Per Apelmo, Hannes Lundkvist & Dan Tedenljung

Space for play as intermodality

Expressive Arts as an educational philosophy and practice

Abstract

Building on the view of play as an educational philosophy and practice presented in our first article, this current article presents ways of creating space for play as intermodality. Expressive Arts (EXA) is presented as a method and a tool with which to create this space, which can be realised in different contexts. In connection with this, we highlight various spatial aspects that influence a social and educational space of this nature, in which people interact on the basis of their different life experiences. Finally, we discuss what we consider to be the key constituents of an educational philosophy and practice that aims to create space for play. This includes a discussion of phenomenology, hermeneutics, the role of verbal language, "communication in relation", intersubjectivity, moments of change and learning that aims to be innovative.

Key concepts: Expressive Arts, intermodality, intersubjectivity

Introduction

By way of introduction, we refer back to our first article,[1] in which we call for the reclaiming, restoration and re-establishing of play and the field of play in a social perspective. We have also written that, with its potential to transcend boundaries and its challenges, the field of play can open doors to the mystery of being and of the world. Play is designated as text (the symbolic plane) and the structure of the play as context (the plane of reality).[2] Play requires a knowledge of codes and techniques, and also time, security and freedom from pressure to perform. An occasion where several people play together touches upon fundamental aspects of interpersonality. .Key to this is an immediate, emotional intersubjective participation.[3] The ability to relate to each other and play together presupposes receptiveness, sensitivity and openness to the Other.[4] Play assumes a desire to learn *from* the Other rather than to learn *about* the Other.[5] From this responsibility unfolds an ethics. Ethics can thus be seen as an approach that precedes and is intensified in the interaction of "communicating relationships".[6] However, a fundamental prerequisite for play is confidence and trust[7]. When adults are invited to enter into a play space, significant demands are placed on the leadership of a process[8] whose aim is to invite participants

[1] Apelmo P. & Tedenljung D. (not pub.).
[2] Røed Hansen B. (1991).
[3] Knutsdotter Olovsson B. (1998), Winnicott D.W. (1971/1982), Stern D. (2004).
[4] Todd S. (2003).
[5] Todd S. (2003).
[6] Levinas E. (1969).
[7] Winnicott D.W. (1971/1982).
[8] Apelmo P. (2009, not pub.).

into, and also to shape, a functioning social space that facilitates play.

Space for play – initial issues

The literature on education includes thinking around "spaces for education" or "the educational aspect of the space". This is because all educational activity is related to place; it is earthbound, territorial, local and otherwise bound by its context.[9] The establishing of a play space builds on an awareness of the meaning of the place, the physical space, the formal space and the social space. As educators,[10] we always enter a "room" – a physical place. We want to bring into this room our philosophy, our theory, our tools and our methodology, and we come with an idea and aspirations for what our educational approach will be in our encounter with the assembled group of individuals. We also carry with us a formal space that constitutes the formal basis of our encounter, in the form of conditions, intentions, timeframes and codes of conduct etc. Time after time we have had to ask ourselves: Why is it that my ideas sometimes take a destructive form, so that the reality becomes the opposite of what was intended – why do processes in the space become rigid or restrained? Why are my educational ideas sometimes not translatable into spatial representations? As a process leader, you have an idea of what is supposed to happen in the educational space, but these ideas are influenced by a number of spatial aspects that are seldom taken into account. The space that is here and now presents us with a complex challenge. How do we fashion a coordinated space where the participants are offered involvement that aims to achieve a meaningful reciprocity and thus justifies the work that lies ahead?

In the following representation of the educational space we use EXA as an example. EXA creates space for play and thus provides a methodology and tools with which to concretise the play and philosophical approach presented earlier.[11] In this article, we attempt to name the spatial aspects that our concept stands and falls by – that is, the aspects of a space that must be taken into account if our concept is to be portrayed as *praxis*, as defined by Freire. Our focus here is on individual adults, even if experiences presented also apply to children. Children can go straight into play mode without thinking. Adults, we would claim, also have the option to do this, even if they do not make use of it. However, the issue of a space for play in a professional context needs to be addressed and clarified. We are of the opinion that organisations where a functioning interaction between colleagues and encounters with users, clients or customers are key to its achievements would have much to gain from an in-depth conversation addressing the educational dimensions of their work.

Expressive Arts (EXA) as a space for play: tools and methodology

Expressive Arts (EXA) – in Swedish 'Uttryckande konst'[12] [13] – is intermodal work in the

[9] Løvlie L. (2007).

[10] Later, we use the concept of process leader so as to encompass other types of leaders of educational activity.

[11] We have previously formulated our concept of the approach that we feel should be at the basis of the educational space (Apelmo P. & Tedenljung D., not pub.). One can of course choose to view EXA from alternative entry points.

