



DIALOGUE AND THE BIRTH OF THE INDIVIDUAL MIND

With an Example of Communication with a Congenitally Deafblind
Person

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Abstract

In this paper I comment on the relationship between general dialogical theory ("dialogism") and the analysis of interaction involving persons with congenital deafblindness (CDB). My treatment of CDB communication builds heavily on the work of Vege (2009) and Souriau (2009). In addressing some differences between major dialogical meta-theories I argue that we need a theory of "extended dialogism", which – among other things – extends its domains of interest beyond exchanges between co-present persons using vocal-verbal

Keywords

Classical dialogism, extended dialogism, communication, perception, touch, trust.

Classical and Extended Dialogisms

"One is not born a personality" (Levitin, 1982).

A common assumption in *practically all forms of dialogism* is that they oppose extreme individualism, i.e., the idea of the autonomous individual, and emphasise instead *self-other interdependences* among human sense-makers.¹ A second thesis is that dialogicality is operative at several levels, in particular in situated interaction between co-present and remote (third-party) participants *and* as situation-transcending assumptions, abilities and practices. That is, dialogicality applies to both situations and living traditions (Mukařovský, 1977), at different time-scales ("double dialogicality", Linell, 2009). When people make sense of the world, they do so (often with others) *both* in the concrete situation with their local interlocutors and contexts, *and* – at the same time – they orient to the traditions of the overall activity type involved, and their experiences thereof, and experiences of their individual and generalised interlocutors. Sense- and meaning-making is always a product of the interplay between semiotic resources (with their meaning potentials²) and phenomena in the world (with their affordances).

Dialogical assumptions at fairly long time-scales may pertain to trust of different kinds in human relations and society (Marková et al., 2008). Also, dialogism must adopt a genetic (or developmental) perspective (Linell, 2009: 252), instead of the extreme structural-systemic ideas of a completely integrated language (and culture) and of idealised, fully competent speakers of the language in question (and fully competent members of the community at hand). Needless to say, there are several other dialogist assumptions among both participants in actual dialogical encounters and in dialogist scholarship (see Linell, 2009). But here I will focus on some recent trends in dialogist theory.

The traditional attitude to dialogue ("classical dialogism") is present in most of Bakhtin's oeuvre (e.g. Bakhtin, 1981). But I choose to start with Luckmann (1990), who discusses the concepts of social communication, dialogue and conversation. He combines an extensional definition (Linell, 2017) of dialogue – a dialogue is a concrete encounter between two or more *persons who are co-present* in a (face-to-face) situation *using language* (or any other semiotic resources that are functionally equivalent to spoken interactional languaging, e.g., using a fully developed sign language) – with the Schützian idea of the dialogue as a *"synchronisation of two (or more) consciousnesses"*. This comes close to the idea that parties achieve – or at least aim at – an entirely *shared understanding* of the topics in

¹ This paper builds on a lecture read at the workshop on *Communication in the Context of Congenital Deafblindness: 10 Years of Studies*, in Groningen, November 2016. I am grateful for comments made by my co-lecturers and the organisers.

² For a specific theory of linguistic meaning in terms of meaning potentials, see Norén & Linell (2007).

focus. Luckmann touches upon ideals of communication like equality and symmetry, but raises strong doubts about them (cf. Linell & Luckmann, 1991).

Many commentators, lay persons as well as scholars in dialogism, have assumed that communication aims at shared understanding and common ground (though perhaps not always in practice, but at least as a normative goal), and accordingly presupposes sharedness, symmetry, equality, synchronisation, etc. However, in this world we meet with different knowledge, and divergent experiences, biographies and interests. We are dependent on communication and similar thinking, but the world is also replete with tensions and heterogeneities. In actual fact, therefore, the goals and achievements in communication and "dialogue" are focused on *sufficient understandings for situated practical purposes*, a notion launched by Garfinkel (1967). We make sense of ourselves, others and the world to a *sufficient* extent and in *sufficiently similar* ways. Of course, when this process is obstructed by misfits and non-understandings, participants must indulge in repair and partial elimination of misunderstandings.

Garfinkel's perspective seems to indicate a shift from shared understanding to sense-making activities of more varied kinds. As I will argue below, this is essential to the difference between "classical" and "extended" dialogisms. But the difference is even more clear with respect to the traditional definition of communication in "monologist" theories (Linell, 2009), which start, at least in the default case, from the idea of *fully developed individuals* and personalities sharing a completely *common code*, and with the idea of communication as involving the goal of fully shared and complete understandings and intersubjectivity among participants. This monological conception is not shared by dialogism. The alternative of *extended dialogism* (or, if you will, "extended interactionism") (Linell, 2009, 2016) insists on the point that we have to deal with a wider range of communicative and cognitive (sense-making) activities. Extended dialogism will of course continue to focus on verbal interactions in different encounters, media and at different time-scales, but it will also attend to other forms of sense-making, such as sensory explorations of the environment, emotional reactions to situations, and communication with other bodily (and external) resources than vocal-verbal signs. For example, we would have to pay attention to visual and tactile gesturing and signing.

