



Title: Dialogical practices :diving into the poetic movement : exploring 'supervision' and 'therapy'

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Dialogical Practices

Diving into the Poetic Movement

Exploring 'supervision' and 'therapy'

by

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of the University of Bedfordshire

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Supervisors

Ravi Kohli, John Shotter, Kirsten Schou

Abstract

This thesis explores a dialogical approach – in relation to supervision, therapy and research. I have as supervisor inquired into my relationship with groups of supervisees who were training to become family therapists or systemic practitioners.

Through my doctoral portfolio, I speak from within my practice and I show in some detail the micro processes in relational encounters which help dialogue to evolve. I also address grand narratives about what it means to be a human being, and show how perceiving a human being as dialogical has extensive and governing consequences for how we think about a person's movements in the world, how we think about them as person, in relation to other people, and how we understand problems, and approach problem solving.

My research has been a *doing*, an *experiencing* and a *creation of knowing* in a reflexive flow. My research philosophy, mode of approaching my practice as therapist and supervisor (and as a person in the world) has reflexively been created through my *being* in practice.

I show how an embodied belief in fluidity and complexity, enables me as supervisor to contribute to a space in the context of supervision which welcomes the freedom of a kind of *orientation* which is open towards situated, emerging, novel and provisional understanding.

By attending to here-and-now interactions, becoming answerable in the moment and by embracing intuition, ambiguity and relational compassion, we have been able to welcome risk-taking and improvisation. This mode of dialogical supervision demonstrates a willingness to spontaneously dive into the uniqueness of every new encounter and every new movement. I see this as *the poetics of the dialogical meeting*.

I have experienced how this space has opened up quite unexpected aspects of the supervisees' experiences and has served as an incitement for them to question different aspects of their relationship to life. This has reflexively created a certain spirit and atmosphere that has invited us all to be bolder in our sharing and exploration of our lives, practice and our ideas.

This thesis makes a contribution concerning: how we can be with people in ways that opens up more understanding and creates a sense of belonging and liberation; challenging and transgressively exploring discursive boundaries which attempt to define and fix what research *is*, what therapy *is*, what supervision *is*, and welcomes the infinity of opportunities and possibilities life may offer us. Thus I suggest that it may become significant for the profession to review the usefulness and legitimacy of distinct categorization between therapy and supervision.

Through my choice of genre I offer the reader a possibility to respond emotionally as well as intellectually to my writing. I believe the way I have chosen to re-present my research through a mix of genre and evocative texts not 'frozen' findings, permits and anticipates novel ways of going on in relation to research in a manner that I don't believe have been described in this way before within the community of family therapy and systemic practice.

This thesis is dedicated
to the memory of my mother

Janikke Helmer Vedeler

who still moves within me, in all my becoming.

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understatement to say that I embarrassed the English professor. Since then, there have been lots of shared feeling voyages through writings and talks, which have *moved* me in so many ways; sometimes to the edge... your soft tone of voice has guided my going on. It has been an honor to have you as supervisor as well as a cherished friend.

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Anne Hedvig Helmer Vedeler, 14. September 2011

PRELUDE – Accompanying Tunes

“Life is by its very nature dialogic.
To live means to participate in dialogue:
to ask questions, to heed, to respond,
to agree, and so forth. In this dialogue
a person participates wholly and throughout
his whole life: with his eyes, lips, hands, soul,
spirit, with his whole body and deeds”.

Mikhail Bakhtin 1984:293

I was strolling down Wimbledon High Street; the giant, heavily-leaved maple trees embraced the sidewalk, solicitously preventing the morning sun from overheating the pavement. I juggled with ideas for my doctorate, pondering the *magical* moments when a therapist in her meeting with a client dares to give herself over to the relationship, letting go of unambiguous self narratives, predictable methods and techniques, and curiously opens herself to the *mystery* of the not-yet-experienced, to the at times incoherent and daring new adventure therapy can be.

My thoughts were playful, free of contextual demands, as I visited experiences emerging from places I hadn't even known existed. Words like *mystery* and *magic* blended themselves somewhat with fear, excitement and a sense of longing. I was feeling energized about doing the professional doctorate, and found the idea of exploring supervision contexts for “therapists-to-be” thrilling. My preliminary intention was to explore how supervision could encourage supervisees' benevolent curiosity towards their relational encounters. At the same time I felt doubtful about being able to complete the intellectual quest I imagined a doctorate would be. My thoughts dwelled upon how both the supervisees' and my own journey would require considerable boldness and tolerance of uncertainty (Seikkula & Olson, 2003, Seikkula & Arnkil, 2006), and what a lonely pursuit it can be to do research. Memories of my mother, who died of an unexpected heart attack when I was 19, nearly 35 years ago, arose: “*I believe she would have been proud of me*”. This unanticipated reflection surprised me given that I had never thought about her as being *proud* of me or not. *Being proud* of academic achievements had not been something I connected with my mother's relationship with her children. Even so, I felt suddenly comforted and almost joyous in this connection between my new venture in life and my mother

who had been gone for so long. I could feel my breathing ease and my steps lighten. It was as if I was attending a “homecoming festival” (Bakhtin, 1986:170) where new images appear and memories long gone re-emerge. I was back in the sixties remembering my mother being pretty cool. She was the only parent I knew who actually enjoyed listening to the Beatles, and as a psychologist working with young male offenders, she invited me to go with her and a group of boys to see the Beatles’ movie “Help”.

I found myself humming an old Beatles song from the mid sixties: “*Roll up for the Magical Mystery Tour*”. It generated a sense of revelation. I felt embraced, comforted, encouraged and supported, and in an instant I knew I would call my research practice “Roll up for a Magical Mystery Tour”. Iterating this to myself I sensed how my mother was joining my adventure, offering this song as an *accompanying tune*¹ which could accommodate challenges, ups and downs, new sights, confusion and uncertainty of such a journey and at the same time support creativity in the years to come. It was a momentous incident. During the time I was walking down this London street, something significant was happening, and in some strange way I *just knew* this *something* would guide my progress in going on.

This thesis including a portfolio, presented as a composition resonant with my therapy practice, is about *my going on* in my interaction with supervisees of family therapy and systemic practice, and is connected to my interest in *dialogical processes* as a way of being in the world. To *live* and *inquire* into my own practice has been a strenuous and mysterious process, as well as an opportunity to experience some magnificent magical moments.

Four years after the reunion with my maternal heritage, as I struggle with the computer keyboard, groping, trying to find the words, moving my fingers back and forth, eager to transmit bodily feelings through my hands on to the PC to make readable sense out of some more or less profound events, I am reminded of Pascal Mercier (2008) writing in his novel, *Night Train to Lisbon*:

“Of the thousand experiences we have, we find language for one at most and even this one merely by chance and without the care it deserves. Buried under all the mute experiences are those unseen ones that give our life its form, its colour, and its melody.”
(:17)

This quotation reminds me how words often strain to express experiences.

¹ I am Norwegian, and experience my life through the tonality of the Norwegian language. The lexical English translation of the Norwegian word *tonefølge* is *sequence of notes*. But I prefer to create this new term *accompanying tune*, which is a *word by word* translation of *tone følge* (*though with a change of sequence*), to be able to give the sense of being musically accompanied by my mother.

As I continue writing, both eager and cautious about putting into words years of exploration in the field of practice, I reflect on the tension between the invigorating feeling of letting practice remain tacit, wordless and spontaneous, *and* the bliss of expressing exactly what one feels. In one moment I suffocate as I feel the PC devours my practice, transforming my lived life into print. Then there is a shift, a sudden relief when a distinct and felt meaning manages to convert itself to paper (or keyboard). Words certainly may reduce meaning, but they definitely can also open up for and reveal significant meaning.

For months and months I have found myself in this vigorous tension between being able to express myself in exact terms *and* allowing myself the creative space in which to find the pleasure in pausing before capturing *the shape, colour, melody and movements* of ongoing life by wording them. This is the strain Bakhtin (1981) describes as part of our living in the world; the tension between the centripetal forces that centralize and unify, and the centrifugal forces that decentralize and dis-unify. This thesis/portfolio, from the ontological approach taken in it to the theme of inquiry and the genre of writing, is an exploration of this tension.

Our lives are lived from inside the livingness, and can be told from *within* this position. My professional doctorate is positioned as a description and re-presentation of events of which I am a part, from within events of which I am a participant. This contrast with long established ideas about how reliable and valid knowledge should be acquired with some distance, by an independent observer (Gergen, 1999). Traditional discourses connected to academic research was mainly aiming towards certainty and consistency through definite findings or coherent stories, but has in recent years been challenged by many different research communities (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, Barone & Eisner, 2012). Life is often experienced as filled with disparity, discrepancy, inconsistency, gaps and indefinites; there is always more and something else. This is what Keith Devlin in his book *Goodbye, Descartes* (Devlin, 1997), emphasizes when he quotes one of the most famous mathematicians of all time, Blaise Pascal:

“Mathematicians wish to treat matters of perception mathematically, and make themselves ridiculous...the mind...does it tacitly, naturally, and without technical rules.”
(:261)

Fiction and especially poetry challenge academic discourse, and have freed themselves from the Cartesian spell of duality and the demand for unequivocal precision. The modern poet has the permission as the gardener of imagination to plant seeds that bloom as they grow; their words are allowed to be both ambiguous and explicit at the same time. I have found that it is not only poetic writing that is inspirational and life enhancing, but just as much the very way of relating to the practice of living. Pascal Mercier (2008) puts it like this:

“The object of contemplation refuses to stand still, the words bounce off the experience and in the end, pure contradiction stand on the paper. For a long time I thought it was a defect, something to overcome. Today I think it is different: that recognition of the confusion is the ideal path to understand these intimate yet enigmatic experiences. That sounds strange, even bizarre, I know. But ever since I have seen the issue in this light, I have the feeling of being really awake and alive for the first time.” (:17)

The Beatles’ movie: Magical Mystery tour was a testimony from a road trip on drugs but it was also a reaction and their response to a society that bore the marks of conformity. My own four year long tour has been an exciting multitude of responsive meetings with supervisees, colleagues and literature. Alongside I have felt encouraged by feeling my mother’s *accompanying tune*, and some words by the German poet Rainer Marie Rilke (1986) which have inspired me to keep asking questions when I most of all wanted to know the answers:

“...have patience
with everything unresolved in your heart
and try to love the questions themselves
as if they were locked rooms
or books written in a foreign language
Don’t search for the answers,
which could not be given to you now,
because you would
not be able to live them...

PART I

Emergence

nothing is

everything becomes in the *becoming*

...and the point is

to live everything

Live the questions now

Perhaps then someday far in the future
you will gradually without even noticing it
live your way into the answer“

Rilke, 1986

Chapter 1

Emergent Involvement

Rilke's appeal serves as an incitement, a request for *you* reading this to tune into his mode when you enter into my '*world of practice*' and my attempts to transform experiences from this *world* into writing. I am inviting you into a dialogue, challenging well established ideas about research and re-presenting research (Devlin, 1997; Gergen & Gergen, 2003, Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, Gergen, 2009, Shotter, 2011). And I will ask you to anticipate events, and allow words and meaning to open as your reading proceeds. My hope is that I will manage to provoke the same mixture of curiosity and serenity in you as I have struggled to maintain in myself when living within and writing about experiences I have found intriguing. I have approached research as an unfolding telling from lived life, from engagement, involvement and relationships. The Russian philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin's (1981, 1984, 1986, 1990) description of *the dialogue* has been a springboard for this work, in terms of the practice into which I am inquiring, the ontological position I have taken and in my approach to research.

I have called this first part *Emergence*, to make a point of how curiosity and understanding is an enduring process, not a finished product. True discovery involves fluidity and motion: back and forth between consistency and inconsistency, bewilderment and order, fragments and wholes, unity and discrepancy, past, present and future, questions and answers. This acknowledgement of movement and complexity is my approach to what is termed therapy and supervision, *and* my approach to doing research in this study: an ongoing dialogical motion between being present and acknowledging the experiences here and now, asking questions and welcoming responses that create movements, *for the time being*.

This Thesis is written from within my practice as a therapist, teacher and supervisor of dialogically oriented systemic therapy. It unfolds and enfolds reflexively, and is really not *the* story, not even a *story*. In one sense I don't even want it to be perceived as *an account*, since that could seduce us into believing that what is presented here is equivalent to the "lived actuality" (Smith, 1990) that has taken place. My intention is rather to create movements through my writing, from within a practice that has engaged me and involves people with whom I have collaborated. I would like it to be experienced as *a composition* – an emerging and unfolding drama, much like a

musical orchestration in which notes, pauses, pace, laps and cycles manage to touch the listener (reader) and create a difference that makes a difference (Bateson 1972, Andersen, 1994), that matters to them (Shotter, 2010). My aspiration is for you to be moved and energized by your reading, and to feel invited into a dialogue with my writing.

I am writing from a position in which I acknowledge my involvement or ecological enmeshment in the process. Claiming this, I stress a significant position, that all meaning is open and in the process of becoming, temporarily settled on the threshold between voices in action (Bakhtin, 1981). This is an ontological position asserting that to live and create understanding is an ongoing relational activity (Burr, 2003, Gergen & Gergen, 2003, Gergen, 2009, Shotter, 1975, 1993a, 1993b, 2010). This stance is also an attempt to value involvement over maintaining one's distance, one that acknowledges the decisiveness, delight, vulnerability and risk involved in being alive and in relationship. As a practitioner and a researcher I concede a relational responsibility (McNamee & Gergen, 1999), what Bakhtin (1990) has named *answerability*, that is to be ethically responsible within the unique act (Bender, 1998).

An Orchestration

The organization of this thesis including the portfolio is as follows:

Part I – Emergence

This first chapter contains a short introduction about the emergence of my focus of interest in relation to *the invitation* from KCC and the University of Bedfordshire to do a Professional Doctorate in Systemic Practice. It also includes a chapter 2, addressing *my research focus*. I have created a description of *contexts* in relation to my stance in the field of what is called systemic therapy and practice. In this chapter 3 I have also included a description of my position as a professional: as a therapist and consultant, a teacher and supervisor' as well as *the Contexts* into which I have *inquired*. I have also included a chapter 4, an *Outline of the Research Journey*, as a preliminary taste of what is comprehensively described in Part II – Roll up for a Magical Mystery Tour, a Portfolio, written from within living practice.

Chapter 5 is about knowledge claims. Here I address the difference between claims to *general rational knowledge* in relation to *local relational knowing*. I discuss a *modernist approach* in relation to *Bakhtin's* notion of *dialogue and social constructionism*, and further argue how dialogue can be comprehended as an *ontological position: understanding our social world and relationships between people is an ongoing philosophical activity*. This paves the way for an approach to practice research as philosophy, chapter 6. By choosing to use the term

philosophical instead of methodological I want to put distance between my approach and notions of method, and choosing the term philosophical helps in this regard. I emphasise a distinction between a *method* driven approach and that of a stance of emergence, openness and unfinalizability. I have in chapter 7 depicted my *mode* of inquiry: an Intuitive and Embodied Dialogical Inquiry. Just as I swapped the concept of *methodology* with *philosophy*, I have termed what is often described as method, as my *mode* of inquiry. This again underlines how this approach welcomes emergence, fluidity and openness.

In the same way as I view *dialogue as mode*, an ontological position and philosophical stance (Anderson, 1997) with which to understand relationships between people in this research, it is also the main form of reference in my supervision relationship with supervisees. Thus the literature that is introduced under the heading *General rational knowledge and local relational knowing* is literature I also will connect to as I speak from and reflect on supervision.

Part II – Roll up for a Magical Mystery Tour - a Portfolio

This *portfolio*, which forms the main part of the thesis and includes 3 chapters, including tales and reflections on practice: *Resonance-ability and Compassion*, *The Apprenticeships*, and *Presence and Movements*, is written from within my practice as supervisor.

Part III – Moving on...

In this closing section I include reflections on the practice research, outcome and contributions. I address how we can be with people in ways that opens up more understanding and creates a sense of belonging and liberation; I suggest that the notion of relational compassion and answerability has become key delineations for understanding the dialogic practice as prosperous for human becoming. I challenging and transgressively explore discursive boundaries which attempt to define and fix what research *is*, what therapy *is*, what supervision *is*, and welcomes the infinity of opportunities and possibilities life may offer us. Thus I suggest that it may become significant for the profession to review the usefulness and legitimacy of distinct categorization between therapy and supervision.

I address how the way I have chosen to re-present my research through evocative texts not 'frozen' findings, might contribute to novel ways of going on in relation to research in a manner that has not been described in this way before within the community of family therapy and systemic practice.

Intermissions

Into this orchestration of voices from practice, reflections and references to literature, I have opened up space for a *Prelude*, four *Interludes*, a *Postlude* and some *Poems*. These intermissions are meant to bring some notes from other parts of my life experiences into this doctoral work, with the intention to *create* as well as *challenge* the sense of a harmonious whole, welcoming diversity and fragmentation. The intermissions are also my recognition of how our lived life experiences are not divided into private and professional aspects. When I go on in my professional life it is as Anne Hedvig; I have lived a life filled with longing, love, loss, exhilarating achievements, rejection and belonging, hope, sacrifice and despair. There have been important readings, journeys, meetings, arguments and discussions. I have been in relationship as a woman, daughter, mother, grandmother, wife, friend, teacher, supervisee, weaver, typographer, journalist and gardener; as colleague, supervisor, supervisee, therapist and client. All these relationships influence new relationships – also in therapy, supervision and research. I seek openness and sincerity, acknowledging all of the ways in which the socially positioned experiences that a researcher brings to the field (Jensen, 2007) “shape the ‘knowledge’ (and) ‘facts’ they derive from” (Michalowski, 1997). Rosaldo (1989) is also concerned with the researcher as a positioned subject who:

“...grasps certain human phenomena better than others....and observes with a particular vision...The notion of subject position also refers to how life experiences both enable and inhibit particular kinds of insight.” (:19)

Note to the Reader

To the Norwegian psychiatrist and founder of the Reflecting Process Movement, Tom Andersen, a central idea was *practice comes first* (Eliassen & Seikkula, 2006, Gjertzen, 2011). He argued that it is the experiences we have from our own practice which pave the way towards greater understanding. I feel sympathetic towards this rhetorical mode that emphasises the importance of practice, even if I find it too linear. My own experience is that there is a reflexive movement between what I/we do and our understanding of it. What comes first? Well isn't that the same question asked about the chicken and the egg? My own belief is that it was neither the egg nor the chicken, but an all together different kind of emergent and intertwined movement of something coming to life. I am writing this because I have had some hesitation in relation to organizing this thesis. The approach to the philosophy of research (I do want to use *philosophy* – not epistemology or methodology²) is something that has been part of the becoming of my practice, as well as the other way around. I have explored a supervision culture, and the

² See Ch. 6.

exploration has in turn created the supervision culture, and the experiences I have had doing this have influenced reciprocally my mode of exploration.

Following Andersen I could put the Portfolio – *Roll up for the Magical Mystery Tour* which includes stories from and reflections on practice first, and then later give an account of how this practice created possibilities for finding ways to inquire into it. But that would not be all together accurate, because there was some reading prior to my practice, and after that it became truly a hurly burly process. Or I might rather say that practice, the inquiry and my relation to reading literature have reflexively created each other. Because it was not as if I first read theory about research and then started my practice; it was not as if I was practicing without being influenced by literature I had read.

This fluid and de-centered approach is hard to shape into a written format without losing its fluidity – its life. Wittgenstein was faced with similar problems when he was ‘editing’ his thoughts in the *Philosophical Investigation*:

“I have written down all these thoughts as remarks, short paragraphs, of which there is sometimes a fairly long chain about the same subject, while I sometimes make a sudden change, jumping from one topic to another. It was my intention at first to bring all this together in a book whose form I pictured differently at different times. But the essential thing was that the thoughts should proceed from one subject to another in a natural order and without breaks.”

My own experience feels resonant with Wittgenstein’s remarks in that I have intended to structure my writing *in a natural order and without breaks*. And I too have felt that the feel of the research journey would be falsely portrayed if I as Wittgenstein says were to go on writing and “...tried to force (thoughts) on in a single direction”. He connects this to the very nature of his investigation, which

... compels us to travel over a wide field of thoughts criss-cross in every direction. The philosophical remarks in this book are, as it were, a number of sketches of landscapes which were made in the course of these (this?) long and involved journeying. (..)new sketches were made (...) thus this book is really only an album.”

(From the Preface to *Philosophical Investigation*, 1953)

The metaphor of an album attracts me, since it suggests an invitation to the reader to leaf through this thesis. For the sake of convenience I have sectioned the thesis into chapters, but please feel free to start where you want and go back and forth. Hopefully, after doing this, you

will feel a sense of this inquiry into my practice; a solid sense of fluidity, and perhaps a fluid sense of solidity.

Some Backdrops and Influences

I had had some crucial experience prior to applying for the KCC conducted Professional Doctorate in Systemic Practice in 2006, which encouraged me to pursue issues connected to ideas concerning identity, relationships and responsibility. When I was doing my MSc in Systemic Therapy I was struck by the relationship that developed between a particular client and myself (Vedeler, 2004). Although I was quite silent during our sessions, the therapy resulted in the creation of some opportunities of significance for this client. I am in great debt to the opportunity this woman, who named herself Meercat, gave me when she offered to participate in conversations about our relationship.

Through this inquiry I confronted the idea that what was going on between us was that Meercat was presenting *monologues*, and that I was merely a *passive listener* or a *container*. This way of understanding people who talk at length without being interrupted is not trivial; when someone talks, she talks out of herself as an entity and delivers the talk to another entity, a receiver who contains the talk. According to Bakhtin (1981, 1984, 1986) monologues are unambiguous voices, deaf towards any response. My experience was that while Meercat was talking, she was talking with me, with herself as well as with other people (not physically present) and about/with ideas of significance. It was not a pre-rehearsed script that emerged but an evolving reflection in relation to my listening. The noun *container* is a word I associate with a place where we throw things away; it receives without responding. In contrast, I was feeling absolutely responsive, even if I didn't use so many words, and I was intrigued by the experience of how significant it was that responsiveness didn't need to include expressed words.

This brought me to an interest in dialogue as *unique, once occurring events* (Bakhtin, 1993) of *movements* between people, not necessarily just concerning the uttered words. The movements that were created between Meercat and me served as invitations which created space for Meercat to talk. This is how she expressed it:

“I appreciated what you wrote about that each and everyone is a unique person. This has enabled me to go on... A lot of people don't understand that about being touched by the inner voice, to me it has been so valuable to be able to express it, because I think I'd dismissed it for so many years.” (Vedeler, 2004:65)

It was remarkable to experience how Meercat over time acted with an extraordinarily greater confidence and agency (Anderson, 1997). My impression was moreover that she was able to create an identity as someone worth listening to, someone whose voice was valid.

These experiences promoted my attention to micro processes (Burr, 2003) *in* and *in-between people* (Shotter, 1993a, 1993b, 2003, Andersen, 1994). I became sensitive of small movements such as breathing, facial expressions, eye movements, tone of voice, pace, hesitations, stress on words and gaps or pauses. In a lecture I held for a group of family therapy students I articulated it like this: "As a listener the therapist needs to have a responsive attitude and show benevolent interest, curiosity and acknowledgement in relation to all the voices the client utters. She needs to be sensitive and affectively attuned to the client's unique expression and open to the novel and unfinished process".

I was impressed by Bakhtin's (1981, 1984, 1986) rich explications of dialogue, not just as a means of communication but equally as a way of understanding life (Morson and Emerson, 1990, Holquist, 1990). I still remember a feeling of deliverance when I first was introduced to his claim that all understanding is incomplete, open and in the process of becoming (Bakhtin, 1981). This created permissions and made it easier for me to live with my own sense of being in flow, acknowledging that even though something may not make complete sense does not necessarily mean it is nonsense. Bakhtin's invitation to dialogue is a call for the comprehension of understanding as *an unfinalized process of understanding more*. To me, this legitimated spontaneity and my tendency to react in the moment, but I also recognized that all my (e)motions are temporary and open for reconsideration.

Nevertheless, I could still feel a self-imposed instruction, a kind of moral *order a strong contextual force* (Cronen, Johnson & Lannaman, 1982, Pearce, 2007) telling me to hold back my own verbal reactions to allow space for clients' own voices to emerge. I found this rather constraining; it was as if I, made up of flesh and blood, experiences and reactions should suppress my feelings and not offer myself as a human companion. I was drawn between holding back and allowing myself to be spontaneously responsive.

The holding back was fruitful in the sense of facilitating space for the client(s) to have time to listen to herself³ and for clients to hear each other. But I also experienced how valuable therapeutic moments occurred when I allowed the others' experience to touch me and reacted spontaneously and responded out of my own deeply felt experience; as if I was able to give myself over to the here-and-now relationship and was present in the moment. At one level the professional context dissolved and we became fellow persons *sharing an emotional journey*

3 In order to avoid the dominating gendered he/him/his, I am making a statement using the female she/her/hers, except when there is an explicit reference to a man. This statement is made in relation to an overarching tendency in the Modern Western society to "masculinize" humanity by the use of nouns.

(Stern, 2004). This sensitivity towards the interactive moment has to do with what John Shotter (1984) has come to call acquiring certain “ontological skills”: embodying a sensitive responsiveness in psychotherapeutic events (Shotter, 2010).

Emma and Anders – a Tale from a Therapy Session

The first time this became explicitly evident to me was just about the time when I was starting on my doctoral work. I was meeting *Anders* and *Emma*, who had come to talk with me about their relationship⁴ when I became aware of how significantly my spontaneously expressed feelings connected with Anders’ feelings, and how this created something I felt was quite important for all three of us present.

“But, but, eh - what shall I do – with...”.

It is hard not to remember the sixty-five-year-old man’s face turning towards me, stammering these words, just as his wife of forty-five years resolutely announced that she wanted a divorce. Emma had met *another*. Tears filled Anders’ eyes and ran silently down his pale cheeks. Sitting in a chair just across from him I could sense his despair in every fiber of my own body. After some months of couple’s therapy, Emma had suddenly disclosed her love for another man. While Anders was still dreaming about an affectionate and intimate relationship between them, she was going on clandestine weekend trips with her lover. Anders’ anguish was beyond words. Holding on to my eyes like a castaway clinging to a life buoy, I could feel how forty-five years of affection, as well as dreams and hopes for a joint future, in one split second had been shattered, and the only thing he could say was: “but, but, eh - what shall I do – with...?”. His breathing was on hold, as if his wife’s words had made him incapable of going on breathing, going on living.

In a sudden flash every unhappy love affair in my own life reappeared. I could feel with bodily clarity how it was to have my heart torn apart when I was fifteen, eighteen, twenty and thirty; first the bewilderment, then an emerging chilly quiver, numbness and at last a huge sinking emptiness, the body’s recognition of no longer being precious to a special someone. Just cut off, dead! In this jolt the heartache spread shockwaves through my body, and I spontaneously responded: “this is how it feels to be heartbroken”. Anders’ and my eyes met, and I could hear his heavy exhalation breathing life into the words: “Is that what this is, being heartbroken”. It was not a question, it was a realization, and somehow I could sense a kind of relief.

⁴ This tale is rewritten in relation to characters’ situation and circumstances in respect of clients’ confidentiality.

With the little word *with* uttered by Anders in the sentence: “but, but, eh - what shall I do - *with*”, he enclosed a whole life of lived relationship and of an anticipated shared future with Emma. It was not only that his wife would leave him, but he was left with so much feeling that connected him to another person, and that was unbearable. What should he do with that? I believe that what I spontaneously expressed in my bodily experience of being heartbroken both gave what he felt was meaningless a meaning he could relate to and a feeling of genuinely sharing that experience with someone (me). In a sense, he was not alone – although he was left. And he had found words to encapsulate something of meaning that was beyond understanding.

What’s more, I have imagined that Emma could feel the tension lessen. As we continued talking I experienced the moment in which Anders and I shared this felt emotional landscape had in some way relieved her of some of the responsibility for his agony. I think I could see a glimpse of relief when her eyes for a short moment met mine”.

Daniel Stern (2004) describes how certain moments, which he terms *Kairos moments*, are filled with opportunity, and enter awareness “such that action must be taken, now, to alter one’s destiny – be it for the next minute or a lifetime” (:7). I had in this meeting with Anders and Emma a sense of coming to a *turning point* which I later have thought of as a *Kairos moment*. This incident intensified my already keen interest in therapists’ responsiveness and in the opportunities it creates. I wanted to understand more about how the therapist or consultant can remain open in relation to the other and prepare herself for being sensitive, responsive, answerable and self reflexive in every unique meeting (Bakhtin, 1990, Bender, 1998, Nielsen, 1998).

Invitations

Although all researchers must defend their research approach, methods and results, there exist more or less broadly accepted ways of approaching research (Polkinghorn, 1997). I will in a later section describe and clarify my position in this discourse, but I want to make the point now that *my research is positioned in a significant communal context*.

I anticipate the position here, to be elaborated later, that all meaning is produced and understood in context (a position taken by, amongst others: Wittgenstein, 1953, Garfinkel, 1967, Devlin, 1997, Gergen & Gergen, 2003, Shotter, 2010, 2011) and neither a single utterance nor a research approach can be understood independent of what has been articulated earlier (Bakhtin,

1986), for instance the particular community the researcher is relating to and what this community is asking for. Any utterance, writing or discourse is part of a chain of utterances, writings or discourses and is marked by this embeddedness, and will in its turn mark the utterances, writings or discourses to come. Bakhtin (1986) underlines this when he says “no speaker is after all the first speaker, the one who disturbs the eternal silence of the universe” (:69).

As researchers we do not inquire either out of or into a vacuum, any (re)action is in relation to something that has been done, uttered, written before. My intention in these next paragraphs is *to position my research as an answer to an invitation* from KCC and the University of Bedfordshire (UoB).

Invitation from KCC and the University of Bedfordshire

I am referring to the Handbook for Professional Doctorate in Systemic Practice (2006) with the intention to provide some clarification in relation to what I will call the community context in to which I am writing.

I welcomed the invitation from KCC and the UoB to participate in a *program for people in practice*, and I was intrigued by being encouraged to develop *sophisticated interpersonal ways of working*, and maybe even create *exceptional relational achievement....include innovative material in the formulation of novel, maybe daring, practice(s) that create energy and life enhancing ‘nourishment’* for me and the situations within which I work, as well as for the people with whom I work. I found it especially stimulating to be encouraged to pay attention to *the crucial details of the practice* which I hoped could *grow out of the interests and enthusiasm* I would feel emerge. I also found the emphasis on the relational positions of the researcher, participants and methods used promising. I was equally intrigued by a pulsing sense of hope connected to the development of *new theoretical dimensions*, which could be *fashioned out of the reflection on the developing practice* (through) *engaging with clients, other people at work and others in similar fields who may possess a diversity of practice*; and, not least, *creating and expanding relationships between practice and commentary and theoretical considerations, such that new theoretical dimensions are fashioned out of the reflection on the developing practice*.

There was also one further bonus this program tempted me with - the creation of a research community, where *participants of the program could draw on each other’s resources and knowledge. The groups that are formed will be central to the learning*.

I understood this as an invitation to develop some kind of participatory action research (see for instance Reicken et al, 2005, Shotter, 2011) within my own practice as supervisor, supported by

people and ideas connected to the significance of relational responsibility (McNamee & Gergen, 1999). I set out to do all this on my research journey in 2007.

Invitation to the Reader

My attempt to orchestrate this into writing is what you are about to read. As much as this research involves participants⁵ with whom I have collaborated, my writing involves you, *the Reader*. I am inviting you, to borrow from Wittgenstein (1953), into a language game, without knowing how you are positioning yourself (Harré & Van Langenhove, 1998) in relation to *this* game. What kind of game are you willing to participate in?

I have already created some contextual invitations about how I would appreciate your engagement with my writing, and I will follow this up in later sections of the thesis. I just want to share some preliminary concerns about this language game. I feel I am balancing between being truthful to ideas I have about not promoting general knowledge claims, but rather acknowledging the situated, local emergence of knowing *and* not pushing personal anticipations too far. This tension between making sure you are on board, absolutely not boring you, but rather engaging you, touching you, and maybe even surprising or provoking you, frankly, my aim is to encourage a benevolent curiosity in you toward going on reading.

⁵ I will later make a clarification and call the supervisees with whom I have collaborated; *companions*.

Chapter 2

Research Focus

Initially my research project had as its centre of attention:

Finding ways that could increase sensitivity and responsiveness in professionals of systemic practice by encouraging a benevolent curiosity about themselves as persons in relation to others.

What started out as a rather pre planned action research format, with the intention to create a program for a supervision context called Personal Professional Development (PPD) at Diakonhjemmet University College in Oslo, Norway, expanded.

Meetings and encounters with supervisees and literature served as momentous experiences that drew my attention to more spontaneously emerging events, and I decided to broaden my horizon and inquire into these events. As Alexander Graham Bell once asserted:

“Leave the beaten track occasionally and dive into the woods. Every time you do so, you will be certain to find something you have never seen before.” (in Kelley, 2008:68)

As my center of curiosity expanded, I started to explore movements and relational encounters in a wider range of supervision contexts. I became enthusiastic about exploring how dialogical practices could be a way of interacting with supervisees in supervision to produce greater awareness, both on my part and on theirs, and of how small details could make a big difference in our learning; for instance, in the importance of the *tone* of voice in asking a question. This initiated at first, a somewhat blurred, spontaneous, responsive and expressive (Shotter, 1993a) inquiry into my professional practice and my identity in relation to many domains of life - a beginning, which I was able later to bring into a sharper, more well articulated focus.

These kinds of questions caught my interest through this process:

- In what ways can a dialogically oriented supervision context extend supervisees’ and supervisors’ abilities and opportunities to move freely in relation to ever emerging situations?

- How can we make use of the here-and-now interactive moments that appear in supervision settings? In what ways can the exploration of details in these moments open up new ways of going on together in other contexts, i.e. therapy?
- How can these kinds of detailed experiences feed into other domains of supervisees' and supervisors' lives and their relationships?
- What other aspects or qualities of relational encounters of significance have emerged, noticeable through experiences within this research journey?
- How might outcomes emerging from this research journey be made use of in relation to '*supervision*' in the context of '*training*' to become a '*systemic*' practitioner or '*therapist*'?
- How can we write about our own and other peoples' experiences in a way that feels resonant with the actual experience? And in what ways can these writings, from within experiences, manage to touch and involve the reader⁶ and invite further dialogues?

⁶ I am here citing Bateson quoted in Tannen (1989): "to make it possible for the readers to respond emotionally as well as intellectually" (p. 167).

Chapter 3

Outline of Contexts

There are several different contexts I feel it is appropriate to describe and fill with meaning in order to contextualize my positions as *therapist, teacher and supervisor* and as *researcher*.

Systemic Therapy and Practice – A Dialogical Turn

Out of the field of what has been termed family therapy or systemic therapy a range of different approaches have arisen. I will not go into this development, but rather position myself in relation to what has been called the *linguistic turn*, founded on *social constructionism, post structuralism, hermeneutics and linguistics* (Anderson & Goolishian, 1988, White, 1991, McNamee & Gergen, 1992, Burr, 2003, Anderson, 2007, Hoffman, 2002). This epistemological position came to exercise a major influence on family therapy and systemic therapy in the 1990s (Hoffman, 2007).

Therapy as Dialogue

Inspired by how meaning is socially constructed in language between people (Shotter 1993) different therapy communities began focusing on the role of language both in the generation, resolution and dissolution of personal problems (e.g. Lang et al, 1990, White & Epston, 1990, Andersen, 1995, Anderson, 1997, 2007a, Hoffman, 2007,). Defining the aim of therapy as a co-construction of meaning through dialogue, Goolishian and Anderson (1988), for instance, let themselves be influenced by these ideas, resulting in what Anderson later called a *postmodern collaborative approach to therapy* and a *philosophical stance* (1997). This approach is closely related to (among others) Andersen's work with reflecting processes (Andersen, 1993a, 1993b, 1994, 1996; Anderson & Jensen, 2007) and Seikkula's 'open dialogue' approach (Seikkula & Olson, 2003).

Striking Moments

Hoffman (2007) discusses how Roger Lowe "distinguishes between approaches that use 'structured questions' like Narrative and Solution-focused work, as aids to practice, and what he calls, following John Shotter (Shotter & Katz, 1998), a 'striking moments' approach" (:64). Shotter

(1999, 2003, 2004a, 2004b, 2010), has, through his exploration of what life is like for participants from within the 'interactive moment', exercised a major influence on my position as a therapist. I have appreciated Shotter's attention to the interactive moment, and it has made me aware of how much focus there is on asking questions (Vedeler, 2007). I have often experienced interest in questioning as a search for techniques, but I *see questions as responses*, and they are only *appropriate* if they fit, that is, if they are in tune with what is happening in the *unique moment*. The related issues of questions and questioning involve directing attention to dialogical process in therapy, considering the dialogue as an invitation to participants to influence and be influenced by the interaction between them.

The challenge for the therapist is to be able to be sensitive and responsive towards the different voices of the clients, those which are easily expressed as well as those which more often are silenced (Øfsti, 2010):

"To tune in to an uncensored channel as a therapist is to tune in to a frequency of listening that listens for what is not so easily expressed. A story has many layers; we need to open up space for a silence that welcomes languaging of what is almost unhearable, without any attempt at correction. The subject doesn't need to involve dramatic secrets. It might be the expression of feeling alone in the family, even around husband and children. People use the therapy room to create themselves, to create a story about themselves in dialogue with something else, so something unexpected might show up" (:129)⁷

I believe this requires a therapist who is willing to touch and be touched by what happens in the therapy room. My own experience serves as an encouragement to sense and experience each person and every meeting as unique (Vedeler, 2004). This turning both toward the other and toward oneself, and allowing oneself to be moved by this is, to borrow from Gergen (2006), the *poetics of psychotherapy*, and what Bakhtin (1981) describes as the *dynamic of dialogue*.

The ideal standard of personhood in the West has been bound up with being a self-contained and coherent individual (de Peuter, 1998) a healthy soul without ambivalence (Øfsti, 2010). de Peuter and Øfsti (see also for instance Gergen, 2009) challenges the notion of psychotherapy as the means to repair or create such healthy personhood. I have myself questioned the concept of *therapy* and believe all of us who call ourselves therapists need to pose the question what it is we *are involved in the creation of*. I believe we need to put questions to ourselves in what ways we are engaging in maintaining stability in society, when we just as well could contribute to destabilisation and opening up new possibilities through questioning discourses on all levels. So it is

⁷ My translation from Norwegian to English.

with a sense of curious *unrest* I am entering the discursive landscape concerning how we conceptualize therapy and supervision, recognising how all my *linguaging* is action (Searle, 1995) (see below).

Professional Context

I am a self employed therapist, supervisor and consultant. I also work as a teacher at a University College, and take assignments.

Therapy, Supervision and Consultancy

In my private practice as a therapist I meet individuals, couples and families. As a consultant I am engaged by agencies to work with different groups of colleagues to advance working relationships (broadly speaking) internally and in relation to their clients. I also supervise groups of students⁸ who, as part of their training, are obliged to have a certain number of supervision hours. I have started to arrange groups for former students who want to continue being part of dialogically oriented relationships, and who want to talk about and experience dialogue as a way of being together in different professional contexts.

In addition to this I take assignments for half- or whole-day workshops, seminars and training days.

Teaching

Over the last five years, I have been an associate member of staff at Diakonhjemmet University College, Oslo (DUCO). I am a teacher in the Family Therapy and Systemic Practice Department responsible for two courses of students each year. These courses are part of a two year program resulting in a diploma in the field of family therapy and systemic practice. These students as well as the MA students are experienced professionals, having work experience ranging from contexts such as social service, child protection, family therapy agencies, child care, schools, health care units, consultancies, aid organizations and churches.

They come from all over Norway to attend classes 4 weeks a year, for either two or four years. The classes are arranged either in Oslo or at a conference hotel situated in the Norwegian mountains.

⁸ These students have a choice between undertaking a two year training program and earning a Diploma, or a four year program to earn an MA in Family Therapy and Systemic Practice. Both courses of study are part time.

Personal Professional Development Program

In addition to teaching, I have been in charge of the development of the Personal Professional Development (PPD) Program⁹¹⁰ that runs through all four years of the Master in Family Therapy and Systemic Practice. I have also been responsible for the implementation of the program, and have supervised PPD groups for the last 4 years.

During their first two years of training, the students have 36 hours PPD. They are organized in groups of 4-5 students, mainly supervising themselves following a structured outline. For the two final years, they have whole day sessions (eight days), with a PPD supervisor in each group or one supervisor attending to three different groups. All these group sessions are part of the weekly program during teaching course.

Therapy and Supervision: formal considerations

There is no legislation or formal agreement that protects the professional titles as for instance, *Psychotherapist, Family Therapist* or *Dialogically Oriented Therapist* in Norway. Consequently there are no associations that regulate the use of these titles or the supervision these professionals undertake connected to their professional development in these fields of therapy.

DUCO has its own set of requirements to approve someone as a supervisor for supervisees in their program. The requirements are that the person applying for approval is trained as a family therapist/systemic practitioner at DUCO or has similar qualifications, has been practicing as a family therapist or systemic practitioner for at least three years, and has received forty hours of systemic supervision. Some additional suggestions have been made as to the types of approaches and themes to which a supervisor should relate.

The doors are quite wide, and the space is rather open – in relation to what can count as supervision in this context. The Family Therapy and Systemic Practice Program at DUCO is also fairly open and includes an ample range of approaches. In recent years it has had its foundation in social constructionism, but the Program also teaches Strategic Therapy, Structural Therapy, Systemic Therapy (as Milan), as well as Narrative Therapy, Solution Focused Approach, Reflecting Processes and Post Modern Collaborative Approach to Therapy.

The supervisors the student engages with have their experiences, interests, passions and competences in relation to a wide range of approaches, methods and techniques. I think it is fair to assert that it is somewhat accidental whom the student choose to be their supervisory companion, at least initially.

⁹ See above, Research Focus, p. 31-32

¹⁰ PPD changed (autumn, 2011) name to PVR (Personlige Verdier og Relasjoner) which translates as *Personal Values and Relations*.

Research Contexts

As mentioned above, the locus of research was initially intended to be the PPD context at DUCO. This is also where some of the tales from practice are situated. But most of the tales that are part of the Portfolio are from groups I have supervised as part of the general supervision hours students must have in order to fulfill the requirements for either a Diploma or a MA in Family Therapy and Systemic Practice.

The supervisees I have collaborated with were second, third or fourth year students at DUCO; some have been part of a supervision group, some have been part of a PPD group, and some have been in both supervision groups and PPD groups with which I have been involved. When I refer to supervisees in this thesis, it is mainly in the context of either PPD-supervision or supervision connected to training.

The PPD groups meet at DUCO while the supervision groups meet either at DUCO, my work place or where the supervisees have their workplace.

Let the Use of Words teach you their Meaning

Leaning on Wittgenstein's (1953) writing about language game, I will invite the reader into a language game acknowledging that there is no fixed meaning outside our socially created meaning. As I will discuss in detail later, there are no social categories outside what we create in language. This means for instance that what we attribute meaning into and call therapy, therapist, teaching, supervisor and supervisees is language created categories and not abstract and fixed entities free of ever changing contexts. This does not however mean that there are not dominant and stable discourses connected to these concepts; some are even formalized through ethical rules and the development of institutions attached to particular texts.

Within what might be called the community of *systemic therapy and practice*, there are more or less pronounced ideas about what these words can mean and do; creating permissions, barriers and boundaries concerning how to perform inside different discourses. My research is an inquiry into practices that encompass these concepts, as well as a creation of what these concepts may come to mean – within the ongoing creation and recreation of a living practice.

Chapter 4

An outline of the Research Journey

This chapter will present an *Outline of the Research Journey*, offering a preliminary taste of what is comprehensively described in Part II – Roll up for a Magical Mystery Tour. It is also meant as a signpost, contextualizing *the addressing of knowledge claims and the philosophy of researching* in the next chapter. I had imagined that it would be more interesting for the reader to follow my reflections on *knowledge* and *research*, if I had first sketch out of what I have been doing as research.

When confronted with creating meaning out of a process, I feel there are some considerations to take into account, for instance the temptation to create a chronological linear and coherent account of a messy, blurred, inconsistent span of lived life; in this case a research process. We often describe lived life as a story, or many stories, but the position I am taking is that “Life as it is lived is not story-like, and so we may suspect that whatever story we choose to tell about it will alter it” (Morson, 1994:19-20).

A chronologically organized description may create a neatly comprehensible story from a journey. It might even seem as if the journey in itself was neat, that decisions were made from thoughtful considerations, rational reasoning and intellectual contemplations which in turn were acted upon. I have chosen to highlight that my research process has been anything but orderly in these terms.

The diagram (next two pages) is an attempt to depict my journey both in chronological order, as well as allowing space to underscore the *Kairos moments* and enigmatic situations I retrospectively have considered as having been, following Stern (2004), *propitious for new understanding and new actions*. I have also included an overview of the Tales (including some poems, prelude, interludes and postlude) you will find in the Portfolio. As well as a taste of the readings that have formed signposts and pointed in directions I could never have anticipated, and the influence of the Research Community of which I have been a part. And remember, this is an irreverent and in many ways painful reduction, and a much neater and more coherent account of a stream of events - the actual *lively* process of which I have been a part.

Chronological Research Process	Kairos Moments	Signpost Readings	Tales...	Research Community
<p>2006, December Ethics Committee</p> <p>2007, February 1. PPD cohort Planning the first PPD cohort with four other PPD supervisors.</p> <p>We play around with ideas connected to uncertainty.</p> <p>We create tasks for the supervisee in -between sessions, as stepping stones.</p> <p>Supervision group with Blossom starts</p> <p>Research Proposals: "Sensible meetings between sense, no sense and nonsense" "Roll up for the Magical Mystery Tour"</p> <p>2. PPD cohort The PPD tasks begin to feel like homework, which had not been my intention</p> <p>I ask myself if there is enough space for improvisation in PPD</p> <p>Two day workshop in Copenhagen about PPD and "my doctoral work"</p>	<p>Experiences of the use of resonance in PPD sessions.</p> <p>The meeting with my maternal heritage, as described in the Prelude – creating the title of my research journey: Roll up for a Magical Mystery Tour.</p> <p>Blossom accepts the dance metaphor as a guide to talking about how we interact in supervision.</p> <p>Meeting with Davis and experiencing resonance in our research dialogue</p> <p>Writing my first Interlude – Desperado. Experiencing that "I can write from within experiences" and "I know more than I know I know".</p> <p>Moment of resonance in the "The Young Woman who had to cut off her Head"</p> <p>Talking with John, my supervisor about asking the supervisees I supervise to write to me about their experiences.</p> <p>This was the beginning of a relationship with groups where I felt I was learning just as much as they were.</p>	<p>Rilke's writing about loving the questions.</p> <p>D. Abram – 'The Spell of the Senses' – opened up my senses and curiosity towards all that is felt.</p> <p>E. Gendlin – About felt sense - and the feeling of wholeness</p> <p>D. Stern – Shared feeling voyages. The difference between implicit knowing and explicit knowledge</p> <p>M. Johnson – Meaning is more than cognitive understanding – it is felt. And about what it is to be a person.</p> <p>D. Tannen – creating permission to write evocatively – challenge dominant discourses about academic writing.</p> <p>P. Mercier's book Night Train to Lisbon was an amazing experience about language and experience</p> <p>C. Ellis – about auto -ethnography – bringing my own experience and voice up front</p>	<p>Creating a 'poem' out of Rilke's writing: Letter to a young poet.</p> <p>Starting to write about "Resonance", including my experiences with Davis</p> <p>"Desperado"</p> <p>"Once I was a Weaver"</p> <p>"The Woman who Cut off her Head from her Body"</p> <p>Starting to write "Going Down the Slippery Slopes of Uncertainty"</p>	<p>2006, July</p> <p>Being admitted to the first cohort of doctoral supervisees at KCC's Professional Doctorate in Systemic Practice</p> <p>Meetings at KCC 4-5 times a year until fall 2009. Co - constructing possible research approaches drawing on each others' resources and knowledge.</p> <p>Gunnar Nodland agrees to be my conversational partner during this adventure. His poems of resonance create vibrations of extraordinary vigor.</p> <p>John Shotter becomes my supervisor. There are lots of shared feeling voyages in his writing and our talks that <i>move</i> me multi -dimensionally ...sometimes to the edge, .and onwards</p> <p>Gail reads <i>Desperado</i> when all women from our cohort are gathered in Helen's apartment.</p>

Chronological Research Process	Kairos Moments	Signpost Readings	Tales...	Research Community
Starting supervision with the Island Women	Being inside the talk with the Island Women	K. Etherington – reminds me of reflexivity and creates comfort in a strenuous process.	“In the Shades of the Mango Tree”	The Måfå Research Group is informally established. Lisen, Ann-Margreth, Gail and I stay at Måfå, my cabin in the mountains – read, write, talk, laugh - encouragements
2. PPD cohort finished.	Blossom gives me her “ <i>story about learning to ski</i> ”. I am Yngve	Introduces me to per formative writing – which disturbs me.	“Kåre and the Mouth Harp”	I ask Kirsten Schou to be my Norwegian (Canadian) supervisor. Her healing sensitivity in combination with sturdy academic experience invite a broadening of my spheres of exploration
Study trip to Houston Galveston Clinic in Houston – inspired to see collaboration in practice.	Davis meets Gitte, and a moment of resonance.	D. Paxton about Improvisational Contact Dance – and the seductiveness of success.	Finishing “In the Shades of the Mango Tree.”	I ask Kirsten Schou to be my Norwegian (Canadian) supervisor. Her healing sensitivity in combination with sturdy academic experience invite a broadening of my spheres of exploration
2009 Starting supervision with The Philosophers, which I later decided to call the Aspasians	Meeting the New Group and feeling “it all coming together”, I wrote about this in “In the Shades of the Mango Tree.”	B. Keeney. About being a Creative Therapist – about the transformative presence of a therapist’s (and client’s) unique personal resources and talents, imagination.....	“The Aspasians – Relational Philosophizing”	Måfå Research Group meets annually February/March from 2008 onwards. Without this group I would never have made it
Finishing writing up the PPD Program – creating a PPD-handbook, with ‘Invitations’ Not included in Portfolio (Is it inviting in too much structure? – Not included in the Portfolio)	Rebekka’s story that just came out of the blue.	J. Shotter’s Social Construction on the Edge, encompasses a number of the different writings I have valued	Creating “Rebekka’s Stanza”	Meetings, emails, Skype-conversations with John, Kirsten, Gail, Lisen and Ann-Margreth
Arranging Dialogical Conversation Groups	Decides to ask Rebekka if we should do a workshop together in Helsinki, September 2011 – She agreed with enthusiasm.	K. Jones and M. Gergen on research as performance: provoke my interest and challenge my typographical discourse of orderliness	Last interlude “The Neighbour’s Gesture”	Ann-Margreth has finished her PDSP
Starting supervision with the New Group			Prelude “The Flight of the Birds”	Gail has finished her PDSP
Writing 2010-2011				Lisen and I have a PLAN – to finish by October 2011
Decide not to include “The Island Women in the Portfolio”, killing my Darlings. But it was too comprehensive and long. Put it in the Appendices.	Moving on...			2011 Submission

Chapter 5

Knowledge claims

“Some day, he supposes, we shall know all the laws of history and be able to calculate human actions with the same precision now used to pinpoint the location of a planet. A “table of logarithms” indicating all the details of our lives will be drawn up, and ‘a real mathematical formula’ will specify all our desires”

The Underground Man in Notes from Underground by Dostoevsky, quoted in Morson & Emerson, 1990:37

“The more one interprets the more one finds not the fixed meaning of a text, or of the world, but only other interpretations. These interpretations have been created and imposed by other people, not by the nature of things. In this discovery of groundlessness the inherent arbitrariness of interpretation is revealed”

Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1982:107

How do we know that what we know is worth knowing? What is valid knowledge? Living is about knowledge. Doing therapy is about knowledge, knowledge about what therapy is and about how to do therapy. The therapist needs to know what she is doing. Going to school to learn how to be a therapist is about gaining knowledge, and supervision is about knowledge; knowing what to do and how to do it. Supervision is about creating knowledge. Researching supervision is about acquiring knowledge. So it is appropriate to ask; what is *knowledge*? Is it as the Underground man supposes; to be able to know all the laws of history and be able to calculate and predict human actions? Or is it more as Dreyfus and Rabinow suggest, that it is by mere chance we choose one interpretation over the other? Or, something else...?