[12] The text in the following section has previously appeared in different versions. See Apelmo P. (1996, 1997, 2009). References are made in these texts to authors such as Bereznak-Kenny C (1989), Blatner A.H. (1996), Carlberg G. (1994), Chodorow J. (1991), Crafford C. (1994), Dropsy J. (1991), Ellneby Y. (1994), Freire P. (1970/1993), Gersie

transitional spaces between different forms of artistic expression (artistic languages).[14] The participant is invited to enhance their work through the transitions between different artistic languages, verbal languages and different sensory modalities. This is called "intermodal transfer" and is specific to EXA. Because several artistic languages are used, the participants are constantly engaged in new ways. At the same time, the participants' own senses are activated. A key understanding is that, in a creative process, in the search for forms of expression, a person is involved as a whole being with all their senses and all their emotions. EXA invites participants to communicate expressively and aesthetically in and through forms of artistic expression. "Expressively", here, refers to the participant having the opportunity to express themselves, both in the context of one or several artistic languages and at the same time in and through one or several sensory modalities, either individually or as a group. "Aesthetically", here, means that the participants are encouraged to seek out their own, and sometimes, by agreement, joint, "authentic expressions". Within EXA, an "authentic expression" is perceived to have the same value as an aesthetic expression. Since the concept of authenticity is not wholly unproblematic, it might be better to talk in terms of sincerity and honesty.

We see EXA as a tool that builds on and stimulates play, at the same time developing the ability to play. EXA opens the way to intersubjectivity, to narratives of lived experiences and implicit knowledge but also to explicit knowledge[15] and contemplation. EXA is closely linked to creativity and the vitality and importance of creativity for individual and group development. The different artistic forms of expression are expressive and aesthetic in nature respectively and we choose to summarise these forms of expression as play. Our perceptions of what play is can vary, depending, for example, on whether we have phenomenological motives for a definition or practice-based motives for a definition; but allow us to suggest that play is a fundamental activity for human beings and accommodates many different forms of expression and motives.

In addition to play, the artistic forms of expression in EXA are bodywork/movement, sound/music, visual images/sculpture, poetry/myths and folktales, drama/staging, conversation

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A. (1990), Grönlund E. (1988, 1991), Hedenbro M. (2006), Hostrup Larsen H. (1987), Kellerman P.F. (1992), Knill P. et al. (1993), Knutsdotter Olovsson B. (1998), Levin S. and Levin E. (1999), Lundgren N. and Norrby L. (1988), Luterkort B. (1999), May R. (1993, 1994), Molander B. (1996), Morgan A. (2000), Perneman J.E. (1977), Robbins A. (1987, 1988, 1994), Rogers C. (1995), Rogers C. and Freiberg H.J. (1994) Rogers N. (1993), Ruud E. (1990), Røed Hansen B. (1991), Røine E. (1992), Schaverein J. (1992), Soltved M. (2005), Stern D. (2004), Todd S. (2003), Ullman M. & Zimmerman N. (1996), Whitmont E. (1992), Winnicott D.W. (1971/1982), Yalom I.D. (1985, 2002/2009). This presentation is based both on the literature and on the experience gained from 25 years of work in practical educational contexts.

[13] EXA emerged in the United States during the 1970s and has its starting point in experiences of treatment-focussed work and educational practice where there have been active attempts to work intermodally. Central figures in EXA include Paulo Knill and Margo Fuchs, Steve and Ellen Levine, Markus Alexander, Natalie Rogers, Arthur Robbins and Shaun McNiff, USA. Swedish and Norwegian institutions are represented by Margareta Wärja and Melinda Meyer respectively.

[14] We should add that all languages and all expression can be said to be *artistic*. In other words, we do not make a value judgement about these concepts in these articles. *Artistic* is a term for everything we at any given moment consider to be art, whether it is intended as art or not (Rancière J. 2003, p. 72).

[15] Stern D. (2004).

and joint action.[16] *Bodywork/movement* is about creating and interpreting through physical expression. Bodywork/movement provides a foundation; the body is used for all creative work, whatever the artistic language. *Sound/music* is about making sounds and listening to sounds. It is about rhythm, and tempo, with their links to the body – pulse and heartbeat, for example – in a creative process. *Visual images/sculpture* is about creating with the aid of all the various tools and materials relevant to creating images or building sculpture. The work also uses ready-made images or sculptures as sources of inspiration and dialogue for a person's individual creativity. *Drama/staging* is about previously-written material, as well as material created during a session – interpretation, theatre, improvisations and similar work. *Poetry, myths* and *folk tales* is about words – improvisation and playing with words. Existing texts may also be used as a source of dialogue and inspiration. *Conversation* and *joint action* relate to the continuous dialogue that emerges in the EXA work between the participant and the process leader. Joint action is used here as a term for what emerges from a piece of work in which thinking and action are united in a mutually meaningful exchange between the parties involved. The common feature is that the participants, including the process leader, express themselves in the various languages. Through the various languages, the participants interact with themselves and others at the same time. It is important to emphasise that there are no rules determining how the different languages are expressed, other than that participants should aim for "authentic expression" and that no-one should come to harm.

