



# ENCOUNTERING SELF, OTHER AND THE THIRD

*Researching the  
Crossroads of  
Art Pedagogy,  
Levinasian  
Ethics and  
Disability  
Studies*







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Researching the Crossroads of Art Pedagogy,  
Levinasian Ethics and Disability Studies

DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

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# ABSTRACT

This doctoral thesis explores art pedagogical dimensions of dialogue and encountering with the Other. The Other is understood as radically ‘Other’ and therefore always strange. Consequently, other’s otherness has nothing to do with person’s abilities or characteristics. The ethical face-to-face encounter between two people is extended to discuss pedagogical ideals, justice, public and the political realm in the light of Emmanuel Levinas’s notion of the Third. The study relies on Martin Buber’s and Levinas’s ethical philosophy. The central notion of ‘being-aside’ is developed throughout the thesis in the light of Jean-Luc Nancy’s thinking.

The thesis challenges art educational constructivist-cognitive notions of learning and becoming educated, and, consequently, the pedagogical notions and boundaries are challenged. Pedagogy is claimed to be a balance between ambitious ethical goals, that are passivity, asymmetry, responsibility, openness and vulnerability in front of the Other—and counter transference affects and defences that inevitably influence behaviour. The pedagogical affects, the educational pre-notions and their regulations in an art educational situation, are discussed theoretically and presented visually via a video production.

The thesis explores an artistic and art-educational project grounded in the collaborative art practice of a person with autism and an art pedagogue. Often, working with people with disabilities is understood as something different or ‘special’, as ‘special education’, and therefore rather exclusive and separate from other pedagogical situations. In this thesis, the knowledge formed as a result of encounters between two people is informative for other pedagogical situations. In addition, the collaborative efforts in community-[arts-]based projects are problematised using Nancy’s critical thoughts on community. The research material consists of video recordings from two years of collaborative work. The use of visual research method generated a more complex and versatile interpretation of the collaborative art practice.

The main research questions of the dissertation are:

1) How can a collaborative art practice help create an ethical relationship with the Other, and how might this collaborative practice be described, discussed and interpreted visually? 2) What are the possible relationships between disabled body experiences and concept of the phenomenological body? And, how can the study of disabled body experiences further inform the concept of the phenomenological body? Finally, 3) what pedagogical understandings about (un)becoming arise at the crossroads of ambitious ethical goals and pedagogical desires?

The primary context of the thesis is connected both to the Finnish and Northern American field of art education. The phenomena of the thesis are discussed at the intersections between European Continental Philosophy and Northern American disability studies. The criticism on ableism, that is part of the disability studies' discourses, brings forth new and affirmative ideas to the field of art education, different from the special education and its therapeutic connotations. Social and artistic interaction with a person with autism becomes meaningful and necessary.

Adopting a phenomenological research attitude, this thesis is built in the spaces between the researcher, her research partner and the temporal moments, *events*. The phenomena happen through the researcher, through her understanding and experiences, and through her lived body and senses. The sensorial and embodied encounters with the world are a crucial and critical part of the thesis, since the encounters appear differently for the phenomenological researcher and the person with autism. Phenomenological (ableist) notions of the body are discussed critically in relation to disabled body experiences and understandings of the normative body are unravelled.

# TIIVISTELMÄ

Tutkimuksessa tarkastellaan dialogisuuden ja Toisen kohtaamisen ulottuvuuksia taidepedagogiikassa. Toinen (Other) nähdään radikaalisti 'Toisena' ja siksi itselle aina vieraana. Siten Toisen toiseus ei liity henkilön piirteiseen, kykyihin tai ominaisuuksiin. Kahden ihmisen välinen eettinen kohtaaminen laajennetaan pedagogisten ideaalien, oikeudenmukaisuuden, julkisen ja poliittisen tarkasteluksi Emmanuel Levinasin kolmannen (the Third) käsitteen valossa. Työssä nojataan Martin Buberin ja Levinasin eettiseen filosofiaan. Väitöskirjan keskeistä käsitettä, 'being-aside', kehitellään Jean-Luc Nancyn ajattelun avulla.

Tutkimus haastaa taidekasvatukselliset kognitiivis-konstruktionaliset käsitykset oppimisesta ja kasvatetuksi tulemisesta jolloin pedagogiset käsitykset tulevat uudelleen arvioitaviksi. Työssä pedagogiikan väitetään tasapainottelevan kunnianhimoisten eettisten tavoitteiden, kuten epäsymmetrisyyden, vastuullisuuden, passiivisuuden, avoimuuden ja haavoittuvaisuuden sekä vasta-affektien ja -tunteiden välissä, jotka vääjäämättömästi vaikuttavat käyttäytymiseen ja reagoiteihin. Pedagogiset affektit ja kasvatukselliset ennakkonäkemykset tulevat työssä tarkastelluiksi sekä teoreettisesti että visuaalisesti.

Tutkimuksessa paneudutaan autistisen henkilön ja taidepedagogin väliseen taiteellisen yhteistyöhön. Työskenteleminen autistisen henkilön kanssa nähdään usein erilaiseksi tai erityiseksi, ja siten muille pedagogisille tilanteille ulkopuoliseksi. Tässä tutkimuksessa kahden ihmisen välisessä kohtaamisessa synnytetty ymmärrys käsitetään informatiiviseksi myös muita pedagogisia tilanteita ajatellen. Lisäksi, tutkimus selvittää mahdollisuuksia eettiseen kohtaamiseen yhteisötaideperustaisessa hankkeessa Nancyn yhteiskriittisen ajattelun valossa. Tutkimusaineisto käsittää videotaltiointeja kahden vuoden mittaisesta työskentelyajanjaksosta. Visuaalinen tutkimusmenetelmä mahdollistaa kompleksisemmän ja monipuolisemman tulkintamahdollisuuden taiteelliselle yhteistyölle.



Keskeiset tutkimuskysymykset ovat:

1) Kuinka taiteellinen yhteistyöskentely voi auttaa luomaan eettisen suhteen Toiseen, ja kuinka tämä yhteistyö voidaan kuvailla, käsitellä ja tulkita visuaalisesti? 2) Missä suhteissa *disabled*<sup>1</sup>-kehokokemukset ovat fenomenologisten kehokäsitysten kanssa? Ja kuinka tutkimus *disabled*-kehokokemuksista laajentaa fenomenologisen kehon konseptia? 3) Millaista pedagogista ymmärrystä muodostuu kunnianhimoisten eettisten tavoitteiden ja pedagogisten halujen risteämässä?

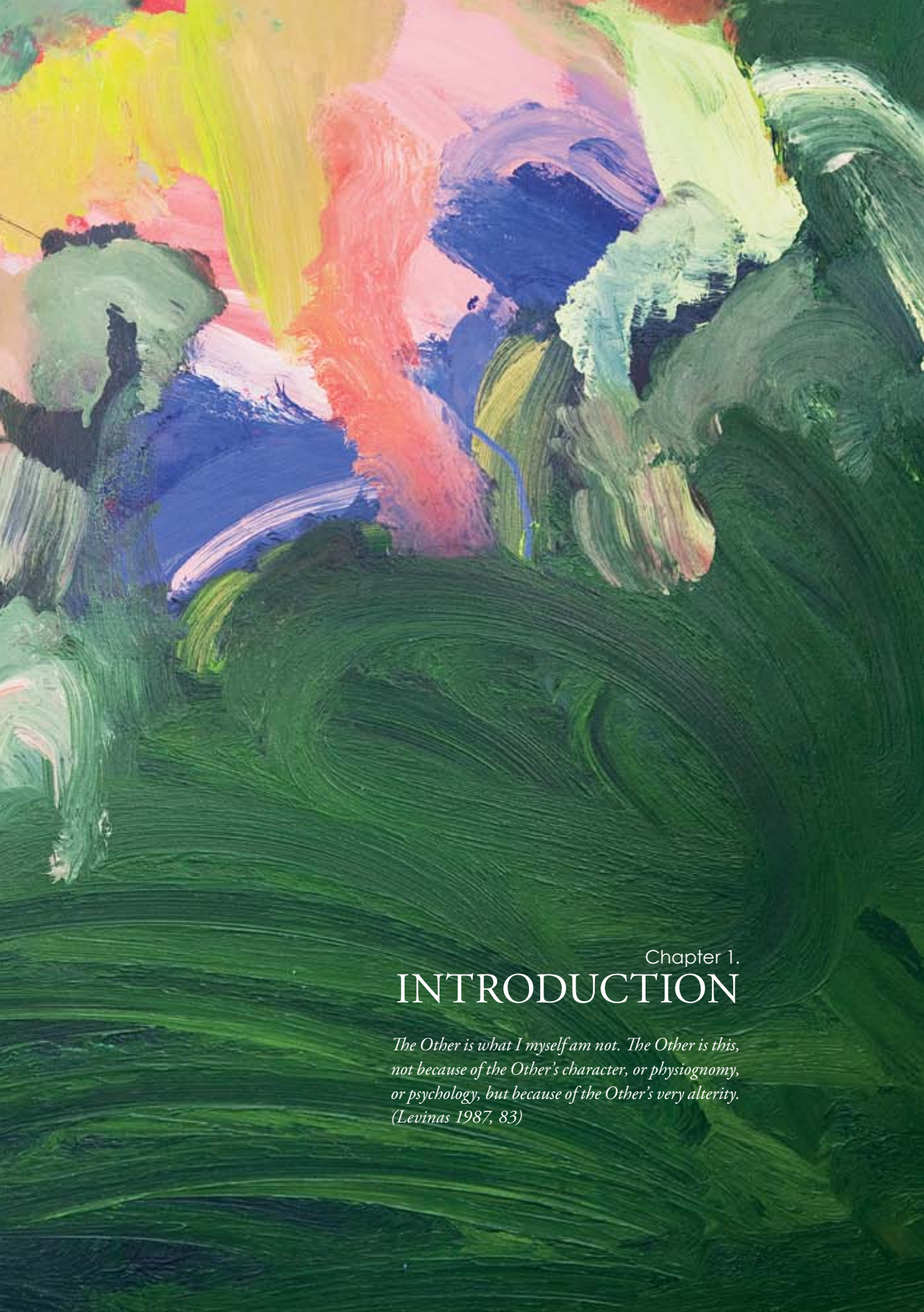
Tutkimuksen viitekehys liittyy sekä suomalaiseen että yhdysvaltalaiseen taidekasvatuksen tutkimuskenttään. Työn ilmiöt ovat tarkasteltu eurooppalaisen mannermaisen filosofian ja pohjoisamerikkalaisen *disability*-tutkimuksen risteämässä. *Ableismin* kritiikkiin liittyvä *disability*-tutkimus tuo tutkimuksessa esille uutta ja myönteistä, erityiskasvatuksesta ja terapiasta poikkeavaa näkemystä taidekasvatuksen kentälle. Sosiaalinen ja taiteellinen vuorovaikutus autistisen henkilön kanssa hahmottuu merkityksellisenä ja tarpeellisenä.

Fenomenologisen tutkimusnäkemysten viitekehyksessä tutkimus rakentuu tutkijan, hänen tutkimuspartnerinsa ja ajallisten hetkien, *tapahutumisien*, välissä. Aistimuksellinen ja kehollinen kohtaaminen maailman kanssa muodostuu väitöskirjan keskeiseksi ja kriittiseksi osaksi, hahmottaessaan fenomenologisen tutkijan ja autistisen henkilön erilaisia maailmassaolon tapoja. Työssä tarkastellaan kriittisesti fenomenologisia käsityksiä kehosta *disabled*-kehokokemuksia vasten. Siten tutkimus problematisoi fenomenologisen ja normatiivisen kehon.

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1 Disable suomennetaan yleensä vammainen. Disability studies on tutkimusalana monipuolisempi ja käsitteenä laajempi kuin vammaistutkimus. Vammaisuus ei terminä ole sovelias tässä tutkimuksessa.





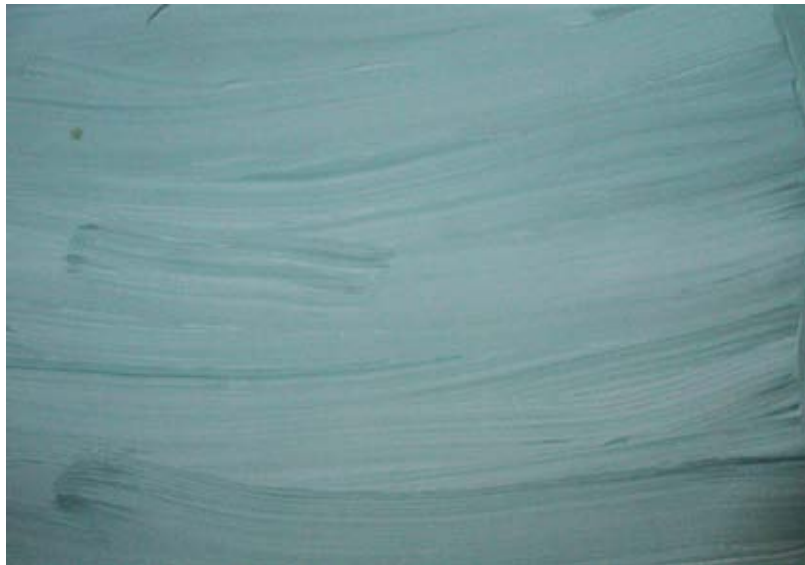
Chapter 1.

# INTRODUCTION

*The Other is what I myself am not. The Other is this, not because of the Other's character, or physiognomy, or psychology, but because of the Other's very alterity. (Levinas 1987, 83)*

*Brushes in our hands, we both pick up a colour. Thomas starts with a blue colour, like he often does. We concentrate on our own sides of the paper. I flip the paper around. Communication happens between the colours, when we enter each other's spaces. Encouraged by this, we both paint the area in the middle and the colours mix. I realise how painting the shared space requires that we both give up own desires. Also, it means seeing the painting from the other's perspective. Our painting is not his or mine, it does not belong to either of our 'sameness'.*

*He points at the ultramarine colour jar to get more of it. I give him the jar. The blue paint runs out just when a horizontal line has been painted from top to bottom in the middle of the paper. I assume he wants more blue paint. Instead, he points at the brown coloured jar. For a moment, the painting looks like a landscape, because the painting is now half blue, half brown, and divided in the middle horizontally.*



*A collaborative painting by Thomas Kaarni and Mira Kallio-Tavin (2005).*

*Thomas points at a new colour. I offer him all the wrong jars. Nothing is acceptable. He wants red. Rubbing and immersing, he spreads the red paint all over the painting. The brown colour loses its green and is transformed into a reddish tone. Thomas tries to make the red colour spread smoothly—clearly testing his own patience. The strokes of his brush are large and his gestures powerful. The multiple layers of paint and the many brush strokes create depths and surfaces on the paper. Occasionally, he moves his brush speedily: short strokes are dancing fast. At other*

*times, he seems to enjoy the prolonged movement. It appears as if the gesture of how the paint is spread on the paper matters to him.*

*As the last colour to follow, like so many times before, Thomas chooses white. It does not spread evenly but highlights the hand movements on the brush tracks. By choosing the white paint, he signals that the painting is about to be finished. As a result of the 'white fog' all over, all of the previous layers disappear, and from the result, it is not possible to perceive the complexity and multi-layeredness of the work.*

This doctoral thesis explores an artistic and art-educational project grounded in the collaborative art practice of a person with autism and an art pedagogue. The majority of the collected material and most of the theoretical conversations focus on studying the complexity of the encounters between me, the researcher, and my research partner Thomas, an adult man with autism. Within this project, I worked for two years with my partner exploring the possibilities of varying modes of 'dialogue' and non-verbal and non-cognitive interaction through collaborative artistic work, mainly repeated and shared painting sessions. The main themes of this thesis are the importance of constantly developing relations and the interweaving of theory and collaborative and individual artistic work within the context of artistic and educational research; systematic and analytical diary notes and video documentation served as the methods of data collection and analysis and the forms of presentation. Typically, research conducted in educational contexts focuses on how student(s) and collaborative artistic partners are subject to intentional transformations in their educational experiences. In contrast, the goals of this thesis are to present how the process of inquiry and conceptual development 'pushed' the pedagogue (researcher), educational traditions, and, hopefully, the views of society towards transformation.

The collaborative and art practice phenomena of our being together, what I call 'being-aside', is discussed using the traditions of Continental Philosophy, particularly phenomenology, and focuses especially on philosophers such as Emmanuel Levinas and Jean-Luc Nancy. While struggling with cumbersome practical questions of pedagogy, I interestingly found the difficult philosophical ideas helpful for answering the questions central to my research project. Through the course of my research, it became evident that the cognitive-constructivist notion of learning, which justifies human existence through abilities and capabilities, was not a sufficient or even an appropriate framework for the study. Existing pedagogical and educational theory per se did not offer the kind of approach with respect to the 'Other' that I needed for this research project, or that I was able to find, for example, in Levinas's work on ethics and responsibility in encounters between people or in Nancy's work on 'being-with' and 'being-together'. I found important and meaningful theories for my work in the

field of disability studies, which has confronted the politics and ideologies of abled bodies in the core of knowing and theory.

As stated above, I worked for two years with my research partner Thomas as a part of this project. Thomas is an adult man: he was 21 at the time that we worked together. Our cooperation was formed through a European Commission-funded, international educational project called *Art Without Borders*.<sup>2</sup> Of the two years that we worked together, the first half year was part of the project. The project took place between the years 2004 and 2005 in Helsinki, Finland and in four other European countries as well: the Netherlands, Greece, Bulgaria and Lithuania. The partner institutions in the project consisted of a boarding school specialised in caring for mentally disabled children, an educational institute, a university, a development centre and an autism foundation. In each country, ten pairs of practicing artists and individuals with disabilities were formed for the purpose of artistic collaboration. The intention was to work on a regular basis to produce collaborative artworks and individual pieces. Each participating country organized a national exhibition at the end of the project at a prominent location with good public exposure. At the end of the project, each working couple selected one individual piece from each participant/artist and one collaborative work for exhibitions that were held in each country. In addition, some of the artwork produced was chosen to be part of an international exhibition that toured the five countries.

In Finland, the participating institution was the Autism Foundation, located in Helsinki. The Foundation provides specialised expert services for adults and young adults within the context of the autism spectrum. All of the people participating in the project were either practicing artists or individuals diagnosed with autism or Asperger syndrome. In Finland, new alternative ways of communicating through art were explored, based on the local and official goals of the *Art Without Borders* project. The underlying goals for the project were based on the belief that a person with autism has a rich inner life, one that nevertheless cannot be expressed by verbal communication, but, rather, that could possibly be expressed and communicated through artistic interaction. The local official written goals for the Finnish part of the project also mentioned the need to view autism with a new kind of understanding in society and to open up new possibilities through treating visual artistic work as a type of rehabilitation action. It is my understanding that through the project and the exhibitions in prominent locations, the aim was to increase knowledge and awareness of autism amongst those considered 'normal' in society and to improve the status of people with disabilities in society through artistic dialogue. The project received considerable media coverage and was supported by prominent institutions (See also Kallio 2006, 2008a, 2009, 2012).

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2 *The Leonardo da Vinci programme is part of the European Commission's Lifelong Learning Programme, and it funds practical projects in the field of vocational education and training (See [http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-programme/ldv\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-programme/ldv_en.htm)).*

## PEDAGOGICAL APPROACH

The pedagogical context of this thesis is unique. Usually, encounters between two people are understood either as educational or therapeutic. This thesis is neither. Instead, I argue that pedagogical moments and encounters should be viewed more broadly. Consequently, I discuss a type of pedagogy that I find has been dismissed and neglected, that does not even have a name, or that only has a vague sort of name. Many formal pedagogical or educational situations include these kinds of moments of encountering others that are difficult to define and where a pedagogue cannot, or should not, go behind the role of a knowing subject. These types of encounters, which do not aim to teach or heal the other person, are the starting point for rethinking the pedagogical approach to encounters in this thesis.

During the research project, I started to reshape my own notions about art pedagogy, which I had previously taken for granted. Working together with a person with autism, my artistic partner during the process, made me critical of my own actions as a pedagogue and aware of some of my own 'patterns'. I began to question my actions in situations involving art pedagogy, actions that I have found necessary and essential before. I questioned my assumptions about artistic learning and, instead, started to focus on the importance of elements of embodiment and sensorial knowledge in art pedagogy. In brief, these artistic engagements with my research partner stimulated criticism, questioning and a re-conceptualisation of art-pedagogical approaches. Through my work with Thomas, I explored possible ways of encountering the 'Other' in an art-pedagogical context that were new to me.

At the beginning, I perceived our artistic collaboration as visual, material, spatial, sensorial, social and embodied. I paid most of my attention to our art making. Later on, I realised that the rest of what happened between us, and especially what did not happen, was at least as significant. I realised that it was not only the colour choices that I needed to pay attention to, but also the many shared, tedious moments of silence: moments when we sat together, stared at nothing, did nothing, or said nothing. It also included the moments when contacts were formed indirectly. Pleasure, for example, was created through materiality and through the sensory experience of painting. Those notions helped me to distinguish my research aspects from the more traditional educational perspectives, which aim at changing another person and which I will criticise in this thesis as being unsuitable when working with people with disabilities.

I began my research project from the perspectives of dialogical pedagogy (Vuorikoski & Kiilakoski 2005; Freire 1989; Matusov 2009). In dialogical pedagogy, the meaning of education is understood differently than merely consisting of traditional pedagogical and didactical actions, or 'teaching'. In the pedagogical stance of *education through dialogue*, the pedagogical objectives do not have a certain direction or aim to change another person. Through dialogue, it is essential not to define another person or, for example, her/his disability without that person having the possibility

to influence how s/he is perceived or identified. Dialogical circumstances in a pedagogical context are usually understood as being non-hierarchical, democratic, pluralistic, ethically and culturally sensitive, and inherently egalitarian. (Vuorikoski & Kiilakoski 2005, 318–319.) During the research project, these pedagogical ideas were further developed through ethical perceptions and I began to see pedagogical dialogue, and dialogical pedagogy, as a complex process. In this thesis, dialogue will be discussed as the in-between space that comes into being in the encounters between my research partner and myself. Instead of using the term dialogical pedagogy, I prefer to use the term *encountering pedagogy*, a term derived from theories on encountering ethics, or dialogical ethics, or the ‘ethics of rendezvous’. The main proponents of these theories are Martin Buber and Emmanuel Levinas. My thinking is closer to that of Levinas, although I find both thinkers important and they both are discussed in the thesis.

When working with Thomas, I was not a teacher in the way that teaching is usually understood. Although I am an art educator and therefore always a pedagogue, I was not in a teacher role. Instead, my role in this project was to be a collaborative artist and a researcher.<sup>3</sup> Conversely, the pedagogical questions became more and more important, and will be discussed in detail towards the end of the thesis. While pedagogy might not mean directly teaching in this thesis, encountering another person is, however, understood as a type of pedagogy. Often, working with people with disabilities is perceived as something different or ‘special’, as something that is a part of ‘special education’, and therefore separate from other pedagogical situations. In this thesis, I argue that the gained knowledge—which also includes ‘not-knowing’—formed through encounters between two people is informative for other pedagogical situations.

Because working with a person with autism entails knowledge that can be useful for other pedagogical or educational situations, my discussion and critique of learning and education in this study are justified. Thus, I did not teach Thomas: I was learning myself. This learning process included exploring both educational affects and preconceptions about education, which will be discussed in detail. Christa Albrecht-Crane (2005) writes about the relationship between education and affects and especially how affects influence learning. Typically, ‘fear, anxiety, anger, frustration, boredom or apathy’ all affect learning (Albrecht-Crane 2005, 498). In this thesis, affects are examined as pedagogical foundational elements rather than as particular features of individuals. When they are discussed as particular qualities of the participants, the emphasis is more on the pedagogue’s growing understanding of her or his own affects rather than the affects of the partner, as would be the case in most educational contexts.

While educational research often concentrates on a change or changes that are assumed or perceived to occur in a student, in this study the pedagogue is the one

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3 This position was partially formed within the context of the Art Without Borders project and partially by my own choice. Some of the other art educators and artists involved in the same project took a stronger teaching artist role and taught their partners, for example, about materials and techniques.



who is the primary learner. The pedagogue is the person subjected to change and, consequently, the project challenges established pedagogical notions and pushes against pedagogical boundaries. Pedagogy often calls attention to the fact that students are not just passive objects receiving input from the teacher and that the teachers should be perceived of as learners, too. Regardless of these ideologies, teacher as learner seldom happens, and education continues to aim at changing the other: building and propping up the students as 'becoming', as subjects. In this research the other person, Thomas, was not educated, changed or directed toward a certain goal.

Most of the critique of learning that emerged from the process arose from my struggling with a new situation, which led me to critically analyse my own behaviour and try to develop a sense of self-recognition and introspection. One of the main critical foci for the research was to study what happened to me during the process. The confusion at the beginning of the process of working with Thomas, which arose out of a feeling of speechlessness and from a lack of interaction and events, eventually transformed my work as a pedagogue and cooperating artist and led me in unexpected directions. Coming to grips with the nature of an experience that was unprotected, undefined, unpredictable and prone to make us vulnerable led me to re-evaluate my pedagogical practices. Throughout the process, I became more conscious of emotions and educational preconceptions and their regulations. It became important for me as a pedagogue to begin to understand that there is an inaccessible unconscious part of me that I will never get to know. Knowing and understanding became possible only after I began to value what I did not know, that which Jacques Lacan claims is 'left unknown', as unknown knowledge.

## THE o/OTHER

In this thesis, I introduce the O/other and discuss the art educator's participatory role in (re/de)-producing otherness (Suominen 2005, 16). The 'Other', as both a word and a concept, is used in at least three different ways in this thesis. First, the 'Other', when capitalised, refers to the philosophical and sometimes psychoanalytical notion of otherness, the ontologically given alterity (discussed in detail in Chapter six). Second, the 'other', when not capitalised, either refers to another person, namely my research partner, or applies to the field of social justice. Third, Levinas's notion of others' otherness (alterity in people) makes this division between the capitalised and uncapitalised form of the word much more complex. The fact that the word is both capitalised and not capitalised in many quotes from, and texts written about, Levinas's work, used in this thesis, necessarily manifests into complex and seemingly contradictory usage of the term. Whenever possible, however, I attempt to keep the original intent of the writer, in terms of capitalisation or lower case. In addition, when otherness is discussed among people, it does not have anything to do with a person's characteristics, such as autism, except perhaps when discussing otherness within the context of

social justice. Social otherness, however, only has a minimal role in this thesis. I will thus discuss how pedagogy and the ideology of justice try to de-other the 'Other' and how the 'Other' always remains out of the self's reach.

## ETHICAL APPROACH

Ethics constitutes one of the key elements of this research project. I find ethics important because of the focus and nature of my research approach, and because I understand the pedagogical circumstances of being a powerful participant in another person's life. Gert Biesta (2006, 2) echoes this idea by stating that education is always an intervention into someone else's life. This requires liability not only as a researcher, but also as an educator and a collaborative artist in order to maintain the 'strategy of humanity'. Citing the work of Hannah Arendt, Juha Varto (2008a) describes education as one of the essential conditions of human lives. Though the need for education is not as absolute and clear a condition as the most ultimate conditions, birth and dying, it still is a condition that we should continually rethink since it means interfering in a person's own particular life in a way that cannot be shared. Each person is socialised and educated to fit into society in one way or another. No one can escape the process of becoming educated. (Varto 2008a, 31–32.)

The ethical framework of this thesis comes from Levinas's heteronomous ethics, which is based on the 'Other', not the 'self'. Levinas's ethics differs from the mainstream ethical tradition; it is often called a radical and anarchical ethics. While this tradition sees the other person as a limitation of the self (Rötzer 1995, 59), for Levinas the other's call, meaning the unpredictable part of his/her own otherness and alterity, comes before the self exists. The ego does not make conscious decisions responding to the Other's demands. Instead, to be human, the ego must respond to the Other. (Simmons 1999, 86.) For Levinas, ethics is the first philosophy. The central idea is that the self is asymmetrically responsible to the Other. This is most evident in front of the other person. Levinas's theory of the face-to-face encounter, the relationship between two people, is the most well known part of his philosophy. While this thesis claims that ethics should come before knowledge in education and pedagogy, it also discusses the Levinasian notion of the 'third party' by extending the ethical relationship of two persons, my research partner and me, to include the *Third*, that is, the politics of practiced pedagogy.

More than anything else, ethics in this thesis has to do with adopting an attitude of criticality towards the research settings and my own choices. I have been asking myself, what does it mean to choose to work with a person with autism as a starting point for a research project? Do I produce otherness while doing so? Do I label the person that I am working with as other? While one can claim that the 'other' is always the 'Other', just as I am the 'Other' to myself, the situation is different when working within a research project with a collaborative partner who has his own name and face, a person who has been diagnosed by society as disabled. This research project forms

and builds identities, just as the community-[arts-]based project *Art Without Borders* does. Both projects are public. This calls for adamant responsibility. This responsibility becomes especially important when producing a video from the research material. The challenge of visual representation is very similar to writing about a person who is a research subject. The challenge, then, is how to talk about and show the other without exploiting and repressing him, without turning him into an object for others to gaze at. I will be addressing this question throughout the entire thesis.

## AUTISM IN THIS RESEARCH

Autism has many detailed neurological definitions. All of them tend to emphasise stereotyped patterns of behaviour and abnormal functioning in social interactions, when using language, and when engaging in symbolic or imaginative play (American Psychiatric Association 2000). One of the most common understandings is that people with autism remain more apart from the world around them than the world around them would require (Grandin & Scariano 1992, 2; Happé 1995, 15–26; Kerola et al. 2000, 14–60; Timonen & Tuomisto 1999, 22–26). For the purposes of this thesis, the problem with these definitions is that even though there are societal ambitions to tolerate and understand dissimilarities among people, within these definitions there are tendencies to define ‘normality’ and the criteria for being a ‘normal’ person (Davis 1995, 23–26 & 158). Within the autism spectrum, normality is often referred to as a region of ‘neuronormalcy’. The presumption is that each human being will try to enter the realm of neuronormalcy to have a fully human life. People whose behaviour differs from the norm are often considered ‘problematic’. In my research, such people understand their relationship with the world as being more a problem for the world, the surrounding society, than as a ‘problem’ of the person with autism; instead of neuronormalcy, I would like to use the term neurodiversity. In general, different categorisations of people constitute efforts to appropriate the other. The expressions ‘a person who suffers from Asperger’s syndrome’ or ‘a descendant of a talented family’ are similar in the sense that they both attempt to define, predetermine and dominate a person. The categorisations can become a stumbling block when researchers see such persons in different situations. Preconceptions of this kind can easily become barriers to dialogue and prevent encounters based on equity. (Vuorikoski & Kiilakoski 2005, 317.) One of the implications of this research is to direct critical attention to the many different discourses that sustain the norm, and to recognise that disablement is not solely the physical state of a small minority of people, but, rather, to understand that it can be found throughout the human population and should be acknowledged in all education and pedagogy.

The neurological reasons for autism or autism spectrum disorder are beyond the scope of this thesis. Following the politics of disability studies, the notion of autism in this thesis is not medical but affirmative. Autism is not a monolithic syndrome.

With this research project, I am not aspiring to acquire the type of knowledge or understanding that could be generalised to others/all people with autism. Should I apply the aforementioned approach, this would inherently objectify the person I am working with. Manifestations of the autism spectrum are so varied that it would be meaningless to list symptoms or types of behaviour based on the findings reported here, where the aim is to acknowledge and honour the other's alterity rather than try to define and understand it. Therefore, I do not find it necessary to define the aspects of autism in the person that I work with, since I in turn do not want to define 'normality'. I am solely interested in the person I worked with and invested in studying the larger phenomena through our collaboration and encounters. My research partner was a young man whose personality and modes of behaviour must be understood as something that is a part of him, not as a syndrome.

In this thesis, the *norm* is seen as a problem when talking about or studying individuals. Normative thinking offers a narrow understanding of subjectivity: black and white without shades of grey. Another person is understood as being different from the self, strange and always something that I, or my perceived selfness, is not. It is not possible to capture the other through predetermined categories, characteristics or classifications, since each individual is much more complex than a list of identifiers (such as gender, sexuality, race or ability). Therefore, norm is not a helpful concept. Even though we know what a normative person is supposed to look like, act like and eat like, we also know that she or he does not really exist as such.

In Western societies, the world is most often perceived through notions of normalcy. Norm is a standard that we learn in school; actually, we learn it much earlier. We perform according to or against a particular norm or a standard. It rather seems that people are born with an inherent need to compare themselves to others, to compete not just with one another, but also against a perceived standard of acceptability. At the same time, what is strange and different—the Other—is often disavowed and rejected. The definitions of and reasons for disability or 'abnormalcy' have been changing throughout Western history. What has remained constant, however, is the fact that people want to keep some distance from 'abnormalcy', such as disabilities, partially because of the secret deformities of the psyche and out of fear of our own mortality (Wexler 2005, 213; Swain & French 2000, 573). Even if there would not be a 'natural' need for defining the norm, various societies ensure that everybody learns about notions of normality from an early age. For example, curve charts measuring the length of a new-born baby are drawn up, the baby is weighed and the size of its head measured to assess whether or not it is 'normal'. Most everyone knows what a normative person is like: how much she or he weighs, their cholesterol values, how many vitamins they need on a daily basis, his or her IQ, how much they earns, what they generally think about, and so on. (Davis 1995, 23.)

The notion of norm seems to be partially beneficial because it feeds into a society's, a tribe's or a culture's ability to compete against and survive in competitions against

others: it helps a society to function by creating and maintaining an adequate social structure and by identifying, eliminating and/or marginalising the 'weakest' members of any society. What is easy to forget, though, is that most norms exist merely to emphasise their opposite: that is, abnormality. This emphasis generates the use of power in moments and places where it would not be necessary, and where it does not advance everybody's interests, only the interests of those who can exploit their power through the notion of norm. (Davis 1995, 23–26 & 158.) It is essential to understand that this thesis does not support society's unquestioned reliance on concepts of normalcy; treating people based on perceptions of abnormalcy as it is defined by medical testing or psychology is not a pedagogical norm or idea and should not be applied as such.

Thus, in this research project I treat my artistic partner as another individual, as a person with needs and desires, not essentially as a person with autism. Consequently, this thesis is not a study of autism, although it is informed by autism research; my goal was never to interpret my research partner's behaviour through the autism spectrum literature. A reader might find this a contradictory statement considering the fact that the *Art Without Borders* project was built especially around the idea of working with people with autism. However, I hope that the attitude, goals and ideas of this thesis would appear different from the politics of the project. Although I began to work with a person with autism within the larger project, and though the research idea at the beginning was about working with a person with autism, I try to demonstrate in this thesis that my partner's autism became less and less significant to me the more that the project progressed. While it seems natural for any situation or in any working relationship that preconceptions about another person fade when getting to know the person better, I claim that this 'fading' process as such is insufficient for pedagogy and I argue that it is a completely different process than a pedagogical process that seeks to appreciate the Other's alterity.

Studying our work through my research partner's impairment would unnecessarily narrow the diverse possibilities for rich interpretation. From the beginning, my desire was to see my research partner as a complete person with a full and rewarding life, as a person who does not 'emulate the norm' (Campbell 2008, 156). People without disabilities quite often believe that being disabled is an inferior and pitiable state, one that should be cured. This is what people asked me many times during the project: how did the collaborative work influence Thomas, and did he get any better? For this research project, I embraced a perception of the affirmative model of disability (Swain & French 2000, 578), which perceives that living with disability is not a tragedy and that normalcy is not a goal.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND MOTIVATIONS

The research questions are as follows:

- 1) How can a collaborative art practice help to create an ethical relationship with the Other, and how might this collaborative practice be described, discussed and interpreted visually?
- 2) What are the possible relationships between disabled body experiences and concept of the phenomenological body? And, how can the study of disabled body experiences further inform the concept of the phenomenological body?
- 3) What pedagogical understandings about (un)becoming arise at the crossroads of ambitious ethical goals and pedagogical desires?

These research questions include pedagogical practices in order to perceive the affects that were caused by the undefined and unpredictable aspects of the collaboration and the role they were given during the encounter. I will clarify what it meant to strive for togetherness and maintain an element of singularity: in other words, to place singular being with plural togetherness and see their place in a shared or communal being. Early on, the work was shaped and coloured by questions of communication and possible interaction: How could I communicate with a person who does not speak? What kind of interaction is possible with a person with autism? Is there the possibility for dialogue and encountering one another? Later on, these initial questions were developed into a more complex exploration of phenomenological concerns, such as what is the phenomenon of 'being-aside', which working together with another person created, how they appeared and what they revealed. More importantly, I realised these initial questions were my questions when confronting something that was new to me, and that these questions did not include Thomas and his point of view. Throughout the artistic collaboration and research process, I speculated about my partner's being in this world and his and our shared, as well as our different, perspectives on things. In the following chapters, I will describe the moments we spent together to learn from my research partner and the process of our encountering one another, and critique self-reflectively my own behaviour as an art educator.

During the course of this study, I have aimed to rethink art pedagogy and its research from various perspectives, and have offered new grounds for developing ideas about education that take better into account the abilities and awareness that go beyond cognitive-constructivist thinking. By cognitive-constructivist thinking, I mean goal-oriented learning, in which progress depends on students' cognitive abilities and their abilities to build knowledge through experience. The number of students with different needs in schools is growing all the time and few people seem to know what to do about it. This thesis is not trying to solve these issues; instead, it offers an alternative way to scrutinise the entire idea of learning and education as something that transfers ego to the process of becoming a socialised individual. Education can be understood as a complex transaction between people where an educator's agendas

constantly need to be rethought. In this sense, this thesis, while emphasising pedagogy and its discourses in society, is essentially aiming to take part in the scholarly discussions pertaining to the field of art education.

## FOR THE READER

The introductory chapter has offered the background to the research project and described the project's ethical commitment. The next chapter, Theoretical foundations, will build upon this commitment by discussing the theories of disability studies in art education, as well as the phenomenological attitude and ontological bond that underpin such theories. The third chapter will explain the methodological field informing the thesis. In the fourth chapter, Pedagogical foundations: expanding self, pedagogical presumptions and educational ideals will be discussed. The fifth chapter, Social and communal orientation, will offer a diversified view on the community-[arts-] based projects. The sixth chapter, Ethics on Rendezvous: ethics on pedagogy, will lay out the pedagogical premises for the thesis and discuss the main theories supporting the work. In the seventh chapter, Circulation between us, togetherness frames the encounters and issues of embodiment and touch play a central role. The eighth chapter, Critical self-recognition through video, introduces the visual outcome of the research project.<sup>4</sup> And lastly, in the ninth chapter I will present my conclusions about the research project and answer the research questions.

While each chapter forms its own entity and consistently serves different purposes, each chapter includes quotes from my journal texts, which were written soon after each artistic working session with Thomas. These entities are essentially combinations of my journal reflections and notes and reflections written down while watching video documentations of these sessions. During the process, my criticism of my actions and attitudes and my writings grew to such an extent that I had difficulties recognising some of the thoughts in the journal notes as being my own, as thoughts that I had once held. For example, in the journal text at the beginning of this chapter I discussed Thomas's desires, will and encouragement. I thought, then, that I could know them. I maintained and cherished this self-critical attitude and have brought it to the centre of this study. Presenting the notes in their original form introduces a certain amount of fuzziness, even contradictions; their role is to show the layers of the process and to bring the events that happened as close to how I experienced them as possible. Against all inclination to present the study as merely an objective set of writings and conclusions, I wanted to demonstrate the growth in my thinking, and thus, I opted to preserve most of the original journal texts. The layeredness of the process is inherently centred around the development of my thinking and understanding of how the 'o/Other' can be thought of and discussed. All the journal texts, which were originally produced and

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<sup>4</sup> Contact the author for access to the video ([mira.kallio-tavin@aalto.fi](mailto:mira.kallio-tavin@aalto.fi)).

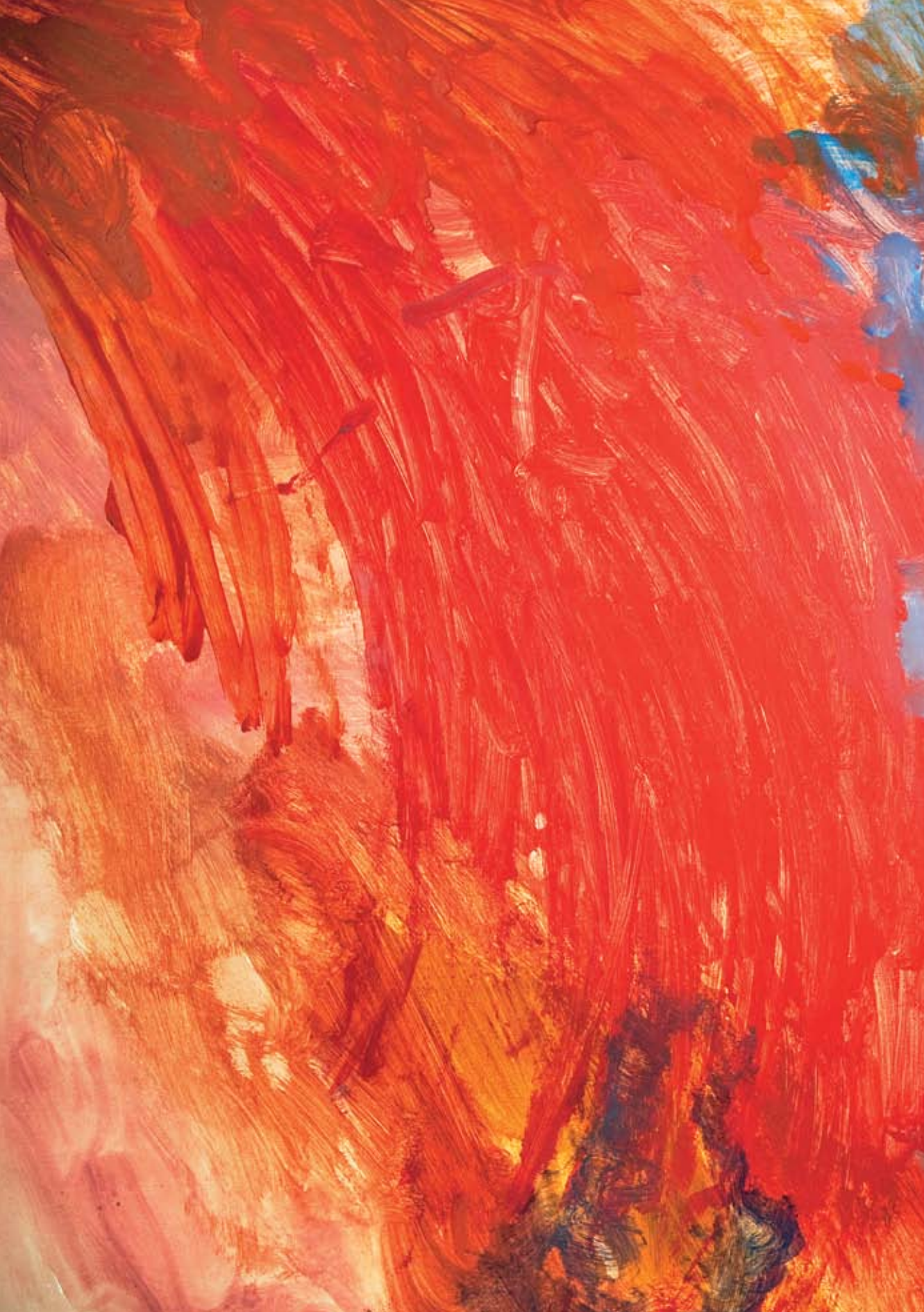
crafted during the active period of the project in 2004–2006, are written in *italics* to distinguish them from later and different types of reflections.

Most chapters start by introducing a journal text that addresses the relevant themes. In the first section of each chapter, I have explained in detail what will be discussed throughout the chapter. In many cases, I do this towards the end of the first section.

The reference system used in this thesis follows the guidelines for students of Aalto University School of Arts, Design and Architecture (Sava et al. 2007), and the reference technique that is commonly used in the Finnish humanist fields (see, for example, Hirsjärvi et al. 2007).









Chapter 2.

# THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

In this chapter, I lay out the theoretical framework for the thesis. Readers will find that the thesis discusses its phenomena at the intersections between European Continental Philosophy and Northern American disability studies and a medley of Finnish and Northern American art education. My reasoning for focusing extensively on the Northern American art educational discourse is made relevant through the partially joint history of art education developments in these two countries: several essential Finnish art educators<sup>5</sup> have visited the United States for shorter or longer periods of time to study at art education departments in the various institutions, and a significant number of Northern American scholars<sup>6</sup> have visited my home institution of Aalto University in Helsinki, Finland during the past two decades. Also, my thesis advisor, Anniina Suominen Guyas, is a Finnish scholar who has held professorships at Kent State University and Florida State University, and who concluded her doctoral studies at Ohio State University; she feels that her work has been constructed between and influenced by the two cultures and educational systems. Lastly, I have written my thesis for the most part during my visit to Ohio State University as a visiting scholar in 2011–2012. All of these influences, as well as my personal interactions and discussions with Northern American colleagues, have shaped and impacted this thesis.

