

THERAPEUTIC REALITIES AND THE DIALOGICAL: BODY, FEELING, LANGUAGE AND WORLD

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Tom Andersen: "What we come to form, and thereafter understand (both the formed and the forming), emerge from us being **in** language in conversations **in** movements **in** relationships **in** culture **in** nature (we do not have language etc 'in us'). The Being '**in**' these various **ins** can best be understood by letting 'the feeling that comes' (by being in these various **ins**) create its own metaphors, and let those metaphors be part of the language one searches through in order to find a meaning." (no date).

From Bergson (1911) *Creative Evolution*: "Like eddies of dust raised by the wind as it passes, the living turn upon themselves, [like vortices and eddies in a stream – js] borne by the great blast of life. They are therefore relatively stable, and counterfeit immobility so well that we treat each of them as a *thing* rather than as a *progress*, forgetting that the very permanence of their form is only the outline of a movement" (Bergson, 1911, pp.134-135).

They 'counterfeit immobility'... !

What does our thinking need to be like *if it has to take place in a 'fluid space'*, a space in which there are no fixed and finished 'things' in terms of which to conduct it?

Installing ourselves, *now*, at this moment, in the 'flow of experience' currently at work in us, a flow that has not yet been 'worked over', to distinguish *unique features* within it to which we can only give *metaphoric* expression

"An utterance," says Bakhtin (1986), is never just a reflection or an expression of something already existing and outside it that is given and final. It always creates something that never existed before, something absolutely new and unrepeatable... But something created is always created out of something given... What is given is completely transformed in what is created" (pp.119-120).

Therapeutic moments *just happen*.

They cannot be *caused to occur* or deliberately *made to happen* by people following intellectually devised plans, procedures, or protocols – this is because the coordinated execution of all planned activities depends upon all concerned *already sharing* the already existing *concepts* relevant to the formulation of the plan, thus all new plans depend on old concepts.

Consequently, all planned, deliberately conducted activities result in "the continual rediscovery of sameness."

Deep changes:

Further, genuine therapeutic changes are 'deep' changes in that they are not just changes in what we *'think about'*, they are not to do with learning some new and previously unknown facts or bits of information, but changes in what *'we think with'*, changes in how we *relate to*, or *orient ourselves* toward our surroundings.

And as a result – as Tom might put it – to find ourselves immersed *'in'* a situation *quite different* from what we felt ourselves to be *'in'* previously.

A number of surprising consequences:

- 1) It means that language, or better, our *use* of language is always *innovative* or *creative* rather than merely reproductive, concerned with representing what is already in existence.
- 1) As Garfinkel (1967) puts it, communicational events continually happen for “another first time” (p.9); or within “a once-occurrent-event of Being” (Bakhtin, 1993, p.2).
- 1) This leads us to a focus on the *process of communication* – on all the available means of communication at our disposal – rather than just upon the *nature of language* (as in fact a product of the process).
- 4) If all our actual, face-to-face uses of language are *innovative* – as they must be 'tailored' to fit the needs of the situation of their utterance – we cannot, ahead of time, know precisely what it is we need to say in expressing ourselves to others.
- 5) We need their *expressive-responsive listening* as we speak, if we are to continue our speaking with them, otherwise, we will have to re-trace our steps continually, and try to express ourselves to them in other words, until we manage to 'hit on' a form of expression they happen to understand.
- 6) Two kinds of Difficulties we can face in life
 - **1) Problems:** There are those kind of difficulties that we might, following Wittgenstein (1980), call “difficulties of the intellect” (p.17). These are difficulties that we can formulate (or form) as *problems* and *solve* by constructing an appropriate theoretical system within which to 'think them through'.
 - **2) Orientations:** But overcoming an orientational or relational difficulty requires a quite different approach... and that, of course, expresses straightaway the nature of our difficulty: What actually is involved in our approaching a situation or circumstance that we at first find quite bewildering or confusing or dis-orienting?