In the work in and through EXA, a distinction is made between process and the products created in the form of, say, images, texts, dramas or pieces of music. The work in and through EXA is not limited to *one* artistic language, *one* method of expression or only *one* communication modality. The intermodality of the work facilitates transitions between different forms of expression and therefore enables work that is more in-depth and broader in scope. An artistic expression – a symbol – says something different to what can be captured by traditional verbal methods. In its practical application, EXA's modality makes it possible to adapt the work to the participant, the individual or the group in question. The starting point for the work can be the "language", the form of expression and the sensory modality that the participant themselves chooses to work through, a choice that can later be broadened to include others. The participants act by expressing themselves, mainly through the various artistic languages available to them but also through conversation and joint action. It is the process that is the main focus of interest. However, the product is not insignificant. It documents the process and is a catalyst for continued exploration and building of knowledge. EXA, and play in and through EXA, provide a context for intersubjectivity. This form of context can be described metaphorically as a stage being set for storytelling, listening and "communication in relation". A stage is set on which the participants become visible and seen in a special way and where EXA provides tools for storytelling in and through play. This generates opportunities to encounter "The Other"[17] in the theme that has arisen or arises. Work in and through EXA takes place in spaces organised specially for this type of activity. By this we mean the formal space, the physical room with its various types of equipment and practical arrangements, and the social space with its shape and

[16] The boundaries between the various forms of artistic expression are of course not as clearly defined they appear in a schematic presentation such as this.

[17] Apelmo P. & Tedenljung D. (not pub.), Levinas E. (1969), Todd S. (2003).

structure and its democratic orientation. Into this context the participants bring both their lifeworld experiences and their individual cultural identities. Lifeworld experiences and cultural identity thus become important aspects of our understanding of what sets the conditions for the social space.

Skaparkväll in Ansgar Church – an example

A normal *Skaparkväll* (Creative Evening)[18] brings together around 18 people, both men and women aged between 17 and 61, with the majority aged 20 to 25. During the course of a term, the work reaches around a hundred individuals. It is a meeting of a great variety of people with different life experiences. As one of two process leaders, you never know who will be attending a *Skaparkväll*; the number can vary from just over ten people to around thirty. People who have not attended before – and new participants come along constantly – are spoken to informally as soon as they come through the door. By the time the evening gets underway formally , most people have already heard what the process leader has to say about how the evening is set up (the various strands and stages, approaches and instructions such as: "Whatever you create can never be wrong" and "During the evening you speak as yourself and on the basis of your own experiences").

The system requires everyone to paint. Some participants have experience of creating pictures as adults; for others, it is a new and possibly foreign experience. At a particular point in the evening, each person shares the picture they have painted within a small group. This is the moment for participants to share thoughts, feelings, associations and experiences arising out of the paintings. A participant – we will call them A – steps forward and hangs up their painting. The question that always opens up conversations "What is the painting saying?". The question following that is "What does the painting say about you and your life?" The process leader explains that the moment you express an opinion about a picture you are saying something important about yourself. It could not be otherwise: your thoughts, feelings, associations and interpretations are always based on your own experiences, both reflected experience and the experience that "runs through your veins". A seeks out thoughts, associations and emotions in the encounter with the picture, and participants are allowed to test out thinking – "to test think" – and to reflect freely.

The process leader and more experienced participants stand ready to put questions to A based on what A says and what A has painted. A is told that it is always OK to respond to questions by saying "Pass – I don't want to discuss that", but that others are free to ask questions. The aim of the questions is to open participants up to the different dimensions that the picture might evoke in each one of us. When A has had their say, the other group participants (B, C, D etc. including the process leader) make the picture their own and seek answers to the question, "if this picture was painted by me, what would it be saying about me and my life, or – if relevant – about the current theme, based on my perspective?" Nothing that is said has priority of interpretation over A and A's understanding of their picture. Underpinning the session is a deep respect for each participant's attempts to reflect on their life and to see possibilities. When other people make the picture their own and talk about themselves, their life and their experiences in relation to A's picture, A acquires a wealth of other possible aspects to relate to as they consider their picture. A

[18] Apelmo P. (2012).

is able to see dimensions and angles of approach, and can discover emotional strands that can be useful to them in their attempts to understand themselves in relation to life, life experiences or the theme being addressed. Meanwhile, the other participants reflect their own lives and experiences in A's picture. After that, the sharing continues with other pictures in the same way.[19]

EXA as a stage for life experiences and a space for change

Work in and through EXA is based on the participants' life experiences from a holistic perspective of awareness and consciousness.[20] Themes and questions that arise are processed and analysed both verbally and non-verbally, employing the senses, feelings, movement and thoughts. The aim of the work is to help the participant gain a clearer experience and understanding of themselves and their context and of the themes or the task at hand. The participants also develop their ability to manage and interact with their context in everyday circumstances – to move forward in practice by taking responsive action on the basis of the theme or challenge that is in focus or that has emerged.