However important the Northern American interconnections are to this work, its primary contexts are connected to the Finnish research culture and its academic discourses. My research partner and myself are Finnish and the entire chain of events took place in Helsinki, Finland. Also, my philosophical thinking leans on contemporary Finnish philosophers, such as Heikkilä (2007, 2009), Hotanen (2008, 2010), Santanen (2005a, 2005b, 2008), Tuohimaa (2001), Varto (1992, 2000, 2005, 2007, 2008a) Värrö (2004) and Wallenius (1992, 2005), who play an important role when discussing Levinas's and Nancy's philosophies. This thesis is informed by research discussions at Aalto University, where I also completed my doctoral study courses and where some art educators are interested in remapping art educational encounters when working with diverse groups of people with different and changing needs (see Pusa 2012; Heimonen 2009).<sup>7</sup> While education, art and art education all have several—fixed and changing—definitions, the understanding proposed by the scholars invested in this particular line of inquiry advocates an art education approach that attempts to reach beyond traditional understandings of teaching. The guiding idea for all of these projects is that there should be opportunities offered to people to have experiences within artistic contexts without specific and rigid agendas for learning

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5 *The first Finnish thesis in art education was written during a visit to Ohio State University (Räsänen 1997).*

6 *Arthur Efland, Patricia Stubr, Kerry Freedman, Therese Quinn, Kevin Tavin, Drea Howenstein, just to mention a few.*

7 *Art educators have worked with people with different needs in, for example, children's foster homes and elderly homes, as well as with homeless people, with people with mental health problems or alcohol or intoxicant issues, and with elderly people with memory issues.*

or working towards some other specific goal, such as therapy or rehabilitation. This kind of freedom is fairly typical for art, but very rarely tied to education, except for the creative self-expression art education movement (see, for example, Carpenter & Tavin 2009, 246).

The most commonplace misunderstanding with studies such as the one presented here is that it is perceived and understood through therapeutic or special education terms and contexts. I wish to emphasise that this study aims to be neither. There are no attempts to try to heal or cure or essentially change anybody. This does not necessarily mean that there would not be possibilities to change our habits or conditions based on the collaborative work, however unintentional they may be. Further, I deem it important to emphasise that there might be nothing wrong with trying to improve and strengthen the abilities of people with autism as such. It is, however, not the goal of this research project to do so.

A good example of a positive change of condition is Temple Grandin's (1996) story, *Emergence: Labeled Autistic*, where she tells her unique story from learning to cope with her childhood autism to learning to fit in socially in adulthood. Grandin is a well-known author with a doctorate in animal science. For her, autism was a journey from the far side of darkness to a socially enlightened life. She practiced ways of communicating with the help of other people and by learning to control her voice and behaviour in a way that did not cause distress to other people. For Grandin, autism was a label that she did not want to have. Disability studies, on the other hand, has tried to affirm a 'positive identity of being impaired' (Swain & French 2000, 578) and to prove that people with disabilities are not lacking something compared to notions of normalcy and that their lives should not be seen as inadequate. Scholars of disability studies have argued against a so-called 'medical model in which disabilities are perceived as potentially curable through treatment' (Blandy 1994, 180). Research that looks at the narratives of individuals with autism supports this kind of positive identity (see, for example, Ashby & Causton-Theoharis 2009; Causton-Theoharis et al. 2009). Grandin's book, written by a person with autism, reflects the nature of my research in an important way and offers another perspective for seeing the diversity of autism.

## DISABILITY STUDIES AND ISSUES OF ABLEISM

Whereas Northern American discussions on disability studies and ableism<sup>8</sup> form the essential framework of this thesis, it also links such discussions to the Finnish disability studies conversation. However, while scholarly discussions pertaining to disability and education are lively in the field of special education in Finland (Ladonlahti & Naukkarinen 2006; Ladonlahti et al. 1998; Naukkarinen 2005a, 2005b; Saloviita 1999, 2001, 2005, 2006a, 2006b; Moberg et al. 2009; Ikonen 1998), the discourse

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<sup>8</sup> *Ableism refers to an abled-bodied norm in society, which is akin to racism.*

on (dis)ablism is only rarely mentioned, except by a few scholars: Simo Vehmas (1998, 2009) and Tanja Vehkakoski (1998). In the US, disability is considered both an academic discipline and an area of political activity. As an academic movement and area of scholarship, disability is a relatively new category in relation to more established disciplines such as law, psychology and medicine. Its roots are in the political, social and cultural movements of the 1970s; as a field of study, disability has gained greater visibility since the late 1980s (Davis 2002, 10–11). However, it has not been until recently that disability has become a fully legitimate area of study and discussion. Disability in its academic contexts is defined as the social process that turns impairment into a negative signifier by creating barriers to access. As an area of diverse studies, disability studies processes the complexities of postmodern theories and their assumptions, and thereafter offers a non-therapeutically oriented perspective to the disability discourse. In many ways, the practices of feminist, queer, ethnic, post-colonial, Marxist and postmodern criticism and scholarship have given examples and openings, and their practices have been extended within the field of disability studies. (Davis 2006, XIII–VIV; Wilson & Lewiecki-Wilson 2004, 10.)

In disability studies, disability is recognised as a cultural identity comparable with other minority identities with embodied experiences of impairment. In disability studies, the politics of oppressed and repressed minorities that have been isolated, incarcerated, observed, controlled, written about, operated on, instructed, regulated, treated and institutionalised are theorised and discussed similarly as race, class and gender (Davis 2006, XV, XVIII). Disability studies scholars aim to challenge the social construction and representation of the body and to analyse disability as a socio-political construction. The disabled body<sup>9</sup> provides insight into the fact that all embodied individuals and groups of people are socially constructed and that social attitudes, the material conditions of society and institutional determination build dominant ideas and perceptions of the body more strongly than the biological representation of the body's reality. It is society and its discourses that create and maintain disabilities through values, conventions and significances. (Davis 2006, XVI–XVII; Siebers 2006, 173; Wilson & Lewiecki-Wilson 2004, 10; Osteen 2008, 1 & 301; Vehmas 1998, 104; Vehkakoski 1998, 89–90 & 92.)

In disability studies, the emphasis is on an alternative to the medical model of disability, in which disabilities are perceived as being potentially treatable via various treatments and therapies. Until recently, research on disability mostly concentrated on clinical or practical fields, and it employed a deficit or medical model that presents disability as a problem or impairment to be cured, or at least mitigated. This medical concept of disability emerged at a specific time in history and can therefore be changed in the contemporary era, where the insights of feminism, postmodernism, postcolonial theory and social studies make it possible to analyse disability as

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<sup>9</sup> *In this thesis, I assume mind to be a part of the body.*

a socio-political and cultural construction. Osteen (2008) also points out that disability studies have provided a valuable and necessary alternative to the objectification of disabled people within clinical discourses. The dichotomy between the medical and scientific approaches has grown deeper, leading to a separate way of describing medical and physical impairments.

Disability studies concentrate on discursive constructions and avoid solely focusing on impairments that are bodily realities. By focusing on everything else but impairment, and by abandoning impairment to the clinical fields, disability scholars, ironically, accept the dichotomy between bodily realities and discursive constructions. The dichotomised ground ironically dissolves the body into a symptom of discourse, into a neo-Cartesian mind/body dualism position. (Osteen 2008, 1–3.) As Osteen says: ‘Thus, although most disability scholars dutifully claim not to deny the reality of impairment, they generally focus on everything but impairment, thereby accepting the dichotomy that their work should to bridge’ (Osteen 2008, 3). For this research project, I focus on building a bridge between bodily and social factors as well as creating an ethical and political understanding. When working in close physical proximity with another person and collaborating with that person, when abandoning the role of an ideal pedagogy and acknowledging the flesh of the research, I find it important not only to adhere to the way discourses are constructed, but also to grasp the awkwardness of flesh and focus on the complex embodied encounters that acknowledge both of our impairments. This does not mean that I would list and analyse either of our impairments; rather, I would acknowledge that we both take part in the collaboration with different sorts of features.

The social model of disability was born out of the experiences of disabled people<sup>10</sup> challenging the dominant individual models espoused by non-disabled people. This model posits that a disabled person needs help to access certain things, because of the barriers—social and physical—constructed by non-disabled people. However, this model underlines disability as a personal tragedy and essentially redefines ‘the problem’. This model does not leave room for the idea that people who need help with their social and/or physical environment could actually be pleased and proud of who they are. Non-disabled people often assume that disabled people constantly lack something significant and that they would want to be ‘normal’. However, this is rarely voiced by disabled people themselves, who consider the disability to be a major part

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<sup>10</sup> *There is no consensus on which terminology to use: disabled people or people with disabilities. The American Psychological Association (APA) recommends the latter term (2010). However, the term disabled people is often used by disability studies scholars and disabled artists precisely because of the awkwardness and distracting nature of the term and its negative connotations (Derby 2011, 111). For example, performance artist Marry Duffy claims to be a disabled person rather than a person with disability, as the latter would mean ‘just trying to be normal’ (Eisenhauer 2007, 10). In this thesis, I have chosen to use both terms. I mainly use the term people with disabilities to emphasise that my research partner is first a person and second a person with autism, but I use the term disabled people when referring another scholar who uses that term in his/her work.*

of their identity. Disabled people are subjected to many disabling expectations, for example that they should be 'independent' and 'normal' and that they should 'adjust' and 'accept' their situation. These types of expectations can cause unhappiness more so than the impairment itself. (Swain & French 2000, 570-573.)

Colin Cameron's writings were published in the Tyneside Disability Arts poetry group of young disabled people:

*We are who we are as people with impairments, and might actually feel comfortable with our lives if it wasn't for all those interfering busybodies who feel that it is their responsibility to feel sorry for us, or to find cures for us, or to manage our lives for us, or to hurry us in order to make us something we are not, i.e. 'normal'. (Swain & French 2000, 577)*

More recently, the socio-political notions of disability studies have been developed beyond social models towards a so-called affirmation model. The affirmative model redefines the ideology that emphasises tragedy and impairment. It directly challenges the presumption of personal tragedy and the determinations based on the values of non-disabled people. While the social model, which was also generated by disabled people, offers a viewpoint on those living within a disabling society, the affirmative model values disabled individuals' own lifestyle, culture and identity (Swain & French 2000, 578).

Another ideological approach to recognising and acting critically towards the 'naturalness' of being disabled is to talk about anti-ableism instead of disability. This is especially appropriate when positioning academic research questions and sites of study and when presenting living with an impairment as an animating affirmative modality of subjectivity (see, for example, Campbell 2008; Eisenhauer 2007). Ableism is a perspective of disability studies that investigates the limits of liberal tolerance of disability. The politics and criticism of ableism is an attempt to theorise about the ways in which disabled people have to live in an ableist society, which is the normative society formed and shaped by abled people. While ableism is related to the way in which the notion of disability is produced, and while it fits well into a social constructionist understanding of disability, ableism can be associated with the production of ableness, suggesting a falling away from ableness, which constitutes having a disability. The idea is not to define and determine a person's abilities or characteristics via his/her *disability*. (Campbell 2008, 151–154.)

Somewhat paradoxically, disability studies also describes the physical impairments—basically all the humanly possible physical impairments—that are covered in disability studies, such as lacking an arm or a leg, or, for example, deafness, chronic syndromes, mental or learning disabilities and behavioural or neurological disorders, including autistic spectrum disorders. The complexity of the politics of disability always comes from its opposition to normalcy and the fact that it is defined by the dominant group, which considers itself normal. However, it is important to acknowledge the



identity that informs this sense of difference. (Wexler 2009, 7.) The division between disabled and non-disabled is difficult and problematic in a number of ways, since the division is often made based on impairments or oppression. However, many non-disabled people may have impairments, such as issues with their sight, or they may suffer from pain and chronic illnesses; non-disabled people can be oppressed in different ways, for example by poverty, racism or sexism, and they can also be the oppressor, for example a racist. (Swain & French 2000, 570–572.) While autism and other cognitive disorders have not previously been at the core of disability studies, they are now recognised as an important addition to the field. A good example of this is Mark Osteen’s (2008) edited book, *Autism and representation*. Within the field of art education, Alice Wexler (2009) has written extensively on autistic spectrum disorders in her book *Art and Disability: The Social and Political Struggles Facing Education*.

Osteen points out that autism is represented mostly by non-autistic people (Osteen 2008, 6). This is a research text that has once again been produced by a non-autistic person, and at its best, it can only be an attempt to try to capture something that my research partner would recognise and accept. When conducting researching with Thomas, I found it important not to try to understand him as a representative of autism. This is why I did not want to work with many people, or refer to other’s experiences, when doing art with him. This is also a significant part of the singularity of this thesis. Later on, I came across some interesting research on autism and I have found it essential to read, write and reflect upon the narratives and autobiographical writings of individuals with autism (Barron & Barron 1992; Blackman 1999; Grandin & Scarioano 1996; Mukhopadhyay & Wing 2000; Sellin 1995; Tammet 2006; Williams 1992).

In this section, I have described the historical development of disability studies within social and cultural studies. In the next section, I introduce how this development has influenced art education and how few scholars have welcomed the ideologies of disability studies in art education.

## MAPPING THE FIELD OF DISABILITY STUDIES IN ART EDUCATION

Art practices and disabilities have a long and shared history. There are some indications suggesting that people living in institutions for disabled people in the 18<sup>th</sup> century participated in art activities in the United States (Blandy 1991, 134). The art practiced by disabled people inspired the work of professional artists, resulting in disability art making movements.<sup>11</sup> The field of art education has been interested in the art practiced by disabled people since 1930s (Derby 2011, 95). Art created by disabled individuals is often given different meaning in the present than it was in the earlier days of disability studies in art education. A significant difference has to do with understanding that people experiencing disabilities often do not want to be

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<sup>11</sup> *Phenomena, such as l’art brut, outsider art and visionary art.*

perceived as ‘curious’ or as a ‘genre’ categorised by such designations as ‘outsider art’, ‘mad’, or ‘l’art brut’ (Blandy 1991, 139; Wexler 2005, 214–216).

The art of students with disabilities was earlier understood as a form of therapy and rehabilitation, and it had a role in building self-esteem. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, utilitarian art was recognised as a diagnostic tool for determining non-functionality and psychopathology (Derby 2011, 95). The criticism from advocates of disability studies in art education claim that much remains to be done to enhance our understanding of the nature of disabled people within art education. For example, the main literature regarding the role of disabled people in art education has focused on issues related to teaching students with disabilities to articulate their feelings using a language of inclusion, accommodation, mainstreaming and therapy (Eisenhauer 2007, 7).

Over the past 20 years, art educators with an orientation towards disability studies and ableism have tried to argue for distinguishing between art education and special education and for critically extending the concept of disability beyond special education settings, trying at the same time to increase disability awareness and the critical politics of ableism (Blandy 1989, 1991, 1994; Blandy et al. 1988; Derby 2011; Eisenhauer 2007, 2008; Loesl 1999; Wexler 2005, 2009). Special education categorises and ‘others’ students with disabilities when analysing them from the outside and promotes ‘popular and professional stereotypes’ (Blandy 1989, 9). Blandy finds that special education discourses typically serve to categorise disabilities and he questions special education’s usefulness in educational contexts because of the tendency to promote stereotypes about disabled people, which only help spread stigmas and confuse teachers (Blandy 1989, 9). In contrast, the politics of disabled ideology and the affirmative model of discussing disability issues in art education does not stigmatise people because it is understood that people with disabilities are individuals who think, talk and write for themselves and that they should not be defined and therefore stigmatised from outside. In this thesis, I support an anti-ableist notion by referring to the ideas of Levinas; this in essence means that I do not seek to define or know the other, but rather to learn from and with her/him.

Parallel to the dominant and general disability discourse, which I explained in the previous section on Disability studies and issues of ableism, the art educational discourse on disability previously emphasised impairment and other limitations of people with disabilities. Art educator Doug Blandy (1991, 132; 1994, 180) calls this the *functional-limitations model*, which he linked to the medical model and which he sought to replace by introducing a *sociopolitical orientation* to art education in the early 1990s. He has criticised the functional-limitations model for assuming that people must strive for normalcy, live in segregated spaces, receive a segregated education and suffer a loss of rights (Blandy 1994, 179–180). Further, Blandy argued that art education should have a socially transformative and reconstructive purpose (Blandy 1994, 179 & 181), and he praises the sociopolitical orientation to art education for ‘encouraging a view in which disability is attributable to the failure of social systems to accommodate the “needs and aspirations” of all citizens’ (Blandy 1994, 180).

The sociopolitical orientation then shows that the limitations of a person with a disability come from the environment, and, since the disability is a social construction, it can also be eliminated. The sociopolitical orientation introduced a wider understanding of how art education is practiced in society and outside the school. Interestingly, a similar reconstructive suggestion that Blandy made in 1991 has currently become, two decades later, topical and strongly promoted in Finland, including the idea to prepare art educators 'to work in community arts settings such as recreations centres, museums, and art councils, as well as school settings' (Blandy 1991, 180). In the international teaching evaluation report (TEE 2010), the future competences of the art education programme at Aalto University are described as enhancing new employment possibilities for future art educators: 'The programme has broader tasks of enhancing the roles of artistic strategies and arts-based methods and approaches in different sectors of society' (TEE 2010, Chapters 1 & 2).

The sociopolitical orientation within art education follows similar politics as the more general notions of the social model in disability studies. As in disability studies and the affirmative model proposed by Swain & French (2000), the issue of ableism has represented the next step in the advance of disability studies in art education. Jennifer Eisenhauer in particular argues that, 'while the sociopolitical orientation advocated by Blandy (1991) argued to enhance preservice teachers' experiences with disabled students and their understanding of policy, the affirmative model emerges from within rather than outside the disability community and emphasizes the cultural contributions of disabled artists as important voices through which to challenge cultural oppression' (Eisenhauer 2007, 9). The affirmative model builds upon the sociopolitical orientation by emphasising that disability is a cultural rather than a personal limitation (Eisenhauer 2007, 19). Following the ideology of the affirmative model, Eisenhauer states that in the art classroom, it is not sufficient to just accommodate students with disabilities; it is necessary that an arts curriculum explore the disability culture and the socio-political issue of ableism (Eisenhauer 2007, 10). Art educators have possibilities to critically engage their students with the autobiographical work of disability artists and to reflect upon their and other's pre-existing understandings of disability. Through such an issues-based strategy, it is possible to gain further insight into disability within an art education curriculum. (Eisenhauer 2007, 20.)

As art educator John Derby (2011) has remarked, teaching through ableism is for the most part not what has been practiced within the school and higher education art education curricula in the past few years. He claims that two decades after Blandy's call for a socio-political orientation towards disability, 'the field continues to resemble orthodox special education discourses that largely ignore the first-hand perspectives of disabled students, teachers, researches, artists and others' (Derby 2011, 95). Continuing, Derby states that these discourses, which also include art therapy, 'have fallen behind the progression of disability activism, espoused by Blandy and colleagues, which has evolved into the established field of disability studies' (Derby

2011, 96–97). He primarily criticises the language used in art therapy, and especially in special education, when talking about students with special needs. Advocating replacing the term ‘special needs’ with ‘disability’,<sup>12</sup> Derby claims that identifying and classifying people and education as ‘special’ can only be understood as a euphemistic formulation that builds patronising stereotypes and that it can only be seen in opposition to an ableist normal culture. (Derby 2011, 102–103.) Special education is based on the classification of people and it relies on an assumption that anyone with the same diagnosis would have similar educational issues, and thus, that there would be similar solutions to their problems (Vehkakoski 1998, 94–100).

This thesis explores an art education discourse that does not have special education and therapeutic connotations. However, this study is not a first-hand account of a disabled teacher/researcher/artist, as Derby and Eisenhauer call for. In working with a disabled person who is not able to talk and write on his own, but who willingly and fluently draws and paints, this thesis depicts an artistic encounter between a researcher/pedagogue and a person with autism. An anti-ableist approach in this context means that I do not know the other person, nor am I analysing his behaviour or understanding him through (stereotypical) notions of autism. I link this thesis more to the American discussion on ableism and disability in art education than to the Finnish discourse on disability. The main reason for this is that while the conversations by a few active art educators in the United States have in certain areas been quite lively for the past two decades, I do not find this kind of critical discussion existing in Finland, especially distinguished from that of art therapy<sup>13</sup> and special education.<sup>14</sup> I wish to contextualise this study within the frameworks of art education pedagogy and the phenomenological studies of the body. It is also important to acknowledge that despite its few devoted advocates, art education has largely continued to ignore disability as a cultural category, and it has not treated disabled people as a cultural minority worthy

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12 *The issue with terminology is especially difficult in Finnish, as there is no real good translation for disability. The term that is widely in use, ‘vammainen’, has connotations of being handicapped, but it is not directly related to begging (cup-in-hand), and therefore, for the most part it is not considered offensive. It is, though, close to a very offensive word, ‘vammanen’, which only differs from the former word by one letter and is often confused with it. More importantly, the level of activism around the term ‘vammaisuus’ has not yet reached the level of cultural or societal criticism in the same way as disability studies has when concentrating on advocacy instead of creating critical academic discourses. The other term in use is ‘person who needs special help’ (‘erityistä tukea tarvitseva henkilö’). This term is, as we can see, not trouble-free either. This term is used, for example, in the Art Without Borders catalogue book (Klinga 2005, 6.)*

13 *Meri-Helka Mantere’s work at the intersection of art education and art therapy in Finland has been remarkable in the past three decades. Mimmu Rankanen, as a younger scholar, continues her work on art therapy within the context of Finnish art education.*

14 *Special education within the context of Finnish art education has mostly been absent. Currently, there has been increasing research interest in the topic. Minna Haveri is working on an ongoing research project on special art education and several master’s theses have been produced on this topic as well (see, for example, Salonen 2012).*

of study, not even in the United States. Many scholars, however, seem to agree that understanding non-able-bodied persons would be beneficial for art education, and in particular scholars devoted to equity and minority studies in the field are enthusiastic about including this line of inquiry and theory within the curriculum.

While I am seeking diverse ways to learn from and about disability in relation to art pedagogy and phenomenology, so as to contribute to an understanding of the self and Other within the art education curriculum, I am not suggesting directly adopting anything that one might call the ‘American model’. This means that this thesis does not directly follow the methods or traditions promoted by Northern American art educators who focus on disability; likewise, the theory used here is not typical to that found in other studies on disability, but actively seeks to explore previously uncharted connections between theoretical and practical concepts. Also, it is worth noting that the Finnish political, social and cultural criticism is very different from the American criticism in terms of how it uses the critical cultural theory of race, class, gender and disability. While the United States has a diverse and multicultural culture with a long history of struggles concerning differences between people with varied backgrounds and needs, Finland has been relatively homogenous from a cultural perspective. For the most part, it is not until quite recently that the politics of difference have begun to enter into Finnish cultural discussions and studies.

Thus far in this chapter I have justified the importance of disability studies for my research project. Next, I will move on to discussing philosophical engagement, a topic that I also find important for disability studies, but on a different level. The discussion of philosophical engagement is part of the background to the thesis and helps inform an understanding of knowing in this research project. I clarify the phenomenological approach that I find relevant for this thesis, and make comparisons to the thinking of Husserl, Merleau-Ponty, Heidegger, Levinas and Nancy. In this chapter, I also develop the notion of *inspectivity* and discuss the necessity of *singularity*. The notion of ontological engagement that I introduce here is influenced by Nancy’s concept of ‘being-with’ and his notion of ‘touch’.

## PHENOMENOLOGICAL APPROACH

The research project and approach presented here is bound up with a phenomenological approach, since the research issues are intended to be approached as they *appear*—that is, what appears (Levinas 2009, 85) and how it appears. This means that the phenomena appears *to somebody*, *to me* as researcher, and therefore is bound up with the pre-assumptions and notions that I carry with me. As a researcher, I capture the phenomenon, ‘being-aside’, then search for how it appears and finally find out what the phenomenon reveals (Varto 1992, 86-88; Spiegelberg 1984, 684–685; Miettinen at al. 2010, 11; Hotanen 2010, 136). Phenomenology is, more than anything else, an *attitude* between the researcher and the perceived phenomenon. This research project

created this sort of an attitude between the researcher and the temporal moments, the events, and between the researcher and her research partner. The events reported here took place at the Autism Foundation. As a part of this consciously chosen attitude of openness, I as a researcher do not know beforehand what will appear; instead, I describe and interpret the phenomenon as it happens with an open, wondering attitude, and I try to recognise the subjective engagements that my subjective participation introduce to my interpretation.

Leaving a space open for the event is a typical attitude in phenomenological research. The significance of relations is built through interpretation. The interpretation is always bound to the researcher, meaning that the phenomenon appears as it does to the singular researcher, not just to anybody. This is why the researcher's position needs to be transparently opened up within the text. (Arho 2004, 16–17.) Having an understanding of the phenomenon comes from the experience of self, from how the phenomenon reflects the experienced world, and how it brings the thinking forward. An understanding of the world and the phenomena within it takes shape through the person who is looking at it, through her understanding and experiences and through her lived body and senses. Therefore, it is important to define how the phenomenon is 'true' in 'my' experiences (Spiegelberg 1984, 684–685).

Husserl is considered the father of the phenomenological approach, with many followers further developing his ideas. Lifeworld (*Lebenswelt*) is one of Edmund Husserl's main concepts about being in the lived and experienced world, meaning that one receives and understands the phenomenon through her lifeworld. A person is always part of her or his lifeworld, which is constructed out of her or his thoughts, senses, memories and imaginings. There is no other way to be, and this has to be acknowledged. Martin Heidegger's notion Being-in-the-world (*In-der-Welt-Sein*) was influenced by the concept of lifeworld. According to Husserl, phenomenology is essentially a study of the structures of consciousness, a method and a way of thinking that he called phenomenological reduction. It is about a form of consciousness that seeks contact with the environment, to refer to objects outside of one's self or to things that preoccupy one's self (Levinas & Kearney 1986, 14; Heikkilä 2007, 27). While looking at everyday phenomena philosophically, one should not have an ordinary attitude and relate them to the world as being self-evident (Pulkkinen 2010, 28–29 & 42).<sup>15</sup>

Levinas explains how Husserl was primarily interested in establishing and perfecting phenomenology as an epistemological method for describing how logical concepts and categories emerge as essential meanings, and he draws attention to the fact that it was Heidegger who gave the radical possibilities of phenomenological analysis and knowledge a positive and concrete grounding in our everyday existence: 'Heidegger

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<sup>15</sup> *An ordinary attitude means the common and everyday approach when a person does not often question or even stop to pay attention to what appears before him.*

showed that the phenomenological search for eternal truths and essence ultimately originates in time, in our temporal and historical existence' (Levinas & Kearney 1986, 15–16). For Heidegger being—and thinking about being—is essential, not how it structures, correlates and appears to pure consciousness, which is what Husserl considered to be important in his discussion of phenomenological reduction (Heikkilä 2007, 27; Backman 2010, 60). For Heidegger, reality exists whether one experiences it or not. It is not a matter of subjective experience; rather, a human being is thrown (Geworfen) into the world and the world happens regardless of what he or she thinks. Heidegger's notions of temporality (*Zeitlichkeit*) and historicity, which are bound up with existence in relation to everyday experience, provide the philosophical foundation for this thesis. The temporal moments, *ereignis*<sup>16</sup> or *events*, between me and my research partner are treated as research data gathered from a specific place and time and it would not be possible to repeat this study with other people in the same or even in a similar way. The temporal moments are crucial for the phenomenological research attitude adopted in this study.

Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological approach is also derived from Husserl's phenomenology. Merleau-Ponty builds upon Husserl's lifeworld concept, and develops especially his ideas about forming perception through the sensing and lived body. Merleau-Ponty's and Nancy's perceptions of the phenomenological body and flesh are discussed throughout this thesis as an attitude of being in the world and discussed together with embodied experiences of our 'being-together' and 'being-aside' and also with non-able-bodied experiences. Merleau-Ponty found that Husserl's late phenomenology offered a possibility to describe and develop the notion of the body as a part of subjectivity and to criticize the Cartesian notion that limited subjectivity includes only the mind. While Husserl perceives of existence through pure consciousness, for Merleau-Ponty existence occurs through the moving, feeling, sensing and perceiving body (Heinämaa et al. 1997, 45), thereby giving a direct description of experience as it is without taking into account causal explanations about it derived from psychological, scientific, historical or sociological origins (Merleau-Ponty 2006b, VII). Perception is given crucial significance by Merleau-Ponty: through perception, the subject constitutes the relationship between conceptual thinking and the world. A person does not conclude beforehand what he or she is supposed to perceive; instead, that person trusts her/his perceptions. Therefore, perception is not based on calculated thinking; rather, it is based on embodied relations to the world. Wondering is an important part of his phenomenology, since what appears might just as easily be misinterpreted. Wondering, even confusion, is part of the process of phenomenological reduction wherein new perceptions will be defined based on earlier perceptions. (Hotanen 2010, 135–136.)

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16 Heidegger's term *ereignis* translates into the Finnish language quite well: *tapahtuminen*. The English equivalent is often translated as an event. I have chosen to use the term *event* throughout this document to describe the temporality of the moments we shared together. *Ereignis* might also be understood as 'concern' and 'coming into view'.

While the research approach adopted here is bound to Heidegger's being-in-the-world and further develops Merleau-Ponty's embodied phenomenology rather than Husserl's phenomenology, the phenomena that appear as a part of the research project are mainly discussed using Emmanuel Levinas's and Jean-Luc Nancy's philosophy. While developing Merleau-Ponty's embodied engagement to the world, the crucial and sole significance of perception does not seem to fit the updated notions of conceptual thinking. In this research project, I assume that people constitute reality based on their particular psychological, scientific, historical and sociological origins and that these origins shape their perceptions and the way they interpret reality. Along with this criticism, I extend Merleau-Ponty's natural attitude regarding the organic body to include technology, such as video cameras and other virtual extensions of self. My research partner's embodied relationship with cameras, headphones and computers tells about a different relationship to the world than the one assumed when only focusing on the phenomenological organic body. Thomas, like many other people with autism, communicated via and also found enjoyment through different technical devices. I find these embodied extensions of the body important and valuable to consider as a part of embodied experiences.

Heidegger greatly influenced both Levinas and Nancy, and Nancy's notion of being-with, which plays a central role in his understanding of togetherness, the 'being-together' that I am exploring in this thesis, was constructed based on Heidegger's work. Also, both Levinas and Nancy have a relation to phenomenology. Levinas considers himself as a phenomenologist from the standpoint of his philosophical method and discipline (Levinas & Kearney 1986, 14). However, Levinas's understanding of subjectivity differs from phenomenological ontology's notion of subjectivity as a function of being, as *Da-sein*. Levinas shows that subjectivity exists outside of being, that the subject has no nature as such, that the singularity or uniqueness of the subject cannot be conceived of in ontological terms. Being is not, however, non-being or a source of negativity; rather, it is beyond being, that is, it is 'otherwise than being'—it is the alterity of the Other. Paradoxically, Levinas can only speak about what is 'otherwise than being' in the language of being, in the language of ontology. (Biesta 2003, 63; Lingis 1987, XVII.)

Nancy's relationship to phenomenology is unambiguous. Martta Heikkilä has clarified this relationship by saying that Nancy's questions about *being*, similarly as Heidegger's, originate from the tradition of phenomenology. Nancy understands phenomenology to be 'being as *such*', a being that 'makes' things to come into existence and makes the phenomenon appear. His thinking is phenomenological insofar as phenomenology is defined 'as a philosophical movement dedicated to describing the structures of experience as they present themselves to consciousness, without recourse to theory, deduction, or assumptions from other disciplines, such as the natural sciences'. (Heikkilä 2007, 27.) Nancy does not agree with Husserl that phenomenology should be understood as epistemology, upon which philosophy as a scientific discipline could



then be built. Nancy claims that the way that the notion of appearing is discussed in the traditional phenomenology is insufficient. For him, it does not really touch ‘on the *being* or the *sense* of appearing’. Nancy is looking to make sense of it all; he is looking to go beyond the phenomenon embedded within the phenomenon itself, which he finds to be lacking in the phenomenological approach. (Heikkilä 2007, 27–28.)

As Merleau-Ponty suggests in his early seminal work, *Phenomenology of Perception*, phenomenology is accessible only through a phenomenological method. This method, as I understand it, should be understood differently from conventional research methodology. As mentioned before, this method is more about the researcher’s attitude and engagement when describing the phenomenon. As Merleau-Ponty emphasises, a phenomenological method is a matter of describing (Merleau-Ponty 2006b, VIII–IX). In this thesis, I describe my experiences with and perceptions of my research object, which constitute the temporal moments, the events, with my research partner; I do this through my narrations, which are based on my diary journals and on my reviews of the video documentations. Being-in-the-world and looking at the phenomena through a phenomenological approach is essentially a *shared* being for all of the phenomenological philosophers. This is more important than being in the world as self, alone. This is a part of the lifeworld and also a part of the research attitude adopted in this thesis.

The writings of Emmanuel Levinas and his followers are explored throughout the entire thesis. His philosophy is discussed within an art educational context. Levinas’s thinking has often been adapted to fit discussions on education and it has been discussed considerably in education literature (see, for example, Todd 1997, 2001, 2003a, 2003b, 2008; Egea-Kuehne 2008; Chinnery & Bai 2008; Biesta 2003, 2008; Säfström 2003; Joldersma 2002, 2008). However, it is crucial to understand that his work cannot be applied as such to pedagogy or to anything practical as such: it is impossible to transfer Levinas’s philosophical thinking directly to educational practices or ideologies because it was not intended for that purpose, and it would not do justice to his work, however suitable his ideas seem to be for education. It is important to realise that his work is not meant for any kind of moral agenda regarding education or the programmatic regularities of pedagogical methodology. (See, for example, Biesta 2003; Simon 2003.) His work is philosophical and is not meant as a practical toolkit for pedagogues.

## THE ONTOLOGY OF SINGULAR

The knowledge underpinning this thesis has been constituted based on a singular encounter between two people. This knowledge should not be used as an example, one that can be generalised for others to use, or as a model of a method. Singular is not opposite of general. Particular—not singular—is an example of a general or universal knowledge that aims to achieve an objective understanding. Gilles Deleuze (1994) uses the concept of *repetition* in contrast to generality. Repetition is an event that is not guided by cycles, equalities and laws, but by a unique series of things or events.

He gives art as an example of a source of repetition, since art can always be put to other uses: ‘To repeat is to behave in a certain manner, but in relation to something unique or singular which has no equal or equivalent. [...] Generality, as generality of the particular, thus stands opposed to repetition as universality of the singular. The repetition of a work of art is like a singularity without concept, and it is not by chance that a poem must be learned by heart.’ (Deleuze 1994, 1–2.)

Repetition concerns singularities. Deleuze (2004) describes singularities by distinguishing between individuals, by focusing on the central actors in the process of individuation. Singularity should not be understood as the qualities of things or matters, or be confused with the personality; singularity is the uniqueness, the unique combination of points of tension and the potentiality of things or matters. Singularities are not present in quality, but rather in the encounters between things, in the interactions and events that change, sometimes constantly. A set of singularities, or a set of singular points, forms an ideal event. According to Deleuze, ‘The singularity belongs to another dimension than that of denotation, manifestation, or signification. It is essentially pre-individual, non-personal, and a-conceptual. It is quite indifferent to the individual and the collective, the personal and the impersonal, the particular and the general—and to their oppositions. Singularity is *neutral*. On the other hand, it is not “ordinary”: the singular point is opposed to the ordinary’. (Deleuze 2004, 63.)

While singularity has not been at the centre of knowledge, the particular has been of greater interest to researchers. The particular can be understood in relation to something more general, and, in a research context, its general features need to be shown. Varto (2008a, 30) refers to Hannah Arendt, and states that the matter is actually the other way around: ‘The human condition comprehends more than the conditions under which life has been given to man’ (Arendt 1958, 9). Human life represents a singular possibility that a human being carries with her throughout her entire life. Singularity arises from the most important human conditions, birth and death, and this is how singularity is derived. (Varto 2008a, 30–31.) Singularity is attached to time and place. When severed from either of those, abstract thinking transforms the singular into something general, which only serves as a fiction to replace that what really is. (Varto 2008a, 110–111.) For Nancy, the entirety of human existence constitutes a singular event. Existence is in and of itself a ‘modified grasp’ at existence (*par elle-même*). Being is singular each time. (Heikkilä 2007, 40–41 & 42.) Singulars are not, however, individuals—nor, for that matter, are particulars—but events where each singular feature gives a birth to something else. Singularity represents all beings and being as such. Roughly put, there are only singular matters and their relations. (Heikkilä 2009.)

In this research project, I am searching for an encounter with a singular person. The singular experiences stand in opposition to the kind of universal and general knowledge that most research in the 20<sup>th</sup> century has advocated. This thesis would be

very different if I would have collected empirical data on many people with autism. In that case, I would have stated something general and universal about working with people with autism. However, the knowledge that I am looking for and the pedagogy that I want to practice are different from anything that could be described as general and they are not suitable for any other situation. Singularity is bound up with temporality: events that have happened and that will never come back. Levinas argues that temporality, the theory of time introduced by Bergson, is one of the most significant, if largely ignored, contributions to contemporary philosophy (Levinas & Kearney 1986, 13). This thesis states that most pedagogical situations are singular moments, events that are detached from a larger narration of life, without a grand narration or an overarching scheme. I state that the nature of pedagogy, not only in this research context, but in most pedagogical situations—and in many other encounters between people—is constituted through singular moments rather than a grand narration. The thesis relies upon the manifesto of one singular experience between two people. I have, however, chosen to use a few narrations written by individuals with autism to reflect and enrich the research material. My effort is not to try to state anything general about autism through these narrations, even though some similarities with these narrations and my experiences with Thomas might occur.

According to the philosopher Juha Varto (2008), the knowledge that is bound up with singular experiences can be also called knowledge of the flesh, or *carnal knowledge*. He states that a person her/himself does not have any distance from this knowledge. It is attached to the flesh and it cannot be viewed from outside of it. One can get access to the knowledge residing within another person only when being close to her/him. (Varto 2008a, 13.) Paradoxically, a research text and all representation—such as the video produced within this research project—are problematic to the singular, since nothing that is singular can appear from a distance as a representation or as something imagined (*Vorstellung*) (Varto 2008a, 37). The singular nature of the research does not mean that it would be out of the reach of other people. Quite the contrary: when something is deeply singular, it usually makes the most sense to us—like something that we might possibly see in many works of art. As is characteristic of art, the knowledge that stems from human experience and expression is something that can be shared among people, and it is therefore possible for others to understand. Naturally, this research knowledge differs from the type of knowledge found in the natural sciences as well as a positivist understanding of the world and an objective understanding of knowledge construction.

## INSPECTIVITY

All my knowledge of the world, even my scientific knowledge, is gained from my own particular point of view, or from some experience of the world without which the symbols of science would be meaningless. (Merleau-Ponty 2006b, IX)

Juha Varto's (2000) notion of 'inspective' is opposite to that of 'perspective'. As a research attitude, rather than looking at things from a certain distance, from some chosen perspective, the researcher acknowledges being an inseparable and internal part of the research body or research flesh. Perspective would refer to an attempt to discuss the phenomena outside of the self. That would be an endeavour towards achieving neutral and objective knowledge. However, a neutral perspective only alienates the researcher from the self in such a way that the stated viewpoint is imaginary and illusive, and therefore nobody's real viewpoint. Inspective viewpoint acknowledges that there is no such ideal neutral or objective knowledge, since the researcher is always looking at things from her own point of view, from her own particular angle and from her own body. Inspective is a chosen research viewpoint of looking at things from inside, sometimes in a participatory way and sometimes as a result of researching one's own artistic project.

In this research project, I find looking at the phenomena from inside and acknowledging the singular and subjective nature of it more interesting than an effort to establish a certain distance from the phenomena in question. I am part of my research body, since I participated in all of the events and was part of each moment of the research process. This is an important part of understanding and learning from the moments. Varto (2000) describes an inspective research attitude as experiential, embodied and sensorial. The participatory approach offers a position for being in the middle where the research happens. Varto describes an inspective research approach using a metaphor of looking at a bonfire when the self-being is tied to a stake. (Varto 2000, 37.) It is essential to understand that the viewpoint that the researcher is looking from, and its situationality, her position and her entire cultural, symbolic, linguistic and personal-historical understanding shapes the way in which the research knowledge is perceived. Then we get to realise there is no normative or universal or neutral way of knowing or of conducting research. There are only different voices to catch hold of and different differences to perceive.

Knowing that originates on a stake is different than knowing initiated from distance. Therefore inspective knowing is also different: object is not to distinguish from the one that knows, as the one that knows has no coherent subjectivity that s/he would relate what s/he knows. To pick up something to be an object to know is not axiomatic but always questionable choosing with insufficient criteria. (Varto 2000, 39)

## ONTOLOGICAL ENGAGEMENT

Every researcher and every research project is engaged in gaining some understanding of the world, people and knowledge construction. The ontological understanding of knowledge in this thesis engages with Jean-Luc Nancy's ontology. As an ontological framework, it has been essential when researching the encounters

between me and my research partner. Nancy's thinking is not 'used' concretely in the research, since it is not possible to 'practice' any kind of ontology in a concrete matter. While a pedagogical encounter is a singular moment between people, it should never be understood as just a moment; one should acknowledge the notion of the world, other and self that one carries with them and which influences each moment. One can be aware of some of these factors, while the others are at more of an unconscious level. While I find Nancy's philosophy incisive when thinking about 'being' as such, it is crucial to acknowledge that Nancy's writings are not generalisations of empirical issues. Indeed, they are an ontological study of the nature of being and existence.

Consequently, I am well aware of the fact that we cannot try to apply ontological thinking to a research project that makes use of empirical material. That is why Nancy's thinking is not exactly applied and discussed for the most part next to the empirical material in this thesis. Thus, I acknowledge that for many, it would be unthinkable to even try to discuss Nancy's thinking in a work that includes empirical material, even if they would be separated from one another. I find it meaningful to apply Nancy's philosophy to lived life when he discusses such concrete examples in his own texts. The proximity of lived life and philosophy appears especially in Nancy's writings on art, community or the body (see, for example, Nancy 1991, 1999, 2010). In some parts of the thesis and in relation to certain terms or notions, especially Nancy's writings on art and community, I wanted to stress and push the limits of philosophy and discussed his philosophy together with other theories.

Some of Nancy's principal notions sound straightforward and can easily be misinterpreted as referring to things that they do not actually refer to. Notions such as *being-with*, *we*, *sense*, *circulation* and *touch* sound confusingly concrete, but they need to be distinguished from similar terms that I use at a concrete level later on in the thesis. For example, while I want to maintain the complexity and multi-dimensional layers of the notion of touch, and while I want to remember its philosophical notion when working with my research partner, I do not want to conflate philosophical touch with physical touch by stating that they are the same. Neither do I want to confuse Nancy's loaded and theoretical notion of 'being-with' with the empirical part of the thesis, and therefore it is crucial to distinguish between 'being-with' and 'being-aside' when talking about being-together with Thomas. By emphasising the different contexts and the significance of these two notions, I simultaneously, and perhaps paradoxically, wish to maintain the philosophical reference to Nancy's thinking when discussing the concrete aspect of being-together with my research partner. I consider the effort of opening up the concrete level of the thesis to philosophical thinking important because of the theoretical dimensions offered by such thinking. Simultaneously, the theory of being-with—the ontological understanding of being—informs the notions that make the being between people ultimately possible.

## BEING-WITH

For Nancy, we derive the most important meaning in our lives from being-with-one-another. Being alone does not have meaning. It only comes meaningful to us by *us*. According to Nancy, 'Being itself is given to us as meaning. There is no meaning if meaning is not shared' (Nancy 2000, 2). Nancy says that we are asking the wrong question when we ask, what is the meaning of our lives? We should, instead, pay attention to *us* as meaning as such. *We ourselves are meaning*—entirely, without reserve, infinitely, with no meaning other than 'us'. Nancy calls this shared being 'being-with', and he defines it as both spatial and related to time. Time and space and their simultaneity makes the *with* possible. According to him, the word *with* represents existence in a crucial way: 'Existence is *with*: otherwise nothing exists' (Nancy 2000, 4). Furthermore, without shared time and space there would be no shared togetherness (Nancy 2000, 60–61). Being-with fulfils the limits of togetherness, through touch, opening up singularity and vulnerability to one another. Being-with is always impressed and touched by the other. This openness fascinates us and leads us towards one another.

