

# A JOURNEY IN METAXIS: Theatre of the Oppressed as Enactivist Praxis

Warren Linds  
Canada

## Abstract:

The writings of Francisco Varela on cognition and knowledge offer a way to approach the process of drama creation. This article inter-plays an approach to knowledge called enactivism and the particular workshop development process of Theatre of the Oppressed, based on the application in a North American context, of the philosophy and practice of Augusto Boal.



*Warren Linds is a theatre facilitator trained in techniques of Theatre of the Oppressed. He has been working in popular theatre and community education for the past 18 years. He is presently a doctoral student in Language Education at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, Canada where his research is on the facilitation and development of transformative drama processes as a participatory action research methodology.*

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## A JOURNEY IN METAXIS

**METAXIS:** from *metaxu*: adverb, metaphor, verb, grammar, preposition, plural, etc. In the state of *in the midst, betwixt, between, between-whiles, in the interval, neither good nor bad.*

(Greek-English Lexicon, 1996, p.1115)

Each day is a journey, and the journey itself, home.  
(Basho, 17th century Zen poet, quoted in Tremmel, 1993)

Theatre is born when the human being discovers that it can observe itself;  
when it discovers that, in this act of seeing, it can see *itself* —  
*see itself in situ: see itself seeing.*

(Boal, 1995, p.13)

In NADIE Journal 19:2, 1995, Judith Phippen outlined how the reflective path of Humberto Maturana as outlined in his writings offers a mechanism that would help those of us in performance studies to take an academic and poetic look at our own praxis.

Maturana collaborated with Francisco Varela in the work of *The Tree of Knowledge* (1992), which examined cognition as a biological phenomenon. More recently, Varela co-authored, with Eleanor Rosch and Evan Thompson, *The Embodied Mind* (1996) where they outlined further how cognition can be examined by combining Buddhist ways of knowing with the current research in artificial intelligence.

Brent Davis and Dennis Sumara (forthcoming) have based, on the work of Gregory Bateson and Varela et al., an enactivist theory of cognition in which cognition does not occur in minds or brains but in the possibility for shared action. Enactivism refuses to privilege the individual but sees knowledge not as a substance but something that is developed collectively through joint and shared action and collaboration. True to the enactivist framework, this article will illustrate enactivism in its co-emergence with my analysis of the poetics of *Theatre of the Oppressed* as developed by Augusto Boal and adapted by me in the contexts I've worked in the past six years. As such, it is an attempt to apply some of Maturana's and Varela's concepts to a particular dramatic process.

In doing this I will discover more about enactivism as it is expressed through *Theatre of the Oppressed* and my own present and possible praxis given my reflection-in-action. In this way I will be examining my lived experience as facilitator / Joker<sup>1</sup> in light of enactivism and examining enactivism in light of my lived experiences.

The real test for applying all this to my own praxis will be in how integrated enactivist thought is in writing about it. Rather than treating theories as containing separate, discrete check-lists about each of its aspects, I will try, through writing as a method of inquiry (Richardson, 1994), to find out about myself and my own praxis-in-progress and ways to enact it in my life and work.

### **Theatre of the Oppressed—A Form of Embodied Drama**

The basis of Boal's work in theatre is the focus he puts on what he calls *The Arsenal of Theatre of the Oppressed*. This includes games, exercises, children's play used around the world, some invented, some over 400 years old, but

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1. The Joker is the person in the process who is attached to neither audience nor performer and is, in fact, the bridge between the two. She/he is the 'wild card', sometimes director, sometimes referee, sometimes facilitator, sometimes leader. It is this ambiguous 'in-between-ness' that can only be learned through inter-action in practice.

reformulated in a structure. The work reframes our knowledge and opens us to the senses, helping us think about the process of thought. It concretizes the knowledge we have but then makes this knowledge problematic. Reflection becomes an act of turning back upon ourselves, enabling us to begin to know how we know. This reflexivity, this inter-connection between looking back in order to move ahead, allows us to bring forth from within and without a wealth of possible meanings, a myriad of possible-worlds.