In this chapter I will address questions about knowledge claims to create a basis for orienting myself and positioning myself in relation to research, and helping me to orient myself as therapist and supervisor.

Mikhail Bakhtin’s notion of *dialogue* (1981, 1984, 1986), *social constructionism* and what Shotter (2008, 2010) has termed ‘*withness*’-*thinking and embodiment* constitute the heart of my claim to

a body of knowledge. I will discuss this claim in relation to the *modernist presumption*, which argues *that we need explicitly to know about generalized and concluded fact* to be able to move about intelligibly and find our way around in life (everyday-life, therapy, supervision and research).

Knowing from Within

As a teenager I fantasized about being able to *know it all*. I had a young girl's belief in the omnipotence of the human being in the world, believing that if I only could know every tiny bit about absolutely everything, then I would be able to put this together, and organize and predict absolutely all there is. *I was indeed a true child of Descartes*. As I grew older my belief in *knowing it all* shriveled. And when pursuing academic achievements I often thought of myself as a slow learner: To get the bits and pieces, numbers and words, categories and connections to fasten together inside my head (as I presumed was necessary) was such a laborious affair. It seemed impossible to consider myself an intellectual, and still more impossibly, an academic. Those characterizations were connected to a capacity to show stringency, coherence and consistency, to be able to remember what was written and said when, where, about what, who etc.; a kind of knowledge *about* 'what' and 'that'. And above all, proceed with *certainty* towards knowing *how* to perform in relation to this cognitively achieved knowledge. I had greater confidence in my ability to know how to *act in the spur of the moment*. I have often reflected on this discrepancy between knowing what to do, even knowing what to say, and feeling incapable of what I have thought of as giving rational account of how things hang together.

I can recognize how commonly gender stories are told about how women trust their feelings, senses, unspoken knowledge and tacit knowing, often with a sense of this as *being of lesser value*. These ways of knowing: the things that *we know*, but *we don't know that we know*, even if *we in the moment know what to do*, interest me and I don't assume they are connected to any *biology or 'gender'*. I rather think of them together as a *de-classified human capacity*¹¹.

I do feel humble, though, in writing about *knowledge*. It is a *big* word (quoting John Shotter in Vedeler, 2007) attended to by philosophers and scientists over centuries. These authoritative scholarly voices have attributed and disputed each others' knowledge claims. I do feel that, "Who am I to question those authoritative voices, representing thousands of years of dominant wisdom?". And still, that is what I intend to do. Or rather, I will question the *idea* of privileging

11 "...western culture has continually reaffirmed the mind/body split and the association of male and masculine with mind and female with body: "Embodiment is relegated to the female, freeing the phallogocentric idea to transcend the material, creating the deadly split between epistemology and ethics" (Lather, 1993:682). Since science traditionally defined the production of knowledge as the province of men, bodily knowledge has been systematically denied "it is as if 'facts' come out of heads, and 'fiction' out of our bodies" (Simmonds, 1999:52).

some voices, that I, borrowing from Bakhtin (1986), will call *canonized authoritative voices*, at the expense of local and less authoritative voices. Those voices that are *alive* in our everyday life, continuously creating sense out of the muddled or hurly-bury events of everyday life, are seldom invited into spaces in which the ‘big theoretical talks’ go on, such as doctoral dissertations, hard-bound philosophical volumes or large scale conferences . The word *theory* is saturated with a sense of gravitas – as if made of heavy material – valid and core essence – displaying convincing correlations not to be sneezed at. As for our everyday going about trying to make sense – it has not the same sense of substance. To be quite explicit, I believe our everyday common sense making has been deprived the privilege of being of significance; as I wrote above, it has been *declassified*.

It is not a question of either/or; I wish to reject this kind of dualism. I do not assert that it is only those voices appearing in our every day talk that are valid. On the contrary, I believe that also those voices we frequently refer to as theory are interesting to *relate* to and engage with. It is the *taken-for-grantedness*, the *gravity* and *privileging* I place in question.

To underscore another sort of privileging, I will offer an intermezzo that took place between my father and myself. This is a story *about knowing from within*, which illustrates how knowing from within is created *within an ongoing relationship*.

I think of myself as an incredibly fortunate woman, not least because I have a father who shows great interest in my work. My father has been a psychologist for many years, and is also engaged in the field of dialogically oriented family therapy and training (G. H. Vedeler, 2007). When I have asked him to read and respond to what I write – I always await his reactions with a sense of excitement and apprehension. Although he always shows impressive appreciation, I still know that we, as he himself would affirm, are likely to approach research from different angles or traditions. Thus, he is really useful when I need to scrutinize my own writing. As follows from my introduction so far, I have approached my practice as therapist, supervisor and researcher from an ontological position where I recognize knowledge claims as ongoing processes from within experiences. One day I sent my father a preliminary outline of three different positions towards knowledge, it looked like this:

“The first kind of knowledge is connected to *knowledge about facts and figures*, and the second *knowledge is about how to generally relate to these facts and figures*. Compared to these two kinds of knowledge I will introduce *a third kind of knowing* (Shotter, 2008) which transpires when we are inside unique relationships, being with people and responding in the moment. Or like now, in this moment when I am interacting with my computer, with notes, books and thoughts, when I let my fingers play, subsequently

reading what I have written and realizing that I have understood something new, for the first time. In both cases, new knowledge is born from within the interactive moment. This last knowing is what Shotter (2008) refers to as a third kind of knowing, *knowing from within living/ongoing relationships.*"

We had a telephone conversation after my father had read what I had written, and a really interesting talk transpired. My father said that he was so pleased with the distinction I had made, between the first and the second kind of knowledge. Because he felt there is an emphasis on the search for knowledge about facts and figures, as in diagnosis in the fields of psychology and therapy, and that we need to be more interested in *how to relate* to our clients; how to do therapy. Then he said: "But, this *third* kind, I didn't really get that. It doesn't really make any sense to me". "What!" I responded quite bewildered. "Don't you get it? – This is actually what this is *all* about, this is my *stance*. Towards everything!". Then I tried to elucidate how this third kind of knowing, *from within*, is the main position from which I work, research and write. We didn't seem to come to any shared understanding and I felt miserable. I was disappointed with myself for not being able to express my intention in a sufficiently intelligible way and have my father understand what I had understood (!).

Eventually, this initiated a feeling of renewed energy, and I proceeded with my attempts to articulate my claims towards valuable ways of creating knowledge/knowing. Having my father's doubts in mind I dug into Ludwig Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* (1953) to understand more of his ideas about local grammar and 'games people play'. Ludwig Wittgenstein was originally an artificial language philosopher. Following in the footsteps of Bertrand Russell, his teacher, he supported through his book *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* from 1922 the idea that language was built from atomic statements using logical connectives. Later he abandoned this conviction and began to study the phenomenon of ordinary language in use and conceived meaning in living language in terms of the question of how the speakers in a specific context use words within language to express intentions.

I became fascinated by Wittgenstein's thorough re-orientation towards meaning making and language. In *Philosophical Investigations* he *philosophizes* over language as an ongoing locally constructed game of sense making, logic being negotiated as grammatical rules created and played out in relation to unique circumstances. This is not unlike what Harold Garfinkel (1967) underlines when he describes how people continually create and recreate their social world. For Garfinkel *rationality* is produced as a local accomplishment as members of society craft their moment-to-moment interaction.

“Members to an organized arrangement are continually engaged in having to decide, recognize, persuade, or make evident the rational, i.e., the coherent, or consistent, or chosen, or planful, or effective, or methodical, or knowledgeable character of [their activities].” (ibid:32)

Social order arises in the very ways that participants conduct themselves together, and the sense of a situation arises from their interactions. This is termed *reflexivity* and means that members shape action in relation to context while the context itself is constantly being redefined through action.

As I was reading Wittgenstein and Garfinkel I could sense a line of thought between their ideas about *local* logic, and the realization that logic is not the end, but a negotiable grammar of every unique game, and Bakhtin’s dialogical orientation. Bakhtin (1981) see knowledge as spontaneously occurring between voices sensuously attuning to events occurring in their surroundings. Knowledge is about understanding how to relate and this is achieved as a local discursive activity.

Then, some days later I received an email from my father¹²:

Dear Anne Hedvig

I read some more of what you sent me, and I have been thinking some more about the three types of knowledge you are writing about. I believe it is quite illuminating and useful to make this distinction.

I have actually, always been discontented with the way we educate therapists. We learn a lot about, and teach about how things “are”. We call that professional discipline and it has a high status, like for instance Medicine and Psychology. Then it has been realized how this isn’t enough, knowledge is not sufficient to learn skills. To *know about* is not enough; we also need to know *how*.

To do this one has tried apprenticeship models like the practicum, educational positions, supervision programs etc. That is nice enough, but it can’t stop there (in fact it never stops).

I do understand more now about how our experiences with clients are about how meaning continually emerges in the unique meeting. “*It just happens once and never again*” as it says in a song from my youth. Maybe that is why I found it so tedious to write down case notes from my therapy sessions. It felt so scanty in relation to what I and not least what the clients had experienced.

¹² My translation from Norwegian to English.

And above all, it is about not measuring one's abilities up against what is "right" (that is what makes skill-training/supervision disturbing) but what we experience in our body and in our mind. Validate the experience, like when you said to Anders:¹³ "this is what it feels like to be heartbroken"

Your father

Our talk had actually been a dialogue opening up the possibility for both of us to understand more – from *within* our talk. Both of us had felt encouraged to try to create more sense in relation to the other. It was a relational activity, not just happening as we talked, but managing to generate engagement in relation to what we had been talking about, and we had both felt heartened to proceed into this realm of knowledge claim, to understand more. My father had not been convinced by my talking *about* 'the third kind of knowing'. It was when he was reminded of his own different experiences in his professional work, read what I had written about Anders, and was reminded of a song from his youth he was emotionally touched and *moved* in relation to what we had talked about. I felt a sudden warm gratitude towards my father; our dialogical encounter was truly helpful for me to understand more about what I needed to make more explicit. It had generated more understanding between us, as well as a pulsating kind of energy I could feel enthused me in relation to going on writing about different ways of approaching knowledge.

General Rational Knowledge and Local Relational Knowing

Challenging Grand Narratives

The Western world's perception of knowledge has been overwhelmingly decisive for our everyday understanding of *being* and *relating* in life. The grand narratives (Kincheleo, 1997) of what has become termed as *Modernism* have created taken for granted assumptions about what counts as knowledge on all levels (Burr, 2003). My intention here is to illuminate how what I will call *the Cartesian legacy of reason and logic*, has generated a spider web of claims concerning what it is to *know*. I assert that this web has become enmeshed with every little space in our everyday conceptions; from what it is to think, use and live in language and what it is to be a person; how to create sense of interpersonal activities such as in *therapy and supervision* – and all the way – to the inquiries we do into these realms of life. This net is made of sticky stuff. Even those who comprehend life and living from other perspectives now and then find themselves caught up in

¹³ He is referring to my conversation with Emma and Anders, see page 25-26.

the web of reason and generalized logic. Joe Kincheloe (1997) asserts that such grand narratives have the power to

“shape our representation of the world along the lines of particular patterns (...) our fictions, though complex and idiosyncratic, become literary constructs (fiction formulas) reflective of dominant ideologies and ways of seeing (...) in the larger society.” (:57)

I have, at this point abstained from distinguishing between an approach to research and an approach to common everyday sense making, as my intention is to show that there is no reason to make such a distinction. I will argue how an approach to knowledge can be a philosophical stance beyond methodology; an ontological position that influences all realms of life.

Modernism

“The Age of Reason” or “Enlightenment” are phrases used to describe the time of changes in *scientific method* emerging after Galileo, Bacon and not least Renee Descartes entered the Western world’s scene of science (Devlin, 1997). Opposing the ancient Greek’s dialectic approach through rhetoric and logic, a scientific revolution rose which stated that “*scientific truth was determined by empirical observations followed by analysis*” (ibid: 61). In *Discourse on Method*, Descartes describes how true scientific investigation is based on being *objective, dispassionate, and rational* and *context free*; in relation to the investigation of natural science, philosophy and the theory of knowledge (ibid). He was convinced that the human being, through reason and logic, is provided with the strategy to discover and realize an underlying reality.

In this Cartesian tradition *knowledge* is based on the assumption that the nature of the world can be revealed by observation and that there is a definite social world that can be discovered. If we pose questions about the world and gather relevant data in an appropriately rigorous manner we will end with good knowledge of the social (Law & Urry, 2003). This involves a search for general descriptive laws that can be used to predict natural phenomena, including those of human social life. Shotter (2010) describes how this philosophy promised a deep and successful knowledge of the world, “a world made up of a fixed number of existing particles of matter in motion, which, at any chosen instant in time can simply take on a new configuration” (:14). Once predictions were possible, it would be possible to control the occurrence of those phenomena (Schostak 2002, 2006). Subsequently, underlying explanations and theories could be drawn out.

I see these assumptions as treating human life as composed of entities that can be discovered if we look hard enough. Consequently, the emphasis is placed upon reference to actual things in the world to account for meaning. This involves the idea that *knowledge* is nothing substantially

more or less than *the truth conditions they involve* (Devlin, 1997). There is this *thing*, and it means *that*. This is the modernist's ontological position.

A position which presupposes a reality consisting of units of entities, which adapt to other entities on the basis of rules, will pursue predictable connections and truth, certainty, consistency and structure. And through method driven approaches, based on rational consideration and logical deduction truth will be revealed and discovered (Devlin, 1997). It will be possible to predict and describe the true reality of how '*it is*'. Certainty, consistency and coherence (de Peuter, 1998) are to be pursued through reason and logical thinking. If we take this position, research is validated as adequate and true if we are able to categorize, classify and analyze what we accept as reality (Schostak 2002, 2006, and Schostak & Schostak 2008), and subsequently make an account of it. With such *accounts* we can determine truth conditions; make plans, organize systems and organizations and produce desired outcomes.

This has significant consequences for those of us who want to study our social world. There is an expectation concerning the possibility to describe, to predict, then to control behavior, with knowledge based on underlying theory. All this again might produce some methods and techniques that can be used to assure desired human behaviors, and consequently to formulate rules and laws to ensure sustained desired outcomes.

Reason, Logic and Language

If we take as point of departure this Cartesian approach to knowledge based on searching for reliable data *about* reality (that), in respect to knowing *how* to act and react, a certain language is required, a language that is able to re-present (or mirror) the truth, and describe in a distinct manner how to relate to truth conditions.

A defining feature of our species is our ability to use reason and language. The belief that rational thought is a completely logical process, a mental calculation that follows precise rules, has promoted an interest in writing down and formalizing a language of the mind, a predictable and contextually void language, formed through generalized logical structures and absolutely free of any hint of ambiguity.

By the seventeenth century, Devlin (1997) accounts, there was a belief that all genuine knowledge could be formalized. Man was distinguished as a *calculating man*. Gottfried Leibniz attempted to develop a symbolic language, mathematical language – what he called a universal characteristic – whereby any concept could be assigned a characteristic number so that reasoning was reduced to calculation. Leibniz said quite bluntly "*If someone would doubt my*

results, I would say to him. 'Let us calculate, Sir' and thus by taking pen and ink, we would settle the question" (quoted in Devlin. Ibid: 150).

In their *Principia Mathematica*, Bertrand Russell and Alfred Whitehead set forth to produce a formal language with which the truth of all mathematical statements could be demonstrated through logical analysis. The project was intended to further develop formal logic as a way of eliminating all confusion caused by ordinary language, and thereby create a perfectly transparent medium by which one would be able to conduct traditional philosophical arguments (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2010).

Following these lines, Chomsky called his study of language 'Cartesian linguistics' in order to emphasize its scientific nature; a study of language in a rational manner, free of any messy context like culture. Chomsky proposed that all human languages are essentially logical and follow universal rules (Devlin, 1997). Before him, Saussure described language as conceptual, in terms of the signifier and the signified – but also as the rules and structures of a *self-contained system* (Shotter, 2010).

Questioning the Idea of a Generalized Logic of Language

By thoroughly exploring the age of Greek logic and modern reason, the mathematician Keith Devlin (1997) questions the claim that mind follows logical rules. He claims that the quest for finding rules of thought and language begun by the ancient Greeks has continued to the present day in the effort to create artificial intelligence. Devlin describes how the dialectical method of Plato, Socrates and Aristotle, used logic as the principle method to establish scientific truth. This

“...placed logic at the pinnacle of human knowledge. However, after the scientific revolution, scientific truth was determined by empirical observation followed by analysis. Consequently, the dialectic method was no longer regarded as an instrument for the discovery of facts about the world.” (:61)

Descartes' book *Discourse of Method* sought to undermine the ancient Greeks' dialectic as a tool of discovery and replaced it with the method of heuristic discovery and analysis, based on observation (a bit more needed here on this). However, what was being called into question was not the importance of logical thought itself; after all, science puts a great premium on precise, logical analysis - logic survived.

But Devlin asks: “What if our logical thinking and our use of language is not rule-based action? Where does that leave logic as a science of reason..?” (:180). He goes on to discuss how our Western culture is dominated by an approach going back to Socrates, and especially Plato, and argues that their love of mathematics and of precise definition led them to “discount any human

talent, ability, activity, or skill that could not be defined and explained and subjected to rational argument (:182). This rational approach was supported by Galileo when he showed how it successfully could be applied to the physical world. Descartes consented by arguing that the rational approach provided the true way to understand the activity of the human mind, and that understanding consists of the formation and use of suitable representations.

These thoughts, Devlin claims, have been promoted by others, as Leibnitz and Kant still dominate the Western conception of “*the coolly, logical ‘rational man’, a man who is regarded as far more reliable than the much maligned woolly-minded, intuitive thinker*” (:182). The concept of control is immanent in this ‘accepted wisdom’; connected to values of control over others as well as self control, and a discouragement of not being in control. I can certainly recognize this from my encounters in supervision contexts as well as in therapy; sometimes revealed as embarrassment towards using too much time searching for meaning or a lack of agency (Anderson, 1997). It is also evident in the lack of trust in implicit knowing (Stern, 2004) or tacit knowledge (Polyani, 1966).

Mind and Machine

The belief in a generalized, rule bound and logical language about reality became evident in the creation of artificial intelligence (AI). Hubert Dreyfus, in his book *What Computers still can't do* (1979) set out to show how it is impossible for disembodied computers to mimic higher mental human functions. He proposes that computer science is naive and has not understood how living consciousness uses living language. Besides the technological problem of storing a great number of bits of neutral data, Dreyfus (1979) points how “there are in the last analysis no fixed facts, be they a million or ten million (..) Since human beings themselves produce facts, the facts themselves are changed by conceptual revolution” (:282).

Devlin (1997) agrees with Dreyfus and states that it is time to recognize that this project has failed, at least so far: logic simply can't capture the real processes of human thought. Contextual improvisation, local, unique logic and living relationships are too complex, and as Devlin asserts: our minds are intimately intertwined with the world around us; even our social norms play crucial roles in the marvelously complex dance of human cognition. The problem, what Devlin calls the Achilles heel for AI, is the *common knowledge problem*; when we talk and reason, we use all sorts of *common sense knowledge* of the world. A four year old child has the capacity to know the intrinsic and movable, implicit context as significant for understanding the explicit expression, which the computer is incapable of (Dreyfus, 1979).

The difference between the Cartesian idea “that all understanding consists in forming and using appropriate symbolic representations” (ibid:xi) and seeing human consciousness as a living

enduring complex capacity for sense making in relationships, is the core of the problem with AI. This is also what Wittgenstein (1953) addressed when he moved away from the perception of knowledge and understanding as the mental capacity *to know it all*, as in the universal language game, in the sense of perceiving whole pictures or general logics. Wittgenstein replaced these notions with a focus on conditioned local knowledge and local logic that is efficient enough for knowing how to go on under present and apparent circumstances.

I would like to offer a small example:

There is a small private dirt road leading from the main road up to the cabins and ski slopes, not far from where I have my cabin. This dirt road is a toll road, and we need to pay when we pass by a gate. There is a sign telling how much it costs and a small box where we put the money. The sign says:

Pr dag (day) - kr 30

Pr døgn (24 hours) - kr 20

The question is, how much shall we pay for driving up to have a few hours on the slopes? It would be tempting to pay 20 crowns, as that is cheapest, and then we could even go up and down the whole day. Or we could pay 30 crowns, as I presume that that was what was *meant*, when the sign was put up.

I think this is a good example of what we need to know if we are going to relate to other people. We could follow rules, and win in court, pledging that the sign said we just needed to pay 20 crowns, *who could know beforehand that we were not going to stay 24 hours?* But that would be to dismiss the intention of the person who had written the sign, the local logic of that person, and withdraw from any sense of relational responsibility for finding ethical ways of going on together.

These kinds of considerations are inherent human competencies – to be able to ‘read’ the ambiguous contexts within which we are moving. As a grandmother I can see my one and a half year old grandchild moving around, learning through his interaction with his surroundings how to relate to locally constructed logics. He is becoming a master of this infinite multiverse - relating in ways a computer (or any other rule bound device) will never be able to do.

The Picture holds us Captive

The overarching assumption that the world can be analyzed into independent logical elements is followed by an epistemological assumption that our understanding of the world can then be reconstructed by combining these elements according to rules. This way of understanding our

social world, and the way we perceive language has great consequences, and this image, or *picture*, using Wittgenstein's (1953) own words "held us captive. And we could not get outside it, for it lay in our language and language seemed to repeat it to us inexorably" (No. 115). We have been imprisoned by the belief that language is made up of logical pictures of a reality 'out there'. Wittgenstein is arguing against his initial thoughts in *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* where he had written that "The general form of propositions is: This is how things are" (:4-5). He later wrote:

"That is the kind of proposition one repeats to oneself countless times. One thinks that one is tracing the outline of the thing's nature over and over again, and one is merely tracing through the frame through which we look at it" (No:114).

Wittgenstein's *philosophical investigations* (1953) in the book by the same name, was, in short, his confrontation with the idea that there is an underlying reality, and language signifies that reality. "What we are destroying is nothing but houses of cards and we are clearing up the ground of language on which they stood" (No: 118).

Devlin (1997) reflects along the same lines when he writes:

"As a result of over two thousand years of intellectual development, starting with the ideas of Plato and Aristotle and strongly influenced by Renaissance thinkers such as Leibnitz and Descartes, twentieth century man finds it very difficult to break free of trying to understand human conversation as an exchange of information" (:217).

In opposition to this, is an understanding of human being as alive and orienting themselves through living in relationships. Blaise Pascal railed against Descartes' omnipotent view (in Devlin, 1997) and asserted: "The heart has its reasons that reason does not know". This serves as a modest reminder, when we consider once again the rationalist tradition, in which we are brought up to explain *knowing how* in terms of *knowing that*. By doing this we reduce skills to facts, rules and laws and explain the complex in terms of its parts, as Devlin (*ibid*) asserts; explain the composite in terms of its constituents.

Disembodied Sense Making

Dreyfus (1979) is quite clear when he asserts that computers cannot be like humans, but he raises a disturbing question - *maybe humans will turn into computers?*

"During the past two thousand years the importance of objectivity; the belief that actions are governed by fixed values; the notion that skills can be formalized; and in general that one can have a theory of practical activity, have gradually exerted their

influence in psychology and social science. People have begun to think of themselves as objects able to fit into the inflexible calculations of disembodied machines: machines for which the human form-of-life must be analyzed by sensor-motor skills. Our risk is not the advent of superintelligent computers, but of *subintelligent* human beings.” (:280)

I felt recognition when I was reading Dreyfus’ peek into the future as I could identify both my own lack of trust as well as that of clients, students and supervisees with whom I work, in their own participation in sense making. I find that people certainly question themselves regularly in comparison with a ‘high standard’ of objectified knowledge – with the consequence of finding themselves as *sub-intelligent* and *woolly-minded*.

Social Constructionism

Social constructionism claims that language and communication is primarily constitutive of social reality (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, Leppington, 1991, Gergen & Gergen, 2003). It invites us to examine all taken-for-granted ways of understanding the world (Burr, 2003), and to be critical of the idea that our observations of the world unproblematically reveal its nature to us. It challenges the modernist view that knowledge is based upon objective, unbiased observation of the world, a world that is composed of facts and that “the goal of knowledge is to provide a literal account of what the world is like” (Knorr-Cetina, 1981:1). On the contrary, social phenomena are not given, constant, functional or objective; rather they are constructed, deconstructed and re constructed through human interaction. From this perspective language is neither a neutral system of signs that expresses something that exists independently of language nor a vehicle in which to transport meaning. Language is a system by which reality is actively and collectively constructed and conversations are the fundamental human reality in and through which our everyday world is constructed, sustained, or transformed.

Macro and Micro Processes

Vivian Burr (2008) makes a point of describing two tendencies of interest in social constructionist theory and research. One tendency is to be engaged in the micro processes, the other in the macro processes. She connects Michel Foucault and his interest in power relations and how social structures, social relations and institutionalized practices are constructed through language to macro processes. These practices construct macro discourses, or grand narratives, for instance in relation to mental health, class, crime and punishment and our perception of sexuality and gender (Foucault, 1973, 1975, 1976).

On a micro level, Burr states, social constructionism is about how dynamic interpersonal processes such as those described by Gergen (1994, 1999) and Shotter (1993a, 1993b) are

ongoing relational activities which create our understanding of who we are and what our social world is about.

I agree with Burr (ibid) when she accentuates that micro and macro social constructionism should not be seen as mutually exclusive. Whether the dialogue is a movement between inner, vague and blurred voices (as in thinking, see for instance in Vygotsky, 1986), between living people in relationships or in terms of long standing social norms, the same kind of process of *meaning making* takes place. I take Bakhtin's (1984, 1986) conception of dialogue to be an overall description of the process of sense making, knowledge creation and power relations on all levels and under all circumstances.

Dialogism – a philosophical stance

I will in this section lay out some ideas using the work of Bakhtin (1981, 1984, 1986) describing how I comprehend dialogism as a philosophical stance; a continuously tension filled body of movements towards understanding.

Where *Descartes* and the modernists are motivated by an urge to find the truth beyond dispute, Mikhail Bakhtin's (ibid) more *modest* philosophical stance is to call for knowing more of a living, growing, relational and developing world, or, as Shotter (2010) describes it, "a world, existing in the cosmos as a complex, internally interrelated, invisible unity with continuously emergent, uniquely new aspects and characteristics" (:14). There is a breathtakingly enormous gap between anticipating the world as one grand master narrative of consistency, coherence, predictability, certainty and essence, and Bakhtin's (Morson & Emerson, 1990) proposal that '*what is*', is simply ongoing dialogues about '*what can it be*' or '*how can we understand this, in this specific context*'.

I have referred to Mikhail Bakhtin's description of *dialogue* as the *springboard* for my work in terms of the practice into which I am inquiring, the ontological position I have taken, as well as what I later will term my philosophical stance on methodology. I will try now to underscore the significance of this thinking in relation to the macro and micro processes concerning sense making and relational knowing.

It is with quite some humility I plead the legacy of Bakhtin, in recognition to the complex and intricate volume of work he left behind. I will not take it upon myself to be an expert judge of his work; the very phrase *expert judge* is contradictory in relation to his legacy: one that invites openness, ambiguity, polyphony and infinite understanding. Thus, it is also with boldness I approach Bakhtin, and take the liberty of using use his expressions and writings as a point of departure and as a haven to revisit. It would therefore be an obvious paradox if I treated

Bakhtin's voice as canonized or exhaustive. I have rather related to his writing as an invitation to elaborate and as an opening stroke in a poly vocal chorus of voices.

Dialogue

In contrast to the modernist evaluation of knowledge as the discovery of essential truth, social constructionism and Bakhtin's conception of dialogism (Holquist, 1990) comprehend knowledge as contextual, created through unfinalized meaning making processes, in which there is an ongoing tension filled reflexive movement between certainty and ambiguity. I have found Bakhtin's contribution of the concepts of *unfinalizability*, *polyphony*, *heteroglossia*, *the centripetal and centrifugal forces* and *answerability* immensely valuable in striving to understand more of the complex movability intrinsic in the process of sense making in which all human beings continuously take part.

Bakhtin (1981, 1984, 1986) claimed that language and communication are primarily constitutive of social reality. Language is in process of creating our world, and this is done through dialogue; we think, talk and act dialogically and new meaning emerges on the threshold between voices in action. Shotter agrees and asserts that language is not a device for picturing or mirroring an already existing language-independent reality (Shotter, 1993a). The key assumption is that we are not knowable entities and we do not react in terms of predictable conditional responses (Bateson, 1972). In this perspective human beings are nature and culture (Moi, 2011); we are living, bodily, responsive, expressive and relational beings (Shotter, 2010). We are enmeshed in meaning making through language and in relational communities. As Bakhtin (1984) puts it:

“to live means to participate in dialogue: to ask questions, to heed, to respond, to agree, and so forth. In this dialogue a person participates wholly and throughout his: whole life, with his eyes, lips, hands, soul, spirit, with his whole body and deeds. He invests his entire self in discourse, and this discourse enters into the dialogic fabric of human life, into the world symposium. (...) Every thought and every life merges in the open-ended dialogue.”(:293)

Bakhtin suggests the term *unfinalizability* as an all-purpose bearer of his conviction that the world is not only a messy place, but also an open place. Meaning is never a completed product. Bakhtin consistently opposes all ways of thinking that could reduce the present moment – each present moment – to a simple derivative of what went before. Time is open and each moment has multiple possibilities.

“Nothing conclusive has yet taken place in the world, the ultimate word of the world and about the world has not yet been spoken, the world is open and free, everything is in the future and will always be in the future.” (Bakhtin, 1984:166)

As opposed to the Cartesian tradition that has as objective the disclosure of truth, Bakhtin sees truth as a relational ongoing activity.

“Truth is not born nor is it to be found inside the head of an individual person, it is born between people collectively searching for truth, in the process of their dialogical interaction.” (ibid:110)

Morson and Emerson (1990) accentuate that what Bakhtin has in mind is “*a conception of truth that allows every moment to be rich in potentials [and] arise from the experience of the ‘open present’ in each moment*” (:236). It is in this landscape the dialogic sense of truth manifests its *unfinalizability* by existing on the threshold of several interacting consciousnesses, a plurality of unmerged voices: a *polyphony* of voices interacting. From this perspective language, knowledge, sense making, and understanding can be conceived as different words describing the *process towards* creating meaning.

Language – Multitude of Potential Meanings

Bakhtin considers language as a meaning making process, involving movements [in our bodies and between bodies, and between bodies and the otherness that surrounds us (Shotter, 2008)] which express and construct meaning. Language is the movement which can mediate meaning as an ongoing activity. The meaning in the language will be in motion, dependent upon the actual context in which it is used. The context is reciprocally created through language and creates language, through the participants’ past experiences and anticipated experiences in the present context.

Bakhtin’s (1981) notion of language, from our native language to the meaning of a single word, is in its immanent openness for a multitude of potential meanings. This variety of meaning he terms *heteroglossia*. *Heteroglossia* is a basic condition governing the operation of meaning in any expression. It is that which insures the primacy of context over text. Everything is understood as a part of a greater whole and there is a constant interaction between meanings, all of which have the potential of conditioning the others. Which will affect the other, how it will do so and to what degree is what is actually settled at the moment of utterance.

Thus there is no meaning inherent in the utterance itself, but rather in relation to the moment in which it is said, and what that moment encompasses.

“..no living word relates to its object in a singular way: between the word and its object, between the word and the speaking subject, there exists an elastic environment of other, alien words about the same object, the same theme, and this is an environment it is difficult to penetrate. It is precisely in the process of living interaction with this specific environment that the word may be individualized and given stylistic shape.” (ibid: 276)

Bakhtin goes on to describe the dialogic process as a reflexive process through which the word, the meaning and the discourse is shaped and reshaped in relation to the local micro circumstances, which he calls

“a dialogically agitated and tension-filled environment of alien words, value judgments and accents, (which) weaves in and out of complex interrelationships, merge with some, recoils from others....” (:276)

The meaning making process is a living one and as all living movements it is complex:

“The living utterance, having taken meaning and shape at a particular historical moment in a socially specific environment, cannot fail to brush up against thousands of living dialogic threads. Woven by socio-ideological consciousness around the given object of utterance; it cannot fail to become an active participant in social dialogue. After all, the utterance arises out of this dialogue as a continuation of it and as a rejoinder to it – it does not approach the object from the sidelines.” (:276-277)

I view heteroglossia as Bakhtin’s recognition of the multiple and always evolving movement between certainty and uncertainty. It is a promising condition, contesting any notion of everlasting stability or generalization of universal truth. And it encompasses all that we yet do not know.

Meaning under Pressure

Bakhtin claims that our way of understanding our social world is continuously under pressure, affected by two kinds of forces. The *centripetal forces* work towards a monological unity of language, words, meaning, and expressions. The *centrifugal forces* disperse language into heterogeneity and difference. These opposing forces are found in every use of language, and affected by these forces, every concrete utterance, every word or tone of voice of “all speaking subjects serve as a point where centrifugal as well as centripetal forces are brought to bear” (Bakhtin, 1981:272).

Philosophy and Ontology

I will propose considering dialogism as an overall ongoing movement in which one extreme point is *dialogue* and the other extreme point is *monologue*. Dialogue is a state of a paramount openness to all voices and an acknowledgment of heteroglossia, whilst monologues “possess a ready-made truth” (Bakhtin, 1984:110). I take the meaning making process as a philosophical stance which recognizes *meaning* in terms of a temporary, local meaning in precisely this moment, created between living people and the otherness (Steiner, 1989, Shotton, 2009) to which they relate. Dialogism should be perceived as a process; an *ontological stance* founded on a belief that nothing *is* in itself, but is in the process of becoming.

Bakhtin (1984) explains the monologue as an approach by which one person remains an object of the other; no response is anticipated that can change anything. It is in the highest sense a “denial of the equal rights of consciousnesses vis-à-vis truth” (:285). He discusses the term monologue in relation to totalitarian approaches; by denying and closing down the dialogue, one will be the object of the other and monologue will appear.

Bakhtin (Morson & Emerson, 1990) has used the term *monologism* to explain what he calls an error, the assumption that everything has a meaning relative to the seamless whole, a meaning one could discover if one only had the code. This kind of thinking is totalitarian, he argues, in its assumption that it can, in principal, explain the totality of things. It is not a question of either-or, he explains, but of *polyphony* – many-voices. The dialogical approach is open for change in response to experience, does not aim at moving anyone in any exact direction and invites other voices into an open-ended, co-creating process.

In Bakhtin’s world there are no grand narratives that assure us mastery. On the contrary, we will need to attend to risk taking and uncertainty, to processes not conclusions, to fragments not wholes, and to creativity not finished products. In this world heterogeneity and movements are the fundamental conditions for what is perceived as real. And it is only through recognizing *dialogue, not as instrumental but as ontological*, we will be able to move around and know *how to go on* (Wittgenstein, 1953) in relation to people and in relation to the ever moving circumstance of living as event (Morson & Emerson, 1990).

Chapter 6

Practice Research as Philosophy

A Dialogical Orientation; how to 'go on' in the midst of Fluidity and Complexity

“In recent years there has been an encouraging growth in scholarship that seeks to explore “an intermediate space [that] we can’t quite define yet, a borderland between passion and intellect, analysis and subjectivity, ethnography and autobiography, art and life.”

Behar, 1996:74

“Truth is therefore not abstract and other-worldly, but concrete, particular and sensuous – while at the same time being open, in an ongoing state of new creation by the actors, transcending the boundaries between the ordinary and the fabulous”.

Alvesson & Skölberg, 2000:175

“... we began to question the pragmatic value of our conventional-looking scholarship and imagine new possibilities. The language of the academy and all that it symbolized fell short in its ability to capture and communicate the complexity of human experience in all its diversity”.

Knowles and Cole, 2008:57

As a practitioner who takes the world to be socially constructed through ongoing and infinite dialogues, I have found it vital to find appropriate ways into the territory of research. Ways that, I feel, call for opposition to the captivation by a modernist world view of many research communities seeking to inquire into the social world. As described in the previous chapter, I hold that knowledge is a contextually dependent matter and that there are no “theory neutral data” (Johnson, 1987) in the form of essential facts, categories or figures, and thus no generalized *truth* to be *discovered*. I will argue that what follows from this is that we are in no need for instruments or techniques to disclose facts, to measure or systemise. The linear notion of cause and effect

should to be challenged on all levels, and we need to acknowledge how research never is innocent (Haraway, 1988). We need to embrace it as performance and enactment (Law & Urry, 2003) and scrutinize its authority. We do not put questions to a world that answers us back. We create the world as we speak; the reality is a relational effect (ibid.). The argument made by Giddens (1984) and others is that social science can be understood as an expression – and a reflexive moment in the continuing elaboration and enactment - of social life. Gergen and Gergen (2000) suggest in accordance with this that we should discard the traditional goal of research as an accumulation of products, of static frozen findings and “replace it with the generation of communicative process” (:1039). In doing this, the essential endeavour of research becomes that of “establishing productive forms of relationship” (:1039).

This chapter addresses how we need to find ways of orienting ourselves as researchers in relation to a ‘sensuous’ space on the borderland between ‘passion and intellect’ as described in the two introductory quotations, a place I comprehend as a fluid space in the midst of complexity. It is a realm of life that can be difficult to describe, but none the less intensely experienced. Our descriptions, one way or another, will create what we are describing in an ongoing reflexive movement. Depicting dialogue as ontological, I will take the position that our orientation (Wittgenstein, 1953) is best carried out through taking a philosophical stance – in full collaboration with the people involved, for finding ways of going on (Ibid.). I will describe later how I have been inspired and moved by voices from a wide range of research communities. These influences have retrospectively inspired me to call the orientation with which I have moved *Intuitive and Embodied Dialogical Inquiry*.

Inquiring in the Midst of Complexity

Law and Urry (2003) give an account of how social science has had the tendency to assume and *produce* social worlds composed of discrete entities standing in hierarchical or inclusive relation to one another. However, as they say

“much of social life escapes our capacity to make models of it, not only in the technical sense that it is beyond the grasp of current research methods, but in the more profound sense that it is constitutively resistant to the process of being gathered together into a single account, description, or model (...) social science method has problems in understanding non-linear relationships and flows. Heisenberg wrote: ‘The world ... appears as a complicated tissue of events, in which connections of different kinds alternate or overlap or combine and thereby determine the texture of the whole’.” (:5)

We should not conceive human relationships as mechanical, but rather as active and creative. A particular human 'encounter' never produces a single and confined effect; interventions or changes will always produce an array of possible effects across the 'encounter' in question. Prigogine (1997) describes these 'system' effects as a world of irregular, chaotic motions.

"Complexity thus makes three assumptions: that there is no necessary proportionality between 'causes' and 'effects'; that the individual and statistical levels of analysis are not equivalent; and that system effects do not result from the simple addition of individual components." (Law & Urry, 2003:8)

Complexity also explores how components of a human system can, through dynamic interaction; 'spontaneously' develop collective properties or patterns, which are not implicit in the same way within its components. The interest is in emergent properties, regularities of behavior that transcend the ingredients that make them up. Complexity argues against reductionism, against reducing the whole to the parts. Shotter has termed this complexity '*chiasmatic realities*' (2010), and sees it as a vague, complex, multi-dimensional, intertwined mixture of infinitely many different kinds of influences. It is, he says,

"...next to impossible to give them any fixed or finalized characterization: they have neither a fully orderly nor a fully disorderly structure; neither completely stable nor easily changed organization; neither fully subjective nor fully objective character. They are also non-locatable – for they are 'spread out' among all those participating in them. Yet it is precisely their lack of any predetermined order, and thus their openness to being specified or determined by those involved in them, in practice [...] that is both their central defining feature, and the feature that opens them up to the efforts of those acting within them." (:75)

Following from this, we need, as researchers, to relate to the chiasmic realities, the complexity of life as it is lived, not imprison it inside finalized concepts and definitions, as methodology and method driven approaches have a tendency to do (see Ellingson below). Research needs to welcome ambiguity, fluidity and openness.

Perhaps the Romantic poet Keats' term *negative capability* can serve as an incentive for a researcher's spirit: "(being) capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason" (in 'Getting it', Shotter, 2006:8). This is much the same attitude Rilke¹⁴ invokes by encouraging us to *have patience with everything unresolved in our heart and try to love the questions themselves*. Wittgenstein concurs with the observation,

¹⁴ Referred to in the introduction part, page 18-19.

“When you are philosophizing you have to descend into primeval chaos and feel at home there” (Wittgenstein, 1980:65).

Dialogue as Ontology - Research as Philosophy

By swapping the concept of *methodological* with *philosophical*, I am emphasising a distinction between a *method* driven approach and that of a stance of emergence, openness and unfinalizability. Philosophy is a *mode of inquiry* that pushes

“our thinking to the point where we are not prepared for its results, to the point of a kind of surprise or to the point where there is an eruption of that which could not already be accounted for in our prior forms and rules of thinking.” (Docherty, 1996:198)

As emphasized earlier, *dialogue* as described by Bakhtin is an ontological position¹⁵, and has implications for the creation of knowledge. In the choice of the perspective that knowledge is created in relationship, in a continuous movement between voices in action, any dialogue may be defined as a research process. I have found *ideas* with which to structure my research journey that do not treat methodology or methods as *authoritative discourses* or as *orthodoxy to be obeyed*. These ideas are in agreement with the notion of research as philosophy – acknowledging that there are indefinite ways of *going on* within the realm of research.

Consequently, I agree with those who think there is too much emphasis on categorizing types of researchers or research orientations. This categorizing has, according to Miller (2000), served to constrain researchers into thinking and acting in accordance with their perception of their research ‘type’ rather than pursuing important research questions regardless of the categories they reflect (I would prefer to say regardless of ‘*what emerges inside the dialogic moment*’). Patti Lather (1997) deconstructs the theory-practice binary and gestures towards a third space of both/and, and neither/nor and presents what she calls a situated methodology; letting practice and the theoretical reflexively influence each other. This refusal of strict boundaries between social research approaches, has been known as the *blurring of genres* (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000) referred to as Laura L. Ellingson (2009) has created what she calls a Qualitative Continuum. She elaborates on Laurel Richardson’s idea of *crystallization* (Richardson & St. pierre 2000), supporting mixed-genre text that “combines symmetry and substance with an infinite variety of shapes, substances, transmutations” (:934). Ellingson (2009) encourages researchers to move across dualistic methodological boundaries and thereby “signal innovative approaches to sense making and representation” (:7).

¹⁵ See last chapter 5.

Accompanying Voices

I have let myself be(come) a researcher within the emergence of my practice, where I have invited people I have been involved with, as well as myself to experience, create and inquire into our practice as an ongoing perpetual dialogical activity. Throughout this process I have been immensely inspired and moved by reading an ample collection of literature covering the wide field of qualitative research (see for instance Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, 2005; Tierney & Lincoln, 1997) and other ideas on the fringes of these research communities. I will in what follows offer a *feel of the voices* that have accompanied my research journey and amplified my take on what I only have retrospectively come to call *Intuitive and Embodied Dialogical Inquiry*. I take a position here in which I distinguish theory of method as retrospectively constructed. This is in accordance with Shotter, who sees theories as aiming, ultimately, at justifying or legitimating a proposed course of action by providing it with an already agreed grounding or basis. Saying this, I do not view these voices as adding up to a theory that provided a map that instructed my practice research (Shotter, 2011). They have rather been companions, *guiding voices* (Simon, 2011), contributing in a multi cultural and polyphonic choir, enriching and enhancing my embodied soundboard and thereby supporting an entry into the realm of research.

I made a decision not to organize these voices under *concepts*, for example reflexivity, meaning making or writing. I have instead connected them to authors' *voices* and what I have thought of as *communities*, for example Auto-ethnography, Feminism and the Systemic Field.

Ethnography – Auto-ethnography

Ethnography supported my interest in perceiving people as part of communities, not as single operating entities. The anthropologist Clifford Geertz (2000) instigated me to go into details to achieve *thick descriptions*. His idea of *hanging out*¹⁶ or *walkabout* inspired me to move around without having to understand, make distinct connections or conceptualize my movements and encounters.

“In moving across places and peoples, restlessly seeking out contrasts and constancies for whatever insight they might provide into any enigma that might appear, one produces less a position, a steady, accumulating view on a fixed budget of issues, than a series of positioning – assorted arguments to assorted ends. This leaves a great deal of blur and uncertainty in place: perhaps most of it. But in this too we are following Wittgenstein: One might ask, he writes, “‘Is a blurred concept a concept at all?’ – Is an indistinct photograph a picture of a person at all? Is it even always an advantage to

¹⁶ Which he borrowed from James Clifford and his book *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* (1997).

replace an indistinct picture by a sharp one? Isn't the indistinct one exactly that which we need?" (PI, 71)." (Geertz, 200:xiii).

Reading Carolyn Ellis, *The ethnographic I* (2004) made a major impact on me, and supported ideas about being open and reflexive – putting *myself* in the picture, so to say. In auto-ethnography the researcher serves as her own subject of research, becomes her own case study. I have found this exciting from the point of view of acknowledging the researcher as part of what is being researched. The researcher as narrator is not standing outside the act or the text, but is invited into the scene as an adequate and transparently visible embodied co creator. I also found it appealing that the community of reflexive ethnographers promote openness also in relation to the research process. This openness demonstrates researcher integrity and a consciousness that welcomes dialogue. As Finlay (2002) writes: "...through the use of reflexivity, *subjectivity* in research can be transformed from a problem to an opportunity (:531).

Wendy Luttrell (2000) makes a case for what she calls "good enough" methods. Her argument is that being reflexive is something to be learned in terms of degrees rather than absolutes; a "good enough" researcher is more or less reflexive, not reflexive or unreflexive. And the researcher needs, according to Luttrell, to "accept the mistakes they make – errors often made because of their blind spots and the intensity in their social, emotional, and intellectual involvement in and with the subject(s) of their research" (:515). Ellingson (2009) recognises research as an interactive process, influenced by the researcher's own personal history, biography, gender, social class, race, and ethnicity, and by those of the people in the setting (calling) for openness and a willingness to aspire to transparency and reflexivity. I welcomed this as an opportunity to set practice research free from a positivist commitment to value-free scientism. I was taken to these approaches that "privileged story over theory and evocative details over patterns." (ibid:xi).

To Karen McCarthy Brown (1991), ethnographic research is a form of human relationship. She believes that when the lines long drawn in anthropology between participant-observer and the informant break down, "the truth is one in between; and anthropology becomes closer to a social art form, open to both aesthetics and moral judgement. This situation is riskier, but it does bring intellectual labour and life into closer relation" (:12). This is another token, encouraging the researcher to climb down from the pedestal and make herself accountable *within* the circumstances she is (en)acting. Bruner (1986) emphasizes along similar lines that every [ethnographic] tale represents the "imposition of meaning on the flow of memory, in that we highlight some causes and discount others: that is, every telling is interpretive" (:6).

When reading Kim Etherington's (2004) *Becoming a Reflexive Researcher* I became even more confident in becoming an "embodied researcher". She views her body and its responses as important; not only in her personal life but just as much in her professional life. By doing this, Etherington joins those who challenge academic research as an impersonal activity and welcomes intimacy and involvement in place of distance and non-involvement. She supports the hearing of the particular researchers' voice in their writing saying, "Without sight of the person at the heart of the work I feel no relationship with the writer, even if I am interested in the topic" (:25). Ken Gergen (2009) refers to anthropologists as vanguards in humanizing their writing and puts it like this: "...the attempt is to remove the cloak of obscurity, and write as a more fully embodied and culturally embedded researcher. The hope is to reveal oneself more fully in the work, as opposed to placing oneself in a God's eye position" (:226). Rather than positioning ourselves in our writing as rational agents, bounded, and superior, as valued by the major traditions of scholarly writing – our writing "could allow expression of desire, emotion, and bodily sensations" (Gergen, 2009:226). He points, however, at the risk a researcher might take if she steps outside the conventional practices of writing, the risk of being labelled "a second rate mind" (:222).

Laurel Richardson (1992, 1994) has been important to me because she validates writing as a method of inquiry. She asks and answers "How can we create texts that are vital, that are attended to, that make a difference? One way to create those texts is to turn our attention to writing as a method of inquiry" (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005:517). This is recognizing how writing is not an act of representing actualities, but a creative process saturated with reflections and choice. Richardson advocates for an evocative writing style and says

"Poetry can re-create embodied speech in a way that standard sociological prose does not because poetry consciously employs such devices as line length, meter, cadence, speed, alliteration, assonance, connotation, rhythm and off-rhythm, and repetition to elicit bodily response in readers/listeners." [(Richardson, quoted in Simon (2011:411-412)]

The influence of Feminism

Dorothy Smith (1990) argues for placing the researcher where they actually are situated, namely, "...at the beginning of those acts by which we know or will know, and second, making our direct embodied experience of the everyday world the primary ground of our knowledge" (:22). She continues to say that we should

"begin from our own original tacit knowledge and from within the acts by which we bring it into our grasp in making it observable and in understanding how it works. We

aim not at reiteration of what we already (tacitly) know, but at an exploration of what passes beyond that knowledge and is deeply implicated in us.” (:23)

This standpoint, which locates the researcher in the particularities of their experience, is profoundly contradictory to objectified forms of knowledge. I have found her clear cut confrontation with established ideological practices which separate the locally known and experienced from the objectified versions of society that have been the grand narratives of established social science extremely invigorating. Smith seeks to characterise just what it is in the sociological practices of writing that alienates and occludes the standpoint of experience. She points to how it is the ‘father-tongue’ that seems to be the essential language, but argues that we (women, and I would add all others who want to oppose the Cartesian spell) are not forever condemned to a “borrowed language” (Smith, 1990:4).

Mary Gergen (1988) says that since it is impossible to comprehend an interest-free knowledge, feminism should feel free to substitute explicit interests for implicit ones; articulate our values as researchers and based on these develop new research practices. She goes on and underlines the significance of enhancing *the voice* of research participants and become increasingly more sensitive towards the perspective of research subjects and their experiences. She calls for a feminist-inspired research, which could recognize how

“...scientists, subjects and “facts” are all interconnected, involved in reciprocal influences, and subject to interpretation and linguistic constraints. In addition, scientific endeavors would be treated as value-laden and would be formed with a specific value orientation in mind. This research approach would treat scientists as participants in the research project along with the subjects of research and not as superior beings who maintained a knowledge monopoly among themselves.” (:94)

I applaud this underlining of the researchers’ as well as the participants’ voices, that often go missing on the way from data collection to the finished research report.

Smith (1990) problematises the way in which descriptions of “What actually happened/what is” are not the equivalent of the “lived actuality”; rather, what is produced is the virtual reality intended and organized by the text of the factual account. To elucidate ‘voice’ can serve as incitement to accentuate the livingness of the participants’ participation and their emotional-volitional being in researchers’ writings.