When we wander around our immediate environments, we identify individual objects as instances of categories that we have learnt to think with in life, through our biography and our cultural community. Usually this process of comprehending of what we see, hear or otherwise sense is quite unproblematic, being highly habitualised and building on knowledge that has come to be taken-for-granted. But not unfrequently, we cannot determine immediately what we are confronted with, what it is that we see, hear, smell, etc. Suppose that one day when I walk through the park which I sometimes trespass on my way to the department, an unidentified tree attracts my attention. (Let us assume that my need

of understanding what I see stays on the elementary level of basic-level categories (Rosch, 1977).) I can see that there is a tree, but I cannot determine what species it belongs to; is it a beech, an oak, a linden tree or perhaps an elm? Close by there is also a car whose make I cannot determine at a distance. But the external objects provide "affordances" (Gibson, 1979) for interpretation. I can start a sensory exploration of some of the individual object's (tree's or car's) affordances, a kind of interchange of sensory actions and discoveries of properties in the object. Such an interaction builds upon close integration of the actions performed by bodily movements and the subsequent perceptions of the results of these actions, what Noë (2004) calls action-perception cycles.

Suppose that on the basis of these action-perception cycles, among other circumstances, I realise that the tree I am looking at is an oak. This achievement involves determining, recognising and understanding that the individual object, the specific referent, belongs to the category of oaks. I will then probably also come up with the label "oak" (provided of course that I recall the term that I have learnt), in particular if I choose to talk about it with my companion (if there is one present) or think about it in my internal dialogue. I may actualise my rudimentary knowledge about the ecology of oak-trees. Most of this I have learnt from other people, partly through verbal interactions, and these others in turn build upon communicative and cognitive habits of many "predecessors" in culture. At the same time, the processes or practices mentioned above and mobilised *in situ* as parts of an interaction with the objects involved, which can become part of a verbal discourse. The general point is that my sense-making of the oak is dependent on indirect dialogue with other people. The example of the oak is paralleled by countless other examples, including the car whose make I could not determine from the beginning. But here the make, for example Toyota, would most probably be spelled out on the car itself, for me to read off if I get close enough.

To put matters in somewhat more general terms, in extended dialogism we must assume that our embodied minds are important. For besides furthermore of course the direct interaction with others, there is the "interaction" with the (ecological) environment in general: objects, artefacts, processes, physical and mental events. As Gallagher (2011) has convincingly argued, embodiment (of minds) is logically and empirically connected with interaction with the world. "Objective" phenomena provide perceivers with opportunities ("affordances") for sense-making. In addition, many external objects have been designed by other human beings to be used in particular practical activities, which implies that (for those familiar with these aspects of use) these artefacts have also been prepared for the corresponding categorisations in sense-making.

The above-mentioned two domains of interactions, with others (e.g. through language) and with the rest of the world are actually more intimately intertwined than I have indicated so far. The world out there has been inhabited by other people, whether these are still alive

and active, or belong to earlier generations ("predecessors"; Goodwin, 2017) who have *made it meaningful*, by categorisation, verbal labelling and discursive practices. As youngsters and in fact throughout our lives, we are immersed in this meaningful world, into which we have been "thrown" (to use Heidegger's term) and whose categories we simply – by and large – have to accept and do accept. Sensory perception too is therefore indirectly dependent on, or rather interdependent with, other people's sense-makings. In sum, extended dialogism includes both direct interaction with others and interactions with the (natural and man-made) environments made meaningful by (self and) others.

The close relations between interaction with other sense-makers (people) and interaction with the physical environment are made manifest in the blending of communicative activities and actions towards and perceptions of artefacts in many mundane situations, which are – on a more careful scrutiny – quite complex. External objects and artefacts can structure and facilitate (or sometimes complicate) smooth verbal interaction (Streeck et al., 2011; Nevile et al., 2014). As an example, we may look at the study by Lindström et al. (2017) of customer-staff interaction in the buying and selling of theatre tickets at box offices. If we focus on the customer's participation (communication and action, cognition and problem-solving) in this situation, it is only marginally about "internal" processes, such as thoughts about prospective theatre performances. Nor can we regard the situated "outer" activity as consisting only of an exchange of some linguistic utterances. It is not entirely focused on the (largely verbal) transaction with the seller (staff member), about future performances and the availability of tickets. As Lindström et al. demonstrate, a lot of interaction takes place before (and after) the central transactions. This comprises gaze behaviours, the prospective customer's movements in the room when approaching the box office window, and occasional verbal utterances (e.g. greetings, if distances are not too cumbersome). For both parties in the interaction, the buyer and the seller, sense-makings are distributed on self (talk, gestures, other bodily actions), the other (his or her embodied conduct), objects, artefacts and also advanced technologies (such as the computer and its provisions). The latter "transactional" objects and artefacts include, on the customer's side, mobile phone, calendar, queue tickets, documentation of pre-bookings, performance tickets, wallets with money and payment cards, etc. In other words, sense-makings, and communicative as well as practical actions, are distributed on embodied minds, the other's contributions to interaction, objects and artefacts, and other affordances of the environment. Parties appeal to "third parties" (people other than the individual buyer; buyers may sometimes act on behalf of other people), the theatre organisation and its arrangements, who are often physically absent but whose preferences and norms must be taken into account. Language is used to specify the requested service but most of the understandings of the activities experienced rely on other things. In fact, most of us could

arguably handle the business also in a foreign country, the language of which we have very rudimentary knowledge of.

