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Self, selving, and the education of attention

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ABSTRACT

Movement that predicts an outcome is central to life and central to the self. Thinking ultimately represents directed movement. Self (an upper case noun) is an internal objective state, or fixed action pattern (FAP), while selving (a lower case verb) is a vital, purposefully moving, intricate felt process that lies at our psychic core. As illustrated through a case study, overly identifying with Self as one or many objective states will lead to repeating patterns that feel 'stuck' as a particular way of being in the world. It is through the appreciative SEEKING awareness of the intrinsic tension between these two opponent processors, Self and selving, that we nurture, in the words of Colwyn Trevarthen, "hopeful purposefulness." Graceful selving in embodied time, informing what we value, can be nourished through the artful and caring education of attention in a companionable relationship, such as between therapist and client.

> "It [the Self] is a process never at rest, so that self… is never fixed, never a thing we can point to and say 'That's a self.'" (Meares, 2005, p.61)

Introduction

It is with great pleasure that I contribute to this special edition to honour Colwyn Trevarthen's work and its contribution to the arts in therapy, as well as its contribution to my own work as an academic and as a therapist. My paper begins with a short summary of Colwyn's ideas on the nature of interpersonal connectedness, as expressed in one of his recent papers. Using that as my starting point, I explore the inherent tension between what I call *Self* and *selving*, and how graceful selving can be nourished through the artful and caring education of attention in a companionable relationship, such as between therapist and client.

The Self as object and selving as 'hopeful purposefulness'

I make up stories about who I am (Bruner, 2003). I am an academic. I am a therapist. I am a husband. I create discrete, objective identities of *Me*, each with its ways of thinking, feeling, and behaving (Crampton, 1981; also Fernyhough, 2016). But there is also the ineffable experience of *I*. This sense is closer to the felt immediacy of the body – what Merleau-Ponty called the "knowing body" (Merleau-Ponty, 2012 [1945], p.431), and what the poet and priest Gerard Manley Hopkins referred to when he wrote:

"When I consider my self-being, my consciousness and feeling of myself… [it] is incommunicable by any means to another man… Nothing else in nature comes near this unspeakable stress of pitch, distinctiveness and selving, this selfbeing of my own" (cited in Meares, 2016, p.15).

This feeling of an experiencing *I*, *selving*, Hopkins wrote is not able to be communicated through language – it is "unspeakable" – nothing else comes near it. It is this unspeakable felt quality of self and relationship that fascinates me in the therapeutic relationship (Hobson, 1985, p.91) and for me it is to this that Colwyn Trevarthen's writings are pointing and to its positive influence in our lives.

"I have been trying to understand…the peculiar inventive sensibility of the human brain in the human body, and the aesthetic and moral psychodynamics that are revealed in the joy of play with the convivial company of a child…The function of interpersonal connectedness is… actively aesthetic and moral in the internal purpose and feeling of each moving human body" (Trevarthen, 2015, p.396). Colwyn contrasts his approach with those that he characterises as mechanical: "I feel people are much more carnal, adventurous, and passionate in beautifully irrational ways, alive in imaginative time and keeping memories that we generate playfully. Humans have evolved to enjoy making meaning…. I know it doesn't always work smoothly, but isn't this hopeful purposefulness, or fun, what psychotherapy should primarily be concerned to support?" (Trevarthen, 2015, p.410).

Over the years of my therapeutic work I have come to agree that hopeful purposefulness, along with William James' notion of personal "warmth and intimacy" (cited in Meares, 2016, p.19) is vital for our wellbeing, and that an aesthetic, artful and creative felt sense is present in all human relationships, within a moral reciprocity. In this paper I want to explore what I consider to be a dynamic that is present when it "doesn't work smoothly" – the unappreciated tension of the self understood as a concept, and self experienced as an unfolding, unspeakable, hopeful process (*selving*), two aspects of self that William James

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has famously written about.[1] I say *unappreciated tension* because I don't believe a path to a sense of living with "hopeful purposefulness" lies in resolving the tension. Rather I take a stand with Iain McGilchrist who argues that the brain is intrinsically a series of opponent processors, "in other words, it contains mutually opposed elements whose contrary influence makes possible finely calibrated responses to complex situations" (McGilchrist, 2009, p.9). It is in the appreciative embracing of the felt tension between Self as observed object and self as involving process (Buber, 1970 [1923]) and the mutual refining that they exercise upon each other, that we may satisfyingly create "finely calibrated responses to complex situations."