The work with EXA requires an openness between the participants and a readiness to delve into areas that feel new and challenging, that create desire and joy but also cause some anxiety. In the work in and through EXA, the participants move in exploratory, cross-boundary, transitive, transformative areas that enable and call for creativity while at the same time constituting play. The work aims to put in place processes that deconstruct what was previously taken for granted and to then change and become reconstructive or reparative. The participants face challenges of a varying nature relating to the moments of openness that occur. Along with openness comes vulnerability. The fragility of our existence is made apparent, as are the opportunities, the strength and the resources – and potential for change – that also arise from the openness. During the process, the participant might find themselves both on the surface and in the depths of their own life experience at the same time. The questioning and the sharing of life experiences help the participant to work towards a breadth and depth in and of their own experience as it emerges from amongst the participants in their encounter with artistic expression. This existential depth is always present, even if, at first glance, the participant – in their own eyes or the eyes of others – appears to relate only to what is happening on the surface. Working with the participant, the process leader attempts to identify the essence of the phenomena that emerge from the activities in the encounter. Within the work with EXA, individual phenomena constitute a source of exploration and interpretation and thereby of a more in-depth understanding.

The objectives of the process and the outcomes of the work are pursued through joint action between the parties. The artistic expressions have a holding and supporting function and meaning. There is an emotional, communicative flow between the person leading and inviting others to the process and the person who chooses to take part in the process. The EXA work seeks out and creates phenomena, as part of the communication that takes place, in order to also actively confront and test out these phenomena. As participants – active subjects – we examine and seek clarity and context in that which sometimes appears unclear and confusing, and whose

[19] For a more in-depth exploration of *Skaparkväll*'s work with pictures, see Forsgård B. (2016). For a more in-depth exploration of EXA as a work process, see Apelmo P. (2009).
[20] Stern D. (2004)

background may be in a cultural sphere that differs from our own. The search for understanding is based on a context that implies specific interpretative assumptions. There are various difficulties associated with the search for clarity in relation to different types of phenomena. My experiences of your experiences become our experiences and then my own again. Interpretations are made on the basis of the conditions supplied by the context. The challenge for the process leader is to work with the participant to seek an understanding and an interpretation of the phenomena that arise. This joint work builds on the participants' pre-understanding, arrived at through previous interpretations of similar situations and contexts and of similar phenomena. Even when a phenomenon is felt to be fundamentally new, previous experiences are used as the basis for interpretation. There is of course the danger of an impasse between all the participating parties. Irrespective of the agreed direction and aims of the process-oriented work, it is important to be aware of the power of transference and countertransference respectively and to consciously work with/via these. These days these concepts are seen as generally applicable and worthy of consideration in any context where people interact with other people. The role of process leader is based on meaningful reciprocity and presence in the encounter with participants. Their work implies a rejection of the traditional "expert role" in which the process leader interprets the participant's material. The process instead advocates a trust in each participant's ability to arrive at insights, both by means of their own inherent resources in and through creativity and through harmony with the creative process of interaction with others. To make it possible to create and enter into a process of happenings, a number of different elements must be in place to underpin and embed the process, elements that also create presence and can function as a warm-up. The main responsibility for these elements lies with the process leader. Thus a space is created in which a person can be at play – a space in which to be a human being capable of reaching a human being's full potential. EXA now opens the way to a deep intersubjectivity.

Work in and through EXA releases the participant from a one-sided trust in explicit knowledge. EXA also demands implicit knowledge, the narrative of lived experience. The creative work produces space for change – in Stern's words, moments arise in which *Chronos* is repeatedly suspended in favour of *Kairos*.[21] We all need access to a stage – that is, a context or a space for educational activity – where we can be seen and where we have a special opportunity and space to give form to what we have to say and also to tell our story. We need space that opens the way to change – space for exactly those moments when *Kairos* suspends *Chronos*. In our day-to-day lives, it may be that our families, friends and work colleagues provide that type of context of shape and space. For some of us, however, it may be important for various reasons to find contexts beyond everyday contexts in which to tell our story. A more specific context is needed to allow us to present our story in a particular way. Challenges we come up against, in our private lives or at work, are such that we need to create specific spaces where the challenges can be accepted and processed – professionally or privately, or by combining the professional with the private. This applies particularly to professional contexts that place significant demands and expectations on active contribution by the individual. People's stories may be long or short: they may be fragments and embryos, or narratives that need to be fine-tuned. They may be stories that were suspected or stories that we did not know existed that now come to the surface. The act of narrating and communicating by means of artistic expression allows physically-embedded

[21] Stern D. (2004).

knowledge and experience that has not yet been formulated in words to sit alongside that which is already known and expressed. An environment is provided in which the participants are able to try things out, explore, experiment and seek out alternative approaches to creating something innovative in a secure environment.