Meaning as Embodied

The interest in meaning as socially constructed in dialogues is intrinsically linked to a discursive turn and the *conception of language* is often connected to concepts, words and letters – spoken,

written or read. Edward Sampson (1998) has pointed out how the constructionist model is so *verbocentric* that

“...it fails to address the embodied nature of discourse itself. In this way, constructionism encourages us to sustain the kind of spectator-like connection to the world (...) To be more specific, constructionism’s current failure and thus my motivation to move beyond it, is the failure to recognize that talk is inherently embodied.” (:23)

Reading David Abram’s book, *The Spell of the Sensuous*¹⁷ stimulated my *senses* towards what is not so easily described, but none the less intensively experienced. Abram makes a point of how our spontaneous experience of the world is charged with subjective, affective and intuitive content, and is the vital foundation of what we call objectivity. Nevertheless, this foundation is neglected by the culture of science. In a society, he asserts, that prioritises predictability and rewards certainty, the spontaneous and pre conceptual experience is referred to as ‘simply subjective’. Mark Johnson (1987, 2007) is supportive of this claims that the conception of disembodied reason is deeply rooted in the modernist’s view of the person that underlies not just our dominant philosophical theories but also makes up much of our common cultural understanding. The fleeting boundless stream of felt experience is perceived as secondary, as merely a diverted dimension. Abram also draws extensively on Merleau-Ponty, who identifies the subject as the *experiencing self* with *the bodily organism*. Without the body; our tongue, eyes and ears, there would be no taste, no words nor sound.

This appreciation of what is without doubt *felt*, but not so easily described, is in tune with Eugene Gendlin’s (1997, 2003) recognition of felt sense. What he has termed *felt sense* is our body’s awareness of a situation, a person or an event. Besides logical schemes and sense perception he describes a powerful felt dimension of experience that is pre-logical but none the less functions importantly in what we think, what we perceive, and how we behave.

“A felt sense is not a mental experience but a physical one. *Physical*. (...) An internal aura that encompasses everything you feel and know about a given subject at a given time – encompasses it and communicates it to you all at once rather than detail by detail. Think of it like a taste, if you like, or a great musical chord that makes you feel a powerful impact, a big round unclear feeling...[...]...A felt sense doesn’t come to you in the form of thoughts or words or other separate units, but as a single (though often puzzling and very complex) bodily feeling.” (Gendlin, 2003:32-33)

¹⁷ I read the Norwegian translation: *Sansenes Magi; Å se mer enn du ser; Magic of the senses: Seeing more than you see* (Abram, 2005)

This kind of what I will term *bodily confidence*, is a recognition of what Donald Schön (1987) refers to as “knowing more than we can say”, what Polanyi (1966) terms “tacit” knowledge and Stern (2004) calls “implicit knowing”.

I found Gendlin’s delineation of felt sense and his underscoring of how our *thinking is beyond pattern* as challenging research discourses that demand structure and logic. I see this as an acknowledgment of bodily sensations also inside the realm of research. It has allowed me to move around, to trust my ‘gut feeling’ without knowing where I am headed – but at the same time to sense when I am moving towards something interesting.

”In the past, meaning has been canalized very largely in terms of things (objective reference, sense perception) and in terms of logical structure. Of course, meanings were viewed as concerning experience, but “experience” was usually construed as a logical scheme that organizes sense perceptions or as a logical construct that intervenes to relate and predict observations of behavior. (...) we can no longer construe “experience” so narrowly. Besides logical schemes and sense perception we have come to recognize that there is also a powerful *felt* dimension of experience that is prelogical, and that functions importantly in what we think, what we perceive, and how we behave.”
(Gendlin 1997:1)

It is difficult to apply logic and concepts to experience as actually lived and felt. Gendlin draws on Bergson when he describes how only *intuition* or actual *livingness* can grasp it adequately, while concepts and definitions can distort or deaden it. The attempt to *define* can turn living experience into abstractions or into dead objects of study. Johnson (1987) underscores in agreement with this how “any adequate account of meaning and rationality must give a central place to embodied and imaginative structures of understanding by which we grasp the world” (:xiii author’s italics). I view these comments as declarations which encourage trusting *intuition/tacit knowledge/implicit knowing*, and invitations to move and write from within experiences and to use an evocative poetic writing style rather than traditional disembodied academic language; relating to felt experience without sterilizing or destroying it.

Sometimes ‘something’ happens, that enters your awareness, maybe not in the sense of intellectually understanding it, but something is aroused and you feel you need to attend to it spontaneously. This might be what Daniel Stern (2004) terms a Kairos moment of opportunity, when events demand action or are propitious for action. These moments come alive in the movements between consciousnesses, be it actual living voices or anticipated voices of ‘the other’.

From the Field of Social Constructionist Therapy and Practices

Collaborative Practices and Reflecting Processes

Harlene Anderson (Anderson, 1997, 2007, Anderson & Gehart, 2007, Anderson & Jensen, 2007) has highlighted the importance of the collaborative relationship in many different spheres of life. To be collaborative is not just a uniform or mask one can put on; it is a way of being. Her philosophical stance refers to a way of being-with-people in relationships and conversations, "...a way of thinking with, experiencing with, relating with, acting with, and responding with the people we meet..." (Anderson & Gehart, 2007a:43). Anderson distinguishes her work as a "philosophy of life" in action as an approach and not as a theory or model of therapy. This emphasizes "walking our talk" (George & Wulff, 2007) and calls our attention to the significance of behaving "in accordance with principles, spoken and unspoken" (:405). Collaboration is a way of being, not something you can slip in and out of. It can also be perceived as an ethical stance of being relationally responsible (McNamee & Gergen, 1999).

Tom Andersen (1992, 1993a, 1993b, 1994, 1996) has influenced my embodied being in so many ways, also as a researcher. His emphasis on *talking about the talking*, not just during therapy processes but also after the therapy is finished, promotes a continuous curiosity and boldness towards asking those involved how they have experienced different encounters. It is about continuously learning from the clients and others with whom we are in relationship.

Appreciative Inquiry

The Appreciative Inquiry (AI) movement has its center of attention on ways of initiating positive change through dialogue (Cooperrider & Whitney, 1999). Their main idea is that people feel more energized and confident when the focus is on what works and what we do well. David Cooperrider and Dianne Whitney describe how people can shift their attention and actions away from focusing on problems and instead elevate valuable ideals and productive possibilities for the future. They emphasize *appreciation* by recognizing and amplifying those things that enhance life: health, vitality and excellence in human systems and affirmation of past and present strengths, successes, assets and potentials. This turning away from inquiring into what is wrong and what doesn't work, and instead valuing and describing what works has been quite important to me, especially since I have inquired into my own practice. I have at times felt uncomfortable with *the focus on what works*. This is connected to a philosophy in the western world which has concentrated on learning from our mistakes (McAdam & Lang, 2010), as well my own experience of cultural stories accentuating how it is inappropriate to appreciate one's own work; equating appreciation with self-exaltation, self-indulgence and even arrogance.

Appreciative Inquiry is founded on the assumption that human systems, people and communities, grow and change in the direction of what they study. AI works by focusing the attention on people's and communities' positive potentials – positive scores. It is a process of learning more about what works through inquiring into a working culture. I have taken this as supportive of inquiry into what works in my own practice, to understand what I/we can do more of.

Witness-thinking and Social Poetics

I have been hugely inspired and moved by John Shotter's *witness thinking* and his continuous encouragement to aim for understanding our activities and practices from *within our doing them* (Shotter, 1999, 2003, 2004b, 2009, 2010). This has inspired me to move in novel directions towards reflection on and inquiry into "what is involved in having to think 'in the moment', while 'in motion', both from within the midst of complexity, and in relation to unique, never before encountered, 'first-time' events" (from the introduction, Shotter, 2006) He encourages practitioners to relate to events in their practice without having to create a comprehensive theoretical or conceptual scheme in which to *solve* all the *problems* they face by methods of reasoning, since these *relational* difficulties cannot be solved in this way; they need, as Shotter claims, resolving. Thus practitioners need to create an appropriate way of relating to them, this is the importance of Wittgenstein's (1953) methods of investigation. For they can help us to find our 'way about' in complex situations and help us to 'go on' with those around us in such situations, even if such situations are not wholly comprehensible to us (Shotter, 2011).

Because living processes grow and develop irreversibly in time, Shotter acknowledges that 'something' unique and novel will emerge in relationships. He claims that such events can provide us with action-guiding anticipations as to how we might act next in relation to the particular situation we might face, in each unfolding moment. This requires, he says,

"a switch from thinking in terms of how a *pattern of already spoken words* might be interpreted by us as to their meaning, to thinking about the spontaneous, bodily effects on us of *words in their speaking* – a move away from thinking in terms of static forms to thinking dynamically in terms of changes occurring, as in music, almost wholly in time. In other words, it is a switch from studying language to studying speech." (ibid:1)

Katz and Shotter (2007) introduced me to a writing style that has, with, for instance Deborah Tannen (1989) and Mary Catherine Bateson (1984) as well as many of the authors mentioned earlier, inspired me to aim for an evocative and pivotal emotion filled writing, a form of writing which aims for understanding through involvement. Katz and Shotter call it a "poetic" or "formative" style of writing. It is a writing style that aims for 'moving' or 'striking' readers in such

a way that they come to “grasp” or “see” something in their surroundings that they have not seen before, at least not cognitively. Not because it has been hidden from them, but because they have lacked the sensibility to be responsive to what has always been in plain view. This way of presenting writings from *within experiences* can help readers to achieve that kind of “understanding which consists in “seeing connections” (Wittgenstein, 1953, No. 122).

“It is a kind of writing that works – though the use of concrete details, the quoting of actually voiced utterances, the use of metaphors, making comparisons – by juxtaposing familiar words in unfamiliar ways, thus creating occasions in which readers must creatively complete, not logically but dialogically, the process of understanding.” (Katz & Shotter, 2006:30)

Dialogically oriented Action Research

I have earlier (Vedeler, 2004) described how a dialogical approach and action research (Reason & Bradbury, 2001; McNiff & Whitehead, 1996, McNiff, 2003) unite in the view that objective knowledge is impossible. To *know* is not only an academic activity but also a continuous process in our daily life in which we together make sense of our lives; when working from within existing practice, new understanding develops as people in conversation seek previously unnoticed openings for further refinement, elaboration, correction and co-construction of meaning about the actions of which they are a part. When a person comes in contact with another living being in a given context, with their utterances, their bodily expressions, their words - their whole being will arouse a response (Mead, 1934) based on *how the expression strikes a chord; touches and gives resonance in the other person.*

“This will bring to life what we already know and have the effect of what Wittgenstein would call ‘reminders’ (1953, no.89). Through this touch, fresh possibilities of possible new relations, experiences and actions may arise in a reflexive process. This is so to speak, the ‘heart’ of the dialogical process. In dialogical action research the participants will meet in not so structured conversations being open toward new, evolving understanding and open to transformation, moment by moment.” (Vedeler, 2004:32)

Re-Presentation of Research

The socially constructed idea about what counts as research has far-reaching consequences for how research should be accounted for. It was Patti Lather (1997) who first introduced me to the idea that when science is performance we also need to keep attention on how we perform the re presentation of research. She termed her way of presenting her text as mosaic, a “multilayered

text designed to interrupt the reductiveness of the restricted economies of representation that characterize mainstream social science” (:234). The task is to bring fragments (all we have) into a critical constellation so precise that truth will allow itself to appear, however fleetingly. She does this using multiple voices, a multi layered text, different textual formats, and various typefaces, allowing her research subjects space at the top of the page, and her own reflections at the bottom.

Dorothy Smith (1990) draws our attention to how the written text is not an account of what ‘really’ happened; it is not in itself the true story. This promotes a view of writing as a collaborative process and encourages transparency towards the creation of writing, as well as an aspiration of humility in relation to what the written text can represent.

Kim Etherington (2004) showed me how research can be a creative and artistic enterprise, and that writing can be a form of inquiry¹⁸. Her book *The Reflexive Researcher* was my first meeting with the re presentation of research through a compositional layout; through playful use of fonts and images. I have similarly found Kip Jones’ (2004) redolent and light-hearted biographical narrative interview with Mary Gergen, presented as an example of *relational “performative” biographic production*, quite stimulating. It showed how a life story could be re presented with evocative images that created involvement with the ‘text’ – a feeling of intimacy and energy.

Re-presenting research as a performative act in written or other formats¹⁹ can be an appreciation of abandoning the traditional valuation of the unambiguous research report. Kip Jones says

“Data would return to its place of importance as resource for explorations of multiple understanding and keys for further engagement by wider communities beyond Academia. Knowledge would be constructed socially in a relational way within a participatory society. The researcher would become a gatherer, a facilitator, a curator, a Wizard of Oz.” (Gergen & Jones, 2008:6)

Ethics as Relational Responsibility and Situated Answerability

One could wish for the grounding of an ethical theory, a rule bound ethics of research which would make all decisions superfluous. This is of course impossible. And the less rule bound, unorthodox and novel research processes become, and the more we *accept research’s lack of innocence*, and *acknowledge its performative and enacting qualities* – the more we need to attend to ethics as situated and relationally accomplished, “derived from living rightly moment

¹⁸ See also L. Richardson, 1994

¹⁹ See for instance *Qualitative Social Science: Volume 9, No. 2, Art. 43, 2008*

to moment and attending carefully to the irreducible particularities of each case” (Morson & Emerson, 1990:25). Ethics, Morson and Emerson claim, drawing on Bakhtin, is fundamentally located in particular situations and will always require real work. “That work of judging necessarily involves risk, a special attention to the particulars of the situation and a special involvement with unique other people at a given moment in their lives” (:26). As Bakhtin (1993) concedes, only through participating directly in the “actual eventness of the once occurrent act” (:1) can we enter into “communion with the actual, historical event of Being” (:6). And Bakhtin acknowledges that it is only as we think and act in such a participative fashion that we can be wholly responsible or *answerable* for our actions, in the sense that we are “reflexively conscious of the existential meaning of our acts and their implication, ethical or otherwise. Being-as-event must therefore be lived through, and not passively comprehended from afar (Gardiner, 1998:136). I have called this a situated Answerability and aligned it with what Sheila McNamee and Ken Gergen (1999) have termed relational responsibility.

McNamee and Gergen promote *relational responsibility* as valuing a continuous process of comprehending, adjudicating and adjusting within relationships. This stance is a deemphasizing of final solutions, as “fixing blame, correcting errors, solving the problem – in favor of continuous engagement in relational inquiry” (ibid:47). They suggest instead to move beyond formalized, stable identification of responsible actions towards a sensibility that sustains a relationship (ibid:47). Bender (1998) highlights how theoretical and aesthetic thinking may limit the degree to which individuals act responsibly because they locate the most important aspect of an act outside the responsible self participating in the event itself. She says

“This is a grave failing, as it allows individuals to displace their unique responsibilities either though appealing to a categorical ‘good’ posited by theoretical thinking, or by merging with the ‘other’ posited in aesthetic thinking. Bakhtin’s ethical self, in contrast, participates in events from a particular position that is hers or his alone, and cannot be replaced with any other position or anyone else’s moral imperative.” (:187)

I appreciate these ideas that comprehend ethics *both* as a shared responsibility, *and* as one placed on each participant. As living human beings we cannot not be responsive, we are co creators of each unique act in which we participate. I appreciate being reminded that our moves and our presence are enactment, and generative of social practices. As Bakhtin said, there is no alibi for living (Morson & Emerson, 1990). He might have added: *Not even for a researcher.*

Chapter 7

Intuitive and Embodied Dialogical Inquiry

- a mode of inquiring from within practice

This chapter will address and describe my approach of inquiry into my practice. The subsequent *Portfolio – Roll up for a Magical Mystery Tour* encompasses more detailed portrayals of significant processes and events.

I have depicted my *mode* of inquiry, retrospectively, as an Intuitive and Embodied Dialogical Inquiry. Just as I exchanged the concept of *methodology* with *philosophy*, I have termed what usually is conceived as method a *mode* of inquiry. This is once again my attempt to underline how my approach welcomes emergence, fluidity and openness. It is an acknowledgement of how ‘my doings’ are done in response to ‘something’ in a reflexive flow.

With the danger of being heard as flippant, I have tried to approach this research in and on practice as a ‘*Magical Mystery Tour*’. I have engaged in meetings with supervisees intuitively – with my embodied and embedded being – without knowing where we were going. By taking a stance in which I have welcomed ambiguity, uncertainty and surprises, and by paying attention to *felt sense*²⁰, I have acknowledged *tacit feelings* and *implicit knowing*, have asked questions and invited those involved to join me with curiosity and engagement. I have allowed myself and invited supervisees to be spontaneously responsive and expressive in our encounters with other(s) and otherness.

There have been movements of sensuous bodily arousals; striking moments or profound events that have evoked a sudden sense of resonance, of being disturbed and challenged, of curiosity and uncertainty, of love and belonging. Moments that has called out for a reaction, a response there and then. These moments or situations and the responses to them have only retrospectively been given meaning as significant for my research and the choices I have made. The *choices* have been intuitive, spontaneous responses and I have allowed myself the space to feel uncertain, confused and at times in limbo, on the edge of my understanding and far out of

20 The reader will recognize some phrases and concepts from the previous chapter. I have resisted, for the sake of fluency to repeat the references, which I have treated as accompanying, ‘guiding voices’.

my zone of comfort (Wilson, 2007, Øfsti, 2010). If I had not responded as I did in relation to these events I would have missed out on some experiences I have found immensely exciting. It is not that these experiences are in themselves *rare* or *unrecognizable for others*; rather on the contrary, they might be so familiar that we easily can lose sight of them. Marcel Proust reminds us that “The real act of discovery consists not in finding new lands, but seeing with new eyes” (in Kelley, 2008:16), and Ludwig Wittgenstein (1953) points out “The aspects of things that are most important for us are hidden because of their simplicity and familiarity. (One is unable to notice something – because it is always before one’s eyes.)” (No. 129).

It is by not hastening we are able to *look again* and pay attention to the details of what is *right in front of us*. I feel I have been able to *stop, look, and listen* and included this in my research into my practice. I have felt that this *mode* has rewarded me as a researcher with experiences I would have missed if I had treated supervision as merely something I would stand outside and inquire into, as from a distance. I have ‘entered’ my practice as a living bodily being meeting other bodily beings in the flux of becoming. Thus, due to the fact that living processes grow and develop irreversibly in time (although in rather *mysterious* ways), I have experienced how *something unique and novel*, sometimes even with *a sense of magic*, has emerged in relationships of which I have been a part.

Guiding anticipations

I will describe this mode of approaching my research practice by means of these *guiding anticipations*:

Invitation to ongoing Dialogical Inquiry -

- Walkabout – Enacting and Creating Novel Means of Practice
 - Deep hanging out with myself – becoming my own *case study*
 - Trusting Intuition and acknowledging Kairos moments
 - Embracing fluidity, complexity and ambiguity
- Engaging Participants through Dialogue
- Writing as Inquiry
 - Thick Descriptions and evocative writing style
 - Mother-tongue, father-tongue – searching for my own voice in a foreign language
 - Involving and collaborating with the participants
- Re presenting living practice
- Creating validity through generating dialogues

Invitations to ongoing dialogical inquiry

I have let myself be(come) a researcher within the emergence of my practice, where I have invited people I have been involved with, as well as myself: to experience, create and inquire into our relationship(s) as an intuitive, embodied and perpetual dialogical activity.

My mode of investigation has been to invite and engage supervisees I have in supervision into ongoing dialogues about supervision and supervisory relationships. I have started out by asking general questions such as: what is supervision – what are our expectations – what do we need to do? And I have asked situated questions about what is happening with us *now*, such as: how are we doing this – what is happening between us *now* – what do we need to do *now*? This has been a mode of supervising supervisees independent of my inquiry, but it has additionally created some responses that have initiated further talks. Some of these talks have developed into inquiry processes, as described below.

Hanging out and Walkabout

My approach has been to engage as supervisor in supervision group in ways that I have found 'natural', in the sense of doing what I have been used to doing. It was from this position, from *within ongoing relationships* that I started to inquire. I have supervised more than thirty different supervision groups over the last four-five years and I have continuously gained experience from these groups, which means that I have been *hanging out* with more than 150 supervisees, and I have been able to *walkabout* in many different supervision cultures. The talks and comments I later have transcribed or made a recollection of have taken place in different supervision contexts: arranged dialogues for the purpose of inquiry, dialogue around dinner or coffee tables, in restaurants, in cars and on busses, through mail correspondence and telephone conversations.

Deep hanging out with myself – becoming my own case study

I have been *hanging out* with myself 24/7, which I believe deserves the description of *deep hanging out*²¹. I have regarded myself and my involvement in this inquiry as a kind of "*case*" to study. I have also considered myself as one of many research participants and not as a superior being; I have not let myself stand outside the scene, the act or the texts that have been created. On the contrary, I have instead invited myself into the ongoing inquiry and become involved as a co creator. This has created intimacy in contrast to distance, and made me accountable within the circumstances I have been moving in relation to – that is the supervision I am doing and the supervisees I have collaborated with. I have been trying to *walk my talk*, and been open to scrutinize that intention by asking those I am involved with how they perceive my position.

²¹ This is a description I have borrowed from James Clifford (1997)

One advantage of putting myself as researcher on the scene, is that I have been able to be 'inside' myself as a 'research object' also when I have been relating to other, taking a first person position within the relational reflexive act. By writing and sharing autoethnographic texts I have demonstrated the will to offer my own experiences and stories from lived life and thereby opened myself towards my research companions' as well as other readers' involvement or even *assessment*. Writing this way has also been sensitizing, a way of understanding more of myself in relation to my ongoing life.

Trusting Intuition and Acknowledging Kairos Moments

I have mostly refrained from creating special research settings, but instead inquired into those situations or relationships I have found *intuitively* interesting. I have let myself be guided by *felt sense* and paid attention to my body's spontaneous responses. I have allowed, even encouraged myself to pay attention to the experience of "now" and to those *Kairos moments* or situations when I have felt *new opportunities arising*. These experiences of *striking moments* have guided my curiosity and been *propitious for action*. By following these experiences, without feeling I needed to conceptualize or even word my embodied sense of *something* being interesting, I have been able to experience and see what I would not have been able to experience and see if I had followed a plan. I have not anticipated events, but been able to go into some events among a multitude of other events, and explore these relational happenings.

Embracing Complexity and Ambiguity

This approach has welcomed complexity, thus I have not been able to (or had the intention to) structure the fluidity of ongoing relationships. My research questions have been allowed to emerge according to the emergent curiosity I myself have felt, and in relation to what those people I have engaged with have sensed as interesting. By doing this, we have been able to make our own embodied experiences of the *once occurring event* the primary ground for curiosity. The complexity and fluidity of lived life have required openness to ambiguity and the necessity of resisting definition of events, thereby opening up for more understanding of the emerging questions.

Engaging Research Companions through Dialogue

I have continuously wished to involve the supervisees I have engaged with in dialogues about what we are doing, and asked them to comment on what they experience and how they perceive the stories and anecdotes I write about our relationships (see next paragraph). I have shared my writings and asked for response through email, through reading out loud what I have written, having dialogues about supervision, watching film recordings and transcribing audio recordings from sessions. I have received spontaneous responses, through verbal feedback and through

email. And I have been given reports, stories and poems written as reflections on supervision, and permission to use these writings as part of this portfolio. All this has contributed to polyphony of engaging voices – expanding understanding and making the written stories multi-vocal.

I have tried to be open and reflexive, telling the supervisees what I am doing and thinking. And I have always tried to incorporate their responses into my ongoing writing, either by rewriting or adding their responses as significant parts of the composition.

Writing as Inquiry

I have used writing as a way of inquiry. Much of what I have been reading concerning writing and research is about *writing up* the research. I have been inspired to approach writing as part of *a mode of the doing* of research. Through the process of reflexive writing and reflexive sharing of my writing with the research companions I have been able to use writing as a way of becoming more at home in and create a space, that welcomes intuition and the emergence of relational and embodied knowing. This has helped me to generate the tales, and interludes in my portfolio that describe a greater level of detail from inner and outer dialogical movements which without my research focus would have been difficult to describe.

I had not anticipated that I would be able to write down an account of what has taken place. The inquiry is not an attempt to disclose or reveal the essence of a reality. I have instead wanted to create something that resonate with the feelings I sense the people with whom I have been involved have had and that they in turn will recognize in what I have written and feel energized by reading. I have wanted to emphasize what we have done that has worked for us, that is, what has enhanced dialogue between us and contributed to a sense of freedom, self confidence and curiosity towards the supervisees' (as well as my own) relational encounters in other domains, in their professional life as well as in their more private lives.

Thick Descriptions and Evocative Writing Style

I have tried, as part of this approach, to create thick descriptions: incorporating many voices (supervisees and scholars) as well as my own voice to be able to elucidate the processes I have wanted to bring into the open. When writing, my intention has been to write in detail. I also have chosen and developed a writing style that allows for me to express desires, emotions and bodily sensations, making my direct embodied experiences the primary ground from which I write. In doing this, I have strived to relate to felt experience without sterilizing or circumscribing it.

Mother-tongue, father-tongue – Searching for my own voice in a foreign language

By writing I have been able to slow down the process and go into experiences, to feel my way towards ambiguities and significant experiences.

When I want to move the people with whom I am communicating, I am concerned with finding words that resonate with the inner state of what I want to convey, and simultaneously, I will need to use words that resonate with the other person. This is not just a language problem in the sense of translation from one language to another, as from Norwegian to English; it is a challenge in all relationships. I have come to think about having had to move between living my practice in Norwegian, and writing about it in English, as rather beneficial.

In the beginning of writing it felt difficult to *translate* the words I use to describe my experiences in my mother-tongue to a 'tongue' I had less sense of, as I felt my writing lost its sense of life, history and anticipated future. I learned through my living in this world of translation that something got lost, what was mine is no longer mine after being translated. I toiled with reading the words that had not been born in my body, they did no longer appeal to my emotions and I felt estranged from my own text. Because of this recognition I decided to try to write everything directly in English, since I wanted to conquer the English language and make it mine. I wanted to make my experiences English and let them be raised in an English environment, conscious though, about how this would affect the 'life' of the telling, and circumscribe the 'life' I aspired to describe.

My decision to write in English has proved to have some advantages; the words 'don't come easy' and I have had to *really feel my way* when I seek to create coherence between felt experience and the written word. This interacting between my experiences, felt sense, the text I write and the language I use has been exciting and rewarding. I will go as far as to say that the process of *feeling my way to the right English words* has become a mode of inquiry. Not only have I found 'my own tongue', though I would prefer to call it *my own voice*, but I also believe I have been able to be more in resonance with both my own experiences as well as those I have collaborated with.

I have not aimed for a traditional academic language using the "father-tongue", but welcomed and trusted my own emerging voice. I have worked hard to be able to write in a way that moves and strikes those who have been part of the experiences as well as intended readers. To help me, I have all the time imagined having readers who are practitioners and who don't necessarily feel at home in the traditional and orthodox discourse of academia.

Writing autoethnographic pieces (such as the Prelude, Interludes and the Postlude), and the poems is an endeavor to be reflexive, open and to include more of me as an embodied human being in my research.

Involving and Collaborating with Companions

Writing has not been performed in solitude. I have, as already mentioned, shared my writing with the supervisees involved as well as with other interested readers (other supervision groups, family, friends and colleagues). I have been eager to receive responses and suggestions for improving the writing. I have continuously asked the people I have written about for consent in relation to writing about our experiences, to share them with others and to use them as part of this portfolio. I have chosen to call those supervisees with whom I have collaborated over time in the creation of the Portfolio *companions*. My companions have expressed that they have enjoyed and benefited from this reflexive process. This sharing has been fruitful in the sense of encouragement towards acknowledging our own voices. And by finding my own voice I feel I have simultaneously been more open towards being touched and transformed by the voices of others. I believe writing has served as a relational transgression, not only for me but for people who have been involved in my writing, either as research companions or as readers.

Re-Presenting Living Practice

I have wanted to re-present this practice research, not as definite and finalized findings, but as details and fragments, as ideas of hope and desire, as experienced and imagined events, and as feelingful and profoundly important happenings and recognitions, with the intention to invite readers into dialogue with my text. I have mostly written prose, though I have tried to write it in a poetic manner. I have incorporated extensive transcripts with the intent to contextualize the voices inside the dialogue. I feel the transcripts sometimes honor the voices as they have spoken in a more direct way than condensation or retellings would.

I have presented the text inside a fairly ordinary format. However, I have in one occasion re-presented a research dialogue by taking out the questions and letting the voice of the supervisee stand alone. Here I have used a stanza format and used fonts, size, gaps to give some more evocation to the voice presented. I have had an intention of using a poetic, rather than academic language to be able to surprise, honour ambiguity and transform small and ordinary life experiences into exceptional opportunities for new ways of going on in supervision, therapy and other life domains.

There is of course a threat of not being taken seriously when re-presenting research in another 'language', using prose and poetics instead of a more academic genre. I have, however put emphasis on coherence between my ontological stance, mode of inquiry and the re-presentation, in expense of loyalty towards traditional academic discourses about how to present research.

Ethics

I have throughout the process of engaging with supervisees been concerned with ethics. My research project was approved by the KCC ethics committee, December 2006. My research was approved by the dean at Diakonhjemmet University College January 2007. All the supervisees that took part in the initial action research gave their consent, after being informed about and invited to join the action research project. When I later became interested in exploring other supervision contexts, I informed the supervisees I was collaborating with that I was inquiring into my own practice. The mode of inquiry became part of the mode of doing supervision; our experiences, my writing and their writing became something we shared and talked about. I was continuously encouraged by their responses in relation to taking part in this reflexive inquiry, they reported to feel energized and enthused by the dialogical way of approaching supervision and research.

I asked the supervisees if they would agree that I could contact them later, and ask for a formal consent, if I was to use some of the writing in my portfolio. The supervisees approved to this, also through email correspondence. The supervisees, who are participants in the tales in the portfolio, have received an Information and Agreement Form²², together with the chapter where I have written about them. All the students I approached have agreed to be part of the portfolio, and sent their consent back to me.

I have changed the names of all the supervisees. They have however been informed that there is never any guarantee that someone might identify them in the writing.

I have made sure that other people who are mentioned in this thesis have been secured confidentiality.

Creating Validity through Generating Dialogues

Traditionally it has been expected that research results should be put to the test of generalization and prediction. I have argued that knowledge is local, continually changing and is created through language. This means that the validity of research results, as in ethics, depends on the quality of reflection. Quality may also be judged to which extent it makes sense to the reader and whether the process has given the research participants the experience of taking part in a meaningful process.

²² Appendix 1

Through the orchestration of Part II – *Roll up for the Magical Mystery Tour*, I have wanted to create an invitation for the readers to be involved, feel related, enchanted and moved. My intention has never been to convince, but rather seduce the Reader into a relationship where she may feel enthused by the text.

The living body is the possibility for experiences, both those we share and those we feel inside our own body. The sharing and the intensifying or boosting of a 'feeling' creates an assurance that is more of a bodily nature than a form of intellectual knowledge. The next question is how *reliable* is this kind of bodily assurance, compared with what we often term intellectual knowledge? And what do we understand when we use the concept of *reliable*, for instance in relation to research? Is intellectual conviction anything more than a coherent story made up of fragments to create coherence and conceptions? I will accentuate that I take that felt sense, intuition, tacit knowledge, implicit knowing as vital foundation of what we act on in all spheres of life. Hence I believe that a text's ability to enthuse the reader into a relationship that encourage her to *go on* being interested in what she has read, is of great value. My objective is for this research on practice to be *valued* because it engages and invites to further dialogues. I have aimed towards writing in a way that feels trustworthy, so that the reader feels that what is written sounds accurate, though not necessarily in relation to it as a presentation of *the lived actuality*, the actual account of events having taken place, but in the sense of being in resonance with what feels to be true. I hope this thesis with the portfolio invites the reader into dialogue as well as *generates* dialogues and thereby can contribute to *bringing out into the open what has been experienced, but has not been so easily expressed, and establishing productive forms of relationship, ways of going on together.*

Chapter 8

Survey of Portfolio Content and Presentation of Research Companions

This chapter offers an overview of how I have orchestrated the accompanying Portfolio – Roll up for the Magical Mystery Tour, including Tales from Supervision Practice, some poems and 3 Interludes.

The tales are written from within my practice as supervisor and practice researcher – in close collaboration with research companions. I will address how some striking and interactive moments opened up for exploring novel ways of going on together, movements which had an impact on the context there and then and the people involved. To give an additional glimpse of how this research has been perceived by some of the supervisees I have worked with, I have included some email correspondence with a few of the comments they have made about how I re-presented our experiences in this portfolio.

The three interludes are intermissions which are meant to bring musical notes from other parts of my life experience to this doctoral work. My intention is to *create* as well as *challenge* the sense of a harmonious whole, welcoming diversity and fragmentation. These intermissions are also my recognition of how our lived life experiences are not sectioned into private and professional parts but reflexively presuppose and create each other. Writing and presenting these Autoethnographic stories (Ellis, 2004) is also my attempt to explore and share with the reader how life experience flows into our professional life as tacit knowledge (Polanyi, 1966), felt sense (Gendlin, 1997, 2003, Purton, 2007), image schemas (Johnson, 1987, 2007), contours of feelings (Shotter, 2010), and as self-narratives (Griffith & Griffith, 1994) by which we live (Jensen, 2007).

As a reader I believe you will experience a development in my writing concerning the form and style of how I relate to the experiences from which I am writing. I have chosen to demonstrate a stance toward knowledge creation by writing about more than my relationship towards supervision and supervisory relationships. This fidelity to knowing of the third kind, emerging from within ongoing relationships (Shotter, 1993b), has encouraged me to privilege and welcome

the voices of my research companions into my writing – sometimes at the expense of the voices of scholars and literature. I have deliberately done this because I have often felt when reading research reports that the ‘embodied sound’ of the research participants is missing. This being a professional doctorate the reader will not find a traditional literature review in this portfolio; I have wanted the poetics of the practice I have been writing from within to create transgressions on its own. Instead I have woven an extensive amount of writing about research and about the many themes I have ‘covered’ in this portfolio.

The Orchestration of the Portfolio

- Roll up for a magical Mystery Tour

Interlude – Once I was a Weaver

An Autoethnographic story about experience of how delightful and liberating it can be to experiencing context as fluid and indefinite

Chapter 9 Resonance-Ability and Compassion

Title: I Hear You

Subtitle: Resonance

- *Research Companions:* Some colleagues, Milla, Linda, Martin, William, Jenny, Erika, Helga, Blossom and Davis
- *Context:* Mainly Personal Professional Development (PPD) groups at Diakonhjemmet University College

Subtitle: Davis and the Researcher

- *Research Companion:* Davis
- *Context:* PPD and research conversations, and emerging context

Subtitle: Davis and Gitte

- *Research Companions:* Davis and Gitte
- *Context:* Seminar, supervision group

Interlude – Desperado

An Autoethnographic story exploring embodied knowing and writing as a form of inquiry.

Title: The Young Woman who cut her Head off from her Body

- *Research Companions:* Andrea, Elisabeth, Lena, Laura, Eva, Gitte, Maria and Kari.
- *Context:* Supervision

Chapter 10 Apprentices²³

Title: Going down the Slippery Slopes of Uncertainty

- *Research Companion:* Blossom
- *Context:* PPD, supervision group and Dialogical Conversation Group

Interlude – Kåre and the Mouth Harp

An Autoethnographic story told from a third person position. This writing is written from within the living moment of the past, feeding into the present – creating extensive musical vibrations.

Chapter 11 Presence and Movements

Title: The Aspasian – Relational Philosophizing

- *Research Companions:* Rebekka, Louise, Alma, Bella, Marian and Francesca
- *Context:* Supervision group

Title: In the Shades of the Mango Three – Space for Relational Compassion

- *Research Companions:* Ellen, Ida, Marion, Lisa, Ellen and Susanne
- *Context:* Supervision group

²³ I have included a story from a supervision experience called “The Island Women” in the appendix 2, as an additional treat for those who would be interested in an even more extensive understanding of how I have learned to become a supervisor. This is also a telling from an evolving relationship that reciprocally influenced all of us present in many domains of life – significantly important for me as supervisor and for the four supervisees as professionals.

PART II

Roll up for a Magical Mystery Tour

Portfolio including Tales written

from *within* living

Supervision Practice

some poems

and 3 Interludes

“Had I only to look about me at the daily life:

even with a minimum of attention

I could have discovered something new”.

From *Chronicle of the Guayaki Indians*, by P. Clastres, 1998

Everything Becomes in the Becoming

Depiction of a Research Journey

I was interested
in listening
became
enchanted by dialogue
as Bakhtin was
creating sense
creating space
for me and the other

the importance of the other
for me to become
in fluidity
stability
in between
for the others
to flourish
for potentials

nothing is
everything
becomes in the becoming

what release
being bailed out
from a prison
of authoritative discourses
the freedom
of creative novelty
in the sanctuary
of dialogue

I wanted
to contribute to
possibilities for the others
to wake and shake
as bodies refuse to fake

take responsibility
be answerable
as co-authors of the lives of the others
we became
different shapes and colours
of ourselves

there was nowhere to hide
no alibi in living
This Research Journey

Interlude 1 – Once I was a Weaver

Once I was a weaver, a weaver without a loom. I designed the frame out of brushwood I found in my aunt's back yard and stretched the warp between the crooked branches. Since the warp and the frame needed to work together, the product that came out was neither square nor flat, the form was absolutely unique. This was in Santa Fe, New Mexico and I was nineteen; a young woman who opposed any ideas about what was the proper way of doing things in life. I was inspired by the anti authoritative wave that was shaking the western world; who needed to relate to any established ideas about frames? Frames were like borders, which I suspiciously considered things that could easily transformed themselves into traps, and traps entrapped creativity and human expression. These ideas encouraged me to rebel and permit myself to weave just about anything into anything. All that was needed was a warp to hold the piece together, but the material, length and space between the threads did not follow a proscribed format. I expected the frame to behave flexibly, and to function in relation to what developed within.

I have always thought about this time as liberated from constraining bridles. It was almost overwhelmingly life enhancing. This nineteen year old girl nourishing herself on a glorious mixture of the unshackled seventies, an upbringing in a fairly unconventional family (according to the cultural standards in a small town on the south coast of Norway in the late fifties and sixties), and fortuitous meetings with wonderful people, which supported and permitted her to feel free to move around outside the anticipated context.

I loomed together silk and hemp, unspun wool and neatly spun cotton threads, beautifully hand colored organic materials mixed with whatever was available in my immediate surroundings. The result was not something I had planned; it was as if it merely happened as the materials came into contact with each other and with me.

You might imagine the feeling of exhilaration that filled me when my first art work was exhibited; in a central building by the Plaza in the midst of the land of the artistic Navaho and Pueblo Indians. I was so proud, and rather amazed. Well, at this point down memory lane I do need to admit that it was ironically enough, regarding my anti establishment spirit, exhibited in the premises of a national bank.

Chapter 9

Resonance-Ability and Compassion

It was as we were trying out ways of creating a structured Personal and Professional Development Program at Diakonhjemmet University College I became interested in what I have called *Resonance-Ability*. We were interested in finding ways that could increase sensitivity and responsiveness in professionals of systemic practice, by encouraging a benevolent curiosity about themselves as persons in relation to others. Resonance-Ability is a word I have created to describe the *ability* to become sensitive and responsive in relation to how we are emotionally struck and moved by the other or otherness we encounter. That is, the *resonance* we can feel is evoked between people within the inimitable meeting.

I will further address how I became interested in exploring how, when the listeners abstains from assessing or judging, and instead manages to listen with tenderness and openness, with emotional involvement, from a space of unknowing, loss of control, loss of ideas and concepts, she becomes open for being touched by the other. I have termed this way of listening, *listening with compassion*. It is about entering into the world of the others, allowing *the others* to express themselves in their own terms, and respect their unique and emerging otherness.

Taking as point of departure Bakhtin's idea about how people are relational beings, my stance in relation to personal development for a professional was to exercise and encourage an ongoing curiosity in oneself in encounters with "otherness". The creation of an integral self is the work of a lifetime, Bakhtin claims (1981). The work is never completed and in this way we are always in the process of becoming. But the work can never be done in isolation; in Bakhtin's scenario the creation of self is always an act with more than one actor, and the mind is structured so that the world is always perceived according to this contrast (Holquist 1990). In order to perceive ourselves we must appropriate the vision of others. This relation is never stable, it is an ongoing telling in process of being made and every moment is *rich in potentials [and] arises from the experience of the 'open present' in each moment*" (Morson and Emerson 199:236). It is in this landscape that dialogic personhood manifests its *unfinalizability* by existing on the threshold of several interacting consciousnesses, a plurality of unmerged voices: a *polyphony* of voices interacting. Harré (1998) points to how there are patterns of stability and change in the stream of

cognitive and emotive acts that each person produces, usually with the engagement of other people:

“Mental states, according to this point of view, are produced ad hoc in the course of people acting, and are nothing but attributes of the stream of action. There are no mental entities other than the public and private actions people engage in.” (ibid. p 4)

I believed that being open towards the emotional resonance another’s expression creates could make us more responsive in our encounters. I was concerned that personal development in the context of therapy training should not be about creation of personal narratives that could trap identity, but instead inspire a continuous curiosity over questions like: “who can I become in an encounter with you, who can you become in meeting me, what is created between us, and who do we become in this unique encounter?”. I proposed that this stance would require encouraging supervisees to postpone closure, to dare to stay in a curious uncertainty and to exercise the ability to relate to imagination and to mystery.

It is challenging to turn one’s curiosity toward that which arises between the therapist and the other, particularly because so much of popular literature²⁴ connected to “personal development” work is connected to understanding oneself as “an individual”, as a stable autonomous entity. Just as traditional psychotherapy focuses on the individual psyche as the setting for change, I was concerned not to promote the idea that supervisees in the program were to explore their individual “self” as a single unit.

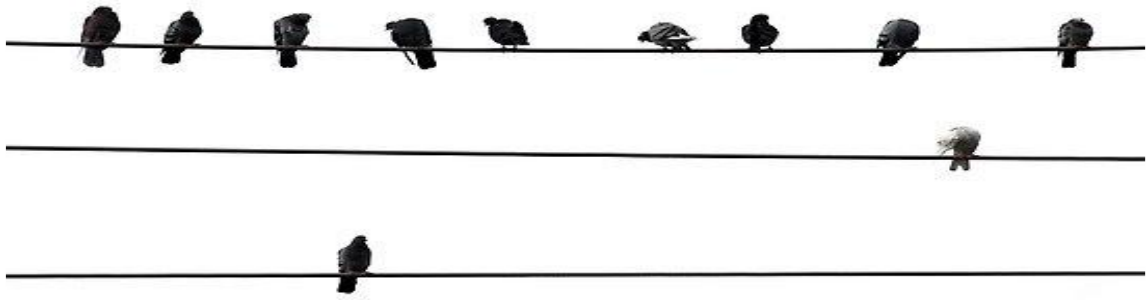
I was initially planning to carry through a pre planned action research format, including interviews with supervisees and supervisor colleagues. The cycle of reflection and action was intended to look something like this: identify the field to be researched, plan interventions, carry them out and evaluate the consequences, on the basis of which new fields of investigation are decided; let this cyclic movement continue. The following is a multi-folded storying depicting the emergence of my interest in ideas connected to ‘resonance’, the encouragement for developing ‘resonance-ability’ in supervisees as well as in myself and other supervisors – but it is also about how I moved away from having a ‘plan’ to be more sensitive and relationally responsive as a practice researcher.

²⁴ I am here connecting to self help books like: *Women Who Think Too Much: How to Break Free of Overthinking and Reclaim Your Life* by Susan Nolen-Hoeksema (Paperback - 29 Jan 2004); *The Little Book of Confidence* by Susan Jeffers (Paperback - 7 Oct 1999); *Healing Your Emotional Self: A Powerful Program to Help You Raise Your Self-esteem*; *Quiet Your Inner Critic, and Overcome Your Shame* by Beverly Engel (Paperback - 3 Jul 2007).

These depictions point to how we encourage supervisees to listen in a way that welcomes the not yet said, allowing for the listener to feel compassion and be moved, and the significance of sharing this movement with the other. The tales also address how people (supervisees) feel estranged from other people, how they feel lonely because they have not found their voice, ways of talking or feel prohibited from sharing because of dominant stories concerning what are valid or reasonable feelings to feel.

This first set of tales was written over a period of one and a half years between 2008 and 2009. "I Hear You" includes four tales: Resonance, Becoming an African Again, Davis and the Researcher, Davis and Gitte, and is mainly written from within my practice as director of the PPD program at Diakonhjemmet University College and as a researcher of this practice. "The Young Woman who cut off her Head" is written from within my practice as supervisor of a group of supervisees over a year's time.

I chose the title "I Hear you" as a response to my Masters dissertation, which I called "Do You Hear Me?", to call attention to the significance of what Bakhtin (1986) has emphasised, *for a human being there is nothing more terrible than a lack of response.*



I Hear You!

"When I meet my therapist I often feel that he just sits there, and I don't know what he thinks of me. And all I can think of is: what is going on there, in him? In a way I have to regulate myself. But in this group, I feel that it's different and that my feelings strike them and they tell how they have similar emotional experiences. That's good".

William, after taking part in a PPD, and listen to the resonance group.

"...they hadn't understood anything of the language, they had felt despair, but then they had watched my expression, in a way, what I was trying to say... They thought it was powerful, demanding, for them to observe and be there without understanding. In that way they saw me. Because that is how I often experience it, I often experience it like that, that I am not understood".

"I believe speaking Swahili has a good impact on me, it is good medicine, I think I will speak more Swahili."

Davis' description of how he experienced the resonance group, after he had talked to them in Swahili, his mother tongue, which he hadn't spoken for many years.

"Many people don't understand how it is to be touched by your inner voice; to me it has been so important, because I dismissed it for so many years".

Meercat, a client, describing how it had been of importance to be able to express herself without interruption.

I have been growing for some time an interest in the importance of creating space for what I will call *felt experiences* to be acknowledged. The expressions above are examples of the significance of being able to *voice the not yet voiced experience* and to be in relationships that invite us to be touched in our being. I have explored these *felt experiences* in relation to a relational, tentative

and bodily felt approach to acknowledgement. This acknowledgement concerns being in relationships that welcome the sensed but not yet said. It is also about the significance of acknowledging how the listener doesn't always need to hear *the stories*; some experiences are not stories and might never be storied, but are none the less voiced. It is about being in relationships where we feel safe and valuable, where we can trust the other's 'ability' to move in relation to us, so we can find ways of going on.

My aim is to address the idea of *resonance* and the use of *resonance groups*, as one way of creating a safe place for exploring relational encounters. I wish to invite the reader on a wandering in which I will share how experience, tacit, implicit and bodily knowing interact with my own and the other's more explicitly expressed knowledge. Writing this, I hope simultaneously to be able to create a sense of coherence between the shape of the text and its content.

I have created some tales in the course of this wandering concerning the significance of *being touched by an other* and of being heard. For the sake of fluency I have orchestrated them under some headings: Resonance (which was written in 2008), Becoming an African Again, Davis and the Researcher, and Davis and Gitte (the three latter tales were written in 2009).



Resonance

The practice that constitutes the main foundation of this text is the work my colleagues at Diakonhjemmet University College in Oslo, Norway and I do developing ways of increasing the professional systemic practitioner's interest in and sensitivity towards their relational responsibility. This is part of a practice research I conducted over a period of 2 ½ years while creating a Personal Professional Development (PPD) supervision program, in relation to the Master Program in Family Therapy and Systemic Practice at Diakonhjemmet University College in Oslo. This work interacts with my private practice as a therapist and supervisor. I consider the ideas expressed here to be valuable in other contexts as well.

I need for you reading this to bear with me for the time being, and let the words I use work their way into your understanding. Some of the words and phrases are connected to everyday talk, others to theoretical concepts, and you might find them both familiar and unfamiliar.

To feel safe and valuable

In my practice as therapist and supervisor I have become aware of how crucial it can be for the person I am talking with to have time to *feel her way* towards experiencing and expressing herself, and have the experience of *being heard* by me. The process which I for now will name *feeling her way* is a complex intertwined and responsive movement between felt sense and expressed words. I have experienced how rewarding it is for a person when she *feels safe and valuable* in this process. In my Masters dissertation, *Do you hear me* (Vedeler, 2004) I discussed the importance of a client having time to express herself in a safe and benevolent context in order to be able to find ways to go on. *Safe*, because that supports the client's courage to move into places where she has never been before, to make new and meaningful connections and to dare to use the time it takes to move around in this complex landscape of experience; *valuable* because people are dependent on other persons' active and benevolent responses in order for an experience to feel valid. Validity is, also in this context, not a question of a generalised truth, but the response of other people to you as someone "morally worthwhile" (Riikonen & Smith, 1997). I have had a tentative and preliminary understanding of the significance of this way of approaching conversations in therapy, supervision and in PPD work. When writing *tentative* and *preliminary* I mean that I have been moving around using these ideas without always being able to explicitly describe what I am doing. During the last year I have had a chance to explore in more detail what impact these ideas could have on therapy and supervision, and on our approach to supervising therapist supervisees, and I wish to connect the sense of feeling safe and valuable to the notion of *resonance*.

Practice Research

I wanted to explore how a teaching institution can encourage family therapy supervisees to work on their own personal development. I think of personal development for a professional as the exercise of *benevolent curiosity* towards other and oneself in encounters with the living life in which we are enmeshed. Just as a benevolent manner is necessary in a person to bring about openness in another, it is necessary to be benevolent towards ones' own thoughts and feelings to be able open up.

Taking as a point of departure Bakhtin's (1981, 1984, 1986) ideas, that all responses are *answers* to previous impressions, I wish to inspire the systemic practitioner to *explore these answers*. I believe that being open to the resonance in oneself evoked by others in our relationships will make therapists more responsive in their encounters. I want to inspire therapists to a continuous curiosity towards *who I become in an encounter with you, and who you may become in meeting me*. This means encouraging supervisees to *postpone closure, to dare to stay in a curious uncertainty* and to exercise *the ability to relate to imagination and to open up to the mystery of*

the not-yet-experienced, the incoherent and at times daring new adventures any encounter may offer. Humans have a well of experiences, some of which create an understanding that is relatively clear and stringent. But there is also a treasure trove of implicit knowing and embodied experience that we can recognize and use. As PPD supervisors we challenge supervisees to be spontaneously expressive and responsive, and simultaneously question their responses in a *benevolent manner*. This concerns encouraging curiosity towards the reflexive and ‘one-off’ *happenings* that transpire in all meetings.

Reflecting team and resonance groups

We often use the *reflecting team format*²⁵ when we arrange the PPD sessions. This facilitates the involvement of all the supervisees throughout the day. One supervisee at a time is in focus²⁶, often talking to the supervisor while the rest of the group forms a reflecting team.

The awareness of the relational state of our being and the importance of humility towards other people are ideas at the heart of the concept of reflecting teams. I use it in many different connections and appreciate it dearly. In the context of PPD supervision, though, my experience is that our reflecting teams sometimes tend to be too intellectual or too disconnected from the complex process of the supervisee in focus. It is as if the supervisees that constitute the reflecting team want too much on behalf of the other and offer explanations or interpretations disguised as questions. Sometimes they also become captured by their own concerns and move away from the person they are listening to.

During the last year we have been trying out ideas about how we can encourage the supervisees in the listening-expressive-responsive position to connect more explicitly emotionally to the supervisee in focus. We have encouraged the supervisees to *sense* what the supervisee in focus is expressing. They have been given the difficult task of sensing and responding to *the emotional vibrations*, but not capturing them as *conclusive conceptions*. In other words, they have been expected to both understand and not understand at the same time. We know this feels like walking on a knife edge, but we have found it very exciting, and later on rewarding. It is beneficial for the supervisee in focus, but also for the supervisees in the listening/responsive position who are working to increase their ability to postpone closure and live with uncertainty. They have to listen very carefully to the *whole person's* expression, not just to the “*literary content*” of the words; not just to the “*story*”, but also to *the emotional relation of the person in focus to what she is telling*. The term we use to give voice to this way of being together is to feel and express

²⁵ *Reflecting team* as it has been developed and described by T. Andersen (1995).

