imagine how any behavior in the presence of another person can avoid being a communication of one's own view of the nature of one's relationship with that person and how it can, therefore, fail to influence that person." (xv-xvi. authors' emphasis)

²¹Benhabib (1992) describes these conversational acts as demonstrating "universal moral respect" and "egalitarian reciprocity."

²²Benhabib (1992:52) develops the tie between the theoretical depth of communicative action and commonplace practices with precision and clarity. "[I]f we do not view such discourses in legalistic terms as articulating the standpoint of right-bearing 'generalized others,' and if we understand them as the continuation of ordinary moral conversations in which we seek to come to terms with and appreciate the concrete others' point of view, we do not have to submit to the distorting lens of procedural universalism. To argue that the counterfactual ideas of reciprocity, equality and the 'gentle force of reason' are implicit in the very structures of communicative action is to argue that the 'moral point of view' articulates more precisely those implicit structures of speech and action within which human life unfolds. Each time we say to a child, 'But what if other kids pushed you into the sand, how would you feel then?', and each time we say to a mate, to a relative, [or a co-worker], 'But let me see if I understand your point correctly,' we are engaging in moral conversations of justification. And if I am correct that our goal is the process of such dialogue, conversation and mutual understanding and not consensus, then discourse theory can represent the moral point of view without having to invoke the fiction of the homo economicus or homo politicus. To know how to sustain an ongoing human relationship means to know what it means to be an 'I' and a 'me', to know that I am an 'other' to you and that, likewise, you are an 'I' to yourself but an 'other' to me. Hegel had named this structure that of 'reciprocal recognition.' Communicative actions are actions through which we sustain such human relationships and through which we practice the reversibility of perspectives implicit in adult human relationships."

InterSoft case. Organizational conventions helped scramble the wires of communication, rendering already difficult problems impossible. It is not possible to disentangle the development of Alexey and Hernán's relationship from organizational norms like the preference for email as the primary form of interaction (even for people sitting in the same room) or from routine practices like copying (cc) superiors on memos. The routines that shape Hernán and Emilio's interaction are confusing at first and remain vexing to Alexey even after they are explained.

From an organizational perspective, it is perhaps neither surprising nor particularly problematic that these tensions arise. What is significant is that there are no second-order processes in place to help parties perceive or engage (much less manage) the unintended consequences of their interaction. The consequences are not restricted to bad feelings between employees. The development and perhaps viability of an important strategic partnership hangs in the balance when Alexey and Hernán interact.

If an organizational perspective can help us to see the influence of routines and the absence of recursive processes, it should also help us see that establishing these conversations is not a straightforward proposition. It is not enough to simply build time for discussion — though that would certainly be preferable to what we observe in the case — but to build the capacity to recognize the need for and to create the capability to inquire which demands a particular kind of conversation that can deal with the counterintuitive quality of organizational life.²³

²³Schön's (1995:73) account of what he and Argyris have observed in well-intentioned efforts to change organizational practices gives an idea of the challenges involved: "Argyris and I have been impressed, as a result of our research, with the step-function difference between what happens when people discover problems and invent strategies of action, and what happens when they actually try to produce their inventions under everyday conditions of real time and pressure—especially when it comes to situations of embarrassment or threat. Under these conditions, individuals frequently produce actions contrary to their inventions and are unaware of the discrepancy. To take one instance, a manager may want to persuade her subordinates (middle managers) to stop withholding negative information in their evaluations of their workers. But she may actually employ, unaware, the very strategies she wants her subordinates to give up. In order to avoid upsetting her subordinates, for example, she may smooth over her negative attributions. And her unawareness in such a case is likely to be due not so much to ignorance as to skillful adherence to the theories-in-use learned early in life."

Thus, as much as Hernán or Emilio may want to set up a process to identify tangles in the wires of communication and sort them out, we might expect that they will encounter difficulties in their efforts. We should be sober about the need to engage the vulnerabilities of organizational life where “inquiry always has a political meaning... [and] the inquirer risks becoming caught up in contests, games, and deceptions—the ordinary stuff of what Argyris and I have called ‘limited organizational’ learning systems.” (Schön 1995:97). Schön and Argyris suggest that what is called for when organizational practitioners get stuck is a form of collaborative inquiry that can produce systematic reflection on what practitioners know and what they do and get at the underlying assumptions, implicit frames, and methods of inquiry. Such inquiry must be able to engage the propensity of individuals in organizations to “learn collectively to maintain patterns of thought and action that inhibit productive organizational learning” (Argyris and Schön 1996:20)²⁴