In between the two categories of sense-making, i.e., with or without direct verbal interaction, there is (what might be seen as) a third category, namely, the interaction with, or "use" of, signs and posters designed for communication (many of which contain linguistic texts), e.g., along streets and roads, in parks and market-places, in offices and receptions, etc., providing information or advertising goods or services, or telling us what we are allowed or not allowed to do. They often function communicatively by being followed by adequate conduct (Valsiner, 2014), but they may also be reacted to through spoken exchanges, or private language-borne deliberations and interpretive activities. Certainly, they have often been acquired by individuals being instructed through spoken or written language. These designed artefacts thus provide a link between the two above-mentioned categories of sense-making, i.e., direct interlocution through speech and text events, and sensory perception of the environment.

In other words, language and languaging lie behind the meanings of the world of objects and living creatures (for example, roses and snakes are associated with feelings, largely due to story-tellings in the culture), furthermore of designed artefacts and technologies (for example, cars and computers, which we operate with partly on the basis of experts' instructions), and abstract concepts (for example, marriage and democracy would be impossible without abstract argumentation and organisation among people).

Language comprises *heterogeneous* forms and manifestations in other respects too; for example, it does not only comprise mundane spoken interactional language, but also language materialised in technologies, such as (different genres of) writing, mathematical language (formulas etc.), musical notation, etc. It is *not* obvious that these are manifestations of the precisely same language, unless one is prepared to set up a very abstract notion of language (as has indeed been done in most forms of linguistics).

Language can have many functions. One important distinction, so far not mentioned here, is that of basic cognitive and communicative ("commognitive"; Sford, 2008) use vs. meta-linguistic and meta-communicative use. Meta-linguistics, i.e., language used *about* language and forms of communication, occurs in integration with basic language use, not in the least in communication with young children (Taylor, 2013).

Summing up, recent "extended dialogism" has adopted and highlighted points and assumptions of the following kinds:

- (rather than talking about synchronisation of consciousnesses) dialogue and dialogicality are about more varied activities of *sense-making* (applied to self, the other and the world);
- joint (and individual) sense-makings revolve around *partially shared* understanding; we live in a world of different interests, biographies and (sub)cultures with

asymmetries of power and knowledge, (only) partial sharedness, heterogeneities, tensions and sometimes conflicts;

- language is not always in focus: we make sense of things in situations in which recourse to language is at most *indirect*.
- the theory must be driven by a *genetic* perspective with different forms and levels of primary, secondary, and tertiary intersubjectivities (Trevarthen, 1979). Tertiary forms include relating to third parties (absent individuals and groups) and external cognitive devices (e.g., written texts) (cf. Linell, 2009: 258ff.; Zlatev, 2013).

The genetic perspective of the last-mentioned point will be of special importance when we focus on individuals with disabilities, of which congenital deafblindness will be an extreme case. While there may be evidence for a minimal selfhood from birth (Trevarthen, 1979; Zlatev & Blomberg, 2016: 190), the self of the deafblind individual will be excessively dependent for its evolution on the interactivities with special others. Like other children, the deafblind individual wants to increase his or her understanding of self, others and environments through sense-making. He or she needs to consolidate his or her understandings by testing it through exploratory actions and perceptions-by-actions. Similarities between own and others' sense-making and understandings may be discovered, and with time also discrepancies, differences and tensions. Language will be very important here, but not so very much at the very onset. Another point is that every child, as well as every adult person, wants social recognition. The deafblind child will need guidance and trust from helpers in all these activities. We will try to identify some features of these shared and reciprocal ("dialogical") interactions in some analyses to follow below.

Sense-making and Deafblindness

The sense-making activities in which individuals with disabilities are involved provide the most convincing evidence for dialogism and human dialogicality. In the beginning the contact and interaction with the partner (usually a parent or a professional partner) and his/her body are nearly the only pathway for a congenitally deafblind (CDB) person to making sense of the world, which – in addition – will be limited, sometimes for quite a long time, to the world within reach.

I would argue that the study of CDB communication can provide a significantly increased awareness of the nature of dialogue and dialogicality in general. However, there are of course also crucial differences.³ Thus, CDB communication usually builds upon highly

³ The short fragment to be discussed here ("Ingerid and the crab") concerns only one single case with one individual (Ingerid). CDB persons and their circumstances vary vastly (Souriau et al., 2009): variations in

idiosyncratic forms, experiences and meanings between the individual person with CDB and her/his carer (Marková, 2016: 186). By contrast, for normally sensed children the development of communicative practices takes place in a cultural world with highly conventionalised communication, that of verbal spoken (and/or signed or written) languaging.