²⁶ I have chosen to call the supervisee who is in *the position of talking about her concerns*, showing or expressing herself as the ‘supervisee in focus’. The rest of the group, sometimes with the supervisor, is in position as listeners or reflecting team.

resonance. Resonance is more connected to music and vibration than words and explicit meaning. We wanted to distinguish between two ideas connected to hearing or experiencing what is expressed, and we started to engage with the two Norwegian words “gjenklang” and “gjenkjennelse”. The first word is made up of the words *gjen* and *klang* which can be translated to *returned-sound* or *resound* or *resonance*. *Gjenkjennelse*, translates as *identification*. Playing with these two words we supervisors thought it useful to make a distinction between *listening to identify content* and *listening to feel the vibrating sound from the one who speaks and feeling how it touches our whole body*. It was about listening to be moved, and then be able to genuinely and authentically give something back by the way we expressed our response.

We are now forming *resonance groups* to open up the possibility for responding more vivaciously and spontaneously, not having to grasp *the* meaning, but cherishing the effort of wanting to connect by expressing a ‘felt emotional connection’. We have gained some experiences using resonance groups which I would like to share, but before doing that I will take a step back in time and describe some events of significance, and explore these in connection to some ideas I have found valuable.

Feeling our way around

One of the first experiences using resonance was in a PPD session where the supervisees had been asked to bring with them an expression, something that could express their ‘felt experience’ of a theme they were concerned about. The rest of the group was invited to listen and then respond by expressing what *touched or struck them* and if it created *any resonance*.

This is a short summary of what happened when Milla gave her expression: Milla had been telling about how she as a therapist always wanted to be on the spot, offering support even before the other person knew she wanted it. This was something Milla had been exploring during her PPD process. She wanted to try to be more laid back and see what then happened in her relationships. To express her own movements she read a poem about Jon who wanted an apple out of reach in the tree. Jon got tired and sat down patiently to wait, and eventually the wind blew the largest apple down and it landed in his lap. Milla then played a cd with a soft jazz version of John Lennon’s *Beautiful Boy*. The rest of the group listened cautiously and then gave their spontaneous responses. I was very touched by how **Linda** responded²⁷: *“When listening I was reminded of Saturday afternoons. I love that time of the week, when I return home after shopping and put the groceries into the cupboards in my cosy kitchen. I feel so calm and relaxed, and I have this kind of gathering expectation as I open up a bottle of good red wine. Friends will*

²⁷ This is my recollection of what was said, and not a transcript from a recording of the session.

soon show up, and I just know it will be a wonderful evening. That was a resonance I felt when I heard Milla read the poem and play the music”.

I am not sure how this specifically resonated with Milla because she didn't respond explicitly to each one of the others in the group. But *to me* it was a significant experience, and *I* felt deeply touched. I was struck by how I felt Linda emotionally connected to Milla's expression, and how *emotive* her way of talking was. Linda described the same kind of calm yet vibrant expectation I had sensed when Milla was expressing herself through the poem and music. I think this was the first time I *knew* in an immediate and bodily sense that this way of setting up response from the group was something we could elaborate.

When half a year later I presented the paragraphs above to Linda, *I experienced* that she was quite moved by me remembering what had happened, and she expressed that I had described it in a way that she felt was “exactly” how she remembered feeling. The movements in Linda's face and body waved²⁸ towards my body and touched a chord that I believed waved back to Linda. It was a feeling of emotional contours, creating something, not only *between* us, but something we were both *inside*. I could feel a physical excitement inside my upper chest as a joyful and tickling movement.

I am playing with the notion of *resonance* here. The meaning of the word is to describe a dynamic relational movement. It is as if the expression waves back and forth over a length of time, and changes the body it touches every time it strikes the body. This is a feeling of *resonance waves* or *resonance in a dynamic motion*, much like what Daniel Stern (2004) has termed a *shared feeling voyage*. He describes it quite evocatively: “*As they move, they pass through an emotional narrative landscape with its hills and valleys of vitality affects, along its river of intentionality (which runs throughout), and over its peak of dramatic crisis*” (:174). My experience of how this was for Linda is not something she and I talked about, I can only guess based on what I myself could feel. I am wondering if Linda could sense something like this “*You understood my feelings then, we had something together which I didn't know. When I now read what you wrote I feel deeply understood, because you and I connected emotionally back then*”.

How my body sensed something I didn't know that I felt

I am part of a small group of colleagues who meet occasionally and talk. Our aim is to raise questions, ask for support and have conversations about different issues. We divide the time equally between us, and each one decides how she wants to use 'her' space. Some weeks after the meeting with Milla, I met my colleagues. I didn't know what I wanted to talk about at all, I

just knew I didn't want to go on about how my research project was a pain. I had talked about it a great deal already.

I started off by saying that I didn't know how I wanted to use my space. My two colleagues listened, and I asked them if it would be ok if I started to talk and then just see what emerged: "*Afterwards you can just say whatever you feel*". I felt safe together with these women, and knew that they would be very supportive towards anything I would bring forward. Sitting there I remembered a book by Eugene Gendlin²⁹ that I had been reading, and thought about his idea about *focusing*. Gendlin writes about the *felt sense*, and how important it is to let the body have time to express itself. There is always something more than what is explicitly available to us as mere a cognitive understanding. This *something* is implicit in our body; sometimes felt as a sensation, a lump in the throat, a bubbling vibration in the stomach, and it often needs time to be accessible. I decided to give my body time, and started slowly to talk. I could hear myself utter words about how exhausted I felt trying to find words, expressions and my way around in space and time. And I could feel it in my breathing and in the pace with which I was speaking that it was exhausting. Maybe this articulated something about how difficult it was not to have anyone who really could understand what I was doing. I could hear myself talking about my research, but I'm not sure I could have recalled what I was saying myself. As I finished the two others started to talk to each other. I still remember the immediate bodily response I felt when Anne said: "*I feel Anne Hedvig is expressing loneliness*", and after a while she asked the question "*who is she missing?*" It struck me like a projectile and I felt a sudden physical pain someplace between my stomach and chest. I hadn't known that I felt lonely, but now I knew I did. A lost memory of my husband reading and responding to every little bit of writing I had struggled to formulate reappeared as an inner image. Despite his continued support towards all my professional work, he often expresses the view that most of what I write is beyond his understanding these days.

I do believe Anne had been touched by my depiction of exhaustion in trying to find my way around, and that it resonated with her own different experience of being a researcher. She didn't say that, but I could feel it in Anne's *emotional tone of voice* and it created connections between her feelings and mine, without this being spelled out explicitly. It created an emotional bridge between my floating experiences and her emotional recollections of her own struggles. That in itself brought comfort to what I now think of as my body's sense of loneliness and a longing for sharing all the tension filled and complex experiences I was having. By Anne's naming an un-verbalized experience I was no longer lost in space. If she had offered a reflection as a proposal emotionally detached from her own being, it could have felt like she wanted to throw me into a

²⁹ Focusing – How to gain direct access to your body's knowledge (Gendlin, 2003)

dance, but was unwilling to share the rhythm, movements and possible, unexpected revelations and feelings connected to that.

Poetics

As I have grown an interest in meaning as less distinct and less static but nevertheless loaded with significance, the contribution from art has been even more (.....) (blank³⁰).

I have come to cherish how different poetic ways of expressing meaning point beyond the immediate context of a word in use. Art has freed itself from the modernist presumption of certainty and the demand for unambiguous convictions.

My friend and colleague *Gunnar Nodland* has a gift for writing poems that capture *and* open up. Read the following poem he has written and see if you can get a sense of what I mean:

Everything's set
without settlement
the control post
is unattended
the uproar spreads

the emotions start their
intifada
unchain
check points

self bombs
shatter firmly
identity

giving in to
the zone of fluidity

³⁰ As I was writing this I had the experienced of what Gendlin (1997) describes as a distinct and felt meaning that has not yet emerged to the point where I can pronounce it. I know there is a word that would fit where I now could only write (.....), but it has not yet exposed itself as a word. It has nothing to do with writing in English, although my native language is Norwegian. I tried to find the word in Norwegian but it was not there. Not yet. I will rather let it be (...) blank, than write another word that would not fit *exactly*. I need to search with my "*attention inward to find again that concrete feeling of what (I) want to say, so that (my) word may pour out again.*" (Gendlin, 1997:15)

When Gunnar writes - *the emotions start their/intifada/unchain/check points* I feel I know *exactly* what he means, but I can't explain the meaning without ruining a sense of enchantment by his poetic expressions. I believe it is the *precision* coupled with a sense of openness in Gunnar's use of words that free me from feeling trapped. A sense of permission is thus created simultaneously to understand and not understand which feels wonderfully liberating. Poetics unsettles the ordinary and creates the imaginary (Gergen, 2006), and has not the intention of representing a reality, but invites transcendence, as does music. Wittgenstein puts it like this

"The way music speaks. Do not forget that a poem, even though it is composed in the language of information, is not used in the language-game of giving information."
(Wittgenstein, 1980, No.160)

Embodied Knowing

This complex fluidity between knowing something and not knowing at the same time became very apparent to me some time ago. I was sitting in the back of a bus noticing a man getting on, and I found myself thinking; "There's an attractive man". He walked slowly down the aisle and sat down in front of me. I kept looking at him and became aware of his brown trousers, brown sweater and dark brown leather coat, and I said to myself: "*Men dressed in brown are quite attractive*" and then "I have always *known that*, that I love men in brown" and then "but I *didn't know that I knew that*, that I liked men in brown". When I later told my husband, about this observation, he said: "But you have always liked men dressed in brown, you keep buying me brown clothes". I had to admit that he was right, and recognized that I had for many years acted out of a knowing something I didn't know I knew.

This knowing-how-to-go-on, is not an intellectual understanding, but one of much stronger bodily 'force'. I wish to recognize it as something of value and something to trust; not just in our daily life, but in therapy and research as well.

The complexity of being human

These events of significance have created an interest in exploring:

- The feeling of being deeply understood as a *shared emotional* experience.
- The realization that understanding oneself is not always connected to an *awareness* of this understanding.
- Having the permission to be *touched* without having to give a *rational* account of its significance (not even to yourself).

- Acting *spontaneously* and *accurately* out of an implicit knowing.

I find these multifaceted observations above intriguing and think they point at some important aspects of the complexity of being human. I must admit that this has brought me to the edge of my tolerance for uncertainty and I find it difficult to trust Rilke's advice and just live my questions³¹. Fortunately, this way of relating has enhanced my ability to stretch towards ideas and descriptions I find difficult to understand, but for which I have, nevertheless, a felt sense of significance; a movement towards a richer understanding of *humanness* and *human relationships*.

Relating to the voices of Scholars

In the following paragraphs I will explore some aspects of being a *relational and meaning oriented human being*. I am interested in exploring meaning as *relational, unfinished and complex*, and connecting it to what I think of as *the complexity of being human*. I am not aspiring to exhaust this huge and complex theme, but to describe in some detail some elements of what John Shotter (2010) calls the realm of 'the chiasmic' being in the world.

It would have been easier just to write, as William Blake did³²:

To see a World in a Grain of sand
and Heaven in a Wild Flower
Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand
And Eternity in an hour.

When I came across Mikhail Bakhtin's (1981, 1984, 1986) notion of dialogue, his perception of life as dialogic and his understanding of heteroglossia, I first caught an interest in the open and unfinalized status of a person and her words being in the world. This again eventually supposed that the meaning of human understanding is open and unfinalized and finds its form in the dialogical space in between people in communication.

How do we understand the human being as relational? In contrast to the notion of the self-sufficient human being this term puts emphasis on the relationship between people, or people and their surroundings. I appreciate the contribution John Shotter (e.g. 1975, 1993a, 1993b, 1999, 2003, 2004a, 2004b) has made when he talks about people as *living, bodily, spontaneous, expressive* and *responsive* to the otherness of the other (e.g. people, discourses, ideas). I am inspired by this way of understanding, thinking about it as an interactive fluidity not only

³¹ From my introductory pages: *Live the questions now, perhaps then someday far in the future you will gradually without even noticing it live your way into the answer* (Rilke, 1986)

³² In D. Stern (2004).

between a person as an entity and what is 'around' her, but as a process in itself. It is part of the livingness of people, acknowledging that what we first might call 'our inner life' is in relation to its own 'internal' bodily processes as well as with what is situated and emerging from 'outside'.

The notion of being spontaneous is connected to the idea that something is 'awakened' in the meeting, something that was partly there anyway and partly transforms into something novel. What was there originally but perhaps not cognitively transparent might be a felt sense or as Stern (2004) would call it, implicit knowing. Implicit knowing is according to Stern a knowing that is "non-symbolic, nonverbal, procedural, and unconscious in the sense of not being reflectively conscious" (:113). He describes how a baby need to acquire a knowing in relation to how to relate in life, without "the distraction and complication of – words – but with help of the music of language" (113). Julia Kristeva (1984) describes the subject as an effect of language, and concedes a pre-linguistic feeling in our sense of self. The mother provides a safe holding space, which Kristeva calls the 'chora'. In this imaginary space subjectivity begins to find a form through bodily feelings, rhythms, gestures and sound. This sphere of experience is according to Kristeva not lost when the subject moves into the sphere of language, but remains an essential part of signification or meaning-making. It is particularly present in poetic language, *"and has the power to disrupt our tendency to take on fixed identities in language and helps us to be 'subjects-in – process', constantly in flux between the given and created dimensions of ourselves"* (Hunt and Sampson, 2006:15, referring to Kristeva).

What I find significant in relation to this is the living human being as fluid, in movement and in relationships. I am the only one who can physically experience my body's temperature rising or falling, my metabolic system working, and my heart beat, from a first person position. But the meaning of these bodily experiences are not solely mine, our relationship with the bodily sensations are socially created – and thereby recreated (Fredman, 2004). Our bodily sensations do not have names, it is by naming them we start to get a relation to them; first by our carers when we a babies, and then through relationships with people and with discourses throughout our lives (Johnson, 2007).

Usually we locate our knowledge or knowing in our mind, almost like a filing system in our computer (Dreyfus1979), where there is an emphasis on the 'mind coming up with words'. This is a legacy from Descartes who divided our body into two different spheres, body and mind. Gendlin (1997, 2003) sees that this mode of thinking, which mainly accounts only for forms, distinctions, patterns and rules, will miss large parts of the embodied situational experiences that make these forms meaningful in the first place. Mark Johnson (1987, 2007) claims that this is a fateful mistake endemic in Western philosophy, our cultural understanding and everyday practice which overlook much of what goes into making something meaningful to us:

“Then we are seduced into mistaking the forms for that which they inform, and we fool ourselves into thinking that it is the forms alone that make something meaningful, real or knowable. We think that if we have succeeded in abstracting a form – conceptualizing some aspect of our experience – then we have captured the full meaning.” (:80)

This fidelity towards stable structures can, according to Gendlin (2003) entice us with the illusion that meanings are fixed, abstract entities that float free of ever changing contexts and the ongoing flow of experience. Such an approach “leaves out the body and our situated, embodied practices, along with all their intricate meaning” (Johnson, 2007:80). And it is as if there is no distinct experience outside our wording them, for instance: do we not feel music as filled with meaning even if we would not be able to ‘put into words’ the feelingful contours of our experience?

I think Lakoff and Johnson’s (Johnson, 2007) description of human beings as *body-mind* is very intriguing. What we are used to call “body” and “mind” and have treated as “two separate and ontologically distinct entities or processes” (:274), could be understood as an interactive and intra active process taking place in and in-between our felt body and its surroundings. Referring to Merleau-Ponty, Lakoff and Johnson describe our body as being a phenomenal body and as *the situation from which our world and experiences flows*. Moreover they understand the body as being biological, ecological, social and cultural. From the very beginning of human life, we gain our growing understanding of our world intersubjectively (Stern, 1985, 2004, 2010). We are not autonomous entities, who individually and singly construct our own models of the world (Johnson, 2007):

“..we learn about our world in and through others. We inhabit a shared world, and we share meaning from the start, even if we are completely unaware of this while infants. In other words, *body-based intersubjectivity* – our being with others via bodily expressions, gesture, imitation, and interaction – is constitutive of our identity from our earliest days, and it is the birthplace of meaning.” (:51)

Experiences so far in the context of PPD

The supervisees are given invitations to reflect in between PPD sessions. We have thought about it as ‘stepping stones’ in between the sessions which take place for one day – four times a year – for two years. We have wanted to contribute to fostering the supervisees’ capability becoming more sensitive of one’s living, bodily, spontaneous, expressive-responsive relational way of being - to exercise the ability to postpone closure, and live with ambiguity.

Half a year after we started the PPD supervision the supervisees were asked to observe themselves in episodes in which their theme³³ showed itself. They were asked to write down their reflections. After two weeks we told them to read what they had written, wanting them to recognize what stood out in the text. We wrote: *“what strikes you and creates resonance. This resonance might not be clear or easy to describe”*. We encouraged the supervisees not to look for distinct descriptions or linguistic formulations, and wrote: *“Language has the function of being able to trap us in descriptions which might be too distinct, have overly rigorous frames and by that tempt us into premature understanding”*. We wanted the supervisees: *“to resist the temptation to understand too fast, and rather stay in the vague and ambiguous”*. They were asked to search for ways of describing their experience of what struck them, in their own text, using an *expression* like prose, poetry, visual illustrations, music or metaphors. They could create the expression themselves or use expressions that gave resonance to themselves. Later they were asked to bring this expression with them to the PPD group. We said that they should decide for themselves how they wanted to *bring* the expression with them, *they could show it, sing it, dance it, paint it or talk it*. It was up to them.

When the supervisees brought with them an expression that showed their ambiguous concern they were asked to show or give this expression to the rest of the group. We asked what we now called the *resonance group* to try to tune in on the person in focus. They were asked to pay close attention to how they themselves were touched and moved by the vibrations of the person’s expression.

Resonance and the use of resonance groups

This is how I summarized one of the first times we used the resonance group:

We try to put ourselves in a position tuning in on the person’s expression by paying attention to how it strikes chords in us. Responding back we try to describe this feeling we call resonance without going into it in a way that develops stories connected to our own life. We also try to describe our feelings in the same metaphorical language as the person who had the expression used.

Some of the supervisee said that they had been puzzled by the assignment, but found it exciting to find ways of expressing themselves. When the resonance group listened and gave their resonance back they said it opened up space for more poetics and they felt liberated. Several of the supervisees in focus showed emotions connected to being confused and struggling to find new ways of moving around in private and professional contexts, when they expressed

³³ By the end of a PPD session we had asked the supervisees to sit for themselves and write down some experiences/themes they were interested in exploring.

themselves in front of the group. One supervisee told enthusiastically how she felt that when she had expressed herself, the response she got from the resonance group was filled with the group members' "own feelings and then expressed in a metaphoric manner, which made me feel as if I was able to go on gliding"³⁴.

When talking with a group of supervisees they said:

Martin: "I never feel I say too much in the PPD sessions, because when the group responds back to me, I know I am not alone feeling like this."

William: "When I meet my therapist I often feel that he just sits there, and I don't know what he thinks of me. And all I can think of is: what is going on there, in him? In a way I have to regulate myself. But in this group, I feel that it's different and that my feelings strike them and they tell how they have similar emotional experiences. That's good."

Jenny: "My therapist is very into recognition, and she wants to connect to what I'm expressing. Here we're not allowed to recognize, it's more about being touched, we're not allowed to create stories, and if we do we're stopped."

Erika: "I know why it's more useful than individual therapy, because we can recognize and feel touched and show it. I really feel it. It strikes me here (pointing at her stomach) not here (pointing at her head). I feel touched in my stomach and my heart. And it's so good to let myself be touched by other people's experiences."

What we now started to call the *resonance group* listens not only to the content, but tries to be responsive at an emotional level. When positioned in a resonance group, we listen and respond with our whole body to the whole body of the other. We need to take in the whole context of the other person's utterance and be responsive to intonation, words chosen, breathing, pauses, and bodily movements.

Helga has given a vivacious account of a resonance experience. I had the impression that Helga had been very touched by how the resonance group had responded to her telling about a very difficult situation she had been in several years ago. When we were talking about this some months after the PPD group met she pointed at her chest showing how moved she felt after the session. She had told of her experience of being thrown out of a religious community she had been a member of all her life. Helga had devoted her life to the group but 'the elder men' said she was no longer allowed to be involved in the church's work because she had married a

³⁴ In Norwegian: "Værende i svevet" means to be able to continue to glide. It is a positive connotation. It refers to the ski jumper who manages to continue to "be in the glide" after he has left the jump. Neither *glide* nor *float* is perhaps a complete translation, and *fly* has too much of a direction in it.

divorced man. After hearing Helga talk, **Blossom** in the resonance group responded back and said with a thick voice, softly emerging from deep down some place in her body, that it sounded as if someone had picked a card out of Helga's card house and made it fall to pieces. Another member of the group responded by saying that it sounded as if Helga had been forced to leave her beloved country, leave precious things behind and seek asylum in a faraway place. This made Helga weep. Talking about this later she recalled being deeply moved by the resonance, and said:

“It was like receiving gifts. It was not only what they said, but it was said with so much emotion. I felt deeply understood, and I felt the same warmth in my chest as I have when I take my kitten up and hug him closely. It's comforting, I would say healing and a feeling of reconciliation. They understood what happened back then, and that helps me not to feel bitter – I no longer feel a need to use negative energy.”

In these and other reflections I sense themes about being safe and valuable, the feeling of reconciliation and new courage appearing: *When I am sharing, I sense that the other person is stretching emotionally to connect and it makes me feel that it is ok to have that feeling, I am ok, I am valuable, and I am no longer alone. That is a feeling of safety. It is not dangerous to go places I have not been before, because I'm not alone. You have been there, and you came out ok.*

Unpleasant resonance

This work is not only about recognizing resonance as a feeling of being positively connected. There are also vibrations in my body and in my supervisee's bodies that do not immediately feel like fruitful resources. Quite spontaneous answers to relational encounters are sometimes not of the kind I would consider helpful, comforting or healing. I have on some occasions been able to have the same curiosity towards unpleasant feelings and unpleasant meetings as I have when reading intricate poems. To be able to use feelings of discomfort to explore my own felt sense, expression and stories – to explore what is created in between me and the other – and use it as a resource, something to attend to as a relational event has been quite demanding and interesting. As a group supervisor I have experienced how my curiosity (or lack of it) is *catching* and opens up for the groups' ability to be curious about what is happening between us – or might close it down (Interesting – Tolstoy apparently wrote an essay about how true Art was infectious, or it wasn't art). When I feel uncomfortable, and choose to 'hide' my lack of curiosity or discomfort I time and again experience how that creates anxiety and awkwardness in the group. If I on the other hand manage to act on my bodily feeling of uneasiness and offer them as 'something' to explore, the group often feel invited to explore relational encounters instead of defining each other as being one particular way or the other.

My colleague Gunnar and I had a talk one day, and I told him how I was playing with trying to experience people I meet as poems. I told him that this had been very helpful in relationships where I feel irritation and even contempt. Some days later I received this poem he had written:

Weaving
without threads
The words together
You are a poem
Searching
the skin
looking for
undiscovered spots
Tenderly stroking
Passion out of
fingertips
invisible letters
Love deserves
you
Caress the words

You become a
poem



Becoming an African Again

When I first met him some years earlier, **Davis** told me stories about his life. He was then a second year supervisee and I was his teacher. He described himself as a lone wolf, and was concerned about his place in the supervisee group. Davis was born in Mozambique; his father was a white businessman who married a white woman, both born in East Africa. Davis lived in Africa until he was in his mid teens. For undisclosed reasons, about 30 years ago, Davis and his mother moved to Norway while his father continued living in Mozambique. Davis didn't speak any Norwegian and expressed a sense of feeling disconnected and quite lost at the time. A physical reaction to experiences he had back then, left traces of a young man's despair, like scars in Davis' face.

Davis works as a family therapist; he is married to a Norwegian woman and has two children. He never went back to live in Africa, but while talking to me he expressed an intense dream about one day working as a family therapist in Africa. When Davis continued into his third year as a Master's supervisee in family therapy I was no longer his teacher. This past year my contact with him has been as the coordinator of the PPD, and a researcher into that work.

When I asked supervisees in a PPD group³⁵ to have a talk about their experiences using the resonance groups, Davis volunteered. Davis and I talked for about 50 minutes. We recorded the conversation and I transcribed those parts of the talk that I found of significance in relation to my interest in resonance. In the next paragraphs I will reflect on some of the things he expressed and about the process between him and me.

Like a Bird on a Wire

Davis had decided to express his theme by reading a text from a song (Cohen's "Like a Bird on a Wire"), and then tell about it in Swahili, which is his first language. He anticipated that the rest of the PPU group would not be able to understand him. By talking a language he knew no one would understand he played safe in a way; what he expressed was not only ambiguous it was not even understandable:

"Then they could just wonder, you see".

I wonder if this was a way of saying that he did not want to be disappointed once again by not being understood?

When the resonance group responded back to Davis, he reflected that:

³⁵ I supervise one of five PPD groups. This time I wanted to talk with supervisees in another group to hear about their experiences.

“They captured me being happy and livelier (...) then, they saw, they saw something I hadn’t thought about. (...) The other thing was that in a way they saw a tiny bit of me, even if what was said, was not said in Norwegian. Eh... that was a very nice feeling”.

“ The thing that really touched me, for one thing, was that I felt they meant well”.

“(...) they said it in a way...when I heard them talk, I didn’t feel a need for correcting them, or putting things straight. I felt that. I didn’t feel that then. That was very useful”.

“They said I seemed happy when I was speaking Swahili, that I seemed lively. Yes, and then I saw myself sitting there. And then I thought, that’s absolutely true, that’s how I experienced it”.

The resonance group was struck by not understanding, and had to make an effort to understand differently. Forced to “feel their way through” – move around responding to different kinds of signs, perhaps ‘forced’ them to be more sensitive and listen in another way, not to the identity, but to the *novelty and unfinished quality* of what was expressed, more to Davis’ emotional state, and less to recognizing the content. This is connected to Bakhtin’s notion of understanding as a social process. The very process of perceiving or *understanding* others’ utterances takes place when these utterances come in contact with the listener’s inner voices. Each time a listener tries to understand, she has, according to Bakhtin (1981) to understand why it is said and relate to the interests of the utterance and assumptions. The proper way to understand the other is not “psychologically” but dialogically, Bakhtin writes (1984), that is, the ability to sense the inner dialogues of the others in all their unfinalizability and then participate in that dialogue while respecting its openness. To understand an utterance is to understand it in a particular context, to understand its novelty and not recognize its identity.

He summed up his experience of this:

And then I wanted to go back to Africa, this is obviously good medicine for me then.
Yeah...

Davis is expressing how powerful it was for him to experience that the resonance group really did make an effort to try to connect to him:

...then they said that when they hadn’t understood anything of the language, they had felt despair, but then they had watched my expression, in a way, what I was trying to say. What they thought I was trying to say. They thought it was powerful, demanding, for them to observe and be there without understanding. In that way they saw me.

Because that is how I often experience it, I often experience it like that, that I am not understood.

In Swahili I said something about how, eh lost...in English, what is that in Norwegian...

I responded by saying the Norwegian word for *lost*: '*bortkommen*'. I believe I wanted to be in Davis' talk, and show my connection to his telling.

Davis connected to me again and pronounced the word '*bortkommen*' himself. One could ask if I was too eager in offering the word, that I could have waited for him to find his way to the word. It is always a feeling of *movements in a dance, honouring the movements and invitations from the other*³⁶. I believe my offering the word was an invitation to talk more about being *lost*.

Davis continues:

"Bortkommen, I feel in Norway. How my friends wants me to return...eh, because all my friends who say that, they talk to me in Swahili. And that is why I thought, well then I will say something about that".

I find this very interesting; because I think Davis is pointing at how crucial it is for people to feel that the other(s) are stretching out to connect, making an effort to try to understand. It is not *the* understanding, but the stretching *towards* that makes him feel understood. I connect this to what I earlier wrote about Bakhtin's notion of understanding: It is a process towards understanding the other as something novel and unfinalized.

During our talk I got a sense of the vital experience it had been for Davis to express himself in relation to his group in his native language. I believed I wanted to honour that experience, and maybe I also wanted to feel a connection to Davis and what had happened in the group. This was a significant moment in our talk. I moved in a direction towards Davis' emotional experience, and was no longer searching for information or answers to my questions. I was caught inside our relationship, here and now. I was touched by what Davis was saying and by the fact that the resonance group had had this strong effect on Davis, and I asked:

"How would it have been to say this in Swahili, what you just said?"

Davis answers that he probably would have started to cry:

"...if I was to say this in Swahili. Because that is a language that is much closer to me. Eh... I have been thinking that language is also culture, the people I know. In that way eh

³⁶ From A. Katz & J. Shotter in Gergen & McNamee (1999).

it is a lot of longing in that language, so eh I'm not sure I would have been able to say it in Swahili. Eh, eh... yeah".

He could feel the resonance of the vibration of his first language as a bodily event.

Watching the film I can see that I paid close attention to his movements, and I think I was trying to sense if Davis would appreciate that I made moves towards his experience. I was feeling my way trying to show a keen interest and at the same time not push him. I was struck by how he had himself been touched by his own talking, how he had felt both connected to the culture and people in his country. My body remembered my own longing when I lived and studied in England for three years, and a picture of myself sitting in a room trying desperately to express something and feeling completely stupid, appeared. When one of my English speaking companions asked me to say it in Norwegian I was first puzzled, but also grateful. I felt it as recognition of me as a person. I think this was one of the times during the talk that I was sensing vibrations between Davis' emotional state and my own sense of connection. I asked:

"hm...well, then, I will not ask you, even if I really wanted to hear it".

Davis response was:

"Ok, I will have a go then".

Davis spoke in Swahili for a couple of minutes, while I listened very carefully. I then said:

"Hm...I haven't heard you speak Swahili before, but I have heard you say Mozambique".

I pronounced Mozambique in a way similar to the way I had heard Davis pronounce Mozambique before. And when Davis responded with a *hm*, I sensed an urge to connect and show how moved I was by Davis' confiding in me and sharing his sense of being lost and his emotional connection to Mozambique. I said:

"You say it in a very special way. It is as...I can hear that it is not '*any old country*'".

After a long silence Davis responded:

"No, hm...it is...it is where I come from".

Davis swallows several times and there is a long silence:

"I have been working on identity and belonging, and it seems as if I'll never be able to finish it. I guess I'll be struggling with it for a long time. But I have decided to use that part of me to be able to understand other people that feel lost, I was almost saying...well

many people, I believe, feel that...and that is why today was such a profound experience. Because in a way, they understood, even without understanding what I was saying”.

Davis expressed with this how profound it is to feel understood when you feel lost, and that the understanding is not connected to a *literal understanding of content*, but to others understanding *the emotion*. And when he felt that the others could understand the emotion of being lost, he no longer felt lost.

I said:

“They understood your sense of being lost”.

Davis

“Yes, I think so. They understood it, in a way they said that and this thing about belonging, identity, yeah...to be part of...they recognized it, in a way”.

Later on in the conversation I asked Davis about how he understood this notion of resonance. He told about music and vibrations. He returned to the word:

“That word, resonance, what is that? But I believe it gives resonance, when I speak Swahili, it is as if my whole body reacts and answers back. In a way, I am another, it is somewhat strange”.

Here Davis pointed to how his talk affected himself. The words that were pronounced out loud moved him; he could feel the vibrations in his body.

Then he came back to the experience of talking to the group:

“It is quite natural to me, even if I’ve never before spoken Swahili to people who don’t understand, but today I did it. And to me that was also a very strange experience, yes...but then they saw that I was happy, and that I was livelier. And then I thought that that they had seen something I hadn’t thought they would see. I guess that is the resonance then, which might not so easily be put into words.

I have two comments on this utterance. Davis here commented on how the resonance team experienced him as *livelier* when he spoke in Swahili. If we think of words as emerging out of bodily experiences and having to be ‘true’ to the body to feel true, the ‘liveliness’ Davis’ fellow supervisees had experienced in his talk might have been the ‘truthfulness’ of his expressing his experiences in a language that is closer to his bodily feelings. When Davis said this, it was not meant as information to me; it was much more a way of *grounding* it in his own body, giving himself a chance to feel the resonance again.

I find this very intriguing: the significance of not only being able to talk in your native language, but also to have the time to express yourself again and again. This is an opportunity to search for words that are 'true' was also what another supervisee, Hanna, expressed (although in a different context), *"You gave me all the time in the world to talk out loud about the things I was thinking about, and I could hear them and decide if they were true or not"*.

Towards the end of our talk Davis came back to the feeling he had had when he spoke Swahili.

"I believe speaking Swahili has a good impact on me, it is good medicine, I think I will speak more Swahili".

I find it very interesting to notice these movements of resonance. There are vibrations moving between and in between people in a responsive flux: from Davis to the group, from the group back to Davis, from Davis to me, from me to Davis and from Davis to Davis. It is not so much content as information, but more emotions as vibrations and contours that play together and move back and forth, creating moments of significance and opening up new possibilities.

I want that African

A week after this conversation Davis called me and said that he wanted to change the topic of his research project. He had an assignment in Ethiopia, and now he wanted to create a project around that which could be the basis of his research. Davis was vibrant when he told me that the Ethiopian manager of the assignment had wanted Davis to come back (Davis had been there for a short visit in October last year). *"I want that African"*, the man had said. He also told me that he had signed up for a class in Swahili, to be able to talk and be with people who spoke his mother tongue.

Later, I gave him a copy of the edited film, and he responded by saying that he really wanted his sons to look at it. *"Then they will experience me as an African"*, he said.



Davis and the Researcher

Davis and I continued our talks for another year meeting three more times, talking on the phone and keeping in contact through email. We were reciprocally engaging in each other's talk, and something novel was created on the threshold between him and me.

The second time we sat down for a talk, Davis reached down into his bag and picked up a small polished tuning fork. He had brought it with him to express himself in his PPD group. He stroked the fork against the table surface and held it up on the top of my head.



Davis: "It is about resonance. It is what is between that creates the sound. I was thinking about resonance. It is a note, the keynote is higher now than it was 200 years ago. The idea about what is normal, right, has changed. That's when I thought about you. And I wanted to give this to you. I have had it for many years. It is such a beautiful small little thing. It reminds me of a lot of things that change. It has a lot of symbolism in it".

I was deeply moved by this unanticipated gift Davis offered me. I sensed from being within our relationship that the movement *between us* and *in me* had moved our relationship towards something I was not able to name. My, and maybe Davis', conceptual understanding of a researcher and a research participant was about to change.

The next time we sat down to talk, some months later, Davis started off by saying:

Davis: "This talking, it has been like therapy for me".

AnneH: "So, what we are doing might be useful in a sense? And we don't need to conceptualize what kind of talk this is. I have been thinking that it might be useful for you – to talk about just about anything – I am letting go here".

Davis: "That is just it".

AnneH: "Cut myself loose, and let whatever happens happen. So be it".

Davis: "Yeah, do that, do that".

AnneH: "I find this quite exciting".

I believe the two of us invited each other into a context where we didn't feel a need to specifically negotiate the meaning of the context. It was as if we both felt at home in ambiguity

and uncertainty – trusting that a feeling of reciprocal benevolence would guide our going on together. This is something we addressed again *the next time* we met:

Davis: “I have decided to use something that is called dialogical performance analysis, eh..as in narrative therapy and what interests me here is that the narratives have an audience, maybe even several. And I’ve thought about, that also, in relation to our talks; when we have talked I have been thinking; ‘who am I talking to?’”

AnneH: “Yeah, that’s interesting.”

We were again moving between talking about our relationship and Davis’ interest in what he had been experiencing lately.

Davis: “Yeah, and I talk to myself as well, a lot. I talk, eh; it’s painful as well as pleasant. I even talk to some, who’re dead now. You see? Not psychotic talk.”

AnneH: “No!”

Davis: “Eh, no it’s more of a dialogue with some friends who died from aids for instance. For instance if I hear a word that reminds me of that person, I may start a conversation. Eh, in my head. I can do this when sitting together with other people. When working. I am thinking about, who’s with me here, in this conversation. So audience, who am I talking to, you see (a slight laugh), they’re there and I keep asking questions like; ‘why am I talking about this, telling it this way?’ In the same way I’ve asked myself the question; ‘why have I accepted participation in these conversations with Anne Hedvig?’

AnneH: “What have you been thinking then?”

Davis: “I believe it’s about not knowing what this is (laughing).”

AnneH: “No.” (smiling)

Davis: (Laughing) “It’s exciting, I don’t know what’s on the other side.

AnneH: “No.”

Davis is addressing how experiencing the uncertainty and ambiguous context have in fact created excitement. And this excitement rubs off on our talk and makes us smile and laugh as we go on talking, feeling the trust we have in each other that both of us will be able to reciprocally create and re create in coordination a context we feel is ‘satisfying’ for us to go on together. This is also something that feeds into other contexts as well, not just something between us.

Davis: "I don't know the outcome, actually. But in most situations in life, we have agreed upon the goal. That is popular these days you know, having a goal, subsidiary goals, you know. And then one needs to find methods to fulfill. I appreciate family therapy that is risky – meaning that we don't know where it will end. I think it's about this, I want to be part of it, you know, when you say to me, 'thanks for coming', I want to respond: 'Thanks for asking me'. (laughter) But it sounds like a cliché."

AnneH: " Eh..."

Davis: (smilingly) "So, I don't say it."

AnneH: (Laughing loud)

Davis: (laughing loud)" But I feel, you know that it is a great opportunity for me to go many rounds with myself."

AnneH: "Funny you're saying this, because when we sit down here, I don't really know what it is we're going to do. Didn't we talk about that last time? What started out as a research conversation was transformed. I was involved. Curious about you and your project, I became quite engaged in your thoughts."

Davis: "Yeah."

AnneH: "I do bring along the recorder, and my curiosity concerning my own project, I haven't forgotten that. But anyway, I don't know what this will be."

By this point, I felt very happy and relaxed. I had been concerned about the *context*; I could sense that as we were speaking. One thing was that I enjoyed the fluid sense of contextual ambiguity, but I guess I had been uncertain about the ethics of not 'keeping myself in place' as researcher. Now I was beginning to think about it in quite another way: it was precisely the fluidity and the ability I had to respond in the moment, into what was happening between Davis and me that made our talk 'ethical'.

My position was to be answerable in the moment, inside the act, from within the relationship that was emerging. I feel that so much of the time in our work we are encouraged to choose an either/or position, one that might just as easily create distance experienced as not only alienating, but also as unethical because we feel we must decline the invitation from the other.

Davis: "So this has become important to me, it has been an opportunity to take some steps, to go in some directions I wouldn't have had the opportunity to do, perhaps."

AnneH: "And that has been exciting for me; to be able to follow you and your reflections. I have, eh, felt that you have, you have, eh courage to go places (...) And you have taught me a lot. Just as you did earlier, when talking about language, and what language means for you. What resounds in you when you speak different languages, try to find the different words in different languages."

Davis: "Eh, yeah, and you know, I hadn't done that by myself, returned to Swahili and the Swahili culture. It has made it possible to let go, let go of my unhappy love affair with Africa. It has taken up space in my life; you know, there is nothing that creates more longing than distance. It became closer, and then I could let some of it go. (...) And that, eh, you didn't have an agenda or a direction you wanted me to go. It was just the talk, and that's that. (...) That created a freedom. I could have thought, *Oh bloody hell*, and not cared. Or I could be curious. And I think this freedom is really important. I've been thinking about that, concerning these conversations we've had. I don't know how suitable it is in BUP³⁷ There are so many distractions, the schools demand action etc, and then BUP need to solve things. The parents are on one's back (laughter), there are lots of disturbances that are pushing us. But I've been thinking, I would like to be quite open and not have an agenda. You know they come with diagnoses and referral forms, where it's all-"

AnneH: "Crossed out."

Davis: "Crossed out with symptoms, hm, and what the referring person wants us to do. Not so much the youngster's own. (...) Yeah, (pause) I put it aside, I usually put it aside. I let them read it, so they know what other people think. But I think I'll put it aside, even more. I think I want to create more freedom, and let the conversation develop in its own direction."

I was struck by Davis saying this, addressing how our talks had had an influence, his experience of being in a context where there was no agenda, no goals to pursue, created a confidence that allowed him to invite his clients into a conversation that could "develop in its own direction". It was the same process I had had in connecting to my research adventure. Both of us had experienced the lack of a forecast as liberating and creating less of a need for planning and prediction.

AnneH: "Eh (Pause) That's funny, exciting, when you say that, because, I've been thinking 'the less I take control'. You know I have had the experience doing this research that I've had too much control and it's made me feel sick."

³⁷ BUP, is "Barne og Ungdomspsykiatrisk Poliklinikk, Child and adolescence Psychiatric Unit.

Davis: "Eh, yeah."

AnneH: "But the less I've had control - and I think our conversations have been a kind of breathing space. I've thought, just talking and hearing you speaking has been so nice. Very enjoyable."

In this last bit of transcript it becomes obvious to me that Davis' experience of our talk had made him feel more 'at home in the uncontrollable' just as I had felt able to let go of controlling my research project.

I think it was rewarding that I had been able to act into the moment the first time I approached Davis as a researcher. When we talked about his experience of feeling the resonance from the resonance group, I had acted on the *threshold* between research and supervision. I think about this situation as a moment in which I let the otherness of the other enter into me and make me other (Shotter, 1993); I became involved with Davis and invited Davis to be involved with me – and we were both transformed by that involvement.

One could make the point about this movement as being on the edge of what is appropriate for a researcher. This concept of *edge* is interesting, I think about it as a sharp line between entities, which creates an either/or position. This is a distinction that is often constructed in research communities or in discourses about *acting* as researcher. I am reminded of Karen McCarthy Brown (1991) who believes that when the lines are drawn in anthropology (and I would suggest in other qualitative research communities as well) between participant-observer and the informant, anthropology will become closer to a social art form, open to both aesthetics and moral judgement. She points to how this situation is 'riskier', and will demand a closer relationship between intellectual labour and life. This situation or act is not a natural place, it is a performative space. By defining the act as 'answerable' or 'responsible' Bakhtin (1993) seeks to integrate the 'subjective' side of it with its 'formal' aspects, though without falling into relativism. Rather than merely defined by their products (being systematic, logical, or categorically correct) and rule bound requirements, acts are also constituted by the locations in which they happen, as individuals are embedded in specific horizons (Bender, 1998). Bakhtin (1993) underscores this quite poetically when emphasizing, how when an individual acts ethically, he

"sees clearly these individual, unique persons whom he loves, this sky and this earth and these trees ... and the time; and what is given to him simultaneously is the value, the actually and concretely affirmed value of these persons and these objects ... and he understands the ought of his performed act, that is not the abstract law of his act, but the actual, concrete ought conditioned by his unique place in the given context of the ongoing event." (:30)

Through Davis and my relational responsiveness, an emerging ethics was produced in our unique social relation (Wood, 2004). In this *once-occurrent event of being* (Bakhtin, 1993) Davis and I shared an experience of feeling joy and excitement when neither of us knew where we were going, and it created opportunities for him and for me which we would have missed out on if we had followed a plan, been hesitant of losing control and committed to pre structured guides for how we should relate to each other. By 'losing control' we gained an ability to be more *spontaneously responsive in our presence* within the interactive moment.

To me these talks with Davis were the beginning of a wandering in my research where I could acknowledge a spontaneous responsive mode which I later came to call an Intuitive and Embodied Dialogical Inquiry. I was able to let myself be guided by what I intuitively sensed was interesting, and I acknowledge my embodied knowing as interesting to attend to. I began asking the supervisees to share with me their different experiences in supervision. This became even more part of the very context of the supervision space, as we started to talk more about "what is going on between us in this room/space here-and-now?"



Davis and Gitte

A year after Davis had graduated he and I were both participants at a workshop Harlene Anderson conducted in Norway. She had offered a woman a live consultation, **Gitte**, the woman talked with Harlene about her worries at work.

Three years earlier Gitte had been very enthusiastic when she started off in her new job, but her excitement had somehow faded away. Gitte explained how she had imagined she would be joining a dynamic team and have the opportunity to work with people who were passionate about the reflecting team and systemic ideas. In one way or another, things had not developed along these lines and Gitte felt that her older and more experienced colleagues were not that interested in collaborating with her. She neither felt that she herself nor the other newcomers had been able to have any sort of influence on the way the institution could work. After some talk about this, Harlene invited a group of seminar participants to position themselves “as if” they were colleagues who were either “newcomers” or “old colleagues”, or Gitte herself. Davis volunteered to listen and then speak from a position as if he was Gitte.

The “old colleagues” and the “newcomers” spoke, and finally Davis. He stood up, took a long breath, and announced with a vibrant deep voice,

“I feel so lonely”.

And that was all he said. Nothing more.

I was quite taken aback by Davis’s firm pronouncement, spoken with no trace of hesitation at all. Sitting on a chair a couple of meters away I was rather impressed by Davis’s capacity to so confidently resonate with the feelings I had vaguely sensed Gitte was expressing. It was just as much how these were announced that amazed me, as the words themselves.

Some weeks later I met Gitte again, and asked her how she had experienced the consultation with Harlene Anderson. Gitte said something like this:

“It was ok, but I was disturbed by having to speak English. But what really made an impression on me was *that man* who talked. The one who was me; He just announced those words ‘I feel so lonely’. It was spot on. I was surprised, because I hadn’t thought about it like that. I felt he really understood how it was to be me. How could he? It was as if his words came from deep down his well. Who is this man”.

My impression was that Davis’ whole being was able to *hear* Gitte by connecting emotionally. He had let his whole being be touched and it was from that position he could express himself in a way that made Gitte feel heard. “*I hear you*” was embodied in his words: “I feel so lonely”.

Davis' response served as an incitement for Gitte to question this sense of *feeling so alone* – and she returned to it again and again³⁸. It was something she felt she needed to attend to in different situations in her life, not just at work – with the older and more experienced colleagues.



Later:

In an email from Davis:

I find your project really exciting, and I look forward to reading it☺ I have had so much practical benefit of your knowledge and attitude towards our field of work. To be benevolently curious, to be curious towards what is not so easily understood, to dwell on the dubious – just long enough to make the novel and unforeseen happen. To listen to the quiet voice – or the deviation that is difficult to hear in the noise made by people and machines.

Another email:

I have more contact with the “African me”. It moved me to reconcile with my suppressed African identity and person (…). It was obvious that I seemed much happier when I spoke Swahili (…). When I said this to a colleague she said “Well, it’s probably your “heart–language³⁹”. Just the thought of there being such a word as “heart–language” made me want to cry. Lots of things fell into its place for me, concerning identity and language.

³⁸ Gitte was taking part in a supervision group I was running.

³⁹ Translated from the Norwegian word *hjertespråk*.

Interlude 2 – Desperado

This piece of writing was unfolded one Saturday in January 2008.

Today has been a very special day. Profound, I think I will call it. Is *profound* the right English word to use? I don't know yet, I haven't lived with the word long enough to know if it suits my experience. But *profound* has a kind of tactile sound that honours this day.

I woke up early this Saturday morning, not just because the wind was howling and the rain pouring down, although it is January. No, it's because I like Saturday mornings. The study beside my bedroom is filled with books I haven't read. I went in, picked up three books and thought I would have some time to look through them before my husband Carsten woke up. Downstairs I fired up the tiled Swedish heating stove and lit candles in the living room and kitchen. It was still dark outside. I made coffee and sat down in my sofa. This is the best time of the week. Not much was going to happen, although I had promised to drive in to town and help my daughter in her new apartment.

I opened up my laptop and checked my email. The books from the study lay beside me. I glanced at them. One of them was Harlene Anderson's book about collaborative therapy⁴⁰, which I had been reading quite briefly. Then it was the Norwegian translation of Daniel Stern's book *Present Moments in Psychotherapy*⁴¹. I had read the English version, and now I was looking forward to reading it in my own language. Stern's description of valuable therapeutic encounters as "shared feeling voyages" had touched me. The third book was Norwegian and dealt with the concept of emotions. I knew neither the book nor the author. Just before Christmas I had been flicking through *Morgenbladet*, a quite intellectual newspaper, a little too pretentious for my taste, and found an advertisement. My eyes caught Stern's name and I decided I would get the Norwegian translation of his book. Further down I found the title of another book: *Følelsenes filosofi*⁴² (The Philosophy of Emotions) and thought that might be something of interest to me and my research project.

The books had been delivered a week ago. I put them on my messy desk, along with about twenty other interesting books waiting to be read.

⁴⁰ Ref. Anderson & Gehart (2007a)

⁴¹ Ref. Stern (2004)

⁴² Ref. Grelland (2005)

Sitting in the sofa, I looked at the books. Should I read or should I write? John, my supervisor has encouraged me to write, at least 250 words a day (I have now in this moment written 433. That wasn't so hard!?). I should definitely write! Instead I clicked on the site where they have auctions and sell artwork. My favourite internet site these days is *Blomqvist*; a net auction where you can buy all sorts of art. I seldom buy, but I love to fantasize about all the wonderful different pieces I could have around me. Beauty and shapes attract me as do textures, colours, contrast, harmony and surprises.

As I poured some more coffee into my favourite mug I opened up Harlene Anderson's book, and flicked through. I mainly flick these days, I think I have become a *flicker* during this period of doing research. I flicked through the pages until my eyes fell on Peggy Penn's name. I take pleasure in her writing. Penn and Frankfurt's article about "Creating a Participant Text: Writing, Multiple Voices, Narrative Multiplicity"⁴³ made a great impact on me while I was doing my Master's. Their writings together with John Shotter's articles had me interested in Mikhail Bakhtin. *Penn & Frankfurt, Shotter and Bakhtin* opened up space for understanding what *being listened to* could mean. I went on flicking and was struck by Penn's use of the word *compassion*. It's not a word I often hear or read anymore. Peggy Penn referred to a philosopher called *Martha Nussbaum*; a name that was new to me. Half a page down and I knew I had to read more about this woman's ideas. I instantly felt a connection to Nussbaum, and decided to buy the book she had written⁴⁴ and to which Penn was referring. So I did. *Amazon.com* is fantastic! I felt the same excitement I always do after ordering a book. It's almost like planning a holiday in an exotic and faraway place. It's filled with opportunity and this feeling of wanting to be surprised, moved and the chance to discover something new.

Harlene Anderson's book had done its job for now. I looked at Stern's book, which I felt already familiar with and decided to see what Grelland had to say about feelings or maybe *emotions* is a more proper translation of the Norwegian word; *følelser*? This "problem" again, about finding the right translation that could do its job as a *mover*. Anyway, I didn't have any expectations in relation to the content of the book. The book was quite thin, the front page blue and somewhat dull, and I didn't find it appealing. I flicked through. Suddenly my eyes caught the word *compassion* and I felt drawn to read on. It connected immediately to what Penn had referred to from Nussbaum's work. Might this be a more interesting book than I first had anticipated? I decided to give it a chance and went back to the introduction. Grelland started off by saying that he had

⁴³ Fam Proc 33:217-231, 1994

⁴⁴ Ref. Nussbaum (2001)

been inspired by Sartre's ideas about feelings. This was kind of disappointing. Sartre has never been one of my favourites, but then Grelland went on to say that he had abandoned Sartre's ideas and was more influenced by people like Kierkegaard, Heidegger, Derrida and Martha *Nussbaum*. Reading Nussbaum's name made me shiver. What a coincidence! Her name turning up like that: twice in a few minutes. This is something that again and again fascinates me: when I am struggling to find plausible connections I suddenly feel they are thrown at me. I didn't think about it as accidental. No, to me it was more a feeling of enchantment or even *magic*, mixed with something else I didn't yet understand.

Still alone in my living room, I could see that the wind had calmed down, the sun was up. I blew out the candles and walked the hundred meters to pick up the newspaper. I had breakfast, served my husband coffee in bed, took a long shower and got dressed. All the small and ordinary things I always enjoy doing on a Saturday morning.