Discussion

On capturing the experience

The literature dealing with EXA and closely-related fields[22] has constant references to phenomenology and hermeneutics. The philosophy and scientific theory that best links to EXA is phenomenology. Phenomenology focuses on the direct experience of a phenomenon. In its simplest form, it is a method of "illuminating" a phenomenon. It observes and investigates how phenomena – events and experiences – actually appear; it focuses on receiving, seeing, illuminating and describing what we actually see. Thus one of its aims is to describe processes and experiences. On a more fundamental level, phenomenology aims to break down and reduce all "being" – everything that is and that we encounter – to a phenomenon, and thereby seek the essence of this "being". It therefore focuses attention on fundamental experiences in life. This has the effect of establishing a more fundamental, direct contact with the world. This contact is given philosophical status and constitutes a link to knowledge that has not been formulated in words. Striving to get access to the fundamental experiences in life avoids the traditional division between mind and body. Perception is seen as an important tool for seeing and illuminating the world and our being in this world. By perception we mean becoming aware of something through our senses and assembling and interpreting these stimuli into a meaningful whole. In addition, existential phenomenology marks a clear link not only to perception but also to the senses. Even if there is a difference between thought and idea in relation to sensory experience, both are seen as of equal interest in our observation of the world. Sensory experiences are more closely linked to a direct experience because of the physical nature of the senses.

To be faithful to the body as a subject is to try to reduce objectification of the body as far as possible.[23] The opposite of this is an attempt to reduce the body to certain functions linked to particular qualities. In these ways of considering knowledge, theory has been prioritised over a holistic way of looking at our consciousness – at the expense of the practical, manual work, and the body. In the phenomenological tradition, it is Merleau-Ponty who places the body at the centre of the work to understand a human being's conditions for existential interpretation. Reason does not provide absolute knowledge. The division between body and soul is a key example of the dualism that is unable to embrace the human being as a whole. This means that the traditional concept of experience is also inadequate. We are our bodies and our bodies precede our collected experiences. In the absence of words, understanding is achieved through perceptions, observations and sensations. A physical awareness emerges. Taking the body as subject is to take into account not only the state of the outwardly observable body but also the –

[22] See for example Bereznak Kenny C. (1989), Gilje N. & Grimen H. (1992), Merleau-Ponty M. (1945/2012), Stern D. (2004) and Apelmo P. (2009).

[23] Thinking 'body' is an objectification. The objectification becomes clearer when we talk in terms of the 'body', finally becoming apparent when we write 'body'.

possibly disregarded – inner body. The body becomes a medium through which the person can relate to their surroundings; at the same time, the body is a part of those surroundings. The body is not just seen, heard and understood: the body sees, hears and understands. Thus the body comes into existence, and at the same time as the body comes into existence it is also subjectified by being enclosed in and through connections emanating from a communicative interpersonal approach. A number of researchers see the strength of phenomenology as in bridging the dualism between the body and consciousness. Merleau-Ponty believes that it is impossible to separate the two. The body is not an object that I possess; I *am* my body and it is through the body that I experience the world. "Consciousness is in the first place not a matter of 'I think that' but of 'I can'", writes Merleau-Ponty,[24] that is, consciousness is directed at the world around us and is thus embodied. Embodiment is an ongoing social process and practice in which physical techniques are learned.

The phenomenological perspective is, essentially, a criticism of the perception that the world appears as something that can be separated from our experiences in line with a traditional theory of knowledge. The phenomenological attitude encourages us to address the contemplation of a phenomenon and how the experience of that phenomenon appears to us. In Husserl's classical phenomenology this is called "bracketing" and means, in popular scientific terms, to place everything that normally binds us to a spontaneous perception of a phenomenon in brackets. We put between brackets our belief in everything in our attitude that appears to be a given. We then adopt a reflexive attitude by focusing on our experience of reality. The separation occurs by marking (or contrasting) the framework of notions that we take for granted that are part of how we naturally perceive things – everything that we take for granted and do not otherwise question. This constitutes the first step of phenomenological reduction. We believe that communication in and through forms of artistic expression facilitates this process, and also facilitates what follows. The second step in phenomenological reduction refers to the sudden or intuitive realisation of the functions that are necessary for experiencing the phenomenon – the "aha! moment" we experience when we suddenly see what we have previously taken for granted in a new way, and perhaps see and experience, feel or touch other things the phenomenon has to convey. This point of realisation is the moment when we *experience* the phenomenon in philosophical terms, in contrast to the attitude we had to the phenomenon at a time when we were still taking it for granted.When, previously, we saw the phenomenon as unchanging, we had not yet *experienced* it.