I have myself had no direct access to empirical deafblindness research. But I have been fortunate enough to be allowed to use (in Linell, 2010) an episode called INGERID, GUNNAR AND THE CRAB ("Ingerid og krabben"), i.e., the excerpt published, with video and transcript, by Souriau et al. (2008: 97-98) and Vege (2009). This is an exemplary case (cf. Nafstad, 2015: 24). It has been analysed by Vege (op.cit.), and also by Marková (2016: 185-191). Here I take the liberty to return to this episode.⁴ Hence there will be no oak-trees in this story, but it involves the attempts by a person with no or little access to language at learning the affordances of the phenomenon, concept and word of 'crab(s)'.

Ingerid is a 24-year-old woman who is stricken by complete blindness and very limited hearing residues. She is therefore a rather severe case of a person with CDB. Gunnar (Vege) is her carer, guide and teacher and has acted in this role for many years. He is her protagonist in the film. The two participants have been on a fishing expedition somewhere in Norway, and when we are invited to look at them (below you will only see a transcript of their interaction), they find themselves on a pier with, among other things, a bucket filled with small living crabs and some water. Before the events in focus here, there have been several related moments in this situation (Vege et al., 2007). When we enter the episode in the excerpt below, Gunnar has just made a small crab run up along his forearm. This course of events is repeated several times, first on Gunnar's arm and then on Ingerid's too. The video-clips also show them indoors at home, when Gunnar "talks" – using speech, signs and gestures but this time without the real crab – about what they have experienced on the day before on the pier.

The following is a relatively crude transcription of the Norwegian talk in "Ingerid og krabben". G stands for Gunnar, and I for Ingerid. There are four types of notation in the transcript, three of which correspond to kinds of semiotic resources in the transcript: G's Norwegian utterances are given in Courier⁵, and his (conventional or (mostly) idiosyncratic)

the severity of the lack of vision and hearing, other disabilities (e.g., difficulties of balance) or health problems (e.g., heart diseases), cognitive capacities, competent, understanding and resilient partners (on the crucial importance especially of really good communicative partners, see Souriau 2009: 89-99), time of initiation of communication and interaction attempts, combination of semiotic resources available (speech, visual signs and gestures, tactile signs, depictions and demonstrations, finger spelling, normal writing, Braille, other simple or computerised external communication devices, e.g. communication boards with icons (Bliss), etc.).

⁴ The copyright of the film belongs to the authors of Souriau et al. (op.cit.) and VCDBF/Viataal. The reader of this essay might want to look at the video-clip of "Ingrid and the crab" on the CD in Souriau et al.

⁵ Underlining of vowel letters designate focal stress or emphasis on the word in question, ° ° surrounds speech in a lower volume, °° °° even lower speech (whispered speech), and * * laughter in the talk. Occasionally, I have inserted time-codes into the transcripts (e.g. 0:01).

(basically) tactile signs have been given in CAPITALS. There are also practical actions actually taking place (performed) in the situation or make-believe stagings that imitate or "depict" such real events by means of manual and other gestures ("iconic gestures"; Andrén, 2010). These are all given in a normal straight font. An example would be the crab's movements, which are either "real" (involving the real crab moving) or are "depicted" (in Clark's full sense) by Gunnar's gestures imitating a crab's movements. Both these are staged by Gunnar, but they are accomplished in close interaction with Ingerid; it seems that signs will work better when they are "combined with dramatisation through movements and sounds" (Souriau et al., 2009: 77).

Often, turns or utterances are composed of several of these resources. For example, as we can see below, in lines 21 and 25 Gunnar first lets the crab crawl up Ingerid's arm and then, in line 22 produces vocal-verbal utterances (å hå hå hå h↑å! va?! kendte du den? (given in Courier)(interjections followed by *what now?! did you feel it?*), whereas in line 26 he produces the tactile *sign* for "feel" (given in CAPITALS in English), then *demonstrates practically* the crab movements on Ingerid's forearm (shown in straight font) and *vocalises* (utters) the interjection håh!(in Courier). By contrast, in lines 23 and 26-28 Gunnar *depicts* the crab movements by letting his fingers "walk" up along Ingerid's arm, and in the latter case he tactically signs *FEEL* and closes the turns with interjections.

Norwegian utterances⁶ and tactile signs have been translated into English, these translations given in *italicised small print* (10 pts).⁷

Ingerid og krabben

1. (0:01) Ingerid!
2. Ingerid and Gunnar hold their hands in a preparatory position for tactile signing
3. G: va gjorde du? (.) ja ha ha (.) han krabba på dej(transl.: *what did you do? (.) yea ha ha (.) he the crab on you*) G imitates simultaneously the crab's movements on Ingerid's arm. *jaha↑*
4. G looks down into the bucket, then showing how the crab falls down into it,
5. (G: 0:09) G: va va de? han ramla ner! (transl.: *what was that? he fell down!*) (G bends down at the same time, the two seem to look down into the bucket)
6. G: ja↑ (signing:) GUNNAR (= G takes I's hand and leads it and his own hand to his moustache which he strokes) kendte (*felt*), points to his own arm °Gunnar på armen° (*Gunnar on his arm*)
7. (0:23) G pulls up his sleeve, imitating the crab crawling up the arm °°ja ja eja°°
8. (0:30) G makes the (real) crab run up the forearm: °ja° (.) °ja° (.) °hja°

⁶ Utterances not translated are usually (sequences of) interjections.