I had to send a letter to Denmark and pick up some DVDs I had bought from Amazon. The work of the polish director Kieslowski had been referred to in a book about dialogues⁴⁵, and I had a hunch that it could be of significance. Waiting for the cashier at the post office, I picked up a CD collection with Johnny Cash's music. It had *Desperado* on. I felt a sudden longing for this hard-bitten singer's raspy and wounded voice; maybe there was a vague sense of connection between my own state of mind and the man in black? Then there was a Lynn Anderson CD. As well as *Desperado*, she had several old evergreens reminding me of my youth, like *I Never Promised you a Rose Garden* and *Stand by your Man*. I went for Lynn and left Johnny behind on the shelf.

Later that day, when I was sitting in my blue Subaru driving into Oslo to help my daughter, I had *this feeling* inside. When I now write *feeling inside*, I have to stop for a second to search for the right words; words that can describe the different movements I felt in my body. Is excitement the right word? Or tickling butterflies? Or is it more precise to say that it felt like I had..... Well, I can't find the word. And in a way I don't need to. Or do I?

While driving on I was thinking: "This experience, this thrilling feeling I had when I stumbled across Nussbaum's name twice, describing something of great importance to me, I would like to tell someone". I knew it was not something that would be easy to communicate. To other people it would probably be one of those small coincidences that happen all the time, nothing to dwell on at all. Realizing this connected the feeling

⁴⁵ Rober (2004)

to the sense of being both excited and lost which I had had since I left home. This gap between my experience and my own anticipation that it would not be anything of value, gave me a sinking sense of aloneness. This is about having an intense experience and doubting that there is anyone in the world who would understand its profundity, the thrill or the feeling of magic. I went on to think of how this resembles the feeling people have when they seek help. People who come to therapy often disclose a sense of being alone with their feelings and being disconnected from their surroundings. This is not about having *problems*; it is about the need for *connecting* to other people.

Driving along I thought about who I could talk to. Could I call someone now, on my mobile? Do I have a friend who would be interested, who could possibly understand? And what would I want this friend to understand? I thought about Eva. She is an open and spiritual person. But I decided not. On another occasion, when I had spoken with her about something of this kind, she hadn't been astonished enough. To her, coincidences or connections that are not immediately obvious are just part of life. I thought about another friend, who I enjoy talking to because he is never judgemental. No, that didn't fit either. I needed someone who could connect both with my astonishment and be curious about the connections.

My longing was for someone who would connect to my emotional state. I was afraid the latter of the two friends would be too disembodied towards the importance of my little story. An overwhelming sadness filled me as I looked out of the car window. There was no snow, and the landscape I was driving past seemed as bare and vulnerable as my state of mind. I reflected on these different emotions; my longing for sharing this *sense* of having experienced something worth talking about and my feeling of dejection.

Just then, my husband called. He told me that I didn't have to buy the tabloid newspapers, but it would be nice if I picked up bread at the bakers. We talked about when I would return home. I didn't have to hurry he said, since he would watch football until 6. "*But do you want me home then?*", to my own surprise I could hear my voice sounded sulky, almost like a miserable teenager wanting her boyfriend to say he loved her and wanted her around him all the time. Carsten responded with a somewhat bewildered, "*of course*". I told him that I had had an emotional and special experience earlier that morning while he was still asleep. "*You have to tell me about it when you get home this evening*" he replied. "*I will*", I said and put down the phone, asking myself, do I want to tell him? I mean, I know it will sound a smallish little thing, nothing to go on about. I realized I wanted, not just to *tell*, but to *be* with someone, maybe I longed for a *shared feeling voyage*? What words could I possibly choose? I knew he wouldn't

understand if I said it had been amazing or astonishing or magical. Those words would not stretch out and touch him, like maybe Johnny Cash's *Desperado* could have touched me. Could the "right" choice of words have the same effect on Carsten? I had to ask myself, why is this so important? What is at stake here?

Then I was reminded of a metaphor three supervisees and I had collaborated on earlier that week. The four of us were watching a DVD recording of a session we had attended together. In that session Blossom had been talking with me about how difficult it was for her to seek comfort from other people. Even when she was mortally ill she had not wanted friends to visit her in hospital. I had sent Blossom a voice recording of our conversation, which she had listened to at home. She was now reflecting on how concerned she had been during our talk and when she listened to the recording, about how I would be able to continue talking with her about this very difficult issue. She had been terrified, and she had been afraid I would be scared too. When we watched the DVD together now, she said that she could not experience me as *not* being able to be there, on the contrary *"you held me there, I can see that now: because you asked me if it was ok that we stayed a little longer in that painful experience. And your eyes said that it was ok"*. Andreas, who also had been present during the session we had recorded, was listening while we talked, and replied after a while: *"I remember feeling as if the two of you were in a bubble "*. "Yes", I nodded, *"like in a cocoon? Or at least that is what I wanted it to be like for Blossom. I wanted her to feel like she was surrounded by soft, warm silk and cotton"*. "And I had all the butterflies in my stomach", Blossom continued. All four of us smiled, some started to wave their arms: *"and make the butterfly free to fly on"*.

Sitting in my car I felt a sudden comfort when I thought about the cocoon and the butterfly, and a longing. How would my husband respond? I could not expect him to understand the experience I had had. Still I felt this intense hope that he would at least try. That he would turn towards my experience and my telling, and try to connect. Make a soft cocoon around me, and who knows my experience might become a beautiful butterfly?

I do not expect understanding in terms of a blueprint of my own experience. What I wish for is for the other person to show *passion*, as a movement to connect her or his own experiences to me, or at other times, to search in themselves for *compassion*. But in order for me to write more about that I will have to wait for Nussbaum's book to be sent me, put on my desk together with 20 other books, and picked up for a Saturday morning reading....and open up for some more miraculous experiences....

It was dark when I sat in my car driving home, listening to Lynn Anderson performing *Desperado*, *I never Promised You a Rose Garden* and *Stand by Your Man*. To my disappointment, Lynn didn't manage to touch me. I reflected on the concepts of art and about therapy. What is art? What is therapy? To me the art of therapy is about possibilities for being able to touch and be touched in the most profound way. It doesn't need to feel pleasant. It might be disturbing, but *it must feel like an invitation to go on*. Is Johnny Cash's *Desperado* a piece of art? To me it is. And I made the wrong choice this morning at the post office⁴⁶.

But I chose the right *word*. It has been with me all day. I have conquered the word and made it mine. It is a serious word, and it has been a serious day. Quite *profound*.

This is what I am most engaged in these days, it occupies my thinking. It's about how people have experiences which are of such a character, that we might call them mysteries because they are difficult to understand. They might be with or without words, complex and painful, or astonishing and enchanting. They might be quite ordinary to others, but are extra-ordinary to the one with the experience. This is also about how important it is to be able to share them with someone. In a way they are not real before they are shared, since they get their validity in relation to other people. Most important, it is about *longing* for someone to validate your experience by making an effort to share, to find resonance in his or her own reservoirs of experience. It is in this unfolding movement between being touched and a wish for sharing, the doubting that anyone will understand or the lack of someone stretching towards you to understand, people might get lost.

Moments of despair, or minutes, or hours, or a life filled with desperation is worth looking into; people's *fear* of not being met, *not* being met or the *realization* that there is no one there to meet you. It might not only be in the words spoken, it could just as much be in the lack of a responsive look, in the eyes, in the face and in the bodily movements, followed by an intense hurt and movement towards silence.

"*What is at stake?*" I believe it is love and passion, or loneliness and indifference. To me it is an ethical stance, acknowledging our responsibility as fellow human beings, *recognizing the deep, but sometimes barely visible, cleft between life and death*.

⁴⁶ This is about voice, and the difference between words and voice, the difference between the two singers' relation to what is sung. Cash, was singing out of his life experience into other peoples' experiences. It was not merely the lyrics in themselves that touch, but the voice giving life to the words.



The Young Woman who Cut her Head off from her Body

“Whenever I read a poem that moves me, I know I’m not alone in the world. I feel a connection to the person who wrote it, knowing that he or she has gone through something similar to what I’ve experienced, or felt something like what I have felt. And their poem gives me hope and courage, because I know that they survived, that their life force was strong enough to turn experience into words and shape it into meaning and then bring it toward me to share.”

Gregory Orr, 2006

This wonderful quote, addressing the enigmatic power of poetry and its intense impact on people’s feeling of being disconnected or connected to other people, serves as an introduction to a tale from my meetings with **Andrea** and a group of supervisees. I will attend in this tale to how powerful it is to feel understood and the enlivening feeling of being bound together by shared feelings, what Daniel Stern (2004) has termed “shared feeling voyages”. This is not just about the feeling *here and now* of being connected to other people; the sharing of feelings also showed to have the potential of altering Andrea’s memory. The tale is also about how Andrea as a ‘wounded

story teller' (Frank, 1995) went from merely being her suffering to a storyteller who had something to offer.

Andrea had been talking about some concerns and I had asked her about how she had felt about her relationship with the people she was working with. "I can't feel", she responded. "I have to make a sharp division between my head and my body". As she was saying this she made a movement with her hands towards her throat, as if she was cutting her head away from the rest of her body. "You see", she continued, "I needed to do that when I started to work in the child protection service. I was only twenty two years old. I was so young. Too young to cope with all the feelings I met, in other people and in myself". Tears were running down *Andrea's* cheeks as she was talking. We went on and spoke some more about how she had experienced this, but I soon got the impression that *Andrea* thought we had talked enough. This was our first supervision session in this group and I remember thinking that she might not want too much attention just now. For the rest of the day we touched upon many different issues, but not explicitly on *Andrea's* feelings.

I always end the supervision sessions by inviting the group to reflect on what has happened and moved them/us during the day. When it was **Elisabeth's** turn she said something about recognising the feelings *Andrea* had expressed earlier. She too worked in child protection and found it extremely exhausting at times. Elisabeth turned to *Andrea*, wiped some tears from her eyes, and then there was a moment when Elisabeth's eyes decisively met *Andrea's*. It was a powerful moment, and I believe all six of us in the room shivered. A week later I received a note from *Andrea* in which she wrote⁴⁷

"A moment of Resonance":

I was prepared for, wished for and open to the idea that supervision would be of help in my personal and professional development. I knew less about in what direction it would take me. My experience in the child protection service has created some defense mechanisms to help me manage to survive my everyday life. I can now see that I in a greater sense had protected myself by shutting down my emotional life when going to work. This had been helpful for me, but maybe not so much for the people I met.

I was starting to sense the contours of this, but during supervision it became clearer. At the same time those emotions I had been shutting down emerged. To cry during the first supervision session was maybe not something one would have imagined. And I was unsure if it was ok for the group as a whole, wondering if I occupied too much space.

⁴⁷ I asked *Andrea* and Elisabeth if they would describe what happened between them. I received this piece of writing from *Andrea*. My translation from Norwegian.

I was quite surprised when Elisabeth, during the concluding reflections, said she had been touched by what I had told. To be honest, I'm not sure what she said, before or after, but we looked at each other – and I saw and felt understood – concerning my innermost and most difficult feelings that had been talked about in supervision – to be human/professional/ mechanical/to survive and the cost of that for a person who goes to work with cases in child protection.

It was not only my concern, in a way we were in it both of us, comforting each other through our eyes meeting in a glance. It was as if, in some seconds (or less), there was a string of understanding that tied us together, and I could rest in the assurance that someone else also had had that experience. It went right into those feelings I had had when I had sat there and cried.

It was later said, and it's correct; I am not alone in this. The assurance was inside my feelings, it was seen and understood, and it created a conviction that I could go on – that I could develop. I was also thinking, and felt comforted by thinking, that my pain could have meaning and further associations for another person. That was in a way meaningful."

This striking moment of resonance between Elisabeth and Andrea was like a silent, but vibrating moment encapsulating the poetics of a dialogical human encounter, where the "I" and the "you" become an "us", and a "we". Andrea experienced something like Gregory Orr (2006) describes in the introductory quotation referring to reading a poem that moves him, when he knows "I'm not alone in the world". This giving in to the immediate proximity of eyes meeting enabled Elisabeth and Andrea to become one in that moment, without giving up their sense of remaining themselves. Experiencing that someone has gone through something similar to what I've experienced, or felt something like what I have felt provides hope and courage, because I know that they survived. I believe the enigma of these poetic moments of resonance is in their decisive lack of ambiguity, coupled with a lack of control. There are no guards up, no goals, nothing to be achieved - just the presence of the other.

This incident was something Andrea returned to very often in the next couple of months. She expressed gratitude and even surprise that she had been so moved. "But it felt nice that my experience back then had a mission in a way", Andrea said as a response to the group's interest in exploring their own similar feelings connected to feelings about being under pressure.

The supervision group changed: three of the supervisees left, one of them was Elisabeth and two new women joined. They had not been part of the initial conversation but became quite curious when we time and again returned to Andrea's experience of resonance. Andrea said it would be useful for her to explore in greater detail what her experiences working in child protection were about.

The last day this group was together I asked Andrea whether we should use some time to talk about “this thing she had mentioned”; “But I don’t know exactly what it is I want to talk about, just around things that happened then”, Andrea replied. I reminded her and the group about what I continuously stress: “There is no need to be exact; it is the fumbling around, the groping for meaning that is interesting. What is of importance will emerge”. This is something I have been concerned about; creating a space in which supervisees feel comfortable with their fumbling after words, groping after meaning. The modernist’s spell, demanding coherence and consistency (de Peuter, 1998) is ever present in supervision contexts as well as in therapy. I often find that people want to present themselves as valid and valuable (Riikonen & Smith, 1997), as sensible and intelligible – and feel obliged to perform thinking and talking that is consistent and fluent, almost in the form of pre rehearsed texts (Dreyfus, 1979, Devlin, 1997). My intention is to invite clients and supervisees into another kind of space. A room where we can dwell, connect with bodily sensations and affects, let the felt sense (Gendlin, 2003) emerge and acknowledge the not yet said (Anderson, 1997) but distinctly felt (Johnson, 2007), or what feels too chaotic to be narrated into coherent stories (Frank, 1995). I have called attention to a relational space where fluidity and complexity is cherished over definitions and explanations, a space for orientation. This presupposes a pacing that welcomes what I sometimes call *relational contemplation*. As a therapist and supervisor I am heartened to let myself become part of this fluid and complex space, where I am willing to lose control. I often need to remind myself again and again of being curious, to search and be willing to redefine my position from expert to that of someone whose desire is to learn more from those I am involved with (Anderson, 1997). It is often demanding because I feel there are always supervisees, clients as well as my own competing discourses, craving to position the therapist and supervisors in an expert position.

Andrea welcomed this opportunity and **Laura**, one of the newcomers offered to talk with Andrea, while the rest of the group could form a reflecting team. Andrea started by telling about how hard it had been to work in child protection, and how little support she had felt. Laura asked if there were any events that stood out.

Andrea started to talk; her voice was soft as she brought us all back to a small town in northern Norway 10 years earlier⁴⁸:

Andrea: “It was this woman who had a seven year old son. I had been working with the family for quite a long time. She was struggling with drug abuse and was not able to take care of her child. One day she tried to commit suicide; just after her ex partner had beaten her badly. I had really worked hard, talked to the son about his mother and so

⁴⁸ This is not a transcription of the conversation between Andrea and Laura: I have condensed what Andrea said using her exact words, into one continuous story.

on. Maybe this is what makes it so hard (Andrea looked up in the ceiling, as if recollecting that day). We needed to take care of the son and place him in foster care. I remember the evening before I was going to court to get custody. It was the first time for me, 'My own case' you know, and I sat in the office preparing. Yeah, I remember bringing; eh...doing the forbidden thing, bringing the case files home so I could be all set. I sat on the floor by myself and I thought about this woman who had been working so hard to be able to keep her son with her, trying to protect herself and her son from her ex partner. But then one day I had to tell to her you know, 'this isn't working, you can't keep your son". Sitting in my apartment I could feel her grief and despair. That pain was so deep. It was dreadful. You know, this is when I can understand people who hurt themselves, because the pain is unbearable. I lay down and banged my head, banged it several times in to the wooden floor, screaming out, just to be able to manage the pain. When I had gone through that, I was then sort of ready and went to bed. The next day I felt I could meet the mother; I had taken in her pain and I felt prepared. But it was too much, I had gone too far, and I believe what I have been doing ever since is to try not to let this happen to me again. I had to step back. Maybe what I have done is take too many steps back."

Laura: "Tell me, was there no one there you could share this with?"

Andrea sits quiet for a moment, a small ironic smile curls over her lips and she continues: "You know, banging one's head on the floor is not something to be proud of. I know other people have had similar experiences, but we don't talk about them."

At this time I asked Andrea and Laura if we who had been listening might share some thoughts and feelings with them. Andrea nodded and sat up attentively, listening while we talked.

I remember having an intense wish for us to be able to connect to the feelings Andrea had shown while talking, and, hoping for this I invited the two others by saying:

"I thought it was incredibly powerful to listen to this, imagining Andrea all alone on that floor. She had brought home the files, wanting to do the best job she could and then wanting to take in this woman's pain. The pain was so strong, so she needed to bang her head on the hard wooden floor and scream. Scream out the pain. And she was young. (Andrea's eyes fill with tears, and she picks up a tissue to dry them). There was no one there to share with. It must have been so hard (I believe I hear my own voice quivering), to take in the mother's pain, when she herself was so young, and all alone. How about you?"

I turned towards the two others in the group.

Eva launches in: "I find it difficult to reflect on this (her voice is thick as if filled with more words than she feels able to utter) I can recognize what she's saying, it's, it's.." (Eva sits quietly unable to find words that could convey her emotional connectedness with what Andrea has told us).

Lena carries on: "I too can connect to this story, the feeling of loneliness I think I can hear from what Andrea is telling. It was way too much for one person to bear alone. I remember those feelings from the time I worked in child protection. How could she bear it by herself?"

As I continue I can see from the corner of my eye that Andrea has her eyes fixed on each one of us as we speak. She breathes deeply as I go on:

"And I remember how the first day, when we were sitting here, she showed us how she had to cut her body, her feelings away from her head. And then, I wonder if there were more experiences like this, how could she manage to go on? I think it's remarkable to hear her say in such a firm voice that she needed to step back. She needed to take care of herself, didn't she? But maybe, as she's saying herself, there were too many steps back?"

Eva: "Think about the steps that she needed to take to be able to go to court that next day, after having felt the woman's pain".

I continue, "Yes, and I'm also thinking about how this experience is something that can be a resource for Andrea; she has herself felt such intense pain that she might be able to understand people who harm themselves. Perhaps these experiences may be of value, something that might help Andrea in her work?"

There was a long pause, as if all of us present needed to breathe in and out several times before we felt ready to continue speaking. Laura turned to Andrea and asked her if there were things that made an impression on her when she listened to the team.

Andrea replied: "eh, it's the first time I have experienced anyone taking the time to be moved, and that, eh, that was nice...eh, that this story has a meaning, that it's not just a story read from a book, read without feelings, but a real story not just for me, but for others as well, for those who listened. That was, eh, good."

When Andrea talked I could hear in the tone of voice and in the pace of the words coming out that she was touched by listening and by the fact that her story had moved the listeners emotionally.

The conversation with Laura faded out after a while, and it seemed as if Andrea was happy with how it had developed. Some weeks later Andrea and Lena formed a new supervision group together with **Gitte, Maria and Kari**.

We were talking ourselves into being a group, creating space for each of the members to talk about whatever they wanted. Andrea was last and started off by saying:

“I have appreciated the previous days. And I believe I’ve talked a lot about vulnerability, my vulnerability towards being a social worker. I believe it’s been right and useful for me. I can see from my notes that I’ve been very preoccupied with me, me and me. But as a professional it’s useful (laughing) to be concerned about the other person also. Well, I guess, I’ve been too concerned about the other person, haven’t I, earlier in my work. So I forgot about myself, and have not been able to take care of myself. But these days I feel more emotionally sensitive and find myself being frequently moved by other people. So that’s ok then (laughs out loud, and the rest of the group joins in). I guess this is part of the process. You asked Lena about what had moved her, and I was thinking about what has been most important for me, that what I’ve experienced has been of use for others as well, that they’ve felt a resonance when I’ve been telling about my experiences. It’s made me feel that I’m not alone. So I’m kind of excited about how we’re going to go on. But still, you know, I need for people to see me.

I responded to Andrea by saying with a smile: “And I’ve been seeing you, watching the film from last session and it was quite moving. To be back in the room, listening to your story”. “I’m moved by you saying that”, Andrea responded, “It feels good as well (cries). I believe there’s just been once, that I’ve not cried here, it’s unbelievable (with a short laugh).”

Andrea turned to the “newcomers” and shared her experiences from when she was a young social worker and how it was to go to court to get custody. She also related what an impact the supervision some months earlier had had on her:

Andrea: “The experience with the team made a great impact on me. It actually changed things. When I think about myself on that floor, that night, banging my head hard, several times into the floor, I’ve always thought about myself as home alone. Always home alone. But after that day when I talked about it I have people around me there in

the room. In the picture in a way. That's been such a nice feeling, and the feeling is still there".

It was as if Gitte wanted to be sure she understood: "When you remember back?" Andrea affirmed Gitte's question:

Andrea: "Yes, then it's as if there are three or four other people there with me. And that's quite comforting. It wasn't just the words, you see, it was the way they were said, it was genuine. It's not just empty words that are spoken because it's the right thing to say, because then it wouldn't have mattered you know."

"Are you saying that it's a kind of resonance, that it's believable?" Maria asks, and Gitte continued: "They are in a way taking part in your world?"

Andrea: "I'm not alone any more. I have you (Andrea is gazing at Lena and me) with me there. You are actually with me in that room, that night. The memory is changed, I'm no longer lonely." Andrea nodded her head as if confirming her own story.

These meetings with Andrea and the group illustrate what Davis also experienced, the significance of being listened to with *compassion*. In both cases the listeners abstained from judging and managed to listen with tenderness, openness and emotional involvement (Lipari, 2009), "I receive the other into myself, and see and feel with the other" (Nodding, 1984:30). Lipari (2009) terms this "listening otherwise", not merely as part of an exchange of signs or receipt of information, but for the emergent self-transcendence that involves openness and vulnerability. "When we bear witness and listen otherwise, we *listen* from a space of unknowing, loss of control, loss of ideas and concepts (:57). This is an opening up towards the other, not shrinking what is expressed into all ready developed contextual forms the expression needs to fit into. It is a welcoming of the complex, the incoherent and emergent understanding. I also think of this as letting the uniqueness of the once occurrent dialogical event touch the listener and change the listener as well as the speaker – which is different from listening as a form of assessment. *Assessment listening* is the kind of listening we do when we listen 'to make up our mind', intellectually evaluate what we hear and then respond in a deliberate way to move the other in relation to our own 'thinking'. Or *judgment listening*, which would be what Lipari (ibid) criticizes Martha Nussbaum for, when Nussbaum (2001) sees compassion as something one can just feel if one value the others' experience *as worthy* of compassion.

It is about entering into the world of the others, allowing *the others* to express themselves in their own terms, and respect their unique and emerging being. *Listening with compassion*, is

about the ability to move with the other, let the other person's movement move you, without evaluating it in connection to the 'story' that is conveyed.

This manner of listening is much like what has been termed "charitable listening" (Donaldson, 1984) or "generous listening" (Lois Shawver in Hoffman, 2002). Yet, I do find a distinction that is worth accentuating, and that is the listener's willingness to be emotionally touched by the other's emotional relationship towards what she is expressing – to let her own soundboard of resonance be touched (Elkaim, 1997, Jensen, 2007) and respond in relation to that.

A remarkable outcome of this listening was that which Andrea told about the *effect* this listening had on her memory. When she now (after the supervision) remembers back to the night where she needed to bang her head on the wooden floor, she is no longer alone. The memory is changed, she is no longer all alone in the room, but has the listeners with her. The experience of the emotional connectedness she felt, what Stern terms a *shared feeling voyage* (2004), created a bond between Andrea and those who had listened *with compassion*, and that altered her memory. This has some resemblance with Peggy Penn's (Penn, 1998) work with traumatized rape victims; where the client is helped to introduce a chosen protective figure into her flashback, "which has the effect of interrupting the old scenario so that it cannot take place in the same way again" (:299). Penn describes how this approach relies on the client finding a new or freed voice in the treatment conversations in order to tell her story differently. The new, repopulated story has the effect of altering the client's memory and renewing her life direction and belief in herself. I found it interesting that in Andrea's case the compassionate listener became actual people repopulating Andrea's memory. It is interesting to see how a here-and-not emotional connection reverberates backwards into emotional memory, and creates 'new' emotions concerning earlier events.

It was not only Andrea's *memory* that was altered; she herself went from being a wounded social worker to becoming a storyteller. She was not only someone who needed care, she became, through her storytelling, someone who could care for others as well (Frank, 1995, Young, 2009) – her story became important for those who listened because they could recognize something of themselves in the telling. The 'shameful' stories about not being able to cope became shared and socially acceptable experiences thanks to Andrea.

I could sense how these events made a major impact on all who were present. To have had the opportunity to see, hear and feel how powerful it is to be listened to in this compassionate way created intimacy, boldness and humility in this group which encouraged us to move in relation to each other in an even more compassionate and *passionate* way. And I could sense that this ethical way of listening, pointed far beyond ideas about learning listening techniques. It was a

poetic experience, 'something' unique and novel which emerged in our relationship. According to Shotter (2011) such experiences can provide us with action-guiding anticipations as to how we might act next in relation to the particular situation we might face, in each unfolding moment.



Have you ever looked into the Eye of an Elephant?

Dusk dawn, Yala National Park, Sri Lanka

A lonely elephant	One small inch
on a narrow road	from where I sat
six people	he passed
in an open jeep	
	first in slow motion pace
Sit still	then a split second's gaze
a month ago	
a ranger was killed	our eyes became one
	next he was gone
Trampled to death	
I held my breath	I was left in love

Chapter 10

Apprenticeship

My engagements with groups of supervisees in supervision invited me into conjoint *Apprenticeships in dialogue as a way of being with people*. I became inspired to explore a range of different situations, and I embraced these opportunities to expand my experience and understanding of what takes place *inside* supervision encounters of which I am part. I have had the chance to have supervision conversations and conversations about these conversations (Andersen, 1992) which have been just as rich in developing understanding for me as for the supervisees with whom I have collaborated. In this process there was no pre-set goal to be reached; instead I became a *host, guest* and *participant* in the co-constructing of relationships and a “willing apprentice (O’Sullivan, 2010) on a journey with supervisees. Each opportunity for conversation was a commitment and a surrendering to the wisdom of the situation co-created, and each meeting invited me to be in service to my supervisees and to life itself, as Imelda McCarthy puts it (2010).

It was the unique and at the same time universal movements within these encounters that made me curious initially. These meetings inspired me to investigate new styles of group supervision, trusting that the dialogical process in itself would create learning, and that accidental relational rupture could be welcomed and dealt with as a learning situation.

The tale I have chosen to share under the heading of Apprenticeship⁴⁹ is from a relationship I have with a supervisee I named Blossom. I chose that pseudonym because it incorporates how she appears to me – as a person I saw as flourishing over the four years I have known her.

It was in a supervision group Blossom attended that I first introduced a format for supervision in which we could welcome just about anything into the supervision context. My intention was that this could make it possible for us to use the here and now movements we were *within*. In addition to our talks *about* other relationships (case descriptions, showing videos) and *how* to relate to them, we could experience and explore what happened between us in *the uniquely felt inter active moment* (in distinction to role play). It could be like dancing together, I proposed, we

⁴⁹ For further reading of my relational apprenticeships, see appendix 2, *The Island Women*.

would need to learn to invite and respond to each others' steps and movements. I was inspired by Shotter and Katz's (1999) use of the dance metaphor:

“For there is something very special about dancing with others: something occurs ‘in’ the to-and-fro, back and forth, relational responsive movements between two or more living beings, such that we have an active sense of something as moving ‘within’ us and of us as moving ‘within’ it.” (:152)

This move was about creating possibilities in supervision, to become curious and sensitive to these relational movements, and inquire into what kind of dance the participants had invited each other into. The less pre planned or predictable the context – the more we would need to improvise and learn from how we responded in our meetings. I felt encouraged by other experiences, for instance with Davis and the groups Andrea was part of, to let go of controlling the structure and instead use what emerged in each unique emerging situation.

I enjoyed letting go of predictable methods and techniques, allowing whatever happened to happen, and curiously opened myself to new adventures - inviting the supervisees to join in. Some supervisees felt apprehensive towards this uncertainty. Blossom embraced it although she was anxious as well - as was I. I believe these meetings created not only tolerance for uncertainty (Seikkula & Olson, 2003, Seikkula, Arnkil, 2003), but even some *appreciation of anxiety* because we experienced how rewarding it could be to live it through. I experienced how a reciprocal benevolent willingness created a relational confidence, as well as the other way around. The same way as dance, improvisation is dependent on relational trust, and relational trust makes dancing and improvisation possible.

Meeting Blossom created even more trust in the significance of ‘being with’ the other person(s), in a relational and devoted fashion. And I became more concerned with my ‘style’ of doing supervision, creating space for ‘being with’ and trusting that this space would prove to be significant.



Going down the Slippery Slopes of Uncertainty

I had known **Blossom** for three years. She was a student in one of my classes and part of three different groups I have supervised. During her work on her Master's degree she presented a reflection on her process to become a systemic therapist. Blossom read a piece she had written and her reading was performed in front of the class. I heard it as an extraordinary account of a journey in which she had experienced being transformed from *comprehending her professionalism as mastering relationships* towards being *a sensitive and responsive improviser in relationships*. Her story was also a metaphor about the relationship she had with her supervisor:

“Skiing (learning by doing together)

By Blossom

I'm the master of alpine slopes. I do telemark skiing and have for many years. I do the steep hills; playfully I speed down steep drops and the black slopes in the snow board parks.

I stand aggressively. Changing weight from one ski to another while sorting out which leg to maneuver feels like playing. My balance is good. It's a competition between me and the steel edge of my skis against the ground, and I usually win. I use the raw muscular power in my thighs to put pressure on the steel edge. I speed up and put more and more heaviness on the edge – and it makes a nice cut. If I had turned around I would have seen a nice curve in the snow behind me. I do one bend after another. I have experienced that if I become afraid, chicken out and stop putting pressure on my skis, I lose speed and skid. So I will not do that. I am determined to go all

the way down. And it needs to be fast and it needs to look rough. If there is ice in the slopes, I just need to lean over even more, be more self-confident and aggressive to master those parts of the slopes. The muscles in my thighs, my fitness and skiing technique make me capable of forcing several meters of ice, I fly past it as if it wasn't there.

Some years ago I met Yngve. He shared my interest in skiing and we were going on an outing together. He was a well known skier, and I knew he had been coaching the national team. I was kind of nervous and wondered if I would manage to keep up with him. Several days before we were to meet I started to prepare my skis, putting on wax and grinding the steel edges.

He picked me up early one Sunday morning. We drove off in his small red Golf. But we didn't head for the alpine sport center; he turned left in the roundabout. My heart went faster; we were going towards Haldetoppen, the highest peak in Alta. The one without a ski lift and I knew there were no slope preparation machines there. We parked the car, fastened the skis on our backpacks and started off on our walk towards the top.

He had brought coffee and some sandwiches. We sat sheltered behind the pole for the radio transmitter and ate before putting on our skis to go downhill. I was really looking forward to going down. "Earn your turn", Yngve shouted, turning his head towards me as he set off. "Earn your turn"? Yeah, I certainly felt I earned the curves and turns I was going to do on my way down. I mean, I had struggled up the steep mountain for several hours now...it would be satisfying to see traces⁵⁰ left behind me.

I am standing on the top, double-sticking my poles as I let the weight of my body; very calmly move from the sole of my foot towards the tip of my skis. The skis break through the powder snow (løssnø⁵¹). The first turn, and I find myself flying like a crow; I try to throw myself around to reestablish my balance just to find my skis carving their way in to the snow in the next curve. I am stuck and totally humiliated. Yngve has to dig me out of the snow.

Hold back your weight, he says, follow the snow. Then he shows me how to meet the snow. I try, and I fall, again and again. I leave traces all the way down the steep hill, big holes from my body. Yngve brings out a roll of sport tape from his pocket. He asks for my sunglasses. He covers both glasses with tape, just leaving two small holes in each glass. Then he gives me ear plugs insisting that I put them in my ears. He suggests that I might meet the snow differently now. "Feel it in your body, don't look and don't think, be sensitive and improvise" he says. I can feel my anger: This was supposed to be an enjoyable day skiing.

⁵⁰ Here she wrote: å sette *spor* etter seg. The Norwegian word "spor" has the double meaning of tracks (as in ski tracks) and traces (as in making a difference).

⁵¹ Løssnø means that the snow is like powder and there are no ski tracks.

I have to learn skiing all over again. The use of brute muscle power is of no use in the powdered snow, it's just damaging it. I can feel the snow under my skis, putting weight towards the back of the skis now. I am floating down the hill, yeah, I will improvise for sure. The improvisation fails, and I keep falling all day long. I can feel how insecure I am, can I trust what my body tells me? Through this insecurity my former knowledge of snow emerges. I am suddenly aware of approaching a snow crust, and my body reacts reflexively. I feel insecure; Shit, it will hurt if I fall now. My legs feel like jelly and I am no longer floating, I try to lean forwards. It doesn't do, I try to stabilize, try to do something different; should I be a coward and do a parallel curve as in slalom? Yngve slides up beside me. 'What happened?' he asks. It was the snow crust, it made me anxious, I replied. He laughs and tells me to loosen up, follow the snow...let it show itself, don't be scared. We carry on down the hill. I try following, - don't be scared - I instruct myself, but it's difficult and the insecurity makes me do the parallel curving again and again. I can see how Yngve is floating down before me, but it's hard to let myself go, like he does - to be so entranced. I try to keep my body light and free; a dynamic body is what Yngve calls it. It will feel so much better if you manage to let the snow and the terrains guide you, he says. You'll just feel exhausted if you plough your way, the snow will be spoiled and you'll miss out on the good feeling.

I went on many trips with Yngve that winter, improvising in powdered snow. My dynamic body would go off at full speed down the hill. The idyll would be violated by a stone, or the consistency of the snow would change. Sensing my body's experiences, never letting it go on auto pilot...the snow is never the same. The same steep hill is unique every time, I can never know what I will meet. I need to trust my body's abilities. I learn to improvise, be more creative...me who used to calculate mathematically the force I needed to put down on the skis to get the optimal speed! I can't explain how it feels to go down an untouched snowy hillside, there are no words for it. We have tried, me and my ski companion...this exceeds sex.

Skiing in powdered snow is something else...I used to seek understanding and to control existence, as for now, I'm in the glide, I don't know where I am, who I will become or where I will end up....

But I am still anxious, even if I have been fortunate enough to have felt the ecstasy of floating. I do tend to fall. And I'm anxious about going off a cliff..."

Blossom's voice halted for a moment before she asked herself:

"...and what happens if there is an avalanche...What will happen then?"

Even before she stepped down and leaned over, whispering into my ear: "You know, *you* are Yngve", I knew it. Sitting some meters away from her, I had felt how the last question almost knocked me out. Her choice of words generated a resonance of anxiety waves. For a moment, I lost my balance. I could feel the heartbeat in my ears accompanied by questions; "have I expected too much from her?, have I not done my share to keep her feeling safe *enough?*". There

was a mixture of moving and prevailing sensations in my body creating a powerful sense of doubt coupled with amazement. Wow, what a commitment; I had certainly felt it, but having it spelled out like this was truly impressive. The feeling that conquered my emotional landscape was that of deep admiration and a sense of warm satisfaction.

Going back four years, I recall my first meeting with Blossom. She was a student who right away evoked my interest. Her mindful, almost hesitant approach appealed to me. I believe I have perceived her like that since she first introduced herself as one of thirty-five students in my class. I remember two lively brown eyes, and a clear voice. In her I experienced a fascinating fusion of eagerness and modesty, of strong will and prudence.

She was the one who knocked on my office door and asked if I would be her group's supervisor. I said yes. The group was a gathering of supervisees who worked in different contexts. I introduced a format for supervision, where we could elaborate different ways of working together, and I said that I hoped we could welcome anything into the context, and then make an attempt to make use of it. It could be like dancing together, without knowing the steps, I proposed. We could learn to dance, by throwing ourselves into the dance, and then later on talk about what we had been doing: *"Each one of us can transparently reflect on how we invite and respond to each other in this dance"*, I said.

This was the first time I had used the dance metaphor in this way, as a way of reflecting on supervision processes. I believe I had felt that there had been lack of interest or was it a hesitation, during my own training to become a systemic therapist, *"Hey you people, what's happening here now, between us?"*, was almost never expressed. And it puzzled me. How come my teachers, tutors or supervisors didn't welcome more often the potential in exploring the here and now moment? I had heard and read about co creation, relational reflexivity and transparency and about how to use it in therapy, but it was rarely present in our *'live'* processes in class or supervision. So many chances had been neglected. I wondered if it might have to do with being cautious in challenging situations where the teacher, tutor or supervisor would be emotionally involved. Could there be a bit of an anxiety about not knowing what could happen; a fear of losing control, being stripped or exposed, that obstructed all those living opportunities we could have used to explore all the intricate relationships we take part in and develop? All these questions and doubts were part of my own reluctance to pursue situations where I could feel out of control and out of my zone of comfort (Wilson, 2007, Øfsti, 2010).

Blossom grasped the dance metaphor and has been holding on to it ever since. She was the one to remind the group to talk about the dance we had engaged in. And she was the one who asked me to dance with the group, as if she was saying: 'take us in your arms and move with us, let us

feel how you would move your body'. I felt she intuitively recognized what therapy/supervision dialogues can be about, as well as showed a commitment to becoming a dedicated relational therapist. I sometimes sensed a hesitant vulnerability that made me cautious towards her, as if there was an invisible hindrance that prohibited her, or was it me (?) from keeping up taking on challenges. At the same time I could sense that she appreciated every time I or other group members challenged any affection for discursive consensus. I knew her commitment invited me (and I think the whole group) into a kind of relational confidence, an atmosphere of trust: we are in this together – exploring what supervision or any other ideas can be about. I could see it when the group disagreed, and even had harsh arguments; Blossom would step back for a moment and then throw herself into the situation. Later on she could reflect on how uneasy she had felt – but it was in those situations she also could reflexively see how her boldness had invited the other group members into a relationship where there was space for disagreement, boldness and humility.

After some time Blossom got a practice as an occupational therapist in a family home⁵², and brought with her stories from work. At some point, I think I identified myself with her urge for doing an ethical job in an environment that could feel challenged by systemic thinking. Her eagerness to address her own struggles in a responsive manner invited me further into a relationship I came to cherish deeply.

The year after, Blossom decided to continue and take another two years to receive a Master's degree. I was no longer her teacher, but she became part of one of my PPD groups. One of the talks we had in this context was about fear, and it became quite significant for both of us. On the basis of what she wrote in her essay (above) I would think of her talk as being performed under the influence of fear of an Avalanche. But sitting there talking, I imagined she and myself out on an icy surface – Blossom struggling like Bambi to keep herself upright. I was also aware however of how imperative it was for me to stay present and not seek refuge on shore – which would have been mostly to take care of and monitor my own anxiety.

Blossom was addressing some issues that were very difficult for her to voice. It was not just the concern in focus that was difficult to voice, but just as much her apprehension about talking about it with me. She was anxious I would not be able to hear what she had to say, and that made her wary. It was about being in hospital and mortally ill. Blossom told how she was hesitant to seek help and support when she was treated for cancer, and how much energy she had to pull out to be able to cope. She had enough with her own vulnerability and anxiety and could not bear to deal with her family's anxiety.

52 Family home in the context of child protection.

It was a topic that made me vigilant, I could feel it in my body; the fear of dying, but maybe even more powerful the fear of other people's fear of her/me dying. I could in Blossom's telling recognize the urge for holding back, creating a distance so I would not have to care for other people while struggling to take care of myself. I am deliberately swapping the nouns here, because I don't know who's fear I was feeling – Blossom's or my own. Death is my fear of avalanche. I will not assert that I was having inner dialogues as our talk evolved. There were no words, just bodily vibrations or even more explicit – sensations. I believe I acted upon what Schön (1987) terms *knowing-in-action* (:49). My *knowing* from within this inter-active moment was that this could be a crucial experience for Blossom, to be able to voice her concerns with someone who could stay with her through the talking. I could feel how Blossom moved towards the shore, as I sensed the drive towards safe solid ground, but I also knew how important it was for Blossom to experience how it could be possible to share fear and anxiety without falling through thin ice. There was no need for doing or saying things that could 'take the agony away'. By staying with her, holding her back from seeking refuge on shore, I believe we created a deep feeling of mutual trust. Later we talked about how this had been a significant experience for Blossom – and how she herself had been feeling when she was inside a relationship that could encompass the relating of emotions without necessarily deliberately doing things with these emotions.

Therapists are invariably not only confronted with the unforeseen, the uncontrollable and the unpredictable (Rober, 2004) but also with themes and situations where they themselves feel vulnerable. These are maybe the most demanding but also equally propitious situations where we can sense how imperative it is if we manage to stay present. It is not as if the therapist or supervisor never feels anxious, wary or uneasy, but it is more about how we relate to these feelings of unsettledness.

As winter turned to spring, a year after Blossom had written the essay "*Skiing (learning by doing together)*" she joined one of my Dialogical Conversation Groups. She was very distressed and looking for support. When challenging other people's ways of seeing things, it seemed as if she never hit hard. But she did tell a story that moved me. Blossom was working in a section for families who need support in some way or another. A young mother and her one year old twin boys had just moved in. It had been decided that the twins were going to foster care in some weeks, since the mother was going to prison for a year⁵³. The mother was devastated, just thinking about being separated from her babies for so long made her fall to pieces. Blossom told how she felt some of her colleagues showed a lack of empathy and even some contempt, as if they thought: "It serves her right, she shouldn't have done what she did, she should have thought of her children before committing that crime". We had a short conversation about how this also

53 For the sake of anonymity this is not an accurate case description, but accurate in the sense of seriousness of the dilemma Blossom felt she had to relate to.

might be a sign of the colleagues feeling helpless. How is it possible to take in and relate to such incredible grief as this mother was feeling? Most mothers can probably feel the chill of helplessness down their spines, just from imagining being parted from their young children unwillingly, I proposed. I could certainly acknowledge how tough it could be to listen and be with someone experiencing this. What is one to do under such circumstances? “But one needs to support her, to listen to her”, Blossom said quietly, “even if there is nothing we can do to change her circumstances.” I nodded, feeling quite thrilled, hearing a new firmness in her soft voice.

When I saw Blossom again, she told me how she had spent a whole day, a long night and another day with the devastated woman. The children had been taken away and Blossom had stayed with the mother to talk, but mainly listen. “I couldn’t leave her”, she said. “Some people might think that it was unprofessional, but I just didn’t want to leave her alone with her pain. I needed to be there. And she told me how that had seen her through the night”.

I could feel my chest heave; in one moment the four years I had known Blossom came together. It was as if the different notes of joy, anxiety, hope, eagerness, sensitivity, cautiousness, alertness and love were played out in one orchestral momentum. Like a soft, but insistent, fulfilled BANGALANG.

“You were out there on the ice then”, I said. “You really managed to be out there on the ice with her,” I repeated. “You know Anne Hedvig, not only did I manage, but I was out there on the ice, and I stayed there the whole night through”, Blossom responded.

I had known in some way that she eventually would feel free *gliding down the slippery slopes of uncertainty*. That she would experience her ability to be there, with no plans, be out there in the powder snow and just trusting her body’s responsivity letting the terrain guide her.

To live
without taking all those
detours
To go on
where the path
ends

Gunnar Nodland

Interlude 3 – Kåre and the Mouth Harp

She was standing alone in the hallway on the first floor in a house on an island. It must have been the third day after Christmas Eve and she and her parents had been invited to a traditional get together at some friends' house. She was around ten years old. It was a nice hallway; she could feel the soft carpets under her bare feet and there were



paintings all over, competing with the bookshelves for wall space. Somehow she found herself standing with a mouth harp in her mouth trying to create some sound. The small instrument intrigued her and she was fascinated by her own ability to play some musical notes.

They referred to her as an unmusical child. She couldn't sing. Her voice sounded *flat*, she was told. As an adult she couldn't remember when that was articulated for the first time, or who had said it, but she lived with it as a fact from early childhood. It was hard to understand what was flat, because she enjoyed singing and thought her voice sounded just fine. It was not before she one day put two fingers into her ears that she too could hear her own voice sounding strange.

But she loved music. When listening to the old 78 EPs her father kept in the living room cupboard, hearing Harry Belafonte sing '*Island in the Sun*', she could feel her body go with the rhythm. She could actually feel how Belafonte's voice managed to move the waves from the shores of the Caribbean Island across the great Atlantic Sea and fill her whole body with an extraordinary poignant blend of sadness and optimism, heaviness and lightness, longing and belonging. Even better, when she listened to Louis Armstrong perform '*All that Meat and no Potatoes*', she joined in. Louis engaged her in an emotional duet and she could feel a deep and passionate sway of connection. But her favorite song was '*Hello Dolly*', and throughout her childhood it was performed with joy, enthusiasm and confidence in front of the bathroom mirror. Her feet, her knees, hips,

arms, and head moved with the music, so did her breath, mouth, cheeks, eyes and eyebrows. Her chest could almost burst with happiness as did her voice when she tried to copy her hero's deep harsh voice. But there were also these other feelings blending in, a sense of hurt, of being alone; the joyous performance was always done in solitude, her voice was not invited into real life living duets.

Several years later, when she was a grown woman she was invited to a small seminar with a group of people she hardly knew. The topics were interesting and she was quite pleased to be part of the discussions. Her ideas were cherished and she felt relaxed and happy. After dinner a big fire was lit outside, and the seminar participants gathered around, sitting on logs close to the warmth of the fire and each other. Someone picked up a guitar and started to play. Song leaflets were passed around, and the group enthusiastically began choosing songs to sing. She could feel a sense of companionship emerge, a new quality in the group's joint movements. It was not just the voices that managed to blend into a choir; she could also feel how the individuals ceased to exist as separate entities and were transformed into a moving cheerful whole. But her voice was silent, she didn't manage to join in as she was anxious that someone would show discomfort when they heard her unmelodic voice – and a bodily reminiscence of not blending in overwhelmed her. She could identify a familiar falling feeling, in her legs and in her stomach, chest and shoulders. Even a surprising but distinct sense of shame came to the surface of her consciousness. It was intolerable and she went to bed early. After this she found herself steering clear of contexts that could create a similar kind of *musical disconnectedness*.

This feeling of not taking part inside an evolving relationship, not managing to join a group, appeared now and then in different contexts where music and singing was part of the social interaction. Sometimes she wondered if other more 'musical' people understood her sense of being left outside, if they could imagine her loneliness when *voice* was discussed. Every time she chose to mime songs in social gatherings, aiming to take part in the joint melodic adventure, she could apprehend her movements as untrue, almost forged. But she could also feel how her body yearned for a beautiful voice that other people could connect with and cherish. Or for her to be able to play an instrument that could musically unite her with people. It was certainly not the admiration she wanted, but the sense of belonging inside the shared movements created when people sing or play music together.

This life history of feeling musically disconnected had one exception as she had had a precious one time experience.

Standing in the hallway, ten years old, trying out the mouth harp and feeling a deep satisfaction, she was accompanied by Kåre, the owner of both the instrument and the house on the island. She was fond of his calmness; he was a friendly but rather shy man. From the second floor she could hear laughter, loud voices and people moving around having a good time. But it was there in the hallway, on the first floor, Kåre gave her what she later thought of as her childhood's most treasured gift, when to her surprise he said: 'You know, you are quite musical'. The contour of those words, and the soft but sincere intonation with which they were pronounced left traces in her inner landscape for the years to come, nameless but distinct contours. She could later recognize them as a blend of pride, hope and belonging. Someone had heard her tonal movements and recognized them as musical.

But it was not before she had her newborn daughter in her arms and found herself humming

"Når trollmor har lagt sine elleve små troll
og bundet dem fast i halen.
Så synger hun sakte
for elleve små troll
de vakreste ord hun kjenner
ay-ay – ay – ay – ay – buff"

she was able to share her melodious singing voice with someone else. And she could feel how her child moved in connection to the rhythm in her voice and she to the baby's response. Together they were creating the beautiful music of belonging.

Chapter 11

Present within Movements

In the two final tales from my supervision practice in this portfolio, *The Aspasiens, relational philosophizing* and *In the Shades of the Mango Tree, Space for Relational Compassion* I address the significance of being *present within movements*. I am describing how the supervisor composes (Shotter, 2011) herself in relation to the supervision group; taking in each 'situation' as novel, and with potential for something new to be created. This requires that the supervisor is attentive to the vague, not-yet-cognitively formulated *feelings*, of sensed movements expressed in the room. This attentive position involves feeling one's way into the 'world of the other' and listening to the uniqueness in what is expressed. This way of being *with* people is hard to describe and has been experienced as even harder to acknowledge at times where there is a demand for 'proof' of what works⁵⁴. I hope my descriptions can offer some clarity in relation to this in showing how groups of people *moved* in relation to *each other* and how that created some profound transformations for the groups' relationships with each other and for the participants' engagement in other domains of their lives in both private and professional contexts.

I have started off some supervision relationships by inviting the group participants into a dialogue about what supervision can be and their expectations for it, then letting an emergent dialogical process guide our going on. This dialogue has mainly been fashioned by inviting each supervisee to sense, feel, talk and reflect in a conversation with me in the group. We called this process *rounds*, and my intention has been to offer each supervisee ample space to tentatively explore what emerged by feeling their way in both their inner and outer relational evolving landscape. I called it *perpetual groping for meaning*; a way of describing how I thought meaning would emerge on the threshold between voices (including embodied feelings) *in* and *in between* people in dialogue. This has been an acknowledging of heteroglossia (Bakhtin, 1981), recognizing how there is potential for an indefinitely 'amount' of meaning immanent in all experiences/situations. I initiated talking like this, trusting that my way of striving to be *tentative in my talking* (Anderson, 1997), *compassionate in my listening* (Lipari, 2009) and allowing for *felt sense* (Gendlin, 2003) to emerge, would welcome a certain way of being together. I hoped we could engender a space between us that would feel safe enough to explore ambiguity, uncertainty,

⁵⁴ I am here referring to the increasing demand for evidence based practices; see for instance Jensen (2006), Rønnestad (2008) and Skauli (2009).

ambivalence, ruptures, discourses, hopes and dreams. This groping for meaning requires listeners who are able to follow the one who talks, through her orientation and exploration of a landscape that is not fixed. It can be demanding, since complexity and lack of coherence “represents the triumph of all that modernity seeks to surpass” (Frank, 1995:97).

At some point the notion of musicality (Small, 1998; Sacks, 2007; Malloch & Trevarthen, 2009) came to mind (or was it through my bodily felt sense?), and I became more aware of how this was not only about how I myself tried to be in tune with the one I was speaking with, but just as much about occasioning musicality between all of us present. Not only did I need to throw myself into the movements within a dance, as I described I had with Blossom and her groups, but I also had to sing along *as well as* conduct a multi vocal choir. I started to acknowledge that I and everybody else are musical people (Small, 1998; Bjørkvold, 2005), we just need to find our voices in tune with the other voices. This was about creating a space of *relational compassion*, inviting resonance and acknowledging that there is no dissonance in itself. Dissonance is always created in context, in relation to something. I became concerned with how I showed emotional interest and willingness to respond benevolent to the keynotes of all the supervisees. Through this we were more able to create what I think of as musicality between us.

Bjørkvold (2005) asserts that sound, movement and rhythm are the musical characteristics of the human being. It is through these elements that people are coupled to each other. I believe this is in correspondence with Small (1998) and Malloch and Trevarthen (2009) who perceive dialogical musicality as a human capacity, which is threatened by discourses about individuality and the demand of intellectual intelligibility. It is as if we lose our sense and joy of sensitively moving together without definite goals as we grow into this Western world of Modernism: a world I experience value stability and predictability over transgression and flexibility; the individual over the relational.