From Self to the felt vitality of selving

If we are, whether as infants or adults, at our embodied psychic core, a moving, intricate felt process (selving), then overly identifying with Self as one or many objective states will lead to problems. Let's consider this clinical example from my own therapeutic practice.[2]

> Elizabeth, a single woman in her mid-40s, previously married, came to see me because she felt deeply unsatisfied with her career. She was in a mainly administrative role, and told me she felt stuck and bored and wanted so much more from her work, but didn't know in which direction to turn. She wanted a role helping others and to live her career from, in her words, her 'authentic self.' In her marriage she had felt she couldn't speak up, and speaking up for her wants and needs was still a challenge for her, in work and out of it. During the course of our work together I had introduced a model around letting go the old and letting come the new (Scharmer, 2007). In sessions prior to the one I'm about to describe we had spent time looking at her desire at work to 'keep busy' and 'smile and be happy', which she wished to let go of, and we had been exploring her uncertainty of what might come in its place. In this session, her eighth, she enters the room with her usual anticipation for what might emerge.
>
> After exchanging some remarks around how her week had been ('quite good'), she tells me a short story about how she has felt relaxed and spacious staying for the week in a friend's house by herself (she usually lived in a small apartment). But now it is 'back to the real world – it wouldn't be sustainable me living like that'. I smile slightly, not sensing any particular direction as yet, and feel the conversation starting to lose energy. My mind goes to what we had discussed the previous week, her wish to speak up for herself, and I mention it. She says she has thought about it, but nothing in particular had happened where she felt she had spoken up more for herself than usual. The conversation once more starts to fade. I ask if there is anything in particular she wants to bring to the session, and she replies no.
>
> In the moment of silence that follows I notice the feeling of the lack of vitality between us and in me. Our relationship feels becalmed and directionless.[3]

Elizabeth's descriptions of the past and her wished-for future are largely couched in terms of lack of movement and Self as object – feeling stuck and bored, unable to speak up, and wanting to find her "authentic self". However, recently she has felt relaxed and spacious in her friend's house – the image of moving easily and with enjoyment around her environment comes to mind. But now it's "back to the real world" – her voice tightened a little as she said it. I imagine her body tightening as well, her movement becoming restricted, as she imagined fitting her vitality back into the confines of her notion of her 'real world' Self.

Selving has vitality at its heart – purposeful, hopeful moving. It has been extensively explored in the work of Daniel Stern in his theory of vitality contours (Stern, 2010) and affect attunement (Stern, 2000). Affect attunement is "the performance of behaviours that express the quality of feeling of a shared affect state, but without imitating the exact behavioural expression of the inner state" (Stern, Hofer, Haft, & Dore, 1985, p.142). This unfolding quality of feeling expressed in a behaviour Stern called a vitality contour. Affect attunement is a multimodal or trans-modal phenomenon, where the affect of a vocal and/or bodily gesture is attuned to by another and then expressed in a different form from the original. According to Stern, this largely unconscious recasting of events is necessary to "shift the focus of attention to what is behind the behaviour, to the quality of feeling that is being shared" (Stern et al., 1985, p.142).

This is much more than mimicking. Mimicking implies we are attentive to a person's behaviour (an important factor in building a relationship) but it tells the other person very little, if anything, about the inner state of the person who mimics. In therapy, it is the equivalent of me repeating back to the client their own words with the same vitality contour. It can have its uses to encourage a client to continue a direction of thought, but it does little to build a relationship (Norcross & Lambert, 2011). However, for me to abstract a component from another's movements, be they movements of the voice or body, and relay it back to the initiator in a changed yet recognizable form, tells the other I am not just paying attention – it says I *value* what has been given to me by the other – I *care* about them and what they are communicating (Ingold, 2018, p.28). I take the vitality contour into myself, infuse it with my own personal "pitch" and "distinctiveness" (to borrow from the quote by Hopkins), and gift it back to the other for them, in turn, to perhaps infuse with their own distinctive selving, before offering it back to me. The relationship is now one of *companionship* (from the Latin meaning "to break bread with", and defined here as the wish to be with an other for a mutually beneficial inner purpose, apart from reasons of immediate survival, procreation or material gain). Companionship involves exchanging affect through sharing impulses of motivation (Trevarthen, 2001), and this is the warmth that deepens the therapeutic relationship, encouraging sharing of vulnerability (on the part of both client and therapist) for the purpose of deep healing change (characterised by Schore, 2019, as a dialogue between two right hemispheres). It is a relationship that emphasises "the connectedness of things, before reflection isolates them, and therefore towards engagement with the world, towards a relationship of 'betweenness' with whatever lies outside the self" (McGilchrist, 2009, p.128). This experience of "betweenness" is where I now continue the story of Elizabeth and me.