The first principle Boal articulates is that the human being is a unity, an indivisible whole. Ideas, emotions, sensations and actions are interwoven. A bodily movement is a thought and a thought expresses itself through the body. All ideas, all mental images, all emotions reveal themselves through the body.

The second principle is that the five senses are all linked. We breathe with our whole body, we sing with our whole body, not just our vocal chords. One example is chess. Good chess players do physical training before a match because they know the whole body thinks, not just the brain.

Living in the world with its overwhelming stimuli, our senses suffer. We start to feel little of what we touch, listen to little of what we hear, or see little of what we look at. We adapt to what we need to do at any particular moment but we don't use fully our entire body. In order for us to be 'in the moment' which theatre requires, we need to re-sensitize, we need to awaken the memory of our senses, we need to re-realize that we control our senses and our muscles and our body. The body begins to speak through sound and movement.

Theatre is developed in intensive week-long workshops or in shorter workshops over longer periods of time. The workshops explore the inter-related aspects of becoming aware of our bodies, enabling us to use the body as a vocabulary of expression, creating theatre through verbal and non-verbal language, and using forum theatre to activate audiences.

The core of the drama workshop process is to use awareness of our body to examine and deal with issues of power.

### **Knowing the Body and Making It Expressive**

Knowledge acquired aesthetically is already, in itself,  
the beginning of a transformation.  
(Boal, 1995, p.109)

The body is a social body (Johnson, 1983) and transformation occurs in social situations as change co-emerges in working together towards consensus.

Consensus often gets a bad rap as meaning ensuring everyone in a group or community agreeing on something. The word actually comes from a Latin word meaning 'a feeling or perceiving together'. Johnson makes the point that:

. . . communities seem to be more pulled apart by divisive ideas than impelled by organic rhythms which might unite them. Recovery of our

shared genius requires utilizing the somatic resources we share with animals for acting in concert. (1983, p. 176)

In a social situation like a drama workshop, we work together to develop collective stories. This happens by activating the whole body through verbal and non-verbal expression.

Drama opens up a space for exploration between self and other as stories are told both one on one and in a group. At the beginning of my workshop process this is done exclusively through non-verbal image. No one ever has to say what the story is about. Not only does this emphasize the traditional theatrical aphorism of 'show us, don't tell us' it also leads to participants / observers being able to 'write' themselves into the stories of others. A dialogical relationship of self and other is created.

The important concept of *metaxis* (a Greek word used by Aristotle and Plato which means 'between + in' — in other words, betwixt and between, among, a middle way) is a key to understanding Boal's work. It is, he explains:

. . . the state of belonging completely and simultaneously to two different autonomous worlds: the image of reality and the reality of the image. The participant shares and belongs to these two autonomous worlds: their reality and the image of their reality, which she herself has created. (1995, p.43)

The participant belongs to both these worlds utterly and completely, not merely vicariously or imaginatively. This also happens with the observer, the audience and the facilitator. The one who does and the one who watches belong 'completely and simultaneously to two different, autonomous worlds'.

A new kind of knowledge emerges from this process of inter-action between the observing-I, the I-in-situ and the not-I, the other. We begin to see everything in new ways.

We hold a mirror up to nature and, instead of trying to represent it, find it accessible. We can see that this co-emergent self/other/world is plastic, mutable as knowledge is enacted, not pre-existent. Self-observation through *metaxis* allows us to see knowledge as it is enacted in each moment of the present, not as something which already exists.

### How Does Metaxis Occur?

The two worlds of *metaxis* in ourselves are autonomous. *Metaxis* occurs in the artist's body and is embodied. Self and mind are woven through the entire human body and through the web of relationships in which that self takes shape.

Then we play with the reality of the images before us. The protagonist must forget the real world which was the origin of the image and play with the image itself, in its artistic embodiment. The protagonists must practice in the second world (the aesthetic), in order to modify the first (the social). This is

what Boal calls 'transubstantiation'. Each of the worlds have their own organic constitution.