I was encouraged to be even more sensible to the ever emerging musicality between all of us present, and welcoming improvisation and attending to the key notes of all present. Preben Friis and Henry Larsen (2006) are referring to improvisation as accepting the offer made by the other, not just as listening but about allowing yourself to react differently, and allowing yourself to be changed. Roar Bjørkvold (2005) describes how dialogues can be compared with listening to music in which all voices play together to create harmony, creating a sense of being *inside* a shared experience. From this perspective any dialogical practice can be about co-exploring and creating dynamics by improvising themes in dialogue based on the keynote of the other. Daniel Stern (in Adolfsen, 2005) compares dialogue with “jam-sessions”. He points out that to play jazz one must learn to get differences to function together, even though they are absolute contrasts. This

requires that one modulates reciprocally with other musicians and the dynamic becomes a unique shared construction, in the same way as in dialogue.

The group I have called **The Aspasians** enjoyed this opportunity to be together without goals, but improvise and respond sensitively to each other key notes. The tale I present is about how experiences of these *rounds* created some significant processes for this group as a whole, for each supervisee and especially for *Rebekka*. I experienced that we created a kind of melodious and liberating *philosophical space*, thus the naming of *The Aspasians*, paying tribute to the Greek philosopher Aspasia (Billig, 1996, Henry, 1995). I chose the name, not only to honour this female philosopher, but also to pay tribute to women in general – to feminist discourse and to women’s voices. *Aspasia of Miletus* who lived in the fifth century of Athens was Pericles’ political advisor (Billig, 1996) and a woman with a voice, a “*liberated woman*”. The Aspasians have described how our rounds felt liberating, and that our being together in this atmosphere of dialogue created a sense of *freedom*. Rebekka describes it as not having to ‘be so clever’, not having to ‘deliver’ and how that allowed her to be ‘present’ and not so ‘pre occupied’ with her ‘own concerns’.

I find that these concerns Rebekka is addressing are connected to discourses about ‘doing things to people’ and ‘creating certain changes’, and I have often met professionals and supervisees who feel uncertain about whether what they do is good enough, especially if they are just ‘present’ and move in relation to the emerging circumstances they are engaging in. Feelings of shame, embarrassment and censorship might occur when professionals don’t make plans but are with people and relate in spontaneous, responsive and expressive ways. I believe this dialogical space we managed to craft, created as Rebekka described, not just an opportunity for her to be understood herself, but also as the generation of how she herself wants to be with people she collaborates with: “Now I am concerned with that when I talk with clients and colleagues because I have felt it myself, in my own body”. The other members of the group reported similar experiences, and called attention to the fact that what we were engaging in was a joint endeavour, where all the questions and reflections created feelings of freedom and belonging.

In the Shades of the Mango Tree is told from within my relationship with a supervision group in which I could sense apprehension and desperation. I have tried to lay out in some detail how I composed myself in relation to a group of women who had, in a previous supervision relationship, experienced ‘something’ that emerged as significant during our first meeting. This story is about how I, through acknowledging a bodily sense of *something*, acted in the moment and invited this *something* to be addressed without having more than a sense of it being important. This is also a story about how I invited the participants into an exploration of an event,

not by entangling the 'happening' but by bringing out into the open their relation towards what had happened, their feelings. I approached it in Wittgenstein's words not as a problem of the intellect but as a relational difficulty (Shotter, 2010), something they needed to explore through orientation.

I have this image of a computer filing system with folders and headlines that pops up in relation to what it is to be feeling, thinking and talking. I believe we are so adopted into the Cartesian ideas about rational reason and logic, that we treat human being as if we are only legitimated if we follow a certain way of expressing ourselves. And that our problems or ways of being are best addressed if we get our filing systems right – that is move out of the right file, with the right heading and with clear distinct accomplished meaning. Gergen (2006) shows how the Cartesian world view claim that the mind, when working properly, is a rational system working according to logical laws or principles. Meaning and understanding are accomplished inside the heads of individuals by mental acts, and through intention we put our meanings into words; finally through interpretation, we come to understand the content of other people's words.

I have earlier in this thesis proposed that humans are best understood as relational, fluid and therefore complex beings, propitiously orienting themselves to ever emerging circumstances which reflexively create and recreate them in a complex flux. These two next tales tell of how this way of understanding people has come to influence my practice.



The Aspasians

Relational Philosophizing

In one of the supervision groups I have been part of the last couple of years, as a supervisor, the experiences of *rounds* have in particular created some significant processes for the group as a whole, for each supervisee as an individual, and for one supervisee, *Rebekka*, in particular.

The following tale is an example of:

- How these *unplanned talking rounds* can develop, and what they might invite people who are present to talk about.
- How supervision created a space in which a group of supervisees could explore each other's emotional vibrations; resonate with them without being tempted to capture them in a finalized and inevitably reduced conception.
- How this space opened up quite unexpected aspects of Rebekka's not yet publicly voiced experience (a story about not doing anything) and served as an incitement for her to question different aspects of her relation to her family and to her professional life.

It was an early November morning. Six supervisees and I gathered around a large coffee table while it was still dark outside. This was our fifth supervision session together and the talk circled around different experiences we had had together. Some of the women had travelled from far north and were in Oslo just for the purpose of supervision, two whole day sessions. I asked if there was anyone who wanted to start off, while my eyes swept around, as if taking in each of the women present. This taking in reminded me of my brother's friend Ibrahima from Guinea in West Africa who described the difference between a handshake as a way of presenting yourself and the handshake he is used to in his culture; where each person holds each other's hands for a long time, to take in the other person's 'situation' 'how things are for him'. I wanted to create space for the 'situation' and 'how things are'. So, the invitation to talk was just that; to create a situation for us to talk. I had no expectation what so ever concerning what we should talk about. However, my embodied anticipation was that the group would cherish this opportunity to move along slowly and let whatever *came to mind* be expressed. Or I might rather say, what would emerge from within and in between our moving bodies.

I enjoyed being with these women, partly because I sensed a kind of gradual *looseness* in our relationship. When I first met **Bella, Louise, Francesca, Marian, Alma** and **Rebekka** half a year earlier, I experienced them as a rather uneven collection of supervisees, coming across with different experiences, expectations and ways of being. I remember thinking that some of them might feel that I was moving along too slowly, that my invitations were awkward and even pointless. Nothing was said but I could sense a slight apprehension in the air. It didn't make me feel too uncomfortable since I also experienced how it was accompanied by a breeze of benevolence. We had just arranged for two sessions before the summer holiday, and I was almost surprised when they approached me and asked for more sessions.

After our meeting in August I was struck by how an intense commitment in the group, a willingness to be together, to listen to and learn from each other, had emerged. The talking rounds in the beginning stretched in length and were wonderfully rich with back and forth reflections on all kinds of matters. There were heartbreaking examples from the psychiatric ward, experiences of pilgrimage, personal love stories, concerns about children and partners and frustrations towards colleagues who showed more interested in diagnosis than in their clients' life stories. It was an exciting place for me to be, and I could recognize myself proceed with less and less censorship; I improvised and felt more expressive, more responsive and relaxed as time went on. It was an amazing mix of feelings, bodily sensations and heartfelt appreciation of being so fortunate in spending time with a group of extraordinarily dedicated women. These wonderful fusions of feelings convinced me that I had something to offer; we could share apprehension, concerns, laughs, flaws and undigested ideas. At the same time, I found it easy to hold back, and

regulate my offering of ideas. In short, I thought a spontaneous, responsive and vibrating livingness between us guided our going on.

Bella has a fascinating way of opening up conversations. Her benevolent subtlety often attracts attention in our group. She works with children who have hearing problems, and that might have encouraged her ability to express herself through captivating facial and corporal gestures, often accompanied with a humorous glint in her eyes and an inviting laughter. Now she quite spontaneously and enthusiastically started to reflect over these rounds, about how our *rounds* generated so many thoughts and that she felt so energized. *Alma* recognized it from how people talked about Tom Andersen.

Alma:

“... what I am thinking is that we have time to think, talk, yeah, just to *be* and that is so different from our usual stressful and busy lives. We have time to land. And we can't hide ourselves by talking in terms of diagnoses. We talk about ourselves.”

Bella:

“And when you say this, I come to think of someone I work with who told me, when I was starting this study, that I should be careful, and remember to take care of myself, (*frowning, while putting on a very serious face*) ‘Remember, you have had a very sick child’ (*laughing*). That was what she said. ‘But isn't that ok?’ I responded. And then I talked about the importance of having lived a life and to be responsive to other people. Wasn't that what you said something about Anne Hedvig? I drew a nice picture of it: ‘to fill your heart’, and that was such a different expression from containing. Which is associated with a place we throw rubbish. Throw it all away in a bin, sort of. I really enjoyed that metaphor – and I have used that metaphor in my work. So that is what happens when we sit and talk, take these rounds, they seem so important to me.”

Louise:

“And then I start to think about how it is for me. I come here with no agenda, and, and feel so open, more open than I am when I meet my colleagues at work. We can have rounds there as well, but then I have all these preconceptions. I feel I shut more down. But here it is so open, and it just floats on. An oasis - it is like a gift. And I recognize what was said, it is not an obvious thing, to be together in this way. It is different from being with colleagues, and friends, we are more free of charge.”

There is an agreeing humming and nodding around the table

I didn't comment or ask anything more about what they were saying although I had both questions and connections I could have made. But I thought they were feeding into each other's talk and I was aware of how my comments could serve as interruptions and diversion; and *Rebekka's* response to this talk proved me right:

"I want to tell, eh, ten years ago I was working in community care, I think I was pregnant at the time. And I was eh, attending, or working in a home, with a family where the woman, the mother, she was in her mid forties, had cancer. She had two children in their teens, and a husband. Yeah. And I remember feeling very uncertain about that assignment. I was not sure what was expected from me. But I was there, for almost a week maybe. I was there, the only thing was, I was only there together with the family, you know, in that bedroom, and in that living room. And then she died. Eh, and then they put in a notice in the local newspaper, eh – thanking me for the help they had received, with my name in it. (*Rebekka weeps*) And I have been thinking, what did I do then, at that time, I was just there. It was kind of a shameful feeling; I mean I was just there. I mean I wasn't doing anything, I was just there. It's just now, that I can comprehend what it is I did. Eh, I've never talked about it (*her voice breaks*). There has been this feeling of shame that my name was there in the newspaper. It was quite simply embarrassing, because I hadn't done anything, but now I do understand. (*Rebekka pauses and weeps*) Just being there, yeah just being there was important."

Affirming nodding and humming from all the rest of us. Then there is a long silence.

I kept a close look at Rebekka during the silence, wondering if there was more to come. Rebekka's use of the word 'embarrassing' struck me. She had been ashamed, and now something was happening, just in front of us the dishonorable story was transforming into something else. I was in some way aware of my own breathing, hoping it would be conceived as calming; an appreciation of the slow pace in between us, and hoping the silence would invite Rebekka to speak more if she had more to say. And she did:

"I knew this has been important to me, touched me, been with me."

I looked at her; not saying anything, there was just an affirming "hm", and a nod. I could see tears filling eyes around our table as I became aware of the warm water in my own eyes. I was touched by the group's ability to hold back any verbal comment, as if we all trusted the significance of our very presences. The silent gap was loaded with a sense of resonance, and after some time just one person felt the urge to say three words emerging from the most sincere place in what I experienced as a shared emotional landscape:

“That was beautiful.”

There was a mutual agreement, uttered through some more humming. Then there was another long silence. I looked at Rebekka, her breathing and bodily movement signaled a kind of relief, which I understood as expressing that she didn’t want to say more. I wished to emphasize and honor her contribution, and I said:

“Sometimes, well I’m thinking, about the importance of talking about what it is we do, when we seemingly ‘do nothing’. What is it we do then? And what is the question about? Is it about being clever, doing things? And what are the *doings* we think we need to do, so that we can say that we *did* something? That we ought to do something purposely to create something special? There are lots of *ought to*. And I wonder if they are *not* about *being there*, the way we’re there with our *presence*. You must have been there very *present Rebekka*.”

Rebekka:

“I remember they asked me ‘what’s happening now?’, and I didn’t have any answers. So, what I was thinking, yeah, was that I had done a lousy job. (*Heavy inhalation*) And then that gratitude comes along. (*Long exhalation*) It felt as it was so undeserved. (*Inhalation*) But I do understand more now (*a long exhalation*).”

We went on with the supervision, that day and the next, and for seven more days the following year. I believe all of us could see and hear that things were happening with Rebekka. She referred to her relationship with her family of origin as something she wanted to relate to differently and she was noticeably very enthusiastic when she talked about how her relationships at work, with clients and colleagues were moving in new directions.

My hunch was that the unprepared round had created an opportunity in which Rebekka had surprised herself as she spontaneously gave voice to some previously unexpressed aspects of her feelings. When this was noticed and appreciated by the rest of the group, it might have created a sense of comfort and energy. But perhaps even more importantly, by *wording* her expression, Rebekka might also have come to value these previously unvoiced and thus unknown aspects of herself as important, as something she needed to attend to further.



Just before Christmas a year later I asked Rebekka if I could meet her and talk about '*what's been happening with you this last year, after the supervision where you talked about your experience with the dying mother*'. She responded to my request with enthusiasm and I felt she too found it valuable to reflect on how this personal and relational process had emerged and generated a significant transformation in her life. She invited me to her home for a conversation.

Rebekka lives up by the Norwegian mountains, and it was a long drive on an icy and winding winter road before I could settle in with a hot cup of tea and homemade cookies in her high lofted living room. We had a two hour talk. The following is an edited version of what she talked about. I have decided, for the sake of fluency, to abstain from commenting on Rebekka's 'talk'. I will let her words stand alone without my questions.

Re-Presenting Rebekka's experience

I have created this re presentation of Rebekka's talk in the form of stanza. As a skilled professional typographer (from *the Age of Lead*⁵⁵) I feel I have been quite irreverent concerning the use of fonts, style, size and gaps. I have done this in a playful, though sober attempt to create a sense of the pace, tone, gaps and immanent meaning I experienced when listening to Rebekka's voice. In a way, I think of it as a visual tone, born on the threshold between Rebekka's expression and my understanding. I can imagine it is like writing down music, where there needs to be more than just the notes to create a sense of the movements. It is a recognition of how music is created between the composer, the performer and the listener (Small, 1998), on the threshold of between the speaker and the listener would be Bakhtin's wording (1981) words. In this, my composition I have used my intuitive 'feel' of how I would like to compose the music of Rebekka's voicing.

Any re-presentation is a form of inquiry (Richardson, 1994) as any other analysis is saturated with the feelings, thinking and voice of the researcher. Conversational analysis (Edwards & Potter, 1992, Jefferson, 1995) tries to incorporate more than just the words in the analysis, by writing in time sequences, gaps, overlaps, intonation etc. It is not only that it is impossible to create an ultimate accuracy of what is said, but I often find conversation analysis disembodied, robbed of the 'heart and soul' of the voice.

This time I wanted to try out another way of doing it. I do not presume I can re create Rebekka's voice presenting it as I have done; perhaps all I can offer is my elucidation hoping that it will create a *sense* of hearing a voice when you read it.

⁵⁵ When I was trained to be a typographer we just worked with materials made of lead, and there were very strict rules to be followed in relation to e.g. size and type of fonts.

I remember
so well
that she said just *that*

I thought
that is
EXACTLY
what is happening

things
are
beginning to happen
with
ME

SUPERVISION MIGHT BE
A LOT OF THINGS
for instance about
CASES

But
NOW
things
were happening with
ME
and
I think
with
SEVERAL OF THE OTHER
GROUP MEMBERS

This was
the **opening up**
for
being IN TOUCH
with
a *number* of issues
in my life

The *very* first time
I dared
to
lowered my guards

just be there
dare
sense
what had been
DIFFICULT
IT IS AMAZING
it wasn't
PLANNED

suddenly
it was there
on the tip of my tongue
it needed
to be expressed

It was
Really - POWERFUL

It was
THE STARTING POINT
to think
about
stuff
that has been difficult
in my life

It was as if
THE FIRST STONE
STARTED TO ROLL

it was about
THE FEELING OF **SHAME**

Not
Having
Done
Anything

That is about my life
THAT feeling
is **significant** in my life

This URGE I have
TO DO things,
ACCOMPLISH things
it is certainly part of my life

I **need** to feel **clever**

But something has happened to me
I don't
need to be so clever

I don't need to take steps in that way
anymore

Something
Happened
That Day

I started to ACKNOWLEDGE MY OWN STUFF,
MY FEELINGS and things that guide me,
things that have
an - IMPACT ON MY DOINGS
MY IDEAS

The **stuff** that creates all these thoughts
ALL THE PICTURES and ALL MY OPINIONS
I go around with
that MAKE ME DO THINGS

I started to think
about how
I DON'T OWN THE TRUTH

I DON'T NEED TO BE CLEVER

DO THINGS

It is **OK**
JUST TO BE - **TO BE WITH PEOPLE**

is absolutely good enough

Something has happened to me

this is something
I WANT TO PASS ON
TO MY COLLEAGUES

I used to think 'if only this had happened now, then I would have done it so differently. I should have done so much more, talked more, and been so much cleverer, said more'.

But this is *not* how I think any longer. **Today I think that what I did was just what they wanted me to do.** What happened back then was that I lost my guard; I became an insecure little girl, pregnant with lots of hormones.

I used to work as a nurse in an intensive care unit, where I had all this APPARATUS you can HIDE behind.

Now, with this family, ten years ago, there was just a seriously ill mom with two

teenage daughters curling up in her bed. And it was just tough, plain hell. At that moment that was it. I didn't have anything; there was nothing I could do to change the circumstances.

Now, now it feels good to understand it in another way, and **TODAY I can give myself credit.**
Ten years passed before I was able to do that.

I was ABLE TO SENSE THAT **AS I TOLD THE STORY**, because of **the response I got from the group while telling it.**

The difference
between
PRAISE and ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

How important
it is
to help children
find words
for
their feelings

Things are
**EXPERIENCED
BODILY**

Not just to have
self-confidence
but
to feel it
in yourself

The entire **appraisal** thing
creates
PERFORMANCE ANXIETY

what if
I don't perform?

I have FELT this
Without daring
TO FEEL IT - PROPERLY

We can
talk
about
things
in life that have been *difficult*

in A WAY
that
can help people

to feel
differently
about themselves.

I think
THAT is what happened with me

THAT TAKES TIME

It is not done
from
one day to another

It is about opening up
feel it
in
your body

I am thinking
about
this *group of ours*

It took me
precisely
three years
before I could
TRULY
FEEL

Then
I could feel
THE SPACE
BEING SAFE ENOUGH

I NEEDED
to have
THAT TIME
until
I could feel
THE TIME WAS RIGHT -
NOW I CAN DO IT

I am sure THERE ARE
people
who think
that
being 39 years old
I should have
confronted
my mother
long ago
that I should
have dealt
with
these things - earlier

But I didn't do that

I feel
I can reconcile
with that

My aunt
said
just some months ago
that
I should have confronted my mother
long ago
I just responded
YEAH, I **could** have, but I **didn't**
To feel the
POWER
that **STRENGTH**
in you
THAT IT IS actually - absolutely OK

Well
I hadn't
had
THAT
if it hadn't
been
for *the group*
and what happened in the group

Telling the story was the *opening up*
for something,
about ACKNOWLEDGING my own feelings
about SHAME and the feeling of GUILT

It certainly was the beginning, yeah

We were offered
an OPPORTUNITY
to reflect on ourselves

I have started
to look
at
myself

I have been
thinking

*what
has actually
happened with me?*

I have found my own VOICE

THAT IS
HUGE

that happened
AFTER
I TOLD THAT STORY

to have the chance
to look at myself
my stuff - my life
That's
what it's all about
I have
eventually
come to understand

that what it is all about
is

ME

I need to look at myself

I didn't have the impression that you, as
supervisor
had a cunning plan
that you wanted to
TAKE US THERE

It was more as if
we went on
created the road
as we
went along

It seemed as if
all of us
were more able
to loosen up

it happened when
we had these ROUNDS

Every time we met
they took
more and more time

It is all about HOW WE STARTED TO TALK
ABOUT OURSELVES, we lowered our guards,
dared to open up and offer ourselves to
each other

And the time we used
I believe
that was important

**to me
that was so important
to use time**

to be able **TO SENSE**

we were
not expected
to rush on
I can remember how we talked, in between
us, after the very first supervision session
with you. We talked about how this would
need time. It was nothing like pang, pang,
pang. We needed to use time, we could
already sense that back then

*'Do we dare throw ourselves into this with
Anne Hedvig?'*

Or shall we get another supervisor,
someone with a more replanned
approach, who would tell us what will
happen when and how?

**I HAD HEARD REPORTS FROM OTHER
GROUPS**
who had had other supervisors

Yeah, I brought with me
a story from other *students'* experiences
in another group

They had brought with them personal stories about crisis in their own lives

The supervisor
had responded by telling them
that
“these stories
SHOULD NOT BE SHARED IN THE GROUP
Supervision is
NOT A SPACE FOR THESE STORIES
you’re fellow supervisees
should not
be bothered - HERE
be bothered with your story”

they shouldn’t
have to carry any responsibility
or whatever was the thought behind that

I remember thinking about it
I thought about it
FOR A REALLY LONG TIME

it made me
anxious

I was *wary* I could be met that way
“THIS IS NOT THE TIME AND PLACE
IT IS NOT APPROPRIATE HERE”
That would have been *awful* for me
I AM sensitive towards other people,
concerned about how they can bear what I
have to tell.

IT IS HIDDEN DEEP DOWN IN ME

I am sure I would have crept back into my
shell again - again - again - again – again -

As time went on
I understood
it was not like that
at all

people started to share

I believe that was part of it

people sharing experiences from their lives

SHOWING how they felt

dared to show their feelings

These ROUNDS

they took up more and more space,
it was almost
as if we sabotaged your plan

you were totally cool about it

COURAGEOUSLY

we started to tell
more and more
about ourselves
we opened up
took up space
it was impossible
to keep
timetable

These other things
we
were going to do
just
vanished
into the blue.....

ONE DAY WAS NOT ENOUGH
WE HAD JUST GONE HALF
AROUND AFTER ONE DAY

My life makes me into who I am. Make me
say what I say in a conversation.
I was brought up to be clever,
to be this nice girl who does as she is told –
that has worn me out.

You know, I am from this resourceful home,
as it is called, with good economy and
parents who were politicians. No one would
think that this was a family with big
problems; it didn’t look like that from
outside.

But there have been things, experiences I
have had that has been with me, as an
adult,
been with me into conversations in my
professional life. It is about my relationship
with my parents.

I have felt to insecure, and at the same time
I have needed to be so clever.

That is what all this is about;
me *not being able to be* totally present in
conversations, because I have been

saturated with ideas about what a good or healthy life is like.

Now I keep thinking, if there had been some left cuts instead of right cuts, things could have turned out quite differently in my life too. That is a new idea.

I used to think about people as EITHER resourceful OR not resourceful; some people have dreadful lives. I don't think about it like that anymore. Because I have experienced it for myself, EVERYTHING IS POSSIBLE IN A PERSON'S LIFE

I *really* do believe that now

I can meet people differently. I can listen without having to contribute with my own stuff.

I need to be
PRESENT
in conversations

that
is
so

LIBERATING

**TO LET
WHAT EVER
HAPPENS HAPPEN**

I can no longer - decide in advance

- I no longer
- bring with me
- ten bullet points
-
-
-
-
-
-
-

I have thrown it all away away awaaaaaay

I was going to have a ICDP-group
(8 preplanned meetings about 8 significant subjects)
but I put away the plans and let the mothers talk about whatever they wanted

we were able
to create something together

it was amazing
how they shared and contributed

These mothers were struggling in their lives, and now I could experience how they managed to talk about these struggles

we were able
to create
a very special atmosphere

Afterwards the public health nurse who were in contact with these women told me

the women had changed concerning their interest and care towards their children

I got credit for going through with the ICDP- program
Me who had DISMISSED the whole program!

I heard from other groups, where they had nicely prepared power point presentations that it had not opened up for any kind of reflections and talk amongst the mothers

it is about
being
in relationships
together
with people

Like
how I experienced it
when we spent that week together

I listened to the group
after I had talked with you
about
my relationship
with my family

that was
wonderful

to feel
how
my telling
created
resonance
IN THE OTHERS

it mattered to them

Nothing
was
condemned
nor
explained away

I WAS TOTALLY UNDERSTOOD
I am *concerned* with that when I talk with
clients
and
colleagues
because

I have FELT it myself
in
MY OWN BODY

I have been able to *redefine myself*
in relation to other people

It has created *new opportunities*

Bella and I talked about it

we believe it has been about
NOT having to DELIVER
NOT having to be PREOCCUPIED
NOT having to be so CLEVER

When I meet people
NOW

I can LISTEN differently
I *don't need* to contribute by talking
about my own concerns

People start
TALKING WITH ME
differently
tell much more
about their lives and their difficulties

Response from the Group

Rebekka's appreciation of this group was something I wanted the rest of the women to be able to hear, and I asked Rebekka if she would mind me sending what I had written to the rest of the group and maybe get a response from some of them. She was happy with that suggestion. This kicked off a to and fro mail correspondence between us – which I have included below. I knew they were working hard on their own writing, just about to finish their master's dissertation, and I didn't want any of them to feel I was putting pressure on them to respond. It was more of an offer, to be able to share if they found time and I wrote:

Hi there hard working women

I guess you are all in the midst of writing or thinking about writing.

And I have been writing about us, and about Rebekka in particular. She has read it through and said that I can use it for my doctoral portfolio. So now, it's your turn - if you have the time and energy, I would really appreciate to get a short or long response from you.

Do you recognize this? Do you have any comments or expansions? Any experiences to share? Anything you want to say about what we have been doing together? Anything else, concerning these 'rounds', what they have meant for you and for us as a group?

I am not finished just yet, but thought I would have you read it anyway.

If you don't have the time to read/write, I will REALLY understand©

Take care, and see you later.

Anne Hedvig

From: louise@online.no

Hi you all!

And thanks Anne Hedvig, it was such a gift to be allowed to read what you have written. To read about myself and us and what we have had together created some associations - how it can be in our rounds, and to listen to something I myself or someone else has been talking about. And how this contributes to new thoughts. As well as feelings!

I was touched when I read this, it was as if I from a distance could see us sitting there. I relived feelings and the moods I have been in when we have been together, and I could just see all the different views I have had, if I have been fortunate to sit by a window.

It was powerful to be reminded of Rebekka's story.

It is something on its own, but it is also a story about what these kind of talks or supervision may bring occasion, for us as individuals or as a group.

Reading your text, Anne Hedvig, was also reminding me of how important you all have become for me, something I don't want to lose. Because, sometimes something happens, which you describe so beautifully, something of significance happens between people that doesn't happen that often between people or in groups. To come in touch with something in myself that is forgotten or has been lost some place is also a gift, something I will bring with me which will create a difference that matters.

To read this, was also a nice interruption from all the other things I'm doing these days; analyzing and discussing. And a reminder, this master is much more than writing the dissertation. And I know perfectly well what will remain most, in my body and soul.

These were my spontaneous remarks, and when I read your mail, and read what you wanted our response on, I believe I have covered most of it.

I also feel that you manage in such a beautiful manner, to care for and describe the hazy and the fragile which is there in between us, when we sit and talk, what is so vague that it is difficult to find words for. There is a lot of poetics in the way you write, and I do look forwards to reading it when it is finished.

Good luck to you all, I look forward to meeting you on the March 8.the Women's Day.

Louise

From: Rebekka@online.no

Thank you, Louise! You are poetic as well. I do agree, what Anne Hedvig is writing is caring and beautiful. It is so nice that research can be like that too. I have already read some of it and I am so pleased that the rest of you can read it now. This has

really been such a gift – what we have had together and been able to create. And then it feels nice to read what Anne Hedvig Has written. I recognize it as well.

Last Monday I had a lecture for 80 health care nurses in XX about the systemic. I would never have dared to do it, if it hadn't been for you my experiences with you! Being able to shake myself free of the manuscript and just tell about what seems of importance, here and now. (You know how I am able to 'carry on'). It is absolutely fantastic! The feedback was just marvelous and XX, who is a lecturer at the University College was quite enthusiastic. She wants to implement the systemic perspective in the education of health care nurses to a greater degree (well I didn't know it was there in lesser degree now).

Two doctoral thesis were presented first, and then it was my turn. Afterwards everyone said that they wanted to hear more about what I had presented a presentation. And that wasn't about med, but people are ready for the systemic perspective, I think... People who work so close to other people, in particular, and stand by them through the one enterprise after the other – all equally unsuccessful.

Rebekka

From: bella@online.no

To: Hi you guys!

I appreciated the text, and I could certainly recognize it, and so many nice and important moments of significant learning emerged while reading it. I don't have many comments towards your text Anne Hedvig, I think you write like a dance, with just the right pace and delightful movements. I agree with the comments Louise and Rebekka has written.

You are writing about how we expressed the usefulness of the rounds. I never seem to finish talking about how this round invited me to be aware of my inner pace, you touch up on this when you write about pace/time and use of time in our supervision. This time you gave us has created something concerning the pace I have when I meet the other or the otherness. It is difficult to say what has released this, it could be the different stories, it could be the people in this group who have made me feel so safe in so many ways, but I see how the time you gave us, to reflect in silence, triggered resonance in us. This has done something concerning me and

my meetings with the other and otherness. The meetings in therapy is exciting but it has been just as interesting for me to think about these rounds in relation to more everyday matters as well.

You created a space for us that made it possible and safe (these are my experiences) to address both private and professionally related experiences and concerns. Some of the words you came up with, I keep thinking about them, things like: “Yeah, but what is right and what is wrong?” “Who is to decide” This has expanded something for me and I ask myself these questions. And these questions are answered if we give the others time - then there is something that creates resonance, in us and confirm how we move as close to the other as we can manage. Rebekka’s story pops up, it was powerful and not least – it is a reminder – how being emotionally present may be a way of safe and qualitatively good communicating.

You have obviously, by inviting us into these rounds, made me move more slowly in many situations. And I am so thankful. This has also been a personal project, while studying, and I believe the round has played a major role in this and not least having the supervision over time.....

It was nice to read this; it created *more energy* than it created *loss of energy*. Thank you Anne Hedvig.

All the best from Bella

From: marian@online.no
Dear Anne Hedvig

Looking back I recognize all the exciting meetings we have had, and I have grown fond of everyone in the group. I have been thinking about the freedom in this group and what it has done with me. The word freedom is something I connect with this group. I believe it has to do with the dialogical way of being together – something is created between us – in the moment – which creates something – as a process and transformation.

I have used all day; trying to formulate something...it is about how I see freedom as a decisive factor. How you described Rebekka’s journey moving slowly, your meeting with her and your dialogue, and then our group – when she talked about her meeting with the dying woman and her family. It evoked such resonance in me, because I have experienced

something similar. The others worded my feelings and experiences. And that felt nice. I remember I got goose bumps all over when I first read what you had written. It is literary beautiful and poetic. I can understand that people you share it with feel deeply moved. I'm looking forward to our meeting next week.

Hugs from Marian

From: Rebekka@online.no

I could feel how it really stuck me; Marian: Freedom... Yes! And I wanted to attach a poem by Virginia Satir, who describes this so significantly. I have used it towards the end of my lectures on systemic practice. You might have read it. I see freedom as creating space – to create new understanding. To what extent do we have that freedom, without being caught inside the limitations of language (ex diagnosis...puhh!)?

(I feel so fortunate and honored to take part in this with all of you)

Rebekka

Five freedoms, by Virginia Satir

The freedom to see and hear what is here, instead of what should be, was, or will be.

The freedom to say what you feel and think, instead of what you should.

The freedom to feel what you feel, instead of what you ought.

The freedom to ask for what you want, instead of always waiting for permission.

The freedom to take risks in your own behalf, instead of choosing to be only "secure" and not rocking the boat.



In the Shades of the Mango Tree

Space for Relational Compassion

In his book “The shadow of the sun”, Ryszard Kapuscinski (1998), a Polish journalist who lived for several decades on the African continent, notes how different cultures relate to disagreement and quarrels. Under the enormous mango tree in the village of Adofo, in the Ethiopian province of Wollega the people gather for conferences:

“... If someone in the village is quarreling with someone else, then the court convened beneath the tree will not try to ascertain the truth, or where justice lies, but will set itself the sole task of ending the conflict and conciliating the warring sides, while granting to each that he is in the right.” (: 315)

This last tale will describe in some detail how the supervisor listened and composed herself in relation towards a *tension filled situation* in a group of supervisees. It is about how *presence* and compassionate listening⁵⁶ invited the group to explore their relation to the ‘situation’, and shows

⁵⁶ See Ch. 9, p. 133-135

an approach to disagreement which accentuates the emotional relation or feelings people have in relation to an event, not their story *about* the event per se. I will describe how this invited us all into a space where we were able to listen to each other with compassion and to ourselves the same way. The tale also addresses how the supervisees in this group experienced the supervisor's dialogical approach from *within*, and how this created an embodied experience anticipating ways of moving in relation to their work as professionals.

Six women had approached me through email and asked if I could be their supervisor during their last year of training. I had written their names in my notebook. They were second year students of family therapy and systemic practice, and that was about all I knew about them.

As I was preparing for this new group, making coffee, watering my plants and arranging some more chairs around the table, I was trying to memorize their names: **Karen, Ida, Marion, Lisa, Ellen and Susanne.**

The bell rang and when I opened the front door I was greeted by a small crowd of smiling middle-aged women, standing on the steps outside my apartment. They had all arrived at the same time, and were now filling my small hallway with their bodies, enthusiastic talk and laughter.

Every new meeting is special, and sometimes it has a freshness that I sense as quite enigmatic. This sense of novelty, something unsullied persistently reveals itself to me, even if I acknowledged the uniqueness of people always meeting *for yet another first time* (Garfinkle, 1967). What keeps astonishing me is not that I meet different people with different experiences, different things to tell and my experience of how different dialogues develop. It is the sense of taking part in something entirely new that keeps me alert in a way; it is a vigorous excitement that fills my body with attentiveness.

Entangled feelings of being misunderstood

Well seated, coffee poured into cups, some small talk about my apartment, train delays and assignments that had not been sufficiently dealt with, we started to talk about this supervision. The women told me that they had had forty hours with one supervisor, and I got the impression they were quite satisfied with how that had worked out. *"This is a very nice group, and we enjoy each other's company"*, was what I heard.

I proposed that we could take *a round*, share experiences and expectations. I would also like to know some more, I said, about each one of them. *"Let's move on, but we're not in a hurry. I would like us to use time to get to know each other, and maybe get a sense of this group's culture and see how it develops"*.

Karen started off by telling about herself, where she worked and so on. I asked her how she had perceived supervision in other contexts and what she hoped for now. Karen said something about being open and curious, and that she had been very satisfied with the supervision they had had with the other supervisor. I wanted to hear some more concerning this satisfaction, and Karen mention how she had been feeling safe. I wondered about the feeling of safety, how it had been created and Karen emphasized that it was her feeling, and that there might be different feelings in the group. I didn't continue going into that, but I think I made a 'note' asking myself without words, something like 'is something going on in this group?' When I am writing that I made a 'note' without words, I am not sure I would think of this sensing as what Rober (2004, 2005) for instance would call inner dialogue. I accept that human experiences have a feeling of flow, a non-linguistic dimension (Gendlin, 1997, 2003) to our experience that is not pre verbal but exists as interracially related to the explicit worded or conceptualized understanding. It was this sense of something I brought with me, much like what Stern (2010) would term musical contours, saturated with meaning but without words.

I continued talking with Ida. She too shared her expectations, and how much she had enjoyed the group. She felt she could trust people and that she had been learning so much from everybody. "But", Ida hesitated, and there was a long gap of vibrating silence. "But?" I asked with a soft tone of voice, and a small smile. "Is there more, in that but?" I am quite attentive towards how I 'appear' in situations where I get a feel of there being not yet worded concerns. I don't want to be perceived as demanding, just inviting; which means that I try to express a benevolent interest and at the same time an expectance towards my invitation possibly being turned down. "But, eh, I don't really know since I wasn't in the middle of it", Ida's eyes swept around to the others. "I don't know if the rest ..." she stopped again, and stared. "This sounds as if it's something we could talk about", I proposed tentatively. I didn't understand what it was, but I sensed that at least some of the nodding bodies were heavily burdened with *something* we needed to attend to.

'Something' had hit hard

Lisa and Marion started to talk, filling in for each other. I understood that there had been some disagreement last time they were together, and something Ellen had said had hurt them. Ellen was silent, but then she burst out: "It was absolutely awful. I haven't slept well in these last weeks. I felt so miserable. I should have kept my mouth shut. Oh, why do I always act without thinking?" As they went on talking I got the impression that Ellen had felt offended by *something* someone had said, and had expressed *something* that Marion and Lisa had felt was hurtful. It had happened just as they were about to finish the last supervision session, and they hadn't had the chance to talk about it. Ellen hadn't been talking to anyone. "Not even to your husband", Lisa seemed surprised. "No!" Marion and Lisa told that they had had some contact and talked about

what had happened. Karen, Ida and Susanne all expressed a kind of bewilderment, they had felt the apprehension back then, but hadn't understood the implication it had had for the three others.

"Let's talk about this" I offered, feeling a kind of relief and bit of excitement, having sensed this strain in the group and managed to participate in bringing it out into the open, between us. This *sensing*: it might have started off as softly spreading waves between my shoulder blades, then a tickling sensation in my chest, small movements in my stomach, down towards my tights and back again. I could feel how my body moved in the chair, first leaning forwards, and then settling backwards as if grounding myself in the situation. Without cognitively noticing it I found myself having jumped into something unexpected and I *sensed* a demand for improvisation, for approaching without having time to think and consciously reflect.

My response acknowledged my answerability (Bakhtin, 1990), acting into the uniqueness of this particular act, which I sensed called for a kind of presence I still time and again experience as valuable. It requires in Shotter's words (1993) to be attentive to the "vague, not-yet-cognitively-formulated *feelings*, of 'sensed movements' or 'sensuous re-positions'" (:130), expressed in the room. This attentive position involves listen out for and hearing what is said immanently in the voices as they speak (Bakhtin, 1990), and it involves an approach to language as not decoding signs, but feeling one's way into the 'world of the other' and listening to the uniqueness in what is expressed. This is what Shotter calls ontological skills; embodying a sensitive responsiveness to the uniqueness of the emerging event (Shotter, 2010). This *presence* requires meeting every new situation with openness and sensing others' as well as my own expressions as blushing pre juvenile innocence and treating them with the utmost sincerity. Lipari (2009) would term this *listening otherwise*; with compassion. It is about listening without creating order or coherence, without evaluation, judgment or assessment but with an openness to be touched and transformed by the other. To be able to do this, I feel like I need to "breathe the other in" – take in their whole circumstances as novel; the same way I take a newborn baby in and let it move me – there is nothing there to assess, it is just love. Imelda McCarthy's (2010) reference to Humerto Maturana's definition of *love*: "Love consists in opening a space of existence for another in co existence with oneself in a particular domain of interaction." She goes on saying that "To be present to those who we have before us in state of reverence is also to honour their 'beingness'" (:10).

There was a real sense of tension in the room. This *something* had hit hard and threatened to crack a group of women into pieces. I will not propose that I was happy or content with the situation, there was too much agony for that. Still, I *knew* (as a bodily felt recognition) that if we managed to find a way to go on much could happen. Maybe I even felt that it could give the

group a chance to be in a process and have the opportunity to experience how problems actually can be dissolved through dialogue. I suggested that I could talk with Lisa, Marion and Ellen, one at a time, and asked the three others if they could form a reflecting team. They all accepted the invitation. But first I suggested we should take a long break.

Susanne and Ellen went down to the store to buy some energy, preferably dark chocolate. The others wanted to get fresh air; Ida stopped on her way out and asked:

“Are you anxious?”

“About what?” I asked back.

“No, I don’t know. But there are so much, eh, feelings here, so much hurt. Are you not afraid that you’ll step on someone’s toes?” Ida eyes were full of concern.

“No, I think this is exciting or even stimulating in a way” I responded.

I don’t know if I was completely honest, because I could feel a sort of insistent anticipation – even a slight strain maybe. Or was it a kind of uncertainty, what if I couldn’t perform, and maybe in the end made things worse for the group? I had heard voices filled with despair and witnessed eyes full of anguish, and I wanted to be of help. Still, I didn’t feel the need to contemplate this; instead I prepared for being present with whatever I had, to meet whatever turned up. I believe Tom Andersen’s (1994) way of preparing was to “not think, just look”, and I think about that as opening my senses towards the coming, and not dwell on my thinking about what is going to be said, or what has been said. McCarthy (2010) describes it as being *centred* and *present*, and not “influenced by those fluctuations of the mind, emotions or constructs which can distract us from full engagement” (:10). We are simultaneously at rest and attentive, and we can listen as McCarthy express *from silence and from the heart*, granting to each one of the women that she is *in the right*.

Creating opportunity for Compassion

I had no other plan than initiating *a format* that could create an opportunity for talking and listening, for being listened to and experiencing the feeling of being met. After having arranged ourselves in the room I asked the reflecting team to listen with their ‘appreciative ears’ and with their ‘hearts’, explaining that what I meant was for them to “*listen for the relationship the one who talks has to what she is talking about. You can hear that if you listen to the tone of voice, the gaps, the distinction, the pace and the words. When you respond, speak from the resonance it has created in your own body*”.

I was not going after *the* story; we didn’t even need to create a *story* of what had happened. It

was *the effect* on each one of those involved that needed to be welcomed. If we had pursued the happening, and tried to sort out *who* had said *what* to *whom* about *what*, I am certain we could have come into misunderstanding, blame and guilt. The negotiated cause of the event could become more important than the feelings that succeeded the happening. This excessive trust in sorting things out, in order to create a story of an event, is not only an overestimated exercise it is also a tricky business. “*Life as it is lived is not storylike (...) Lives include all sorts of extraneous details leading nowhere, but good stories do not.*” (Morson, 1994:19-20). The narratives function as a major intellectual device for *organizing* into an intelligible whole what otherwise appears to be a collection of disconnected fragmentary events. This organisation of complex events into a meaningful whole has the possibility to create a shared meaning but just as well a potential for circumscribing the event as experienced. I am sure we could have found stories about this event, stories which would have had a cause and an effect, or even causes and effects, but I am not sure it would have made it easier for the women to go on together. To sort out a problem as if it is a rational construction is what Wittgenstein (1953) calls problems of the intellect. A difficulty of orientation is different, and requires another way of relating. It is not sorted out by putting pieces together, adding up or subtracting. To relate to these kinds of difficulties we need to explore many different relationships like what I have described earlier as *perpetual groping for meaning*.

What I offered was an invitation for each one to articulate their feelings there and then and then encourage the feelings to be expressed the way they wanted to express them. I didn't see it as my task to *untangle the mess*, or the differences, but rather create a space in which all the different relationships and feelings connected to the *something* that had happened could be expressed and acknowledged. This approach declines competition between those involved, and may generate a context where every expressed feeling is valid in its own right. Everyone is listened to with compassion and without evaluation.

Revelation

Sitting down, I was sensitive towards trying to create a context that could enable the others to hear what needed to be heard. I wanted the reflecting team as well as myself to be there, for each one of the women, and let what they expressed touch us: to feel in our own bodies the sadness, loneliness, anger, frustrations that I could imagine Ellen, Lisa and Marion had been feeling.

When I heard *Ellen* talk I felt how she expressed the uttermost pain and I could recognise an intense loneliness. I heard how she talked about self accusation and the determination not ever to be spontaneous ever again. She felt so ashamed she said, and it had been impossible to talk

with anyone about what had happened, she didn't trust that anyone would understand how she had experienced it. Ellen also disclosed that she had been reluctant towards coming to this supervision session today, she had even considered discontinuing her studies.

Lisa talked about how she had felt blamed, and that had made her revisit self-contempt and accusations from others about being too clever. This was a recurring theme in her life she said, the feeling of being too intensely concerned with what she felt as of great existential importance, while other people thought it was not that important. Lisa told how she too had been battling with feeling ashamed of how she might have made Ellen feel inferior. That had not been her intention. As we talked I could hear how Lisa managed to talk about how this had been for her, and at the same time reconsider how she had conceded what had happened 'then'. I thought I also could hear how she could feel with Ellen and feel sorry for how she had been feeling so devastated.

Marion also spoke about shame, anger and about how she once again felt that what she expressed was not worth expressing, remembering how time and again she has experienced being rejected after expressing herself. "When feeling safe, I show more of myself. But then I have experienced how this becomes 'too much' for people around me. I'm left with the feeling of people not being able to put up with me, that I harm people by simply presenting myself. This creates guilt and despair. To present myself as open and explicit becomes a dangerous yearning". These feelings were not new, they were familiar to her, and she knew them from other contexts as well. Over and over during our talk, Marion dwelled on how she had reacted with feelings that were "more connected to previous experiences than to what was actually happening in the room and in between them, then".

To listen genuinely

I was sitting across from each of the three women when they were talking with me. I felt that the details of *what had happened* that day were not important, and I didn't invite the women to sort things out, or to untangle the threads that had spun them into confusion and misery. I was never capable of understanding what had taken place, who had said what to whom etc. But I still had a sense of the journey we were on together as they talked about how they had been affected by what had happened that day; I was travelling with Ellen, then with Lisa and at last with Marion, through a feeling-full landscape "with its hills and valleys of vitality affects, along its rivers of intentionality (which runs throughout), and over its peak of dramatic crisis" (Stern, 2004:172).

Their talk struck cords in my own chamber of experiences. I could imagine shadowy valleys, closed doors, chilly winds, murky nights in bed, too small rooms and overwhelming loneliness, yawning distrust and dark shame. I listened with all my senses on alert and I was sincerely

touched; I could feel it in my breathing, how the warm salty water filled my eyes and how a big lump pressed up against my throat. I was *taking in* what was expressed, and I let Marion, Lisa and Ellen's agony fill me and meet my own bodily memory of loneliness, self accusation, self-contempt, guilt, surprise and disturbance. I believe the resonance I felt was resonated back through my eyes, facial expression, nods, affirmations and a few questions. This resonance wasn't something I could intellectually construct, or put on as a mask. It was genuinely derived from my own lived life. In each talk, I mobilized an intense presence, deliberately and spontaneously affirming every expressed feeling I could sense.

Then the reflecting team talked; they all gave something back after each conversation I had with first Ellen, then with Lisa and at last with Marion. The tone was serious as Susanne, Ida and Karen managed to express deeply felt connections to what had been conveyed. They acknowledged the feelings that were expressed and told how they themselves would have reacted in a similar manner if they had felt something similar to what the three others had felt. They also articulated some sense of surprise by all three of them having been so devastated. And they were so unhappy that especially Ellen had felt so utterly alone. It was also pointed out that they were grateful for having a chance to hear about it and that they hoped that this could make it easier for them to go on as a group. Maybe it even could strengthen the group culture.

We spoke for almost three hours, using the time we needed for everyone to be able to talk at their own pace. It started out with a feeling of wariness, as if one might step on aching toes, but I could sense the tension loosen up as each one talked and could hear the voices of the others, supporting and acknowledging what was said.

We took a break, and then came back to have a less 'formal' format for talking. Sitting down, I felt I was in a new room, in a new group. Ellen was laughing and talking with Lisa about how the last weeks had been, but without the hesitation and guard I had felt was there in the morning. I wondered if the dark cloud of dejection and vigilance that had threatened to strangle this group of nice women was about to vanish.

We spent the next day together as well, talking about other issues that emerged as we went on; about working in the mental health system, as a private practitioner and about concern for their own children and life situation. What struck me that day was the vibrant wholehearted laughter I could hear and see that surrounded Ellen. And she was not hesitant or holding back her spontaneity. It was a considerable shift in the atmosphere in the group. Most significant was that Lisa and Marion, who had mainly responded to each other the day before, incorporated Ellen in their talk.

I was also once again struck by the impact a 'here and now experience' of how a dialogic space creates the possibility for 'problems' to dissolve (Anderson, 1997) creates an opportunity to learn from *within* the experience, not *about* the experience of others (Shotter, 2010, 2011). Lisa was energized and pointed out that this experience was really worth something:

"You showed us your work you know. We have really felt it, experienced how problems can dissolve when we talk about them like this. Rather phenomenal."

I was feeling somewhat relaxed and content the following days, I sensed a new trust in my hearing and seeing, a confidence in my movements and a distinct new faith in the possibilities encompassed in a space *where people can talk, listen, really hear the others and oneself, and feel truly heard.*

Letters from the supervisees

I approached Ellen, Lisa and Marion, and asked if they wanted to explore what had happened in the supervision and if they would care to write something about how they had experienced this event. At this point I was hesitant towards approaching the whole group before the three women most involved had agreed.

This is what **Marion** wrote about the session:

"Permission is an important word for me, when I try to describe what opened up our dialogue. My experience was that you gave me permission to give an honest version without evaluating the content. At some point during our talk, you came up with a word that was too strong for me. A word I thought might hurt Ellen. It felt absolutely ok to correct your suggestion, and my reaction towards that word made it clearer to me what I meant".

The permission to talk, without being judged, assessed or questioned was, according to Marion, what made it possible for her to word her experiences – experiences that under other circumstances had been difficult to word (see below).

My intention is also to speak in a way that welcomes contradictions. I want to offer feelings, words, ideas and stories in a manner that hails and permits the other to take a stand and question the relationship to what is expressed like Marion did here. This is not just done in back and forth talk in this special moment, but is just as much an overall atmosphere of welcoming ambiguity, conviviality in the preliminary and temporality by the way questions are asked. For instance: "Was it like you were left all alone, or...?"; where the word "or" is pronounced not as a question that needs to be answered, but serves more as an invitation that makes it possible to

take a stance towards my suggested relation to what we are talking about. *Or not*. I put quite a lot of consideration into how I express myself and respond, not only through words but just as much in other movements. I am striving between considerations concerning the need for contextualizing situations, creating some predictable structure and the opportunities that lie in ambiguity, diversity, loopholes, surprises and movements that fashion our supervision encounters through co creation. In Bakhtin's (1981) words this would be striving between the centripetal forces that unite, and the centrifugal forces that disperse fixed contextual meaning.

Marion went on:

"It is always an act of balancing to take care of and develop the different relationships in a supervision group, and at the same time retain one's own integrity. (...) But I think your questions and our dialogue invited us to take this into consideration, and challenge in all these directions. Your approach, being open and calm, and your considerations towards making your own expressions suitable for the other, is experienced as honest and inspires us to have confidence in you". (...)

Marion is here pointing at a sense of balance between invitation and demand. I believe it is of great importance not to *push*, but *spread the ground* through *invitation* for talking. When I talk I use time to find the 'right' words, and I try to be open concerning where my ideas come from and what they are aiming at. When I feel I get it wrong, I try to do it more in tune the next time. This effort is simultaneously a sign saying "this is one way of understanding, but there are more or other ways – you choose any direction that suits you", and "I'm trying the best I can to do it right for you, because you deserve that".

Marion:

"I felt quite relieved the days after our talk. The feeling of loneliness connected to being in the group, was experienced as less weighing me down. This physical feeling of being able to breathe easier was evident. It felt good when I managed to lower the guard".

The physical relief Marion felt, being able to breathe more easily is something I hear repeatedly when people talk about being heard. It is as if the holding words back slows down the breathing; you "hold your breath to keep the words inside". Breathing is welcoming life, Tom Andersen used to say (Ianssen, 20119).

Lisa wrote:

"I didn't prepare for what I should say or what should be my main message. I went right into the feelings I had had after our last session. Still, it took me by surprise that I all of a

sudden felt that intense sadness I didn't have any control over. I could feel the tears coming, and that was ok. I felt a kind of compassion towards myself, not that I felt that sorry for myself, more a feeling of connecting to something important. I can't recall the questions Anne Hedvig asked, but I know that they were pointing towards an inner journey I was on. She didn't appeal to the memory, to make me recall what had happened. I think this was significant. It was more about my experiences, tied to who I am and what I have with me. (...) Through this talk, and the questions Anne Hedvig asked I managed to take this journey and worded some of the things that have been difficult in the supervision group. I believe I thought my fumbling came across fairly human, and that might have evoked a kind of empathy in the others. But not least, I managed to awake a generosity towards myself. I shouldn't need to be so hard on myself."