⁷ This is the fourth (above-mentioned) kind of notation in the transcript. Note that these notes are my translations, and thus do not reflect any extra semiotic activity on the part of the participants.

9. oop (the crab falls off the arm and is caught by G and then thrown down into the bucket) (.) ja.
10. G: ja (signing:) GUNNAR Gunnar kendte *yea Gunnar felt*, repeats the event with iconic imitations; I is relatively focused, her hand in recipient position
11. (signing:) GUNNAR FEEL Gunnar kendte, å hå hå↑ *Gunnar felt* (followed by interjections)
12. (0:52) The crabs are down in the bucket; G proposes that they take one up again
13. G: du GUNNAR °ska Gunnar ta° opp, en sån opp!(demonstrates the body movement necessary for picking up a crab) om igen ONCE-AGAIN (transl.: *hey you*)°should Gunnar take° up, such one up! once again); the two hold their hands in the preparatory position for signing;
14. (1:00) G is in a starting position, slightly awaiting; G: °°kjem kjem°° °°come come°°
15. G leads I into helping him to pick up a crab from the bucket
16. (1:05) G: åv åv åv åh↑
17. G signs GUNNAR TAKE-UP and takes up a bigger crab, hides it in his hand
18. (1:10) G: ska vi kende, ja, ska vi kende *shall we feel, yea, shall we feel*
19. G prepares I's arm by pulling up her sleeve, looks momentarily at I's face
20. (1:20) G: å så å så; *like that like that*;
21. (1:26) G lets the crab crawl up I's forearm; I looks focused but rather tense
22. G: å hå hå hå hå↑! va?! kendte du den? (interjections, followed by *what now?! did you feel it?*)
23. G shows the same crab movement imitated on I's arm: ja ha ha hå↑
24. (1:40) G: om↑igen ONCE AGAIN, åh å så ska vi kende ja ja ja (transl.: *once again, an'then we will feel yea yea yea*)
25. (1:46) G lets the real crab crawl up I's forearm sjhhh
26. G (signs) FEEL and shows the movements on I's arm: håh!!
27. (1:56) G (intensely): va va de? va va de? *what was that? what was that?*
28. G (signs) FEEL (shows the crab's movement, signed on I) ja ha ha
29. (2:10) G: ja!! de de de... den krabba! *yes!! that that that... that crab!* (imitating the crab in her hand) å så *and then* (showing the movement along her arm) ja ha hå så... (with enthusiasm)
30. G: ska vi ta'n å å å *shall we take it an'an'an'* shows how the fictive crab falls down into the bucket
31. (2:30) G: va va de du kendte för nåt? ja du kendte ja du kendte *what was it you felt something? yea you felt*
32. G: a:ckurat ja vi kendte som *exactly yes we felt that*

33. G: á så tok du ja du tok á- -- °á så lyfte ví'n opp° á så la du'n opp i ja så krabba an' then you took yes you took an' - -- °an' then we lifted it up° an' then you put it in yea crab like that imitating the crab

34. G: á så la ví'n opp i ja så krabba °ná har vi kasta° an' then we put it in (the hand) yea the crab °now we have thrown° shows the crab's movement on the arm, then how the crab is thrown into the bucket

Analyses

Communication between CDB persons and their sighted and hearing partners are necessarily asymmetrical. At the bottom there are of course the asymmetries described by Souriau (2009: 81-82) as fundamental. On the one hand, there are asymmetries in sensory-perceptual, cognitive and cultural access to the world. Secondly, there is the asymmetry with regard to a common language; CDB persons lack a community language and culture, whereas sighted and hearing people can rely on a powerful, commonly known, spoken and written language. But in addition, the interactions themselves will often be (at least superficially) quite asymmetrical; this holds true of "Ingerid and the crab". It is Gunnar who handles the lion's part of the communicative labour; he is staging the events and activities, signing and talking, more often than not very distinctly and enthusiastically. Ingerid cannot hear, let alone understand the talk itself, but she can feel the vibrations, parts of the emotionally loaded prosodies, in Gunnar's body. Despite this Ingerid takes some part in the interaction.⁸ In some moments her face reflects her attention, focusing and recognition. She seems to "think and feel", apparently with thrill and perhaps some fear, for example, when the crab is crawling up her forearm, especially when this happens for the first time (line 21). Gunnar attends to Ingerid's faint or subtle reactions, and he provides hyperarticulated responses to them. In doing so, however, he often expresses what Ingerid *might* have experienced. He acts *as if* Ingerid understands more than she is in fact capable of. On the day following the excursion to the pier, Gunnar and Ingerid use the memory "traces" (Vege et al., 2007) of the events with the real crabs. On this secondary occasion, Gunnar's communication is even more marked and manifest, as he uses his bodily engagement – talk, signs and gestures – in a very intense manner, and Ingrid appears to be somewhat more active, relaxed and appreciative. (This part of the video has not been included in my transcript above.)