> "This space between us feels quite calm to me", I say to Elizabeth, "but I don't have a sense of where our conversation is going, and you've said you don't have any particular topic you want to bring up. I wonder if you are wanting me to take responsibility for its direction?" She looks away, and seems thoughtful, and then looks back towards me, and with a slight nod, indicates she wants me to continue.
>
> "I want to hand responsibility back to you for this session. I wonder if this lack of direction I feel is part of why you said the time in your friend's house was unsustainable – you said you needed to come 'back to the real world'. Perhaps the way you felt in that house is the way you would like to feel in the future, and your notion of 'back to the real world' belongs to the past. Part of what you are wanting in your career is a sense of direction. Maybe we are right now sitting in the way of being that is blocking that forward movement that you

[1] "Whatever I may be thinking of, I am always at the same time more or less aware of myself, or my personal existence. At the same time, it is I who am aware; so that the total self of me, being as it were duplex, partly known and partly knower, partly object and partly subject, must have two aspects discriminated in it, or which for shortness we may call one the Me and the other the I." (James, 1892, p.176, cited by Meares, 2016, p.18).

[2] The details have been changed so that it is a composite case.

[3] This clinical example also appears in Malloch, 2017.

had a taste of when you stayed in your friend's house?"
Her posture has changed, and she is sitting upright and leaning towards me, an expression of focused curiosity on her face. I discover I also have changed position, and am sitting more upright, and leaning towards her. My voice is louder and clearer, my hand gestures are larger. I feel awake!

The curiosity exhibited first by me, and then by Elizabeth, that is focussed on what is happening between us, is about creating something of *shared* value (Trevarthen, 2011) in what Stein Bråten has called felt immediacy (Bråten, 1988). This movement into focused shared curiosity is rewarding for its own sake, and lies at the very heart of our vitality. Jaak Panksepp described the feeling and behaviour of curiosity as originating in the SEEKING system of the brain, which, "when fully aroused, fills the mind with interest and motivates organisms to move their bodies seemingly effortlessly in search of the things they need, crave, and desire. In humans, this system generates and sustains curiosity from the mundane to our highest intellectual pursuits" (Panksepp, 2012, p.35). Panksepp has also called this SEEKING a major source of "life energy" (Panksepp, 2012, p.34). Elizabeth and I are moving our attention with curiosity in order to pay attention to and consider more deeply what is now occurring between us. Both of us are motivated by the vitality of curiosity, occurring within the space of our joint attention, and Elizabeth has shifted her attention from her objective notions of her Self to her process of intersubjective selving.

The graceful shape of motivated embodied moving

"Human intersubjectivity evaluates both the rhythmic grace and the affective sympathy of intentions in movement, sensing with body and mind the efficiency and purposes in movement of another individual in felt immediacy" (Trevarthen, 2015, p.396).

I have highlighted the importance of our embodied felt sense of self, I, selving (a lower case verb) as coordinating moving, in contrast to an objective Me ("I am a…") which I have called a Self (a capitalised noun). I have suggested when we identify too strongly with Self as object that we get stuck in our lives, we cease to move effectively, and that it is in the appreciative embracing of the creative tension between Self and selving that we can best fashion "finely calibrated responses to complex situations" along with a feeling of warm, hopeful purposefulness.

Let us now look at evidence for why movement, purposeful and graceful, is central to our human selving.

From infancy we desire to join in relationship with others through story-telling in movement of the body and voice (Malloch, 1999; Trevarthen, 1989; Flohr & Trevarthen, 2008; Zentner, Eerola, & Purves, 2010). Children love to create games, played by themselves or with others, expressing and nurturing their moving selves. This motivated moving is the expression of and development of selving. Selving is social, co-created in ceremonies of movements of voice and body that take form in music and dance, and other shared projects of imagination. These graceful ceremonies of creativity give cultural shape to the expressions of our vitality (Trevarthen & Malloch, 2018).

At a very basic level, movement that predicts an outcome is central to life. Neuroscientist Rudolfo Llinás has granted subjectivity to all forms of life, however simple. "Irritability [i.e., responding to external stimuli with organised, goal-directed movement] and subjectivity, in a very primitive sense, are properties originally belonging to single cells" (Llinás, 2001, p.113).

Llinás has further argued that over the course of evolution predictive movement has been embedded into the brain so that it underlies its organisation and functions. Llinás has elegantly illustrated the point by tracking the development of the embryonic shark (Llinás, 2001, pp.59-64). To begin with, the shark embryo must ensure oxygen is effectively distributed, so the embryo rhythmically undulates. This movement occurs not through centralised regulation by a nervous system (which has yet to form), but by electrical coupling of the muscle cells. As the electrical signal moves from cell to cell, so the whole undulating movement unfolds (known as myogenic motricity). Then, as the spinal cord develops, the muscle cells cease to be electrically coupled, and the impulse for the movement is taken over by the spinal cord neuronal circuits, which are now coupled (neurogenic motricity). The dynamic of the movement remains the same, but the impulse for movement has begun to migrate from the organism's external properties to being internalised and centralised in the brain.