The other essential factor for Nancy in terms of the concept of being-with is its embodied nature: 'The ontology of being-with is an ontology of bodies, of every body, whether they be inanimate, animate, sentient, speaking, thinking, having weight, and so on' (Nancy 2000, 84). For Nancy, thinking and the body are not separate. He asks: How can thinking touch the weight of the body, or how can the body touch thinking? The body has *sense* and it forces thinking—and thinking has to assent to the body. In body-thinking, the body is forced to think more and more, always too far. Thinking has weight and the body is all that the weight can ever sense, and that is why it makes no sense to talk separately about the body and thinking, or about sense. (Nancy 2010, 53–55.) Nancy asks: '*If thinking is thinking bodies, what is called thinking?* What, for instance, is the link of such thinking to painting? And touching? And pleasure (and suffering)?' (Nancy 2008, 17).

Nancy describes the ambivalent condition of togetherness via the concept of contact. Contact with another person is never axiomatic. Between people, there is proximity and contiguity, but only to a certain extent. There is no continuity, no immediate contact. Contact is always formed indirectly; it is beyond fullness and emptiness, beyond connection and disconnection. While all of being is in touch with all of being, the law of touch implies separation. (Nancy 2000, 5.) Being in contact and in touch with another person requires a reciprocal space where intimacy is based on separation. Nancy places intimacy in a primary position as a way of being. Being-with is bound to both action and place, and therefore being is intensive. Turning to one another and being exposed to one another are the essential parts of interaction that happen 'between us'. The aim is not, however, to become totally joined together. Being is direct and immediate coexistence. At the same time, it is significant to hold on to one's singularity in being-together.

According to Nancy, it is imperative not to attempt to figure out or develop final definitions about another person or what it means to be / function in a spatially bound relationship. He says that, ‘Being in touch with ourselves is what makes us “us”, and there is no other secret to discover buried behind this very touching, behind the “with” of coexistence’ (Nancy 2000, 13). The shared being involves a type of motion that Nancy describes as circulation. This circulation goes in all directions at once, in all the directions throughout space-time. He lists them as follows: all things, all beings, all entities, everything past and future, alive, dead, inanimate, stones, plants, nails, gods, and humans, all those who are and what are exposed by sharing and circulation (Nancy 2000, 3). Going in all directions all of the time, infinitely, means that the concept of circulation is a concept of eternity, one that is similar to the Nietzschean notion of ‘eternal return’. The circulation is not linear, it has no beginning and end, no target or objectives as such, it is not progressive and it has no final fulfilment. It is movement between one place and another, and from moment to another moment. (Nancy 2000, 3–5.) This circulation is both plural and singular, just like *we* are, moving continuously, in circles, and all the time. This idea of circulation functions as an image of my and my research partner’s ‘being-togetherness’, without end or beginning and without any final fulfilment. Our being-together is a concrete being in a concrete space. That is why comparing it to the concept of being-with can only be functional as an image of or metaphor for the work. However, because of this connection, it is important to explicate where the ontological notion of being-with originally comes from and how and why the Levinasian notion and Nancy’s own explication of being-with is a more appropriate metaphor for this thesis than is Heidegger’s.

The concept of being-with (*Mitsein*) originally comes from Martin Heidegger and is connected to his famous concept of *Dasein*, ‘there/here being’/da-sein. Nancy’s thinking is closely connected to Heidegger’s accounts of being and he raises and redevelops Heidegger’s central ontological notions while remaining generally faithful to them (Heikkilä 2007, 30). Heidegger emphasises that *da-sein*—an analysis of existence—is a with-world, always shared with others, *mitda-sein* (Heidegger 1996, 34, 107, 111 & 112). Being with others then belongs to the being of *dasein*. The world is always the one that I share with Others. (Heikkilä 2007, 128–129.) Being-with is then the condition that creates the possibility of ontically being-with-others. Even though being-with-others is essential and primordial to Heidegger, his work has been criticised for not including ethics with being with others. The critique is directed at the two separate notions, *Dasein* and *Mitsein*: Why develop *Dasein* separately if the two are genuinely co-original? (Heikkilä 2007, 130; Lindberg 2010, 177.)

Art educator Jan Jagodzinski argues that Heidegger had no real need to develop an ethics. According to Jagodzinski, Heidegger’s development of *Mitsein* (Being-with) in *Being and Time* is, in this sense, an underdeveloped and under-theorised concept. It may well be that its very underdevelopment is precisely where Heidegger’s philosophy is flawed and leads to a possible ‘archi-facism’. Jagodzinski continues that Levinas,

on the other hand, makes a strong distinction between *Dasein* and being-with. That is a prior ethical relation to the Other, which grounds the notion of *Dasein*. For Levinas, ‘being with’ already precedes ‘being there’. (jagodzinski 2002a, 82.) Similar to Nancy, Levinas builds on Heidegger’s analysis in *Being and Time* and discovers deeper, more ancient notions of being, which are based on the relationship between me and the Other. Levinas’s understanding of subjectivity as a shared being prior to being itself should not be understood as a new way of thinking about subjectivity, or as an attempt to view the ‘phenomenon’ of subjectivity as a new concept. Levinas sees Heidegger as viewing being-with as a kind of being-aside. Levinas feels that this form of togetherness cannot lead to the emergence of responsibility and therefore remains caught up in an individual’s solitude. (Todd 2003a, 153.) In this thesis, I have acknowledged the complexity of being-with through individual solitude and developed the concept of ‘being-aside’.

To summarise the different notions of being-with, I want to emphasise Nancy’s development of Heidegger’s thoughts on being-in-the-world with others. For Nancy, being is possible only ‘in us’ or ‘between us’. ‘Being-with is not added on to being-there’, as it is for Heidegger, because ‘to be there is to be with, and to be with’ is ‘what makes sense’ (Heikkilä 2007, 131). In contrast to Heidegger’s notion of being-with, Nancy thus elevates being-with to a more definitive role. In doing so, Nancy simultaneously raises the ontical to an equivalent role with the ontological.<sup>17</sup> For Nancy, the paradoxical approach to being is at the core of ontology, the paradoxical first-person plural. One is at the same time singular and plural. Essential to this plural singularity is the shared being in the world. For Nancy, it is essential that *we* come before *I* (Heikkilä 2009), just as it is for Levinas. This is the foundation of his communal thinking.

Nancy’s thinking is also similar to Levinas’s in the matter of the Other. Nancy discusses the Other through the idea of body. He asks: How can a human being feel the being of the other, as an equally embodied human being? The other is similar, but essentially and infinitely different. It is impossible to become de-attached from the self and from one’s own identity in front of the Other. The obstacles stem from the difference in the levels of consciousness, or because they cannot be unified physically. On the other hand, the obstacles are materials, since people as physical bodies are separate from one another. However, Nancy points out that openness, ability and the willingness to be exposed to the world are all typical of bodies—and of human beings. (Heikkilä 2009.) Levinas goes further than Nancy with the idea of being-with. For him, essence refers to a proceeding thought of the ontological being that goes beyond being, beyond essence, to a mode that is ‘otherwise than being’. While Levinas’s thinking will be discussed in this thesis in detail, Nancy’s notion of being-

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<sup>17</sup> *In Being and Time, Heidegger introduces his existential phenomenology as a ‘fundamental ontology’ that exists prior to ontology. He discussed the difference between being and beings. Ontology is interested in being, whereas the ontical is connected to the world and the discourse about the everyday existence of beings.*



with functions as an ontological background to the framework of the encounters that take place between people.

The phenomenon that I discuss in this thesis, 'being-aside', stems from Nancy's notions of 'being-with' and 'being-together', which I found to be important when encountering another person in a shared space. However, it is crucial to separate this encountering from any aspirations of togetherness or dialogue. 'Being-aside' means being next to one another, which includes togetherness, when knowing that the other is alongside you, without feeling the pressure of shared identities that comes from shared togetherness. It brings the opportunity to be alone while being together. I develop this notion of 'being-aside' throughout the thesis, first discussing the dialogical possibilities and pondering the condition of 'being-together', and later considering it within a pedagogical context. 'Being-together' as a possible collective identity is discussed within the community-[arts-]based project *Art Without Borders*.

## ONTOLOGICAL TOUCH

Nancy says that, 'I would no longer be a human if I were not a body [...] A singularity is always a body and all bodies are singularities [...]' (Nancy 2000, 18). Touch is the most fundamental sense for Nancy. Touch is superior to all other senses, for as someone touches, they allow themselves to be touched at the same time: touching-the-other as being-touched (Nancy 2008, 45). This is the most explicit sign of how the senses function. When one senses, one also senses that s/he is sensing. That is, for example, when people see, they also sense that they are being seen. Touch makes this clear most explicitly; while a seeing person is not always seen and a hearing person is not always heard, a person who is touching someone else also touches her/himself and is at the same time touched. Touch is the most fundamental sense for Jean-Luc Nancy, as every living thing has at least that sense. (Santanen 2005a.) Also, Merleau-Ponty, following Husserl's idea of double senses, writes about the double meaning of touch: When pressing two hands together, are both hands both touching and being touched? (Hotanen 2010, 143).

For Nancy, *touch* appears as a way of communicating between the body and mind, *Psyche*. (Heikkilä 2007, 253–254.) The world opens up for us through the senses as singular fragments. Bodily existence gives us access to the world and its plurality. Touch is difficult to limit sensorially, since in a way all that is sensorial involves touching. According to Nancy, the understanding that is constructed in between the body and the senses can be described using the concept of a borderline or limit state. Embodiment captures the human notion of place, space and surroundings through which one is affected by the world. The inner and outer are not separate alternatives from one another. Instead, they flow into one another and become a space of change. At the borderline between the inner and outer, there is room for touch, which as a contact formulates the possibility for constant

penetration into an object. Touch changes the manner of how we perceive an object, offering an admission to depth and surface, inner and outer. According to Nancy, touch happens on the border, in the in-between space, and it involves a physical and sensorial weighing of things. To touch means touching the limit, the edge or the contour, while the thing itself remains untouched. We can only touch the surface of something. (Derrida 2005, 6.) Through touch, we can only reach the edge, the threshold. Physical touch and touch within thinking come close to one another almost inseparably, equally and widely.

Touch is also one of the Nancy's most complex notions. The basis of his view of touch underlies a fundamental impossibility: to touch is to touch the untouchable, or to touch is to touch the limit (Nancy 1996, 52). 'To touch at the limit' or 'to touch the limit' can be interpreted as touching the edge of a person, touching the skin, while the person remains untouched, and therefore 'to touch is to touch the untouchable, or to touch is to touch the limit'. To touch at the limit is the law of least contact, or a pleasurable moment where the body is composed solely of skin and not weighted down by organs or any sort of penetration. According to Nancy, it is the process of 'feeling oneself touching you (*and not "oneself"*) – or else, *identically*, feeling oneself touching skin (*and not "oneself"*): *the body is always forcing this through farther forward, always too far.*' (Nancy 2008, 37–39.) Levinas also talks about the skin: for him, the ethical relationship to the 'Other' happens on the edges of the nerves, on the skin (Levinas 1998, 15). This is not to say that the body would only have extensions on the surface. The body-being is exposed to all five senses. A body is a sensorial body only in-between the senses, in the displacement or division of the senses (Nancy 2008, 35; Nancy 2010, 51). Nancy points out the tensions between the five senses. There is no sense 'in general', only local differences and differing divisions. Sensation is necessarily *local*, as is the body. Localities can be understood without any given places, as placeless places, or as the areality of the body (Heikkilä 2007, 181 & 259).

While touch is viewed an essential part of connection in this thesis, when making sense of the philosophical touch of being-with and of the physical touch of our being-aside, touch inevitably brings along with it the idea of body. In this thesis, phenomenological notions of the body are discussed together with the disabled body and confronted against ableist ideology of Western phenomenology. Therefore, it needs to be acknowledged that while the body already plays an important role in this work through, first, its assumed ableness and, second, the ontological engagement of the study, the embodied nature of the body, and especially Merleau-Ponty's and Nancy's notions of it, are given different significance. As mentioned earlier, Nancy's thinking is not concrete and not a straight continuation of phenomenology, and therefore his thinking differs from Merleau-Ponty's ideas about phenomenological sensing and the lived body. It is important to make a distinction between the body-subject/flesh discussed by Merleau-Ponty and the Corpus/body discussed by

Nancy.<sup>18</sup> Nancy makes a crucial distinction between body and corpus: corpus is becoming, whereas body is an object-being. Corpus<sup>19</sup> is therefore something that is not quite yet and not completely and entirely present. It is happening, becoming while it happens, before and after objects—bodies. Within this complexity, Nancy discusses the concepts of touch and exposition. Nancy ponders the possibilities of the philosophical body differently than does Merleau-Ponty.

When the concept of being-with is thought about via touch, the question of responding to touch becomes essential. Here we enter into the area of responsibility and ethics. The question of discreteness is bound up with embodied touch for Nancy. Being-with is a primordial level of complete signifiers, and this is why being-with is meaningful. As an attitude, for the purposes of this thesis this also means openness, not planning and not-knowing. In pedagogy, I understand it to mean pedagogy in the flesh: dealing with the messiness of life, situations that are far from ideal—but reacting in the most human and ethical way possible. On the surface, or, more concretely, on the skin, we come into contact with one another. Contact is something beyond fullness and emptiness, beyond connection and disconnection. To come into contact with one another is not to make sense of one another or to understand one another. Levinas says that understanding the ‘Other’ is not his objective; rather, staying and repeating the contact (dialogue) is what is important.

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18 *This becomes especially important when reading translated text where Corpus is translated as body (ruumis). In the Finnish language, there is no real word for corpus (korpus), and therefore, the translator has chosen to use the word ruumis. (For more on this discourse, see Sihvonen 1997.)*

19 *The interpretation of Corpus is not easy or clear, not even for the philosophers. While Corpus (der Körper) is understood as the most complex and diversified form of body, in some other philosophical discussions it is an example of an objectified body within the context of physiology, military education or sports coaching, and it is used to establish a point of difference from the phenomenological body (der Leib) (see, for example, Värri, 2004, 48.) The entire book Corpus builds upon a single sentence: ‘the words of the institution of the communion’ (hoc est enim corpus meum) (Sihvonen 1997). The idea of Corpus is therefore tightly tied to the Western Christian tradition of the body.*





Chapter 3.

# METHODOLOGICAL FIELD

This research project belongs to the field of art education. The research was conducted within the context of art making as part of a collaborative artistic project, which I participated in as a contemporary artist and art educator. The research context, viewpoint and questions are bound up with art education. My engagement in this thesis is phenomenological and the method that I use is attached to artistic and visual knowledge formation gained while conducting the research.<sup>20</sup> I call this a method of *Art practice research*. This method does not exist as such, but is linked with other existing methods, such as arts-based and artistic research. Substantially, the artistic part of the research is not a separate art project attached to the study, but a lived part of the flesh of the work, which crosscuts the entire work. The art practice is therefore a way of conducting research and a method for learning and knowing. This is also why the visual and artistic work is not presented as a separate chapter in the thesis.

Art and visual practice exist in the work as a method of living through the flesh of the research material, of learning and gaining knowledge, and as a visual practice method to describe and interpret the phenomena of the work. The first method is emphasised at the beginning of the project, during its empirical phase, and the second towards the end of it, when editing the video materials. Visual reading per se crosscuts the entire work via a writing method. A *critical essay writing method* (see Suominen 2005, 36–37) combines two different types of writing: informal narratives and theoretical writing.

In this chapter, I introduce art practice research methods for the purpose of clarifying and mapping the methodology of this doctoral thesis. I will explain the historical background of arts-based and artistic research methodology in Finland and in the US, and clarify how they are understood, used and developed in this thesis. I will also discuss how a critical essay writing method is part of the art practice research process.

## ART PRACTICE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Conducting research using art and visual practices is a relatively new approach within an academic context. There are a wide variety of visions and different notions about arts-based methods, and many different names for these methods, such as artistic research, arts-based research, practice-based research, arts-inspired research, arts-informed research, art practiced as research, a/r/tography and scholARTistry. In addition, there are new approaches being developed all the time. This methodological eagerness comes from, as I understand it, the unique needs of each singular research project. It seems that it is impossible to define one method that suites all research projects through and with art and visual practices. It is just as impossible to try and

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<sup>20</sup> *Although often discussed together in this work, I want to emphasise that artistic and visual thinking can be distinguished from one another. Artistic thinking requires seeing the world as new each time. It is an insight free from routines and patterns of thinking, and it usually happens through exposing passivity and without using force (Varto 2008b, 63 & 65–67). Visual thinking refers to one's ability to conceive of ideas that are not in front of him or her (Houessou 2010, 28).*

define one way to make art or interpret images. Every arts-based inquiry, therefore, takes part in this discussion and adds to the methodological variety.<sup>21</sup> Consequently, this thesis offers one thread in this discussion. Within those methods that are explicitly considered research methods, there are some elements and features that I find to be closer to the path that this thesis follows. Typically, the ontology of knowledge in arts-based research is similar to many other qualitative research approaches. An arts-based research methodology is often combined with many other methodologies, such as ethnography, autoethnography, narrative methods, case studies, participatory action research, discourse analysis or/and interview methods.

Artistic, visual, multi-sensorial and practice-based knowledge are difficult to articulate, especially in terms of what sort of knowledge they introduce to the research. Traditionally, this kind of knowledge was left outside scientific definitions of research as, for example, something too vague to pin down. Within arts and art education, this kind of indefinite knowledge has been a focus of interest in Finland since the beginning of the twenty-first century, and it was first developed within the Academy of Fine Arts (Kiljunen & Hannula 2002; Hannula et al. 2003, 2005). At the University of Art and Design, it was mainly developed by glass and ceramics artists (see, for example, Mäkelä 2003), and by art educators who also considered themselves artists (Nelimarkka-Seeck 2000; Pullinen 2003). In the early years, the methodology that was written within the context of the art academy was promoted as a method wherein the researcher is able to stand at two or more positions at the same time—that is, the art making process and the process of writing about it—and therefore is able to explore issues that other researchers could never see. The thesis follows this ideology of revealing a more complex understanding of the phenomena by standing at two or more positions at the same time. As a participating and art making researcher, I was able to reveal different things about our encountering than if I had observed from far and not gotten involved.

The theoretical perspective of the early artistic research in Finland came from the fields of phenomenology and hermeneutics (Hannula et al. 2005, 26–27), and the attitude of the research methodology confronted that of the natural sciences. This division between arts and science was challenged by using two notions: the democracy of experience and methodological pluralism. Researchers also suggested that these two notions served as a methodological basis for artistic research. By democracy of experience, Hannula et al. means that there is no area of experience that would be beyond the reach of criticising another person's area of experience. In this thesis, democracy of experience and transparency are critically embraced as an attitude of bringing singular experience for the others to appraise. Even though other researchers would not be able to repeat an artistic or otherwise singular research experience, it does not

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<sup>21</sup> *For sake of clarity I choose to use arts-based research when talking about different artistic and arts-based methods, except for the art practice research method when speaking about this dissertation.*

mean that other researchers would be unable to comprehend or evaluate and critique the project. Criticality, openness and self-reflectivity are considered to be at the core role of artistic research. The idea is that the subjective knowledge that is constructed through individual and artistic experience will be transformed into critical research knowledge and accessible knowledge for others through critical and transparent reflective analysis. The hermeneutical circle is often in use: an experience examines an experience that produces new experiences. Through the research circle of experience, it is therefore possible to discuss, arrange and alter the research knowledge. The idea is that personal and subjective experience will become commonly shared experiences and tools for others. (Hannula et al. 2003, 15, 30–31 & 34–35.)

These early writings on artistic research were efforts to disengage artistic research and artistic knowing from traditional research. Almost ten years later, these writings still have something to say, although I would like to state that criticality and openness along with reflectivity should be at the core of any research project. Also, while transparency is bound up with the idea of the democracy of experience, it somewhat echoes the research methods from the natural sciences. The buried burden of transparency has to do with general or universal knowledge as opposed to particular knowledge. While, in my opinion, artistic and visual research is primarily singular, the requirement of transparency might invite language that would lead to something that could be called general knowledge. Another contemporary criticism of the Finnish arts-based research methodologies comes from Jaana Erkkilä (2012b), who challenges the whole idea of using and repeating models, such as the hermeneutical circle. She claims that nothing new and valuable can be accomplished by forcing research interests into already existing models (Erkkilä 2012b, 13).

The Finnish artistic and arts related/arts-based research within art education has strongly emphasised artistic thinking and knowledge in professional artists' practices. Many of the master's theses and doctoral theses (Nelimarkka-Seeck 2000; Pullinen 2003; Houessou 2010; Erkkilä 2012a; Tuominen 2013) that utilise the researchers' own art making try to find answers for understanding how artistic or visual processes and interventions happen. Since these students typically have an identity as an artist rather than as an art educator, the educational focus is seldom included in these artistic practices. Among the master's theses, there are also works that try to understand how one is able to perceive his or her identity, embodied being, social processes or other phenomena through their own art making, and how through artistic practices embedded within the research process, one can find different perspectives on how s/he sees and interprets the world. I see this as a potential and growing methodology, one that has not yet been verbalised enough (see Kallio 2008b; Kallio 2010). Some Finnish artistic researchers have been active in the *Society for Artistic Research*, which was founded in Berne, Switzerland in March 2010. This association publishes an online journal, the *Journal for Artistic Research*, which is constantly mapping the methodologies of artistic research through art and research projects presented on the site. The



ratio between the amount of artistic work and research work done by contemporary artists at universities is continuously discussed in different symposia, seminars and conferences (for example, the AR-CA symposium 2011 and Cumulus Conference 2012). Artistic knowledge building is mapped in different ways using fiction, various narrative methods and artistic descriptions.

Hardly any of the artistic or arts-based doctoral or master's theses in Finland have been interested in gaining knowledge within an educational context in the same way as this thesis. In other words, the research focus has not typically been both educational and rooted in the arts. This is not to say that artistic researchers would not increase knowledge in art education, even though they would not be directly bound to the field of education. However, I state that there is an embedded idea of the overpowering force of the arts as a source of knowledge that has to be searched for as it is, without mixing it with something else—such as education or other sciences—which would only weaken its untouchable core. This core is understood as the substance upon which the field of art education draws, and that is why it is so valuable to it. While Finnish artistic research within the context of fine arts has been influenced by research from other parts of Europe, especially England and Scotland (Hannula et al. 2005, 15), arts-based research within the context of art education has also been part of a parallel—although quite often without noticing it—discussion in North America about arts-based research (Räsänen 2007, 15).

In the United States, arts-based research within an educational context has its roots in the 1980s, crossing as it does the artistic genres of fiction, poetry, painting, drama and music (Cahnmann-Taylor 2008, 6). At the beginning of the arts-based movement in the early 1990s, the new paradigm was received with suspicion. Early on, even the founders seemed to think that it was overly ambitious to think about art practice as research. (Eisner 2006, 10.) As a method, it still sometimes struggles for acceptance within academia (see Suominen Guays & Keys 2009). Elliot Eisner started to develop an arts-based research methodology together with his graduate students at Stanford University that could be used conducting inquiries into the social sciences using the concept of educational connoisseurship. This methodology was called *educational criticism* (Eisner 1991; Eisner 2008, 18; Cahnmann-Taylor 2008, 5; Sullivan 2005, XVII). Eisner's interest in developing a research methodology came from two sources: his one foot was standing in the arts—being a painter in 'another life'—while his other foot was firmly grounded in education and curriculum studies along with art education. He wanted to apply the arts to understand educational problems more imaginatively and more emotionally as well as practices that might normally get neglected. In developing an arts-based method, he wanted it to embrace pluralism and he wanted it to challenge conventional research methods. He argued that universities ought to be places for doctoral students to imaginatively explore new methods and concepts. He claimed that if universities could not provide such a setting, there were few places that could. (Eisner 2008, 18–19.)

In many ways, it is possible to see the methodological similarities between Finnish artistic research and Eisner's arts-based research, especially when it comes to the idea of methodological pluralism (Eisner 2008, 18–19; Hannula et al. 2003, 15). Also, the element of criticality seems to arise from a similar need to problematise artistic interpretation, openness and reflectivity. Eisner writes about tensions that are a part of the arts-based method. One of these tensions arises from diverse interpretations of research materials, which often have no clear references and which might not be able to make the necessary connections. He asks, 'Will the images made through arts-based research possess a sufficient referential clarity to engender a common understanding of the situation being addressed, or is a common understanding of the situation through arts-based research an inappropriate expectation?' (Eisner 2008, 19–20). I believe this to be the biggest tension in any art-practice research method. I do not believe this to be a question of quality or anything that could be easily solved via academic decisions. It is more an eternal question of the arts and interpreting the arts, and how well one singular piece of art is able to discuss larger phenomena.

This research project makes use of pluralism not only via numerous methods, such as participatory art practice, observation, video and text analysis, but also via numerous theories. Philosophical issues are introduced to communicate with disability studies, and as such, the phenomenological attitude engages with cultural criticism in a way that is usually reserved for the social studies. It is no surprise that methodological pluralism and diverse interpretations make the research process more complex. I am well aware of the fact that, for example, the video work in my thesis has been interpreted differently by different spectators and that the video could never provide such straightforward knowledge as, for example, the knowledge gained through interviews, or, for instance, statistically.<sup>22</sup> While there are many ways of making art and interpreting it, there are also many ways of conducting research with art. As Eisner reminds us, there are also multiple destinations that require multiple roads (Eisner 2008, 22). One of the problems with arts-based research is its relationship to the research results. The results do not always correspond to the mainstream rhetoric, and therefore they often remain unnoticed. Eisner talks about another tension, one with the language that cannot grasp the processes or the artwork. Artworks and other visual representations can be interpreted in many different ways and they do not include enough recognisable references, or a work of art can be skilfully done but its message can still be unclear.

It is important to acknowledge the richness introduced by art practice methodologies and to value the multi-layeredness of diversified interpretations. However, any multi-layered interpretation still needs to be contextualised: while a work of art can be interpreted in multiple ways when outside of research, within a research context arguments cannot be made based on a work of art or visual representations alone. This

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<sup>22</sup> *This is not to say that the interview method would not be complicated. It is, however, different when the researcher can make an argument based on a direct quote.*

is why I included my intentions and thoughts when editing and reframing the video material for the video work *Being Aside*. This does not mean that spectators could and would not interpret the video in numerous ways. The text, thus, gives the context for interpreting the research that went into making the video. Often, one singular and personal work of art or other visual representation tells more about the phenomena than a documentary that tries to explicitly explain phenomena with convincing facts. Ultimately, the criticism of artistic and visual ways of knowing within a research context comes from the lack of objectivity. This means that while a work of art or an image might explain and discuss a phenomenon for somebody in a clear and striking manner, another person might not be able to understand it at all. This is often the case with contemporary art. The artist's intention is not always successfully conveyed to others. Even though an image can make a powerful argument, an image alone is not enough within a research context. Therefore, it is my responsibility as a researcher to explain clearly the ways in which the images touch me, so that it would be understandable for others. Perhaps the outcome does not always seem to make sense for others, or at least not to everybody. That is why it is important that the researcher is able to discuss the references and the findings, open up what she has found through the artistic process and eventually contextualise the visual or artistic work.

Most arts-based researchers in the United States are oriented towards the areas of education and the social sciences. Arts-based research exploits the unique way of knowing found in the arts, offering an entrance to human ways of knowing and understanding while at the same time serving educational practices. There are, however, different areas of emphasis in this discussion and tremendous variation in the ways in which the arts are incorporated within educational research. Some of these areas promote the integrity of the artistic product as a site of knowledge, while others focus on the artistic data and process in order to increase and widen complex research realities (Cahnmann 2003; Sullivan 2005, XVII; Sullivan 2006, 21 & 23; Barone 2006, 7.) Melisa Cahnmann-Taylor (2008) deploys another way to make this distinction: she distinguishes between those that embrace *hybrid forms* of artistic and scientific scholarship and those that produce *art for scholarship sake*.

Tom Barone and Elliot Eisner (1997) introduced the idea of hybrid arts-based research, of research done between the arts and sciences, and laid out a theoretical framework describing the qualities of arts-based texts: 'the creation of a virtual reality and a degree of textual ambiguity; the presence of expressive, contextualised, and vernacular forms of language; the promotion of empathetic participation in the lives of a study's participants; and the presence of an aesthetic form through the unique, personal signature of the researcher' (Cahnmann-Taylor 2008, 8). Artists who utilise the art for the sake of scholarship method make art during educational fieldwork to capture the essence of their findings. What distinguishes this work from art for art's sake is often the context in which this type of art making is found and the fact that the content of the art is typically grounded in the experience of data collection and analysis. (Cahnmann-Taylor 2008, 10.)

## PAINTING AND VIDEO AS METHODS

The above section lays out the premises for arts-based and visual practice methodologies that I find relevant in terms of the present art practice research project. While I agree with them to a certain extent, I also sense problems with some of the premises. In this thesis, collaborating with another person while making art is more relevant than making pronouncements about the nature of art making itself. This is why I find that my work has more in common with Northern American arts-based educational research than, for example, with Finnish artistic research. For both of these research traditions, however, the artist/art educator/researcher's own artistic expression seems to be the ultimate outcome of the research. For me, the art practiced as a part of the research project is a practice that strives for a more plural understanding of my own behaviour and self-reflectivity (Suominen 2005, 31), and especially for understanding my encounter with another person in an art pedagogical context. Instead of focusing on art making as such, I offer myself as an *instrument* to the research project. This means that I bring myself, my subjectivity, my education, my culture and my notions of the world to the research project and that I practice art both with my research partner and alone to bring some of my own understanding, through visual and artistic work and writing, to the research project. Therefore, I am part of the flesh of the work. I look at the phenomena from inside and acknowledge their singular and subjective nature rather than attempt to study the phenomena from a distance. As part of the research project, being in the middle of it, I follow the idea of an inspective research attitude and acknowledge that there is no neutral perspective. I cannot choose to see from a distance, since I cannot abandon my participatory role.

In a way, I find my research to be seeking a new methodology in an Eisnerian spirit, or in the way proposed by Jaana Erkkilä (2012b, 13). My research methods did not follow any existing models as such. New and unpredictable things came along all the time. I did not know at the beginning what kinds of images my research partner and I would produce, nor did I know what kind of artworks I would make on my own when reflecting upon our collaborative work.<sup>23</sup> I did not even know what role the video material or our artistic work would get in the process, nor did I know what artistic argumentation and rhetoric I would use at the end of the process. I find this approach typical for contemporary art: the artistic medium and rhetoric are chosen to best serve the content, not the other way around. Not-knowing beforehand and trusting in the collaborative process was a chosen method. Coincidences, even surprises, are as important as anything else, and as a researcher I have to be sensitive when reacting to them. The challenge during the research process is to recognise those moments, to

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<sup>23</sup> *I produced some paintings and drawings while working with Thomas. However, I have chosen not to present or discuss that material in this thesis. I needed to choose what to concentrate on within the thesis—I could not include everything. I did not find that the paintings and drawings took part in the same conversation as the rest of the research material.*

recognise what is an important path to follow, even though the choices that seem to be made on an intuitive basis are difficult to explain. I also know that there are aspects of language that can be difficult to grasp and understand. What seems to be mystical and transcendental can in fact be intuitive and sensorial knowledge, something that cannot be translated into the kind of spoken language that we are used to using. Very often, that kind of knowledge is embodied in and based on experience. By using a method that is based on art practice, I try to get to know and understand the social and pedagogical moments that took place during the research project. By using an art-practice research method, I argue and find the language to recognise and distinguish between this kind of bodily and experiential knowledge.

In this research project, artistic and visual practice as a method is used in two different ways. First, it is used as a collaborative painting work, as an individual and immediate reaction via painting. Second, it discusses, describes and interprets the content of the research material via a video production. The artistic and visual work is both a research method and a method to open up and reflect on the social processes. In the video, I negotiate and contemplate the ‘being-aside’ that took place as a part of the project. I discuss and demonstrate the key themes of our collaborative work. This visual interpretative work is constructed through the process of writing. Both are needed—visual and literary interpretations. The different ways of knowing and not-knowing,<sup>24</sup> and the different means of dealing with that (non-)knowledge lead to richer understandings. We can see things more deeply when using two different kinds of lenses of knowledge (Richardson 2000, 937). My individual visual artwork, in addition to the collaborative working sessions, clarified and structured my understanding of the collaborative work and its social aspects. While working with the video material, I made choices and emphasised certain elements. When making the reflective visuals, I analysed the video material differently than when writing about it. I paid more attention to the visual elements and picked out different details. Some factors gain a more meaningful role than others, while some were edited out. I relived the collaborative sessions and process through the visual work. I studied how a connection was made through, for example, touching hands. I took note of who watched whom and of what we watched. I explored if eye contact was made or not. This visual process was similar to the artistic process as a method; it helped me to gain access to experiences, memories and implications that would otherwise remain formless (Sava & Vesänen-Laukkanen 2004, 36).

## ROLE OF THE VIDEO MATERIAL

The structure of my research project responds to artistic ideals by acknowledging the importance of constantly developing relations and the interweaving of theory, collaborative and individual artistic work, systematic and analytical diary notes, and video

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24 *The concept of not-knowing will be discussed in the next chapter.*

documentation. The research material consists of video documentation from a working period of two years. Through the writing process, I delve into the themes that repeatedly appear in the video material and that I find interesting. Taking an active and participatory role in one's own research means adopting a conscious viewpoint with respect to the research material (Varto 2000). While the video material is a method for remembering, it also provides an essential distance from what happened during the painting moments. A comprehensive understanding is constructed between these two positions: the participatory and inspective point of view and the more distanced analysis of the video material. Researchers have been recording visual material and using it as a research method since the 1980s. A decade later, a number of researchers became interested in exploring the reflexive uses of video, using it not only to simply record 'data', but also as media through which knowledge is created. (Pink 2001, 77.) While visual material tells stories about the people in it, it also raises important ethical questions. It is important to pay attention to what we choose to focus on out of the extensive body of research material, since this process narrates and constructs identities in a selective way (Pink 2001, 35 & 78–79). I realised early on in the process that writing with a video document is not the same as transcribing. Gestures, features, appearances and body language require interpretation; these significances are most meaningful for a person who has been part of the event. The issues discussed in the writings need to be chosen carefully, since there are many things happening at the same time. Choosing from the extensive video material means also choosing what and how to write about the 'Other' and also what not to write. The video material is not a documentary as such made for purposes of the research project; rather, it is part of an engaged and chosen means of interpreting what happened. In this section, I will clarify my relationship to the video material, which is simultaneously close and distant.

The video camera can be understood as a distanced, disembodied eye (Crutchfield 1999, 281; Elsaesser & Hagener 2010, 85), which violently pierces the event. The essential, even axiomatic preoccupation of the disembodied eye of a video camera entails a certain sense of voyeurism. This voyeurism depends on forms of disembodiment in which one's bodily presence in a given space or at a given time is forgotten. (Elsaesser & Hagener 2010, 85.) Video cameras have often been criticised for creating the sense of a penetrating and objectifying eye, especially within the field of women's studies. The distance that it offers when conducting a research project is, however, also its strength. While this claim might seem to stand in contrast to the inspective research attitude described in the previous chapter, I claim that both attitudes are needed and that they supported one another. The understanding that I gained as a researcher took place in the intersection between these two viewpoints. Understanding is not an either/or process in which you adopt one particular viewpoint or another; rather, it can include both viewpoints and thereby be even more diverse. Also, it is important to realise that a neutral perspective is not necessarily the objective of a video production. During the active and participatory phase of research, it is important to remain 'on a stake' (Varto

2000, 37), to concentrate on the embodied and sensorial moment. While this attitude is worth maintaining throughout the entire study as a consciously chosen viewpoint, it is also worth noticing that when I was painting with my research partner, when I was concentrating on the concrete moment and living through an encounter with another person, it was difficult to see, hear, perceive, understand and analyse the event subtly. In the diary notes, which are as important a part of the narration writing as the videos themselves, I reflect on my own intentions and emotions. These inner reflections turn out to be secondary when viewing the videos. Other things seem more important and the narrations become more equal and concern both of us, and, because of the video material, I started to write more reciprocal observations.

I was surprised to see how a video camera could reveal when used as a method of doing research. If I had only written diary notes without the use of a video camera, I would not have been able to understand the meaningful details or construct the moments of knowledge and the social meanings that took place during the activities. While the subjective experience is emphasised in diary notes, the video helps me to see more clearly—not only my own behaviour, but the whole experience. When taking part in the events directly, strong and singular experiences lead to different perceptions, and it is not possible to construct a whole image out of all the moments of contact or details that take place. Some of the matters that seemed meaningful while the action was taking place, or that I wrote up in my diary notes, lost their importance when analysing the video. In this sense, using video as a research method offers the possibility to be critical of one's own participatory activities and it reveals some unexpected aspects of one's behaviour. These aspects would have not occurred to me during the action itself, such as my own occasional impatience, which I did not perceive when we worked together. It was only through reviewing the videos over and over again that I was able to understand the meaning of the little gestures and nuances of my behaviour and their impact on my research partner and that he was quite sensitive to the little signals. Since he did not directly look at me, it had at first seemed to me that he was not paying attention to my gestures.

The possibilities offered by the video camera should not, however, be exaggerated. While I found it to be a revealing tool, I also found that it limited my perception and narrowed my engagement with the subject, especially my embodied commitment to all the phenomena of my research project. Most of the time the camera was standing on a tripod in the corner of the room. Often something happened outside of the camera's angle. The further away the camera was located, the wider the area of the room that was included in the film. At the same time, the image became smaller and the details were more difficult to perceive. More importantly, turning our encounter event into an image changed the entire experience significantly. The part of the research that was ephemeral and joined to the flesh of the participants became something very different on the edited screen. Looking at the same seconds over and over again, seeing ourselves as images that could be rearranged, deleted and repeated, brought in the disembodied

eye in a paradoxical way. Acknowledging this was an essential part of lending an element of self-criticism to the work and formed the starting point for discussing the methods used here as well as the phenomenological and other ideas of body. Nancy's extension of the ontological body 'of every body', which includes inanimate as well as animate and sentient bodies (Nancy 2000, 84), offers other possibilities for discussing the meaning of the video camera. Perhaps the disembodied eye of the camera can be understood as an extension of the body without at the same time losing the inspective engagement of the research ontology. Vision is always already embodied and therefore 'hurttable' (Crutchfield 1999, 281). My (dis)embodied experiences changed during the process many times: while the embodied encounters with Thomas took place at more of a distance when using the (disembodied) camera, I explored different bodily experiences when reviewing the video material. In front of the screen, I confronted my own vulnerability, exposed and hurttable, and wanted to discuss both of our subject positions visually. Through this editing work, I came to face our embodied collaboration through both an engaged and objectified gaze and I began to consider what an embodied (camera) eye/gaze would look like.

My edited video work is an interpretation of the two years that I spent making video documentations. The video is based on the same material that is included in the thesis and first discussed in the narrations and via theory. I wrote the journal texts by combining the notes that I wrote right after the meetings and the first review texts that I wrote soon after the meetings, all within the two-year time frame of the research project, 2004–2006, the same two years that I met with Thomas on a regular base. After that, I have reviewed, reflected upon and written about the videotapes many times. The last review took place in the years 2011–2012, when I also edited the video.

Taking up a critical position included assessing my own research, especially when working with a research partner who could not reply to my creative constructions and interpretations. While it is impossible for me to know how Thomas would like to be represented in the research text or video, I have needed to constantly and critically assess the ethics of my work. Meeting with Thomas after eight years and showing the video to him was an important moment for me.

## WRITING METHOD

Anniina Suominen (2005) has suggested a method of writing with visuals for art education. *Critical essay writing* intertwines images and visuals as two different types of writing: creative and theoretical/academic writing. By creative text, I understand her as meaning an informal, self-reflective type of mediating that consists of one's own images or image making. These texts are then combined with relevant theories. This method is influenced by autoethnography, by narrative research, by arts-based research and especially by Laurel Richardson's approach to 'writing as a method of inquiry'. (Suominen 2005, 36–37.) In this thesis, the informal texts are my narrations



of working with Thomas, a combination of my own diary writings and text produced via my interpretations of the video material of the shared painting moments. For me, this is also a way to describe and interpret the phenomena that have appeared with an open and wondering attitude. With this method, both visual and literal acts constitute knowledge and they are inseparable. Writing along with visual practices furthers the complexity of embodied and tacit knowledge of the visual practice and of the knowledge represented in the visuals (Suominen 2005, 32).

As a researcher whose research perspective is bound up in the participatory role, I take up different critical positions—those of the participant and those of the reflective learner. While being a part of my own research material, I have to confront and analyse my own behaviour, as discomfiting as it might sometimes be, to understand its influences. I consider writing from this pedagogical position the most important method. When writing as an active-voiced author, as active ‘subjects’ when using my individual voice, I am more fully present in my work, more honest and more engaged (Richardson 2000, 924). Claiming to know something as a researcher requires nurturing my own individuality and putting myself into my own texts. When writing about the person that is the subject of my research, it is crucial to be critical of my own authority and justification when talking on behalf of Thomas. While writing about another person, I am also writing *for* him (Richardson 1990, 12). The meaning of progressive and postmodernist writing is to give voice to those who have been silenced. Understanding this meaning is especially important when writing of and for people who do not speak and whose voices are silenced in our society.

Writing is an open place where knowledge is constructed via a creative process. The text itself forms knowledge and understanding. The writing process itself has a constitutive power in creating (non-)knowledge. It is a method of discovery. (Richardson 2000, 923–925.) Writing has to do with surveying and mapping and even with realms that are yet to come (Deleuze & Guattari 1999, 5). Writing requires moral responsibility and the understanding that there is no such thing as ‘right’, without some sort of interpretation, since there is no universal knowledge. Understanding that knowledge is partial and situated—and that sometimes it can be called non-knowledge—does not mean that there is no knowledge at all or that there is anything ‘wrong’ with constructed knowledge. (Richardson 1990, 26–27.) This understanding of situated knowledge is similar to the methodology of arts-based research: forming knowledge from singular experiences is both ‘true’ and partial, just as are our conceptions of the world and the people in it: historical, temporal, overlapping and contextual, and thereby always subjective (Richardson 1990, 12 & 26–27; Varto 2000).

Each of my narrations on working with Thomas has its own theme; each narration is its own separate and disconnected entity. The narrations do not constitute a larger narration that would easily overlap as continuation throughout the thesis. Instead of writing a narration as such, I want to emphasise the singular nature of these events. The independent descriptions correspond better to the reality of how we worked.

I find it important that their singular natures are also perceived in the research. Since the writing process partially depended on my memory, it would have been tempting to narrate our work with a plot with a beginning, middle and end and with its high points and resolutions. This is also what most readers are used to expecting: the culturally upheld habit to narrate everything, even life itself, as a story. A singular event, instead, seem meaningless unless it is part of something bigger, some entity, and that is why it is so typical to narrate a story with a plot based on our memories of that story. This is, however, more than anything a method to construe that what was happened. It is an artificial way to build logic and a schema for something that does not necessarily have either. In this thesis, there is no overarching plot for the time that we spent together. There is no developmental story to tell. The only development happened with me as a pedagogue, when I realise that I do not need to try to change my research partner in the name of education.

## DATA

The research data consists of 34 hours of videotapes, from 34 meetings with Thomas during the course of two years, 2004–2006. In addition, there is eight hours of videotape from a TV documentary maker. This video material is discussed throughout the entire thesis. Its purpose is to engage dialogically with the theories that I find relative to the issues raised in the video material. The 34 videotapes were data for me to analyse and write about, and they were material for the artistic work. Most of the time, the camera stood in the corner of the room. Sometimes I took the camera into my hands and videotaped my research partner working from a closer perspective. After every meeting, I wrote a short reflection journal. The narratives are written in combination with my journal remarks while reviewing the videos, and they are based on what I remembered about what happened. I have looked through every video session, but only wrote about those that I found important in light of the research questions. After reviewing the material and analysing and writing about the videotapes for many years, I wanted to approach the pedagogical issues visually as I edited the video work. By reconceptualising and juxtaposing the video material, I was able to approach the research questions visually. This video is not a documentary of our two years of working together; rather, it is a visual method that has helped me to discuss the essential pedagogical phenomena that I had first approach by writing about it.

Other data include the public material produced as a result of the *Arts Without Border* project: the TV documentary *Autistics and artists* and the exhibition catalogue publication.<sup>25</sup> I find the exhibition catalogue a relevant source to analyse since it is text that has already been written and published, and therefore, exposed to analysis.

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<sup>25</sup> *The TV documentary program by Eero Wallén is a Finish-Swedish television production, Autister & Artister, Finlands Svenska Television (FST), and it is part of the Seportaasi series. It was first nationally broadcasted in the spring of 2005, and it has been reshown several times since then.*

The text of the catalogue was originally only in Finnish. I have translated those parts of the text that I wanted to quote for the purposes of this research project. I observed, documented and interviewed three couples during the project, but I found it difficult, if not impossible, to use this material for the thesis. After closely reviewing and analysing the shared time between Thomas and myself, it seemed unfair to start writing about the other couples that I had worked with just a few times and that I had only met with once or a couple of times. It would have seemed like a poor comparison to the 34 hours of data on my collaboration with Thomas. When writing about the exhibition catalogue publication, I did not mention the names of the participants. For ethical reasons, it seems better to call the participants either X or s/he. While I find this strategy essential, at the same time realising it might seem an unnecessary manoeuvre, since the project was public and it would be easy to find out the identities of those involved, especially since there were only nine artistic couples in addition to Thomas and myself, and some of them are well-known artists.