The artistic creativity of the protagonist must not limit itself to simple realistic reproduction or symbolic illustration of the event: it must have its own aesthetic dimension.

Boal concludes:

. . . if the artist is able to create an autonomous world of images of his own reality, and to enact his liberation in the reality of these images, they will then extrapolate into his own life all that he has accomplished in fiction. (1995, p.44)

Through the process of metaxis, drama becomes the interplay between the imagined and the actual, the tangible and the ephemeral. Reflection within drama allows knowledge to unfold and emerge and become more explicitly known. Learning becomes more tangible and is made available for future deepened exploration, sitting there, smoldering.

Thus, the processes of metaxis (many autonomous worlds in the singular body of the actor) and analogical induction (multiple readings on each story) are illustrated.

How can those being formed in this process understand this process? They must go through it themselves, to become mindful of the I and the not-I, the self and the not-self.

### **Methods of Mindfulness**

A resource for the actor is the inter-play between body and conscious thought. To enable this thought to emerge in-action we do an exercise called interior / exterior monologues. We explore complicated feelings and emotions and discover which one will emerge in internal and external inter-action. This technique clarifies our desires, emotions, sensations; it allows us to see how we are multiple beings-in-flux within one body.

In a static tableau or image, where each actor has been sculpted by the storyteller, each participant is asked to listen to their thoughts and feelings in their characters and body positions inside the image. They are asked to let the thoughts come to the surface and become aware of them as they do.

Then we ask them to do this aloud — when something comes to mind, to speak it in a monologue. I have been in workshops with Boal where we were asked to do this for a full minute. Time passed very slowly as I was aware that I was being timed. But eventually I got into a rhythm of mind, talk. It became like a freewriting exercise. Censoring of thoughts stopped. I stopped repeating myself — saying the same things over and over again — and broke through the initial barrier of superficiality because everyone in the image was doing the

same thing, no one was able to listen (and the cacophony meant any observers could only make out random words).

The next step is to respond to the facilitator one at a time. On being touched, each person is asked to say a word or sentence as the character in the situation. Sometimes this exercise also leads to physical and verbal improvisation as we enact what we discovered through the interior / exterior monologues.

I see this exercise as one of the equivalent exercises to the sensory exercises of seeing what one looks at, listening to what one hears and feeling what one touches. It is being mindful about what we think, enabling consciousness to emerge through the interplay between thought, action (speech) and the physical body.

We use the information that emerges not just for script or dialogue but also for building the character. Much like freewriting (where one writes in the here and now without censorship or erasure) internal / external monologues are exercises of the transitory present. We are encouraged not to self-censor, just to let thought flow . . . and float by . . . as we mine our own selves in inter-action with our positions in a static image.

Then, when we say what we are thinking versus what we want to say, we see the divergence / convergence of thoughtfulness and mindfulness and how the context of which we are part affects / limits mindfulness itself.

I have also often come out of this exercise much more mindful of what I am thinking in my daily life.

Most groups I work with find it easy to do the sensory awareness games and exercises. When it comes to awakening the sense of mindfulness there is initial resistance and discomfort. Some of this is due to the dis-ruption of 'what is the character?' implicit in the work; some is due to the fear of what one will discover as 'the character who is in metaxis with the individual playing that character'. As a facilitator I am constantly asked to tell the characters who they are or to give some 'clue' to the story being told. Participants in workshops who are watching also want the same answers. But the script of the stories are in the actors' bodies in inter-relationship to others in a particular image. And when we activate the image and the actors move, not only is the knowledge that emerged from the interior / exterior monologues enacted, new knowledge is developed through the inter-actions that occur. Working through the resistance and confusion of the process of 'discovering' your character and the story it is in enables the entire group to break through to another level of the work.