The practical implications of the preceding analysis are not subsumed by the prescriptive statements they generate. This is not the least because the forces inherent in these dynamics can at times be considerable (if not elemental) and therefore hardly open to direct influence or manipulation. In many, if not most, cases, however, sophistication and sensitivity to these dynamics increases the chances of averting tightness in the system. It is likely that Hernán and Alexey did not think of their conflict in terms of trust or anxiety about each other. If they did, it is even less likely they would have been inclined to look too deeply into the source of their anxiety, which we suggest is to some degree based on each one's strangeness to the other — in fact taps into the deepest anxieties we can have. Possibly because of the depth of that anxiety,

²⁴Argyris and Schön refer to their model for this kind of inquiry by the descriptive name “Model II” described at length in Argyris and Schön (1996). It is a form of double-loop learning that involves the kind of complex forms of reflexivity that Bateson (1972) described as “deutero-learning” and is distinguished by reflection on context and the way it shapes “habits of thought.”

because of all kinds of social prohibitions and prejudices, there is a barrier of thought and prohibition of discussion around these issues. For example, although Alexey and Hernán hated each other's food and mentally castigated each other's culture, it would be a surprising pass indeed if this issue ever surfaced as a source of their disagreement. Yet without acknowledgment it is difficult to lay these fears to rest, and in this particular case a vicious cycle was afoot.

In Conclusion

As we have outlined, such analysis calls negotiators' attention to the variety of opportunities that exist to work against this grain, acknowledge the other, build understanding, demonstrate respect, and take other steps that forestall the development of other-anxiety and mistrust. This sensitivity also contributes to the development of a reflective voice that can be sustained throughout negotiation. This ability to reflect on practice, whether in on the spot adjustments in the flow of action or in efforts to “replay the tape” after a round of negotiation, is essential for good practice and, in particular, for the conduct of inquiry that provides a model for negotiation consistent with the psychological complexity we have outlined.²⁵ The kind of awareness of broad trends and sensitivity to the way their expression is shaped by the particularities of the participants and issues that we have been discussing contributes to an ongoing reflective narrative that can inform action as a negotiation unfolds as well as enhance retrospective examination of experience. Much of this cannot be expressed in positive statements about what to do or avoid, yet still contributes to the development of practice characterized by

²⁵Schön (1992) draws on Dewey's theory of inquiry to describe a ladder of reflection that moves from “knowing-in-action” (“the knowing built into and revealed by our performance of everyday routines of action”) and “reflection-in-action” (the “ability to take note of surprise and respond to it—to be puzzled, uncertain, or doubtful, if only momentarily, and to respond smoothly through on-the-spot experiments”) to a “conversation with the situation” (“an inquirer's conversation-like transaction with the materials at hand”), “reflection on knowing-in-action”(where “thought is turned back on itself . . .” in a “process of getting in touch with the understandings we form spontaneously in the midst of action”) and the “reflective conversation with the situation” (inquiry “mediated by conscious reflection on the situation and, at the same time, on one's way of thinking and acting on it”). (See Schön 1992: 124-127).

the kinds of sensitivity that are the negation of the blunt, unaware practices that contribute most directly and aggressively to the development of other-anxiety.

Some of this discussion may seem rather lofty and abstract. We suggest it is a function of the topic itself. We have attempted to articulate a social and interpersonal phenomenon that is at once intrinsic to the human condition and, as such, ubiquitous across a wide range of contexts. At the same time, in its manifestations it often tends to be very particular and idiosyncratic, so that there is an elusive or “ungraspable” quality about it. Perhaps one could liken it to a cold virus: they are everywhere but they are in so many forms and mutations that doctors can hardly be bothered to know all of them. Unless one is infected oneself, it suffices to understand the general idea of virus. One does not really want to know more than the fact that people get easily caught in it; it is part of the human condition, and if you can help it, stay out of it. If caught, however, there is nothing but to allow its course and step out of its path such that the condition doesn't get much worse, by taking such precautions as lowering fevers, etc. Summing up, this discussion might be viewed as a cozy treatise on the common cold and sharing folksy insights into avoiding its perils. Similarly anxiety bites us all and takes us out of our game so that we are not at our best. It is not what we would wish for but we don't choose when it happens or with whom. It is infectious, so that even when someone else has it first we are quickly caught up in it. For a while our reality is lived by different rules even as we struggle to be normal.

Yet by knowing Other-anxiety by name negotiators may be able to significantly mitigate its harmful effects, even while it cannot be altogether avoided. Moreover, timely acts of kindness, generosity, or forgiveness, akin to wrapping oneself up in a muffler and lying supine in one's favorite chair, may be necessary to restore the system to health.²⁶

²⁶We thank the PON working group on psychoanalytical processes and negotiation for providing a forum to develop these ideas and enriching these discussions as well as for the support to produce this essay.

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