Chapter 4.

PEDAGOGICAL  
FOUNDATIONS:  
EXPANDING SELF

*My first encounter with Thomas is a powerful experience for me. I am anxious. I am not sure how I should say hello to him. I do not know how to greet a person who does not really speak. He walks towards me intently and takes a seat, looking intently somewhere in the distance. He seems timid. He does not look at me. I wonder if he is as anxious as I am. I say 'Hi Thomas. Would you like to draw, or paint?' He grabs a crayon from the table, where I have placed watercolours along with crayons and paper for both of us. He begins to draw with no hesitations. He knows exactly what to do: he produces large lines, curves and long strokes. I do not know if the outcome matters to him. It seems that the continuations of the strokes are important. Long lines snake their way down the paper following some irregular pattern. A hypnotic, mesmerising continuum. Occasionally, the drawing hand almost stops, and a tender windmill of a crayon follows. A stronger yank. He fills the paper from its corners and edges, which seems to be especially important.*

*Apparently, the lack of eye contact affects me more strongly than I first thought. I realise how self-evidently I took the possibility to read a level of commitment and interest in another person's face. Although I am aware of the special character of my research partner, my actions, reactions and emotions are based on my previous experiences. Those previous experiences make me look for my own emotional condition, and his reaction to it, in his facial expressions. At the same time, I realise how much his facial expressions, and the lack of them, or looking away, affects me. I become quiet and calm.*

In this chapter, I will describe what the beginning of our collaboration felt like for me and what I anticipated that Thomas and myself would encounter. More importantly, I will explain the factors, foundations and contexts that I discovered to be meaningful for us, such as what kind of art education Thomas had been given beforehand and the particular pedagogical engagements and ideologies that I wanted to follow. Although, the *Art Without Borders* project offers a very important context of our encounters, which affected our being-together significantly, I have separated that discussion from the rest of the contexts and foundations for our encounters. While I will discuss the institutional contexts that are attached to the official program and its social and communal viewpoints in the next chapter, in this chapter I will concentrate on encounters between the two of us, and the institutional, educational and social engagements and experiences that we both carried along with us.

The beginning of any cooperation entails facing a new situation and new people. As Tarja Pitkänen-Walter (2001) points out, people who encounter each other are not exactly the same as they were before the encounter. They carry a little of the other person's position with them. Their conceptions of the 'self' and their space in the world have expanded to some degree, which is what perceiving the 'other' requires. (Pitkänen-Walter 2001, 135.) I was eager to expand myself. I was prepared to be

somewhat transformed as a result of this encounter, while also acknowledging that each encounter always includes some discomfort. That comes from the change that the encountering causes; without change, there would be no encounter. (Deleuze 1994, 139.) I composed myself and made myself ready to be exposed to a new research experience and to my new research partner. I was hopeful to see some reaction on his face, even though the eye contact that I anticipated would probably not occur. I was aware of the fact that people with autism often avoid eye contact. This knowledge did not make it much easier for me to learn not to pay attention to the lack of it. As Ashby & Causton-Theoharis (2009, 502–503) point out, eye contact is culturally learned. They stress that a lack of eye contact can be seen as a marker of autism in Western culture, but that, conversely, in many Eastern cultures it is not described as a manifestation of autism; instead, eye contact can mean a sign of disrespect.

In his analysis of ritual elements in social interaction, Erving Goffman (2002) describes how every person lives in a world of social encounters where verbal and non-verbal acts and patterns of behaviour influence how we react on other people's behaviour and how we see ourselves as participants. We are automatically committed to and become involved with other people's facial expressions. While the other's feelings may differ in quantity and in their direction from those expressed by our own faces, they constitute a level of involvement in the facial expressions of others that is as immediate and spontaneous as the level of involvement expressed in our own faces. This is because one's own face and the face of others are constructs of the same order. The situation usually defines how much feeling one has for a particular face and how this feeling can be distributed among the faces involved in the interactive situation. (Goffman 2002, 306–307.) I was curious to know if I could see any feelings or other reactions similar to mine on my research partner's face, or if I could read the reactions of my research partner's face in my actions or behaviours—or if it would only be me reacting on his face. With these questions in mind, I started to analyse the research material and soon found Levinas's theories of face and undemocratic encounters, which he calls asymmetrical, to be helpful. This became the most important theory for the purposes of this research project and I will discuss it in detail in this thesis. I was also aware that meeting a new person always contains a certain level of 'undemocracy', meaning that a meeting can never be completely democratic. The 'other' will never completely agree to be defined by someone else and a full understanding of the 'other' cannot be developed. These social issues pertaining to encountering others were the first factors that I acknowledged at the beginning of our collaboration.

Other issues that I paid attention to in the first meetings concerned Thomas's image making. I noticed that Thomas started to work with crayons right away when he saw them on the table next to a white piece of paper, seemingly without any uncertainty. For me, this showed that certain educational conventions have been successfully turned into habits of behaviour. This was also evident later on during many of our working sessions. Thomas has been educated to work with certain materials and in certain ways. For

example, when working with crayons, it is a typical to add watercolours to the drawing, so that the drawn areas will repel the watercolour and the outcome will contain both elements of drawing and painting. He had also learned that if a painting has not yet been drawn upon, he would draw on it afterwards. I wondered, what is the meaning of these learned manners of image making for Thomas? It reminded me of arts and crafts in kindergarten, when practicing how to use glue or scissors. The aim is then to learn kinetic skills without having any artistic goals. I believe these manners have been easily taught to him, and as he likes following the rules, he would remember to repeat them with pleasure. I wanted to become acquainted with Thomas's artwork—what he had recently produced or currently made and what he had done before, when growing up. His parents were helpful, as they were part of the staff at the Autism Foundation, and I was able to look at many art projects that he had done both in school and independently.

The face motif seems to be repeated in Thomas's independent artwork. The presentation in these artworks is very different from the ones that he has done in school. The outcome is grainier and more interesting, not purposefully smoothed out. The faces in them explicitly represent different states of mind, even though the mode of drawing is plain. Another repeated motif is an oval form, produced on a computer. Thomas would create images, one after another, with ovals that go next to and inside one another, filling the empty space as much as possible. It is difficult to say whether the ovals are just ovals or if they represent something else for him, for example faces. Later on, we drew both faces and ovals together and it seemed to me that both of these activities gave him the most pleasure. In some drawings, the motives, ovals and faces clearly meet. He drew series of faces next to one another, as close as they can be, just like the ovals on the computer screen, only this time with crayons and with different facial expressions. Many of the expressions seemed angry to me.

The assistant told me that Thomas usually draws angry looking faces, but sometimes, when asked, also smiling and happy looking faces. I could not help but think, why is it important to wish that Thomas would draw happy faces? Do we believe that a person is happier and perhaps acts more nicely if he creates happy looking images? This kind of assumption brings with it awkward desires that are projected onto art education. The educational ideal then bumps up against the aim of using visual representations to help assimilate a person into society. Research, however, supports the idea that producing angry—or even violent—images does not reflect real behaviour. Quite the contrary: producing violent images might be a way to process aggressive thoughts so that they do not need to be processed in reality. Producing one's own aggressive images is very different from consuming ready-made violent imaginary. When playing with aggressions based on one's own imagination, processing aggressive themes can help clarify them (Marvin, 2000, 142–143).

I looked at the older artworks that Thomas had produced in school with amazement: they were beautifully organised and skilfully painted landscapes, sunsets and still lifes, and they had other common themes as well, such as a bullfinch on a branch



in wintertime. It was all quite different from the types of pictures that he drew or painted with me, or when alone. I became curious about his previous art education and visited his former school, Marjatta-koulu, to discuss his work with a teacher.<sup>26</sup> As an art educational method, there was clearly a specific form of practice: students would paint following model examples. Also following the Steiner pedagogy's aesthetic guidelines, the students would paint together, at the same time, linear brush strokes on their own pieces of paper, slowly and peacefully, with wet paint on wet paper, so that the paints would blend into one another. White areas of the paper had to be covered with paint and the outcome ought to be solid. The idea is that the painting looks like the smooth and soft landscape of a pure mind. The aim of this working method is to transmit aesthetic values to other areas of life while painting these calming images. There is the desire that when a student creates aesthetic and sublime images, the appreciation of beauty would show in the student's other actions as well, such as in his or her clothing, hygiene and behaviour. The teacher told me about a student that started to pay attention to her living environment and to herself by being cleaner and tidier. The obvious problems with this kind of educational approach are similar to any behaviouristic teaching method: students might learn to follow the given patterns, but they would not necessarily learn to make choices on their own. It only shows the manipulative side of education (Efland 1990, 250).

Rudolf Steiner emphasised the spiritual aspects of artistic processes, which are based on spiritual activity and experiences, and gave an essential role to imagination in the aesthetic, spiritual and conceptual domains. In his philosophy, what he called anthroposophical spiritual science, art is understood as a 'domain of spiritual activity'. Steiner binds together the concepts of truth, beauty and goodness: 'Being truthful means that we have the right connection to our spiritual past. Having a sense for beauty means that we do not deny the connections to the spiritual world in our present physical existence. Being good means to create a seed for a spiritual world in the future' (Steiner 1998, 280). Beauty should be experienced as an inward experience; just staring at something beautiful does not mean that we are experiencing it (Steiner 1998, 279). I understand that the pedagogical idea of Marjatta School is to reach the inward experience and bring together inner and outer beauty, truthfulness and goodness. This is achieved through the technique mentioned above. However, it seems incredible to believe that transforming the philosophy into action via a mechanical exercise could actually change a person's personality. One might also ask, what happens to the concept of creativity when students just copy teachers' paintings?

The school visit clarified Thomas's background for me quite clearly and also showed two important issues surrounding the notion of *norm* when working with people with autism. First, the main aim of educational and social work with autistic people is to

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<sup>26</sup> *Marjatta-koulu (Marjatta School) is a comprehensive Steiner school in Helsinki for disabled children and children that need special psychological or social care (<http://personal.inet.fi/koulu/marjatta-koulu/>).*

familiarise the autistic person with the ableist society. I understand that the purpose of this kind of teaching is to help the student behave more according to social norms and thus make it easier to live with a disability, and even more so, to make it easier to live with a disabled person in her/his environment and ultimately in society. However, an ethical question follows: What rights do people with autism have when the rest of society always seems to be the point of focus? When teaching manners and tidiness are the central objectives of an art education, the possibilities for richer and more complex expressions should not be limited. In her doctoral thesis, Tiina Pusa (2012) writes about the bizarre union of morality and hygiene, which has a long history in social work. She criticises how this union oddly influences the art projects that are done in social work contexts. The purpose of art then is to generate well-being and commit a person to morality and hygiene, paralyzing the artistic process itself. When moral issues, such as purity, cleanness and healthy, are the main objective, then the meaning of art is controlled and it loses its 'flesh'. (Pusa 2012, 141.) It should be self-evident that following this kind of manifesto in fact stifles any true kind of art making. When cleanness is at the core of art making, the idea of art—that it can be as dirty, nasty and brutal as life itself—is lost. Unfortunately, this kind of union between art and well-intentioned ideas of general good sometimes exists in different social, and especially educational, contexts.

Second, the problem of defining beauty becomes notable when considering the intentions of Marjatta School teaching: as culturally contextual notions, aesthetics and beauty remain for the most part incomprehensible to a person with autism. Thus, it is necessary to question, is it possible to assume that beauty could ever be defined explicitly in such a way that it could bring visual pleasure to everybody in equal measures? Also, the question of beauty has become problematic in the contemporary era when we can find more complex and even contradictory definitions of beauty than the modernistic notions of beauty proposed during Rudolf Steiner's time. The aesthetic enjoyments of children with autism are especially difficult to take into account using the methods advocated by the Marjatta School.

When comparing the artwork that Thomas did at Marjatta School in the past with the artwork that he did during our time together, one might say that Thomas's skills and visual talent have deteriorated over time. A closer look reveals that it is not that much a loss of skills as it is him working with different thoughts. While I did not find the method of copying fruitful for Thomas and myself, neither did I want to advocate authentic creativity, which someone might find to a certain extent in our expressive-looking paintings. I believe that there is nothing wrong with copying when it is a choice that the individual makes her/himself. A good example of this is magna and the fan artists that derive a huge amount of pleasure from making copies of somebody else's drawings. To me, that is as important to image making as anything else. While our artistic work together consisted neither of copying nor of creative expression, it is important to ask what it was. This question will be discussed throughout the entire thesis.

## PEDAGOGY OF THE FLESH

*I give Thomas another piece of paper, and soon after that another one. I start painting my own piece of paper. We work across the table from each other. The slowly snaking line that he is drawing continues from one piece of paper to another, softly curling. Rapidly, the style changes into fierce spinning. He seems to be interested in the colour traces on the paper. I continue working with my own painting, trying to find a rhythm while working next to him. It is important to me to work with Thomas, not only to follow his work or remain at a distance, in the teacher position. We work in silence, at the same table. When the third drawing is ready, he puts the crayon back in the box and sits calmly waiting for the next thing. When he gets paints and brushes in front of him, he again knows right away what to do. He grasps the brush and starts painting with one purple colour. He spreads the paint all over the upper part of the paper, working especially carefully in the corners. He scratches his knee and says his first words: 'tickle-tickle'. We work across from each other, speechlessly and diligently, producing quick aquarelle paintings, one after another. At times, he scratches himself, hums and smiles, and says 'tickle yourself, tickly-tickle'. He reaches for my hand wanting me to tickle him. We tickle one another's arms and hands. He continues painting and tickling, smiling and humming, seemingly enjoying himself.*

*I look at his last white strokes on the paper. I know they are his last ones, as the paper is fully covered with many layers, and because white is his finishing colour. He leans back on his seat and says 'tickles' and scratches his head. He tickles the air between us, reaching for me, smiling and making me smile too.*

At the beginning of our collaboration, a critical approach did not help me avoid setting aesthetical assumptions, similar to the ones offered by Marjatta School. I sometimes encouraged Thomas to change his crayon or paint colour, to create more colour tones, thinking that he would enjoy the colours more with various hues. I was also thinking about the outcome of the work, thinking that with colour variety, the artworks would be visually more interesting. A more critical interpretation of my behaviour reveals the somewhat modernistic art educational learning content of producing acceptable paintings and drawings with richly mixed colours. This aesthetic aspiration of mine reveals an effort to determine the nature of our work through general definitions of art work that had little or nothing to do with the singular experience that Thomas and I were having.

Curiously, this is contradictory to my research approach, where I am especially interested in experience and significance that rely upon a single ephemeral moment, *ereignis*, or *event*, which is an unquestionably singular and possible dialogical approach. Distance, perspective, any effort to achieve objectivity or make generalisations, demolishes

the singularity. Aesthetics, on the other hand, represents the philosophy of distance, which constitutes and follows its own epistemology, a universal and particular knowledge, and its own politics (Varto 2008a, 15). When I asked Thomas to change the crayon or paint so that he could create more colour tones, I was practicing aesthetic aspirations based on that what I thought I knew from a distance, something that an art educator tells all her students to do, since it is generally a good idea to use more than one colour when drawing. After seeing Thomas's enjoyment when using one colour tone of paint, one that he would spread over and over again on the paper, adding more and more of same chromatic paint mass with such pleasure, I found it irrelevant to argue anymore that he should use a variety of colours. I realised that instead of aesthetics, I needed a different kind of knowledge, perhaps sensorial knowledge, that is, I needed to use my senses based on the immediate reactions of touch and vision that took place in our work together.

Paradoxically, to understand the sensorial knowledge that I was tapping into during our sessions together, I needed a conceptual and theoretical knowledge of flesh and embodiment. Since it is not possible to write about singular experiences, or sensorial knowledge of the flesh, or *carnal knowledge* (Varto 2008a, 13), without taking some kind of distance from them, it was not possible to speak straight from a sensorial perspective either. Speaking and writing requires concept construction, and therefore, they require creating a distance from the immediate sensorial experience, even though the effort to maintain the singularity, the flesh and the sensorial need to be maintained. I also needed to find out what embodiment and touching meant for Thomas. I had a feeling that embodiment had different meanings for me and for him. This became one of the most important themes in the thesis.

While outlining the sensorial and embodied work process for Thomas and myself at the beginning of the project, I found it important not to make exact plans about how to direct our collaborative art process. I tried to develop a sensitivity towards and allocate space for the aspects of collaboration and interaction that Thomas was interested in, and I focused on these aspects of the art creation and interaction process in my research journals and observations. I found it important to maintain the idea that Thomas is the one who leads the work. I tried not to influence his choices either by verbal nor non-verbal or indirect instructions. I saw myself mainly as a person who is present and offers him alternatives, and I intended to step aside and follow and observe rather than to guide him. At the beginning, this assumption about our roles helped me interpret my positions and increased my level of awareness about my actions and influence as a researcher. Planning the work sessions beforehand would have made me feel secure and would have helped me better to define my position and my role. However, an open manuscript, as challenging as it was, seemed like the only option. Working with Thomas made me realise that my initial plans, whatever they might have been, would have not have been possible.

Later on it occurred to me that we both guided each other, influenced by one another. I began to recognise how that interaction functions: the little gestures that

revealed his reactions based on my conduct and his actions also affected my behaviour. The first reviews of the video material, while still working with him, made me understand the non-verbal parts of the communication better and I saw my neutral intentions in a new light. My reactions and non-reactions (missed reactions) were messages that had greater significance than I had first thought. This awareness made my involvement more active, without any need to stick with the traditional teacher position that the 'subject is supposed to know'. It also prompted me to look for theories that would help me form and define what *pedagogy of the flesh* really means. As much as I found it important not to try to transform and develop the other person, I discovered early on the importance of my own involvement for my own pedagogical growth and for developing the ability to understand the reciprocal issues between the two of us.

To be able to fully observe the actual moments and their reciprocal and asymmetric nature, I had to separate the two inner pedagogues, both of which are effective: the inner ideal pedagogue and the pedagogue that acts in flesh. The ideal pedagogue is ethically pure, unlike the pedagogue in flesh, since nobody can maintain a sense of purity when getting dirty in real life. Admitting my own imperfections is not easy, because it reveals much about me. In many situations, in order to avoid disclosure, central notions such as humanity, art and knowledge are often left to float in the air as principles and ideological murmur. The knowledge of the flesh sticks, it does not float. Pedagogical work is, as I understand it, a continuous confrontation between these two inner pedagogues. As much as the ethically pure pedagogue is a fantasy, the 'dirty' pedagogue of flesh cannot be maintained without its 'pure' ethical counterpart. It became important to maintain a balance in this confrontation when working with Thomas.

Pedagogy is full of different thoughts, ideas and theories from education and psychology; for example, it includes ideas about child development and construction of the 'self' that model particular knowledge and that locate it within the context of general knowledge that needs to be explained and understood. Educators try to apply these different beliefs and theories to those who need to be educated, however well one knows that no particular theory can describe *this* specific person and that no particular theory can explain *this* situation. (Varto 2008a, 31–32.) A pedagogy of the flesh does not aim to build theories or models. Its nature is tied to singularity and responsibility. A pedagogy of the flesh requires that the educator thinks about, struggles with and faces her/his own issues and ultimate purposes; it challenges one's own ethics, before—and all the time while—encountering the 'Other'. In my working relationship with Thomas, encountering my own prior assumptions, beliefs and non-necessary ideologies revealed to me whole new dimensions of myself and made me confront my own vulnerability. While I found the pedagogical condition of staying open, not-knowing and not-planning our artistic meetings essential for the pedagogy of the flesh, I also realised that it was a pedagogical fantasy, since I would always carry my knowledge and at least some prior understandings with me. It would be impossible to be completely free from planning. However, I found this ideology behind the

pedagogical approaches necessary to maintain. It became an important part of the 'pureness' of ethical pedagogy, that necessary need to guide each encounter, and the 'dirtiness' of a pedagogy of the flesh, which becomes messy in the middle of singular, lived moments.

## NOT-KNOWING

Not planning the working sessions in detail beforehand made it possible for me to grasp the transitory moments as they appeared in time and to specifically concentrate on their temporary essence. As Heimonen points out, getting lost in not-knowing both frightens and gives safety to the researcher. When the former comfort zone disappears, one can be freed from knowing and become open to finding something new. Not-knowing means recognising embodied knowledge that is becoming, that is partial and that is always unnamed. (Heimonen 2009, 34 & 47.) This is close to the pedagogical notion of the rhizome.<sup>27</sup> I find not-knowing an essential element of pedagogy. When I let go of the knowing subject position, I am not able to hide behind my professional expertise, but I am free to listen, free to be close, free to follow my instincts, free to move in different directions, free to rely on singularity and free to act on the basis of a pedagogy of the flesh.

For Emmanuel Levinas, 'knowing' means mastering and controlling the 'Other'.<sup>28</sup> Knowing is part of a natural attitude, one which tries to make everything the same for me and to totalise the 'Other'. The one who knows does not value the 'Other'. Knowing is a form of egoism (Wallenius 1992, 207). Knowing is also evidently an inherent part of education. To be able to teach, one has to be knowledgeable. No doubt, one has to know about the subject that s/he is teaching. However, what one does not know is the other person. That should make one humble in front of the knowledge, especially when teaching and learning. A type of knowing that is based on mastering and controlling the 'Other' is often based on constructivist-cognitive processes. Knowledge means power, which sets knowing subjects on the opposite side from oppressed individuals who are not empowered by the knowledge in question. Unknowability, or not-knowing, or nonknowledge as George Bataille (2001) calls it, does not mean a jump into nothingness. As art educator Jan Jagodzinski (2002a, 81–82) says, a necessary 'unknowability' beyond or within the ego calls out to the 'Other' ethically and

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<sup>27</sup> *Rhizome is a concept used by Deleuze & Guattari to describe a research attitude of non-hierarchical multiplicities, which stand in opposition to the dualist categories and binary thinking that they call a root-tree organizational structure (Deleuze & Guattari 1999, 6). In pedagogy I understand this to mean a non-linear, disparate, decentred, moving and lateral approach instead of a hierarchical approach to knowledge or non-knowledge.*

<sup>28</sup> *It is important to distinguish Levinas's knowing and Bataille's non-knowledge from knowledge in its vernacular use. In this research project, I sometimes write about knowledge that should be separated from philosophical ideas about knowing, for example when speaking about gaining a pedagogical understanding and knowledge.*

this unknowable dimension introduces the question of ethics into human relations, which educators need to think about.

In this thesis, I place not-knowing at the core of the pedagogy. All encounters conform to certain regulations. While a cognitive regulation appears quite one-sided, a pedagogy that includes not-knowing introduces multiple and rhizomatic dimensions. When looking at content more deeply, one inevitably steps into the area of nonknowledge, which can cause feelings of unease (Bataille 2001, 112). When a person has a wondering attitude, then nonknowledge can help expose them to what they already know (Bataille 1988, 51–52). As Bataille repeatedly states, the educated and intellectual discursion of ‘knowing nothing’ is a paradox (Bataille 2001, 114 & 129). However, he is also able to show how knowledge enslaves and misleads. The domain of knowledge is a stable domain, whereas in the unknown there is no guarantee of stability and this can obviously never be foreseen (Bataille 2001, 133). This unforeseeable and unstable aspect of knowledge is what calls for an ethical pedagogy.

## BEYOND A CONSTRUCTIVIST-COGNITIVE PARADIGM

Following the ideology of not-knowing, I argue in this thesis that art education and its varied manifestations should look beyond a constructivist-cognitive paradigm. The cognitive paradigm has played an important role in art education, and many scholars still adhere to it (see, for example, Efland 1976, 2002; Eisner 2002; Räsänen 2008, 45–49, 2009, 31–32). Visual perception is understood as a cognitive process because it requires the spectator to choose, generalise and abstract the features of the perceived object. It is important to assert that perception does not involve passively receiving an incident; rather, it is mind’s active process of knowledge building. Similarly, image making that is based on perception is actually about problem solving rather than replicating a particular vision. The cognitive paradigm considers art to be a special area of knowledge, and in doing so, it emphasises a universal form of knowledge and individualism that are contradictory to contemporary postmodern and contextual cultural notions (Räsänen 2008, 46). While there seems to be nothing wrong with celebrating visual cognition as a way of knowing as such, the paradigm applies more to talented intelligence and it cuts off all the other, especially more social, ways of approaching visuality and art making.

Historically, the practice of linking of cognition and art education research stems from development psychology. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the belief in cognitive stages of development led to the development of psychological tests. The most well-known of such tests is Victor Lowenfeld’s 1947 test, which has strongly influenced notions of what and how a person should be able to draw at each stage of life. The early 20<sup>th</sup> century understanding of a cognitive learner reflected the standards of an assimilative and normative society. Even though the early tests are no longer used, and even though a biological understanding of human development is no longer taught as a part

of art education, the thinking and ideology behind this way of thinking are still reflected in contemporary notions of the cognitive paradigm. While the idea of testing seems to be unfamiliar to contemporary ideas of art and art education, testing still plays an important role in contemporary education. The most recent sign of this was the evaluation of learning results in Finland in 2011, which was actually the first national learning evaluation in art education that followed the ideas and practices of a standardised test (Laitinen et al. 2011). While some art educators consider the idea of testing within the visual arts irrelevant, others feel that it offers the possibility to show how meaningful and important the field of study and subject of art education actually are. The fact that this kind of testing has been included in how art and visual culture are taught in the schools helps shed some light on the role of the cognitive paradigm in contemporary thinking.

The kind of assimilative testing that emphasises normative thinking raises an important question about the lack of tolerance for people whose development is different. I started to realise that most of the cognitive knowledge that I had gained during my education as an art teacher was non-relevant when working with Thomas. While some scholars advocate a new type of cognitive science that approaches learning from many perspectives and different senses on the basis of knowing (Räsänen 2009, 31), it is essential to remember that cognitive thinking can only be expanded to a certain extent. Varto (2005) explains that a cognitive process is always somebody else's process; it limits singular possibilities to explore individual experiences and it limits the possibilities to fulfil individuality and a singular way of being part of society. Varto also points out how strongly the cognitive approach strengthens and modifies the notion of norm. (Varto 2005, 207.) One example of the normative nature of the cognitive process are moments when I instructed Thomas to use a variety of colours instead of letting him stick with the one colour that he liked. Those moments revealed to me the structure of cognitive education and how tightly the cognitive teaching tradition is bound to well-learned cultural frameworks. It became clear that I had to find my pedagogical philosophy from somewhere else since I now found the cognitive processes normative and limiting.

Jan Jagodzinski (2002b) argues for replacing the cognitive paradigm with psychoanalysis in education: 'To take psychoanalysis seriously would be to turn pedagogy "on its head" in the way that we now practice it in [...] schools, with our emphasis on cognitive knowing. It would require shifting emphasis onto bodily affect and imaginary desire [...]' (Jagodzinski 2002b, liii). The role of education, especially in the schools, is to teach the school subjects and socially appropriate behaviour. Intellectual and social development is the point of focus. Learning different cognitive skills and learning to be as social as possible, rather than learning a personal embodied and emotional type of development, are the most valued goals in all education. This paradigm has been guiding the theoretical notions of learning, the teacher-student interactive relationship and pedagogical practices, and therefore the actions of



individual teachers. This paradigm does not include developing one's mind, 'self' and emotional life. (Juutilainen 2009, 245–246.)

When it comes to the future of art education, the cognitive approach should be re-evaluated. Gert J.J. Biesta (2006, 14–15) argues that belief in the Enlightenment idea of emancipation through rational understanding has strongly affected the humanist framework of learning, in which rationality is seen as both the essence and destiny of each human being. This has strongly affected how we relate to other people and how we are able to live together. The long tradition of cognitive education has emphasised individual processes of emancipation, conceived as trajectory from childhood to adulthood. However, critical educators have shown that there is no individual emancipation without societal emancipation. According to Biesta, 'We now also live in an era in which we are beginning to see that cognition, knowledge, is only one way to relate to the natural and social world, and not necessarily the most fruitful, important, or liberating one' (Biesta 2006, 15).

## THE ROLE OF AN ART EDUCATOR

*When speaking of our paintings, I am speaking about the layeredness of our work and interaction: It is not relevant to wonder, which sections of them did I paint and which did he paint, or which ones did we work together on? It is impossible to tell which strokes are his and which are mine. I am left to contemplate my right to speak on behalf of us. Thomas does not speak a word, not now, not later. People are interested in his thoughts. Is it my task to be his voice, to attempt to provide a channel into his mind? Will his thoughts open up to me through our work together? The multiple stages, layers and depths of our interaction are hardly evident in the paintings. To interpret the painting by the formal elements that are visible at the end, to consider only its colours or composition, would touch upon banality. No traces of narratives can be found either. The chain of actions and dialogue, both of our thoughts, are embedded in the action of painting, not on the surface of the paintings. The memory of these acts can perhaps be found not only in the video documentation, but also in our memories. I see myself as an instrument of memory. The knowledge gained from our social interaction has not been saved on the paintings to be analysed later; rather, it has been saved in me as the researcher. Can I therefore consider myself an instrument for expressing Thomas's thoughts and a way to reach into his memories? What does a memory mean when one doesn't form a permanent record of memories?*

*Working together puts me in two different positions at the same time. While being in my own space with my own art process, I am also together with another person. Only through the video material do I realise how absent I sometimes become during the process. Working with your own artworks demands concentration, which*

*is somewhat contrary to collaboration and togetherness. When working on a shared surface, with a common artwork, I can see how we both have to give up our own choices. At the same time, it means learning to accept the other person's choices. I could not anticipate beforehand how strongly I experienced his actions on my part of the painting. I have to learn to give up, as he has too.*

From quite early on in the research project, people showed an interest in our work, people such as visitors to the exhibitions, the audience of the TV documentary programme, the audiences at the various conferences, colleagues and other doctoral students. It seemed to me that the most interesting matter for these people would have been to get to know about Thomas's thoughts and how they appeared to me during the project. I was almost able to feel the objectifying and curious gaze, the privileged process of *just looking*, in which the act of looking is presumed to be neutral and normative, but which in fact objectifies the person similarly as the disabled body has historically been a site as of public spectacle (Eisenhauer 2007, 10–11). More importantly, people wanted to hear about our artistic progress as well as about how the level of communication developed between us.

I had to disappoint those people. I could not give them the narrations they wished to hear. I could not assure anyone with noble words and success stories, nor could I offer an easy answer to the question of communication when encountering a person with autism. Consequently, I started to contemplate my role in this project. I wondered, what is the role of an art educator in a project where learning or educational development is not the objective? In this light, the meaning of collaborative art working and education as such had to be re-evaluated. I realised that my task was not to give a voice to Thomas, nor to be Thomas's voice. That would have eventually been helpful for others in society, but not for Thomas or our collaboration. I could have never become a channel into his mind: one can never do that to another person.

In many parts of my first journal entries, I have written down questions for myself: *Thomas does not pay any attention to me, so, why am I here? Who am I in this situation? How can I be helpful for Thomas?* The project's objective was for practicing artists and people with autism to collaborate. From the project's perspective, I was a professional artist with knowledge and skills, while Thomas was a person with autism. Within the context of collaboration between a person with autism and a practicing artist, the pre-setting appears hierarchical; the practicing artist had the seemingly contradictory responsibilities of imparting education, a sense of democracy and a sense of equality to a rather passive subject. I felt that the idea that democratic goals would remain on a surface level of achievements was embedded within this setting and only served to highlight one's own actions in contributing to the artistic and sociological betterment of another person. While I was aware that our task during the process was to produce artworks for an exhibition, I was more focused on critically considering the standards, norms and notions of learning and behaviour in this collaborative and community-

[arts-]based project. My criticism extended from institutional analysis to a more personal level: to study what happened to me during the process.

A traditional perspective on the role of an art educator would have been to see myself as a teacher. I found early on that there is nothing that I could teach Thomas. Not because his cognitive skills were limited, but because he did not need my teachings. Finding the role I needed for my work took some time. I wanted to try different ways of moving from more that of an active participant artist to that of a listener-observer. I wanted to find out what it meant to be present in this situation as an educator and as an artist, and to find out the different ways of doing this.

While working with Thomas, many times I found myself questioning my role and the way I was choosing to exist and interact with Thomas. Sometimes I found it difficult to concentrate on doing anything else other than observing him, and when I was more active in my own artistic production, I had difficulties paying attention to his actions. I wrote some notes based on my review of the videotapes, where I have considered my involvement in the collaborative work with Thomas when concentrating my own painting. I questioned, how could I delve into his actions when making my own choices? I was surprised to see how little I took into account those absent moments of mine during the actual moments of working, and how obvious they are when looking at the videotapes. The artistic work is so binding that it momentarily blinded me to my contact to him.

One essential question when working together was, can I be in relation with him *and* practice my own artistic work? In other words, can those moments of ours be both private and diversified, or, as Jean-Luc Nancy terms it, both singular and plural? (Nancy 2000). I wanted to find tools to help me conceive of our shared moments in more complex ways than just through time spent together and a shared space while working on our art either individually or together. I wanted to understand what it means to reach for togetherness and stick with singularity.

## TOOLS FOR THE PEDAGOGUE'S CRITICAL SELF-RECOGNITION AND LEARNING

A critical pedagogue's self-recognition and introspection are important in the process of becoming more conscious of educational pre-notions and their regulations in an art educational situation and in acknowledging the role of affects in this process. I found some concepts of psychoanalytic theory useful in pedagogical interactive situations, since they do a good job of demonstrating the central elements in a pedagogue's process of self-reflection (Juntumaa 2008, 137): desire, pleasure, pain, enjoyment, fantasy and defence. As part of one of the research questions, I examined the pedagogical practices in play when working with my research partner in order to perceive the affects that were caused by the unprotected, undefined, and unpredictable in our collaboration, and what kind of role they were given in our encounters. I believed that the developed relation to my pedagogical practice, which was based on affects, fantasies

and defences, necessarily had a positive impact on the people I was working with. I contemplated the possibilities for a critical pedagogue's self-reflective type of learning within a well-developed consciousness of the sources of a pedagogue's own affects (Syvänen 2005, 28). In this section, I will discuss the theories of critical self-recognition. They are discussed at a personal level in chapter eight, together with the video.

Recognising emotions, such as guilt or shame, in a pedagogical context are important elements in critical reflection and transformative pedagogy (Juntumaa 2008, 34–35; Taylor 2000, 303–305; Mezirow 1991, 168). I find my own emotions present, but difficult to trace. I believe that they guided my behaviour at some level, and they most likely were evident in the way I reacted when working with my research partner. It is important to distinguish affect from emotions. Affect and emotions exist at two completely different levels. As pre-verbal states of mind, affects are difficult to grasp and conceptualise. While there is no conscious revision or formation with affects, emotions are already formed categories that can lead to conscious actions. (Juntumaa 2008, 35.) Affects are difficult to control and recognise, and therefore they have received relatively little academic discussion. In academic phenomenological language, for example, the concept of affect has usually been replaced by the concept of experience. Certain pedagogical discussions, however, acknowledge the idea of reactions based on emotions. James E. Anthony (1989, 124) refers to Piaget's theories and sets emotions at the centre of learning. According to Anthony, meaning making is built on emotional conditions, not only on reflection. Emotions are always part of learning, teaching and all kinds of pedagogical and educational work having to do with attentiveness, observation, in memory activities and conceptualisation.

The important aspect in understanding the significance and influence of my own affects is to acknowledge that they are always subjective, intensive and personal (Syvänen 2005, 49–50). The affective reactions that I found in my own research material were, for example, emotions based on tension; struggling to give up my own space in the artistic process; a need to be noticed, to be seen, to be reacted to and acknowledged; disappointment, lack of development; and also enjoyment, happiness and feelings of togetherness. In artistic collaboration, the affects can be developed from quite different artistic and non-artistic contexts (see Syvänen 2005, 14). In addition to verbal and non-verbal communication, the art process itself mobilises conscious and unconscious counter-transference<sup>29</sup> materials (see Syvänen 2005, 23). While it might be interesting to trace the reasons for the counter-transference experiences, I find it more important

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29 *In psychoanalytic theory, counter-transference has many different, even contradictory, definitions. So-called 'total' counter-transference includes all the affections: conscious, unconscious, experimented and biased affections. The contemporary notion of counter-transference can be divided into three definitions: 1) The transference emotions that come from our own personal experiences; 2) complementary emotional reactions; 3) and identical empathy reactions. (Tähkä 1982; Syvänen 2005, 20–23.) Counter-transference reactions usually develop from reacting to another person's affections and reactions. Counter-transference exists in changing forms of interaction between people more than through language or imaginary. (Syvänen 2005, 19.)*

to recognise and critically perceive the affects as subjective moments of pedagogy. According to psychoanalytic theory, people tend to react to another person's affects with complementary and identical, or supplementary, emotions (Tähkä 1982, 172). Complementary reactions are developed through empathy and short-term identification, which are needed in order to be able to understand the other person (Syvänen 2005, 26–27).

The process of learning to understand my own reactions, educational pre-notions, self-recognition and introspection took time. However difficult affects are to grasp, I find it important to acknowledge their existence in every encounter and in my own learning processes. As a typical part of this learning process, I had to be exposed to the inherently violent activity of learning that is the process of 'becoming', the development of the ego (Todd 2003a, 19). In his theory of reflective learning, Jack Mezirow (1991, 105 & 117) emphasises the significance of pre-notions and approaches in a reflective process. Reflection requires searching for justification for one's own beliefs and analysing what still is unfamiliar (Mezirow 1998, 8–9). The ability to recognise and evaluate subjective reactions is an important part of reflection; it is helpful in the process of analysing one's own strategies and re-evaluating old knowledge. Critical consciousness means '*to become conscious of one's own consciousness*'. (Juntumaa 2008, 21–22; Mezirow 1991, 225.) Observing and acknowledging my own orientation was an essential part of my reflective learning process. Analysing and questioning what had seemed self-evident before happened as a result of connecting experiences and their considerations. A transformative thinking and learning process meant re-evaluating what was already known, and it required transforming the result and the perspectives. Through such a process, it is possible to develop and concretely direct and transform one's own behaviour and actions (Juntumaa 2008, 25–26; Mezirow 1998, 6 & 8; 2000, 19–20 & 26–27). Through my visual work with the video material, I was able to both struggle and learn from the variety of complex affects, pedagogical fantasies, practices and emotions, and I believe that to have been a transformative learning process for myself.

Implicit learning happens unintentionally and automatically. The two main factors in implicit learning are a sensitivity to the situation and a lack of any intentions or strategies. (Perruchet & Vinter 1998, 513.) It is important to realise that learning does not only happen at the end of the process via conscious understanding and realisation. Most of the learning and even cognitive processing happens unconsciously. (Juntumaa 2008, 33; Ojanen 2001, 152; Reed & Johnson 1998, 261–262.) For pedagogical work, implicit learning is as important as analytical and reflective thinking and they develop in relation to one another. A teacher's reactions and immediate pedagogical actions are often produced implicitly. By recognising the implicit thinking, or just acknowledging that it existed and strongly influenced my behaviour with my research partner, I got to acknowledge my own attitude and approaches and develop and transform my pedagogical work. My unconscious pre-notions and implicit learning processes became

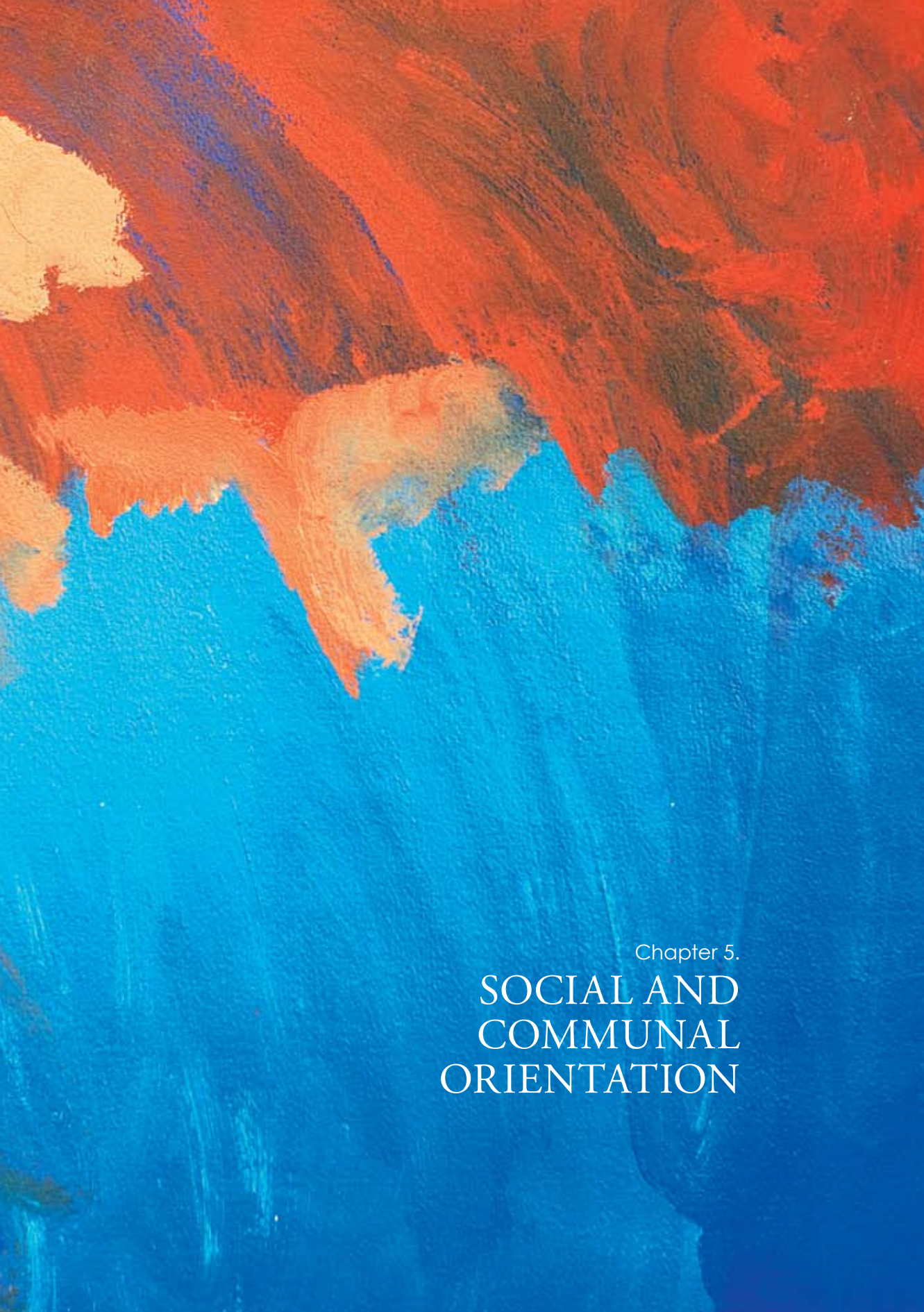
more pronounced when the work was mostly non-verbal and cognitive learning was not central to the project. I can only wonder about implicit learning process that my research partner experienced during our two years of working together, since I will never be analysing his learning process as such.

In this chapter, I have laid out the pedagogical foundations and ideals that played a significant role at the beginning of the research process. I will further develop the themes discussed in this chapter throughout the entire thesis. Thus, the themes touched on in this chapter—encountering the ‘Other’, a pedagogy of the flesh, not-knowing, self-recognition and self-reflection—will be expanded and discussed in light of existing theories in the following chapters. The above themes are further developed as other themes, such as ethics and responsibility, and body and touch, and finally discussed visually in the video. In the next chapter, I concentrate on the social side of our collaboration and discuss critically the communal ideas behind the *Art Without Borders* project. The official project offered an important context for our work, and therefore, I analyse it in detail before focusing on the deeper levels of our collaboration.







The background of the page is an abstract, textured composition of brushstrokes. The upper portion is dominated by warm tones of orange and red, with some darker, almost black, areas. The lower portion is a vibrant, deep blue. The brushstrokes are thick and expressive, creating a sense of movement and depth. The overall effect is reminiscent of a modern abstract painting.

Chapter 5.  
SOCIAL AND  
COMMUNAL  
ORIENTATION

*Thomas is not disturbed by the fact that I am painting next to him. On the other hand, he does not pay any attention to my work. Once I raise my painting up in front of him to command his attention, but he looks at my painting for a moment and returns to his work without being distracted. The touch of my paintbrush is lighter and my strokes are shorter. Thomas does not care about that. Instead, he systematically works towards consistent surfacing and keeps smoothing my loose strokes with a new layer of colour. Is this a social way of working without meaning? Teamwork is not usually recommended for a person with autism. As far as we can understand it, Thomas is socially inactive.*

One could question the meaningfulness of any kind of collaboration with a person with autism. Teamwork is not typically a congenial way of working with a person with autism, because of the difficulties with sharing and cooperating (Frith 2003, 99). In addition, visual co-operation as a starting point creates an extra challenge for a person who is unaccustomed to visual expressions. Thus, it was clear at the beginning of the project that Thomas was interested in expressing himself through art. For me, the beginning was about facing a 'different kind' of a person, a person with behaviour and communication methods previously unfamiliar to me. I anticipated how different, new and previously unfamiliar situations could cause feelings of insecurity in Thomas. There is a predominant assumption that people with autism are not interested in social activities (Grandin & Scariano 1992, 3).