- Wittgenstein (1980) calls these kind of difficulties, “difficulties of the will” (p.17) – making use of a word, I venture to surmise, with a very bad press among us here in this conference.
- But by it, he means, he says, to draw attention to “what people *want* to see” (p.17), what it is they look for or expect to see as they begin to try to get a sense of ‘where’ they ‘are’, and how they might ‘go on’ within the situation within which they ‘find themselves’.
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- A change in what ‘we think with’ changes the *anticipations* and *expectations* that we have ‘at the ready’, so to speak, as we go out to meet each uniquely new situation, each uniquely new client.
- Thus, as Bateson (1979) notes in *Mind and Nature*, we must distinguish between ‘feedback’ and ‘calibration’: -
 - 1. Feedback:** In the feedback process, a person “does not need to change him- [or her-]self” (p.218), while in the calibration process this is precisely what must happen. Compares *Marksman* with *Huntsman*
 - 2. Calibration:** “What is significant [for the marksman],” says Bateson (1979), “is that the act of self-correction can occur *within* the single act of shooting” (p.211). Whereas, “what must happen [with the huntsman] is that an aggregate of information is taken in through the sense organs... [Thus] the man who would acquire skill with a shotgun... By long practice, he must adjust the *setting* of his nerves and muscles so that in the critical event, he will ‘automatically’ give an optimum performance” (p.211). Training *embodied* expectations and *anticipations*

One of our basic bodily ‘needs’: As Samuel Todes (2001) puts it in his book, *Body and World* – a basic bodily *need* for orientation is continually at work within us – a need to feel ‘at home’ in our surroundings.

We need to have a good sense of ‘where’ we are, ‘what’ actually ‘is’ the situation that we are ‘in’.

We begin by feeling dis-oriented, ‘lost’, and seek to ‘get oriented’.

Thus, the “whole quest of discovery is thus initially... ‘directed’ not *to get* what we want but *to discover what we want to get*”(p.177, my emphasis).

My own disquiets:

On the cover blurb to my *Images of Man in Psychological Research*, published in 1975, I said: “Modern psychology promised to discover the true nature of man [forgive the sexist language] in its laboratories. But it hasn’t. It has only discovered there what happens when

men are led to behave as if they are rats, machines, information channels, etc.... Constructing a true image of ourselves demands a radically different approach.”

And what the nature of that ‘true image of ourselves’ is, both as human beings and as persons, has occupied me ever since.

What we need to inquire into is something that cannot be explored by any of the methods of inquiry well known to us – methods in which we formulate and test theories.

For it is the whole structure of the ways of acting and ways of being in the world that we acquire in the course of our *first language learning* – in learning how *to be* a little Dutch person, English, German, French, or Polish person, able sooner or later to make Dutch, English, German, French, or Polish sense of whatever we at first find bewildering – that is at issue.

And what we do in our first language learning is quite different from what we do in learning to make sense of things in theoretical terms... as I have already indicated, that kind of new learning only *elaborates* what we already recognize as existing in our world.

We learn to make judgements.

Wittgenstein (1953) acknowledges the unexpected nature of this in remarking: “If language is to be a means of communication there must be *agreement not only in definitions but also (queer as this may sound) in judgments,*” and he goes on to note that “it is one thing to describe methods of measurement, and another to obtain and state the results of measurement” (no.242, my emphasis).

For even in the activity of measuring, to make sense of it in ways intelligible to others, we must be able to structure our ‘doings’ as a sequence of events similar in kind to those already known about within *a particular society’s ways of making sense of things*.

If we cannot, then others simply will find fault with our ‘measurements’.

We learn these shared *ways of judging* in the course of our practical involvements *with others*, prior to our gaining a self-conscious sense of their nature conceptually: they simply show up in *how* something is done, in the course of *their doing it... others* teach us these judgements.

A remark of Vygotsky’s (1962) that impressed me right from the moment I read it, which has stayed with me to structure many of my subsequent inquiries:

It is that one of the basic laws of development is that, “consciousness and control appear only at a late stage in the development of a function, after it has been used and practised unconsciously and spontaneously. In order to subject a function to intellectual and volitional control, we must first possess it” (p.90).

In other words, what *later* we might talk of as the child developing language and concepts, and the capacity to act deliberately and to implement planned behaviour, and so on, depends on

them *earlier* performing similar activities, as they spontaneously respond to ‘calls’ occurring around them in their surroundings.