⁸ If the communicative project had been one in which the CDB person tried to explain a wish of her own, the interaction might have contained more initiatives on her part (see other examples in Souriau *et al.*, 2008). However, even in such projects the person with disability often loses the overall initiative. Linell & Korolija (1995) showed this for conversations between persons with aphasia and their partners.

Gunnar's communication, his utterances in an extended multi-modal sense, is typically a combination of different resources. He is alloying these varied semiotic resources through the local alternation between them and the integration of them, often in a characteristic sequential order. There are many examples of such local conglomerates. In lines 6-7 his turn starts with a prefaced initial verbal marker (ja), and continues with a tactile signing (GUNNAR) and interstitial verbal fragments (*felt, Gunnar on his arm*), then a pointing gesture and, after a short interval, imitation of the crab's movement on his forearm, followed by a sequence of verbal prompts (interjections). To take just one other example, in lines 10-11 Gunnar again starts with an initial verbal marker (ja), the sign GUNNAR, then a verbal collocation (Gunnar kendte), iconic imitations, new signs, a repetition of the previous verbal fragment, and finally a series of interjections. Final series of interjections with very prominent prosodies are relatively frequent in Gunnar's rounds and seem to invite a "celebration" (cf. Marková, 1991) of a possible experiential achievement, a step towards an outburst of possible extroversion, satisfaction, delight and enthusiasm.

One salient feature in the interaction is the recycled rounds of actions ("replayings"; Marková, 2016: 185) with their phases. In a nutshell it looks like this:

1. cycle: Gunnar demonstrates the events and movements on his own body, with two rounds:

- 1a. lines 6-7: imitations that actually function as commentaries on the preceding events (lines 1-5);
- 1b. lines 8-11: Gunnar lets the crab make real movements (staging the practical actions).

2. cycle: Gunnar lets Ingerid feel and experience, with several rounds:

Preparations (lines 12-17, 18-19), followed by a sequence of real and imitated movements:

- 2a. lines 20-22 (real)
- 2b. line 23 (imitation)
- 2c. lines 25-27 (real)
- 2d. lines 28-30 (new sequence of imitated actions)
- 2e. lines 31-34 (imitation)

In the following I will list a number of additional analytic observations and conclusions:

- Intersubjectivity (the mutual contact and perhaps understandings) is corporeal, based as it is primarily on tactile-haptic interaction (touch and the feeling of touch). In this way Gunnar's body becomes an extension of Ingerid's senses and her sense-making communicative-cognitive process.

- It is possible to see Gunnar's efforts to make Ingerid attend to and understand what happens with the crab as a comprehensive communicative and cognitive "project" initiated by him (Luckmann, 1995; Linell, 2009: 178, *et passim*).
- The communicative project is a joint one (it must be if it has to qualify as communication), but the distribution of the communicative labour is extremely uneven (asymmetrical), with Gunnar as the leader and Ingerid as the follower (as far as possible). As the dominant party Gunnar is staging, demonstrating, signing and talking, he is surveying the situation and possesses the necessary knowledge, he takes responsibility for the communicative labour and therefore for the project.
- The weaker party is almost completely dependent on her partner; Gunnar helps Ingerid in examining their joint surroundings, and accordingly, she receives an almost maximal amount of support ("scaffolding").
- As pointed out, the project (sequence) is organised with replayings, cycles and rounds at several levels. The functions of these recyclings are arguably (and hopefully) geared towards enhancing Ingerid's understandings and to contributing to entrenching the experiences in her memory. This event structure provides space not only for external dialogue but also for "internal dialogue", moments of thinking (Nafstad, 2015: 26; Marková, 2016: 187-8). Traces of the internal dialogue can at least partly be externally visible, in body posture and facial expression (cf. Souriau, 2009: 87). A recurrent pattern in a cycle is the establishment of a common focus of attention, the introduction of an interesting object (the crab), a dramatic course of action (the crab's crawling on the arm and then disappearing into the bucket), the reconstructive narrative summary ("yea it was the crab"), the rehabilitation of communicative contact, and then a new round. There is a certain similarity with peekaboo routines.
- The re-enacting of events is also similar to a story-telling activity (narration). Gunnar is using and reusing words, which Ingerid most probably does not comprehend but she perceives the dramatising vibrations of his body and his talk (which are parts of prosody). However, Ingerid does feel the tactile signings and possibly the iconic gestures, various aspects of Gunnar's bodily emotional arousal, and some situated physical actions (such as the crab's movements), all of which might awaken her interest and sustain her understanding of the situation.
- The communicative activities are strongly tied to the concrete situation. In fact it partly *co-creates* the whole situation with the crab, and parts of its contents and message potential. The boundary between primary practical actions and communicative sign(ing)s is fuzzy. Gunnar is constantly using the situation at hand (the crab and its movements). (However, this will be different on the following day.)

But he also enriches the situational content by introducing a number of tactile signs (GUNNAR, I, YOU, FEEL, CRAB, ONCE-AGAIN).