In the past, experts felt that there was little if any relevance or need to offer social activities to people with autism. The word autism comes from the Greek word *auto*, which means 'self'. The earliest autistic research from the 1940s emphasised that people with autism preferred to be alone. This is still a pervasive belief among educators and other professionals in the field of autism. (Causton-Theoharis et al. 2009, 84.) The contemporary view, however, is very different. This view states that the idea that a person with autism would not enjoy social relationships is a false conclusion (Grandin & Scariano 1992, 3). The social orientation of a person with autism is different from that of an ordinary person, and therefore it might be difficult to recognise and acknowledge. There are individuals, for example, who suffer for loneliness and crave companionship (Frith 2003, 98). Causton-Theoharis et al. have explored the social needs of individuals with autism. They state that, although interaction can be difficult, individuals with autism often long for social contact and are actually aware of their own social isolation. (Causton-Theoharis et al. 2009, 84.) Their research findings show that people with autism are interested in friendship and relationships. The testimonies tell that feelings of loneliness, the desires for friendship and need for interaction and a sense of belonging do not differ from anyone else's. (Causton-Theoharis et al. 2009, 87–88.) Through analysing autobiographical writings, Causton-Theoharis et al. give voice to people with autism. Birger Sellin, for example, writes about the loneliness that he felt so oppressively and overbearingly:

*how come I always have so many lonely hours I am lonely  
everywhere how come  
it is always so difficult to say anything on a subject  
like about my loneliness the whole story often does no  
good even does harm because i  
get really really lonely. (Sellin 1995, 90)*

*thats why i often wish i was dead  
because im alone in my loneliness. (Sellin 1995, 50)*

*its like being buried  
alive the loneliness of an autistic is like a great clod of  
earth weighing down the soul. (Sellin 1995, 84)*

Many of the feelings expressed by people with autism, for example feelings of loneliness, are a part of their everyday lives and relations with the world; at a quick glance, they seem quite similar to the problems and issues that many non-autistic person have, at least on a certain level. Communication between other people, and especially the reluctance to communicate, takes place on a daily basis for most people. While the inability or lack of desire of non-autistic people to communicate is usually hidden behind particular modes of behaviour, people with autism do not have a need for that kind of behaviour. For many people with autism, communication means mainly exchanging information; effects, such as hurting somebody's feelings or making them feel good about themselves, are not as important (Frith 2003, 115). As Uta Frith explains, it would not be useful, actually rather misleading, to compare the surface behaviour of non-autistic and autistic people. If that were the case, we would have to attribute all types of intentional and non-intentional acting, such as different kinds of peculiar behaviour, to different affectional reasons, such as for the purpose of hurting someone's feelings or behaving violently towards someone. Autistic communication and social behaviour are something different altogether. (Frith 2003, 98–99.)

Frith discusses three theories that can account for some aspects of autism. The first theory, a theory of the mind, is most interesting for the purposes of this research project because it addresses many issues in social interaction and communication that can be understood as a consequence of the inability to realise fully what it means to have a mind and to think, know, believe, and feel differently from others. The second theory addresses the strengths and special talents of the autistic mind, while the third theory addresses the absence of higher-level control of actions and attention, strong sensations and the enjoyment of repetition. (Frith 2003, 206–207.) The theory of the mind, or 'mind-blindness', or 'mentalizing', as Frith puts it, all refer to the same theory, one that has become widely accepted and justified because of the large body of empirical work supporting it. The theory of the mind is appealing to many

researchers because it explains many of the social and communication impairments of people with autism. The most relevant impairment has to do with the inability to understand other people's thoughts and feelings or to understand that another person's wishes are different and that other people know and believe different things. (Frith 2003, 79–80 & 99–100.)

Frith tells about a young woman who wrote her about the painting *The Cheat with Ace of Diamonds* by Georges de la Tour, from 1635, which is on the cover of Frith's book, *Autism: Explaining the Enigma*. The young woman seemed to be fascinated by the image and wrote that she had looked at the picture for an hour. She admired the artist's skills and the high degree of realism that the painting represents, especially the textures of the fabrics in the characters' clothes. She also recognised the theme of the painting, which is people playing cards. What interested her most in the painting was the quality of the brushes strokes and the smooth pigments of the paints. But she was shocked to learn that other things could be found in the painting as well. She said that she had had no idea about the drama that one is able to pick out from the image. The characters speak eloquently with their hands and eyes. The lady in the centre and the servant woman both glance at the cheating player on the left who is holding the playing cards behind his back. The lady is also pointing at him with her finger. The cheater does not see this, but looks out from the painting, towards the spectators, with a lack of concern. The fourth character on the right is looking at his cards without any idea about what is going on. The painter obviously wants the spectators to conclude that he is the one who will be cheated. Although the spectators cannot see the characters' states of mind, they can figure them out, guided by the painter's intentions, with logic and precision. And yet, everything that was happening on the canvas was a mystery to the young woman. (Frith 2003, 77–79.) Interpreting images is not axiomatic for non-autistic people, either. The intentions of many works of art remain indefinite, especially without having a proper education for interpreting art. However, the young woman could not see what was happening between the people in the painting; instead, she was able to focus merely on materiality and sense of fabric, which tells us something about her mindset and level of social orientation. Although I do not believe that people with autism share a similar state of mind, I do feel somewhat informed about the direction, and perhaps the way, in which Thomas might direct his interests and thoughts.

It is no wonder that Thomas did not look at the painting that I showed to him. I misunderstood his reaction regardless of how aware I was of his abilities. He made use of eye contact differently and had different ways of interpreting my gaze. Knowing about the theory of the mind helped me to understand the different level of social orientation between Thomas and myself at the beginning of our collaboration. However interesting I found these explanations, they gave me little knowledge about how to work together. Autism literature helped me to understand the enigma, but not to understand the pedagogical, human and ethical issues that art educational circum-

stances require. Instead of concentrating on the clinical and medical side of autism, I looked for other frameworks for my research. As described earlier, disability studies offered suitable terrain for me to discuss things *with* my research partner rather than objectifying his disability to meet my research needs.

In this chapter, I will discuss the social orientations of our collaborative work and especially the project *Art Without Borders*, which my collaboration with Thomas was a part of. I will also discuss critically how community-[arts-]based projects often are justified, how Nancy sees the idea of community as a paradox, and how the ideology of the social 'other' and difference are discussed in disability studies. I first begin by discussing the details of *Art Without Borders* and how social interaction with people other than just the two of us played a role.

During the half year time of the project *Art Without Borders*, Thomas and I always had an assistant with us and often a TV documentary filmmaker. That period of time also differed from later periods of time in terms of working pressure and focus. During the first half year, we were working for the project in order to produce art for an exhibit. Later on, we did not have that kind of a demand placed on us. I will discuss the social, political and institutional ideologies that formed the official goals and motives of the project, including the social 'other'. As a community-[arts-]based project, the *Art Without Borders* project is also critically examined through the notion of community, which it is supposed to represent. Although we now know that individuals with autism are not as asocial as was previously thought, it seems a challenging idea for a project to build groups and shared identities that resemble the ideology of community-[arts-]based practice. Eventually, and without any consequences in terms of the quality or nature of any community projects, the argument in this chapter is that all community projects are subject to disillusionment in terms of building a sense of community. Even the most spontaneously formed projects end up expressing somebody else's politics. This is not to say that such projects could not achieve something valuable and beneficial for an individual. However, most of the advantages of such projects is that they end up promoting a particular movement or ideology, a particular party or the capitalistic nation-state. It is important to acknowledge that community projects are never able to advance their stated objectives.

## DISRUPTION BY PUBLIC EYE

*Thomas is in a good mood. He is making a joke by putting a paint jar on top of his head. There are two other people around the table with us: the TV documentary filmmaker with his camera and Thomas's assistant from the Autism Foundation. I prepare our forthcoming painting session by pulling out papers, paints and brushes. The cameraman looks for a good shooting angle. I also position my camera and tripod in the corner of the room. The assistant remembers a special painting shirt that Thomas is supposed to wear when painting to protect*

*his shirt from paint stains, and so he rushes out to get the special painting shirt from another room. She gives it to Thomas, but he does not want to wear it. The shirt's sleeve is ripped and that seemingly annoys him. The assistant keeps offering him the shirt, trying to convince him to wear it. Thomas stuffs the shirt back into the plastic bag where it came from and says 'no, don't'. His good mood is clearly gone. The assistant is persistent with the issue and next offers an apron to him. He does not want that either. Thomas starts to get frustrated and wants to get started with the painting, without a painting shirt or an apron. He swings his hands trying to get rid of the idea of wearing anything other than what he is already wearing. He reaches for a paint brush, showing us that he wants to start painting.*

*The assistant tries to put an apron on him. He pushes her away. Thomas grabs a brush, sits down and waits for us to start. The assistant offers two different aprons and the shirt for Thomas to choose from. Thomas turns his back on all of them and motions with his hands for to put that stuff away, saying 'no'. The assistant explains to him why he needs to change, and that it is only this one time that he needs to wear the ripped shirt, for next time there will be another shirt from home. Thomas grips the shirt, turns it around and finds the ripped sleeve, and then starts tearing the rip even more. The assistant takes the shirt away from him and tells him again that he is not allowed to paint without changing his shirt first, and that the shirt he is wearing should not be stained. Thomas swings his hands fast and again says 'no, don't', and then grabs the brush in front of him and throws it fast and hard. The brush strikes my forehead hard.*

*The assistant tells him that now you have hurt Mira. Thomas repeats, 'it hurts'. He takes the brush back, seemingly confused, repeating what the assistant tells him: 'bad done', 'it hurts'. The assistant takes the brush away from him, asking what could be done now, since he still does not have permission to paint without changing first. Thomas tries to reach for the brush, but the assistant has a tight hold on it. Thomas gets frustrated and starts throwing more things. The assistant finally takes him for a walk, giving him a break.*

*I am confused. It is difficult not to say something, not to defend Thomas. I talk with the assistant and she tells me why this is an issue of principle. Obviously, they do not want to argue about clothing with Thomas every day. I have contrary thoughts about education going through my head. While I understand the educational principles, they also seem unnecessary. This type of education seems only to be manipulative. I feel for Thomas, who only wanted to paint. I try to hide my frustration, with my forehead aching, and think to myself, who am I to say anything about these things? I am just visiting Thomas's life.*

*Well, it did not turn out to be a day for painting, but that does not matter; there will be many others. This coincidence is meaningless compared to everything else we have experienced.*

The appearance of the institutional engagement broke into our being-together violently. We were forced to take into account the unpleasantness that the institutional and structured rules demanded. My surprise was significant when I first saw the TV documentary made from the half year of painting together (the official project), and the many hours of work in front of the camera. The only thing that the filmmaker chose to tell about our work together was the moment of Thomas throwing the brush. In that documentary, we can see a furious and uncontrolled savage throwing a brush at my forehead. When the documentary filmmaker gave me the tape, he did so awkwardly, and told me that the documentary might be different from what I would have wanted—and then added that I should not worry about it too much and that all the guys in the studio thought that I am a very beautiful woman. I was amazed and could not understand what was going on. I realised later that it must have been his way of apologising—and an effort to distract me. Of course, it did not work like that. I guess Thomas was not given an apology—and why would he have been; he would not ‘understand’ the documentary anyway.

Derrida asks: ‘Is not hospitality an interruption of the self?’ (Derrida 1999, 51). Welcoming other persons with all their weirdness/strangeness/otherness is a distraction done for one’s own enjoyment, a distraction of one’s own understanding of the order of things. It was a shock to see that the moments of encountering one another that were significant for me were seen and interpreted by someone else so differently, even violently. Perhaps my understanding of the complexity of our working-together was utopian and that it did not appear this way to the others. The orientation to the ‘other’—that is, to Thomas—was interrupted and disrupted while we were practicing the performative activity towards each other. In front of the TV camera, and within the institutional requirements, we were obliged to welcome more than each other—more than just the stranger in front of us. We needed to welcome in the entire public realm. No negotiation was possible. The shirt must be worn or no painting will take place.

Systematic exposure and the attention given to the public gaze, such as the TV documentary, grand openings, international travelling exhibitions and several publications, all tell about a public interest in the *Art Without Borders* project, and helps others decide what is politically essential and worthy of financing. That also raises several questions: What and where was the intended audience? For whom was the project developed? What were the roles given to the participants? Who was the big ‘Other’<sup>30</sup> in this project that we all were working on so eagerly? As a collaborative artist

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<sup>30</sup> *With the big ‘Other’, I refer to the radical alterity in psychoanalytical theory that is the symbolic equal to language and laws and that ego is guided by.*

in the project, I wanted to claim that the person I worked with was at the centre of the project and I wanted his 'voice' to be heard. After the TV documentary came out, and after the grandiose exhibition openings had been held, I could not help but wonder, what were the given roles for Thomas, and for all the participants, and who was the intended audience that would learn to understand the differences? I wanted to better understand the reasons for the project and the politics behind it, to understand the power relations within and around the project, and the level of exposure—as an example of a European Union-funded project—that calls for a wider audience and wants to make the project accessible to 'everybody'. Similarly as Lea Kantonen argues (2005, 51), I find it important to ask critical questions, with a community-[arts-]based project, regarding what are the purposes, and what conditions are set, for how the art is to be produced. I find this to be especially important when socially marginalised groups are brought to the centre of public attention. Looking at these kinds of projects critically should always be an essential and ongoing process.

When looking at the project critically, one could ask, what does the urge to produce national and international exhibitions with grand openings and 'important' guests tell us about contemporary society?<sup>31</sup> There has been a tremendous societal shift in disability politics in Western countries within the past few decades. Just a few decades ago, individuals with 'disorders' were isolated in institutions. Now, we promote positive a perception and understanding. Surely, we might just welcome this positive attitude towards individuals with disabilities as it is offered to us. We are, however, obliged to respond to the singular being that we are face-to-face with, and therefore we are obliged to ask who this promotion and perception was serving and benefitting? Is it the sameness<sup>32</sup> that we are practicing towards the 'Other'? The goals of the project are noble: professional artists will find new ways to communicate with persons with autism, and this is then made available to the wider public. I question what the larger goals of this project tell us about the role of an individual as a member of society. Does the inclusion only serve those who are supposedly already included?

## DISCOURSE OF THE COMMUNITY

The *Art Without Borders* project published a catalogue book (Klinga 2005) to generate understanding of the project. Each working pair is represented through a hands-on, working-together picture, and through three images of the artworks they produced together for the public exhibition: one jointly produced and one from each singular

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31 *The first, national exhibition was opened by ex-presidents wife, Eeva Ahtisaari, and the second exhibition, which was part of the international travelling exhibition, was opened by Pentti Arajärvi, the spouse of the president at that time.*

32 *'Sameness' in Levinas's notion means the opposite of plurality and infinity. It means that the 'Other' can be thought about through my way of thinking, and therefore the 'Other' can be mastered by me. The concept of 'sameness' will be discussed in detail in the next chapter.*



person. In addition, there is a two-page narration on each couple. In this section, I critically analyse the language used in the catalogue with the help of disability studies to show how the politics of ableism is strongly emphasised, although covered up with euphemistic language (Derby 2011, 103). To discuss and analyse the catalogue texts, it is necessary to quote from them at length.

In the forewords of the catalogue, there is a description of the Autism Foundation's motivation and engagement with the project:

The Autism Foundation became interested in the project because, despite disability knowledge, there are people in our society, such as people that belong to the autistic spectrum that, according to their own words, become submerged or drowned out within society. They have something to say, but they do not necessary have the means to express themselves in a way that is customary in our society. That is why the lives of many disabled people might be formed narrowly and why they become marginalised. Individuals on the autistic spectrum have skills and will carry out and explore life more widely if the conditions and the grounds for it are created. Within the project, there is a hope that people on the autistic spectrum will be able to explore the possibilities of art as a part of their own lives. Possibly, they will find a new way of expressing themselves and a new world of experiences for themselves. (Klinga 2005, 6)

It is clear that individuals with autism are the ones that have the problem in this catalogue text: they do not 'have the means to express themselves' in the same way as those living in a so-called ableist society and yet they should strive to adopt culturally valued roles to blend into society as best they can (Campbell 2008, 152). The aim of the project was to try to help them learn to express themselves in such a way that society would hear them. It is evident that society as such is not being criticised here, nor are boundaries pushed towards making any sorts of societal changes; rather, the person with autism must be the object of change. She or he must be given the artistic means to express themselves in society. The ableist notion of non-disabled people is quite apparent in this text. Would it not be better to help her/him to look for her/his own means to feel comfortable within society, such as Temple Grandin's squeeze machine?<sup>33</sup> Her soothing machine is exceptional and it was especially exceptional that her environment was so supportive and flexible with her insistent aspirations to build the machine and its various prototypes. In *Art Without Borders*, the art was something that already existed, something that was fixed, and something that people with autism were asked to adapt themselves to. The artists represented the ready and fixed world and people with autism were asked to learn about it in order to enjoy, learn and find 'a new world of experiences'.

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33 Temple Grandin (1996) is an individual with autism who created a machine that squeezed and comforted her entire body and that she was able to control herself. Her work will be discussed in detail in the chapter seven.

Surely, most individuals are not as insistent as Grandin and would not be able to create something like her squeeze machine. Most importantly, I want to emphasise that I do not represent the position of the 'expressionist school', which argues that people with disabilities need to be given expressive and creative freedom. Thus, there is nothing wrong with giving someone the freedom to create. However, I find the language problematic because it brings along with it assumptions that there would be 'a wild creative core' inside every person that is only waiting to be liberated, and that everybody could and would like to 'create' something. On the contrary, I argue for establishing an affirmative model that would focus on the cultural contributions of disabled people rather than on their individual functional limitations.

The catalogue text is, however, able to transmit the warmth of the encounters in quite many cases, telling for example of the togetherness between two men:

Within the meetings, there were discussions about many things other than just painting, for example the past and music. In addition, blues music was played together with two electric guitars, and the music was listened to. [...] the collaboration was smooth and rewarding. (Klinga 2005, 19)

This relaxed, equal kind of togetherness is especially typical when the artist's partner was a high-functioning individual with an autistic spectrum disorder, such as a person with Asperger's syndrome. Also, egalitarian partners often seemed to share the same areas of interest, for example the same musical tastes. In other cases, when the person with autism was not as highly functioning, words are often used to emphasise the supposed problems working with such a partner, like 'challenging', 'trouble', and 'difficult'. Also, the artists involved in the project frequently mention the 'enjoyment' of their partners (Klinga 2005, 24–25), even though it is difficult, if not impossible, to know the extent to which another person enjoyed a particular activity. The catalogue does not mention how this sense of enjoyment was evident, since none of the participants were quoted on this matter. The willingness to participate in the artistic work, however, is told through the own voices of the partners with autism; for example, one autistic participant referred to herself in the second person: 'You are happy' and 'You are missing her a lot' (Klinga 2005, 25).

Generally, the voices of the artists are heard in the catalogue book more than the voices of the partners with autism. Both were asked why they wanted to participate in the project. Only three partners with autism 'speak' for themselves in the text. In two instances, this meant short citations from individuals that did not speak much, whereas only one partner wrote a short narration of the collaboration:

I come very well along with [my artist partner] and we have come into a joint idea of my first painting, which will be a poster inspired by nature. We expect to see the painting very soon and I am enthusiastic to start working with it. [My partner] is a quite nice person and working and talking with [my partner] is pleasant. (Klinga 2005, 52)

There were many other high functioning individuals in the project who could have been interviewed or asked to write about their own experiences. It is possible that they were asked to do so, but that they did not want to share their thoughts. Seven of the artists told narratives, or they were cited in various narratives. Most of the artists' narrations start by them telling about their criterion when choosing an autistic partner. In a few cases, the choices were made on an artistic or aesthetic basis: 'X chose X to be her/his partner based on the doctor images s/he had drawn before' (Klinga 2005, 24), and 'X hoped to get X for her/his partner based on her/his aquarelle paintings, as s/he especially liked her/his use of colours' (Klinga 2005, 30), and 'I chose X to be my partner because s/he told in the orientation meeting that s/he was interested in doing animations' (Klinga 2005, 59), and 'X got interested in X's images drawn on the computer. S/he thought they were funny and s/he wished to have X as a partner' (Klinga 2005, 58).

While the artists are described as choice-making subjects, the reactions of the partners with autism are depicted very differently: 'When X heard this [that s/he was chosen by the artist partner], her/his appearance got brighter and s/he was all smiles' (Klinga 2005, 58). The partners with autism did not get to choose their artist partner on the same or on any other basis.<sup>34</sup> That becomes evident in the part of the text that tells about one of the participants being worried at the beginning because her/his artist partner's style was so different: 'X was pensive at the beginning because of their very different painting styles. However, s/he eagerly anticipated getting more knowledge about oil painting from [his artist partner]' (Klinga 2005, 40). It is clear that the artist is the knowing subject who gets to choose who is in charge and who *knows*. The person with autism is then an object who is or is not picked up, who does not know and who most certainly does not get to make choices for her/himself.

A few of the artists' narratives include qualitative descriptions of their partners: 'I especially liked her/his frankness ... s/he succeeded well with that [last triptych painting]' (Klinga 2005, 13). Another artist was surprised to see how skilful his partner was at painting. The text says, 'X was positively surprised about X's skills', and then adds, 'X's behaviour is often based on patterns' (Klinga 2005, 31). In a few parts of the catalogue, the partners with autism are described as 'shy' (Klinga 2005, 12) and 'anxious' (Klinga 2005, 12, 31 & 64), and two of them were described as 'having doubts about her/his skills' (Klinga 2005, 12 & 30). In several cases, there seemed to be educational aims, which usually had to do with the artist as a teacher.<sup>35</sup> Two of the artists gave specific visual assignments to their partners. In one case, the assignments were meant as homework to be included in a portfolio/journal book. Only one couple

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34 *I believe the only exception to this was when I was asked to participate in the project: a young woman had seen my paintings online and wanted to have me as her artist partner. However, later she decided to withdraw from the project, since it appeared to be too social for her. I had already started on the project and Thomas was asked to be my partner.*

35 *Including me, there were three doctors or doctoral students in art education involved in the project.*

mentions the exhibition and the stress surrounding it, as described by the artist: ‘The upcoming exhibition was strongly on view from early on and that complicated the work a little and caused pressure to [the partner with autism]’ (Klinga 2005, 40). Perhaps that was the situation with most of the couples, even though it is not discussed in the catalogue book.

Five narrations mention that something was learned. This included learning to use colours in more expressional ways or learning something about techniques: to be exact, ‘expression of colour use and volume of colour’ (Klinga 2005, 37) and ‘learning to use oil paint and technique’ (Klinga 2005, 41). The couple also reported that they learned from each other—the person with autism learned perseverance and the artist learned spontaneity (Klinga 2005, 41). In addition to this instance, only two other artists mentioned that they had learned something, although it is possible to read between the lines with some other artists and conclude that they did in fact learn something from their partners. One artist reported that *s/he* was as influenced as *her/his* partner was throughout the project. One artist said that *s/he* learned a completely new technique. Another mentioned that the partner with autism learned to ask for help (Klinga 2005, 31). The same person also learned ‘that painting is more than just filling in the paper from edge to edge’ (Klinga 2005, 31). One person with autism learned to make choices on *her/his* own and to be more independent and take initiative (Klinga 2005, 64). One person ‘learned that *s/he* has an artistic eye and felt sorry that *s/he* has not realised this skill in *her/himself* when *s/he* was younger’, but eventually thought it might not be too late after all (Klinga 2005, 12). It seems that when the artist *her/himself* had the attitude of learning as well, both of the partners faced something new, and the shared sense of wonder brought the couple closer to one another. Then, the artist was not the only one that *knew* and the entire setting seemed more equal.

It is interesting to see that the two couples that did not mention anything about learning, assignments or goals are discussed differently in the catalogue compared to the others. The descriptions are shorter and the attitude in the text is relaxed: ‘It was important from early on that nothing good comes from force. It was necessary to let go and to let the work process get started’ (Klinga 2005, 47). The work process was something that seemed to happen on its own and it is not explained. While the artistic process seemed to be an easy thing to let happen for this couple, explaining the process with words might have been difficult. Another couple that did not emphasise the learning component of the project also mentions the relaxed atmosphere: ‘Plenty of things other than painting were discussed within the meetings’ (Klinga 2005, 19). Both of these narrations are told in the passive voice, differently from the other narrations. This style of writing creates a certain atmosphere and increases the impression of a relaxed atmosphere.

It seems that the artists had many possibilities how to locate themselves within the collaborative process. The roles of the artists varied from democratic settings to different types of teacher-student relationships, including settings where the artists assumed themselves to be more of an all-knowing ‘artist master’. In this kind of project,

the participating artist has a grand ethical responsibility to confront the question of inclusion. The work itself can easily be led through the artist's personal conception of art and what s/he is willing to accept as art for public display. Another question is whether the artist is willing to accept a more complex outcome as a work of art or if s/he wants only to meet her/his own artistic standards. The responses to this question varied greatly in terms of how open the artists were to negotiating with their partners and to giving up their pre-expectations.

One of the participating artists was very well known to the partner, who was a great admirer of the artist's work. That artist needed to decide if s/he should continue to enjoy that pre-determined role of being admired as a master artist or if s/he should move towards a more equal type of interaction. These kinds of external signifiers might disturb the democratic aims of the project. Another artist had a background in modern art. S/he instructed her/his partner about the colour mixtures and compositions without discussing any of the contents of the artwork. The person that s/he was working with seemed to be very pleased about the teaching that was offered. The artist's conception of art was quite exact when judging her/his partner's artworks, her/him possible success with something and whether s/he had learned the idea properly: 'S/he succeeded well with that [art work]', and 'development has happened in X's paintings' (Klinga 2005, 13). S/he also emphasised that as an artist, s/he tried to be at the same time participating and in the background and that s/he only made suggestions for her/his partner, while letting the partner make the decisions for her/himself.

Perhaps the most ableist-oriented narration was written about a partnership in which the artist is described as a busy but tolerating and the autistic person as difficult and demanding. The artist 'was forced to cancel the meetings occasionally, but X took the disappointment well' (Klinga 2005, 25). The ableist approach is also emphasised, for example in the artist's desire that there would always be an assistant to help them. S/he was worried to be left alone with her/his partner because of the 'difficulty in understanding the [partner's] talk' (Klinga 2005, 25). According to the catalogue, the partner with autism 'often had difficulties with concentration' and that the 'circumstances got better' later on, when rules about working together were written down (Klinga 2005, 25). No matter how busy the artist was or how difficult the person with autism was, the artist is described as being loved and missed, whereas the person with autism was always just 'enjoying' the process (Klinga 2005, 25). The artist's visual language was strong and it was clear that s/he wanted the images that they made together to follow her/his own artistic language.<sup>36</sup> However, another artist involved in the project had a totally different approach to the partnership, one that seemed more charitable. She did not invest her/himself in the project and describes the project as being 'essentially [the partner's] project', meaning that s/he was not so interested in it (Klinga 2005, 52).

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<sup>36</sup> *This is clear in the TV documentary, but not so much in the catalogue book, although it is somewhat visible in the paintings.*

A completely different approach came from an artist who had a fixed idea about what s/he wanted to establish and then just made it happen with the help of her/his partner. The artist said (in a personal conversation that is also videotaped) that s/he decided beforehand what s/he was going to produce for the exhibition with her/his partner. S/he had a crisp conception and a well-planned scenario for how the future collaborative work was going to take place. S/he even knew beforehand exactly what the artworks would look like and what material they would be made of. The plan was to make crayon drawings on a piece of paper and then scan a few and print them on three big transparent canvases. S/he wanted to change the scale of their drawings to something more impressive. S/he knew exactly how s/he wanted to drape them in the exhibition place. S/he was a professional artist planning her/his art project in a gallery space and felt responsible for the work, and did not want to take any risks by sharing that responsibility with her/his partner. Again, pairs that did not have a strong agenda seemed to have a more genuine encounter. According to one of the artists, 'Encountering two persons' worlds opens up new views for making [art]' (Klinga 2005, 47). However, this *knowing* artist and her/his partner seemingly had a good time together and both were pleased with the process and its outcome. Nevertheless, giving contingency to the process and giving the partner with autism more power to participate in the decision-making process might have been a good experience for both of them.

I conclude this section with a citation from the catalogue book that describes Thomas's and my collaboration, narrated by the assistant that took part to our meetings at the beginning of the project. In addition to this text in the catalogue, there was also my narration, an extract from my journal texts:

Mira got Thomas as her partner, who came to the first meeting with his head down and with anxiety. Soon Thomas, however, relaxed and laughed almost through the entire meeting, painted a lot and tickled Mira. Mira says she sometimes had difficulty relating to the tickling. Thomas was often able to paint for over an hour, focusing well on the work, and he gradually was able to tolerate it quite well when the painted colour surface was left uneven. Mira once brought him images to use in his drawings. Thomas chose an airplane. Thomas drew a circle that looked like a racing lane and added inside of it all the parts of an aircraft in nonspecific order. Once Mira had painted faces on two of her old paintings and Thomas continued with these paintings. First, he painted around the faces, then slowly on top of the faces as well. When making the last stroke on the second painting, he looked at Mira jokingly and soon he started messing around with the painting. Thomas painted wax canvas, water cups and plates, and he splashed and poured water. He was, however, in a good mood all the time. During the painting, Thomas was able to make choices and asked for equipment from Mira. He took paint out of a jar by himself with a spoon and changed the colour when he wanted to. Development was clearly evident through his choices and independent initiative. Thomas joked

every once in a while, was about to eat a brush with paint, looked at Mira and the assistant and laughed. (Klinga 2005, 65)

Clearly, it was interesting for the assistant to pay attention and write about the meetings when we were working with clear topics, such as the images that I had brought with me. That kind of approach made the most sense to her. For me, these meetings were not the most interesting ones, since I felt that he was repeating some pattern of drawing that he had learned before when obeying the instructions for an assignment. This description of a racing lane was similar to many other drawings we made together, and similar to the one that is described in the seventh chapter. What is most interesting to me in this text is the realisation that I did not pay much attention to Thomas's jokes. Reading this makes me remember how he really joked a lot and was thrilled when he got both of us, the assistant and me, to laugh. The assistant made a clear distinction between painting and messing around. In addition, paying attention to Thomas's development was a key element in her comments.

## THE ETHICS AND POLITICS OF THE COMMUNITY-[ARTS-]BASED PROJECT

In community-[arts-]based projects, the artwork is an outcome of the collaboration, but the work process itself can also be defined as art, since it was a continuous performance (Kantonen 2005, 49). Artwork, then, becomes a jointly lived event (Kester 2004), and the event also becomes a shared and experienced work of art. Community-based art is considered by many to be a logical step towards a more intimate and meaningful relationship between the artist and his/her local audience [or participants] and an efficacious means of shrinking the distance between the traditionally separate poles of production and reception. As such, community-based art is often celebrated as an artistically and politically critical and progressive practice. (Kwon 2004, 100–137.)

Hal Foster, cited by Miwon Kwon, criticises the ways in which contemporary art has absorbed certain methodological strategies from anthropology, and he deconstructs the 'collaborative' interaction between an artist and a local community group in ethnographical terms. The artist is typically an outsider who has the institutionally sanctioned authority to engage the locals in the production of their ('self-') representation. The biggest concern for Foster is how the authority of the artist goes unquestioned, and often unacknowledged. Through such an ethnographic setting, '[t]he "other"<sup>37</sup> of the dominant culture thus becomes objectified once again to satisfy

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37 *In this context, the 'other' is used as a term of social justice. The 'other' is seen as the consequence of social, economic or political disaffiliation. This understanding of the 'other' is different than the way the 'Other' is used in some parts of this thesis. Otherness as a philosophical concept is an ontologically given radical alterity, not an attribute of being or involving certain characteristics or a particular social position. (See, for example, Todd 2003a, 2.)*

the contemporary lust for authentic histories and identities' (Kwon 2004, 138-139). An artist is supposedly an expert who can work with almost any group or individual labelled with a disability or social issue. Although *Art Without Borders* is not a typical community-[arts-]based project, the ideology behind the project is similar and the project should be criticised in the same way.<sup>38</sup> In *Art Without Borders*, instead of working with a group, each (unquestioned) professional artist worked only with one individual. However, the overall setup of the project follows the ideology of community-based art, that is, professional artists working with a certain minority within society, the *other* of the dominant culture.

As Kwon (2004) points out, community-based art projects usually address the concerns of marginalised community groups focusing on social issues, such as the homeless, battered women, urban youth, AIDS patients or prisoners, in order to strive towards developing politically aware community events or programmes (Kwon 2004, 102). That raises the question of characterising the people based on their human diversity, such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality or disability. First, naming a group, or a people, based on their ethnic features or for other reasons is questionable. Grouping people together based on their diversities is an empty effort when trying to work towards social justice. Especially when working with people with disabilities, who might not be able to speak for themselves, these kinds of categorisations must be considered critically. Giving such a 'master status' (Couser 2006, 399) to somebody means a certain stigmatisation over a person. *Art Without Borders* was a mix of ten professional artists and ten individuals with autism. The politics in this kind of setting is clear. While the artists represent their profession in the project, the individuals with autism are chosen and evaluated because of their personal abilities. However, we know that a person is much more than just her/his diagnosis. In this, and in so many other art projects, the intentions are good, but the politics that underpin them end up being at least questionable. What needs to be looked at more closely in this project are the ethics that it represents in relation to its politics. As Levinas shows, there is a never-ending oscillation between ethics and politics (Simmons 1999, 83). This idea will be discussed in more detail later.

Building national exhibitions and circulating the international version of the collected artworks from one European country to another does not on its own cause artists, persons with disabilities and the general public to communicate with one another. While this model, which so often is supported by such sponsors as the European Commission, has ambitious goals, it also carries with it a level of superficiality that limits attempts to build dialogue and understand the needs of the participants. This is a narrow and somewhat strange approach to get people to interact with one another, whether this means the working partners in the project or the various nations.

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<sup>38</sup> *Community-based art is deconstructed to mean collaborative and interactive art making between an artist and a local group* (Foster 1996; Sederholm 1998, 242-246).



The fundamental questions about the aims of this project remain unanswered. These exhibitions are supposed to initiate dialogue with the audience. The receptions are interesting for the participating professional artist, but not for non-professional artists. What needs to be asked is, whose needs are being served by holding these public exhibitions in prominent places and giving them wide media coverage, and what are the ethical values and cultural goals of the project?

What essentially remained questionable in the *Art Without Borders* project is the role of the individuals that the project is supposed to be for. It was unclear to me during the whole process how much Thomas understood about what was going on in terms of the international project and the national and international exhibitions. The good intentions of the project—good publicity for autism and various artistic activities for the individuals—reached the artistic culture community probably much better than the individuals whom it concerned. This is not to say that the project itself would have failed in terms of the face-to-face encounters between people, that is, between the artists and the individuals with autism. I am mainly criticising the politics of how the project was put together and promoted, and how these kinds of projects are funded and supported—to maintain the otherness in society, ‘to satisfy the contemporary lust for authentic histories and identities’ (Kwon 2004, 138–139). A need for international co-operation does not arise from the needs of a person with autism; they more or less dislike public places and mass events. Thomas, for example, did not want publicity or recognition for his artworks, nor did he wish for social events to be organised around the exhibition openings. International and national dialogue was promoted and encouraged through the *Art Without Borders* project; however, one might ask about the meaning and purpose of such a project and what sort of justice it advocates. An almost malicious thought is to see projects like this as being similar to charity work, which ultimately aims to make the benefactor feel good about himself or herself without bothering to figure out the actual needs of those that the projects are supposedly serving.

It is clear where the contradictions between the individual’s needs and the international art that is being promoted came from. The art world and the sponsors need to ensure a positive public outcome. To be part of the art world, there has to be some kind of positive public artistic outcome or artwork that can be exhibited at a public site (in a gallery/museum/city site/public building), and there must be an audience for it. Community-based art demands that the reciprocal relationships between art, artwork and the audience be reassessed (Sederholm 1998, 242–246). The qualifications for the publicity were fulfilled in the *Art Without Borders* project by exhibiting the art at public exhibitions and by making a TV documentary about the project. Maybe, if the project had not been a ‘real’ art project, some of the well-known artists would not have been interested in participating in the project. Also, many appreciated that the project was a ‘real’ art project, designed to show that people with autism are appreciated and can be shown in a positive light and taken seriously. Again, the intentions

were good. The borderline separating the collaborative partners and the artists became ambiguous and the role of the artwork was understood in a potentially novel fashion as a result of the collaborative process.

Many art and educational projects aim to de-other marginal groups. This is not, however, what usually happens. One could ask if it is even possible to de-other a group that is identified based on its members' human qualities, or lack thereof. With community-[arts-]based projects, it is crucial to acknowledge who is the one who creates the community and by what means: what are the politics behind the groupings and whose interests are being met as a result of these groupings? It is also important to raise questions, such as: How do we define a community without stigmatising the people participating in it? How do we see a person's personality above and beyond his or her disability when the group is defined by that particular disability by an external definer? How can we create a positive identity instead of limiting one's personality? All of the definitions for any community, be it self-organised or put together by an external authority, tell about the values, wishes and aims of contemporary society. However, being critical of how people are defined and stigmatised through their disabilities does not mean diminishing the other's otherness, nor does it give one the right to be an advocate for the marginalised group that s/he represents. It seems that this kind of misunderstanding is popular in contemporary society, for example in schools. Many people with an identity as a minority promote differences that are recognised as being specific to the culture that s/he is a part of as a form of empowerment. A disability can constitute such a minority culture.

It is difficult to promote differences when one does not want to recognise the differences. 'Colour-blind multiculturalism' is especially popular in Finland, where most people look alike and where people want to be seen as the same for the sake of equality.<sup>39</sup> Equality politics, which aims to overlook differences, shows up in the curriculum used throughout the entire educational system. This is problematic, since being blind to colours and other differences actually help underline differentiation. (Oikarinen-Jabai 2008, 151.) This issue turns out to be crucial and complex when discussing the issues through Levinasian notions. For Levinas, that kind of 'colour-blind multiculturalism' constitutes the ontological 'melting pot' of philosophy, wherein the uniqueness of the other is reduced (Jackson 2006, 28). That would be nothing other than entering to the area of the Same. Levinas insists that it is not our similarity as human beings that needs to be affirmed, but our difference. That notion challenges much of what has become seen as commonsensical in contemporary society (partially as a result of

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39 *When teaching about differences and disability issues, art education students often complain about why they need to pay attention to so much to the differences; why not just see everybody as being essentially the same? Most of the students that make this argument belong to the dominant culture and do not have an identity of being oppressed. It is easy to ignore how differently minorities are treated when belonging to the majority. There is always somebody who wants to claim that 'everybody is different'. While this is true, of course, it is not really the issue in question.*

Christianity), that is, to see the other as being 'like me' (or like I would want to be treated), as a fellow human being despite contingent differences. (Chinnery & Bai 2008, 236.) The extent to which Levinas resists any notion of sameness is infinite. A somewhat similar perspective to that of Levinas comes from disability studies, which argues for a 'politics of difference'.

Iris Young (2001) states that denying the differences between people has led to a crucial development in the struggle against exclusion and status differentiation. The idea that everybody has the same access to institutional power and privilege is, however, an illusion, and this kind of assimilation or 'path to belonging' needs to be questioned and even rejected. The idea of a 'politics of difference' emphasises having a positive cultural identity as a group as a better strategy for achieving power and participating in dominant institutions. These groups are usually cultural minorities, such as racial and ethnic groups, women, gay men and lesbian, old people and the disabled. (Young 2001, 203.) A typical way of denying differences is to argue for individuality and sameness for everyone rather than affirming group solidarity. That is often the stand of the dominant culture, which ignores group specificity. Blindness to differences also allows privileged groups to ignore their own group specificity and to perpetuate a type of cultural imperialism by creating norms that express this particular point of view. The privileged group then appears neutral and universal, objectifying everything else as 'Others'. (Young 2001, 208–209.)

In Finland, the prevalent and homogeneous culture is valued as being somewhat isolated, but less violent and troubled than some other cultures. The cultural notions are tied together with images of nostalgia and traditions, and many Finns like to think that there is more a sense of an original community in Finland than in some other, say more heterogeneous, countries. Simultaneously, it means that the norms and values are viewed as being analogous to one another. Finnish cultural identity is based strongly on the notions of nation and nationality. The problems that this brings with it are often bypassed. As Julia Kristeva shows, the western national-states and their mechanisms only support violent and racist structures and increase a sense of alienation and horror in the face of strangeness (Kosonen 1994). This means there is not much room for differences. Often one gets to hear that there are no racist problems in Finland (although this seems to be changing currently), because people are all the same. This is, obviously, the stand of a middle class, white, prosperous, and able person who is a member of the majority community. The majority of the art education students in Finland are also part of this community. Therefore, I find it essential to increase discussion about different abilities and minorities within the field of art education.

The criticism of community-[arts-]based projects therefore does not lie in recognising group differences, but in attempting to build communities based on those differences. It is one thing to be disabled and acknowledge that as a cultural identity, and then to join a community that is based on belonging to that particular minority

group. The idea of community is much more complex than just putting people together to work on a shared project. Next, I will discuss community from a philosophical perspective; this perspective should not be confused with the socio-political discussion presented above.

## RETHINKING COMMUNITY

In this section, I discuss community differently than I have done so far. Nancy (1991) has stated that communities do not exist. I do not try to apply Nancy's theory directly to the criticism of community that I have been writing about so far. Instead, I want to problematise the entire notion of community by adding another level to this conversation. Just as a dialogue between two people is not something that one could decide to carry out beforehand, so too a sense of community does not exist in completed form; it can be formed temporarily and then disappear again. It is therefore not relevant to talk about a sense of community as something that is fixed, presupposed or permanently formulated.

According to Nancy, the notion of *between us* is at the root of all philosophy (2000, 21.) The main question for him is, how do we live with other people? That is, how do we inhabit the world with others and discuss where and how contemporary community exists? He analyses modern society and its nostalgic longing for an 'original community'. Nancy argues that longing for original and harmonious communities and for immediate being-together exists in every generation and in most cultures (a family, the Athenian city, the Roman Republic, the first Christian community, corporations, communes, brotherhoods), and should be seen as a mythical thought, an imaginary and nostalgic picture of our past. These ideals of lost, warm and cosy pre-modern communities, when everything was better and when society was less violent, are also exclusive communities, where norms and values were shared between people with a similar identity and background. That is necessary or else the community would not have been harmonic. Therefore, difference is not accepted and, as Nancy suggests, we should be suspicious of nostalgic ideas of community. (Nancy 1991, 9–10 & 17.)

Nancy (1991) discusses his notion of being-with (*être-avec*) within the context of community (*communauté*) in his work *The Inoperative Community*. The complexity of being-together (*être-en-commun*) stems primarily from Heidegger's affiliations with Nazism, but Nancy also criticises Hegel's model of state, which he finds overly totalitarian. Nancy especially criticises Heidegger's inability to think deeply about the ontological meaning of being-with. (Nancy 1991, xxxix, 12 & 14; see also Lindberg 2010, 176–183; Heikkilä 2009; Young 2004, 113–118.) Nancy argues that a community cannot be a subject with an idea, mind, destiny or meaning of its own. He developed his ideas of community interactively with Maurice Blanchot (2004). For Nancy and Blanchot, community was only possible without a shared subjectivity and shared substance. They both start with Georges Bataille and his 'crucial experience of the modern destiny of

community' (Nancy 1991, 16, see also pages 25–26.) Through Bataille, they look for an idea of community that would truly be a community without being totalitarian. For both Nancy and Blanchot, the sense of community is singular and therefore unthinkable immanent within a collective subjectivity (Blanchot 2004, 28): as Nancy puts it, a 'community assumes the impossibility of its own immanent, the impossibility of a communitarian being in the form of a subject' (Nancy 1991, 15).

According to Nancy, one characteristic of all presupposed communities, such as *Art Without Borders*, is that their members are fixated on the idea of a shared or communal mindset. However, Nancy does not believe that any community could define its goals, essence and substance on its own. At the same time, a thought of infinite unity, autonomy and immanence is bound together with the denial of ecstasy, and the question of the community is henceforth inseparable from the question of ecstasy (Nancy 1991, 6). Nancy responds negatively to any common, shared or communitarian notion of a community, such as a harmonious togetherness or identifying with one's own nation or any other group. Instead, he talks about singular beings and their infinity, which cannot be captured by a community. (Nancy 1991, 27.) He criticises the idea of community in its every form. The notion of a political party or a nation, as a common immanence, includes the core of totalitarianism; it has to do with being fused into a collective subjectivity when talking about, for example, the 'will of the nation' (Lindberg 2010, 178). This type of collective subjectivity is also exactly what is being offered to the members of community-[arts-]based projects. Adopting a collective subjectivity might be the only way to remain a member within the community.