I believe this approach, not asking for recollections of what had happened invited Lisa to talk about her 'inner journey', her own relation to what had happened. Hearing herself, Lisa was touched by her own voice (Andersen, 1994, Mead, 1934) and she was able to hear herself as someone she could care about. The feelings she had expressed in the beginning of our talk were guilt and shame; as we talked these feelings were replaced by compassion. This is the permission Marion wrote about, and maybe even more strongly put, an invitation to express without censorship. It was an acknowledgement of any feeling or relationship they had in relation to the event. My questions were also expressed in a fumbling manner, filled with gaps, half uttered words, proposals which might have been an invitation for Lisa to fumble as well. This fumbling might contribute to an atmosphere of a sensuous humbleness all of us could feel. I think about this as sensuously and perpetually groping for meaning, not in a decisive manner as goal hunting, but being open for something novel to emerge.

Sometimes supervisees ask me about how I relate to people I don't 'like'. I have been thinking about this in situations when I can sense that I have some apprehension or feel uneasy towards people. I can see that I often try to ask questions that invite the other to move me. McCarthy (2010) terms it like this "...to develop a sense of reverential curiosity before all of life's facades". She then refers to James Stephen⁵⁷ who reminds us of *how we look will to a large extent, determine what we see*. Maybe I implicitly talked with Ellen, Lisa and Marion in a manner that I thought would move me, in the sense of creating resonance in me, and subsequently move the others who were listening?

Lisa about listening to Ellen:

⁵⁷ Stephens, J (1978) *The Crock of Gold*. London: Pan Books

“When Ellen and Anne Hedvig talked I realized that by listening to her experiences of the event, a whole new understanding emerged. I could hear her in another way. She was neither reproachful nor angry, which would have made me defensive. I could listen to her with the whole of me, and I could easily feel emphatic and even with more surprise, resonance. I think it would have been quite different if I had heard it stated with a double voice”.

Now Lisa points at how she was able to hear Ellen’s experience and feelingful relation. If Ellen had talked about ‘anger’ I believe I would have talked with her about *how* it was to feel anger. By going into the relationship to this feeling we could have been able to create a bridge between the women. This emphasizes the importance of my position as someone whose task is to create a bridge, in this example a bridge between feelings of hurt, guilt, shame and loneliness. To be able to build a bridge I needed to listen out for and amplify the good intentions and create bridges between these intentions.

From **Ellen’s** response:

“...as I said, this was not something I had thought I would talk about. Then Karen and Ida commented on the episode, and it made me feel I should say something, even if I felt reluctant to go into it. You made me feel safe and well looked after, and it was so nice talking with you, I nearly forgot the others. I was quite emotionally touched, since I felt I needed to talk about the pain. I felt I had ruined the nice chemistry in the group, and this created, as I told you, a feeling of guilt. I was overwhelmed by sadness; simultaneously it felt like a release to be able to talk about it. Because I hadn’t talked with anyone and I believe it was because I felt I was the one to blame”.

Ellen had been all alone, not feeling able to talk with anyone about this experience. I was quite attentive towards creating a space where she could feel absolutely sure I would listen to her without judging.

I was also attentive towards how my invitations to Marion, Ellen and Lisa could open up for talk that invited them to talk about their feelings and create an opportunity for the listeners to be moved, not feel accused. I was interested in hearing about “How was this for you?”, “What did you feel then?”, “What have you been feeling, when you didn’t sleep (or didn’t talk to anyone?)”, “How is it for you to talk about guilt (or loneliness, shame) here, now?”, “What is it like to talk about it now?”, and then acknowledging the feeling by saying things like “That must have been pretty horrible”, “I would have been devastated”.

Ellen:

“As we talked and right afterwards too, I could feel how I calmed down, and the inner pain, the lump in my chest and stomach let go. I felt ten kilos lighter when I went home. I had thought I was alone feeling bad about this episode, but when I listened to Lisa and Marion I understood how painful it had been for them as well. This was surprising; I training would have been a big lump. Instead, it was this sense of being met; that what was said was accepted, not questioned. We didn’t unravel the event.”

Lisa proposed: “This is something we can use in our own practice, this was a unique experience; just see what it did with us.”

Karen: “This is gold you know, it is a golden opportunity – for us as trainees. To be able to feel all these feelings. And to deal with it like this.”

Ida: “Yeah, when we’re invited to go into this, like we did”.

This experience created an opportunity to reflect and understand more about how we don’t need to unravel stories about shared events. When the supervisor (it could also have been a therapist or consultant) acts in the moment, into the movement taking place here and now, she doesn’t need to understand the ‘underlying story’. Instead she needs to trust the feelings she can sense, see, feel and hear in each person and in the group. What was important for this group was to be able to talk without being evaluated. They appreciated the feeling of being met, and accompanied on an emotional journey. I will connect this to Wittgenstein’s (1953) distinction between difficulties of the intellect and difficulties of orientation. It was *the relationship* these women had to what had happened between them and in themselves that was significant, and they needed to be able to orient themselves, and voice their feelingful relationship to what had happened, share it and feel that it was heard. The feeling of being heard required that the one who talked could sense that the ones who listen willingness to be moved by what was expressed, and respond from that sense of being *genuinely* moved. This creates the feeling of the others as being authentic. I believe that the sense of validating every feeling as worthy created an opening towards the other(s). What we managed to create was a space for orientation and relational compassion.

We created a space much like what McCarthy (2010) terms *the fifth Province*, a space that invites a *conversation of the possible*, where people feel invited to move with one-and-other co-creatively. McCarthy thinks of it as a place where inconclusiveness in our lives is embraced,

wherein there are no experts only *co-travellers*; no certainty or righteousness, only various and unknown possibilities.

It was about a sense of being disconnected, and I saw it as my task to create a bridge. The rupture in the connection between the women would have made it difficult to go on together as a group, but we managed to generate a dialogue that created opportunities for reconnection – not necessarily through agreement, but in acknowledging the others' relation to what was experienced – in a sanctuary - under the Shade from our Mango Tree.

PART III

Moving On...

it is better
to be on the move
than to arrive

it is what
is in motion
that keeps one alive

Interlude 4 – The Neighbour’s Gesture

My neighbor has been observing me sitting by the window in front of the PC for some intense weeks now. He smiles and waves his hand when he passes, a friendly gesture of approval and support. I need that; one week before submission, and I am still putting a great effort into knowing what this is all about.

Then one day he shouts: “Hey, are you going to be a *doctor*?”

I shouted back: “Yeah!”

He smiles: “In what?”

Spontaneously I respond: “In humanity⁵⁸”

There it was!

⁵⁸ I answered in Norwegian: “*I medmenneskelighet*”, which also translates as “**In compassion**”.

Chapter 12

Dialogical Practice

Becoming Present within the Movement

It is with a feeling of appreciation I am about to complete this research which I initially thought about and started to describe as a journey but which has turned more into a wandering. I have become a wanderer, and that has to do with *pace* and the feeling of having moved slowly in this *walk-about* (Geertz, 2000) in my supervision practice and *deep hanging out* (Clifford, 1997) with students, supervisees, myself and the writings of scholars. It is not as if I have travelled across foreign continents from one destination towards another, it has rather been a sense of slow motion movements in and around familiar landscapes. I have time and again reminded myself to stop, look and listen (read) again, try to see or understand what seems to be well known, from different positions in conversation with different people. This has created a sense of vigour in my walking about.

My wandering within my living/emerging practice and reflecting on it with other people, through conversations and reading, has created a conviction⁵⁹ that people come into being and prosper through unique relationships. I shall in this last chapter describe how I through an ontological stance have come to challenge discursive ideas about what it is to be a person in the world; and what implications this has for understanding human relationships. This stance has influence and reflexively created and recreated understanding and practice. I have through this thesis – *Dialogical Practices – Diving into the Poetic Movement* shown how my understanding of dialogue has unfolded. I shall describe how notions of *relationally created compassion* and *situated answerability* have become vital in relation to dialogical practice; how it is through our willingness and ability *to be present* and dive into the *movement*, letting ourselves be moved by

⁵⁹ As I am writing this I need to acknowledge how challenging it is to use familiar words and concepts in a way that may convey meaning to the reader, without circumscribing my intention by using certain words, inside a too narrow frame. When I write *conviction*, or later e.g. ‘convinced’, ‘I found that’, ‘evident’ or ‘evidence’ – it might be understood as if I then is using it in the same meaning as someone who is inside a modernist ontology or language game (Wittgenstein, 1953). I need to emphasize that the contextual understanding of my use of these words need to be understood ‘inside’ the ontology that saturates this thesis: *let the use of the words teach you their meaning* (ibid.).

the other(s) we become ethical responsible within the unique relationship. I will address how *dialogical approach* opens up for questioning some discursively made categories we live by, concerning for example therapy, teaching and supervision.

Further on, I will depict my contribution so far, in this research practice. I will address how I hope this thesis, will make an important contribution concerning: how we can be with people in ways that opens up more understanding and creates a sense of belonging and freedom; welcome the infinity of opportunities and possibilities life may offer us; challenge and transgressively explores discursive boundaries which attempt to define and fix what research, therapy, supervision and training *is*.

I will also address how I hope that the way I have described my relationship to research, and showed my performance of it, will invite other practitioners to explore ways of approaching research from *within* the poetics of moving relationships.

Research Outcome

My motivation for scrutinizing and developing the supervision contexts of which I have been part grew out of an interest in *identity and relational knowing as an ongoing, infinite process*. In Bakhtin's thinking I had found a nurturing approach to fostering human companionship. I have through the years of inquiring into my practice had the opportunity to understand more of the inherent dialogical qualities, what a dialogical relationship might create as well as creating some new permission.

The wandering tempo and attitude has made it possible for me to *be with* people and *inquire into the details* of these meetings which have made me even more concerned with how it is important to *be alert and present in the movement of unfolding moments*, to get a sense of *the uniqueness and novelty of every encounter*. I have become more taken up by the *ethical imperative* of the *dialogical*, and how each new meeting calls out for being *answerable* within that unique emerging circumstance.

My research has been a *doing, an experiencing and a creation of knowing* in a reflexive flow. My research philosophy, mode of approaching my practice as therapist and supervisor (and as a person in the world) has reflexively been created through my *being* in practice and writing from within this practice. I have come to feel more at home when I have oriented myself in this way of relating to practice: To feel at home in the *manner of orientation and creation*, welcoming *intuition* and the *emergence* of relational and embodied knowing, and to invite others to feel at home in this *same way of being*. It has created a *withness*, between people I have engaged with

and myself, and invited to a *third kind of knowing* (Shotter, 2010, 2011), created through *our engagement and co joint exploration of emerging circumstances*.

This style of wandering, done in slow pace and dwelling must not be mistaken as a safeguard against uncertainty, a way of making sure of having (taking) control. I would say, on the contrary, it *welcomes risk-taking, uncertainty, ambivalence and complexity*, without perceiving it as 'unpredictability' or chaos. As a wanderer I have encouraged myself not to be concerned with creating order. I have, using the words of Tom Andersen tried to breathe in, and *welcome life* (Andersen in Ianssen, 2011), and life is disorderly, unpredictable and filled with surprises. While breathing is for me a taken-for-granted and less mindful experience, in this context, it invites a more conscious fusion of the whole of me in relation to others, to my surroundings and my inner and outer dialogues.

An Inquiry into Human Relationship and Meaning making

I have not taken it upon myself to create an overarching understanding of *all* aspects that I have found intriguing in *all* the encounters I have written about in this portfolio. That would of course be quite paradoxical concerning the scope of this research as well as the philosophical stance I have tried to acquire; there is no *all* to be described. But when looking into my material and dwelling on my own experience, I see that this *wandering* and *artistic co-creation* of meaning has become just as much an inquiry into what it means to be a human being, human relationships and meaning making as that of simply understanding more about supervision. And that has become most important for me to address first in this last chapter.

Ontological Avalanche

I am claiming that understanding a human being as becoming through the movements of dialogue (Bakhtin, 1981, 1984) is an ontological stance that shakes the discursive ground the modern Western world is based on like an avalanche. Perceiving a human being as dialogical (de Peuter, 1998) has great and governing consequences for how we think about a person's movements in the world, as a person, in relation to other people, how we understand problems, and approach problem solving; with that how we conceptualise *therapy* and develop discourses and methods on how *to become a therapist*. Social constructionism (Leppington, 1991, McNamee & Gergen, 1992, Burr, 2003, Shotter, 2010), a dialogical stance (Seikkula, 20002, Shotter, 2008) and the acknowledgement of intersubjectivity (Stern, 1985, 2004, 2010) calls for breaking with the idea that people are autonomous entities relating to stable social categories. Consequently and in line with this, it is imperative to move away from seeing language as representing a stable reality people use to convey exact meaning.

Tension filled Movements

I have through this inquiry experienced how I myself have felt the tension between the centripetal forces that centralize and unify, and the centrifugal forces that decentralize and disunify (Bakhtin, 1981). I have been fighting my own battles concerning all the discourses that saturate our society concerning what a person *is*, what research *is*, what therapy *is* and what supervision *is*. To allow knowledge to emerge, *to become* in relationship and in movement is to challenge the basis of our modern Western society. This can of course be questioned; as one could claim that all academics and intellectual work, as well as research is founded on the idea that there is more to know. I have addressed this previously, discussing knowledge, philosophy and methodology, in chapter 5, 6, 7 and 9. The idea that there is knowledge *out there*, manifested as stable categories that can be *found* if we search hard or well enough might be discussed and disputed in research communities (as described in ch. 6-7), and the whole post modern 'movement' is of course questioning these ideas of stability etc. and value fluidity, complexity and discrepancy (Burr, 2003, Anderson, 1997, Gergen, 1999, Shotter, 2010). But still, I find those voices *marginal* in relation to how our society as a whole relate to knowledge, and how it is played out in our ordinary going-about-life. There is a centripetal force (Bakhtin, 1981) that draws our relationship to knowledge towards categorizations, certainty and predictability. Which we for instance recognize in the growing attention to, and demand for evidence based practice (for example Jensen, 2006, Rønnestad, 2008, Skauli, 2009) and what we consider as evidence. And it is *this* picture that holds us captivated, and which is hard to get outside (Wittgenstein, 1953). We are easily misguided as I pointed to earlier, and take that it is the forms or categories that make something meaningful, real or knowable. We might think that if we have succeeded in abstracting a form – conceptualizing some aspect of our experience – then we have captured the full meaning. This fidelity towards stable structures can tempt us in to believe that conceptualised meanings are fixed, abstract entities free of ever changing contexts and the ongoing flow of experience. If we only base our development of evidence on those categories we have already created, we risk merely retelling and recreating what has already been created inside socially created categories. Johnson (2007) emphasize that this view easily leaves out both the body and our situated, embodied practices, and thereby all their complex meaning.

The *picture* or *discourse* about knowledge as stable categories existing independent of language and about people as autonomous entities, gives *values* to autonomy, certainty, coherence, consistency and consensus. I will underline that I am describing tendencies and forces *towards certainty etc.* but, as I will show below, what I am concerned about is how I recognize how these affinities towards unity and certainty are played out as '*ought to's*' and discourses people live by. It is for instance evident in stories I hear therapists, those who teach therapy and supervisees tell and live by, concerning 'what it *is* to be a professional', 'what therapy *is*', 'how to become a

professional', 'how to become a therapist', 'what PPD is', what 'supervision is', 'what research is' or what these 'things' 'should' 'be'. But these discourses concerning certainty, coherence and consistency have even more far reaching consequences as I experience them as decisive concerning how we relate to our own meaning making.

My own experience

The most powerful force I have felt myself in relation to living inside these discourses, has been that of *accepting not to know* and that of *acknowledging what I do know, even if I don't know it as explicit knowledge ready to be accounted for in words*. It has been hard to recognize that I could *move according to a knowing I was unable to express*. I have felt *lost* when I have thought that it should have been different, and I have become *embarrassed* when I have fumbled after words or heard my voice halt, and *lonely* when I have not felt understood, in spite of my attempts to make myself intelligible. Similarly, I have at times felt almost surprised *when I talk and I can hear that what I say is quite comprehensible* or *I might surprise myself by saying something quite out of the blue, but which really felt significant to express*. I have equally felt warmed and confident when someone has *stretched out to understand my relationship with what I am trying to express and created space for me to find my voice*.

I am accentuating this because these ideas and experiences have been feeding into my work as a supervisor, and I have equally been able to recognize how supervisees have similar experiences as I have myself concerning the above. They have expressed embarrassment when they fumble and grope for meaning and some keep silent if they are not sure what to say, even if they have something they would like to express. Some hesitate to talk out loud if they feel they are the only one who feels or relates this or that way. And some have lost their voice because they have not found anyone who would or could hear it. Some supervisees have found it difficult to acknowledge what they do in their professional life, when having a hard time articulating what it is they do, even if they feel they are useful and people appreciate what they do. Loneliness, embarrassment and shame are words I often hear, and feelings I sense. To address this, and relate to it has been part of this research practice.

Heteroglossia

I have in my practice acknowledged what Bakhtin (1981) terms *living in the midst of heteroglossia*, claiming meaning making as an ongoing living process. It serves as a reminder concerning how every discourse is shaped at a particular historical moment in a socially specific environment and brush up against thousands of living dialogic threads. It is intrinsically intertwined with socio-ideological consciousness around the given object of utterance; and it cannot fail to become an active participant in dialogue. I perceive heteroglossia as Bakhtin's

recognition of the multiple and continuously evolving movement between certainty and uncertainty. It is a hopeful condition, contesting any notion of everlasting notion of stability or generalization of universal truth. And it is a profound reminder, we can not merely be accountable in regards to earlier discursive practices, we need to be answerable in the moment to the uniqueness of the unfolding relational movement. I addressed this, in particular in my writing about my meetings with Davis (ch. 9).

I became concerned with how the discursive force towards stability and consistency is powerful and seductive; 'inside the discourse' one feels belonging and a sense of worth. As for being 'outside' one might feel lost. Our society shows an awarding of those who gain adequate view, behold certainty, show ability to categorize and predict outcomes. The awarding of generalized logic and reason as evidence towards what we identify as right, valuable and suitable ways of relating to our being a person in the world shows itself, not only concerning research outcome but also in our everyday life. This is what Rebekka was up against, demanding of herself to be *clever* and not being able to acknowledge the significance of her presence when she was with the family where the mother was dying (ch. 11). Blossom had expected to learn how to master relationships when she started to train to become a family therapist/systemic practitioner (ch. 10).

Diving in to the Poetic Movement

My practice research has challenged discourses valuing certainty and predictability. Through an increased and embodied belief in *fluidity, complexity, temporality, emergence* and *novelty*, I have opened space, in my practice as supervisor, teacher, therapist and researcher, for *perpetual groping for meaning, encouraging the freedom of a kind of orientation which is open towards situated, emerging, novel and provisional understanding* – trusting this should be perceived with the *compassion* such courage deserves.

I have embraced *spontaneity, ambiguity* and *intuition*, and *welcomed anxiety, risk-taking* and *improvisation*. I value *coincidence, intuition* and *embodied knowing*. My endeavor has become that of inviting people into relationships filled with *playfulness, sensitivity, responsiveness* and *creativity*, and demonstrates a willingness to *dive into the uniqueness of every new encounter and every new movement*, and be *answerable* inside that relationship. This has become an approach to research, therapy and that of *becoming a therapist*.

Revisiting the Portfolio

I have not wanted to create a summing up of 'findings'. That would be in contradiction to an emergent process and to the idea about creating evocative texts that engage the listener, and

that it is this engagement and invitation to dialogue that is my intention, not to accumulate some *frozen findings* (Gergen & Gergen, 2000). I would rather like to accentuate and point towards how this dialogical process as described above provided some significant opportunities for the supervisees with whom I have been in conversations.

I believe the here-and-now approach of *diving into the movements*, I have shown in the portfolio has been quite prosperous. By not having any plans, but relating to what spontaneously emerge, to be *answerable* within the act, we have in these encounters I have described in the portfolio been able to address something of significance.

Davis experienced his PPD group's way of listening as compassionate, which together with our talks created an opportunity for him to regain his African identity. His and my way of relating, without having to contextualize our relationship was 'like therapy' he said, and created a kind of freedom Davis brought with him into the context of his therapy practice as well (ch. 9). And I brought it with me into my research and further supervision practice as an acknowledgement of attending to and be answerable her-and-now.

The moment of resonance between Andrea and Elisabeth (ch. 9) was significant in itself, for Andrea and Elisabeth. But our further talk about it created some additional possibilities for Andrea and for the group. Andrea was able to gain agency (Anderson, 1997) through becoming a storyteller, her memory was altered through the groups compassionate listening and this contributed to creating a *relational compassion* in the group, inviting us all to be both bolder and more humble as we moved in relation to each other in an even *passionate* way.

Blossom (ch. 10) experienced through her *relationship in* supervision, that it was not by *mastering relationships*, but being in relationships she can be of help to other people. Through her 'dancing' with the supervisor and with the supervision group she experienced the impact embracing anxiety, encouraging sensitivity and improvisation can have on relationships. She showed how these experiences made her more capable of feeling confident and relate to difficult circumstances without having to change the circumstances.

In the supervision with the Aspasiens we developed a way of being together that welcomed complexity, movements, spontaneity and presence. As a group we managed to welcome and attend attentively to voices that had not been expressed publicly before. Rebekka has given a thorough description on the impact of being able to talk about her meeting with the dying mother and her family, had on her. The way the group listened with compassion, letting Rebekka move them, opened up for her to talk and later to attend to matters that became significant for her in many domains of her life. Rebekka's talking about this in the group, created opportunities for other members as well, being able to address aspects of their life too. What we called *rounds*,

was a space for relational compassion – where we all became able to take each other in and be moved by each other. This created, as was acknowledged through the email correspondence – a sense of freedom; freedom from having to ‘do things to people’, “be clever” as Rebekka puts it. I see this as the same kind of freedom Davis and Blossom experiences; to move more confidently around in a space of complexity and uncertainty. Rebekka describes it as being able to meet people differently, listen differently – and see “how people start talking with her, and tell much more about their lives and their difficulties.” (ch. 11).

When I met the women ‘In the Shades of the Mango Tree’ (ch. 11) I managed to sense the here-and-know movements in the group and invite these unvoiced movements of emotional distress into our conversation. I believe my compassionate listening, letting myself be emotionally moved by what was talked about, invited the one who was talking to talk about what was significant to talk about. This created not only a relational compassion, as the whole group managed to listen to each other in that manner, it also as Lisa reported created a kind of compassion towards herself. Ellen expressed that she would have quite the group and her studies all together if she hadn’t had the chance to talk like we did. And the whole group expressed and showed how our talk created a new energy and intimacy in the group.

I believe I have been able to describe how this dialogical practice has created opportunities for us all to learn from within, and created significant embodied learning: as one supervisee said: “We have felt it in our own body” (ch. 11). Another supervisee said: “...it is a golden opportunity – for us as trainees. To be able to feel all these feelings. And to deal with it like this” (ch. 11).

Being with People

When I spontaneously, and to my surprise, used the Norwegian word *medmenneskelighet* when I responded to my neighbour’s question about what I was going to be a *doctor ‘in’*, I knew immediately that it was spot on; *medmenneskelighet* translated into *humanity* which encompasses *answerability* and *compassion*, and describes the kind of involvement I feel a dialogical approach requires. It is these two notions that have become especially significant as ‘action guiding anticipations’ (Shotter, 2010), that is, embodied experiences which will guide my going on as a dialogical practitioner.

Relational Compassion

The idea about resonance created an opportunity to explore how supervisees could be encouraged to listen and be touched by the other. To let the other person’s emotional relation to what is talked about touch the listeners own emotional soundboard. This was an encouragement

not to listen to identify or diagnose, but to *be with* the other person on her emotional journey, to let the other person explore and feel her way around inside her landscape of experiences.

I have come to describe this as a willingness to *listen with compassion* - from a space of unknowing, loss of control, loss of ideas and concepts and welcome an opening up towards the other, not shrinking what is expressed into all ready developed contextual forms the expression needs to fit into. To let the uniqueness of the once occurrent dialogical event touch the listener and change the listener as well as the speaker. The impact this way of being open towards the other and the otherness, and letting this move you as listener – and the significance of creating such a space in a group is what I think of as a kind of *synergy of relational compassion*.

Answerability

To be answerable inside the unique situation is to throw ourselves into the emergence of movements and be open towards what emerge. Rather than merely defining our ethics and let our responsibility be governed by rule bound requirements or previously acquired meaning, acts are constituted as meaning by the locations in which they happen. I see our 'ought to do's' not as connected to abstract law, generalized evidence, but as something being played out between real people in real situations, by the concrete *ought* conditioned by each person's "unique place in the given context of the ongoing event" (Bakhtin 1993:30). The willingness to become present in relation to the emerging actualities, instead of being governed by generalized stabilities, and to become present 'inside' the relationship, has made it decisive to learn to read the actual context I am involved in, to pay attention to the musicality of the present movements, sometimes to the expense of claims towards what is required of me as for instance 'therapist', 'supervisor', 'teacher' or 'researcher'.

As someone who is part of our society's system of people who help people, we need to ask ourselves what is it *I am doing*, what kind of conversations *am I* inviting people in to. We can never get outside of these *contexts*, as we are part of creating them through our actions and through our languaging. Using Wittgenstein's notion of language game (Wittgenstein, 1953), we need to ask what language game are we inside, and what language game are we about to preserve or create. The way we talk, the words we use, construct our world and creates possibilities and restrictions.

Question discursive categories like therapy, supervision and training

These dialogical encounters I have described in detail through the tales in the portfolio were done in the context, or language game of what has been termed PPD or supervision; but some may ask *did what you were doing also have a therapeutic effect?* Some will even ask *if this was*

therapy. My answer to that is: it depends on which language game we are talking out of, and in to.

I will remind us, that we must not confuse the language created concepts and categories with the fluid actualities of ongoing relationships. I have claimed that dialogical encounters are life enhancing and create opportunities for orientation and feelings of belonging inside the actual relational meeting. What I will prefer to call *dialogical practice* contributed to a space which welcomed the *freedom of a kind of orientation* which is open towards situated, emerging, novel and provisional understanding. By attending to here-and-now interactions, becoming answerable in the moment and by embracing intuition, ambiguity and relational compassion, we welcomed risk-taking and improvisation. This demonstrated a willingness to spontaneously dive into the uniqueness of every new encounter and every new movement. The experience is there, independent of what we call it. Within a dialogical practice framework we are encouraging people to step outside of the dualistic mind-body discourse and become professionals who are using or are able to access many parts of their different emerging selves with ethical sensitivity and practical fluidity.

It may become important for the profession to review the usefulness of distinct categorization between therapy, supervision and research.

My Contribution

Further on, I will depict my contribution so far, in this research practice. I will address how I hope this thesis, *Dialogical Practice - Diving into the Poetic Movement* will make an important contribution concerning; how we can be with people and create opportunities for orientation, in a way that opens up more understanding and creates a sense of belonging and liberation. I anticipate it will create permissions for other practitioners to challenge and transgressively explore discursive boundaries which attempt to define and fix what research *is*, therapy *is*, supervision *is*, and welcome the infinity of opportunities and possibilities life may offer us. I also hope that the way I have created a description of a relationship to research; the way I have lived and described a living practice from within, and been able to re-present it in an innovative and evocative manner, will invite other practitioners to feel moved, enthused, encouraged and inspired. And I hope this will encourage other practitioners to explore ways of approaching research from within the poetics of moving relationships.

I have managed to create a multi-layered contribution, concerning a dialogical approach – in relation to teaching, PPD, supervision and research. I have managed to describe in some details

the micro processes in the dialogical encounter and show how these details are of significance for a dialogue to evolve. I have also been able to address how grand narratives about what it means to be a human being, what it means to have problems, and how to great the conditions to overcome some of the restrictions from other contexts in the moment of living human encounters. These same grand narratives value generalized reasoning, and simultaneously de value another kind of knowing – knowing from within living relationships: the kind of embodied guidance we live by.

Offering 'myself'

I have through this research practice become convinced that key contribution *offering myself*⁶⁰, and by doing that I invite people into *a way of being with people*. I have through my practice, my practice research and re-presenting this research been truthful towards not trying to convince by numbers, figures or generalized rational accounts. I have instead offered my most genuine voice. I have come to have confidence in the importance of contributing into relationship, with the authenticity of one's *being*, or it would be even more accurate to say *one's becoming*.

This strong belief in the significance of learning through becoming engaged, and being able to hold on to it, and not be tempted to convince the other through creating categories, convincing conceptual imperatives is of great value.

I have through this research, through my re-presentation (in writing and the way I have presented the writing) been able to show how emotionally presence, learning from the other by listening with compassion, and respond by offering my in that moments most genuine voice, something of importance will emerge.

I have managed to create some experiences, and tales, which have emotionally moved the supervisees and readers. It has the possibility of creating a kind of embodied engagement that permits and anticipates ways of going on that has not been described in this way before, within the community of family therapy and systemic practice. And in the sections that follow I would just like to list some of these consequences for some of the different groups of people that I have worked with in my teaching, research, and supervision practices.

⁶⁰ Ann-Rita Gjertzen (2011) has in her dissertation "La eksperten fare" addressed how people who have been working with Tom Andersen have acknowledged the significance of being genuine when responding and being with clients.

Supervisees and research companions

I have offered my attentive presence in my collaboration with supervisees. This has created some significant learning experiences for them in terms of increased self and relational reflexivity as co-supervisees and also as practitioners with their clients.

Their experience being part of the process, learning more about relational encounters and experiencing a way of being together in life and in re-presenting life through writing. They have reported feeling liberated – which has helped them feel more confident in their responsiveness and relational sensitivity in their professional practices, as well as in other domains of their lives.

Personal and professional Development

I have finished creating a PPD-program, but became more and more convinced that the program needed to be flexible and invite improvisation. Today we as PPD-supervisors are more attentive towards how the different groups and each student respond in the moment and we try to invite ourselves as well as the students into a space where we take risks, improvise and attend to the ever emerging circumstances.

Supervisees in my practice as teacher

I have become more alert and answerable in relational movements. I have learned to focus my attention not only backwards but also into the here-and-now movements between us. Through this process of immersion in the movement, I can also speak reflexively with students about this process and so explore with them some opportunities offered by this form of dialogical practice. This has significant implications for how they feel able to be relational sensitive and reflexively engage with clients, peers and text.

Other people I meet in Supervision

Supervisees have reported feeling more able to articulate and live with what has not yet been articulated but is there as part of their embodied being. They can move more confidently around inside relationships that are not fixed but in the process of becoming. They feel more confident in relation to how this is of value because it is so different from much of what goes on in our society these days – evidence based.

Dialogical Conversation Groups

I have invited people I have met to join into Dialogical Conversation Groups where we meet and talk. People have experienced this space as a 'head spa', a place where they feel free to grope for meaning, live and talk about ambivalence and ambiguity. Some say they prioritize it above going

to conferences because they feel the space is significant as a place for experience and as a reminder of how dialogue is prosperous.

People I have shared experiences and these tales with

I have experienced how the sharing of my tales from this portfolio with colleagues in the field has created permissions for people to move more freely around in their own practice. They have acknowledged their embodied knowing, and they feel encouraged to talk with their own voice(s), challenging the authoritative voices of generalized discourses, not just the dominant or restrictive narratives of the father-tongue.

The Doctorate's House Poet

My close teaching and supervision colleague Gunnar Nodland and I have managed to challenge and comfort each other through this process. I believe our conversations have created some possibilities for him to become the Poet of Resonance, as his poems created emotional vibrations in me enthusing me to move further on in the landscape of uncertainty. His has come to write and offer his poems of resonance to clients, students and supervisees, showing a sensitive responsiveness I believe have, engaged, moved and puzzled the receivers.

Systemic Café in Yorkshire

I was invited to work with a group of systemic therapists in the UK on the subject of resonance and use of self. They appeared relieved and excited to explore a reframing of Tom Andersen's reflecting teams as Resonance Groups. I understand some people's writing took an additional reflexive dimension after reading some of my tales and they were inspired to explore ways of writing about their professional experiences and for their research.

Måfå Research Group

I have been part of a group of four women, who have challenged any idea about knowledge as a private affair, and research as one person's doing. I believe my dialogical approach has influenced the others, as it has made it possible for me to let myself be influenced by them. It has been about: *being* and *becoming*, and within that the creations of a research community. Together we have been able to explore ways of relating to research, not as an one person affair but as a jointly created adventure. I have through my dialogical approach contributed to generating a discursive space for elaboration.

Presentations

Having presented this work at conferences to fellow practitioners, I have had several indications that colleagues have found these ideas theoretically stimulating and practically useful. I have

been encouraged to write papers on these ideas in both English and Norwegian. People seem to find useful the connection between stories from practice and theoretical connections. I have had several reports from people of them feeling more inspired and confident in feeling their way into dialogical relationships with a fresh energy and excitement.

Opening up Doors, and Widening the Open Doors

My dream and my hope: I have found the development of my practice(s) in the course of my research to be an unending task, an unfolding process.

As I face each new challenge, new aspects of my dialogical practices emerge in unexpected ways. As Bakhtin (1986) puts it with regard to such dialogical process:

“There is neither a first nor a last word and there are no limits to the dialogic context (it extends into the boundless past and boundless future). Even *past* meanings, that is those born in the dialogue of past centuries, can never be stable (finalized, ended once and for all) – they will always change (be renewed) in the process of subsequent, future development of the dialogue. At any moment in the development of the dialogue there are immense, boundless masses of forgotten contextual meanings, but at certain moments of the dialogue’s subsequent development along the way they are recalled and invigorated in renewed form (in a new context). Nothing is absolutely dead: every meaning will have its homecoming festival.” (:170)

And that is my dream and my hope for the future too... my practices will continue and I hope to create more opportunities.

Postlude - The Flight of the Birds

There is a large window just behind the computer screen. My eyes find a moment's rest as I fasten on the roof covering the grey shed over the courtyard. The tiles are rescued from falling off the cliff by a friendly tribe of moss which has decided to grow an all-embracing new community in the middle of town. Seven *Populus tremula Erecta*⁶¹, have taken it upon themselves to guard us all, the eight families living in the building opposite the shed and the shed itself, now including the new moss community. But in spite of the statuesque erection the tall trees are trying to keep up, the continuously rattling leaves disclose it's somewhat contagiously jittery disposition.

I lean backwards in my steel framed chair, feeling both jittery and statuesque myself. I roll my shoulders back and forth, stretch my neck up and down as if the movements could open up and guide me towards some kind of certainty. I am about to finish writing the thesis.

Then, against the well polished mid day sky, as if from nowhere, there is a sudden but soft grayish shift, moving into my field of vision. It strikes my awareness before it is sucked up in the sky again and transpires into hundreds of alpine swifts. I am absolutely captivated, my senses overwhelmed as the birds shape and reshape formations, moving up and down, away from me and back again forming harmonious and breathtaking silhouettes. Silver cascades of ray from the sun transform hundreds of moving swifts to an amazing giant silver kite, sensuously tickling the blueness and myself. The tension I felt just an instance ago is swept away by the floating movements of vigilant wings navigating in the sky. And I know that this juvenile vitality is just the beginning; the birds will keep on challenging gravity and fashion an infinity of wonderful fluctuation for the year to come until they settle down to brood next spring.

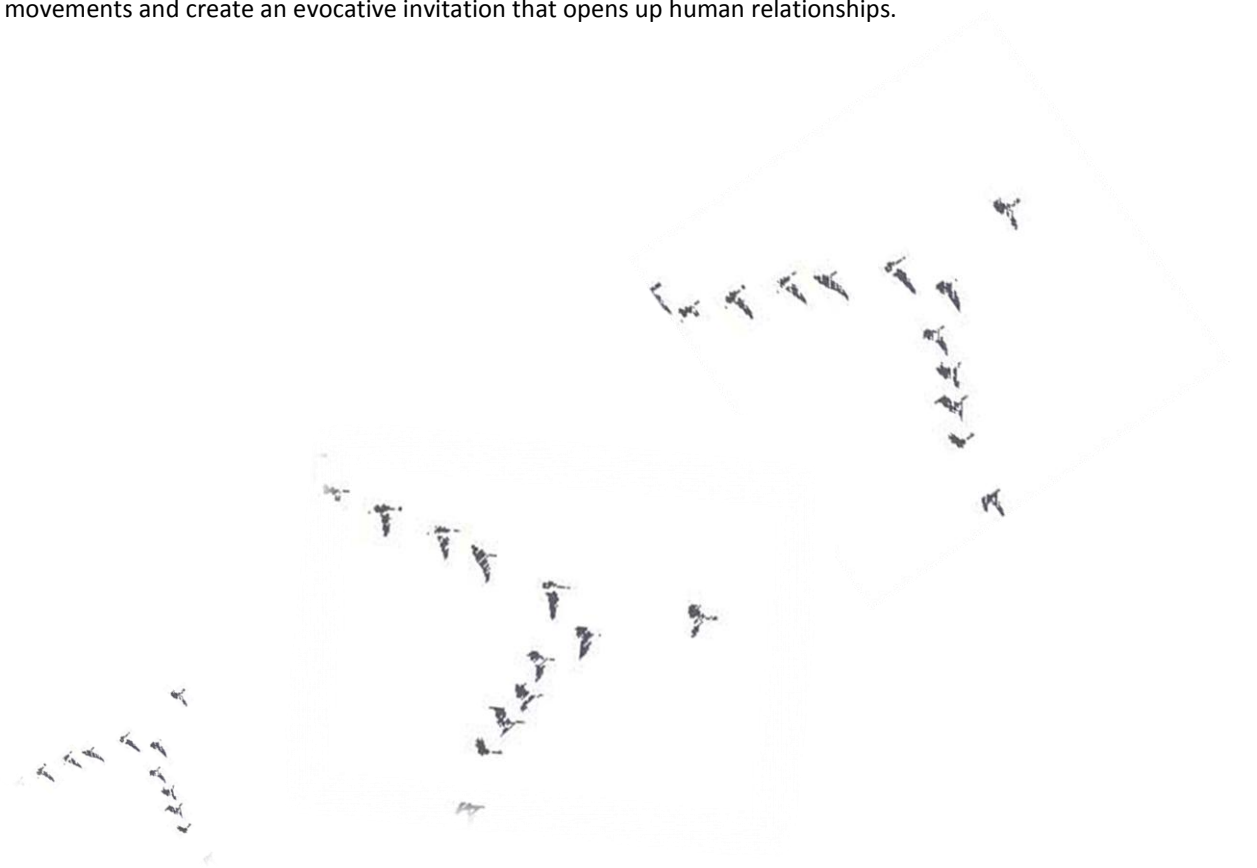
It is not any one bird's movements I am taking in so much as their beautiful flux and shifts against the blue. What amazing coordination and playfulness. I feel gratitude towards this unanticipated and spectacular event, and deep contentment knowing that there is actually no need for me to seize the flux by describing it. The swift movements become embodied as a reminiscence of contours wonderfully freed from the imprisonment of words.

There is a moment's emancipation as I am breathing in the wonders of the organic nature. In my breathing out, I feel enormously envious of the birds' freedom from being taken into custody by digital signs. I am called back to my desk and my computer to create some comprehensible order

⁶¹ Columnar European aspen

out of the flow of movements and reflexively intertwining experiences from my years of *flying*. It is almost as if the birds and my flying play into each other in a mutually illuminating fashion.

I have in a sense taken it upon me to catch the flux of intertwined sensuous and transient motion, not by detaining it, but rather by stretching towards the poet's ability to dive into the movements and create an evocative invitation that opens up human relationships.



Appendices

Appendix 1 - Information and Agreement Form

Dear ,

I am writing to get the last agreement from you, to be able to include the story I have written from our supervision relationship in my doctoral portfolio. We have already talked about this, and you have consented through email, but I would like you to read a final draft you will find attached. As you know, I am doing a Professional Doctorate in Systemic Practice at the University of Bedfordshire. It's another kind of PhD but for people who are already experienced in therapy, counselling supervision or training therapists. I have been expected to study something in depth from my work and then write about it so other therapists, supervisors and trainers of therapists can benefit from my studies.

About my research

Initially my research project had as its centre of attention: *Finding ways that could increase sensitivity and responsiveness in professionals of systemic practice by encouraging a benevolent curiosity about themselves as persons in relation to others.*

What started out as a rather pre planned action research format, with the intention to create a program for a supervision context called Personal Professional Development (PPD) at Diakonhjemmet University College in Oslo, Norway, expanded.

Meetings and encounters with students and literature served as momentous experiences that drew my attention to more spontaneously emerging events, and I decided to broaden my horizon and inquire into these events.

As my center of curiosity expanded, I started to explore movements and relational encounters in a wider range of supervision contexts. I became enthusiastic about exploring how dialogical practices could be a way of interacting with students in supervision to produce greater awareness, both on my part and on theirs, and of how small details could make a big difference in our learning. This initiated and at first, blurred, spontaneous, responsive and expressive inquiry into my professional practice and my identity in relation to many domains of life - a beginning, which I was able later to bring into a sharper, more well articulated focus.

The following questions have caught my interest through this process:

- In what ways can a dialogically oriented supervision context extend students' and supervisors' abilities and opportunities to move freely in relation to ever emerging situations?
- How can we make use of the here-and-now interactive moments that appear in supervision settings?
- In what ways can the exploration of details in these moments open up new ways of going on together in other contexts, i.e. therapy?
- How can these kinds of detailed experiences feed into other domains of students' and supervisors' lives and their relationships?

- What other aspects or qualities of relational encounters of significance have emerged, noticeable through experiences within this research journey?
- How can we write about our own and other peoples' experiences in a way that feels resonant with the actual experience? And in what ways can these writings, from within experiences, manage to touch and involve the reader and invite further dialogues?
- And finally how might the outcomes emerging from this research journey be made use of in improving psychotherapy teaching and training – particularly with regard to the lack of confidence initially felt by all beginning psychotherapists?

Privacy matters

There are two key questions:

i) is it okay with you to include this writing in my research?

ii) what can we do to make it more than okay? For example, you will notice that I have already changed your name and some other identifying details. Perhaps you suggested that alternative name or perhaps you can do that now? Is there anything else you would want me to change that doesn't sit right with you? It's absolutely fine to be as direct with me as you like. Your feedback is part of my research learning. I won't be irritated or disappointed.

In my writing on the computer, I have used an alternative name for you from the start and removed identifying details. I keep the writings on my laptop and a home computer which are both password protected and my writings are kept in password protected directories. When I discuss the writings, I also use your made up name not your real name.

The other thing I would like to take this opportunity to say is that your earlier response to the drafts I have sent you might differ from this last draft, and your thinking about being included in this research might have changed. It may be that this writing was a while ago for you now. How are you seeing it now? Do you have any hints or advice for me to think about?

If you have any questions about any of this please contact me, either on mail:

annehedvigv@hotmail.com

Or telephone:

99441087

If you wanted to speak with my supervisor rather than me, he is Professor Ravi K S Kohli at the University of Bedfordshire and is contactable by email: ravi.kohli@beds.ac.uk or by phone: +44 (0)1582 743092

If you are okay about completing the form underneath, I would really like it back as soon as possible.

All the best, Anne Hedvig Vedeler

Here is the agreement form. Please would you sign your whole name at the bottom of the form. Do call, email or text me if you want to go over anything or if something bothers you. The form may sound a bit formal but I am just trying to be clear and check you do understand what you are agreeing to. Will you please email this to me at

annehedvigv@hotmail.com - from your own email address.

Information and Agreement Form

I understand that Anne Hedvig Vedeler is doing some research on supervision relationships as part of her doctoral studies at the University of Bedfordshire, Luton, UK.

Anne Hedvig has explained to me that she would like to include some writing about our supervision relationship in her research and has shown me what she has written, and I have agreed to her use of this/these stories.

I am comfortable with what Anne Hedvig has done to disguise my identity.

She has explained that there is never any guarantee that someone might identify me from the writing.

Anne Hedvig has told me that it is absolutely fine for me to say that I don't want her to make any reference to me in her work.

She has also explained that we can change or edit any descriptions of me or our conversations so I feel comfortable with what she has written.

I understand that the following groups of people will read about our conversations: Anne Hedvig's examiners from the University of Bedfordshire; her supervisor and consultants to her research; other students, therapists, supervisors, trainers and researchers who want to learn more about supervision.

I understand that there is a cut off point for saying 'No' as some things will go into print or be presented at conferences and can't then be withdrawn. This cut off date is 04.09.2011.

Signed.....Date.....

Appendix 2 - The Island Women

This tale is not included in the portfolio, not because my relationship with the Island Women wasn't significant enough – but because my way of writing about it became too extensive at this point in time. The following is a sketch, and not edited into a finished format. I would have included this tale as part of Chapter 10, The Apprentice.

Hanna, Amanda, Brenda and Marta were students in one of my classes for one year. I was their supervisor during this year and for three more years I supervised their 12 colleagues working at the Family House. These four women became my companions on a four year journey as we undertook a co joint *Apprenticeship in dialogue as a way of being with people*. They have stimulated my curiosity towards encounters, and expanded my experience and knowledge about what takes place inside encounters that are experienced as good. Just as important, I have come to understand more about rupture and repair. We have, together, explored how some encounters inspire and transform, and how these experiences have had a *contagious effect*.

It is the unique and at the same time universal thing about these encounters that made me curious initially. These meetings have inspired me to develop a new style of group supervision, trusting that the dialogical process in itself will create learning, and that accidental relational ruptures could be welcomed and dealt with as learning situations. I know more now about what kind of space invites trust, and what might happen when the supervisor never *questions* the other.

Our meetings have been adventures, an ongoing transformational journey for all of us and we have moved and been moved. It has been a journey also in that we have moved geographically between the mountains, Oslo, a peninsula in the Oslo Fjord and far north in Norway on the Island. Marta, Brenda, Hanna and Amanda have travelled to the University College in Oslo and to supervision sessions with me and I have travelled to the Island. We have not only visited the geographical landscape, although I believe it has been of significance that we have moved around physically. We have also been able to explore as well as create experiences of inner and outer landscapes, in and between ourselves. These experiences have opened up and acknowledged a way of being together that has had a profound effect on all of us.

The following section in this portfolio is made up of fragments of storied events. It is not a chronological account, thus truthful to the idea that there could be infinite ways of telling and

just as many stories to tell from the events of lived life. This writing is an attempt to compose something of significance for others by mixing my reflections, transcripts, mail correspondences and recollections of talks to create a sense of coherence and at the same time, a sense of the complex fluidity of a continuously lived life. To help the reader I will be putting up some signposts:

- *Up in the mountains, September 2007*
The emergence of trust

- *On the Island, February 2009*
An invitation to inquire into our ongoing relationship

- **The importance of not questioning**

- Oslo, October 2007
The emergence of supervision as dialogical practice

Dialogical Captivation

Doing nothing and Presence

- **Amanda**
- On the Island, February 2009
Being in “a special space” and about being allowed to be vulnerable

- On the Island, October 2009
To be heard and to let oneself be heard

- At my desk, March 2011
Falling from grace

The Emergence of Trust

I stand in the lecture theatre at the Hotel and look out over the new class. My gaze moves from one to another of the students and I count softly to myself. Four people are still missing. "Thirty-five students," I think, "What a big group."

I flip through the class list and see that there are quite a few who have travelled far to get here, from the far north of Norway and from the southwest coast. Most probably those missing are coming on a later train.

The first gathering in the students' second year⁶² is always held in a hotel in Norwegian mountain country. The classes are reorganized so that many participants won't know each other from before. I've left home early this morning and spent the four hours on the train to restructure the introductory day. This time, I want to loosen up a bit what I did the year before in what I thought was a somewhat boring and anxious presentation round. As ever, I sense some uneasiness in my stomach, I move restlessly to and fro, and at the same time pretend that I have things to do. Most of the students know someone else in the class from before. It's "Hello, long time since last time", grins and small smiles and friendly hugs of recognition. I wish I too had found a familiar face in this unfamiliar whirl. At once I feel a pull of longing for the classes from the year before.

The chairs are arranged in a circle and I've put name tags on each seat in the hope that the students won't just flock around those they already know. The time is 13.05 and I position myself right out in the middle of the floor; everyone has found their places and 62 eyes are staring at me. I begin to talk. As surprisingly as ever, in spite of a pull in the stomach and lack of a script (I've not written anything down or practiced what to say) fairly clear words and meaningful sentences emerge from my mouth. I experience an expectant but friendly atmosphere in the room, a form of trusting expectation.

After some introductory words I invite them to speak together in several different ways, as in a cocktail party, I explain, and after that in more structured ways. We are well underway. There are still four empty chairs. "Dammit", I think, "They're missing this now, still on the train. It would've been so good to have them here from the start. Could've gotten to know one another."

⁶² This is the second year of four in the Master of family therapy and systemic practice.

Half an hour goes by, and the room is humming. Half of them are talking while the others listen. They are working in pairs but changing partners continually, as in “speed dating”. I hear the door opening behind me and through a cautious crack I see a couple of faces. It’s as though they don’t really know if they should come in or not. I smile as I move towards the door and wave the faces in. Four blonde women with large suitcases tiptoe carefully into the room. I introduce myself and one by one they take my hand: Hanna, Amanda, Brenda and Marta, all from Mo in Rana. Each one apologizes for being late. There is no need, I assure them. “We’ve started now, so maybe you can just jump in and join us.” I explain what we are doing, and the bags are placed along the wall. Hanna, Amanda and Brenda turn towards the “speed daters”. Marta hesitates.

I remember that Marta excused herself with a slight stammer and asked if it was OK for her to take a short trip to her room to take a shower.

“You see, we’ve been travelling since yesterday morning with the boat and then the train”. Poor woman, I think, that’s some journey. I’d once had a friend on the same Island, so I had sat on the same boat and the same train and felt the time travelling as a polluting fog that sank into every pore of my skin. Marta continues, almost breathless, *“Just a short shower, I’ll be back soon”.* I don’t know whether it’s her uncertainty I sense and answer - my general wish is to be friendly and accommodating – or if it’s my own memories of the feeling of the dust in my eyes, stiff limbs and static hair that makes me exclaim, *“I think you should take a long shower, myself, take all the time you need, don’t feel you need to rush”.* Marta nods and disappears up to the hotel room. Then I forget the whole episode.

On the Island, February 2009

An invitation to inquire into our ongoing relationship

A year and a half later, I am sitting around a low table with **Hanna, Amanda** and **Brenda**. We have arranged to give ourselves some hours together, we who in the course of the past year have developed *something* that we all agree is important. **Marta**, unfortunately, is lying under the covers with a fever of 101, but we are quite certain she is jealous of us having this time together. What has happened to make me able to say with such conviction, “We have experienced something important to us, so much so that Marta with her fever is sorry not to be able to be with us”?

This particular evening I am on the Island North of the Polar Circle. It is the darkest time of the year and it has been several weeks since anyone saw a glimpse of the sun. I have been invited to supervise at the Family House where the four women are employed. These precious evening hours are something we have managed to squeeze in between other appointments; the plan is to be together. In an e-mail to Hanna, I mentioned that I wanted to speak about what had happened between us in the course of the year and a half we had known each other.

So here we sit, in the newly redecorated and high-beamed room, intended to be a gathering place for youth and adults who are struggling with aspects of their lives. I, on the other hand, feel that this particular evening is friction free. I feel myself breathing easily, my shoulders have sunk down from under my chin and I've almost put my feet up on the table. It is Hanna who, after a short while, asks whether it wasn't me who wanted to speak with them as a "researcher", about how we are together, the quality of our relation and conversations. I send a grateful thought to my supervisor John Shotter, who in the autumn of a year and a half ago encouraged me to approach these ladies and ask about how they had experienced our meetings.