This process – what is at first *done spontaneously* can later be *done deliberately* – ***need not, and does not, stop with our maturing into adults.***

Even as adults, at this very moment, we are perhaps doing something spontaneously, out of our own control, that we might – *with the help of another who notices* an aspect of what we are doing, and draws our attention to it – *come to gain a degree of deliberate control* over it.

Thus to do it again, deliberately, *when we feel it to be fitting.*

Two questions:

1) How might we come to *a reflexive self-awareness* of how some/many of our usually taken-for-granted forms of talk and acting – while quite helpful and practical in many everyday practical situations – can in some others, work to seriously *mislead* us, by arousing in us a whole set of simply wrong *expectations* as to how next things will develop?

2) And how might we find *starting points* for the development of alternative to them?

My four next themes:

- 1) Why Wittgenstein’s (1953) *Philosophical Investigations* are so important to us.
- 2) Why we must ‘cure’ ourselves of Descartes’ *methods*.
- 3) What our lives are like if we truly take our relations to our *surroundings* seriously.
- 4) And, to provide a case of Tom Andersen’s (2008) which exemplifies Vygotsky’s (1962) ‘basic law of development’ and in which he works *within the immediate moment of lived and living experience*.

1) Wittgenstein’s *Investigations*:

In them, he takes our everyday forms of talk entwined activities as basic, and by looking into their “logical grammar” – that is, at the *expectations* they arouse in us as to the next steps they *could* lead us into taking – shows us how easily we can (mis)recognize the unique *what-ness* of the things or events before us:

- How, for example, we can treat something that is a *living* and still developing organism as if it was something *dead* and finished;
- How we can treat something *unfinished* that does in fact arouse an anticipatory response in us (a tense feeling of expectation) as simply presenting us with a *finished* picture (an image, shape, or form) that requires our ‘interpretation’, and so on.

He is thus concerned, as he says, “... to establish an order in our knowledge of the use of language: an order *with a particular end in view*; one out of many *possible* orders; not *the*

order. To this end we shall constantly be giving prominence to distinctions which our ordinary forms of language easily make us overlook” (no.132, my emphases).

Descartes', in his *Discourse on Method* of 1637, made use of what appeared to him as “clear and distinct ideas” in his reflections, which formed the *foundations* for his further inquiries.

He began with how we *reason in Geometry* as his model.

Of the many features structuring what he thought was *the Method of Rightly Conducting the Reason, and Seeking Truth in the Sciences*, I'll mention here two that bothered me greatly (I've picked these, as I think they are still at work in how in fact we conduct our inquiries).

1) **Mastery & Possession:** One is to do with his aim of seeking a “practical philosophy” which – if we can get to know “the power and the effects of fire, water, air, the stars, the heavens and all the other bodies that surround us...” – would allow us to “put them... to all the uses for which they are appropriate, and thereby make ourselves, as it were, masters and possessors of nature” (p.78).

3) **Separate self-contained entities:** The other is to do with his determination, “to speak only of what would happen in a new world, if God were to create... enough matter to compose it, and if he were to agitate diversely and confusedly the different parts of this matter, and afterwards did no more than... to let her [nature] act according to his established laws” (p.62).

We need to take a living being's surroundings into account too:

Consider first a tree growing from a seed, an oak tree from an acorn.

The acorn, as such, makes a negligible contribution to the material substance of the oak tree or to the energy needed to make it grow.

The materials needed come from the air, water, and soil, while the energy comes from the sun.

In the acorn's surroundings, these all move around, clearly, in a not very organized manner – as inanimate matter, they are simply re-configured, re-arranged.

While *within* it, they come to flow in such an *organized* intermingled manner that the oak tree grows, matures, produces acorns itself, dies, and eventually decays to return all its material substances back into the unorganized flow of inanimate matter from whence they, and 'it' came.

Where, then, is the life of the oak tree?

Is it *in* the tree itself ?

No. It is *in the relations of the tree to its surroundings*.

Similarly with most of the 'things' we think of as being of importance in our lives: they are not fixed and finished 'objects', but have their existence in the unfolding dynamics of our dialogically-structured activities.