We tend to think of communities as having a shared identity, especially when they include marginalised community groups focusing on social issues. For Nancy, community is not something that one could belong to. Instead, his notion of community rejects everything that could connect its members to one another and offer a persistent essence to it. Therefore, the *sense* of belonging to a community does not exist as 'ready', but can be composed momentarily in togetherness of its members' *sense*. Straightaway the community splits up. In the concrete world—the one that exists outside philosophy—we often understand the idea of community precisely through its subjectivity: for example, a group of individuals with autism that are interested in making art and who have the goal of producing a set of artworks for an exhibit. How, then, do we work, define or even talk about a community without referring to its appearance or giving an identity to it? When reading Nancy, it seems to become an unethical enterprise. He states that the given subject is a paradox, since the only two things that the members of a community could have in common are the very things that no one could ever really have in common: being and dying. In his formulation, being-towards-death is being-with (*Mitsein*) from early on; however, nobody can die another person's death, as Heidegger also pointed out. Thus, the only thing that we can share is the fact that there is nothing to be shared: we only share what separates us (*nous partageons ce qui nous partage*). (Nancy 1991, 14–15; Blanchot 2004, 26; Lindberg 2010, 178–179.)

Although Nancy (2000) emphasises the intimate, direct and immediate nature of being, being fused with another person is never a goal, as no one would then be responsible. Having contact with another person requires a space in-between that is based on separation. (Nancy 2000, 5.) Emmanuel Levinas, Georges Bataille, Maurice Blanchot and Hannah Arendt, in addition to Nancy and others, have written about singularity in relation to other people, especially within the context of community or society. Part of understanding the importance of the ethics of encounter, which I find so important in this thesis, is being able to understand the relationship between singularity and belonging to a world with other people through collaboration, community and society. Previous eras as well as the contemporary era have shown that belonging to something larger than one singular person has generated and can lead to a sense of rapture, the consequences of which can be dangerous. Extreme examples include the Nazi's pursuit of concentration camps, mass suicide groups and military and fascists groups. These examples show how a singular person can forget her/his own ethics by blending into the crowd and enjoying the ecstasy of the fusion (Blanchot 2004, 23). Feeling a sense of community or togetherness is a trap in many ways, with the question of a lack of responsibility being the most essential.

I realise that it might be unsuitable to expose an art project to criticism based on the theories of community put forward by Nancy and Blanchot. It might seem that the idea of community arises from very different sources when it is based, for example, on Nazism and when, on the other hand, it is based on an effort to create an understanding of the differences within society. My hypothesis, however, is, that the ideology behind the two perspectives is not that different. As a more general culture criticism, I want to suggest that they stem from the same source, that both building and maintaining the idea of community is something sublime, something larger than the existence of a single person. This kind of community is a fantasy, often either a dangerous tool of totalitarian power or a superficial effort to create a type of togetherness that loses a sense of the singular individual by maintaining false ideologies.

Consequently, a community does not come into being as a result of the fusion of its members, nor does it arise from the domain of work. Completing or producing a work of art cannot thus define the community. Instead, a community is a sort of 'unworking', or, worded differently, it is 'oeuvreless' (*désœuvrement*). (Nancy 1991, 31; Heikkilä 2009.) Would it then be possible to deconstruct and rethink a community-[arts-]based project without first naming the identity of the community, and second without the production, the oeuvre? Nancy and Blanchot both think the base of being-together should be sharing and the type of separation that Nancy calls communication (Nancy 1991, 28–31). According to Nancy, communication is the possibility that all communal beings have to achieve a communally shared mindset: '[...] communication is neither the subject nor communal being, but community and sharing' (Nancy 1991, 25). Sharing, for Nancy, takes place as a shared emerging, that is, a shared emerging of finite singular beings (Nancy 1991, 27). Instead of a shared subjectivity, a community

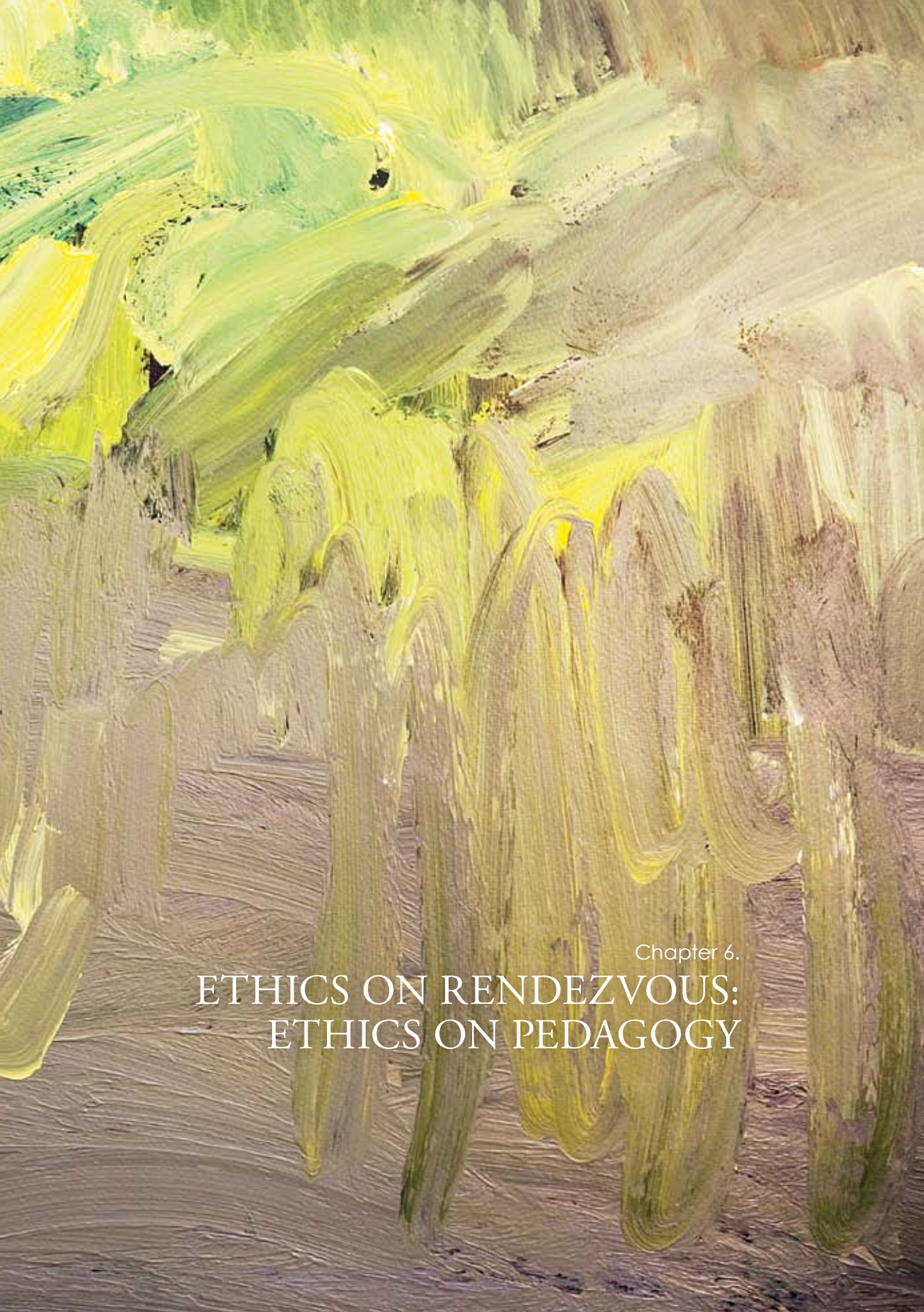
for Nancy could mean, for example, a public place that offers an emerging sense of democracy. Nancy's deconstructed community is therefore a community without a sense of community or communality. In this sense, no political movement could ever be such a community, not even the most spontaneously formed projects.

What is crucial here, however, is to emphasise that when thinking of the relationship between community and singularity, 'that ecstasy (community) happens to the singular being' (Nancy 1991, 7). This is what constitutes the entire problem when discussing individuals with a disability and community-[arts-]based projects. It is difficult to remember the individual behind the diagnosis when talking about a group of people. Therefore, I find the idea of 'community without community' suitable when thinking about a possible community of people with disabilities. Communicating with the silenced members of society and giving space for democracy can, however, easily be turned into something that works towards somebody's aspiration of creating fixed notion of community. Also, blocks of communication are so strongly built that one can easily be blinded to them, especially with the silenced members of society. A 'shared emerging of finite singular beings' is different than belonging to a disability community. It would mean a singular type of communication that emerges in a shared place. It then becomes crucial to hear this type of communication and to give space for it by sharing it. Sharing mindsets and the possibility of achieving a shared mindset, as well as is the exposition and emergence of such mindsets, constitute a political condition for Nancy.

In this chapter, I have critically pondered the possible conditions for being-together and laid the groundwork for answering questions about togetherness in general. What are the conditions for a sense of being-together? Is it even possible, or is it just a fantasy? What formed the moments of togetherness for us? The next chapter will respond to these and other questions about encountering another, the possible dialogical conditions that exist when being-together and how they could be thought about in terms of pedagogy, mainly through Levinas and other philosophers that have been interested in the issue of dialogue. I approach the pedagogical situation involving the two of us, my research partner and myself, from three different perspectives. First, I approach it through the ethical requirement towards the 'Other', that is, the asymmetrical reciprocity between me and the 'Other'; second, I approach it via my sense of pedagogical responsibility, which goes beyond my own comprehension; and third, I approach it through the pedagogical ideology of justice.







Chapter 6.

ETHICS ON RENDEZVOUS:  
ETHICS ON PEDAGOGY

*Painting with Thomas, most importantly, requires giving up pre-determined goals and cognitive planning, and instead focusing on intuitive, bodily and immediate reactions. Painting thus becomes a 'non-text', a performative act based on embodied understandings and interactive reactions. My thinking during these painting sessions is clear of clutter, chaos and pressure. The bright tones of a colour seem to fascinate both Thomas and me. I recognise my own tendency to become absorbed in the movement of a paintbrush, in spreading the paint, and in the intensity of colour and movement. Significance lays within the interaction during the act of painting, in the touch of a paintbrush, in the colour choices, in the painting motions, in what kind of strokes we make, in the position and composition of the actions, in the interference with privacy, and in the reaction to the interference.*

*Through our painting together, I found a new way to think about my own painting work. I started to reach for a sensorial and embodied visual understanding through my paintings. My expression glided towards something similar to Thomas's way of expressing himself. Consciously or unconsciously, I wanted to come closer to his experiences. I found a new kind of desire for painting. I wanted to let go of what I knew from education, to plunge into painting, to paint as if my eyes were shut but enjoying the action. While painting, I realised this was not possible. Still, I find that even trying this could somehow open a way for me to construct my understanding of Thomas's world. I sank deep into spreading paint, into enjoying the material, repetition and rhythm.*

Painting as an artistic medium has multiple possibilities to arouse the senses. A painter has an endless variety of possibilities to choose from to affect the visual representation of the painting. When two people start to paint together, the likelihood of sharing a similar way of painting is quite small. I was happy to recognise, early on, the similarities in Thomas's and my way of painting. I realised that it did not mean that the collaborative process would have required a similar visual language. However, I thought that sharing similar sensorial intuitions might help build a dialogical view of the paintings. I found that our way of spreading paint and enjoying its multiple layers seemed similar. To me, this signified a possibility for being jointly grounded in the same dialogical starting point. How we paint and how we interpret our paintings is connected to our previous experiences and memories, such as our education and the influences of our environments. A single visual interest embodies an understanding of visual pleasure, an embodied comprehension that is linked to learned perceptions and eventually to our entire way of thinking. One could, for example, imagine that thick paint stimulates touch and movement, or that the intensity of a painting can be quiet and the materiality delicate. A touch on the painting's surface can be gentle and discreet, or it can be brutal or simply careless. Seeing and touching are forms of inter-

action, as are most senses.<sup>40</sup> The sense of touch that seeing activates can be verbalised through a negation: If a person would never have touched something before, or would never have been touched before, how differently would s/he see a painting? That is surely an impossible thought, as it is impossible to imagine a person who would never have been touched before. But as a metaphor it is descriptive in showing how close the two different senses, touch and sight, are to one another. Jacques Derrida (2005, 2) asks if the gazes could touch one another by referring to Jean-Luc Nancy: 'If two gazes look into each other's eyes, can one then say that they are touching? Are they coming into contact—the one with the other?' While looking, seeing and being seen seemed all the time to occupy a smaller place in my collaboration with Thomas, the role of touch and being touched took on more and more of an important role.

Working with Thomas influenced my painting, even when I was painting alone. Before, my paintings often dealt with spaces or figures, reacting to and further conceptualising the visual environment. Instead of representation, depth and space, the surface of the canvas or piece of paper and the materiality of the paint and the movements of our bodies now came more to the surface as focal points of my observations. Even though my earlier paintings appeared almost abstract rather than representational, their subjects and forms were concrete and based on narratives, cognitive experiences and visual understanding of three-dimensional space. Thomas's touch on the paintbrush and on a piece of paper was both gentle and rough. Although it was fiercer than mine, it reminded me of my own way of painting. The touch was embodied and fleshy. I thought that I could find perceptions of Thomas's being as a person through his embodied and sensorial way of painting. As in any other relationship, the being-together consisted of those ingredients that seemed to join us together. I rejoiced over the fact that he seemingly enjoyed painting. It only strengthened my desire to give up my pre-determined plans and to concentrate on intuitive, embodied and imminent reactions.

When working together with a single person, one cannot avoid thinking about the issues of dialogue. It became essential to me to ponder what dialogue could mean for my research partner and myself within our work project, and more importantly, what it could mean as a pedagogical condition. Dialogical pedagogy is an educational notion and a social justice discourse that has a way of making pedagogy sound ideal. Marjo Vuorikoski and Tomi Kiilakoski (2005) argue that dialogical pedagogy is misunderstood when researchers use it to solve various issues pertaining to different educational problems. When looking for practical educational answers, the philosophical premises and connected ideological obligations can easily be forgotten. Dialogue has become an unquestionable ideal, norm and rhetorical tool. An invitation to dialogue is like a gesture of good will. Who could resist or criticise such an invitation, as it sounds so ideal? (Vuorikoski & Kiilakoski 2005, 309.)

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40 *Synaesthesia has to do with the idea that one sense stimulation affects other senses. A person can taste forms or see or feel sounds. Within visual arts, visibility is often associated with the other senses. (See, for example, Pitkänen-Walter 2006, 126–129.)*

In this chapter, I will discuss ethics and questions of dialogue in various pedagogical circumstances as well as theoretically and what they meant for the encounters that took place between Thomas and me. I explain the background for the first research question about ethics and dialogue. To be able to understand the role and significances of ethical encounters and how collaborative art practices can help to create an ethical relationship, I first define what ethics means with respect to pedagogy. It is important to keep this conversation philosophical rather than practical to be able to truly understand the ethical nature of dialogue. Towards the end of this chapter, I will emphasise pedagogical notions themselves. While referring to pedagogy, I do not want to claim that Thomas was my student; rather, I want to stress a more responsible perspective, one in which I was and needed to be engaged as a part of our encounters.

As mentioned in the introduction, one of the biggest questions that I confronted at the beginning of working with Thomas was the question of possible dialogue and the notion of encounters. At a brief glance, it seemed that my eagerness to reach out to him was as strong as his lack of interest in reaching out to me. However, upon closer examination, it became clear that our relationship was more complex. Whether I wanted to refer to it as dialogue, encountering, being-with, being-together, being-aside or something else, it all seemed to raise the same question: Did dialogue occur? Was there an in-between space where something was shared? Can a relationship be dialogical if one person does not try to take into account the other person's viewpoint? In this chapter, I will look into these questions, which influenced and informed most of the time that I met with Thomas. I needed to understand what dialogue could mean before I was able to know if our encounters constituted or needed to be considered some form of dialogue. I will start by discussing what dialogue meant to its theoretical father, Martin Buber.

## DIALOGUE IN BUBER'S PHILOSOPHY: DID DIALOGUE OCCUR?

Martin Buber, in his central work *I and Thou*, has explained how dialogical thinking is the only way of thinking that concerns reality. When a man<sup>41</sup> is thinking alone, he objectifies everything: he has already defined beforehand what he is thinking about, and he defines what is also separate and distinct from himself. In a dialogical relationship, a man cannot act this way: only by including another person in the dialogue does he learn that there is something real in the existence of the world that he is a part of and that would not exist in any other way except through this existence. (Varto 2005, 77.) The starting point for Buber's dialogue is in the in-between space that comes into being in the encounter between 'I' and 'Thou'. For Buber, there is no metaphysical subject alone as there is for Hegel, Kant and Descartes (such as an

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<sup>41</sup> While I understand term man to be problematic due to its gendered nature, I retain its original usage for historical purposes.

existential ego). Man exists in-between the sphere of two subjects, which is created when those subjects encounter one another. Knowing takes place neither in a 'subjective' nor in an 'objective' sense, not in an emotional or a rational sense; rather, it takes place in the 'between'—the reciprocal relationship between whole and active beings (Friedman 2002, 69). Following Buber's philosophy, opening myself up to the in-between space between Thomas and myself was what prevented me from objectifying my thinking.

The term I – Thou is the primary term of relation for Buber. The I – Thou combination creates a point of contact between man and the world as they originally existed. The nature of this contact is ethical. The relationship is characterised by mutuality, directness, presentness, intensity and ineffability. (Friedman 2002, 65.) The I – Thou contact is an ideal that describes the origin of existence, and it shows a way for human growth, that is, a way for becoming a person. Buber draws a significant difference between the two notions *person* and *individual*. The latter has to do with a self-centred approach to the world, which can be termed an I – It relationship. Becoming a person is only possible in I – Thou contacts. We are born as individuals in the sense that we are different from everyone else, but we are not born as persons. Our personalities are formed through encountering the relationships that we are enter into. (Friedman 2002, 69.) The notion of I is then able to go beyond the limits of individuality, to experience and behold the other without losing the depths of one's own personality or viewpoint.

The term I – Thou refers to the world of contact that exists before all our conceptual definitions. It is the dialectical antithesis to the I – It relationship, which is evident in individual and practical experiences. We are individuals each time that we perceive, feel and reach for something. The I – It relationship is a typical intentional subject – object relationship, which is an essential and natural relation to the world. It is not, however, a genuine relationship, since it is founded on a separation between the subject and object. Because of the separation, the existential relationship to the individual is monological, since the experience of the world is represented in him and not between him and the world. It is always immediate and indirect. In an I – It relationship, the world is always arranged, created, mastered and conceptually defined by 'I'. The It of the I – It relationship may equally well be a person, an animal, a thing, a spirit or a god. This monological I – It relationship is not bad or evil as such, but it should not dominate our existence and the ideal of our worldly relationships.

The mastery of It is not healthy for a man, because *all real living is meeting* (Buber 1958, 11; Buber 1965, xiv). There are no encounters, no meetings, no dialogue, between a man and the world in an I – It relationship. However, the relationships are not stable: the I – Thou dialogue can become an I – It relationship in the next moment, and indeed must continually change, and the 'It' may—or may not—again become a 'Thou'. (Buber 1958, 3–6; Friedman 2002, 65, 66 & 71; Värri 2004, 63–65.) According to Buber, dialogical contacts happen without a subject or object, without intentions or causation, and without planning. They are unexpected, unique, timeless

and spaceless areas of immediateness without comprehension or conceptualisation. It is not possible to maintain the world of singular and non-conceptual immediate moments all the time. The rest of existence belongs to the I – It existence, which is the area of practical life, social roles and institutions. The experiencing of ‘It’ is planned and purposeful (Friedman 2002, 67). This world is our essential and natural world: it is everyday life, with connections of time, space, knowledge, persuasions, causation, intentional relations and intersubjective actions. It is, however, a self-centred world without contacts, presence or encounters.

Man does not exist in different I’s and Thou’s, but in different I – Thou connections. The in-between space is the area where a man’s complicity with the world emerges, without an emerging ego or reality as such. A man lives in this in-between space, where his ‘spirit’ exists. Buber compares this ‘spirit’ to language: a man does not only speak a language and a language does not only exist in a man, but a man exists in the language. Likewise the ‘spirit’ does not exist in a man, but between ‘I’ and ‘Thou’, and a man exists in the ‘spirit’. The man in this in-between space, that is, in the relationship to ‘Thou’, is a person, in contrast to an individual that is self-sufficient. (Buber 1993, 55–56.) The encounter is at the centre of the I – Thou relationship. Neither of the encountering subjects creates the in-between space alone; rather, it is created in mutuality and reciprocity, and it gives the basis for intersubjectivity and ethics. It also provides man with an exit from the deadlock of the dichotomy between individualism and collectivism, which prevents the fulfilment of personality and personal responsibility.

Totalitarianism of the monological world relationship on its own would not be an ethical way of living. That would be a world where the effectiveness, utility and supremacy of instrumental brain knowledge would completely replace human interconnections. (Värri 2004, 69–71, 75.) There are, however, many types of relationships where the I – It relationship is needed. Some of these relationships might even be interactive and fluently communicative, but still based on the I – It relationship. Usually in these relationships one side needs something from the other side; the one side is willing to give the other side what it wants in exchange for payment. A pedagogical encounter, or any other kind of ethically responsible encounter, such as the one between Thomas and me, should not be an I – It relationship. Historically, persons with a disability have been objectified and dominated by the monological I – It relationship. When the other person does not speak, or does not communicate her/his thoughts in any active way, it has been, as I believe, challenging to step into the in-between space with her/him, the in-between space between the two of us where something was shared and seemed essential. Its conditions needed to be specified.

While I wanted to work in a dialogical relationship with Thomas, I could not demand that he should wish the same. While knowing that he did not necessarily want to engage in a dialogue with me, I was pondering if it was enough for me to create the possibility for dialogue. That is why I asked if a relationship is dialogical if one person does not want to take into account the other person’s view. Buber states that a dialogi-

cal relationship does not demand activity from both sides. The relationship can be dialogical based on only one approach, depending on the quality of that approach and the nature of the varied reciprocity. It is sufficient if one of the partners lives through the joint event from the other's perspective. According to Buber, even when another person is not taking into account my personal view, I can feel the reciprocity between us as long as the other person affects me. This is only possible by not objectifying the 'other'. (Värri 2004, 68.) As Buber points out, what we usually recognise as signs of dialogue, such as speaking, gestures and noises, are not necessarily a part of dialogue, and even the most eager act of speaking that is directed at another person does not make for a conversation (Buber 1965, 3–4). For Buber, the idea of non-equal approaches to dialogue comes from encounters that are not between two or more people, but encounters with nature or, for example, animals.

The personality is formed and actualised via a direct and imminent form of contact with another person. That is why it is crucial to transcend the limited individual (I – It) experience. When both subjects transcend their individuality and orient themselves towards one another, there is a possibility for a dialogue. There should be no conceptual pre-knowledge or visualisation between 'I' and 'Thou' in order for the encounter to happen. All the pre-notions, wishes, anticipations, ambitions and means are obstacles to the encounter. An encounter can happen only when we do not categorise the other person according to our own needs and purposes. (Värri 2004, 65–67.) Our knowledge about the other person is therefore always just a means of limiting the possible dialogue, especially if the knowledge aims to define her/his personality. Claiming that a person is disabled only serves our own purposes and is necessarily awkward for dialogue. Regardless, while one can desire the I-Thou relationship, it cannot be forced. The I – Thou and I – It relationships stand in a fruitful and necessary correlation with one another. Man cannot will himself to perceive something in the I – Thou relationship. (Buber 1965, xiv.)

One challenge in accepting the Buberian notion of the concept of 'I' is understanding that it is a viewpoint rather than a conscious self-position. It is clear that we perceive the world through ourselves and we cannot escape the relationship between inspection and belonging. The 'self' is at the core of all existence—it is the subject of all acts and perceptions—and it would be difficult to imagine a subject that could avoid self-centredness (Hankamäki 2004, 48). Buber explains that both relationships, the I – Thou relationship and the I – It relationship, are part of life. Acknowledging this dualistic position helped me to relate to my existence with Thomas: I was both self-centred and a person who was capable of personal growth through my momentary encounter with him. My self-centredness showed up in the moments when I concentrated on my own art work, and also during many other moments, some of them practical and intentional, such as feeling responsible for producing works of art for the exhibit or feeling the need to make effective use of our time together. Fortunately, those needs were not dominant and their significance decreased over time. This dual

position in our shared in-between space, that of being self-centred and of seeking a dialogue, caused me to reconsider the nature of our togetherness. Was it really something that could be called being-together, or could another term, being-*aside*, one that emphasised our singularity in the face of togetherness, describe it better?

Varto (2005) describes how dialogical encounters with another person leave a permanent trace on our lives. Dialogue is not an ordinary conversation in which opinions would be exchanged: usually, after opinions are exchanged, both of the participants leave without any new approaches. In a dialogue, something different happens, something that can be recognised as new to them. A dialogue reveals how intersubjectivity occurs. The participants—a minimum of two people—bring forth their own important notions and viewpoints. The ‘other’ does not adopt these opinions as such. The idea is that both partners emerge from their own particular worldviews and try to create an area between (*dia*) them where a new notion (*logos*) can come into existence. (Varto 2005, 76.) An ethical encounter requires taking the primacy of the other person seriously. In dialogical conversations, the ‘other’ must be heard: *s/he* is important, not me. The ‘other’ should not be dominated and made a part of my own world, viewed as a mere implement and not even verbally. This requirement demands a struggle against the ‘self’. The ontological experience of dialogue and its togetherness obligates one to express a verbal certainty just as much as a conceptual certainty (Varto 2005, 78.) Our encounter was wordless. The requirement for responsibility was, however, unconditional—both ontologically and conceptually.

After a deeper inquiry into Buber’s theories of dialogue, I found that a dialogical encounter with a person with autism is possible, but requires reframing, or at least adjusting the notion of dialogue. This means that the dialogical moment might happen without an analysed recognition from both participants. Also, the other’s ‘listening’ is not necessarily reciprocal. This understanding of an asymmetrical dialogue is one of the main reasons why I turned to Levinas’s philosophy of ethics.

## EPHEMERAL DIALOGUE

Buber explains that the I – Thou contacts happen in moments that pass by quickly; moments of dialogue never last long. (Friedman 2002, 66-67; Värri 2004, 69.) For me, these moments of connection are similar to the Heideggerian notion of Ereignis, which I discussed in the fourth chapter: the lived world exists only in singular, carnal and ephemeral moments, events that we feel in our flesh and that we cannot really recapture afterwards, although we try. We try to translate them into language and concepts, to name our experiences, to theorise about them, without the possibility of ever really recapturing what has happened. Living through an event is captured in its certainty, in talking and writing about it or even in thinking about it; this already entails a process of moving away from the event itself, though. We are at the middle of an event when we are living through it, and only afterwards is it possible to



really perceive what happened. It is essential to realise that we can never again access bypassed events or the very thing that makes them novel. In trying to understand the past, we are modifying or only representing it. This is not meant as a judgement: there is nothing wrong with conceptualising, representing or trying to understand what just happened.

For Merleau-Ponty, lived life resists conceptual thinking. The world of theoretical objects is a construction. It is not a clear world of ideas. Lived life is present through flesh, in its thickness. (Hotanen 2008, 101.) The temporally present moments, the events, also include the future and the past because the participants carry them within themselves. The two different views used in this thesis, Buber's and Levinas's ethics and psychoanalytical theory, emphasise different perspectives on how to understand time, and therefore, they introduce two more layers into the interpretation of time as it relates to the events in the video. Levinas binds future moments together with present moments. According to psychoanalytical theory, the past is always present in the 'self'. Therefore, an ethical capacity is evident in the temporal interplay between future, past and present. The infinite possibility of the future can be reached through openness and vulnerability to the 'Other'. In present encounters, we continually remake the past through a projection of the present. (Todd, 2003a, 12.) In the events that constituted dialogical moments between Thomas and me, we both brought our pasts, our experiences and our understandings of the future. Thus, the dialogue included more than just the two of us; it also included each event that we carried within us from the past—and the future.

The world of flesh can be reached only through living through events. These singular events are bound to other people. When retreating into singularity, one still breathes in the rhythm of intersubjectivity. Even though we may want to be alone, we experience these moments because we are connected to other people. That is why ethics is considered the first philosophy. The basic structure of being a human being means being together with others, that is, other people, nature and animals. (Varto 2005, 71.) Nancy writes about a type of contact between people that builds no bridges or connections between people as such, as it has no consistency or continuity of its own: 'The "between" is the stretching out [distension] and distance opened by the singular as such, as its spacing of meaning.' (Nancy 2000, 5.) Nancy explains how we are plural even though we are singular. He explains that being-singular-plural refers to both a mark of union and also a mark of division, meaning both isolation *and* being with others. (Nancy 2000, 37.) For Buber, this belonging to others is manifested in the paired words I – Thou and I – It, which must always depict either one of these types of connections. The 'self' cannot ever be understood independently, since the 'self' always exists in the world always connected either to 'Thou' or to 'It' (Hankamäki 2004, 48).

While the 'other', 'Thou' or 'It' is always connected to the 'self', it is just as crucial to understand that the other person is different from me. Dialogue requires recognising different viewpoints and the fact that the partners in the dialogue stake out their

positions based on their own perspectives (Värri 2004, 67). That also means that I cannot view my partner as being the same as me; I cannot try to make him match or suit my own purposes. Buber emphasises that each person in a relationship truly remains himself alone, and that means that he remains different from the 'other'. The 'other' is not another 'I'. When we treat a person as 'another I', we do not truly see that person, but only a projection of ourselves. Despite whatever warm 'personal' feelings we may have towards that person, that relationship is really just an I – It relationship. (Friedman 2002, 70.) Appreciating another person's otherness should not be confused with empathy.

Buber distinguishes between empathy and the notion of *Umfassung*, which refers to the ability to live in the present moment and consider the other person's perspective. More precisely, it means enlarging our own concrete world, fulfilling the present situation and establishing a complete presence in the world that we participate in. This differs from empathy, which is bound to imagination instead of to anchoring us in the immediate present. A man then projects his own emotions onto the object of empathy. Regardless of whatever good intentions he may have, the 'other' is formed in order to follow his own wishes. The most prominent aspect of *Umfassung* is that it causes us to acknowledge the other person's otherness. (Värri 2004, 67.) This will be discussed in detail later in this chapter in relation to Levinas's philosophy.

## THE ETHICS OF DIFFERENCE

*Later, I started to realise how different the aims and the ways of thinking that directed Thomas's and my work were. I realised that just repeating formally Thomas's way of painting did not lead me into Thomas's world of thinking. Our aspirations in painting did not stem from similar bases. Repeating his way of working, as I understood it, did not lead me into his experiences. Even though the sensorial was at the centre for both of us while we were painting together, it did not mean that we shared a mutual understanding. I could not have been able to open up the diversity of our working process and of our subjectivities by sticking only to that. That would have been an attempt towards fusion and integration, without any meaning.*

*Just focusing on similarities and trying to understand the other person's experience through one's own experiences would be an effort that could easily lead to a superficial understanding of another person. There is always something familiar with another person's experience, something that makes us feel enjoyment or a sense of comfort. In some sense, that is an illusion. The other person needs to be taken as another, separate and different from me, as a singular person. Another person is always a mystery. According to Martin Buber (1993), confronting another person is only possible through respecting the mystery of the 'Other'.*

I realised that only emphasising our similar way of painting, only enjoying the rhythm and repetition of painting, would not lead me into Thomas's world or way of thinking, nor into dialogue, which at some deeper level were my goals at the beginning of the project, although they were difficult to acknowledge. Even though we seemed to enjoy similar kinds of visual expression, our motivation and background and context within which we worked were quite different. When working together, it was essential to acknowledge the different accounts and separate them from one's own. When facing this new pedagogical understanding, I was also able to understand the significance of working together in a shared space, of directly encountering another person, which I now referred to as a process of *being-aside*. This understanding did not include my aims to understand the 'other' and his way of thinking, but it did include an appreciation of the radical alterity of the 'Other'. This was only possible by not trying to consciously reach any kind of dialogical connection. This comes close to Nancy's (2000) notion of encountering a person in a shared space, through the concept of 'being-with-one-another'. According to Nancy, when working in collaboration with someone it is imperative not to try to solve or develop definitions of the other person or what it means to be and function in a spatially bound relationship. If coming into contact with another person meant making sense of one another, this contact would penetrate nothing (Nancy 2000, 5). The 'other', my partner Thomas, will always remain undefined to me, and thus, what needs to be researched is distinct from the mutually agreed upon time and space of cooperation, in which both people are separate and the shared space creates a sense of 'us'.

Even though the 'other' is undefined, separate and different from me, this does not mean that he is distant or untouchable. On the contrary, the 'other' bumps up against me, and his reality is formed together with mine. This then introduces power relations, which are always an important part of the ethics of difference. Power relations exist in every relationship and they are therefore an essential part of discourses. Power mixes with a person's basic energy sources, stretches its tentacles everywhere and controls all relationships. For Foucault (1984), power essentially produces, forms and creates. The concept of power would be easier to unpack if it was only a negative force. According to Foucault, 'What makes power hold good, what makes it accepted, is simply the fact that it doesn't only weigh on us as a force that says no, but that it traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse. It needs to be considered as a productive network which runs through the whole social body, much more than as a negative instance whose function is repression.' (Foucault 1984, 61.) Admitting the strength of power can lead to a point at which it might be used more prudently.

The power relations that are misunderstood, or disavowed, can easily lead to objectifying another person, or to abuse and repression. All education and each moment of dialogue include power relations that are partially obvious, partially hidden. Power, being a part of knowledge, discourse and pleasure production, must be acknowledged in

all human activities, but especially in those that try to look closely at people's relationships, such as dialogue or pedagogical situations. There are power relations between all those who encounter one another, between learners and educators, between teachers and students and between each collaborative partner, as well as between Thomas and me. Buber highlights the fact that educational and therapeutic relationships can never truly be dialogical because of their uneven power relationships. The purpose of those relationships is to influence the other person. Therefore, they cannot ever fully be based on reciprocity. (Värri 2004, 83.) Understanding this non-reciprocal situation and the difference that it brings for the participants is an essential ethical starting point. This is one of the biggest differences between Buber and Levinas. Reciprocity is necessary for Buber; without it, a relationship cannot be fully dialogical. For Levinas, instead, no ethical relation can ever be reciprocal. Seeing the 'other' in a reciprocal relation as being equal with me would be seeing her/him as the *Same* as me, which, for Levinas, is a form of totalising thinking.

Levinas calls the type of totalising thinking that limits our conception of other people through our own sameness *totality* or *economy*, which is an opposite of *infinity*. A totalised world is the conceptual totality mastered by 'I', which means that it is mastered in only one way. The 'I' that is at the centre of mastering a world in which there is a certain sameness of things and events, all of which are in their place conceptually, creates a certain familiarity or domesticity, that is, a managed home, an *oikonomos*. That prevents 'I' from experiencing the infinity of the other's world. (Levinas 1996, 35–40; Varto 2005, 93; Joldersma 2002, 182.) A responsibility towards the 'Other' means being open to the infinity of the 'Other'. Responsibility is also at the core of dialogue for Buber. Ethics can only exist when a man is concretely responsible for another person. The starting point for this responsibility is not embedded in a priori and abstract moral codes or in a universal idea of human value; rather, it is embedded in the actual and ontological reality that develops between 'I' and 'Thou' in a concrete encounter. (Värri 2004, 73–74.) This responsible reality needs to be created again and again in each encounter. While our encounters with Thomas were built each time from the beginning, their responsible nature also varied every time.

The responsibility of a singular person is immediate and immanent. Each word and act follows a consequence that one needs to be responsible for. Responsibility exists in relation to the necessity for a genuine response (Buber 1965, 16). Acts are always responding, they are always reacting to something. For Hannah Arendt, singular responsibility is an ethical issue that escapes the possibilities of hiding behind any shared or political understanding of community. Responsibility is singular: only one singular person can be responsible in specific concrete situations. Responsibility can never be shared or deal with abstract scenarios. (Arendt 1994, 289–290.) This means that I cannot give my responsibility to somebody else to take care of: it cannot be shared. For me, it meant being responsible, and being the only one responsible of what we did with Thomas. It does not mean that Thomas would not be responsible as well,

but it means that I cannot ask that of him, or of anybody else, and that I cannot rely on anybody else's responsibility. Being responsible should not, however, mean taking a position of power. Some ideas and goals that came from the *Art Without Borders* project and that I felt obliged to fulfil, such as producing artwork for the exhibition together with Thomas, were difficult to carry on while maintaining the idea of responsibility. I was not able to agree with all that the official project represented.

The ethics and responsibility of Levinas is founded on asymmetry. Unlike Buber, for Levinas the intersubjective relationship is always a non-symmetrical relationship, and is therefore founded on inequality (Levinas 2009, 98). It means that what I can insist on from myself, I cannot insist on from the 'Other'.<sup>42</sup> The ego cannot demand reciprocity. It also means that even though I cannot demand anything from the 'Other', I must be extremely responsible towards the 'Other' and always put the 'Other' before 'I'. Even though this ideology seems utopian, it is the nature of the ethical requirement, and it can be implemented momentarily via our actions (Wallenius 1992, 207). This ethical requirement is obvious in pedagogical relations. A pedagogue is always responsible for the pedagogical situations, and she cannot insist that the student would be as responsible as she herself is towards the pedagogy in question. However, the ethical asymmetry that Levinas writes about goes deeper than that. He claims that I am also responsible for the Other's sense of responsibility (Levinas 2009, 96). I understand this to mean that I must also be responsible for what the 'Other' is responsible for. Although I am writing from the perspective of pedagogy, the Levinasian notion of responsibility includes all people. It should not be understood to include only people in power, such as teachers. Responsibility does not concern any particular group of people that could assume responsibility for all others. That would be an incorrect understanding of the philosophical notions that Levinas is referring to, which are built on respect and humbleness.

Levinas's idea of asymmetry differs from the Western ethical endeavour to understand the 'Other' as I understand myself. The basis for ethical actions has been an identification with the 'Other', relating one's own experiences to the other's experiences and trying to understand the other as I understand myself: to do same things for the other that I would wish be done for me in the same situation. (Tuohimaa 2001, 37.) Levinas emphasises that ethics cannot be related to one's own experiences or based on one's own needs, because the 'Other' is always more than my subjectivity can comprehend. I find this to be fundamentally different from the ethics that is usually practiced in everyday life. I also find this to be the major proposition in support of ethics and a responsible pedagogy. Such a proposition demands that we think about the other's needs and wants, what the 'other' is interested in, and not about what I need and want him to be interested in. As mentioned before, Thomas was interested

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42 *There are two 'others' for Levinas: on the one hand, we have the 'Other' with a capital 'O', Autrui, the radical 'Other' that calls us into question; in contrast, there is also an 'other' with a lower-case 'o', autre, which is another person.*

in using just one colour at a time, spreading monochromic colour layers and painting the surface of the paper smoothly and evenly. My first reaction was to offer him other tones and make other colour mixtures. He did not care about that. Soon enough, I learned to value his choices and how to support them.<sup>43</sup> For Levinas, ‘responsibility must be concrete because the ego is not called to respond from a transcendent being or ideal imperative, but from the approach of an incarnate ‘Other’. The subject who responds is also an incarnate being, who can only respond with concrete hospitality. This hospitality is so extreme that the ego must be “capable of giving the bread out of his mouth, or giving his skin” (Simmons 1999, 89).

I will continue the dialogical journey between my research partner and myself by discussing how some Finnish philosophers have interpreted Levinas’s theories and by concentrating in particular on Levinas’s first central work, *Totality and Infinity*. First, I clarify the main hypothesis of Levinas’s philosophy in those parts of the text that I find important for my research. Although Levinas’s thoughts are used quite practically in this thesis, I am well aware of the philosophical nature of his ethics when viewing them through the lens of art pedagogy. Levinasian ethics is not anything that could be developed into a set of rules or prior codes. Ethics is not a reason or explanation for behaviour. It is a matter of explaining our relationship with the ‘Other’, which comes before meaning itself (Young 2004, 56).

## LEVINAS AND ENCOUNTERING PEDAGOGY

It is not the insufficiency of the I that prevents totalization, but the Infinity of the Other.

Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*

*Thomas looks at a crayon. I take it as self-evident that he is looking at the colour of the crayon and considering what shade of colour he would like to work with. In fact—and I understand this later—he is apparently interested in the crayon itself, as an object, not for its colour. He rotates the crayon in his hands, as if he is trying to observe its objectiveness. Clearly, I have difficulties in realising that there would be anything else to look at other than the colour of the crayon. I try to help him by saying, ‘Thomas, this is yellow’. Later on, I understand that the colours do not have names for him. I realise that the names of the colours do not mean much to him and that the names are not connected to the colour experience in any way. Not knowing the names did not seem to hinder his enjoyment of the colours. Rarely, if ever, have I seen anyone enjoy colours as much as he did. I realised that the intellectual and conceptual process—all the jargon that we use*

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<sup>43</sup> *The pedagogical ethics described here should not be confused with all teaching. Surely learning is a painful process that sometimes, and very often, includes studying things that do not seem interesting to the learner at the moment.*

*to try to explain our colour experiences—is in no way related to the experimental and sensorial enjoyment that Thomas gained from colours. Understanding this, I realised that what I knew before is not of significance within this research project. I now understood what it means that the ‘Other’ is completely different from me: we do not share the same experience, the same pleasures, the same desires, and we never will. We do not share them, even though we often can explain our experiences as being the ‘Same’ through language.*

For Levinas, ethics is the first philosophy (Levinas 1996, 69). He followed Edmund Husserl’s ideas of phenomenology, but soon found Heidegger closer to his thinking. His argument deviated from that of his contemporaries and predecessors, which prioritised ontology and epistemology and placed practical issues, such as ethics, in a secondary position. For his contemporaries, the world of theoretical logical reasoning had to be defined before searching for the ethics underpinning it. Levinas criticised epistemological reasoning and set ethical thinking at the centre of his philosophy. Actually, ethics for him existed prior to philosophy (the history of metaphysics, of ontology) and even before any philosophy of ethics (Young 2004, 56).

Levinas states that it is impossible to define a complete and rational reality without considering the ‘Other’, since the ‘Other’ always brings something unpredictable from his own otherness, from his own alterity (Wallenius 1992, 201; Tuohimaa 2001, 35). A person first exists in the world as a social being, constituted by a relationship, for whom the not-me —that is, the ‘Other’—sets the demands; he only exists secondarily as a conceptual and thematic being. This relationship is not the wilful act of an ego, nor is it a relationship based on knowledge. It is a relationship of infinite responsibility, or respons(e)ability, for the otherness of the ‘Other’. (Wallenius 1992, 208; Biesta 2003, 62.) I claim that, just as we should view ethics as the first philosophy, which existed before epistemology, so too should ethics be considered the first and most important factor in pedagogy: ethics should come before knowledge in the field of education. The ego does not *choose* to answer the Other’s demand; instead, to be human, the ego *must* respond to the ‘Other’ (Simmons 1999, 86, *emph. added*). This viewpoint is different from traditional ethics, which is tied to conscious decision making by the ethical subject, that follows the existing ethical regulations, guidelines or laws.

In traditional ways of thinking, the subject is ethical when her/his acts are based on ethical choices rather than on coincidental or customary reactions. Choices are based on judgement, and on anticipating and taking responsibility for the consequences. This is also a good depiction of an ethical pedagogue. We tend to think that a pedagogue is ethical when her/his behaviour is based on critical judgement and ethical intentions. For Levinas, this is not enough. He describes how an ethical experience appears in real life before the conscious ‘self’ is even aware of it. He thinks that the limits of the responsibility of ‘I’ cannot be limited to concerning only those acts that I is aware of, but that ‘I’ is responsible also for those acts that ‘I’ did not mean or that ‘I’ is not

consciously aware of. (Tuohimaa 2001, 36.) When analysing my and Thomas's collaborative work, this kind of ethics became more and more important to me. I came across moments when I had not been aware of my acts and behaviour, but which I nevertheless was responsible for. I analysed carefully those moments where I could see the limits of my own behaviour. I, for example, did not see his small gestures of reaching out for me when I was working with my own artwork. Or, I pulled away from his tickling touch over and over again, thinking that was a way to be a responsible pedagogue. I realised that pedagogical ethicalness cannot be limited to well-meaning ethical intentions. Ethics must go deeper than that. One needs to be unconditionally and painfully critical of her or his own behaviour. And even after that, there is always more to be done.