### **Time in Past . . . Present . . . Future Stories**

In the logic of Darwin's account of evolution and the Buddhist analysis of experience into co-dependent arising, we are concerned with *the processual transformation of the past into the future through the intermediary of transitional forms that in themselves have no permanent substance.* [Italics added]

(Varela et al., 1996, p.116)

This point has importance for the improvised drama process. In moving from an image of reality to a story of reality, we move back and forth in time and space, providing the actors with opportunities to investigate, through their bodies inter-acting, the characters which they have been given in image form. Their only resources for those characters are their own bodies, their own perceptions of themselves through their bodies and their own inter-actions with others in the scene.

In bringing them back to past and forward to the future, some solid ground is created. But this solid ground in the 'moment of the present' is swept away in inter-actions with others. This continuous dis-ruption of who they are / aren't can lead to some discomfort. The moment of awareness about a character-in-action disappears. Yet, somehow, a character is created out of those moments and the spaces between them.

The past becomes concrete, the future that will be becomes concrete as the actors pass through the transitory present.

### **Reflection**

We are suggesting a change in nature of reflection from an abstract, disembodied activity to an embodied (full-minded), open-ended reflection. Reflection is not just on experience but reflection is a form of experience itself and that reflective form of experience can be performed with mindfulness / awareness. Open-ended, open to possibilities other than those contained in one's current representations of the life space.

(Varela et al., 1996, p.27)

Being, knowing and acting come forth in dramatic reflection, in Sumara and Davis' term 'allatonce' [in press].

Reflection is often used as a substitute word for analysis, for stepping back or away — and gazing on something that is out there now — something finite that occurred now in the past in order to go towards the future. Instead of using reflection in this way, one must look at reflection as the here and now of action.

Husserl (as cited by Creery, 1991) asserts that reflection, because it must take place in language, may call forth into language tacit knowledge held deep within us. If reflection occurs in image, which is a different sort of language, it calls forth this knowledge through a different way of knowing. The languages of the inner self come forward through picture or expressive movement and the union of tacit and explicit knowledge is realized in the reflexive process of looking back. Reflection becomes, as Maturana and Varela (1992) outline, 'a process of knowing what we know. An act of turning back onto ourselves' (p.24). '... We bring out a wealth of possible meanings, a myriad of possible worlds' (pp.26-27).

Katherine Creery did her master's studies on *Reflection in Drama in Education* (1991). She interviewed teachers who *seemed* to have suggested that reflection concretizes learning within the dramatic context, pinning down singular truths and objectifying the present. She says, however, that:

. . . reflection as a move toward the tangible is, in one of the teacher's words, a way of freeing students to go 'AHA!' to pick up what is going on at a different level. It is a call for children to be given opportunities to bring forth their knowledge in a variety of meaningful ways. It is a request that students be afforded meaningful contexts in which they may engage in a process of symbolization. (1991, p.101)

Reflection can provide a middle ground in co-created worlds (by teachers in the world of the child, and children in the world of the teachers). Teachers felt reflection helped students come to know what they knew by giving tacit knowledge — knowledge we can know more than we can tell — a variety of forms. Drama is an enactment of reflection as knowledge is revealed through looking backwards to move forward as re-storying opens up not only new perspectives but also a process in which, Maturana and Varela (1992) say, 'every reflection brings forth a world' (p.26).

In the metaxic process of moving back and forth between the reality of the story and the story of reality, between the imagined as real and the real as imagined, 'knowledge' becomes much more fluid.

But we are still left with the problem of representation. Does drama fix itself to the solid ground of a play, trapping it into singular truth and facts? Does it pin things down for the participants? Is the knowledge that is brought forth through dramatic reflection 'factual'?

I think dramatic reflection can lead to such conclusions but needn't. Looking at the present as a transitory moment enables such moments of 'AHA!' that often occur when the students understand clearly for the first time something they knew before in a partial or confused way. These moments often are recognizable by brief gasps or silences when a particular image strikes at the core of the participants. They recognize it, they resonate with it, they identify with it. Much like seeing below the surface of a tranquil pond before it is disturbed, this is momentarily clear and then goes muddy again. Then we move on. That moment has gone into the past and we continue to work to create new moments.