On interpretation and meaning

When working with EXA, one of the aims is for the participants to work with each other and the process leader to seek interpretations and understanding of phenomena that are often conveyed in the form of interpretations and understanding. The process leader and the participants interact with a phenomenon on the basis of a pre-understanding. An image or a text that may initially seem incomprehensible is always incomprehensible because of the background that we all bring with us in different ways into our search for understanding. Gadamer calls these conditions pre-understanding or prejudices. Pre-understanding is always present – it is pre-understanding that forms the basis of our assessment of a phenomenon that must furthermore always be seen in

[24] Merleau-Ponty M. (1945/2012), p. 159.

conjunction with its context. Also, a person's pre-understanding is not always expressed or verbalised; it may be more or less well thought-out and more or less loosely composed. At the same time, pre-understanding is normally driven by a desire for a holistic approach as a way to orient oneself in one's existence. Sometimes a pre-understanding is distinctive in a way that challenges and causes problems in relationships and other contexts. Pre-understanding is constantly being revised. An interpretation is an attempt to create clarity and ascribe meaning to phenomena that may superficially seem to be unclear, chaotic, incomprehensible or self-contradictory. It is a way of seeking underlying meaning and placing this meaning in a context that affords greater clarity for that which was unclear. A process of interpretation assumes that the person embarking on the process feels it to be a meaningful activity. It is also important to differentiate between meaning and expression. To interpret is to seek meaning with the help of new expressions. "Meaning" can be expressed in different ways. It can be about the meaning of words and concepts, about the relevance and importance of a phenomenon in a precise context or about the intentions of the originator, if one can be identified.

On the role of verbal language in the interaction

For cultures, verbal language and its development have a special status. Verbal language conveys and mediates narratives with tremendous richness. But verbal language can also seem like a straitjacket: what we understand is based on what we already know, and what we know comes from what we are able to understand. The literal reality is what we refer to in everyday language as reality. It is about the everyday or the real – what we often consider objective. We often take this as a given. But that which is objective can exist only within a linguistic, verbal and cognitive context. A reality is made objective by those who are involved and this happens through the conversation between those involved. Thus the objective can only exist in the context of a linguistic construction. Communication – the interaction between subjects – is both enabled and restricted by language as a medium for communication. The object is made comprehensible through language, but the more linguistically and/or rationally distanced the subject becomes from the lived experience, the more unfamiliar are the immediate perceptions and the reactions these give rise to in oneself and in others. The artistic expressions and the joint action in and through EXA in a sense overrule what we take for granted. We reveal and are revealed to ourselves and each other, the Other.[25] In the communicative relationship that is established, new linguistic connections are created[26] and another, different narrative is formulated that, naturally, also includes words. So EXA, with its communication in and through forms of artistic expression, becomes an example – in the body, in emotions, in thoughts, in communication and subsequent conversations – of how process leaders and participants help each other move forward in a continuous coming into being that manifests itself in narratives. An educational context benefits from a broader understanding of a human being's ability to express themselves in and through various forms of language. If education largely involves inviting the subject of the teaching to engage in searching, this invitation will highlight a more extensive repertoire of routes for that searching. We believe that we create a richer process of searching, and a richer understanding of the world around us and of what knowledge is, if we free ourselves from the

[25] Apelmo P. & Tedenljung D. (not pub.).
[26] Knill P. (1993).

linguistic restrictions caused by the special status of verbal language in our cultural context. We also believe that taking this broader view of people as linguistic beings means that we involve more people as subjects in this searching – people who would otherwise be disadvantaged in a speaking and writing-centred society.

On "communication in relation"

Interactions between people consist of the narratives that are exchanged, either physically or verbally or through a different form of communication in or through artistic languages. People create their story and context by communicating. Communication through different types of narrative using different languages may involve short episodes or fragments of a life experience or indeed the broad outlines and perspectives of a person's life. This is emphasised by work in and through EXA in a particular way. Narratives – such as they are presented – emerge from and through process-oriented work and happenings. People are constantly looking for ways of telling stories. They might originate as an idea or an impulse and come to take on a clearer shape later. This may happen more or less consciously. The various forms of artistic expression make it possible to try out different forms of storytelling while at the same time exploring emotions and experiences. As a consequence, forms for a more conscious type of storytelling emerge. A first step is perhaps coming to realise that storytelling actually goes on all the time. A second step might involve playing about with and enjoying the creative urge. A third step could be to observe more consciously what is being expressed by what has been created. It is perhaps not until later that we arrive at a more conscious storytelling through different expressive forms. When a person begins to realise the power and possibilities of storytelling through artistic forms of expression, they start to investigate their own stories – their major narrative and all their smaller tales. This is about people seeking a deeper understanding of their own life and its premises – about major social happenings as well as local ones. The artistic expression gives rise to lived experience – a physically-rooted awareness. Implicit experience – physically-rooted awareness – combines with explicit experience and knowledge. Interacting with other participants provides an opportunity to relate one's own narrative to that of others. Encountering other participants' narratives also prompts an examination of the forms of one's own narrative. Both of these elements provide impetus for further work.