Levinas's ethics can be described through questioning the ego, the knowing subject and its *natural thinking*, its *spontaneity* (Levinas 2008, 35–40). According to him, Western philosophy has given a great role to ontology by looking at the structure of the individual and subjectivity and the knowing ego. (Wallenius 1992, 201; Hankamäki 2004, 93.) According to the initial philosophy of ethics, the main part of being a human being has to do with being together with other people, regardless of how little the history of philosophy has paid attention to this before. From the standpoint of *living*, the most significant feature of existing means existing with other people, since people cannot exist in any other way. (Varto 2005, 64–71.) For Levinas, ethics refers to the ego's criticism of one's own freedom and activities. Levinas criticises a natural way of thinking that prevents the possibilities for ethical living by referring to Husserl and the ontological tradition. He argues that one has to learn to transcend such natural thinking, to break free from what comes so naturally to us. (Hankamäki 2004, 93–94.) He says that what we call ethics refers to what is present when the 'Other', through its very presence, questions my spontaneity (Levinas 2008, 43).

Natural and spontaneous thinking happen 'naturally' and self-evidently, without criticism or the need for ethical consideration. Unless we consciously want to awaken an ethical awareness, we might end up living our life in the same way that Plato described natural thinking in his famous allegory of the cave: a group of people who live all of their lives chained to the wall of a cave by their legs and heads, facing a blank wall and watching blurry shadows projected onto the wall by things passing in front of the fire behind them. The prisoners do not know anything about themselves other than as shadows and sounds. Plato's example of the social-cultural condition describes the natural thinking that we often practice when following the dominant norms and ways of thinking. (Varto 2005, 87–88.)

For Levinas, natural thinking refers to a tendency that seems to be inherent in all of us to determine the world and other people from our own perspective, based on our subjective ambitions. Levinas's ethics specifically resist this 'natural' self-centredness. Natural thinking is a weight, one that is hard to recognise because it is such a firm



and fixed part of our habits and routines. (Hankamäki 2004, 94.) Knowledge based on natural thinking is typically knowledge without a context (Wallenius 1992, 203). Transcending natural thinking is the first and most important mission in ethics. Transcending natural thinking is especially important in pedagogical situations. Nothing is as easy as repeating habitual practices familiar from own experiences, without ever doubting our own natural reactions to these practices. The practices of everyday life, valuing the superior power of own experiences and sticking with the authority of a 'teacher position', are typical limits of natural thinking that powerfully prevent new ethical perceptions.

Each encounter between people is a unique ethical process, which always includes pre-assessed norms, the ego's needs and our own desires. The biggest obstacle in the ethical encounter is the ego, which is at the centre of our inner reality and which also calculates everything from the subjective objectives and seeks to dominate other people. As Varto says, 'The Other does not exist in natural thinking: when we are with other people we understand and interpret them on based on our own needs and aims' (Varto 2005, 74). Our own needs and aims, guided by the ego, are therefore misleading us. We forget that the 'other' is the one we should concentrate on. Transcending natural thinking require a certain degree of passivity, which is key for transcending the ego's power and taking a conscious position outside of our own apparent laws and limitations. Levinas describes this process as an entrance into an outer existence, not as a value per se, meaning that outer existence *par excellence* is another person. (Hankamäki 2004, 94–95.) Adopting a certain passivity towards the ego does not mean annihilating the ego. Although Levinasian responsibility questions the privileged place of the 'Same', the ego stays intact, albeit in a subordinate position. (Simmons 1999, 86.) I understand this to be a meaningful endeavour, as both an imperative part of our ethical responsibility towards the 'Other' and as a pedagogical stance.

The knowing ego and its spontaneity belong to a realm that Levinas calls *Same (le Même)*. Levinas's 'Same' is the 'I' in Buber's thinking, and Buber's 'Thou' corresponds to 'the Other' (*l'autrui*) for Levinas (Hankamäki 2004, 92). The 'Same' is part of 'I' and part of the protecting world (Levinas 2008, 41). Together, they create an entity, a totality, that 'I' can master. The 'I' is open to the world through senses, and correspondingly the world is visible and exposed through the senses' abilities, forms and conditions of perceiving 'I'. Therefore, 'I' makes the world exist. Ergo, the world exists to a perceiving subject. The 'Same' also means that the world exists in the way that the subject needs it to exist. It is typical for 'I' to perceive the world through equivalence: what is necessary corresponds to the needs of 'I'. That which the 'I' does not need is useless (in-different) and left outside of the totality of 'I' and the world (Tuohimaa 2001, 36).

From a pedagogue's perspective, the 'other'—the student/s—exists because of the need to learn. The 'Other' also exists in the pedagogue's world, that is, in her totality. Many things that a pedagogue teaches to students can therefore seem important, even necessary, even though it might be just to fulfil the needs of the pedagogue's ego. With

Thomas, that became clear to me. Things that I would have wanted to teach to him, such as mixing colours, would have only fed my own totalising world. He was happiest with one monochromatic colour tone, and everything else would have just lessened the enjoyment of the colours for him. Levinas's concern with an ontology that denies and flattens the unique difference of the 'Other' is transformed, in pedagogical terms, into a process of drawing knowledge out of the students, of transmuting the students into the kind of being that the pedagogue already has in mind (Jackson 2006, 2).

Within art education, many issues and rules of image making can be taught for the wrong reasons. This is what happens when students with disabilities are taught following a curriculum that includes, for example, a formalist art education or style of teaching that is based on elements and principles. Where would a student with autism need knowledge based on a colour wheel, and why would he need to know about artists from the golden age of Finnish art in the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century, like the Finnish National Core Curriculum for Basic Education (2004) suggests? Moving only within the totality of a particular way of thinking or a particular agenda feels safe. For a pedagogue, it might feel like an inconvenient risk to step outside of the totalised world, and rethink the curriculum from the Other's infinite perspective. Unravelling the totality and opening oneself up to the Other's infinity, however, offers the possibility to see the world as endlessly surprising and unpredictable. Levinas says that we must talk about what we cannot actually talk about (Tuohimaa 2001, 35). And furthermore, we should not rely on what we already know, since knowledge is founded on sameness, on the horizon that belongs to our totality (Wallenius 1992, 202).

Just as Levinas states that we must talk about what we cannot talk about, I state that it is important to teach what we do not yet know about. It is as important to realise that there are things to teach and learn that are so far away from our totality that we do not recognise them as being anything important. This does not necessarily lessen their value. This was my experience when working with Thomas. I did not sense that I would have needed to teach him anything in a traditional way, but I truly felt that I was encountering another person, and I felt that I learned something in the process, and, more importantly, I felt that I was opening my own world towards the Other's infinity.

One needs to take a risk when revealing oneself in front of the 'Other' as a way of entering into an ethical relationship. This makes the welcoming of the 'Other' possible. (Säfström 2003, 19–20 & 26.) The main implication of a pedagogy of encounter is to rethink the pedagogical moments as an ethical relationship first, even though we may not always be certain about what that means. As Jackson puts it, 'Rather than an "ethics of pedagogy" that would assume to know what it means to be ethical, Levinas would have us to think about a "pedagogy of ethics" that starts with an infinite and asymmetrical responsibility for the other and works relationally in search of what might be ethical' (Jackson 2006, 3). Pedagogy should not be reduced to something that is already known. For Levinas, that would be an egoistic endeavour that ultimately violates the 'Other'.

In the next section, I discuss one of Levinas's main theses about the face-to-face relationship. I start again with a journal note. This note is one example of my initial reflections, which I have later been critical of. Regardless of the possible contradiction mentioned above, I wanted to add this note as well so as to show the challenges presented by a sense of ethics and responsibility in our collaboration.

## FACE-TO-FACE



*A collaborative painting by Thomas Kaarni and Mira Kallio-Tavin (2005).*

*Thomas's face does not speak any language to me and yet still his face is exposed to me. I am longing for his reaction to my face. He does not look me in my eyes. Still, no eye contact.*

*I paint an image of my face on the paper, wondering, and hoping, that maybe he would recognise me in the image. I show the painting to Thomas, wishing him to continue painting the image of my face. I want to see his reaction to my face on the paper. He glances at the painting but does not seem to be too enthusiastic about it. However, he starts with blue paint, the same colour that I had used around the face. First, he paints only around the face. He does not touch the face on the paper, only the area around it. He paints with thick dark blue layers. The blue is intense, mesmerizing, just like Yves Klein's or Anish Kapoor's work.*

*After a while, he starts painting with the blue paint over the face, peacefully and with determination. He looks at me and smiles impishly when painting over the face, as if he would know exactly what he is doing when slowly hiding the face under blue paint. The blue paint rejects the lightly painted face in a way; even after painting over the face a couple of times, the face is still dimly visible.*

*I try to hide my disappointment about my gradually vanishing face. I feel ashamed of my childish reaction. I tell myself that it is only an image of me and that I should not read too much into Thomas's actions. What he does to the painting is very different from how it looks to me. What he is trying to do to it—that I will never get to know. Is he over-painting the face on purpose? Is he having fun? Does he recognise my face? While struggling with my own uncertainty in front of the other, I feel persistent and calm sitting face-to-face with him, knowing that the encounter affects both of us differently but significantly.*

In this journal entry, I am eager to know what Thomas thinks and knows. It is almost as if, by getting to know his thoughts, I could come to understand him. I even state that he knows exactly what he is doing. Surely, there is no possibility for me to know that with any certainty. There is a touch, a need for control, on those lines. This control I understand comes partially from the subject of the painting at hand, my self-portrait. Wanting to understand the other is exactly the unethical relationship that I have so far been working against. Understanding and knowing the other involves taking him into my sameness, or diminishing our participation in the I – It relationship. Rather, in an ethical relationship, the 'other' is infinitely 'Other' and absolutely strange. This radical alterity is truly visible: it is the essence of the relationship and apparent on the face. The face is the revolution that opens the body and the whole person to the 'Other'. This otherness is shocking and outrageously *Other*; its presence is so abstract that it does not belong to this [my] world (Hankamäki 2004, 95–96). The face in front of me brings along with it rectitude and an uprightness that exposes me and reminds me of my duty, of my responsibility, to the 'Other'. As Levinas and Kearney put it, 'To expose myself to the vulnerability of the face is to put my ontological privileging of "the right to exist". To expose myself to the vulnerability of the face is to put my ontological right to existence into question' (Levinas & Kearney 1986, 23–24).

For Levinas, a face-to-face meeting is the most important type of encounter. An ethical endeavour does not come from a person as such, but from encountering the 'Other'. When in front of another person, one is open, exposed, receptive and without his or her own aspirations. Another person's face is an entrance to the infinity. A face *means* infinity, whether hostile or friendly. The face of another person can break the thread of making the 'Other' out to be the 'Same' as us, and expose clearly and momentarily that what is not the 'Same' as me, but what is truly 'Other'. (Levinas 2008, 81; Varto 2005, 92 & 93; Wallenius 2005, 49.) A face-to-face encounter is the

ultimate ethical relationship, since the face is exposed, menaced, which invites us to take part in an act of violence and, at the same time, the face is what forbids us from killing another. Levinas says, 'The skin of the face is that which stays most naked, most destitute. It is the most naked, through with a decent nudity.' (Levinas 2009, 86.)

While Levinas speaks only about the meaning of the face, he thinks that the whole body represents the face. In that way, face-to-face meetings do not mean just making eye contact, nor does it mean that the rest of the person would be less meaningful. The whole corporeal person as flesh is important. A face-to-face encounter is one possibility to encounter my own totalised world and try to open it to the infinity. Totalising other people is easy when they are farther away, more distant from 'I'. Then, defining other people based on their race, ethnicity, gender or disability becomes axiomatic. But when encountering another person's face, I realise that s/he is not just a representative of her/his ethnicity, not 'for example "Jewish"', because a person is always singular and does not fit under any general concepts' (Wallenius 2005, 49). When face-to-face with another person, I lose my totalising definition, since the 'other' is always more than my efforts to define her/him.

Being close with a person, however, does not necessarily mean being face-to-face with her/him, which is really what seeing and encountering the 'other' is all about: we can end up defining a person that we are close to as frequently as we can people that are more distanced from us. For example, a mother can always be defined as a mother rather than as another person. (Varto 2005, 75.) In fact, the other person's alterity might be even more difficult, even scary, to realise with people that are close to us. The closer a person may be to us, the more we may think that s/he is the 'Same' as us. The most difficult otherness to realise is the otherness of myself, and the otherness of the person that I am in love with. Familiarity seems to blur the appreciation of the 'Other'. Face-to-face encounters thus should not be confused with just meeting with somebody in the flesh. Just meeting with Thomas and working with him in the same space did not automatically mean that we had a face-to-face encounter. Indeed, people meet all the time, without really facing one another.

The process of ethical encountering with the 'Other' happens on two levels: on a conscious level and on corporeal intentional level (Levinas 2008, 207). Words and speaking represent the conscious level. The corporeal intentional level, an embodied unconscious level, comes before the conscious level. The approach to the face is the most basic mode of responsibility; it is more ancient than consciousness and more foundational than the cultural or existential recognition of the 'Other'. (Levinas & Kearney 1986, 23; Hankamäki 2004, 95; Tuohimaa 2001, 36; Gregoriou 2008, 213.) According to Gregoriou, 'The face of the Other (*la visage d'Autrui*) enacts a structure of responsibility more primary than consciousness, more binding than mutuality, more engaging than agency, more stern than the imperative appeal of juridicality, and more immediate than the vulnerability of bare skin' (Gregoriou 2008, 213).

Pedagogically, working face-to-face requires an attitude that aims to destroy all the pre-notions and pre-definitions of the other person. Letting go of that kind of

knowledge might be a demanding process. One could think that working together, getting to know each other alone, would crack the definitions. That is not what necessarily happens: quite the contrary, in fact. One should try not to have prior assumptions about new people before even meeting, such as about new students, even though this might require more complex everyday planning.<sup>44</sup> Säftström (2003, 25) states that by determining the meaning of the ‘other’—the student—the pedagogue can escape an ethical relationship and retreat into the comfort of having prior knowledge about the ‘other’. Thus, the relationship then loses its immediate essence and the student is turned into an object of the pedagogue’s knowledge. I could have worked with Thomas for two years, while all the time thinking that I was working primarily with a person with autism. But encountering him face-to-face made this impossible. We were two people with different ways of communicating, different tempers, and we both also had different kinds of days, good days and bad days. Those issues determined how we worked together much more than anything else that we know about each other.

The responsibility for another person is ultimately the responsibility of the other person’s life. This can be seen directly in the other person’s face. Levinas goes so far as to say that the direct and naked openness of the face is also an openness to death. (Levinas 2009, 86.) This statement makes most sense when thinking about Levinas’s personal history during the Second World War and his experiences in a concentration camp. Within the context of contemporary Western culture, where death seems remote and of little concern to most people, Levinas’s example might sound extreme. The cultural distance from dying should not, however, limit Levinas’s understanding of the face as a site of openness, or access, as Nancy terms it (2000, 14). The face of the ‘Other’ places demands on me, it interferes with my sense of liberty and freedom and calls for a type of responsibility that I cannot refuse (jagodzinski 2002a, 86). The demands suggested by the appearance of the face no doubt also imply an invitation to serve and to give. It also means a demand not to leave the ‘Other’ alone, even in front of the unbearable. (Levinas 1996, 92.) Turning yourself towards the ‘Other’ and encountering the ‘Other’ means seeing the other person not as an object. To quote Levinas: ‘The best way of encountering the Other is not even to notice the colour of his eyes! When one observes the colour of the eyes one is not in social relationship with the Other’. (Levinas 2009, 85.)

The face also introduces an element of strangeness into our being together: ‘strangeness’ refers to the fact that each singularity is another way of accessing the world. Each

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<sup>44</sup> *This is not what the school system, for example, supports. The tendency is to define the new students for teachers with a few bullet points, such as their gender, their skill level or their ability to focus. Disabilities are listed, such as other impairments. These definitions typically narrow the person so that they are a part of the teacher’s sameness, her or his own totalised world, not the students’ other, infinite, world. Derby (2011) points out, by referring to the work of Blandy et al. (1988), that this way of categorising disability is a typical approach in special education. He criticises art education’s connections with special education by claiming that special education typically brings up these problems. (Derby 2011, 96.)*

person exposes a unique singularity to the world. We catch a glimpse of this individual, unique singularity in the faces of new-born babies, as well as in the final expression on a dead person's face. Each child has already concealed her or his access to the world and we are eager and curious to search for a way to identify this world by assessing who the child looks like, or we check to see if a dead person still looks like her/himself after death. What we are looking for there, in the faces, or in the photographs of those faces, is not an image: we are looking for a way to access the world. (Nancy 2000, 14.) As Nancy says, the face is a way to access another person, and more importantly, to access the world. If it were not possible to access the world or its origin through the 'Other', then we would not be fascinated by the faces of others. The face of a new-born baby or the face of a dead person are extreme examples of how another person can help us access what Nancy calls the origin of the world and understand something about the meaning of life; this idea is similar to Levinas's discussion of openness. Seeking the meanings that are revealed by faces is at the core of everything we do in pedagogy. Through faces, we are exposed to the world and to ourselves, and this is the sense of existence, the (only) sense of our being-together.

In the next section, I summarise the Levinasian approach to encountering the 'Other', and discuss in detail the notion of otherness and desire within the social context of difference. The desire to seek out the 'Other' is understood as an ethical way of sharing the world with others.

## THE DESIRE OF THE OTHER

Understanding the Other's otherness might seem more clear when the 'Other' has been diagnosed as different. However, this is not the case. The Other's otherness is not connected to her/his character, physiognomy or psychology (Levinas 1987, 83). Interestingly, knowing that the Other's difference is based on the characteristics listed above does not necessary limit the desire to view the 'Other' as being similar to myself, the 'Same' as me. In fact, it is quite the contrary. Viewing the 'Other' as being the 'Same' as me would be easier, since then I could continue what people usually do: manipulate and control the 'Other' for my own benefit. Instead, I have to internalise the fact that he will remain a stranger, inhabit an alien world of his own, and that he is not an object that must be interpreted and illuminated via my alien light. He shines forth with his own light and speaks for himself. The inevitable question follows: How can I coexist with him and still leave his otherness intact? (Wild 2008, 13–14.) Thomas's autism does not make him any more or less 'Other' than if he would be a non-autistic person. His world is never less than my own; it is just different and impossible for me to share. As Levinas points out, we are primarily others to one another and only secondarily different, based on certain characteristics that we may share between each other. The alterity of the encounter is more important and actually the only significant category that we need to consider. (Hankamäki 2004, 92.) In this

sense, the differences between people, be they cultural or based on particular abilities, do not affect the alterity of the encounter. They may just make it more visible.

As explained earlier, in natural thinking (as opposed to ethical thinking) one does not take responsibility for the consequences. Natural thinking is typically not tied to contexts. Instead, knowledge is based on a need to make everything the 'Same'. When thinking includes contextualising, it also includes *desire*, which is lost when adopting a natural thinking attitude. Desire is metaphysical and it 'tends toward *something else entirely*, toward the *absolutely other*' (Levinas 2008, 33). The one that is desired is always separate from the one that desires. This makes desire different from need. Desire cannot be satisfied in the same way that need or will can be satisfied. With desire, there is always a metaphysical distance that cannot be crossed. Difference and strangeness remain because 'I' and the 'Other' can never be the 'Same'. Need belongs to the realm of the 'Same', while desire pulls the ego away from the 'Same' and moves it towards the beyond. (Levinas 2008, 34; 2009, 92; Wallenius 1992, 203.)

Simmons clarifies the process of desire and how it is different than need:

Need opens upon a world that is for me; it returns to the self. [...] It is an assimilation of the world in view of coincidence with oneself, or happiness. As the desired is approached, on the other hand, the hunger increases. Nonetheless, desire also originates in an ego who longs for the unattainable. Therefore, desire has a dual structure of transcendence and interiority. This dual structure includes an absolutely Other, the desired, which cannot be consumed and an ego who is preserved in this relationship with the transcendent. Thus, there is both a relationship and a separation. (Simmons 1999, 85)

According to Levinas, the ego tries to grasp the 'Other' but will always remain unable to do so. The ego is pulled out of itself toward the transcendent. (Simmons 1999, 85.) For Levinas, ego can never exist alone. Desire and longing for the 'Other', the social existence, are inevitably a part of ego. The 'Other' appears as the desire for the infinity: it is a desire for the absolute 'Other', 'a desire without satisfaction, which, precisely, *understands* the remoteness, the alterity, and the exteriority of the Other' (Levinas 2008, 34).

Petr Kouba (2008) sees similarities between the ways in which Levinas and Deleuze and Guattari view desire and how both conceptions of desire mediate the relationship to the outside. While there are structural analogies, these analogies should not overshadow the fundamental differences between how Levinas links the outside with metaphysical desire and how Deleuze and Guattari expose the outside through productive desire. However, both ways of thinking conceive of a relationship to the outside that is beyond the reach and capacity of our comprehension. For Levinas, it is metaphysical exteriority, that is, the exteriority of the 'Other', whereas for Deleuze and Guattari it is outside of all social systems, traditional structures and regimes of signification. Desire, as a way of accessing the outside, is never the desire for an object. On the contrary, it manifests itself as pure passion. Also, Deleuze and Guattari separate



desire strongly from need, stating that desire does not arise from an insufficiency or a lack of anything. (Kouba 2008, 76–79.)

According to Buber, people are born as individuals and only a dialogical position makes it possible to grow up to be a person. Levinas says that the personality is guided early on by the fact that we are born as social beings and need to respond to the Other's demands well before we are capable of any conceptual thinking. A child communicates with others before even being aware that s/he is doing so: s/he smiles, flirts, cries and makes other sounds to get other people's attention. What does being social primarily mean for a person with autism? The social requirement of the world is the same for all of us, but people with autism respond to the demand differently than do non-autistic people. One could claim that a person with autism is not developing his personality in the Buberian dialogical way. This does not mean that a person with autism will not develop his personality at all. I believe that the ultimate question that guides people's thinking in this respect is as follows: Can people with autism express a sense of desire for the 'Other'? I claim that, yes, they can.

Being social and reacting to others can sometimes be different from what we recognise in everyday situations, and we might need to be more sensitive to recognising different ways of engaging in dialogue. My research partner taught me that the other person is the 'Other' and that I cannot make him the 'Same' as me. I learned this from him precisely because he did not follow the social rules in a similar way as many others would. He did not pretend to like the same things that I do, or to behave and react similarly as I do. I could not fool myself about him not being the 'Other', as I can in so many other relationships if I so choose. And still, his otherness is no stranger than anybody else's otherness.

While working together with Thomas, I began to consider the multiple positions of difference and how they are produced. I realised that the difference is embedded in togetherness. Recognising the presence of alienness in the 'self' became most significant to me (Kristeva 1991; Ang, 1997, 57–64; Suominen 2005, 16). Julia Kristeva writes about being a stranger and a foreigner. She confronts her alienness in the presence of a strong and homogeneous culture. While she writes about the difference that comes from having different national backgrounds, the social difference of such an encounter, as I see it, is not that different for people with disabilities. It is ultimately the mainstream ableist culture that is seen as the norm, and all other cultures, whether they are people who come from other countries or people who have other abilities, are confronted with the strong and homogeneous mainstream culture. For her, strangeness is formed in the friction and paradox of belonging and not-belonging, it is formed between the exclusive excitement and exotics of freedom and feeling alienated and in feeling suspicious and inadequate compared to others and mostly to the 'self'.

Kristeva writes from the perspective of psychoanalytic theory. Her main argument is that the stranger lives inside of us, in our subjectivities. She asks if the relationship between 'I' and the 'Other' could be redefined, and if it is possible to accept the 'other' as radically different without worrying about a loss of own identity. Her notions of the

relationship between the 'self' and 'other' come close to those of Levinas: she argues that the 'I' could never exist without the 'Other' and that the 'Other' could never exist without the 'self'. Understanding this process between the 'self' and a stranger, the 'Other', gives us the possibility to rethink the meaning of community and society. The idea of a stranger, a foreigner, was built during the development of nation-states and is hence an unconscious part of all of us. Her idea—that *if we all acknowledged ourselves as foreigners, then the foreigners around us would disappear*—can be adapted to fit all human encounters.

Levinas's 'Other' and the 'Other' in psychoanalytical theory are not one and the same, especially given their conflicting understandings of the subject.<sup>45</sup> However, regardless of the tensions between the two definitions, I am not the first researcher that finds it interesting to use both definitions simultaneously, especially in an educational context. For example, Sharon Todd and Jan Jagodzinski have written about Levinas and the project of psychoanalytical theory in education (Todd 2003a) as well as in art education (Jagodzinski 2002a). For Todd, 'they [Levinas and psychoanalytical theory] offer insight into how the surprising and unpredictable forms of relationality that arise in the immediacy of an encounter with difference carry profound relevance for ethical interaction' (Todd, 2003a, 4).

Jan Jagodzinski emphasises the singular nature of ethics while grouping together Levinas's and Lacan's notions of the ethics of the 'Other'. Lacan's formulation of the *objet a* (the unknown element, which is the 'cause' of desire) occupies precisely the point of exteriority in oneself that Levinas identifies as alterity. According to Jagodzinski, it is because of *objet a* that we hate or abject the 'Other'—or that we desire or need the 'Other'—and must respond ethically to it. (Jagodzinski 2002a, 87.) It then becomes crucial to ask the question, what does the 'Other' want of me? What is the Other's demand? (Jagodzinski 2005b, 21).

Todd acknowledges the tension between the two viewpoints, between Levinasian philosophy and psychoanalytical theory, but nevertheless emphasises their importance for education; he finds ways in which the two viewpoints can be held in tension to one another without collapsing their significant differences: 'Both discourses offer education a way of thinking through the relationship between self and Other that refuses to ignore affect as significant not only to learning but to engagements with difference. Moreover, both view the fragility of the self as the source of traumatic wounding when it encounters difference, acknowledging that the Other disrupts one's self-identity. And, finally, both view the relation between self and Other as basically nonreciprocal and asymmetrical.' (Todd 2003a, 13.)

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<sup>45</sup> For example, in Lacanian psychoanalytic theory the 'Other' is understood through the symbolic order and through language, the subject is only a subject because of the unconscious, and ethics is ultimately connected to registering the 'Real'. In comparison, Levinas's egoless theory is seen as naïve for the purposes of psychoanalysis and an ethics that pre-dates the subject. Thus, for Levinas psychoanalysis is violent and not an ethical discourse.

## DOUBTS OF DIALOGUE

We are the same and the other.

Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*



*A collaborative painting by Thomas Kaarni and Mira Kallio-Tavin (2006).*

*He* spatters water with his brush. The water floating on the paper seems to fascinate him. Painting does not seem to interest him today. He continues spattering water with a lazy wrist movement. The paper is soaking wet. I spread red paint on the paper, mixing it slowly with the floating water. Thomas dips his brush into the floating paper, smoothing the paint islands with the water. We both paint in red. Thomas takes thick blue paint with no water and starts to paint in the right corner of the paper: a solid, monochromatic ultramarine corner, just like so many other times before. When the corner is done, he continues spreading the blue paint on the other parts of the paper, systematically and evenly. I start painting the right corner of my paper with blue paint as well. I enjoy the variations and contrasts in the colours. My painting is not so even. When Thomas sees this, he starts painting over the areas I have done, like cleaning up the mess after me. The blue paint turns purple and brownish when mixing with red and orange.

*Just when the paint is about to become all blue and purple, I decide to take the bright yellow paint. I paint yellow and red patterns on top of the entire painting. Thomas does not seem to be too excited about this. He looks around, and then he starts painting his palette. I realise that I disturbed his way of thinking and that he*

*lost interest. When he finally continues painting on the paper, his objective is again to even out my yellow and red patterns into the blue patterns. I continue adding yellow and red paint. He starts to paint the right corner of his paper in blue. I wonder if I forced him into his 'safe corner' with the blue paint. Suddenly, he takes a look at the rest of the paint, dips his brush into the red paint, then rubs, stirs and shakes the brush in the red paint before starting to smoothly spread it onto the purple-blue painting. I realise his need to cover the painting with a smooth paint. Together we spread thick red paint all over the painting. The red paint forms deep and shallow layers with the blue paint, which is dimly visible and creates a thick purple colour. I feel that I cannot teach anything to Thomas, but that I have learned from him to enjoy monochromatic and even painting.*

How could I be the ethical pedagogue that I wanted to be? A purely ethical relationship, that is, a nonviolent relationship, suddenly seemed a non-realistic pedagogical fantasy. During the painting session, I wanted to provoke a reaction in Thomas. I wanted to help him enlarge his thinking in a positive way, thinking that learning requires breaking out of our comfort zone and being gently pushed in a new direction. Also, I wanted to take part with all my personality, to bring my own contribution to our collaborative work and not just act as a facilitator. By painting yellow patterns, I hoped to bring something new into Thomas's thinking. Later on, I realised that what I had tried came completely and only from my own world of thinking. It made me think about teaching in a new light and see what a violating process teaching is. To teach somebody means actually to violate his/her way of thinking. My pedagogical approach had changed from the early state of not guiding Thomas at all to taking a more active and participatory role. Still, I was pondering and critically questioning my own need to influence—even to teach, that is, to violate—Thomas's way of thinking. I did not directly teach Thomas, not in the traditional way at least. I did, however, guide and try to affect him with my reactions and I brought my own ideas into the picture via my own actions. I became more and more conscious of the aspect of 'non-teaching' that I discussed at the beginning and started to ponder the significance of teaching.

My painting and colour experiments represented something that I had learned during my art education, and yet they did not matter to Thomas at all. His sensorial and visual enjoyment came from different sources and it was disappointing to me that I did not understand that early on during our initial meetings. My own ego was strongly guiding our work sessions, no matter how noble my intentions were. No matter how dialogically I tried to work, I later on realised that my own way of expressing things had guided our work. My own art making made me pay less attention to him, the 'other', and to his way of doing art. I wonder why I did not share his painting ideas right from the start. I started to think about what it really means to be responsible for all of my actions, even those that I do not intend and that I am not aware of. Levinas's incessant

responsibility for another person requires me to also be responsible for my actions even when I am not consciously aware of them. I started to ponder, how could I be more responsible for the ethical and pedagogical relationship between Thomas and me?

According to psychoanalytical theory, relationships with other people always include inequality, different desires and violence. Levinas argues that violence exists in all our relationships with one another and is a necessary condition of subjectivity. The way that violence is discussed in this thesis and in psychoanalytical theory in general, as well as in Levinas's work on the 'Other', differs from the ordinary use of the word violence, such as in reference to physical torture or abuse. Levinas argues that the ethical—non-violent—self/Other relationship is a relationship of disinterestedness between two distinct beings, where the 'self' is passively open to the 'Other', and that it is this very passivity that is necessary in order to counteract the potential for violence that exists in our relationships with one another. In contrast to this perspective, psychoanalytical theory addresses the complex relationships that are laced with threads of affect and physical complications, where defences, identifications and ambivalences continually erupt in spite of our best intentions. (Todd 2003a, 12, 18.) For a teacher, it is crucial to acknowledge this violence and to recognise it in the 'self'. Otherwise pedagogical relationships would be dangerous and uncontrollable. Jan Jagodzinski points out that violence exists at the heart of the always unequal teacher-student relationship. This is evident just by acknowledging the existence of rights and laws that protect students from their teachers, especially against sexual and physical abuse, which are established according to the regulations of institutional schooling. (Jagodzinski 2002a, 85.)

I find violence an inherent factor in every relationship between two people, even when there is not any abuse and even in the most loving relationships. In pedagogical relationships, this factor is even stronger, since the power balance is unequal from the very start. To use a Freudian adage, 'becoming' means developing the ego and this development, that is, this 'learning to become', is inherently a violent activity. Education has a socialising function and a mission to change how people think and relate to the world. Therefore, education is understood as an inevitable, violent and external force that has the power to subject, that compels us to learn and become. The learning process is traumatic for the subject, who needs to let go of previous conceptions and learn to negotiate with the 'Other'.

The subject also needs to relinquish its own desires and drives in the service of sociality. In this negotiation with the external world, subjects learn to take pleasure and delight in the external world and learn to control themselves for the purpose of forming relationships with others. Social relations and social institutions, such as family and schooling, play a fundamental role in our becoming a being, a person. (Todd 2003a, 19–20.) The social environment appears very differently for a person with autism. In the constant negotiation with outside world and with the 'Other', a subject with autism struggles just as anybody else does, but the process of making symbolic connections

and of relinquishing its desires probably happens differently. This changes how the environment can react to the person. The notion of learning and becoming receives disparate significances.

I argue that the notion of a dialogical art pedagogy has to be redefined so as to be useful in diverse contexts, such as in disability contexts. In other words, we need to acknowledge the philosophical premises of pedagogy without trying to solve practical questions by aiming at creating certain dialogical conditions. Dialogue cannot be an aim unto itself because dialogue cannot be forced—it happens if it happens. Vuorikoski and Kiilakoski criticise dialogical pedagogy by citing Elizabeth Elsworth and the abstract notions of dialogue and especially the teacher-student relationship. The teacher-student model is strongly rooted in our educational culture; it limits communication regardless of our aims to create an open interaction in educational situations. By acknowledging the pre-existing power relations, however, it is possible to create proper conditions for dialogue. (Vuorikoski & Kiilakoski 2005, 309–310.) To acknowledge the unequal nature of any teacher-student relationship is to acknowledge the violence that exists at the heart of the relationship. Along with dialogue, there has to be an understanding of the inequality that exists between people, asymmetry as Levinas calls it, and the responsibility that it entails. The institution of education, as so many critical theorists have argued and clearly demonstrated, is essentially a battleground of competing discourses.

Since I am pedagogically responsible for even those things that I am not consciously aware of, it is crucial that I resolve the conditions and factors that are necessary for maintaining this responsibility. Education philosopher, researcher and classroom teacher Minna Juutilainen writes about her experiences at the beginning of her career as a teacher. She says she was confused about her own emotions and her ways of reacting during pedagogical encounters, and that it was necessary for her to understand the significance of these emotions and reactions via psychoanalytical theory. She argues that a successful pedagogy requires understanding and noticing the dynamics of the variable interaction of diverse minds. Pedagogy has a way of binding together the singular significances of different worlds of experiences, principles, acts of behaviour and hidden powers. (Juutilainen 2009, 246 & 248.) In my opinion, much of the pedagogical confusion that educational philosophers are confronting takes place because these hidden significances, principles and acts are not recognised. It is the teacher's responsibility to recognise them in the 'self', or at least to acknowledge that something like that exists in the 'self' and in the 'other'. The difference between the two is that the 'self' has no control over the 'Other'. So, the 'self' can only influence its own actions and emotions.

Throughout the thesis, I have been discussing the pedagogical conditions, desires, fantasies and countertransference of affects and defences. I will analyse the documentary video in the eighth chapter, where I will also develop my pedagogical hypothesis on how best to balance ambitious ethical goals, that is, passivity, openness and vulnerability, in front of the 'O/other'. Those pedagogical conditions inevitably influenced

my behaviour when working with my research partner Thomas, just as they influence all encounters between people. Thomas's and my working relationship was not a student-teacher relationship. I, however, state that what I learned from our collaboration is meaningful and significant also for educational purposes; that is why the next section focuses more on the type of pedagogy that is used in teaching and education. I will map the possibilities for seeing the ethical pedagogy that I have discussed so far in broader pedagogical contexts. As an art educator, my personal engagement is educational and I see the world around me through a pedagogical lens.

## TOWARDS A RESPONSIBLE PEDAGOGY

Confronting with another person is only possible through respecting the mystery of the other.

Martin Buber, *Minä ja Sinä*

Levinas and many other philosophers had witnessed clearly the consequences in the 1930s when ethics seemed to disappear. Levinas wrote his most significant work in the aftermath of the Holocaust, which had taken a devastating personal toll on him (Todd 2003a, 2). However, the world has not become a much better place since then, even though human rights are more closely controlled in Europe. Discussing issues of control, supervision and moral rules as a part of the dominant educational and social justice discourse is not the educational/pedagogical answer. One might just say that we should, in the words of Todd, '[...] [simply] get to know the other better, teach ourselves to be more empathic, learn to care for and about the other, and/or act more in accordance with principles of justice, respect, and freedom in order to make the violence of our lives disappear' (Todd 2003a, 7). And, for that matter, why not just teach rules in schools and tell students what is right and wrong, and so on? The self-explanatory answer is that surely those rules are taught and still the world has not become a more ethical place.

Ethics in pedagogy should not be a panacea, a programmatic code of rules or moral principles. In our society, there seems to be an idea that when we get to know a person, then we will not violate her/him and we will be more interested in her/his well-being and act more ethically towards her/him. This is why we learn one another's names and become more educated about other cultures through the individuals that we meet. However, according to Levinas, getting to know each other better does not lead to a better sense of ethics. We try to get to know the 'other', to learn *about* the 'other', we aim to understand the 'other' based on the assumption that the otherness of another person can be understood. However, the 'other' can never be understood. That only leads us to understand the 'other' from our own point of view based on how we live our life. This is also where the confusion comes from: the 'other' eventually does not behave like me and does not act similarly as me, no

matter how well I know her/him. Levinas argues that I cannot draw conclusions about how I am supposed to act based on my own experiences. In front of another person, we do, however, usually behave based on the knowledge and experience gained from our previous encounters with other persons. Pedagogically, I find it interesting to argue—although knowing it is impossible to implement—that doing so is more violating than remaining open and not drawing any conclusions based on our previous experiences.

This understanding challenges even the most progressive notions of disability within art education, such as pre-service teacher's work with disabled people based on Blandy's recommendations. His recommendations included increasing pre-service teachers' knowledge about students with disabilities and about the laws, key philosophical propositions and principles that guide disability rights, disability literature and alternative systems of language. He also recommended that future art educators have opportunities to interact with people with disabilities during their fieldwork. (Blandy 1994, 185–186.) While it seems like common sense that learning about disabilities would increase our understanding of them, Levinas in fact claims that a different process is taking place. He does not deny that we widen our perspective on other people when learning from them. What he is worried about is that while doing so, we often start to believe that we *know* the other person. When we are learning about their disabilities, we need to remember that we are only learning about that particular disability. In essence, we learn about the disability, but we do not learn much about the person we are working with—s/he is always much more than just her/his abilities.

Todd points out that it is different to learn *from* than to learn *about* the 'other'. In schools, it is important to teach *from* and *with* the 'other': instead of just tolerating others, instead of just including learning *from* other cultures, for example minorities cultures, in the curriculum, we need to construct classrooms from bases of inclusion so that people with disabilities can be included as well (the concept of integration, which was popular a decade ago, is understood nowadays as dissociative). In school teaching, it is crucial to be critical about the ethical values that are presented and put forward in education. The teacher, all teachers, need to always remember that pedagogy is a political, social and cultural practice.

Martin Buber wrote his pedagogical thesis in the 1920s. Pedagogical notions have changed radically during the last 90 years, first from an authority-centred to a child-centred pedagogy, and later towards a critical education that finds a dialogical approach inherently crucial to pedagogy. However, Buber's ideas of treating pedagogy as a special kind of dialogical relationship still seem valid and topical. He argues that an educational relationship can never be a truly reciprocal I-Thou relationship, since only the pedagogue can relate to both sides of the relationship and also live through the shared moments from the other's perspective. In doing so, s/he is simultaneously limited by the 'other' and bound to the 'other'. Buber also emphasises the educator's



role as a learner and says that a teacher has to accept that pedagogical work is essentially a process of eternal self-education, where one's own notions need to be constantly re-evaluated.

The between space is at the core of pedagogical encountering. It exists for the purpose of taking into consideration the learner's perspective, and not to reduce the learner to a mere object for the educator. (Värri 2004, 79–85.) By describing pedagogical dialogue as a special kind of dialogue, Buber also underlines the notion of responsibility. For me, this means that the dialogical-pedagogical relationship is not a naïve fantasy that must be maintained; rather, it involves acknowledging critical questions of power and all the complexity of an unequal relationship. I started this chapter by pondering the similarities between my and Thomas's ways of artistic expression and the need to construct a dialogue based on the togetherness of our sameness. I have come to the conclusion that instead of celebrating a superficial sameness, our working together had to be built on the respect of the other's otherness and difference.

To summarise Levinas's ideas about pedagogy, it is essential to pay attention to the challenges presented by a dyadic intimacy between the 'self' and 'Other' when discussing the 'Other' in pedagogy. Often, the 'Other' is read as the other person, the student. The demand of the Other's alterity does not always seem to fit with a teacher's notions that her/his students are beings that somehow exist beyond her/his comprehension. On the contrary, the student-Other seems to be quite knowable and easy for the teacher to comprehend when the teacher takes the role of the pedagogical 'self'. This, however, is nothing more than reducing the 'Other' to the 'Same' and transmuting alterity back into the known of the comprehending ego. (Jackson 2006, 28.)

Nonetheless, the student is not always the 'Other' as an object of teaching, nor does it have to be the teacher, albeit another popular approach to the pedagogical 'Other' tends to treat the teacher as the 'Other' who is bringing something new to the student that goes beyond the student's totalising sameness. That is, to learn, the student needs to welcome the teacher's otherness, which is beyond his/her totality (see, for example, Joldersma 2002, 183–184). Nevertheless, in this research project the 'Other' is neither the student nor the teacher. The 'Other' is not an object of the 'self'. Neither is the other person the 'Other' because of any of his or her own particular qualities. The 'Other' is the 'Other' because he is not the 'Same' as me. More importantly, it is essential for me to understand that I am the 'Other' for the 'self'. Therefore, one can understand the nonreciprocal role of pedagogical ethics:

When I think I know, when I think I understand the Other, I am exercising my knowledge over the Other, shrouding the Other in my own totality. The Other becomes an object of my comprehension, my world, my narrative, reducing the Other to me. What is at stake is my ego. But if I am exposed to the Other, I can listen, attend, and be surprised; the Other can affect me, she '[...] brings me more than I contain.' (Levinas 2008, 51; quoted in Todd 2003a, 15)

## THE THIRD: POLITICAL HORIZONS

Up to this point, I have followed philosophies that discuss the relationship of two: 'I' and the 'other', that is, me and Thomas, or the relationship with alterity, the 'Other'. As Alphonso Lingis puts it, it is a case of 'I' facing the singular 'Other' as you (Lingis 1981, xxxv). However, according to Levinas, the ethical relationship to the 'Other' is always more complex than just a relationship of two. The 'Third' (*le tiers*) ensures that ethics is always also political. The 'Third' moves the ethical reflections further to the horizon, where it is possible to discuss and compare different options and ask for justice (Walleinius 1992, 213). If only a relationship of two exists, Levinas's theories of ethics would be understood too narrowly and his political thoughts would remain relatively neglected. As William Simmons points out, 'With the appearance of the Third, the ego must respond to more than one Other. It must decide whom to respond to first. This decision leads the ego from the an-archival, ethical realm to the realm of politics' (Simmons 1999, 83). In this section, Levinas's ethical notions are interpreted mostly through later philosophers because Levinas did not write about politics and justice at length. Even though Levinas only considered questions of a social and political nature to a limited extent (Atterton & Calarco 2010, XI), his work has been interpreted by many subsequent writers as advocating a totalising realm of politics via his phenomenology of the 'Third':

Although the Third universalizes the an-archival relationship with the Other into the political realm, it does not supplant the original ethical relationship. Instead, there is a never-ending oscillation between ethics and politics. The world of institutions and impersonal justice must be held in check by the an-archival responsibility for the Other. Levinas calls for both an-archy of ethics and justice. (Simmons 1999, 83)

Levinas distinguishes between the ethical relationship with the 'Other' and justice in his later writings. He defines justice as being in the realm of calculation and knowledge, which pre-supposes politics. Justice is inseparable from the political, but it is different from ethics—which is for him always the primary issue at stake. (Simmons 1999, 94.) Lingis emphasises that 'the entry of the third party is not simply a multiplication of the other; from the first the third party is simultaneously other than the other, and makes me one among others' (Lingis 1981, xxxv).

Levinas enlarges his ethics of two to include the 'Third', since, for him, a face-to-face relationship might also include delusional and selfish limitations. He moves from discussing the ethical in abstract terms to discussing the political in more concrete terms (Jackson 2006, 6). While an ethical relationship often is possible only because of the other's face, as Levinas describes it, this same relationship can become too inclusive and also too exclusive towards all the others. The ego can start ignoring all other people when becoming infatuated with the 'Other'. This can happen especially when in love. However, there can be other kinds of close and exclusive relationships other than love. According to Levinas, disrupting a relationship of two can rupture and put an end to

contentment and a carefree way of being (Gregoriou 2008, 218). As Levinas reminds us, the ‘Third’ is necessary for helping us see ethics in a larger context. We need both, to be immersed in the others’ face and to be disrupted and awakened by the presence of the ‘Third’, which reminds us of justice and politics.