The process continues. The brain stem then starts making its synaptic connections with the motor neurons. The upper part of the system, the brain stem, remains coupled, while the motor neurons of the spinal cord become decoupled and start to receive synaptic inputs from other parts of the nervous system that relate to wholistic properties of motricity – such as awareness of which way is up determined by the inner ear responding to the direction of gravity. Finally, the mature brain develops by encephalisation. It is a story of taking properties from the outside and pulling them in and up into the brain – the internalisation of motricity. As Llinás put it "the beast is literally pulling itself up by its bootstraps" (Llinás, 2001, p.62). We see ontogeny following phylogenetic development.

Thus, thinking and motivated moving are intimately interlinked. As Llinás has written: "The brain's control of organised movement gave birth to the generation and nature of the mind" (Llinás, 2001, p.50), so "thinking ultimately represents movement, not just of body parts or objects in the external world, but of perceptions and complex ideas as well" (Llinás, 2001, p.62).

The human process of selving, our sense of ongoing coherence as we move with purpose through our environment, takes place through time. Selving is a "temporally coherent event that binds, in the time domain, the fractured components of external and internal reality into a single construct" (Llinás, 2001, p.126). It is because we share a common sense of embodied time, ranging from narratives of many minutes to preconscious intervals of a few milliseconds, that humans are able to meaningfully relate and communicate with each other (Buzsáki, 2006; Osborne, 2009; Trevarthen, 1999). This ordered, motivated, time-structured moving, this *serial ordering of actions* in the shared process of selving (Lashley, 1951), Colwyn and I have written about in terms of our model of *communicative musicality* (Malloch & Trevarthen, 2009; Malloch, 1999). We have defined it as our skill for moving, remembering and planning projects in felt, structured time-with-others. This innate ability enables us to create an endless variety of dramatic, artful, temporal narratives that we can sense are *well done*. We describe this sharing of our vitality in movement as having three components:

Pulse – a regular succession through time of discrete movements (which may, for example, be used to co-ordinate activities with an other, or to create sound for music, or to create movement with music – dance) using our felt sense of acting which enables the 'future-creating' predictive process by which a person may anticipate or create what happens next and when.

Quality – consisting of the contours of expressive vocal and body gesture, shaping our felt sense of time-in-movement. These contours can consist of psychoacoustic attributes of vocalisations – timbre, pitch, volume – or attributes of direction and intensity of the moving body perceived in any modality.

Narratives of individual experience and of companionship, built from sequences of co-created gestures, which have particular attributes of pulse and quality (Malloch & Trevarthen, 2009; Trevarthen & Malloch, 2018). It is through our innate sense of pulse, quality and narrative in our ways of moving in body and mind (which includes our felt sense of the movement of our thinking[4]) that we sense if movement

[4] "Thoughts connected as we *feel* them to be connected are what we mean by personal selves" (William James, italics added. As quoted in Meares, 2005, p.17.)

in ourselves or in others is *well done*, *beautiful*, or *graceful* (Malloch & Trevarthen, 2018; Trevarthen & Malloch, 2018; Trevarthen, 1999). These terms, in the way I am using them here, are summarised by Llinás when he writes: "What does perfect mean in biology? It means getting the job done – a particular, specialised job like seeing [or running, or reaching, and so on] – as efficiently as possible with the lowest possible cost or effort" (Llinás, 2001, p.108). We see it in the lion as it runs, we hear it in a phrase in our favourite piece of music, in the movement of a skilled dancer, and in the blossoming smile of an infant. It depends on the *prospective control* of the forces of moving, which produces little or no waste energy (Bernstein, 1967).

The beginnings of our sensing and creating of what is well done begins in infancy, as we seek cooperative and sympathetic responses from parents and other caregivers. Modulations of timing, of rhythms, and of the flow of vitality forms co-created between caregivers and infants have a shape recognized as musical as our innate communicative musicality expresses itself (Malloch & Trevarthen, 2009). Our ability to recognise and create gestures that are 'well done' is indicated by the way our hearing responds to musical sounds from the third trimester of pregnancy (Busnel, Granier-Deferre, & Lecanuet, 1992), and infants can recognize music they heard before birth (Hepper, 1991). They recognize musical contours and rhythmic patterns, and can tell when a musical phrase is 'well done' (Trehub & Hannon, 2006). When taking part in a nursery song, infants demonstrate sensitivity for melodic phrase structure, attending to the rhyming vowels at the ends of lines, and by 5 months an infant can vocalize a matching vowel in synchrony with the mother (Trevarthen, 2008). Infants 'dance' to music before they are one year old (Zentner et al., 2010).