The different aspects of storytelling above are combined and fluctuate in importance in and through the EXA work. This can happen both consensually and unilaterally, and both individually and jointly. During the work, in the process that arises, both the process leader and the participant are engaged in "communication in relation".[27] An environment is fostered in which to break with myths, prejudices and preconceived ideas – to break with that which locks and binds in an effort to open oneself up, continue one's searching and seek out responses to challenges, as well as to seek new forms and innovation in all areas of life from the most private and personal to developments at a joint social level. The process breaks habits in favour of something new. As a process leader – in a context of development – you need to be trained to be able to see the stories in the people you meet and constantly be observant of how "the person who has lived the narrative" is reflected in different ways in and through the body. Also, people

[27] Apelmo P. & Tedenljung D. (not pub.).

recount their narratives in different forms: some people publish books, others paint pictures for exhibition, musicians play their instruments, and so on. Some of us recount our narratives in contexts that are less public. For some people, the narrative is kept within a small circle of friends and acquaintances. An interaction cannot be controlled by explicit knowledge or techniques. There must be a mutual desire to create a synchronised "communication in relation" – like a dance. Here, the non-verbal message is not separated from the verbal; the implicit and explicit knowledge content is integrated. It is the same call to "dance" that is at the basis of play as an educational philosophy and practice, irrespective of the age of the participants. EXA, both as a space in itself and as a tool, enables a process where people meet in a practical context and where the individual's input is recognised. EXA invites participants to "dance" – or play.

On intersubjectivity

We see intersubjectivity as a fundamental innate engagement.[28] People want to be seen but also want to see; people want to be listened to but also listen; people want to be tasted but also taste. People want to be loved but also to love; people want to be understood but also to try to understand. People want to share thoughts, experiences and feelings. This longing for intersubjectivity is sometimes combined with fears, depending on previous experiences of relationships. Fears and conventions inhibit and paralyse. In all contexts, intersubjectivity is a driving force. Intersubjective interaction stimulates a sense of morality and responsibility, which in turn strengthens groups and their cohesion. Intersubjectivity thereby becomes a fundamental motivational system that is crucial to human development. Here we see the emergence of an ethics relating to the Other.[29] However, there are several aspects to consider in terms of intersubjectivity and in the search for an understanding of the qualities of intersubjective contact. We would argue that play in and through EXA trains us how to read, observe and understand the world around us and the people we meet. We are trained in observing the other person's feelings, face, movements, posture, tone of voice and speech rhythm and we practice paying attention to the immediate context.[30] This ability can also be blunted if, to use Buber's vocabulary, we solely live in "the It-world", that is, contexts in which human beings are objectified and reified. The ability needs to be acknowledged, and it can be enhanced through our being made conscious of it. A lack of interaction simply creates distance and alienation. Traditional monologic education has been criticised by several well-known advocates of dialogic education.[31] However, we would argue that concepts of intersubjectivity are needed in that they underline that this monologic education cannot simply be replaced – outright, and without difficulty – by a dialogic education. A dialogic education is a step in the right direction but it does not automatically save us from objectifying relationships. People can be objectified unintentionally – even in an apparently dialogic context. Intersubjectivity concepts make it apparent that the interaction is more complex than can be accommodated in the *monologue/dialogue* conceptual pair and its direct links to what is mainly verbal interaction, and this calls for education that will seriously take on the challenge of

[28] Stern D. (2004).

[29] Todd S. (2003).

[30] Stern D. (2004).

[31] Amongst the most influential are Dewey, Vygotsky, Freire and Dysthe.

an intersubjective approach.[32]

On time allowing space for new interaction

So how do we create contexts that make change possible? According to Stern, "present moments" are the intentions and actions that aim to live through, examine and adapt the intersubjective orientation, and in so doing experience something new, something that transcends boundaries. *Kairos* is the Greek concept of the moment, that is, the everyday human experience of a *present* that suspends *Chronos*. The present moments are moments of *Kairos* and are experienced as an anticipatory "power" that mobilises behaviour.[33] We need once again to ask ourselves: How do we create contexts that make change possible and make *present moments* possible? "How can we pry open chronos to create a *present* long enough to accommodate kairos?"[34] The happening is *in the present*– the decision emerges *in the present*– we create *in the present*– there is change *in the present*. *Chronos* is the economised view of time used by scientists that in many ways characterises our day-to-day lives. In the world of *Chronos'*, the present moment is a point that timewise moves only in a future direction. When it moves, it eats up the future and leaves the past behind it. Here there is no present, in fact. Narratives create a feeling of context and continuity in our lives. Storytelling tames *Chronos*, and makes the passage of time seem familiar, thus making the passage of time endurable. However, storytelling does not tame the present moment. *Kairos*, says Stern:

> // … is the passing moment in which something happens as the time unfolds. It is the coming into being of a new state of things, and it happens in a moment of awareness. It has its own boundaries and escapes or transcends the passage of linear time. Yet it also contains a past. It is a subjective parenthesis set off from chronos. [35]