### **The I / Not-I in Mis-Representation**

Garner (1994) quotes Jacques Derrida's claim that play itself is the 'disruption of presence' (p.40) and this is evident particularly in improvised performance where the stability of the text is constantly challenged.

What we say about our lived experiences is not simply an account of what happened — narrating the events of our intertwined relations contributes to a



re-interpreting of already lived events in relation to unfolding events. Knowing, being, doing are all one.

Such challenging only occurs, however, when the idea of representation and the 'illusion of reality' is also challenged on stage. Phippen refers to this aspect of performance as:

constituted by an audience who wants to express their beliefs and is open to change and actors who can facilitate their transformation. (1995, p.93)

This occurs not only through the transformation of the role of spect-actors (audience members who interact with actors in the performance space) but also through the role of the actors who are, if I could coin a phrase, actor-spectors. The actors who have developed the play out of their own experiences play out the text according to the 'script' they have improvised. But in inter-acting with the spect-actors, they are constantly shifting between I and not-I (the not-I being the character they are playing which consists of I/not-I within it). The self, in other words, cannot be stable and unchanging as this circular I/not-I within a character that is I/not-I means that my own self cannot be fixed in any point of time or space.

Varela et al. explore categories in Buddhist schools that examine the arising of the sense of self. Called aggregates, they are both descriptions of experience as well as pointers towards investigation. These categories of the body and its physical environment, the feelings and sensations, perceptions and habitual patterns of thinking, feeling and acting are, I believe, all investigated at one time or the other by theatrical processes. For example, sensations are enacted and demechanized through sensory games, and habitual patterns of thinking and feeling are brought to the fore through ritual games and mask work.

Boal links the question of self to the question of transformation of the self-that-isn't-a-self:

Who is I? It is very easy to decide that we are the way we are, full stop, end of story. But we can also imagine that the playing cards can be re-dealt. In this dance of potentialities, different powers take the floor at different times, potential can become act, occupy the spotlight and then glide back to the sidelines, powers grow and diminish, move in to the foreground and then shrink into the background again — everything is mutable. Our personality is what it is, but is also what it is becoming. (1995, p.39)

In the same vein, society also is, but is not fixed and, potentially, co-transforms along with the people within it.

### **Disrupting Representation through Reflective Re-creation**

I, as a facilitator, must constantly find ways to disrupt the taken-for-granted notion of drama as a representation of reality and find ways to enact it as a re-presentation.

In making a representation of a 'real' situation we are creating in the classroom something which is different from that situation. But there is a link between the dramatic and the real — it enables us to reflect on the world and, by transforming it, we are exploring what transformations are desirable and / or possible in it.

Drama allows participants to externalize and explore their imaginations. Consciousness results from the inter-actions. By continuously altering our perspective we are disrupting our taken-for-granted consciousness, destroying again the momentary present, transforming ourselves in an ongoing basis.

Improvised drama is transitory. When we 'represent' something this is also transitory, fleeting. The inter-action of the actors ensures that the conflict between 'representations' disrupts a commonly held notion of the term. This allows a distanced analysis and multiple perspectives and points of view. My story is in your story. Madeline Grumet (quoted in Casey, 1995) points out that multiple accounts splinter the dogmatism of a single tale. If

. . . they undermine the authority of the teller, they also free her from being captured by the reflection provided in a single narrative. (p.219)

The original storyteller must become removed from the story so that, again, he is distanced. The action and the action of reflecting on the action must happen. The protagonist is the observer and the person observed. Since all members of the collaborating group also become protagonists in the creation and because no one in the story is or acts like in the (original) story (which is only told from memory), then everyone is both observer and observed, enabling an exploration of the different possibilities. People act between their image of reality and the reality of the image.