As the child grows and becomes a toddler, she or he eagerly takes part in a children's musical culture of the playground (Bjørkvold, 1992). Soon more formal education with a teacher leads the way to the learning of traditional musical techniques. It is at this point that the child's innate body vitality of communicative musicality can be encouraged and strengthened through sensitive, respectful, playful, culturally informed teaching (Ingold, 2018). On the other hand, it may wither under the weight of enforced discipline for the sake of conforming to pre-existing cultural rules without attention to the initiative and pleasure of the learner's own musicmaking (Malloch & Trevarthen, 2018). An imposed objective Self is overruling the child's spontaneous, embodied, artful selving.

From selving to Self and back again

I have said that human beings develop consciousness in intimate companionship, inventing sensitively timed artful dramatic performances of co-created meaning. Selving gives shape to these *dancing* or *musical* narratives or projects of imaginative appreciation, and is in turn shaped by them (Bjørkvold, 1992). From the very beginning, infants and caregivers are motivated to connect and share the vitality of their selving through time, in movement organised through their ability for communicative musicality. And when these responses are not cooperative and sympathetic, either through experimental manipulation (for example, Murray & Trevarthen, 1985; Weinberg & Tronick, 1996) or through a felt sense of a lack of hopeful purposefulness (or *shame* [Trevarthen, 2005]), movement can be created that is inflexible and unbalanced and which feels unsatisfying (Malloch, 2017).

In the example of Elizabeth and me, we have seen this inflexible lack of hopefulness in her confining of her vitality as her voice tightens into her "real world" Self. In the example presented in Fig. 1A we see a consistent rigidity of expression and a lack of expressed communicative musicality on the part of a mother diagnosed with borderline personality disorder (BPD). As shown in the pitch plot she repeats the same repetitive up-and-down vocal gesture again and again, with almost no vocal participation on the part of the infant. Where the infant does participate (shown by vocalizations with either a square or circle around them), the infant appears to be resiliently setting up the possibility for a dialogue – vocalising exactly on the 'bar-line' (bar 5, shown by a square; bars in this example show repetitive vocal gestures) and then around the mother's pitch (shown by a circle). Indeed, the infant's vocalisations momentarily persuade the mother out of her repetitiveness – the mother responds to her infant's conversational offering by ceasing her unresponsive repetition and vocalising at the infant's pitch. But the dialogue almost immediately breaks down, and the mother returns to her stereotypical vocal gesturing. For the mother, Self is overwhelming selving.

A counterexample is shown in Fig. 1B & C, where there is a move from Self to selving – from a more rigid to a more balanced, flowing, graceful movement in the communicating. Three years into a therapeutic relationship, in what would turn out to be the concluding months of therapy, I asked a client's permission to record our conversation.

In this session he talked of an emerging "new me" in contrast to an "old me". The "old me" was marked with "a lack of self-respect", he said. "I blame myself when things go wrong, I believe I'm not working hard enough." His voiced was flat, body hardly moving.

Fig. 1B shows what a four-second section of a pitch plot of his "old me" voice looks like

After describing "old me" he paused…his body relaxed, he looked up from the floor, his hands lifted from his lap, the volume of his voice increased, its pitch lifted, and he began talking of "new me". "New me is more rational about life. This part says, 'Well, I was uncommunicative this morning – that's all right, that's OK. That's just the way I was. Doesn't make me a bad person. Other times I communicate really well!'"

Fig. 1C shows a four-second pitch plot of "new me". The shift in the degree of vitality in expression is clear – hopeful, purposeful movement returns.

Selving is an inherently embodied, relational experience. It is focussed on the vital nature of felt immediacy, rather than the ideas we create out of our experience. The philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty argued that "the ontological world and body that we uncover at the core of the subject are not the world and the body as ideas; rather, they are the world itself condensed into a comprehensive whole and the body itself as a knowing-body… The subject only achieves his ipseity [individual personality, selfhood] by actually being a body and by entering into the world through his body" (Merleau-Ponty, 2012 [1945], p.431). If this experiencing of the world through the body breaks down in some way, "if the world falls to pieces or is broken apart, this is because one's own body has ceased to be a knowing body and has ceased to envelop all of the objects in a single hold" (p.295), and so our ability to move through the world, in mind and body, in a way that is well done and graceful is compromised. We are mistaking the map for the territory (Korzybski, 1994 [1933] [cited in Jenkins, 2008]; McGilchrist, 2009) and are failing to appreciate that what we can speak of in language is not the limit of reality (Maturana & Verden-Zöller, 2008).