From a telephone consultation with John Shotter, November 2007

AH: I had a very nice experience with a supervision group a week ago. I think we all experienced it as very moving. When I asked them what it was they appreciated, they said that it was not just what I said, but also about my way of being with them. I don't know exactly what they meant.

John: You should ask them to write down how they experienced what happened between you and them, and send it to you.

AH: Well, I could. But I don't feel that would be so easy, to ask them to write about me, how I was with them. It feels kind of embarrassing, for me to do that. To ask them to do that, for me.

John: Don't think that. (very soft spoken)

AH:hmm...(pause) (a light smiling laughter)...No...maybe I could, could ask them, even if it makes me feel, yeah..hmmm.

Later in a mail:

Dear John, I can still 'feel' how I heard your voice, and how the very soft tone of your voice made it possible to feel/understand that I could ask them. That it

*would be ok, and not a request for praise. That it was about asking for more detailed understanding of our relationship. To me your voice in that moment saying those three words was caring, supporting and encouraging - it was as if you acknowledged my modesty, and at the same time wished for me to be a researcher who should go into the relationships to understand more⁶³. Love,
AH*

The above is about resonance. I had a deep feeling of being understood; my feelings are something with which John connects, I could hear it *in his voice*. I wonder if this bodily felt sense of being acknowledged is something that rubs off on my relationship with the Island Girls? And vice versa, as waves of resonance creating entrainment? A feeling of being in-tuned?

Mail to Brenda, Marta, Hanna and Amanda

From: Anne Hedvig Vedeler

To:.....

Date: 7th November, 2007 07:28:20

Subject: Refleksjons following supervision

Hi Brenda, Marta, Hanna and Amanda

Thanks for last time. I'm sitting here with a deep feeling of respect and admiration for the way you "gave yourselves over" to the group in the course of the time we were together. I experienced it as two extremely moving days.

Who got the most supervision, you guys or me? ...Maybe it's about the fact that in an interaction it's difficult to separate out who does what. I felt it became so clear to me that together we created something so meaningful for us all. In different ways. I've watched both films of the conversations and reflections from Saturday, thought a lot about the conversations with Brenda and Hanna on Friday, and find loads of value for me to reflect over further.

I also had supervision with my English supervisor on Monday. Our focus was on how a supervisor through creating structures (for example, the reflecting team), giving attention to how she, in her position as supervisor, relates to others, speaks, doesn't speak, expresses something in words, tone of voice or other movements, in the supervision room, outside it, etc. can help us to create "feeling journeys" and participate in these journeys.

He suggested that I ask you whether you wanted and had the opportunity (I know time is often tight) to send me some reflections about what it was we managed to create together and my role as supervisor in it all.

He wants me to collect more information" about what I invite and what comes out of that. When I use the word "invite", I'm thinking that my "way of being" (all the movements I make, all my expressions and responses in words and non-verbally) can open up and close down for those I'm with.

*This is about, in other words, getting more **detailed descriptions** of what happens: what the structure invites, how each person experiences my way of being and what each of you feels it means for you.*

I want to emphasize that you must not feel you have to do this!! But if you can I will accept both long and short accounts. There is no framework for length or form in what you might send me – by e-mail. You can use this e-mail address.

All the best for now. Enjoy Christmas, if possible!

Warm wishes from Anne Hedvig

This address was my first initiative, my first invitation to explore what happened between us during supervision.

The importance of not questioning

Between mouthfuls of crackers, cheese and red wine, the word trust emerges and Amanda says:

"Among other things it's the respect for what is said and what is expressed, like that first time at Geilo, when you met Marta, when she needed to take a shower after her journey, so different from how we're often greeted." There's usually lots of back-and-forth, but you said...

Brenda: Go ahead and shower

Amanda: What you said was just, "Go and shower, take a good long shower, as long as you need." This has to do with respect for what is actually being expressed and not, not questioning it away in any way whatsoever. 'Of course, do it.'

AH: That was what you did earlier today with Lillian, right? I felt a presence in your meeting with her, in what she was saying. There was no question about whether anything was right or wrong, you had no judgments. (*I'm concerned with expanding the context so that this isn't just a characteristic of someone (of me) but something the others do as well. This concerns giving actions a vocabulary. What is perhaps initially something that is done in our meetings eventually catches on to other relations the supervisees have with their clients).*)

Amanda: And you did that the first time, in our first meeting, in our first meeting with you, you did that with Marta. Hmm, isn't that right? "Do you see the difference?" we talked about that: "Did you hear the difference?" we talked about it.

Brenda: We talked about it when we left...it's about caring.

Amanda: Yes, because that, Marta needed that. She needed that ... But there's as well something about, with the words one uses – the message that is... So it was a good start then.

This is not the first time Marta's shower and my reaction to it has been taken out as an example of how the basis for trust can be established long before we sit down together for consultation, supervision or other types of conversations. Even though I believe my reaction was spontaneous that time, born of my own need in similar situations, I also think it has to do with a strong belief in being accommodating and accepting in relation to the needs of others. It is not about a strategic action in order to create trust but relating to others as independent agents. People come as they are and are to be welcomed with the appreciation to which each person is entitled.

Oslo, October 2007

The emergence of Supervision as dialogical Practice

Eight weeks after our first gathering in the Norwegian mountains, we met for a two-day supervision session, over a Friday and Saturday, in a small group room at the school. I had become aware that many of the students I supervised in family therapy and systemic practice had never worked with experienced systemic practitioners. They had never "seen" and "experienced" a systematic consultation or therapy. This inspired me to try "to show systemic" work in practice, and in my case this means showing what I think is "dialogic" practice in education and supervision.

We began by dividing the time between the four with the plan that each of them in turn would have time to speak with me about what interested them while the others were the reflecting team. The topic was left completely open.

I began by saying:

"What if we divide the time between you so that everyone gets an hour's time each in the course of the next two days. We'll organize it in the following way: I speak with each of you one at a time while the three others make up the reflecting team with all that entails – they are also to observe me as a systemic practitioner, as a dialogue facilitator".

This last, I say spontaneously. I sense a small thrill of nervousness. "Should I expose myself?", "Maybe I'll make a fool of myself", "Who am I to believe I'm a good example to follow?"

I add:

"Don't think that what I do is perfect. What I want you to follow is what I say or do that invites the person I'm speaking with to reflect over what it seems important to reflect over. In other words, what it is that opens or closes to reflection. Think of yourselves as conversation researchers."

I'm happy with this last clarification, and hope that it will give them the permission they need to reflect completely openly over the conversation. I continue:

"After the conversation between for example, me and Marta, the "researchers who have observed the practitioner" will speak together. Then you will take the position of reflecting team and speak together about what it is that has moved you while Marta was speaking with me. Remember that you are not to interpret but share that which has moved you. Listen with the ear of appreciation and speak from the heart".

This is not the first time we have spoken about the reflecting team and how they are to treat it. Then I move over to say something about what the conversation with each of them can be about:

"We can talk about anything. You can choose, or I can ask. You can say something about who you are, what you care about, expectations and experiences in relation to supervision. Anything. I'm pretty much curious about everything, so in that way there are no limits."

I have intentionally made many contributions at this point in the supervisory relationship. There are several reasons for this. I want to set a tone which says that it is "you who decide what you want to talk about". And I know that all the questions I ask in some way or other get carried forward even though they are not answered out loud there and then.

In the course of the next two days I find that the group throws itself into the different positions. They are in tune and friendly in their reflections, but say that they struggle not to interpret when they have to give something back to the one in conversation with me. I am struck by the intensity in the listening and the willingness to be present in what is being talked about. As "researchers" they are observant and interested in details, and I learn more about my own participation in dialogues than I had thought I would. They mention my attention to tempo, pauses and concern for the words the other uses. Especially Hanna points out "the good questions", something that surprises me. I had always thought I was not much good at questions.

Dialogical Captivation

My curiosity was aroused already after the first day, when I experienced a type of **quality in our encounter** that I felt was new to me. I felt somehow drawn into the movements of the conversations and "forgot" myself. It was a fascinating experience to feel so present, to know with my whole self that I was inside an encounter. It was an experience both of losing myself and feeling powerfully alive. Perhaps it was the very first time I had experienced the movement of merging together and transformation. It was a feeling of becoming one with the other, while being even more present in oneself, and knowing that the other was having the same experience.

These were three very different conversations, one with Marta, one with Brenda and the last with Hanna. Amanda said that she wanted to wait until next time, three months later. Something had happened in her family life so that she didn't want to have the focus on her this time.

Brenda is the first to sit down in the chair. I have no form for sound or video recording of this conversation. However, I remember well that I began by inviting her to say something about the road to the chair she is sitting in. I can't remember what it was that made me open in this way. I have found that this is often seen as an open invitation, something that allows the one I'm talking with to decide what she wants to talk about. This time it allows Brenda to speak about things that are important for her. When I write that I cannot remember the content - that is partially true. I do remember that we move geographically along the north Norwegian coast, that it concerns childhood, the relationship with her husband and children; about education and house building.

Brenda sits concentrated in a chair before me. She is so young, so clear in both her face and her voice. I can feel that I'm a bit shaky with the thought that I'm being observed by a "research team", and almost regret my broad and quite spontaneous suggestion, and ask myself accusingly, "What can come of this?" In any case, I feel myself being pulled into the conversation with Brenda and forget the others. I can see and hear that she is searching for words, but it seems important for Brenda to say what's in her heart because it's coming from the heart in the sense that it concerns intense feelings. She talks about disappointment and expectations, about loss and hope. I slight blush spreads out and colors her cheeks, and the slanted eyes meet my gaze before they dance off to the ceiling or out the window. She smiles, swallows and takes long pauses. I am fully concentrated. I am once again amazed by the boundlessness of stories told from lived lives. A deep gratitude for being able to sit here before these searching young women envelopes me and I feel that I embrace Brenda in the chair opposite me as well.

From an e-mail Brenda sent, December 2007

...the supervision with you was so moving, right in to the soul. Felt at first that it was difficult to get started, but you helped me. I think a lot about Marte Meo; I am the focus. You follow my lead. You are in tune, give me breaks when I need to collect myself so I can give more of myself. I bring you in when I need you in order to continue and you're there with a friendly look, smile, nod. I'm made secure enough to continue. Even so, you lead and do it in a respectful way by being in the conversation, having listened and taken up the thread when necessary. Take care of us when we are moved and again make us secure enough to continue. You enrich and expand so that I get many of these pictures. You enjoy yourself with, smile and encourage. You also became a tour guide in my story. I don't have to think about how, but (liter -?) to you, that we've reached the goal/destination. Thanks so much. Feel that it's this I want to say to you today.

The letter makes me feel happy and secure. Brenda describes a presence to which I aspire. I try to show with my whole self that I am accompanying them on the road, wherever it leads. I am a tour guide who perhaps values the journey more than the guiding itself. I want to express that I've been on journeys before; I want to prepare the ground for experiences, go along on the detours you want to take, change the route underway, get lost with you in the unknown, and also explore the slightly frightening and uncomfortable places, and at no point what so ever run away or chicken out. What she writes here about the relation between what she needs in the way of "breaks (...) to collect myself, so I can give more of myself (...) bring you in when I need you in order to continue (...) you're there with a friendly look, smile, nod" interests me. I have long been interested in how I should use my eyes. I feel that I both hear, and speak with my eyes. I want

my eyes to hear what the other wants me to hear, and I want *my eyes to express* that I want to hear more of what you are concerned with. No matter what it is about, I am interested and will value it.

Hanna dances her way through the conversation. She moves her head graciously, her arms and upper body, no restless twitching, but melodic movements that entrance me. The seminar room is transformed to a stage on which a sensitive ballerina stretches here towards hope, then renunciation, towards impossible choices and possible dreams. I don't believe I've ever before allowed myself to be so deeply lead into a conversation in this way. This time as well it is not the content that touches me, but the power in what is created between us. But I was fascinated, almost enraptured. I was sucked into the story's vortex, but not even this time was it the content that drew me but the strength in Hanna's relationship with what she was talking about, and what played out between us.

I know that Hanna was talking about an important dilemma. She was in doubt about what was best for her in terms of making a choice. But I never had the feeling I was to help her choose and that I had to ask good questions that would make the choice easier.

I have a strong feeling of being invited into her world and that my place is possibly to be a witness, someone who is accompanying her in her exploration. I'm not sitting to summarize or to think up questions to expand or deepen. My breathing is calm, and I am aware of a strong certainty in my whole being; I think this is the first time I've felt such a strong security in relation to listening, taking in the expressions of the other with my whole self. I know that at some point or other I thought, "When Hanna has said what she wants to say, when Hanna wants something from me, then I'll give it to her. But I don't know what it will be." I do not become uncertain. I am in the absolute present, what is coming next does not worry me. So when pauses arise, when I feel that Hanna turns towards me to get something from me, comments or questions, then I'll wait to see what happens; I'm going to use the time necessary to find something to say. I have complete confidence that something will turn up.

After the conversation between Hanna and me she said that she had finally gotten to talk about something that was important for her. The other three laughed a bit at this and said, "But we've heard you talk about this many, many times!" Hanna looked at them and exclaimed, "Maybe I have, but not like this. I've never talked about it this way before." I thought this was very interesting and when I received the following e-mail from Hanna some weeks later, it became clearer to me.

E-Mail from Hanna, December 2007

Hi Anna Hedvig and many thanks for the comments and invitation to say something about the supervision, and in this case especially with the thought of what it is you are inviting...I'm going to try to communicate some thoughts, and you can take them for what they are, some hastily written words.

Firstly, I just want to say that the supervision was very good for me personally. I meant it when I said I was listened to all the way. The strange thing was that, as you probably understood, this is a topic I've discussed more or less with all the others in the group. And *I had decided not to talk about it*. I didn't know what I was going to talk about.

When we went out in the break after Brenda had had supervision, *I still didn't know what I was going to talk about*.

Then we came back in, and there is something about *the way you invite*, it's both the words you use that are so "good" in the sense of opening up and giving room, and what you communicate with your body, or maybe it's just you face and eyes. You sit very much at ease of course, and you have that book in your lap that you don't write in – and you are *sort of there just for me* – I am allowed to take up as much space as I want. And then I felt that I wanted to talk about what is the most important for me right now. In the course of the conversation I felt *I had all the time in the world to speak out loud about my thoughts – and I got to hear them so that I could feel whether they were true or not*. You gave me permission for this, *you didn't try to force anything on me*. I maybe didn't say much directly to you but *I was constantly checking out whether or not you were there* and you were – in that you told me through your face that you wanted to hear more and that maybe you were excited to see where it was going – and that wherever it was going was completely OK.

I've wondered whether you project security and calm, and you no doubt do, but these aren't the right words to describe my experience. For me it was/is more as though you project *a genuine interest in me, for what I have to say*, and in addition an intensity. I can't say it any other way but it's like I know you get a headache. It's absolutely something about the eyes.

Because of you I've definitely become more concerned with words. I can see that *the words we choose to use have great significance*. When you started with Brenda you said something like, do you want to say something about the

road to where you are today. I thought that was so well said, and it felt right for Brenda.

I've also become concerned with feedback, what it is to wonder about something, opening so that the one receiving supervision *can choose to accept or reject it, listening with the ear of appreciation, and not least (and most difficult) not interpreting*. I've begun to think about all this, and it's not easy to achieve. It demands presence, and concentration – and that's what you, AH, have a great deal of.

The rest of us just have to work on it some more.

Hope you can use some of this.

Merry Christmas to you too.

Warm greetings, Hanna

The intense experience of the first day, that what we are doing is of great significance for all of us, leads me to take the video camera along on the next day. I ask if it is OK that I film, maybe it will be helpful to us to watch it together later. All four say an enthusiastic yes. I get the necessary permission and turn the camera on. This becomes an exciting conversation which begins as a topic for an essay and then moves along to become about **Marta's** relationship to herself as a professional. I will repeat a large portion of the conversation between Marta and me, one that began one day in October and continued one day in January the year after.

Doing nothing and Presence

Marta is a tall woman of my own age. I feel that it is as though she projects an ambiguity, at once supremely confident and vulnerable. Perhaps this produces an impression of cunning that gives me butterflies in my stomach? She sits directly opposite me, and the other three sit a distance behind her. Marta looks at me, expectant in a way, as though she is nervously awaiting my serve. Her back is straight and her hands folded in her lap. When I ask if she is tired she answers no, but strokes herself over her cheeks and asks if she is flushed. "No, no," I answer, "It's just that it's Saturday and you've worked so hard all week." We smile at one another and I open with:

Have you thought about what you'd like us to talk about?

Marta: No. There's, there's a lot we could talk about. But what I was thinking about out there, just now, was that I would like to get started on my essay. I've begun to have some thoughts about it.

AH: Yes

Marta: And that's about me of course.

AH: Yes (*smiling*)

Marta: So I think I'd like us to talk a little about that.

I feel an excited joy fill me, that Marta has chosen this angle for her essay. It is of course exactly like what I am also interested in as the topic of my doctoral work. It is almost as though I feel I need to put the brakes on so as not to show too much interest.

AH: Let's do that.

Marta: Yes.

AH: Have you got any sort of title, or theme or some such that you...

Marta: Yes, what I've been thinking, eh, I did further education in psychiatry more than ten years ago and wrote about "Personal characteristics of the therapist that influence the relation".

AH: Hm

Marta: And it was difficult to get permission for that.

Yes, I bet, I think to myself, and nod. This will be exciting to hear more about, and I can see in my mind's eye the clinically clean hospital corridors where pathologizing diagnoses are the focus.

Marta: But in the end I got my way, and a good grade in the end.

AH: Yes

Marta: But then I thought about what you said, about the set of notions we have with us, eh (long pause)

I nod, indicate that I want to hear more.

Marta: Is it possible to find something there?

AH: Hm (*smiling and nodding*)

Marta: Because that absorbs me

AH: (nods)

Marta: not just now, it always has.

AH: Right (nods)

Marta: So maybe that would be something (long pause)

I don't say much else other than to show through smiles, nodding and the odd "hmm" or "yes" that I really do want to hear Marta try to express what she feels she wants to express. When she asks the question "So maybe that would be something", I am not sure who it is directed to. I choose to see whether she will answer it herself, which she does:

Marta: Because that's been important for me, and became even more important when you lectured on "discourses" on Wednesday. Something in that, that the set of notions we have influences us so much. So for my own part I could imagine doing, for my own further development, eh, could be an even greater consciousness for me (long pause)

I continue to nod and confirm with a "Hm" without giving any judgments or asking any questions about what is unclear for me in what she has said.

Marta: Who am I, what do I carry with me. That could be an essay.

AH: That's very exciting then (smiles)

Marta: Yes

AH: Yes. Have you thought about how you will approach it?

Marta: No, but I know it's good to be able to use this conversation.

We continue to talk about this theme. Marta comes up with another idea, about writing about the process she and Brenda are in the middle of. They work with groups of young mothers and their children. Marta talks about this and is especially interested in the observation that so much happens without she and Brenda having to do much:

Marta: We just go around and in a way create, a space. And what is it that we do, I'd like to find some theory about this. (long pause) That might be a good project.

AH: That's exciting. You have two...

Marta: You think

AH: Yes I think so, in a way you have two projects here. Two engaging topics. Of course it's you who has to feel, what it is you want to, what it is that most intrigues you, that you want to do, eh. But what do you think would be best that we talk about now do you think, in order for you to make a choice, between these two benefits.

I don't think it is by accident that I choose to speak about "two benefits". I am interested in using language to create good experiences of choosing topics. Nothing is better than anything else, but...

Marta: (long pause) To speak about, eh? I'm not sure I quite understood?

AH: No, I thought that, when we continue now then, well I thought that I wondered about how we should talk about this so that you could maybe make a choice, or is that (I let this hang in mid-air) .

Marta: No, eh, eh, maybe the choice just has to appear. But about the project, having to write, that's such a monster for me.

AH: Writing a project, yes

I nod in confirmation to show that this is a topic I take seriously and that I have left the topic of choosing a theme for a project. Here, I let Marta lead the way. This is an example of how I do not lead, but am along on the journey. We stood at a crossroads, and I pointed to two potential directions, but Marta had a third way she wanted to go:

Marta: It's like a big thing, to accomplish it.

AH: Having two good topics, does that mean anything is that good to have with you on the way.

Marta: Yes, absolutely. That I can use both. Can I ask you? But what if you, can I ask your advice. If you think I could go ahead on both topics. If you were to recommend one of the topics, what would you choose (smiling)

AH: Recommend one of the topics) (laughs)

Marta: Hm, yes, what would you

AH: No I can't do that, (laughs) No I can't do that, recommend one of the topics. Because I want to read both of these projects. It would be too difficult for me. But when you decided to write this project, over 10 years ago, how did you make the choice then.

Marta talks about an experience she had when she saw a therapist who couldn't talk to a young woman about her childlessness. The therapist was herself childless. When Marta took this up with her supervisor, the latter said she didn't think the therapist's own childlessness had anything to do with the case. – My God, I thought quietly to myself. –Is it possible to be so naïve? Are there still people who believe there is no connection between one's own life and what we invite or dismiss as topics of conversation as therapists? I feel warmth for Marta who so courageously followed her own conviction and wrote about this topic more than ten years ago. The petals begin to unfold; I am sitting in front of a woman with the strength of her convictions. She continues to talk about not being self aware in relation to other people:

Marta: I'm certain that I've seen that.

AH: Where is it you think you see that, that people are not aware of themselves...

Marta: I see it in my practice. (pause) Yes. Maybe the clearest, eh, with those who need to be experts. I think it's so good what Harlene says in her book, about not taking the expert role. When you don't take up something in this way (she throws her arms out wide, opening up towards me) then you make room for something else.

I nod in confirmation with small "hms" while she speaks.

Marta: There's an example of that, but there's a lot of examples.

AH: Hm

Marta: There was a lady who came to me last week. Three kids, a son with ADHD, lots of chaos in her family. Her husband died several years ago. This is a lady who's been in the system everywhere. BUP, child protection, the family center, adult psychiatric. Then we get the referral, she just had to start talking to someone, because she didn't know anything about this.

I'm not certain now who this "she" is, but I don't stop to clarify. I find time after time that it is neither necessary or helpful to stop when someone is speaking. It has a tendency to distract and stop the flow of thought. What is important is that I am listening for what it is in her story that Marta is concerned with, either to understand it herself or to get me to understand something.

Marta: There's a lot of chaos in her life. Then we start to talk, and again I feel in a way: she says it helps to come, to come back. There's loads there, so I really don't know, you know. But she herself thinks it's important to come. So I asked her the last time, about: 'There's been so many forms of help, is there nothing else that's been helpful'.

Marta leans towards me, and I towards her. This is not something I am conscious that I want to do, but when I look at the film afterwards I can see that we move in synchrony with one another; back in the chair, towards one another. I think it is Marta who is leading, and I happily allow myself to be lead on, when she continues:

Marta: So I tried to unravel, 'What is it that's happened?' That's what I mean about how these pearls are important, because she says, 'I haven't done anything else all these years, than try to fit into these systems.'" You know?

AH: Hmm

Marta: She's gone here and there, but she's been fitting into systems, imagine that. (shakes her head)

AH: Yes. (I sigh deeply) Not the other way around.

Marta: No (pause)

AH: That's powerful.

Marta: Yes, very. (taps herself carefully on her chest)

It was powerful to hear that Marta felt it was so important, as it resonated strongly with me.

Marta: It was. And then I think, what is it we do. To people.

AH: When you say that now, I can see it's powerful for you. (tap myself on the chest)

Marta: Hm, yes it is.

AH: (continue to tap myself carefully on the chest with a little smile) What do you think this is about for you, that it is so powerful?

Marta: Because I felt again that I hadn't done so much, in fact that I hadn't done anything, and it helps her that much.

AH: Hm (I can feel my heart beating, I think this is exciting)

Marta: I didn't feel like some expert, I had just welcomed her, I hadn't done anything other than listen to her, and of course said something. And then, and then it's so powerful. And I think we're going to continue, we're going to meet once a week, we're going to look at this together. But I feel humble as well, will I manage it? She 's been fitting into the system, been there for the system, for child protection and BUP. She has a twelve year old son who's gone to BUP since he was six. So, I feel such a strong humility for what falls into your lap.
(pause)

I say hmmm and nod. It is clear to me that this moves Marta and I just want to wait and see what comes next. I am very moved myself and intensely interested in hearing more about Marta's thoughts and about this little, vulnerable family.

Marta: (pause) I think that by looking at what we carry with us we can open up in a way so that it can get better. That the help can be better.

We are now in exciting waters, I search for words and can't quite manage to think out what I will say next, ask about, but I allow it to go its course and hope that what comes out is somewhat meaningful. It doesn't have to be particularly clear. Clear questions can give the impression of requiring clear answers. I like to be a bit fumbling and trust that I manage to fumble into something that the other can see as an invitation to go further. I try to sound my way in but by fumbling a bit for words perhaps also create an open enough space for the purposes of the other.

AH: So when you say that you "do nothing" ...

Marta: Hm

AH: ...then you know at the same time that a lot is happening, in the encounter with you.

Marta: Yes

AH: And that you have a lot with you in this meeting that allows it to be positive for her

Marta: Yes

AH: Could a project maybe be about finding out what it is you do that makes it so that when you don't do anything, you still do something anyway...

Marta: Yes, yes. Yes that could be really exciting.

AH: If you were to begin to imagine something around this...

Marta breathes deeply, smiles and nods carefully: "I'm just so grateful to my parents." The answer comes without thought and I feel excited about the continuation, smile and nod:

Marta: I had such generosity in my home.

When I hear Marta use the word "generosity", I feel a deep joy that I feel can be seen in my eyes. This is a concept that means a lot to me, and that I feel was the way my own parents surrounded me.

Marta: I only had my mother until I was 23, but she was a great mother.

AH: Yes (a little sigh, just past the lips, for a moment I was back in my own feelings of loss for my mother who dies when I was young).

Marta: She was that type

AH: Tell me more, ... about that

Marta: (Laughs a little as though to excuse herself)

AH: Tell me more about that, because it sounds important for you. What is it.

Marta: I think that's important...because, how should I, yes in the first place, I believe that my, or I know of course that my, that it was a place my friends enjoyed coming to.

Every time someone speaks I see internal pictures of what is being spoken about. I can see a house with a spacious kitchen where there was always space around the table. Cosy curtains on the windows and small porcelain cups with flowers on them. The coffee pot always warm on the large stove.

Marta: All the way up to, as long as she lived. And then she has, had (breathes in deeply) the sort of philosophy of life, "Come as you are. Be who you are.

You are OK. And live your life so that it's good". She never thought it was important for me to get an education, eh...

And with that I'm back to 35 years ago. Out of lack of courage to say it to them directly, I had fastened a note on which was written: "I want to quit College and start working". It was my mother who found the note and I could hear her run downstairs to my father was still sitting with the paper. It went completely quiet, then two pairs of feet came up the stairs and there was knocking at my door. What a relief it was when my mother asked me quite calmly what it was that I wanted. But I continue to follow intensely what Marta is saying:

Marta: ..so that wasn't something she had. But think about things, be clear in your thoughts, do what's right, for you.

AH: Hm, hm

Marta: She had that in a, in an authoritative way.

AH: Hm

Marta: For her it wasn't education, to a certain extent I mean, so that it controlled your life.

AH: Hm

Marta: It shouldn't control lives. One should accept people for who they were. Very proud, eh, she used to say that the Germans used to call her the proud wife. She walked as a, as a, what's that called again, eh, a courier during the war.

Marta sits up in her chair to show me her mother's erect posture. I can see Marta's mother, a tall taut lady, her head high, dressed in a brown mid-length coat, a broad belt around a small waist and a hat on her head she walks self-confidently but with her heart hammering in her chest past the young German soldiers staring at her steadily.

Marta: She was the proud wife. She had...I certainly had (pause) I certainly have a lot to thank her for (pause).

I sit and nod, with my whole upper body, to show with my whole self that I am in the flow of the story and want to hear more. It is like a drama under development, with characters, feelings and relationships. I am least interested in a potential plot; I think the unfolding of character is most exciting. This concerns Marta, her mother and the little Island society who has received uninvited

German guests. Marta looks out into space, perhaps it's her mother she sees? She speaks very slowly, thoughtfully:

And I do that (pause) often (pause) in my heart.

There is a long pause in which Marta looks straight ahead, before she moves her gaze and meets mine. I feel that both our mothers are in the room with us now. And perhaps it is the case that I want them there still, even closer in to us, in us, and that this is why I ask carefully: "Hm. And those who know you, well, are there some of them who see something of this in you?"

Marta: One of my closest?

AH: Yes

Marta: Hm, yes, yes I think so (pause) Yes, both my husband and my kids...and some friends.

AH: Hm (pause: is there more?) So, if I spoke to your husband...

Marta: (laughs a little)

AH: (laughs a little) ...if he came in now, and I ask him, I talk about this lady you've been talking to, and then I say to your husband, "Marta doesn't do anything, but the lady thinks it's good to be there with her." How do you think he would explain what that could be about?

Marta: (laughs) Yes, then I think he'd... (laughs) I know he's said a few times, if...it's difficult when you get praise sometimes. Praise, that can be a bit difficult, you can get a bit carried away by it. He just says, "forget it, be yourself". Right? He would say that it's about the simple things.

AH: Hm

Marta: I think so, yes

AH: Being yourself.

Marta: Yes he would say that.

We continue to talk about the way Marta thinks or experiences that other people experience her. When I ask whether she wants to write about any of this, she goes back several times to how several of the patients she meets do not feel that they have received the help they need. I ask

her if she can see any similar things in what she does in various contexts, and she replies with what I interpret as a quiet surprise in her gaze and a smile on her lips:

Because it's like, really, that we withdraw a little. So that we allow the others space.

AH: Hm

Marta: And then I like Harlene Anderson's book...giving up the role of expert, that's quite strong.

AH: When you say that, I think that, well some say that when you give up the expert role you give up something important, yourself as important. But then I think, perhaps it is like that...I got curious about that while you were talking about your mother, that perhaps it's the case that you don't in fact give up yourself, but bring in something important to you, namely not being an expert on other people's lives.

Marta: Yes, yes.

I can feel that I'm fumbling here, thinking while talking, this is important. Important because I can recognize myself? Important because this concerns my professional convictions, my own life, and Marta's? I keep my gaze fixed on Marta to see if she is following, and she is. She looks expectantly at me, as though she's excited to hear what I will say next. I continue:

AH: Some of Marta's ideas that she still has, from way back...

Marta: Yes

AH: ..concern not wanting to be an expert?

Marta: Yes...yes, right (laughs a bit and looks straight at me). I haven't thought about that before. And that I can still be good enough even though.

AH: Or that it's the very reason you are so good?

Marta: (breathes in deeply, and exhales slowly) Yes...yes (long pause while she looks straight ahead). I've thought about it many times, having one's mother until the age of 23, lots of people have talked to me about losing a mother early. But I've never thought that. I just didn't have that grief. I had her of course...until I was 23.

AH: You had her with you so very much.

Marta: ...yes and that's the way life is. And I think she taught me, that life is so vulnerable, that's why we have to live it so well.

Marta speaks further about her relationship with her mother, and how different her grief is from that of her siblings:

Marta: I've blamed myself many times over not having laid down and sobbed over losing my mother, because I haven't done that. But I have carried her with me. But some times I've thought, what is it about me, what is it that made me not lie down and scream about it. (pause)

Marta looks straight at me while she talks and I look at her with a tiny smile on my lips to reassure her that I can understand this...

Marta: Is there something sitting there, something that I need to work through, that's also sitting there (looks ahead and shakes her head). But I've not been there. (pause)

AH: You still have her with you

Marta: Yes that's how it's been for me. But some have maybe thought that I should, but...that wasn't how it turned out. Life is fleeting.

AH: Yes

Marta: The awareness of transitoriness makes it so that, life is so fantastic. So I look at it as a gift

AH: Hm, hm

Marta: Be allowed to exist (long pause)

I sit still and watch Marta who looks out of the room. I smile encouragingly when she meets my gaze after half a minute. She looks a bit questioningly at me, and I say, smiling, that we have time. We continue to talk about writing a project and I ask:

Perhaps you can write about what sort of ideas and experiences you have with you, that you think affect your practice

Marta: That's just it. For me.

AH: That it's not just Marta in her private life but Marta at work as well.

Marta: Yes. These teachings...for good or for bad, because that's it. Because it's that way for everybody. And what it does to people, that is. Who come to get help.

AH: Yes, eh, we'll finish soon, and you'll get a chance to say something at the end. But I feel like saying something about this that they don't have to be good or bad. Don't judge it, but first see how it appears, and what it does in the relation..

Marta: How it appears. Yes.

AH: Then you can see, after awhile, how it opens up or shuts down the conversation.

Marta: I think it's terribly exciting. To recognize, and, yes, I think it will increase awareness of this, will be of greater help to the one who comes for help.

AH: Hmm

Marta: ..than the thought that we are experts, who know something about it.

AH: Hm

Marta: So really, I hear of course that I say myself, so that's what "being an expert" is about, now you've understood that (with a slightly relieved sounding laugh

AH: Hm

Marta: Maybe

AH: Being an expert on not being an expert.

Marta: Yes, yes, yes. Because of course I think it's amazing, to be allowed to work with people and that they come to me and think that I'll try and contribute to positive changes in their lives. That's really amazing I think (remains sitting a little while in thought

Marta: And you know what, that I think helped me to think about her, mamma, there's something about your whole being, from Geilo. It's your whole way of being (laughs a bit). You remind me unbelievably of her, yes right from, Geilo,

this about all my friends who could just come round. You feel so welcome. And I felt that right away then, when I arrived. Yes, I just have to tell you this: when I arrived and wanted to shower and you said, "take a shower, take all the time you need".

Marta strokes her chest carefully, as though to underscore how I touched her heart.

Marta: So good.

AH: Hm

Marta: Yes. How one meets people, to get them to feel good. Yes, that's so important.

I clear my throat a bit, but feel a warmth spread through all of me, and I say softly that that was very nice to hear. Marta laughs a bit. With a bit more strength in my voice, while I make a pointing gesture with my hand towards Marta and the three others who have been sitting completely still and listening, I say:

One doesn't do that sort of thing out into thin air, one does it with someone else

Marta: Yes, that's true.

Amanda

My not questioning Amanda's decision about not being in focus, even if I was touched by sensing her vulnerability, proved to be of greater significance than I could have anticipated. The following section shows how trust emerged from my holding back, trying to make it right, taking responsibility when things went *wrong* and putting an effort into making them *right* again. It is not doing all the right things but *wanting* to do things right that creates trust. This space of trust referred to as "Anne Hedvig's room" created a joint commitment inside our relationship, as all of us present felt obliged to do our share to continue together. For Amanda, this resulted in a new kind of experience: she could let herself be heard for the very first time. These deeply felt but distinct experiences from within proved to be powerful by creating a 'learning by doing' or 'learning by experiencing for yourself' effect that seemed to be contagious.

On the Island, February 2009

Being in “a special place” and being allowed to be vulnerable.

There is something about Amanda, a kind of straightforward honesty I found amiable from the very first time we met. A small vertical line between her eyebrows gives evidence of readiness. I had the feeling of her being in the world with both her feet on the ground, her dark framed blue eyes and her almost white straight hair. That evening, when we were together and talked about the year and a half we had known each other, she started to talk about her experience of being heard by me and how important it had been for her not to be pushed:

“So much has happened. How come I let myself be heard? *Er*, and that is a long, long story which started more than a year ago. It was at that time, in the autumn, when I was feeling completely raw and vulnerable. Lots happened at that time and since then. It might be about being left in peace which made it possible to come (long pause), hm, I haven’t thought about it, but it is possible, er.... Well, it was impossible then, and it was ok for it to be impossible, and that’s cool, or clever, or.... I’m thinking about the people we meet, that it’s possible for them to be impossible in an impossible situation before they can move on. I haven’t thought about that before. Is it just about experiencing how nice it is to be in “Anne Hedvig’s room”⁶⁴, regardless? But maybe you gave me something that day in October that created an option for me to come back and talk at a later time. And that’s cool, interesting in relation to our own practice. People can be allowed to feel raw and vulnerable until they don’t feel that way anymore, and *then* they can talk, just because they’ve been allowed to feel that, er, instead of ‘go on, go on – we need to accomplish something in this session’. Or is it you in yourself, Anne Hedvig? Is that what it ‘s about?

On the Island, October 2009

To be heard and to let oneself be heard

Half a year later, Amanda continues to talk about this feeling of being heard, and the sort of space we have created that occasions this:

“..... It’s about me, and now I might cry, but it’s about being heard, really heard for the very first time. And that was so strong. I needed to cry every time I saw you. I don’t

⁶⁴ When talking about “Anne Hedvig’s room” she is referring to a sensed space, not an actual material room.

know if you are in fact the first person to have ever heard me, but you are definitely the first person I've let myself be heard by. All the way, truly, all the way. Maybe it started in October when I was allowed *not* to talk. You heard me then. You heard that I didn't want to be heard. And then, afterwards, the way you heard me again. The way you *heard* me, and that I *dared* to let you hear me..... the relation between that.... despite you falling from grace when I stomped off from your apartment to the hotel. But through that, that it was made ok again, that was 'learning by doing', that I was heard. I found this is tremendously powerful. And then I think, I'm not that different from other people. And then I go on thinking about the people I meet at work, and how some of them need to talk, and I have been thinking 'my, God, how they talk and talk'. And now I'm thinking: when I listen, show my interest, and am curious, I can see how pleased they are. Yeah, so I'm thinking how golden this supervision has been, in comparison with supervision that has been much more technical. That's been ok enough, but I really don't remember much of it. But what we have been doing together has been so important for me as a person, but also as a professional. And then those things hang together, don't they?

Amanda continues:

"..... It's about trust. I did cry last time we were together - as I always do. I think it's about all the things we've had together. This is how it has become. It's about being in your room. I remember, as I guess you do too, Anne Hedvig, when you fell off the pedestal and how you got up there again after I walked all the way to the hotel and used the time to reflect. It really didn't matter in the end, even if it did when it was happening. It wasn't that dramatic. Because it's about being in that room (*long pause*) which is, er..., which is, er..., something between you and me, which is not about you or me, but which is about you and me.

Anne Hedvig:

"I do remember. The others had been talking, and then I managed so totally to let you down. I didn't do what you had said that you yearned for. Instead I fell flat on my face. I felt so terrible that night, and then in the morning when we met, you gave me another chance. I learned so much from that. So much, about what happens to me, or in me, that makes me do things, push people. And I think I still do that at times but not as often as before. Because now, I can feel how it's coming from me, instead of from what I hear the other wants to talk about."

Hanna:

“I think it’s so true Amanda, what you’re saying about how you’ve let yourself be heard. Trust has been allowed to grow. Trust isn’t something that appears like this (*claps her hands together*), it needs to grow. And it’s about tolerating people saying the wrong things, and letting them do it right again. It doesn’t always need to be *right*. Here, interdependence has been allowed to gradually emerge. And I think this is important learning. Because I believe that anything can, actually, happen, when we experience this interdependence - that we are together in this. This has created trust between us. And I think that you, Amanda, have chosen to let your guard down.”

Falling from grace

Even if Amanda didn’t want to talk or be in focus like the others when we had our first supervision session, I had experienced her as very attentive. Time after time she expressed how nice it was to be in “Anne Hedvig’s room”. I had never heard anyone say that about any room I was in. But I could feel how it warmed me, and how my performance nerves kicked in, as it created a feeling of special expectation. I felt I needed to accommodate this without really knowing what was expected of me.

What happened was that we met up for the second two-day supervision session. We started off by taking turns for everyone to talk about what had been happening with them since the last time we met. Marta talked about how important that supervision had been for her (see page...) and the others joined in one after the other. I felt that the warmth we had created back in October was playing a part in this pleasant and benevolent atmosphere as we were sitting around the table in my work apartment.

It was Amanda’s turn to be in focus. She was ready to talk, she said, but before we started she said she needed to clarify something since she wasn’t sure if she could talk about this case. There were some ethical considerations for us to discuss. I was not sure how we should talk about this but we found a way into it and Amanda and I started our talk. The others were listening as a reflecting team. Amanda, who was based in a psychiatric health team with a social worker, was working with a young woman who had a severe eating disorder. Amanda’s main concern was about how she and her colleague should relate to this woman and her family. As I was listening I felt how I was more and more concerned about their *involvement and emotional commitment*. As Amanda’s telling unfolded, I could feel in my whole body how I was disturbed. I moved restlessly back and forth in my chair. I leaned over and interrupted Amanda in the midst of her reflections. It was difficult for me to hear her talk, because my own inner talk drowned out her voice. My

thoughts were around how I felt that Amanda and the social worker had a linear understanding of the whole situation, and that they didn't comprehend how their own engagement contributed to the family's actions. I felt an intense urge for creating a curiosity in Amanda towards understanding more about the possible negative effects of the involvement between the professionals, she and the social worker, and the family. All my more-or-less open invitations to reflection, or what I might call purposeful interventions, were dismissed by an increasingly obstinate Amanda. I believe I was *thinking* that she showed a lack of interest in the process of reflection but I *felt* I was way out of line. However, these feelings were not distinct enough, thus I didn't use them to reflect on my navigation or my way of being responsive.

It was a powerful story that Amanda told, and I believe she was encouraged and got some thoughtful reflections from the reflecting team, though not from me. The space she had longed for, the "Anne Hedvig's room" had not been created. I certainly felt we were not in that space.

On my way home, and as the evening went on, I could feel a slow moving wave of shame flowing over me. How could I be so absolutely insensitive and 'not present' in response to what Amanda was talking about? How could I have let her down in this way, being so uninterested in *her relationship* to what she was talking about? I was so grateful that we were meeting the next morning. As usual, I started off by inviting everyone to talk about what had happened the day before; if there were things they had been thinking about which they would want to say something about. The invitation was to all of us and I chose to be the first one to answer.

I began talking about how I had used the evening to think about the talk with Amanda and how ashamed I had felt. I was not surprised by Amanda's response when she told me how angry she had been. We continued to talk about this, and I shared my thoughts about being preoccupied with myself and my own ideas.

This experience was very important to me, and made me more interested in what it is I contribute with when rupture is created. I became interested in exploring how my lack of answerability 'inside' the relationship was experienced as offensive.

*

The four following pages are illustrations I made after a conversation I had with Amanda, Hanna, Brenda and Marta. It is a playful way of re-presenting what they said about how a sense of transformation had been embodied 'in' them.

The last pages is a edited version of the same conversation when they talked about the relationship between all five of us.

Amanda

I have
experienced it
for myself. Now I want
clients to experience
it with
me:
That I am
willing to make an effort – to
meet you half way (or more). To
be of help. I will mobilize my feelings,
my love. I want to be there for the client, ask
suitable questions. It can't be just sort of, sort
of good or sort of suitable – as if it doesn't really
matter. I want to show that it matters to me, to behave
that way. I want people to feel that I want to be nice. This
is so significant in relation to trust, to relationships and
if you want to be helpful. To show that you strive,
fumble and search for words. Like, you know:
lean towards the other – be expectantly
benevolent and interested in one's
way of physically expressing
oneself: "what will
emerge?". You
know, the
difference between that and
Yawning, checking your wrist watch:
"God, isn't She ever going to finish with her self-absorption!".

TO SEE WHAT HAPPENS THEN – IT IS SUCH AN EXHILARATING EXPERIENCE

Marta has her experience, lots of nice things in relation to her growing up, from her mom.

It hasn't been like that for me. But I have learned to appreciate other kinds of experiences that I may benefit from. It can create competence as well – to have had crappy experiences, and I have loads of that, loads.

I WILL MAKE USE OF THEM – USE THEM IN A BENEFICIAL WAY

HANNA

I used to
"now I will",
"now I have to",
"what shall I do now?"

These things rotated around inside my head

I am not going to claim they are all gone
but those voices, they are so much more distant
and when they return, I am able to say to myself

"go away - quiet down"

I thought I needed, not because I was so
clever, but I felt such a need,
I thought this was required from
me if I was going to be of help

Because that tradition

**it tells us to
execute change
do the thing**

we are brought up in it
which is, of course, effective
but not in relation to our work here

I'm thinking - if I was a family - and met myself now - today

compared with a while ago
oh-oh-oh-oh-oh-oh-oh-oh-oh
now it is much more about

**being with them
jointly – together
being with them
together – jointly**

I am still preoccupied with myself
but not to the extent
not to the extreme extent –

I was before
there is no way
you can compare it

this is such a

significant difference

Brenda

I want to return to one word

twofold

Because

it is a bit

twofold

Supervision

has made me

more occupied with myself

more occupied with myself

more occupied with myself

Simultaneously I am

less occupied with myself

less occupied with myself

less occupied with myself

in my private life *and* when I am working

POWERFUL

things have been happening

things have been initiated

that we bring with us –to the next day-or the next week

I want to return to the letter B

My letter B

being

BRAVE

Brave-Brenda- Brave-Brenda- Brave-Brenda- Brave-Brenda-

It feels so nice – to have become braver

Returning to being occupied with myself

And less occupied with myself

I feel fantastic-I feel fantastic- I feel fantastic-I feel fantastic- I feel fantastic-I feel fantastic

I feel so dam good about myself

From the beginning – in supervision – I started to look at myself

I have found myself – again – the old “me”.

I remember my uncle telling a story from I was a small girl. I had been sitting by the kitchen window – looking out the window – on the harbor. Suddenly I started to sing

“Ut å pass inn å dans”.⁶⁵

I have regained some of that - got it back.

Ut å pass inn å dans

. It

is about an intense inner joy and there is no division between the private and the professional. This is important to me – it feels so nice. Simultaneously – when meeting other people – I am not preoccupied with myself. That is wonderful. I don’t need to achieve or perform. Meeting new people I feel I don’t need to be so full of skills or so clever. So much has happened to me.

⁶⁵ This is a Norwegian expression: “*Out and pee, in and dance*”. It expresses a kind of exhilaration – a joyous feeling of having fun with others, being inside a shared feeling of moving together, not really having time to attend to other needs or more sober businesses.

Marta

I have
been encouraged to let
'the thousand flowers flower'
'the thousand flowers flower'
'the thousand flowers flower'
'the thousand flowers flower'
'the thousand flowers flower'
I feel
empowered in my work
I AM MORE ABLE TO ACKNOWLEDGE MY OWN CONTRIBUTIONS
I am bolder
I am bolder
I am bolder
I am bolder
doing what I have always done
doing what I have always done
Previously I have thought about it as
'I'm not doing anything'
'I'm not doing anything'
'I'm not doing anything'
'I'm not doing anything'
'I'm not doing anything'
REALLY – I THOUGHT THAT - REALLY

What I talked about earlier today – that young girl in school. I was asked to contribute as an expert. No one else had managed to enable this silent girl, who obviously had had some very traumatic experiences, to talk. I just did what I felt was right, and I talked about what she enjoyed doing. And when I met Sylvia just now, the one who had asked me to come she said: 'I admire you - for what you did, how did you think of doing what you did?' I feel the confidence so strongly, this is what I am, and these are my skills, independently of Sylvia appreciating them or not. Even if I do rank Sylvia high, professionally. I guess some colleagues might have thought about it as not doing anything, but that doesn't matter to me anymore because I have a greater self-reliance.

I am myself and that is also my professional identity. This blend of me as a person and more professional ideas. I am able to give myself permission to unite my personal being and the more professional expectations.

The Apprenticeship

Brenda: You are **HELPING TO**
GET HOLD OF WHAT IS ACTUALLY THERE
INSIDE US – IN OUR BODY
NOT JUST IN THE HEAD
LIKE
with
METHODS AND TECHNIQUES

Things
FROM DEEP DOWN, WHICH NEED TO BLOOM
I wonder if
THIS MAKES US BLOOM?
We are
ALLOWED TO TALK
about
NICE EXPERIENCES
AS WELL AS AWFUL EXPERIENCES
We all have them. But these experiences,
THEY ARE STUCK THERE, DEEP DOWN,
but
WE ARE ALLOWED TO REVISIT THEM
in a way.
Hanna: Sometimes when we talk,
SOMETHING SIGNIFICANT HAPPENS

I feel you
SHOW SUCH A GENUINE INTEREST

Brenda: Are you

OUR (= DELIVERER)⁶⁶?

Marta:

OUR MIDWIFE?

Brenda:

Earlier today, when Hanna came with the food,

I MOANED and COMPLAINED

Then I just had a short

TALK WITH MYSELF AND MOVED ON

instead of feeling embarrassed and stupid.

These years with

SUPERVISION HAVE HELPED ME

do this.

just a small everyday thing, but anyway.

Hanna:

EVEN TO SAY THAT YOU ARE PISSED OFF

here

BETWEEN US

well

THAT ALSO CREATES A FEELING OF INTIMACY

Brenda: and

HONESTY

Hanna: and

HONESTY, AND RESPECT, MORE RESPECT

Well

REALLY, IT IS ABOUT INTIMACY

because we had respect.

⁶⁶ In Norwegian *forløser*, means deliverer, but it also means to loosen someone from something.

THOSE TALKS
we have had them
AGAIN AND AGAIN
and they have
CREATED SOMETHING BETWEEN US
And that
THE OTHERS HAVE BEEN LISTENING
Hanna:
THE TALKS WE HAVE HAD
with you Anne Hedvig
have had some quite
SIGNIFICANT CONSEQUENCES
Because
WHEN I SPEAK WITH YOU
I speak with you
but
THE THREE OTHERS
have
BEEN THERE LISTENING
And they
UNDERSTAND MUCH MORE OF ME
now
COMPARED WITH
THOSE WHO HAVEN'T LISTENED
And
I have been able to
HEAR THE THREE OTHERS
Brenda: To
BE HEARD ALL THE WAY
and to
BE RESPECTED FOR THAT

It is something I
ALSO
EXPERIENCE WITH MY NEW BOYFRIEND
Someone is
CURIOUS AND CARE
CARING
This is something I feel we have
EXPERIENCED IN SUPERVISION
And when that happens,
I BECOME ABLE TO TURN AROUND
LOOK AT MYSELF
and I have some
CONVERSATIONS WITH MYSELF
thinking
HOW I COULD HAVE ACTED DIFFERENTLY?
In a way it's about
FEELING EMBRACED
THAT NOTHING IS WRONG
I guess that is about
FEELING SAFE
Being
SAFE IS ABOUT LOVE
SOMEONE CARING ABOUT YOU
AS A PERSON
You can
TAKE THINGS BACK
"it wasn't meant like that"
I feel what
WE ARE MET
with here
is like

A KIND OF
LOVE STORY
someone cares
WANTS WHAT'S BEST FOR US
We can
TALK
about the
GOOD AND BAD THINGS
we can
CRY
and we can
LAUGH
This
LEADS TO
lots of
INNER TALK, PICTURES AND WORDS
and after a while that
CREATES
some
MEANINGFUL WHOLES
This is actually rather
COOL - TOTALLY AWESOME
Amanda:
HAS SUPERVISION CONTRIBUTED
to your confidence in this?
Brenda: Do you mean
that I can spell it out?
Amanda: What you said about love.
Brenda:
YES - IT IS A SPACE
NOTHING FEELS DANGEROUS
I can
SAY WHATEVER
I want to say,

it is
NEVER QUESTIONED
I can
USE THE TIME I NEED
to understand more
ENOUGH TIME
NOTHING IS CONDEMNED
It is the nice and
WARM HANDS
It is the
SENSE OF CARE
That is
IMPORTANT
Hanna: And I believe
you are
A HEALER
We haven't talked about that.
But I really feel that you are a healer.
Amanda: Are you saying that it is
HEALING?
Hanna: Yes, because
that is what those
HEALERS TALK ABOUT
they talk about
THE ENERGY, BETWEEN
and that is what
we have here with you
WHEN WE GET IT RIGHT
there is
SO MUCH WE DON'T KNOW

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“If I ever feel I am getting to the point where I’m playing it safe, I’ll stop. That is all I can tell you about how I plan the future.” (in Barron et al., 1997)