In *Kairos,* events converge in a present – in a moment. *Kairos* arises from "communication in relation". Moments of possibility are created; we see and understand from new perspectives. The experience and realisation of this require action or create a situation that is favourable for action. The *present* is an occasion for action and change – perhaps only for a moment but also in the longer term. And even if we do not grasp the opportunity that arises, this action is something that changes our lives, even if it is a different type of change. The *present* is a small window of coming into being and opportunity. *Kairos* captures moments of different magnitude – moments of life – of lived experience – beyond words. The words can merely recreate them afterwards. We have all experienced such moments – "[they are] the experiential referent that language builds upon."[36] To tell a story – in an encounter with one or several Others present – is in itself an experience of the *present*. During the creative act, which is a storytelling, a *present* arises. This at the same time implies a recreation of a past moment – a re-telling or revision of something that has happened. Our subjective lives are generally characterised by the feeling that they are taking place in the present. The same is true of our fantasies, our dreams and our expectations for the near or

[32] Freire (1970/1993) may be said to have produced an intersubjective thesis and challenge in the way that he strengthened the dialogue concept by emphasising the importance of a subject/subject relationship.

[33] Stern D. (2004).

[34] Stern D. (2004, p. 26). Stern says that this philosophical issue has been addressed by many people over a long period of years, including Saint Augustine, Heidegger, Husserl, Merleau-Ponty, Ricoeur and Varela.

[35] Stern D. (2004, p. 7).

[36] Stern D. (2004, p. 9).

more distant future; they are experienced in a present. Seeing the experience as so tightly bound to the present is a fundamental aspect of any phenomenological approach. "Presentness is something like an existential affect."[37] Presentness seems also to require a sense of the self. In an educational context, such a pursuit of the *present moment* – a pursuit of presentness – is also a constant pursuit of change. This pursuit subjectifies us in that we seek out transformative *action* and in that it highlights the changeability of society and the world around us. In so far as we talk about an education for subjects – an intersubjective education – it is vital that the participant is given the opportunity to actually enter into subjectivity, which means that we need to create space for *Kairos*. We cannot make others into subjects – a person must enter into subjectivity themselves – but what we can do is to provide them with the tools and conditions to enable them to do so.

On EXA as an innovative educational space

EXA sees people in all their complexity – their physical embodiment, intersubjective dependency and desire to seek a way forward. EXA sees the playing, inquisitive, searching human being. "A person becomes a person when they interact with people"[38] and our basic hypothesis is that "communication in relation" constitutes the human being and thus the educational space. The storytelling person exists in a context of living intersubjectivity, in a living encounter with the Other – the Other as a sensitive listening witness in the "communication in relation" of intersubjectivity. This underpins, and constitutes, what it is to be a human being in "meaningful reciprocity". It is our view that consciousness is presence in relationships. Awareness is a physically-rooted, reflected experience that can sometimes also be understood in, and even translated into, knowledge. But consciousness and awareness also affect how we experience our surroundings. An experience-based awareness can be understood in various dimensions. We consider that a person's consciousness springs essentially from interpersonal experiences as well as from their awareness. It is therefore difficult to restrict oneself to all the ready solutions and models presented in various contexts, whether relating to leadership development or models for organising daycare staff in groups of children that are too big and do not take account of the whole person. Here, people have often been reduced to being someone else's tool, to a being where the only experience that counts is that which is rooted in cognition and communicated in the traditional verbal way.

Work in and through forms of artistic expression is based on practice that, in our context, refers to a fusion of theory and practical application, of body and mind, whose meanings are linked to how we appear in our lives and life contexts in a way that is closely linked to phenomenology. It is based on the human desire to ascribe meaning to various phenomena, and touches on a fundamental understanding of the conditions of human activity. This applies to human activities per se as well as the consequences of human activities. The work builds on a strong trust in every individual's inner drive towards an ability "to find what is innovative" – to find "the point of growth".[39] Change is based on lived experience. Stern writes as follows:

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[37] Stern D. (2004, p. 24).

[38] Apelmo P. (2009).

[39] From Wahl M. (1978).

> "In and of itself, verbally understanding, explaining or narrating something is not sufficient to bring about change. There must also be an actual experience, a subjectively lived happening. An event must be *lived*, with feelings and actions taking place in real time, in the real world, with real people.[40]

"Present moments" constitute the events that change our lives.[41] These events become memories that together form the narrative about our close relationships. Present moments arise in and through intersubjective contact between people. When we furnish an educational space, both physically and in terms of the social and educational frameworks we establish, we are in part creating our own premises. We create barriers and open up opportunities. An innovative educational space needs to restrain any destructive or immobilising elements and create opportunities for *present moments* – in other words, an innovative educational space should put things in place to ensure the emergence of deconstructive processes, creating challenges that lead to constructive change. We would argue that we need to re-evaluate the traditional barriers that are easily replicated in our educational spaces – barriers affecting how we express ourselves, how we interact with others and how we experience our environment and our relationships etc. We have previously discussed the elements that can bring about change; with this final issue it becomes clear that all these elements require a space that creates scope for them.

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[40] Stern D. (2004, p xiii).

[41] Stern D. (2004).

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