Education of attention – selving / Self

Let us consider the act of walking. It is repetitive movement, that, for the most part, takes care of itself, our feet and body adjusting to the terrain. Llinás, who I have quoted earlier on the central role of motivated moving, introduces a concept that describes a way that selving, the centralising of prediction, creates functional efficiency. Our body knows how to move in highly complex, sociable ways, and an important aspect of this is what Llinás calls Fixed Action Patterns or FAPs. FAPs allow us to do other things with our minds as we make use of "well-defined action patterns… that when switched on produce well-defined and coordinated movements: the escape response, walking, swallowing, the pre-wired aspects of bird-song, and the like" (Llinás, 2001, p.133). Despite the name, these patterns of moving are not entirely fixed – they are constantly undergoing modification, adaptation, and refinement

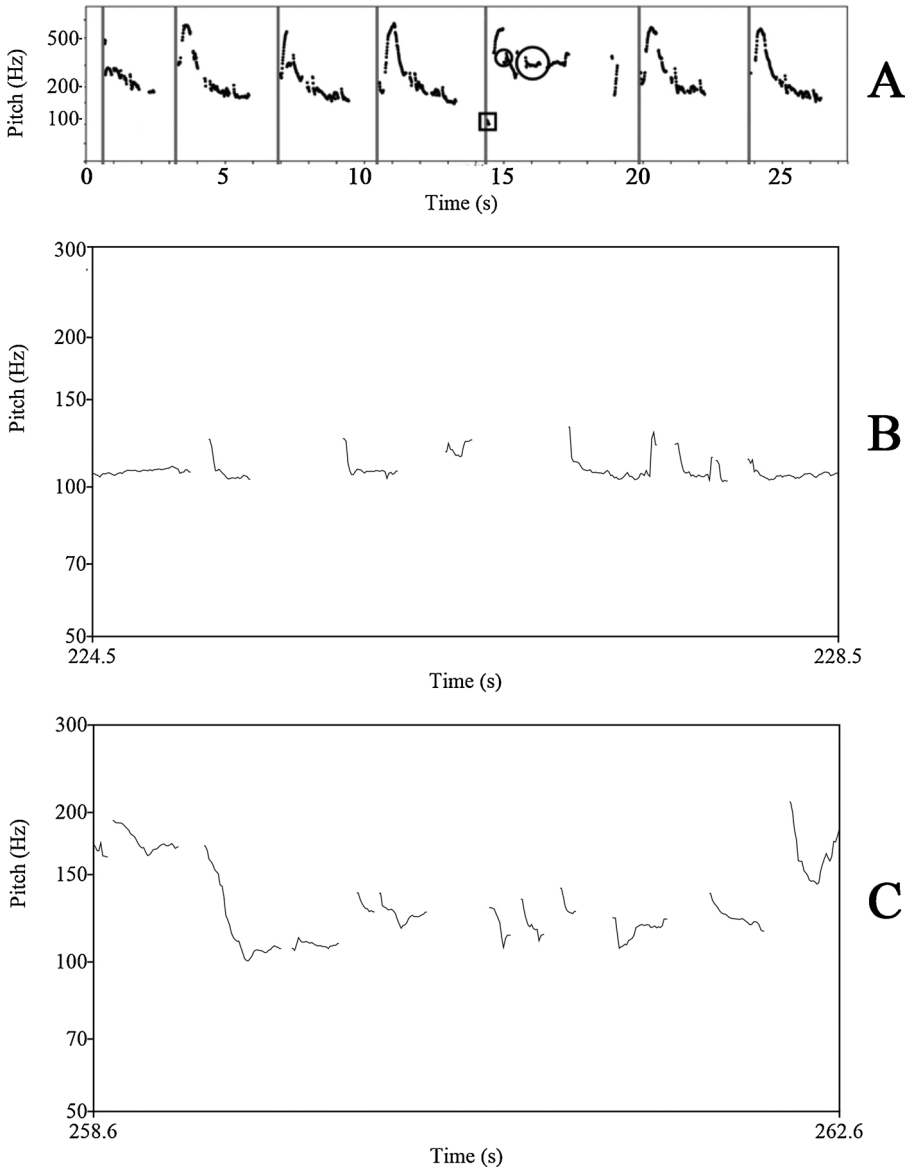

Fig. 1. A pitch plot of a mother diagnosed with BPD interacting with her infant (original in Gratier and Apter-Danon (2009), figure 14.5, page 319). B & C. Change in the pitch movement of a client's voice – from "old me" to "new me" (originals in Malloch (2017), figures 4.1 and 4.2, p.72).

through learning and experience, and they overlap each other. For example, Llinás describes the performance by a soloist of a violin concerto as a FAP – a series of extraordinarily complex movements learnt over a long span of time, and then modified, perhaps inspiringly, in the moment. FAPs have two components – the pre-motor realm of prediction (I must play the next phrase of the piece of music), and then the release of the action (I play the next phrase). In a similar way, emotions are pre-motor FAPs, which we feel as we emote as they help create our thoughts and actions (Damasio, 2010; Llinás, 2001; Panksepp & Biven, 2012).