- To some extent later rounds tend to be more analytic than the first rounds. Gunnar seems to try to divide the holistic situation (the entire situation with the crab's movements and how they are felt) up into components: the crab, the movement on the arm *per se*, the fall into the bucket (lines 29-30). It might be possible to understand this as a pre-conceptual, pre-semiotic and pre-linguistic analysis in terms of things (crabs) and movements (runs), something which can be seen as prefiguring the nouns and verbs of an upcoming language. Sometimes there is a simultaneous use of tactile signs and spoken words, but with the same references (lines 6, 11, 13, 24), or of signs and actions (lines 17, 26, 28). This would be part of an overall development according to the scheme: from holistic situation via situation components (which are pre-conceptual) to situation-transcending use of symbols (signs and words) (performed at home on the following day).

The interaction in "Ingerid and the crab" takes place at the early developmental stages of intersubjectivity. Ingerid and her contact with Gunnar still live in a kind of very limited dyadic world that comprises primarily her own body and that of her partner, and what they can feel through these. The two persons and their communication constitute a small world of their own, which they experience within the reach of their bodies and it is shielded largely from its outer surroundings. Often, they form a cocoon for themselves. Ingerid and Gunnar are there for each other, which corresponds to Trevarthen's (1979) level of primary intersubjectivity. It is reminiscent of the communication between infant and carer in certain kinds of situations, for example, some forms of play, and on the nursing table. But into this dyadic communication Gunnar introduces selected aspects of the outer referential world, first and foremost the crab. In this way there will be also a third entity in their communication (cf. Marková's (2016) third node in her triangles), an object that the two can jointly focus upon, experience and in some ways comprehend. In this we find, as was pointed out above, the beginning of an analysis of the situation into some of its components, the seeds of a secondary intersubjectivity in Trevarthen's terms.

Almost all of Gunnar's behaviours are bodily. This also holds for the vocal-verbal (language) components, which are probably perceived by Ingerid through the prosodies and experienced as bodily, especially as Gunnar is talking quite loudly, in a very intense manner. She feels the movements of the crab and Gunnar's hands, and she arguably senses a good deal of the vibrations inherent in his vocalisations and in general, his emotionally charged bodily engagements. For Ingerid, his language (in the conventional sense) is bound to be peripheral for the communication as a whole, since she most probably does not understand

much of the verbal content. But for Gunnar – the dominant and steering participant – the immediate situation on the pier, with the crab, is permeated by language and the linguistically acquired knowledge of the world. Thus, there are profound asymmetries at several levels.

If we return to the issue of human communication in general in relation to communication involving persons with complete CDB (section 2), there are – despite the differences – some similarities, although the normal development is quite rapid, while the congenitally deafblind individual remains on early stages of development for a long time, in some cases for years. After all, Ingerid is 24 years old, and has been cared for all her life. Many deafblind-born children will foresee only a relatively modest progress.⁹ But even if the development sometimes seems stuck, it has its local interactional dynamics.

Some general similarities, in addition to what we have already found, include the following points:

- The active perceptual examination of the environment, which takes place through action-perception cycles (Noë, 2004): the individual manipulates the objects with movements, including with the senses (changes of direction of approximation), and observation of the results of these movements. However, this occurs here very much through touch and feeling, without the distal senses of sight and hearing and with a strong control by the sighted carer. But tactile support promotes attachment and emotional relationships (Souriau et al., 2009: 60).
- The adult partner deploys many multi-modal demonstrations, with the help of talk (language), signs and staging of actions (exemplifying gestures).
- Routinised sequences are practised in play activities of different kinds: peekaboo, nursery rhymes with emotional peaks (often with nonsense words and expressive prosodies (cf. lines 22, 23, 28, 29)).
- The primary intersubjectivity (with only Self and one Other) dominates the communicative development of the normal child during its 7-8 first months. Then the external objects invade the communicative interplay. As we have seen, this has its counterpart, albeit within harsh limits, in the relationship between Ingerid and Gunnar.

⁹ The most well-known deafblind person in history is undoubtedly the American Helen Keller, who became an important humanist, author and lecturer. But she was not deaf and blind at birth, but from about 19 months of age. Among other factors that contributed to her unparalleled development one may mention her exceptional intellect and her life-long relationship with an understanding and unyielding teacher (Anne Sullivan).

Mutual Trust

As I proposed at the outset of this essay, dialogue revolves primarily around how people make sense of themselves, others and the world, on different premisses and at different levels. Dialogical theories must be capable of describing and explaining all forms of sense-making, including those which take place under difficult or adverse conditions. But dialogue is also about the need for (mutual) social recognition, and this is where we come to the role of immediate trust. Dialogue philosophy, which is related to dialogism as a meta-theory for human existence, has also been used in the development of an applied ethics of being in the human world (Linell, 2017). The rest of my concluding discussion will relate to this.