One way to allow re-presentation to emerge is to view it as a re-creation of stories in the new space of dramatic creation. Peter Reason and Peter Hawkins point out that:

. . . when the story is distanced through a reading back, it can be seen not only as part of me, not my product to fret over whether it is 'good enough', and can be enjoyed more for its own sake. So one way of expressing meaning is to play around with who is the storyteller and who is the audience; and also with the variety of voices, roles and dramatic style which the storyteller can adopt. (1988, p.86).

Re-creation invites us to tolerate ambiguity, paradox and evolving, emerging knowledge — to respect the ability of the mind to detect and generate patterns of meaning and hold only those aspects that are meaningful. It enables the interpenetration of image, word, rhythm and nuances.

Suzanne Langer makes the point that, as re-creation, not re-presentation:

. . . a work of art expresses a conception of life, an emotion toward reality, but it is not a confessional nor a frozen tantrum. It is a developed

metaphor, a non-discursive symbol that articulates the logic of consciousness itself. (cited in Rico, 1993, p.106)

Reason and Hawkins (1988) outline several ways to responde to the telling of a story. Each one of these might take the form of a dramatic reflection-in-action:

- Replies . . . my reaction to your story, an expressive way of giving shape to the feelings arising while listening to the story.  
Identifying the feelings / emotions and telling a story.
- Echoes . . . a sharing response...your theme in my story . . . Here the listeners tell their own stories on the same theme.  
Arises more out of thinking what the theme is, then telling a story.
- Re-creation . . . your story as re-created by me: here the listeners take the story and re-shape it into another form, finding their own way of telling the tale. Maybe use a different style or a different angle or a different form.
- Reflection . . . my story about your story: standing further back, it is more about-ist, pondering the story.

### The Theatre as Language

Taking the process of creation of theatre to a public performance introduces another level of exploration. Those who have been working intensely for, say, five eight-hour days want their work to 'reach' others. At the same time, the entire focus of *Theatre of the Oppressed* means that 'reaching' others is done in a theatre that is *present*, not as some finished product. The quest is to involve the spectators as spect-actors.

Suzanne Langer's use of the metaphor of the waterfall evokes for me how a workshop process leading to performance should look:

The waterfall has a shape, moving somewhat, its long streamers seeming to shift like ribbons in the wind, but its mobile shape is a permanent datum in the landscape, among rocks and trees and other things. The material composition of the waterfall changes all the time; only the form is permanent and what gives any shape at all to the water is the motion. The waterfall exhibits a form of motion, or a dynamic form. (cited in Davis, Sumara and Kieran, 1996, p.162)

Varela et al. discuss this in their reference to the need for some sense of disciplined practice, a form in motion, a path made in walking.

The workshop process needs a form, a structure that is continuously moving in the inter-actions between me as facilitator and me as participant and participants as facilitator and participants as participants and the worlds we jointly create.

There is a central axis which our working together turns around. It is solid ground that is continually moving.

### Theatre as Communication

You can't stop the waves  
But you can learn to surf.  
(Satachidanda, quoted in Craig, 1996, p.286)

It is important for me as facilitator in this process to be 'mindful' of finding ways to enable this ground to be fluid and fluctuating. It is my role not to find new techniques within the work but to be aware of what is possible and to be in the present with people's intervention — to move away from formulaic questions and debriefing techniques.

I am a learner in the workshop environment. I am not acting on the others, the participants. I am co-implicated in an exploration process and co-evolving alongside the participants in the process. Although I am a facilitator and they are participants, I am co-implicated with them as a participant. Facilitator as participant, participant as facilitator, I must be able to shift back and forth. The process is shaped by me and I am shaped by it in a circular process. Facilitating learning becomes part of life itself, a continuous tinkering (Sumara and Davis) with what is going on.

But how?

Sumara and Luce-Kapler (1993) point out that action research is a journey in which participants will always wonder what is around the next corner. This aspect of serendipitous events, of being prepared for what will happen when we turn the page, comes from paying attention (Tremmel, 1993).