I suggest that an objective Self – a particular way of moving in the world – is a kind of FAP, a habit of efficiency in how we move our mind and body, sometimes known and named, and sometimes as yet unseen, but still influencing our movement through the world. It will have a particular felt sense. Some ways of moving might be considered intrinsic ways of being human (a Jungian archetype, for example) while others will be crafted from our own personal histories. They manifest in our internal dialogues of self-criticism or support (Fernyhaugh, 2016; Puchalska-Wasyl, 2016), in the movements of thought, feeling and action of our sub-personalities (Crampton, 1981), and overall in our shortcuts of behaviours and personalities that are necessary to navigate our complex environments (Llinás, 2001; Montag & Panksepp, 2017).

Thinking and moving are always in relationship to our current environment. Let us return to the example of walking. Imagine walking down a path that becomes more and more precipitous. Because we are not paying attention, we stumble. This wakes us up, and we now pay far greater attention and we look around for clues as to how we can best approach this situation. Let us further imagine we are walking with a friend who has walked paths like this before – they are more experienced in a situation such as this. We notice where they are placing their feet, we notice they are walking more slowly, we notice they are holding on to particular tree branches as they come within reach. We start to imitate their movements. Our friend points out that a slightly different colour of the rocks indicates which are slippery and which afford a firm foothold, and so we pay attention to this colour gradient that we hadn't even noticed before. Not only are we now walking in a manner more appropriate to the terrain, we have also started to see the terrain differently. Our *refined* way of walking, passed on to us from our friend through us paying attention to the way they move in this particular environment, and by them directing our attention to gradations of

difference we hadn't seen, has both informed our movements and the way we pay attention. We are actively, curiously exploring the environment with our feet, hands and eyes. We are looking at and moving in our environment differently – in a manner that affords greater effectiveness of our directed moving. What we value in the environment has changed.

At times our shortcuts of thinking and behaving as we navigate our lives, our patterns of felt internal and external movement, don't serve us or the situation as well as they might. Like the walker described above, the path has changed, but we haven't yet noticed, and we stumble. We look around for information that can direct how we might change, but perhaps we don't yet see in enough detail to understand how we might adapt and alter our steps, or perhaps there is no-one skilled in teaching us a different way to pay attention. So, in the absence of noticing any cues for moving in a more effective, graceful way, we keep using the habits of moving that have served us in the past. Focussing attention into the present moment of selving, however, particularly with an other who has skill to pay attention in a way that highlights granular details that up to now were not seen by us, in a way that encourages the hopeful vitality of curiosity, can allow us to see and hear in a new way our patterns of moving – a Self – patterns of thinking and behaving that may stretch into our past over many years. We learn that these patterns of moving are value-rich experiences, and through this we discover opportunities for moving differently, with more graceful efficacy for our current situation. As Nathaniel Barrett has written, as he discusses Gibson's ecological approach (which I shall return to below): "Because they have depths of meaning that cannot be grasped all at once, value-rich experiences are entered into and explored, rather than simply had. I propose that this abundance of meaning, always exceeding what is grasped, is essential to the experience of value as something discovered" (Barrett, 2014, p.132).

We get to know our environment by moving around in it (by walking around in it, for example), not by simply looking at it. As we move around and curiously explore our environment, whether that environment be external or our internal psychic environment, the patterns that we notice undergo continual modulation. We and our environment are in active creative relationship with each other, and we and it are changed by this relationship. In the case of our internal psychic environment we could say the act of moving and exploring is felt, embodied selving, and that which is explored are the patterns of objective Self. As we appreciate and are curious about the tension between embodied, present moment selving and the habits of moving that are our current focus of attention, so both sides of us are changed by the experience. As we undergo an "education of attention" (Gibson, 1979, p. 254), and we can perceive finer grains of difference, we are better able to create finely calibrated responses to the complex situations we encounter in our psyche (which in turn are in relationship to the complex situations in our environment), and we feel a sense of hopeful purposefulness. Gibson explains this as the picking up of environmental *affordances* for what we want to do or objects we wish to acquire (Jenkins, 2008).

There are many different means to educate our attention – for example, cultural systems of music, dance, art and ceremony lead us towards ever greater appreciation of difference – can we hear the difference when a phrase of music is played like this, or like that; can we see the difference in the way a shadow can be represented in an artwork like this or like that; can we appreciate the ways the priest, as they officiate at a religious ceremony, eloquently recites a sacred text so that it is 'well done' (while avoiding believing that this is the *only* way it can be done - losing the creative appreciation of the tension between Self and selving). These works of art teach us ways to listen and see, constantly building on our innate sense of timing and shape – our communicative musicality (Trevarthen & Malloch, 2018). Through learning new ways to pay attention, what we value changes (Damasio, 2010). We are driven on by the intrinsic gratification that the fulfilment of curiosity brings (Barrett, 2014). Therapy is another cultural system that can lead us to greater appreciation of difference.