In primary intersubjectivity the fundamental immediate trust between participants is crucially important (cf. Nafstad, 2015). The parties literally touch and feel each other, and there must be no space for doubt in the other's true intentions. As Marková (2016a) points out, building on Nafstad's essay, there must be a basic interpersonal trust; both the weak party and the carer must be trusted as a partner with good intentions, a person with dignity, worthy of being listened to and trying to be understood. But the mutual trust is not symmetrical. Parts of the trust must also be "epistemic" (Marková, 2016: 127ff.); the partners must both assume that the other knows and remembers something, and that the other has some relevant and truthful knowledge to provide. Just like the small infant is fundamentally dependent on its adult partner, Ingerid relies on Gunnar when it comes to communicating and getting to know something. At the same time Gunnar, the carer, must accommodate to his moral position and trust Ingerid's potential and willingness to participate. The immediate bodily contact between the deafblind person and her partner reminds us, as regards the aspect of trust, of the mutual gaze contact between the infant and its caring adult (at least in some cultures).

Anyone who watches "Ingerid and the crab" may probably find it unclear if Ingerid fully *understands* what was going on. The world of the deafblind person is enigmatic for us. But it seems that Ingerid now and then is engrossed in thinking (inner dialogue). Also, we must remember that we are faced with understandings at the level of primary and incipient secondary intersubjectivities. Here the mutual social contact, with its need for immediate trust, is crucial. This is a fundamental condition, a contextual requirement, for the building of both the apperception of the world and language. Ragnar Rommetveit (1992) has explained true communication as an "attunement to the attunement of the other", and yet, in this endeavour "intersubjectivity must be taken for granted in order to be achieved" (Rommetveit, 1974: 56). The latter assumption means that we need some form of common

ground in order to be able to proceed to developing shared understanding at more advanced levels.

Communication is a matter of both understanding and care¹⁰, recognising (especially) the (weaker) party's need for recognition and empathy. The professional carer, a category of individuals exquisitely represented by Gunnar in our example, is painfully aware of the predicament of the deafblind-born person, and her limitations in capacities and actual achievements. Therefore, he must take on an immense communicative responsibility. At the same time there is another side of the professional ideology that has to have an impact on the professional's actual attitudes in interaction. One has to regard the other as a sense-maker with a potential to understand and develop (Nafstad, 2015; Marková, 2016). The person with severe communicative disabilities has a full value as another human being, our "neighbour" in the biblical sense (Hodges, 2011). She is not a soulless animal, as some behaviourist theories have claimed (and still do), but a person with feelings, understandings and potentials for sense-making. It is true that sometimes this will not be enough for the individual to reach the achievements that we hope for. But when the parties are *there*, in the actual interaction and its reciprocities, they must bracket their doubts and engage in the other as if her potential goes beyond that which can actually be objectively observed. Gunnar builds his contributions to dialogue with a point of departure in Ingerid's limited responses, and with this strategy the two can make joint progress into the building of an understanding of the world that lies beyond the limits of the immediate world within reach.

Ingerid becomes a person, somebody who can intentionally show and say something, take communicative initiatives and try to make herself understood, give verbal and gestual expression to her wishes, ideas and feelings. But she needs another human being to achieve this. As Souriau et al. (2009: 78), through their co-author I. Simonsen, put it, the CDB person needs a communicative partner to support her "in keeping both her brain and her body going"; otherwise, "the risk of isolation and inactivity is always there". A person, any new human being, emerges from dialogue and interaction; as Levitin says in his book title (1982), "one is not born a personality".¹¹

¹⁰ Nafstad (2015) prefers the notion of 'cure', where many others (Hodges, 2011; Steffensen, 2012) would probably talk about 'care' in the contexts involved.

¹¹ Significant contributions to CDB studies was made in Soviet Russia within post-Vygotskian socio-historical psychology, featuring, among others, Meshcheryakov (1979), Ilienkov (1977) and Levitin (1982). However, this notice is not to suggest that their theorising builds upon extended dialogism, promoting a dialogical mind and interpersonal trust. On the contrary, a bitter polemics based on political arguments among scholars for or against extreme (and often unjustifiably attributed) positions on the

Summary

This paper has raised some points about dialogicality and sense-making that move a bit away from classical dialogism.¹² I have proposed a kind of "extended dialogism" that would highlight points like partial understandings, genetic perspectives and occasional backgrounding of language. I would claim that such a meta-theory would be useful in the study of communication with persons with disabilities.

With regard to Deafblindness studies the following points of extended dialogism would be important:

- It is not limited to verbal language.
- It attends to a broader range of sense-making activities, including the use of signs, gestures and practical actions, and sensory exploration of the outer world within reach.
- It accommodates the common feature of asymmetry between participants in communication.
- The role of the integration of perception and action is even more obvious in the case of touch than in making sense through other communicative resources.

In the case of communication with a person with CDB, it seems obvious that we cannot talk about entirely symmetrical and completely shared understandings.

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subject matter seem to have obstructed the appreciation of these Soviet and Russian CDB studies (Bakhurst & Padden, 1991).

¹² Note that Luckmann (1990), in the text I referred to at the outset, was concerned with what should be meant by a concrete "dialogue" (communicative encounter), rather than the features of a dialogist meta-theory about dialogicality.

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