(Andersen, 1996, p.122)... what just happens to us over and above our wanting and doing is more important than what results from our desires and interests

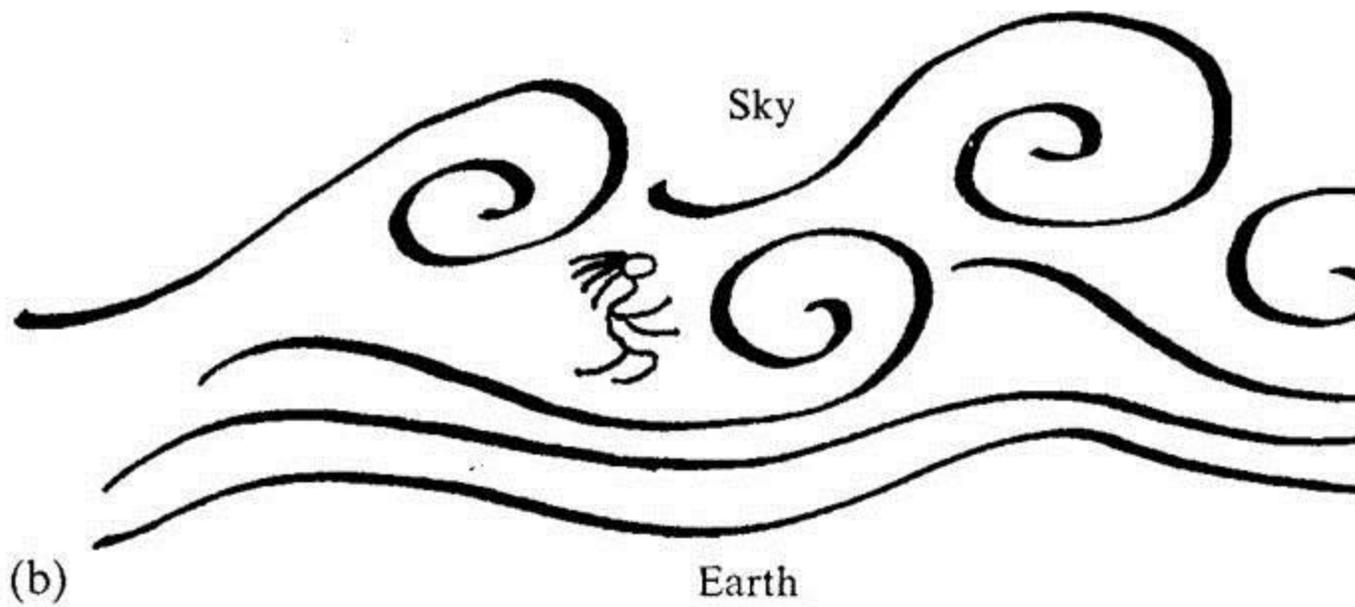
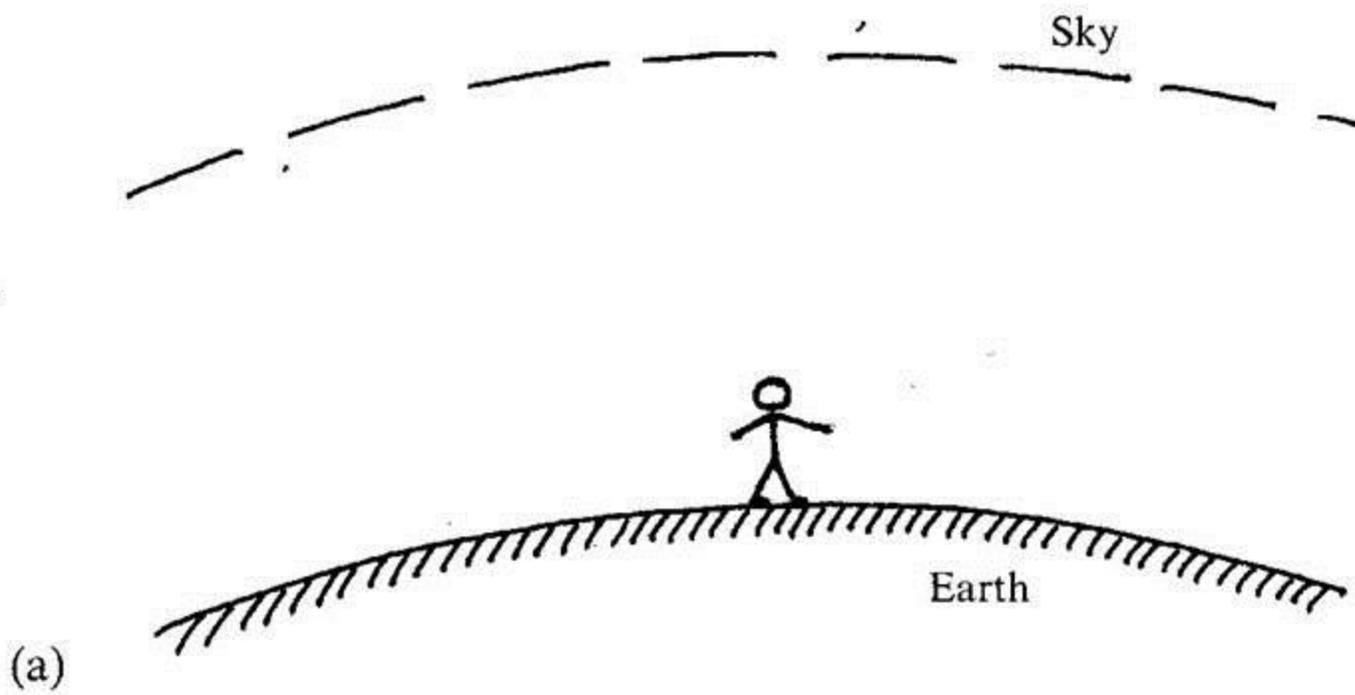