Let us now return to Elizabeth and me. We left the interaction with us both being very curious about what was happening between us.

> "Look, both of us are suddenly leaning in and sitting up. What is this?"
>
> Elizabeth starts to talk about the eager part of her that so often starts enthusiastically but then nothing really happens. She starts arguing with herself whether it is useful or not. I gently interrupt…
>
> "Words are usually about this or that, black or white. I'm curious what would happen if you just continued to lean into whatever is occurring here. Something seems to be happening in the space between us." I indicate with my hand the space above the table that is between us. "Perhaps take a moment to feel it, and see what's there."
> After a moment Elizabeth's eyes start to mist over with a hint of tears. "What's that?" I ask, sensing she is now much nearer to an emerging embodied experience. "Relief," she replies.
> It was relief that she didn't need to "keep busy" and always be smiling. Instead, she said, she would like more playfulness in her life.

Recalling that I said at the start of this paper in honour of Colwyn that his writings point to the unspeakable felt quality of self and relationship, this is an unspeakable moment of therapy – present moment selving is foreground, refining the creations of objective Self. As Daniel Stern writes: "A therapy session (or any intimate dialogue) is made up of a series of present moments… As the dyad moves along, linking together present moments, a new way of being-with-the-other may arise at any step along the way" (Stern, 2004, p.219). In this present moment, as Elizabeth pays attention in ways she has never quite done to these particular inner ways of moving, through our shared curiosity she senses new gradations of difference in her inner world, and something new and valuable emerges, and she is turning towards hopeful purposefulness.

The anthropologist Tim Ingold writes: "Every decisional cut – be it in woodwork, walking, singing or writing – entails a differential in the way of movement – moving that eventually takes it in this direction or in that. This is what skill is about: not imposing exterior form on compliant matter but finding the grain of things and bending it to an evolving purpose. It is no accident that the word 'skill' has its roots in the Middle Low German *schillen*, 'to make a difference', and in the Old Norse *skilja*, 'to divide, separate, distinguish, decide'" (Ingold, 2018, p.42).

To pay skilled attention in the space of intersubjectivity is the role of the companionable, artful therapist. The system of therapy, like the systems of art, can support this growth of caring attention. Seen this way, therapy is not to teach new ways of moving, of transmitting understanding or knowledge, but to sit alongside, to be curious and hopeful, and by being available to an other, these ways of being attentive are passed on.

To quote Tim Ingold once more, writing on education, he puts it like this – and I have added [interpretations] of how this can apply to the art of therapy:

> "Novices [clients] are not so much 'filled up… as 'tuned up'. Otherwise put, if the knowledge of the old-hand [therapist] is superior to that of the novice [client], it is not because he has acquired the mental representations that enable him to construct a more elaborate picture of the world, *but because his perceptual system is attuned to attend to critical features of the environment that the novice simply fails to notice*. Adopting one of Gibson's key metaphors, we could say that the perceptual system of the skilled practitioner [therapist] *resonates* with the properties of the environment [the client's inner life and intersubjective space between therapist and client]. The more practised we become in walking the paths of

observation, according to Gibson, the better able we are to notice and to respond fluently to environmental variations [the constantly modulating lived experience of the client's world] and to the parametric invariants that underwrite them [the shared experiences of the human condition]. That is to say, we undergo what he called an 'education of attention'" (Ingold, 2018, p.31)

Companionable, artful therapy is an education of the client's attention through *awareness with* the therapist – the focus being the client's inner experiencing. The inherent tension between selving and Self becomes creative, and new ways of moving towards "finely calibrated responses to complex situations" are discovered. As the education of attention proceeds so the client discerns finer grades of difference in their own inner experiencing, that which is valued is refined, and differences that were never noticed before in one's inner experiencing become seen and their value appreciated. This exploration guided through awareness with the therapist is enlivening, which may create a virtuous circle – the vitality of curiosity with the joint awareness of the therapist leads to education of attention, which leads to discovery, which encourages further curiosity.

In my academic and therapeutic work, it is this passionate curiosity I would like to personally thank Colwyn for helping to instil in me. As I first worked with him, in his lab in Edinburgh, and as I have continued to collaborate with him from the other side of the world, I have been continually enlivened by his ever-seeking curiosity of the intricate beauty of the sounds and sights of mothers and fathers and their babies as they happily exchange gestures of body and voice. It is a wonderful journey of discovery.

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