Although we can go through the entire process of *Theatre of the Oppressed* in a workshop format, it is only when we facilitate or 'Joke' our own workshops that the skills of compassionate action that Varela et al. discuss can be developed.

According to Varela et al. (1996), the ultimate effect is:

... to remove all egocentric habits so that the practitioner can realize the wisdom state, and compassionate action can arise directly and spontaneously out of wisdom. (p.251)

We can see how this spontaneous action occurs only in inter-action with the world of others.

So what happens when we learn the skill of conducting the process of, say, *Theatre of the Oppressed*?

Developing the ability to frame situations differently is closely related to shifting toward the values and assumptions of the new theory of practice.

Then there is a move from a gimmick to genuine reframing, from superficial technique to action consistent with the deeper meaning of a practice.

Whitehead (in Russell, 1995) has explained that professionals often experience themselves as living contradictions. They need to focus on living their values more fully in their practice. These values must live through their practice and include a way to understand both present practice in terms of reflecting on the past and an intention to create something new. He adds that it should:

. . . involve an action plan and a commitment to project themselves into realising a possibility which it is hoped and believed will improve the quality of something. (p.15)

To Whitehead, values are not merely abstractions, they are embodied in practice. They are the reasons we use to explain our lives to ourselves and each other. Their meaning emerges through our practice.

The values and ideology of *Theatre of the Oppressed* are also not mere abstractions. They can be embodied through the transparent lens of the technology I use. At the same time, I as a co-participant am a learner, learning more about those values through my own emerging practice. It will be important not to see any learning about this practice as an end point but as a beginning to continuing to practice together in each participant's own context and communities (be it schools with other teachers or students or in the community outside the school).

The intertwining of subjectivity, context and meaning in facilitating theatre is illustrated in this evocative metaphor for embodied research:

To draw a carp, Chinese masters warn, it is not enough to know the animal's morphology, study its anatomy or understand the physiological functions of its existence. They tell us that it is also necessary to consider the reed against which the carp brushes each morning while seeking its nourishment, the oblong stone behind which it conceals itself, and the rippling of water when it springs toward the surface. These elements should in no way be treated as the fish's environment, the milieu in which it evolves or the natural background against which it can be drawn. *They belong to the carp itself . . .* The carp must be apprehended as a certain power to affect and be affected by the world. (Morley as quoted by Grady, 1996, p.69)

This metaphor captures nicely the sense of what Varela et al. (1996) call structured coupling in a co-emerging of the world and the entity. One does not exist without the other as:

. . . organism and environment enfold into each other and unfold from one another in the fundamental circularity that is life itself. (p.217)

To extend this analogy to theatre, the world does not exist outside of our own perceptions. The environment belongs to us ourselves. I, as facilitator, am affected by and affect the people I work with. And it is impossible to separate out me, the world and our inter-action as separate independent variables.

### Conclusion: What Does It All Mean?

When you put your knowledge in a circle,  
it's not yours any more — it's shared by everyone.

(Metis Architect Douglas Cardinal,  
*Regina Leader-Post*, November 28, 1995, p.2)

All the books written by Augusto Boal on *Theatre of the Oppressed* and all the workshops he and hundreds of others have given around the world over the past 25 years have lead to an evolving praxis. This praxis depends on the situations and contexts where the work is emerging in-action. The method depends on those using it to use the process that has framed this article. It depends on mindful facilitators / Jokers being there in the moment, in the presence of the people they work with. Its basic foundations are the body and its media of expression and the lived experiences of those involved in it. Its objectives are to enable people to take charge of their own lives in inter-action with their world.

*Theatre of the Oppressed* praxis will change as those involved in it change. Already the change has begun. Participating in the drama creation process enables me to enact what I had been thinking about in the context of *The Embodied Mind* and those lived experiences fed more of my thinking for this article. The circle of reality is moving . . . and changing . . .

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