Figure 3. (a) The exhabitant of the earth and (b) the inhabitant

“Language and words are like searching hands” (Andersen, 1996, p.122)... words are like gestures, they can ‘touch’ people, they can also ‘point beyond’ themselves to something in our surroundings.

“Words are not innocent. I used to think that the thought came first, then it was conveyed through words to others. Now I think differently. We search through words in order to find the thought. As the highly respected theoretician and clinician Harry Goolishian used to say: “We don't know what we think before we have said it””

4) Tom: *When you hit, is the hand closed or open?”*

[He did not know and I turned to the boy and asked]

Tom: *When your father hits you, is the hand closed or open?*

[The boy, now sitting on his knees on the floor with his upper part of the body lying on the chair, lifted his arm and by turns opened and closed his hand, and said]

Boy: He pushes with the open hand and hits with the closed

..... (and Tom continued to question the boy in a way that allowed to father to gain a sense of the boy's feelings)

Tom: *And what hurts you the most?*

[The boy indicated the closed hand, and I turned to the father and asked as I supported the question with bringing my closed hand (my fist) through the air towards the father]

Tom: *“If your hand, on its way to hit, stopped and talked, what might the words be?”*

[He had difficulties to comprehend the question, so it was **repeated three times**, and as that happened I spoke to myself: (inner dialogue) *“it is not surprising that he can not find words for some in some situations (may be most often men?) it might be more easy to beat than finding words..”*

Finally he said:

Father: *“Stop doing what you are doing. What you do is not right.”*

[Then he was asked how he would say those words, and that question also **had to be repeated several times** before he said]

Father: *“ I would say it calmly, slowly and firmly.”*

As a consequence of all of this, I think, we have to give up Descartes' idea of a world of '**matter in motion according to laws**', and embrace the very strange, **flowing, turbulent world of our everyday lives** in which we, like plants growing from a seeds, have our existence within a special confluence, in the chiasmic *intra*-acting, of flowing streams of energy and materials that our bodies are continually working to *organize*, to intertwine or to 'orchestrate' into the unbelievably complex forms of our human achievements and behaviours to come.

Tom (Andersen, 1992) expresses it thus: *“I see life as the moving of myself and my surroundings and the surroundings of those surroundings towards the future. The shifts of life around me come by themselves, not by me. The only thing I can do is to *take part in them*. To take part is to learn to use the repertoire of understandings and actions that have come from the various experiences I have had over the years. What seems to be most important is to learn what I shall *not do again*” (p.54).*

All his life, Tom retained his disquiets with what seemed to be finished and finalized stabilities in our treatment of others: What other ways might be open to us? What might we do instead? And those disquiets have motivated me also – and indeed, I venture to suggest, that same restlessness, that need to know – “Where Do We Come From? What Are We? Where Are We Going?” (Gauguin’s questions) – still sits with us all here in this hall, now.