Levinas believes that politics must be controlled by ethics because the other ‘concerns me’. As Rötzer says, ‘I am hostage to the other. I am hostage to *my* other. One acknowledges the other to the extent that one considers oneself hostage. What’s important is that I’m the hostage’ (Rötzer 1995, 59). This differs from the Western political tradition of believing that politics should guide ethics. Levinas says that Western ethics always proceeds from the fact that the ‘Other’ is a limitation for me, the ‘Other’ is really nothing to me: ‘He is indifferent “to me”; he doesn’t concern “me”’ (Rötzer 1995, 59). Simmons, in turn, argues, ‘Ethics, which is a manifestation of the *saying*, has been traditionally subordinated by politics, a manifestation of the *said*. A resuscitation of the ethical is needed to check the political. However, the political should not be abandoned. Ethics requires the political to be universalized into laws and institutions’ (Simmons 1999, 92, *emph. added*).

By using the terms *saying* and *said*, Simmons is referring to Levinas’s second opus, *Otherwise than Being*, wherein Levinas re-formulated his ethical foundations as a response in part to Jacques Derrida’s (1978) famous criticism of his ideas in the essay ‘Violence and Metaphysics: An Essay on the Thought of Emmanuel Levinas’. Levinas responded especially to Derrida’s criticism of his ontological language and its inherent violence. In response, Levinas makes a distinction between *saying* and *said*, stating that the expression of the face is a *saying*, which exists prior to any linguistic concepts, which in turn are fundamental to the *said*, the ontological discourse. He thus claims that language does not originate only with the speaker; thus, he shifts attention from the ego of the speaker to the addressee, to the ‘Other’. (Levinas 1998, 6; Atterton & Calarco 2010, X; Simmons 1999, 88–89.) In Levinas’s words, the ‘saying is communication, to be sure, but as a condition for all communication, as exposure’ (Levinas 1998, 48). It is the ‘risky uncovering of oneself, in sincerity, the breaking up of inwardness and the abandon of all shelter, exposure to traumas, vulnerability [...] Saying is a denuding, of the unqualifiable *one*, the pure *someone*, unique and chosen; that is, it is an exposedness to the other where no slipping away is possible’ (Levinas 1998, 48 & 50).

The ‘saying’ exists prior to essence, prior to identification (Levinas 1998, 45). In ‘saying’, there is nothing that would already be fixed. The notion of ‘saying’ is not about presenting the essence of entities; it is more like a performative activity towards the ‘Other’, an orientation to the ‘Other’. That activity can also be passivity, and ‘saying’ can mean listening instead of speaking. The ‘saying’ is exposure to the ‘Other’; it involves taking a risk to suffer without reason, for nothing. (Säfström 2003, 25; Young 2004, 70.) This idea of taking a risk, of suffering for nothing, perhaps best depicts the idea of ethical encountering—and ethical pedagogy. A pedagogue who is willing to take that risk and act performatively towards the ‘Other’ and expose the ‘self’ to the ‘Other’ welcomes the ‘Other’ through the ‘saying’. In a way, I tried to take this kind

of a risk with Thomas when I decided to let him to guide our work, without having any hunch about where it would lead. But I felt that I was taking a risk and stepping into the area of performativity and saying especially when I started to respond to his tickling. I will continue with this topic in the eighth chapter. While the 'saying' involves taking a risk, the 'said' on the other hand would constitute a pedagogy that changes the idea of 'saying' from an active verb into a substantive and passive form, into something that is *the already* 'said'. In this context, the student is already given meaning: s/he is someone who is known or can be known, and through this s/he becomes substantive. (Säfström 2003, 26.) Simmons describes this process as follows:

Thus, the appearance of the Third extends the an-archival responsibility for the Other into the realm of the said, ushering in the latent birth of language, justice and politics [...] The an-archival relationship with the Other is the pre-linguistic world of the saying. Language is unnecessary to respond to the Other. The Third, however, demands an explanation. (Simmons 1999, 93)

While the realm of the 'saying' is the area of ethics, a part of the totalising realm of the 'said' belongs to the area of justice. However, justice should not diminish our infinite responsibility to the 'Other', since the ego is always infinitely, asymmetrical and responsible for the 'Other'. For Levinas, justice is also unethical and violent, and at the same time, necessary for preserving the 'Other'. There are always conflicts between justice and ethics and unanswered questions. One such question is, does justice limit ethics? The nature of the relationship of the two, ethics and justice, is both one of separation and of oscillation. The same type of relationship exists between 'saying' and 'said'. (Simmons 1999, 94 & 95.) It might seem strange to argue that issues of justice are not necessarily ethical. That is exactly the opposite what most social justice projects claim, for example in art education. *Art and social justice education* movement advocates that education should exist between (contemporary) art and activism and take into consideration issues of the local environment, for example the city, economics, human rights and issues of social change. Human relations and their social contexts should be most important and not independent and private space. (Quinn et al. 2011, xviii–xxiii.)

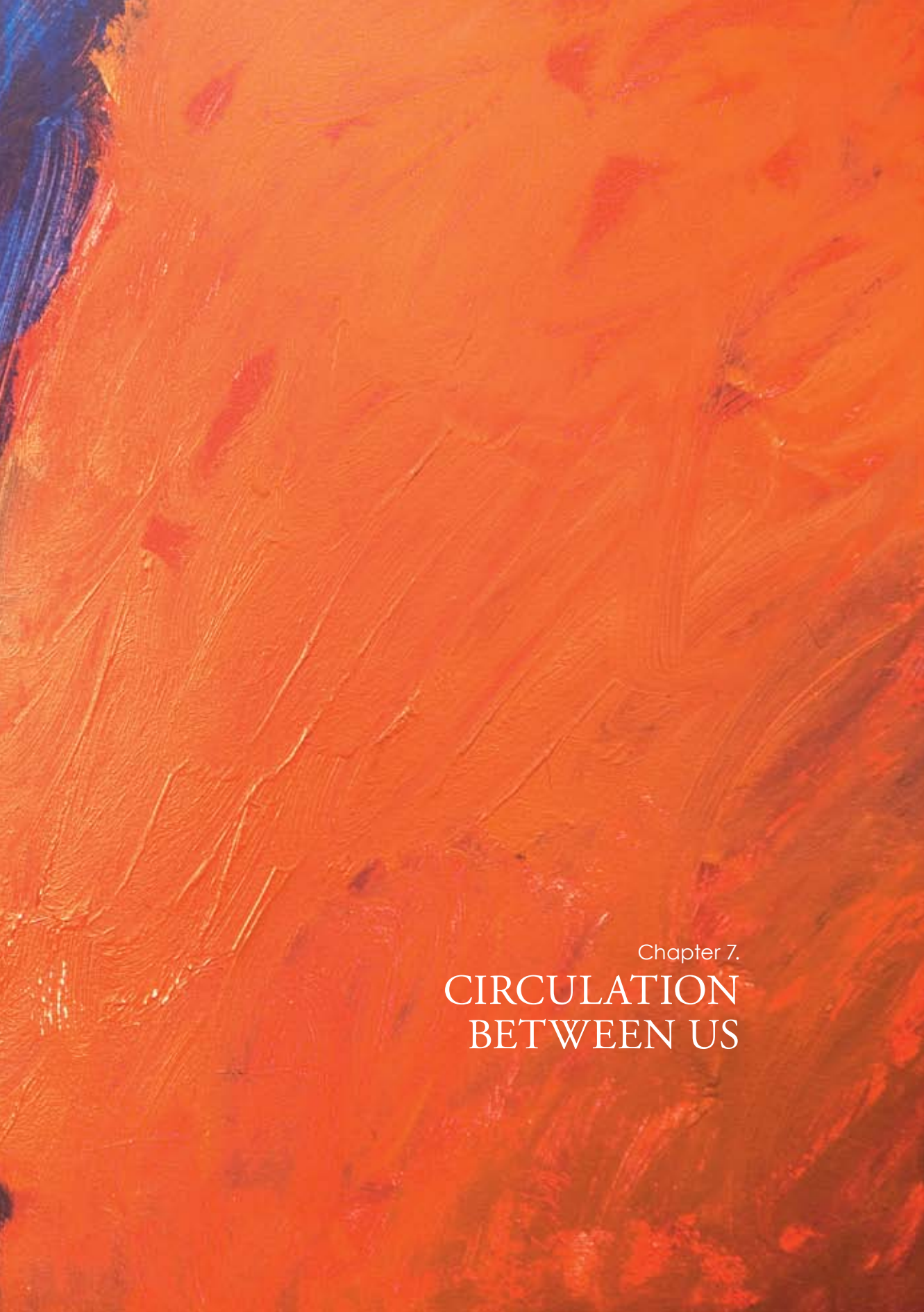
For Levinas, social justice belongs to the area of law, to the totalising realm, and to the realm of 'said'. Social justice projects often aim to support ethical issues, but their programmatic nature often fail in parts when it comes to ethics. *Arts Without Borders* is an example of this. While the intentions of the entire programme seemed ethical, it was challenging to ethically respond to each singular person. Realistically, it is impossible to have an ethical face-to-face relationship with all other human beings, and those who are not present can only be reached indirectly. Pedagogical situations often belong to the area of justice. Pedagogues need to practice a politics of justice, since they need to respond to more than one person. However, this should not mean eliminating ethics as such. Levinas's question, *how do we respond ethically to many people?*, needs to be answered in classrooms every day and that is what an art and social justice education tries to take into account.

As Matthew Jackson (2006) points out, Levinas's philosophy has not been at the centre of progressive pedagogies striving for social justice in education. Although Levinas's first question between humans is a question of justice, his philosophy is not known as one that actively takes into account justice. Usually, discussions about Levinas's work concentrate on the ethical relationship between the 'self' and 'Other', while largely ignoring the notion of the 'Third'. However, Jackson emphasises the political potential of the 'Third' as the crucial element for Levinas where social justice is concerned. He sees significant political implications for progressive pedagogies with the notion of the 'Third'. The 'Third' is a necessary part of the ethics of the intimate relationship between the 'self' and 'Other'. Otherwise, the 'self' and 'Other' would be left in an apolitical, ideal and abstract realm. That is precisely what Levinas's criticism of Buber's notions of 'I' and 'Thou' is about—the abstract nature of the ethical relationship must be incarnated in the life of the political realm (Critchley 2010, 42).

Jackson argues from a somewhat different standpoint that the 'Third' is always already present in the ethical considerations of the 'self' and 'Other', in the face of the other. He reminds us how everyday pedagogical situations often include many students whose needs must be considered rather than just one. (Jackson 2006, 26–27.) I argue that the 'Third' is always present in all pedagogical situations, even when it is just an encounter between two people, as it was for Thomas and me, because of the essence of pedagogy. Even though other people were not present, there are always other people and many needs included in the interaction. Most importantly, there are institutional frameworks, notions of art, curricula or other foci and objectives for the work, politics and principles, and pedagogical philosophies that guide the pedagogy. Consequently, there are no pedagogical situations that would be 'innocent' of encounters, free from the 'Third', just between the 'self' and 'Other'. This was revealed perhaps most explicitly in those moments when I said *no* to Thomas's tickling. While the entire process of working together was about letting go of pedagogical preconceptions and trying to understand our collaboration differently, there was a limit to how far I was able to relinquish control. The search for the unknown had to be 'sacrificed', and it was the 'Third' that entered into the equation and took over.

In this chapter, I have contextualised my collaborative work with Thomas and with the theories of dialogue and ethics. I have discussed Buberian and Levinasian notions in those parts that I have found relevant for the central inquiry of this thesis regarding the points at which pedagogy, otherness, difference, justice and radical alterity intersect. I explored answers to the research question about creating an ethical relationship with the 'Other' and its possible dialogical nature. In the next chapter, I will describe our collaboration from a different point of view, I will explore the notion of being-aside more in depth and I will discuss the special and embodied part of our encounters, theorising about the space that we inhabited, both personal and extended, via the concept of touch. I will examine the second research questions about the phenomenological body and its adequacy for describing the experiences of the disabled body.





Chapter 7.

CIRCULATION  
BETWEEN US



*A collaborative drawing by Thomas Kaarni and Mira Kallio-Tavin (2005).*

*I have drawn a red circle on the paper. The circle is like an initial image, something for us to start with. My intension is to induce Thomas to engage image making through this basic form. As a form, a circle is introverted and stable, something that I find human and pleasant. Circles and ovals are the forms that Thomas has used most often in his drawings. Both forms refer to human faces, the most familiar motif. The human face is also one of Thomas's favorite motifs to draw. While waiting for him to enter the room, I am hoping he will participate, that he will continue drawing with me and decide whether the circle will be an abstraction, a human face or something else.*

*He arrives tickeling himself, and me, and he is humming, 'Tickle yourself, tickle-tickle'. I find this embodied greeting a fine way to say hello. I tell him that I thought we would draw today. We both speak with a low voice—it seems convenient. He tickles the piece of paper on the table, grabs the crayon box and then picks up two crayons. I ask him to choose one crayon for me. I think that by doing so, he will be assuring me that he approves of me working on the same piece of paper with him. At the same time, I am aware of the trouble of making the choice of picking one crayon out of twenty causes him. He gives me a crayon from his hand. Then he changes it. I ask if this is a good one. He repeats the word 'good' but then takes the crayon back and puts it into the box. As I am left without a crayon I ask him again to give me one. First, he puts the whole box in my hand, then he picks up a bright blue crayon for me.*



*We sit around a small round table, opposite each other, ready to work with the shared drawing. Thomas picks up the red crayon for himself. It is the same one that I had drawn the circle with. With that crayon, he starts drawing another circle next to the one I had drawn before. When that is done, he continues with a curvy line inside of the circle, which I believe represents a mouth. After that, he adds two small circles for eyes. It is now clear that he takes my hint of the circle and chooses to draw faces on our shared piece of paper. I draw similar faces on the other side of the paper with my blue crayon. His character gets an upper lip, then teeth inside his mouth. My face gets big eyes. Thomas continues focusing on the teeth, adding them one by one, first up top, then down below, sparsely, then adding some more teeth in between them. When the mouth is ready, he takes a look at my drawing and then adds arched lines on top of the eyes. I want to draw a big smily mouth full of teeth as well, maintaining the theme he chooses. When Thomas's character is ready, he sits a while just looking at it. Then he tickles the image's mouth and smiles at it, as if he was greeting the newcomer.*

*We both draw new circles for new faces on the paper. The first two faces that he draws get a big smile with many teeth. The third face gets teeth but the face does not smile. The lines on top of the eyes are not arched, but straight, and the entire face looks angry. He continues drawing many more faces. The rest of them look discontent: the corners of their mouths curve downwards and the eyebrows represent anger. Thomas creates a large variety of discontent emotions on the faces. The many faces are adjusted [to fit] into the spaces he finds for them. Some are flattened, some are angular and some are elongated. He wants to fill in every area on the paper. Wherever there is some space, he utilizes the space for a new face, as big as [he can make it so that] it fits; even the smallest spaces get a small face. He flips the paper around again and again, filling it up with new faces. I take a yellow crayon and start to tint the two faces I have drawn. He works in a concentrated manner, looking at the entirety of the drawing as if he was planning the final picture.*

*He seems to have a logic to maintain: faces need to be side by side, not nested. The only occupied spaces he uses are the necks of my characters. He might not recognise these spaces as having been used already, because he does not draw necks for his own characters. Even still, he hesitates to use these spaces. He does it as a last resort, when there are no other spaces. Once in a while, we tickle one another, with him speaking his 'tickle' words and smiling. He seems relaxed, as am I, and the moment seems pleasant for both of us. We both whisper when speaking. The beeing-aside comes into being in a tacit moment of busy drawing and tickling. The last thing for Thomas to draw is a long line that snakes along the edges of the paper and around the faces of our characters. He draws fast with his entire body, constantly flipping the paper around in rhythm with his drawing. He extends the line between each*

*face, even the smallest ones, reaching across the table. When this is done, he leans back on his chair and drops the crayon on the table. I ask him if the drawing is ready, and he confirms [it with one word]: 'ready'. We wash our hands together and I prompt him to go see his timetable on the wall for the next thing to do.*

Nancy says, 'Other beings are curious (or bizarre) to me because they give me access to the origin: they allow me to touch it [...]' (Nancy 2000, 20). *We* have access to the origin, since it is as plural as we are, divided, just like we are. *We* have access, we *touch* the origin. The origin is a form of the 'Other'. The origin is the plural singularity of the Being of being. We reach the origin by being in touch with ourselves and in touch with all other beings. We are in touch with ourselves and each other insofar as we exist. We have access to the origin each time that we are in the presence of other beings. (Nancy 2000, 13.) This is a very comforting thought: essentially, through having contact with other people, we face the origin of life, each time, every time—and there are numerous possibilities for this contact. Each person has a different access to the world. As already stated in the second chapter, Nancy emphasises that only shared meaning makes sense and that there is no meaning if meaning is not shared (Nancy 2000, 2). With this in mind, I started to rethink our being together and wanted to resolve the nature of our togetherness and figure out what kind of sharing took place during our meetings.

*We* take place in both families and society when encountering another person, in dialogue, in the lack of dialogue and most certainly in each pedagogical situation. *We*—me and Thomas—started to become *we* through working together, through giving space to one another, by appreciation, by listening, by touching and tickling one another. We learned to find a rhythm of tactile working and tacit communication. We needed to find our own way to communicate, how to be *with* and be *distinct* from one another. The aim of our working process together was not to establish any kind of hegemony between the two of us. Being-aside did not always mean being *together* in a nice and sweet way—it included complexity, conflicts and cracks, moments of miscommunication and sometimes moments of communication. The aim was rather to create a condition where our activities, whether singular or done together, would appear open, uncovered, and if needed, grainy and coarse. We live through the constant paradox of being singular individuals and yet reaching out to others. For both Thomas and me, each moment included balancing between the paradoxical 'first-person plural'. As interested 'I' might be in 'me' as a singular human being, there are hardly moments of pure singularity. This resonates well with Levinas's idea of the basic structure of human life, which primarily consists of being-together with others.

Time, space and embodiment play an essential role in our togetherness. Being-aside gave birth to a shared space and we became *us* because of this space and time together. Time had a special meaning for Thomas. He wanted to know his daily schedule beforehand and did not want any surprises. The times that we shared together

at our meetings were marked on his timetable with a special art activity symbol. Our meetings took place in the flesh: a face-to-face working condition was an essential element of our being-aside. Embodiment and touch played a significant role in part because language was not used much between us, in part because it is Thomas's way of being, the main way that he communicates, and in part because painting itself is an embodied medium. The physical and embodied borderline of both our personal spaces was pierced already during our first meeting. Touching, tickling and scratching took place while painting and drawing. I found out later on, when analysing the videos, that our working together included many other kinds of body movements than I had first realised or remembered. I might not have otherwise paid much attention to the movements that I did not associate directly with the act of making art together. Some of the touches were almost inappropriate, and it took a long time for me to even acknowledge them, not to mention to analyse them.

Painting is embodied through its own materiality, and through the gestures by which paint is spread on the surface of a piece of paper, with the touch of a painter's body. Through body movements, the painter transfers her/his own flesh onto the surface. Merleau-Ponty has said it poetically: 'A painter transforms the world into a painting by borrowing his own body to the painting. This is not a cluster of actions, but an intertwined web of vision and movements' (Merleau-Ponty 2006a, 17). While I find this statement somewhat modernistic and dated, I agree that it is the body that transforms the paint or crayon into an image. When painting, we usually use our body without paying much attention to it. The reason for this, according to Nancy, is because the body is so obvious that we do not know or think about the body, we *feel* the body (Heikkilä 2009). The body carries out our intentions. In other words, it is the body that is painting, since the body is not just following the intentions of the mind: 'Sure enough – how could spirit paint?' (Merleau-Ponty 2006a, 17). I understand the concept of the body and how we use our bodies to include thinking. A body is much more than just a physical and material extension of the mind. Spatial experiences are transferred onto a painting, regardless of whether or not the painting represents any specific space or place. That means that the body is in a spatial relationship with a flat painting, reminding us of our bodily dimensions as well as of lived and experienced environments. Embodiment captures our understanding of space and the environment and how the world is encountered. It is essential to acknowledge that a person *is* his/her body and that we perceive our world through our bodies by always existing in some space. In that sense, it means that the body is not a material entity that the mind is trying to control; rather, it is a sign of a person's personality (Heinämaa 2010, 113), and therefore a way of existing in the world. I approached our collaboration, which I had started to call *being-aside*, with an awareness of our bodily and spatial existence.

In a way, and paradoxically, most of human togetherness is a kind of aside-being. That is how I would characterise not only our togetherness with Thomas, but also most of the moments of existing. This is not to say that these encounters would be based

on solitude or that they would lack responsibility. Todd refers to Zygmunt Bauman's forms of togetherness and discusses how people typically inhabit a shared space without directly interacting with one another. Forms of togetherness are the settings in which people initially are 'cast *aside* each other'. This kind of being-together means that we exist tangentially: each of us occupies a space, but we do not interact in any significant way. These moments are especially typical in the classroom spaces that teachers and students inhabit. Not all of that time is spent in mutual recognition, not between the teacher and students nor between the students sitting alongside other students; the students may be listening or daydreaming, and certainly not always interacting. (Todd 2003a, 46.) Often we, together with Thomas, sat next to each other, or there was a table between us, working silently, not quite being *together* with each other, but being *aside* each other. Still, working side by side, with the shared artwork in a shared time and space, was a form of togetherness, a form of contact that allowed our singular ways of being. The contact between Thomas and me was formed indirectly, through pleasure, by the materiality and the sensoriality of painting. The pleasure of what Thomas experienced was evident in his behaviour. Thomas laughed; on occasion, he tickled himself or me. It was important for me to define the pedagogical position and my own committed perspective for our *aside-being*. Since the other person remains unknown, what remains to be studied is what we have in common, what is shared and agreed upon beforehand: the defined time and space for the work.

In this chapter, I describe how being-aside existed for us, the conditions of our embodied time-space being, the kinds of friction and complexity we confronted, and the ways in which happiness and contact occasionally took place. First, 'not to speak' describes the most exceptional part of our being-aside. Second, I describe how the connection between us was made through touch and our embodied being, and how the notion of touch and embodiment gets different meanings. The phenomenological body is presented and also criticised for its ableist worldview. Third, I describe what we were ultimately doing when painting together. I map out my thoughts in light of pedagogical and critical notions of being-aside. All of this anticipates my discussion of our intimate and private togetherness that is described through the video in the following chapter.

## OUR OWN SPACE

Our working space was a private room at the Autism Foundation. The working space was one of the *fields* in this research project. By fields of research, I mean all those spaces that have an effect on the research. The fields of research may include the (art) discipline, our embodiment, the kinesphere, sounds, other people, the space, the institutions involved, human beings as a field, the field as life, a field of gaze and a particular condition (Heimonen 2009, 44–80). The theory of fields comes from Maurice Merleau-Ponty, who based his phenomenological field theory on Gestalt

psychology. Field theory emphasises the holistic nature of reality, with an intention to go beyond the mechanic approaches of humanist research. Reality appears as a field that is continuously being transformed. Perception is always bound to the field where it takes place. The researcher and participants are always on the same field and influence one another. (Heimonen 2009, 77–78.) Research knowledge is created and developed within the field of our research: it is created in the space, in the event that we, my research partner and I, shared. There are two subjects that influence each other, that inhabit and live via the research. While the field of research is shared, the responsibility for writing about it and reflecting on it pertains only to me. That brings along with it issues of ethics and responsibility.

The field in our collaboration can also be described by the nature of how we worked. Our way of working together occurred through artistic action: encountering one another by means of art making, which mainly included painting together. Thereby, painting, both its visuality and materiality, also has to be placed at the centre of the research project. Time was also part of our field: our one-hour meetings every other week created a rhythm that was pleasant to follow. Our conditions, us as participants in the room that we shared, varied on different days. Sometimes one of us was sick, had not slept well, or was not in a great mood. The most important condition is the confidence that is built by the continuity and tranquillity of working together. Everyday life at the Autism Foundation operates according to a strict schedule. The meaning of this culture of operation is to structure and therefore ease the everyday life of people with autism. For me, it was challenging to create an open working space in this highly structured environment. That is why our room, our own space, grew to be of special importance for me. At the beginning, the institutional structure governed our work more strongly. Over time, however, our time together became comfortable and relaxed: both of us had a natural role and way of acting together.

We worked across the table from one another. The table created a space of ethics for us. We were not too close or too far away from each other. We could see what the other was working on, and when working with the same surface, we had a democratic way of entering into the painting area. Hannah Arendt (2002, 58) mentions a table as an example of something that both joins and divides people. I learned quickly that we needed that space between us to have control over the tickling. We could reach each other from across the table, to tickle or to pass supplies, but we were not next to each other all the time. This is mainly how we worked. Surely there were exceptions, for example movements on restless days. As Levinas says, facing one another (e.g. from across a table) is not a modification of the 'along side of': for him, 'face-to-face remains an ultimate situation' (Levinas 2008, 80–81). I realise that Levinas does not mean a face-to-face situation in a concrete sense. I, however, felt that the working situation for us was more importantly a symbolic choice. People working with people with autism quite often work seated side by side with their students or they might even stand behind them. They do this to avoid eye contact and any misunderstandings caused by the

different ways of using and interpreting a person's gaze. (Frith 2003, 104–105.) I did not want to avoid Thomas's eyes or his own way of gazing at me. But I realised that I should not read too much into it either.

Kirsi Heimonen writes about the space that surrounds our bodies and how we all have a different relationship to this space. Kinesphere refers to the space that we can reach with our limbs without moving. It is the space that we inhabit and carry with us. We can rearrange it, roll around in it, expand it or diminish it, but we can never diverge from it. Kinesphere is especially important for dancers, who create a living entity with their bodies together with the space around them. Through the kinesphere, a dancer expresses her/his relationship to the space. (Heimonen 2009, 53–55.) The different experiences of kinesphere played an important role when Thomas and I were tickling and scratching one another. It was surprising for me to realise how sensitive I was about my personal space.

People react differently to their personal space and have different emotions and feelings about how close other people can get to their personal space. While working together for the first time with Thomas, we were creating our own shared space and understanding of how to work in it. We reached for the paints and the paper, for a water cup, towards different materials, while working next to one another. And we tickled each other's hands and arms, following Thomas's rituals of building up a sense of confidence with another person. According to Thomas's assistant, tickling signified that Thomas approved of the situation. At the beginning, he seemed uneasy, but later he relaxed and also showed that by tickling me more. The change in his condition was also apparent by the way in which he painted: how he seemingly enjoyed himself, smiling, laughing, humming and concentrating intensively while working. When he talked about 'tickling' and 'tickling itself', he meant that he wanted to tickle himself or other people—and that he wanted to be tickled. I realised early on, that Thomas's kinesphere must differ from my own. His understanding of the space around our bodies—indeed, his understanding of our bodies—and how we function in that particular space, how we touch ourselves and one another, was different.

As a part of all the events during the two years of working together, Thomas and I worked with both separate and shared paintings. According to my understanding, the being-aside took place especially when we worked on a shared surface. When working on our own artwork, we tended to concentrate only on our own work, thus not interacting at all; we tended to work in spite of the presence of the other person. When working with a shared painting, I was led to consider issues of privacy, power and domination. Working with a shared painting surface was social, but there was also the possibility for shared privacy during the painting process. Painting together offered room for speechless, embodied communication and for social interaction within a protective intimacy without the strain of a social situation. When painting together, the essential purpose was to construct a space of togetherness more or less as a way of 'being-aside'. Then, the painting process primarily emphasises materiality, embodiment and touch, the haptic, kinesthesia, and sensory synesthesia.

## TACIT BEINGS

*Not speaking feels somewhat exceptional. Thus far in my life, my existence and communication with other people has been based on language and discourses. I am being advised to talk using simple and short sentences of just a few words. I am told to give him direct demands without negotiation or ambiguous questions. I learn to do this in my own way, without a feeling of commanding, but being clear. At the beginning, it feels weird to speak when the other does not respond. Thomas understands my words better than I first think. I speak with too loud of a voice and with too simple messages. With time, however, I speak less and less. I am both happy and perplexed by the obmutescence. For a nonverbal person like myself, obmutescence is kind of a relief. It offers the possibility of silence and peace. I wonder then, why is it that the outer silence produces an inner turmoil? I needed time to be sensitized to silence, to quit my own unnecessary twaddle and start to enjoy the silence. Thomas does not seem to be missing my speaking. To me, speaking starts to feel and sound like I am violently piercing the tacit togetherness of our being-aside.*

Usually, it is language that defines subjects and determines the entire social condition and environment. As Levinas says:

The saying is a way of greeting the Other, but to greet the Other is already to answer for him. It is difficult to be silent in someone's presence; this difficulty has its ultimate foundation in this signification proper to the saying, whatever is the said. It is necessary to speak of something, of the rain and fine weather, no matter what, but to speak, to respond to him and already to answer for him. (Levinas 2009, 88)

We are so accustomed to filling the air with talk that when there is a situation for which speech is not possible, it almost feels unpleasant. Thus, it is not only about filling the air and trying to diminish awkward moments, or about having a habit of drivelling, which causes one to miss talking. The symbolic signifier of the language includes much more than just what is *said*. Through language, through *saying*, we regulate and position our desires, drives and experiences within the world of signifiers. As Levinas says, this can be true even when we are just talking about the weather. It is not only the words that we use to describe the world and our place in it; it is also how we structure our identities through the symbolism of the language. As Tavin says, 'The symbolic consists of signifiers that help to suture our minds, bodies, thoughts, and actions to something socially acceptable' (Tavin 2010, 51). The symbolic is defined differently than language as a result of our work together. Our being-aside includes symbolic signifiers other than spoken language.

The need to speak, to talk about anything at all, was strong for me at the beginning. It took a long time to first become accustomed to not speaking, and later, to start to enjoy the silence, that is, the silence in me and the silence of us working together. This

long journey for me to become accustomed to not speaking makes it easy to understand that our silence was not easy for others to access. An example of this difficulty might show up in the TV documentary. When our working moments were being videotaped for the TV programme, the editor of the programme must have been uncomfortable with our silence, since he edited out most of our working-together. The documentary filmmaker filmed hours and hours of our work, but the editor wound up reducing it to a couple of minutes. The other couples (artist—individuals with autism) were more talkative and he—or the TV channel producer—chose to include them talking rather than showing our silent work.

It was interesting to see that entering into an obmutescent situation did not automatically mean harmony: quite the contrary. Silence as a notion is described as an inner experience, which usually also requires an experience of freedom and independence. Silence is not just a lack of voices or other sense stimuli. It is a condition or atmosphere. (Koivunen 2000, 12; Nieminen 1991, 24.) This condition of silence was an essential part of our being-aside. It was constructed not just through a lack of speech, but also through the experience of silence. It required a few meetings for me to first get used to it, and then to come to enjoy it. In pedagogy, silence can be bound together with the skill of listening. By listening, I mean sensitising myself to the other person and minimising my own totality, similar to what the Buberian I-Thou relationship or Levinas's notion of infinite responsibility require. According to Juha Suoranta (2005), listening skills have often been dismissed in educational contexts. He finds that listening, when it meets with a respect for, reverence for and acknowledgement of silenced and tacit voices, is the most crucial skill in education (Suoranta 2005, 229). Not all of our working sessions were voiceless. Sometimes Thomas wanted to listen to his music. He seemingly enjoyed that very much. We would listen to his music on a CD player, or he would have headphones over his ears. Sometimes, he was so into listening to his music that he did not want to work with images, but to move with the music.

## TOUCH AND OTHER SENSATIONS

*Sometimes Thomas tickles himself, me and the images of the faces that we draw on the paper. The tickling varies from vigorous scratching to a more gentle touch. He tickles especially hands and arms. He combines little words with it, like 'tickle yourself'. Tickling is part of the [process of] encountering, confronting and togetherness. It is a ritual that shows that the other is approved of. He repeats that over and over again. It seems that he takes 'tickling breaks' from his artwork. The work rhythm is based on the tickling moments, when he touches my hand, or his own, and starts to tickle or scratch it. Once in a while, I take part in this, and we tickle each other. Tickling is a part of our being-aside, as is the artistic process.*



*To touch and to be touched breaks the borderline of intimacy. While Thomas's tickling is a warm way to say 'hello' when we meet, it is sometimes bothersome to me. These unexpected elements of the research process force me to rethink critically the educator's and researcher's ethical questions. What is easy to ignore through the written diary notes manifests itself in an almost unpleasantly clear manner in the video material. The unpredictable and surprising situations did not allow for preparations. Cringing at another person's touch is like denying his physical existence—and at the same time, it is embarrassing for him. While, when reviewing the video, I am surprised at my lack of discretion, I realise how large a role bodily communication plays in our relationship and how differently we understand the idea of kinesphere space. I thought, initially, that I could politely hide my drawings away from his tickling. The moment is also a good one, though, as it brings up the mechanisms of power.*

When two people touch each other, they affect one another. This can be a passing moment that does not signify anything meaningful—or it can change a person in a bidirectional manner, causing him to be touched while also touching. When we tickled each other's hands, it reminded me that we are two separate beings who cannot be one but who can touch the edge, the limit, while still remaining on the threshold of discreteness. Discreteness is the most essential part of touch—be it physical or touching another person by way of our thoughts. Respect and responsibility are at the core of pedagogy and ethics—and at the core of any human encounter—and guide our being-aside when working face-to-face. Through the 'flesh of the world', we are in a tight relationship with one another. Touch deepens our togetherness. For Merleau-Ponty, intersubjectivity is essentially inter-bodied, not inter-consciousness (Hotanen 2010, 135 & 146). Also, togetherness happens essentially between bodies. The body is an active subject that constitutes the world and is also in an active relationship with other bodies.

Juho Hotanen (2010) clarifies Merleau-Ponty's notion of an embodied relationship between the 'self' and 'Other'. By embodied thinking, Merleau-Ponty means that the body is connected to its own perspective and therefore the other's perspective is foreign. However, 'I' am not enclosed within my own private world, and I can see that others are orientated towards the world through their bodies just like I am. If my body would be just an object for me to enjoy, would other bodies then be objectives of my consciousness? Since I am an embodied subject, it is possible to understand that there are also other embodied subjects. When shaking hands with another person, I touch her/him and feel her/him touch me. However, I cannot touch her/his touch. This is why the other is at the same time a subject and an object. I would not feel the other touch me unless s/he continued to touch me and did not withdraw her/his hand from me: if I would touch her/his touch, we would blend into each other and s/he would no longer be another subject. (Hotanen 2010, 139 & 146–148.) Intersubjectivity is about a chasm between

my and the other's touch. The other is like a mirror, which helps me to become visible and touchable. Merleau-Ponty's thinking seems to go even further away from Buberian I-Thou ethics at this point. The 'Other' is not 'S/He', but another 'I'. (Hotanen 2008, 115.)

Merleau-Ponty's thoughts about interpreting other person's perceptions through one's own imperialism comes close to Levinas's ideas about the limitation of totalising thinking when viewing other people through our own sameness. It is impossible to know how and what another person perceives. Paradoxically, the only way to think about another person's perceptions is through one's own perceptions. It is crucial to understand that every perception is singular and tied to the viewpoint of the perceiver. Merleau-Ponty says that an attempt to maintain an illusion of objectivity is actually an attempt to look at things from *my* own imperialism. (Hotanen 2008, 114.) Merleau-Ponty's and Levinas's notions of intersubjectivity are different in terms of their explanation of asymmetry. While Merleau-Ponty comes close to allowing for equality, for Buber and Levinas intersubjectivity is always asymmetrical, meaning that subjectivity is secondary, the same as pre-ontological intersubjectivity, which has to do with being-for-the-other prior to being-for-oneself. (Chinnery & Bai 2008, 234 & 236.)

Anneli Arho (2004) has written about multi-sensorial artistic experiences from the receiver's perspective. When listening to music, a person often does not just hear the music. S/he also feels the tonal vibrations in her/his body. In many cases, the listener also sees the music happening. Sensations influence one another and blend into a single experience that is difficult to distinguish. We learn on a cultural level how to articulate and distinguish between artistic experiences that might be complex and diversified. We experience the world through all five of the senses and we do not usually specify our sensorial experiences. (Arho 2004, 162.) However, we learn to specify and discuss in detail our sensorial artistic experiences within the context of art both when receiving art and when making art. Tarja Pitkänen-Walter (2006) writes about multisensory experiences as an artist and describes how touch and sensorial modality become intertwined in an image; she says that making art is either a conscious or an unintentional multisensory experience. (Pitkänen-Walter 2006, 119 & 126–129.)

When working with Thomas, it was important to maintain a continuity and closeness between the senses and thinking as a part of touching, and, for example, to be aware of how seeing is connected to touch. Maintaining a close relationship between the senses and being aware of their fluid interaction with one another seems to be characteristic of people who are fluent in the use of the senses in their professional life, such as artists. This is often not the case with people with autism. Typically, people with autism tend not to be able to connect any immediate contact with the senses. My understanding of the use of touch and the other senses needed to be shaken. With Thomas, I could not just follow the flow of our sensorial experiences. Trusting my own five senses was not enough. I needed to pay extra attention to his different sense experiences and enlarge my understanding of how he processed such experiences. Since he was not able to tell me, I reviewed and interpreted narratives from other individuals

with autism about touch and other sensorial experiences. I did not try to *understand* Thomas better through these narratives. This would have been impossible, first of all because it is not possible for me to understand the ‘Other’ and second of all because it is clear that these experiences were not his own and could not really tell me anything about his sensorial experiences. I made these narratives a part of this research project to enlarge the sphere of body and not strictly deal with it from an ableist viewpoint. My understanding is that the phenomenological notions of body have been written by abled Western males (including Merleau-Ponty) and to rely only upon those notions seemed inadequate for the purposes of this inquiry.

## THE COMPLEXITY OF TOUCH

It is quite commonplace that people with autism resist touching, hugging and other types of physical contact. Some do not like to be touched at all, and many have an ambivalent relationship to being touched. Often, people with autism interact with and respond to others using a different logic of sensory input than non-autistic people. Sensory input can be so different for a person with autism that some people talk about more than five senses for people with autism. Managing the complex sensory input is difficult in many social activities because of sounds and lights or because the sensations are too overwhelming—or sometimes, like for Tito Mukhopadhyay, there are not enough of them. Sensory differences can mean overreacting to some stimuli and underreacting to other stimuli (Ashby & Causton-Theoharis 2009, 507). Mukhopadhyay was 14 years old when he told his story in the book *Beyond the Silence: My life, the World and Autism* (Mukhopadhyay & Wing 2000). In another context, he describes his senses: ‘I am calming myself. My senses are so disconnected, I loose my body. So I flap [my hands]. If I don’t do this, I feel scattered and anxious [...] I hardly realized that I had a body except when I was hungry or when I realized that I was standing under the shower and my body got wet. I needed constant movement, which made me get the feeling of my body. The movement can be of a rotating type or just flapping of my hands. Every movement is a proof that I exist. I exist because I can move’ (quoted in Blakeslee 2013). Portia Iversen (2006) discusses Mukhopadhyay in her book *Strange Son*, and describes his sense experiences: ‘Tito’s senses are clearly separated from one another. He cannot literally see and hear at the same time’ (Iversen 2006, 95). Ashby and Causton-Theoharis (2009, 507) explain in their research that many of their experts who are individuals with autism tell about the difficulties in regulating sensory information:

*Anything I took in had to be deciphered as though it had to pass through some sort of complicated checkpoint procedure. Sometimes people would have to repeat a particular sentence several times for me, as I would hear it in bits, and the way my mind segmented their sentence into words left me with a strange and sometimes unintelligible message. (Williams 1992, 69)*

Temple Grandin (1996) provides readers with an interesting insight into her own autism in her book *Emergence: Labelled Autistic*. She tells about how she struggled to learn to cope with people that were strange to her, only to realise much later that she was the one that was different. She primarily discusses in the book the significance of touch for her, binding it together with her autism, which is a ‘damaged nervous system’. In the book’s foreword, Dr Bernard Rimland refers to his own research and discusses unusual reactions to touch among children with autism. Rimland argues that the topic had been virtually ignored in the research literature on autism, and very little is known about the phenomenon of touch. Grandin has continued researching the calming effect of deep touch for people with autism, and also for other people—and animals.<sup>46</sup>

More recent research has paid attention to how sensitive persons with autism can be to the five senses of sight, hearing, touch, smell and taste. The journal *Social Cognitive and Affective Neuroscience* has recently published a study on why people with autism may reject social touch (Voos et al. 2012). While the researchers were primarily looking at brain activity, the study offers insights into why some people shrug off physical touches, and more importantly, how families affected by autism may learn to share hugs without overwhelming an autistic child’s senses. As a result of the study, Voos et al. suggest that making social touch more rewarding early on during a child’s development might further help children with autism learn social skills, since learning is heavily dependent on pleasure. It is clear that the need for other people, both family members and the larger society, are at the centre of this research. It is the family members that need to hug the child with autism, not the child her/himself that needs to hug the family members. The same holds true for the environment, where people with autism need to learn to behave in less disturbing ways. It is surely most understandable that parents want to try to build a connection with their children. Sensory perception and dysfunction are often the most difficult issues for family members to deal with. Difficulties with language, even not speaking at all, as well as certain routines in life or particular obsessions and fixations, are easier to understand than an altered perception of sensory input. However, it seems unclear in this study by Voos et al., and in many other similar studies that are supposed to discuss autism, that while the needs of environment and family members are considered, how the needs of people with autism themselves will be taken into consideration.

While a brain study can explain the reason for something, it cannot explain how an experience appears to the person who is experiencing it. I find the insights in the narratives written by people by autism themselves or by their family members to be more interesting than the scholarly journal articles on autism. It seems that the meaning of touch and other sensations are mentioned over and over again in the books that are written by individuals with autism or their parents—usually the mothers. Portia Iversen tells about a day at the beach with her son Dov: ‘Although Dov was three he

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<sup>46</sup> For more information, see: <http://www.grandin.com/inclsqueeze.html>

still wasn't talking; he wasn't even pointing. I could not get his attention. All he wanted to do was feel the smoothness of the pebbles, and repetitively splash the surface of a puddle, or run his hands through the sand. Everything was a big sensory experience' (Iversen 2006, 24). Daniel Tammet (2006) describes his school experience and fear of touch: 'When the time came to play social games, such as musical chairs, I refused to join in. I was frightened by the thought of the other children touching me as they shoved one another for one of the remaining seats' (Tammet, 2006, 20). Donna Williams (1992) would not tolerate other people's touch, but enjoyed touching other children's hair: 'Touching other children's hair was the only friendly physical contact I would make' (Williams, 1992, 9).

Grandin described her relationship to touch as important and complex. While she desired to be touched, she also could not stand it: 'Our bodies cry out for human contact but when contact is made, we withdraw in pain and confusion. It wasn't until my mid-twenties that I could shake hands or look directly at someone' (Grandin & Scariano 1992, 15). Other people's touch was often too intense for her. It is interesting to see how she ties together her difficulty with touch and looking directly at someone. Touch and looking are also the two themes that repeatedly grabbed my attention when working with Thomas. This is no surprise; in a way, to look somebody directly in the eyes feels almost like touching them, as discussed in the last chapter. Nancy's question seems all the time more relevant: he wonders 'if looking into each other's eyes is touching?' (Derrida 2005, 2).

Grandin points out in her book how added tactile stimulation is needed, and that proximal sensory stimulation, such as touching, tasting and smelling, are more important than distant sensory stimulation, although, she believes herself to be a visual person and a visual learner. As a visual thinker, she describes needing 'concrete symbols for abstract concepts'. She describes how she was able learn about the things that she could actually see. Math and French were difficult 'because these subjects are not learned visually'. She did well with biology because it involves visual learning. (Grandin & Scariano 1996, 28–29, 56 & 77.) I found it interesting to learn from Grandin's sensory experiences and statement that proximal stimulation is important for people with autism. Thus, I did not believe that Thomas's experience was the same as hers, since sensory experiences never are the same between two different people. It made me pay attention to Thomas's touching and, for example, I learned to interpret his tickling in a different light.

As a very talented and gifted person with a fixation on machines, Grandin was able to resolve her relationship to touch by creating a 'squeeze machine' that works in the same way as being held or touched by a person (Grandin & Scariano 1996, 106). The squeeze machine provided her with a self-applied deep pressure 'hug', a sensation that she craved and that she was able to control herself. The inspiration for the machine came from a cattle chute that she tested herself when working on her aunt's farm. She produced several prototypes of this machine, and she studied its benefits

on other students as a part of her academic studies. She described over and over again her mixed feelings about touch, even when inside of her own machine. She thought that by learning to tolerate the pressure inside her body, which she both desired and abhorred, the next step would be to learn to tolerate human touch. She would dream of this magical machine that would 'soothe her and make her less different' (Grandin & Scariano 1996, 61). However, what was important was that she was able to control of the amount of pressure herself (Grandin & Scariano 1996, 101).

I knew that Thomas touched someone, usually tickled them, when he felt comfortable and when he approved of the person he was with. I realise that I will never get to know exactly the pleasure he gets from touching and being touched through tickling and what it means to him. However, I believed that while it was a familiar action that he repeated as a fixation, it was also a way to connect with other people. When there were no connections on the level of spoken language or eye contact, wandering hands represented a form of social outreach for him. What I did not realise beforehand was that it might also calm him down, make him feel better when frustrated, and give him comfort and relief. Thomas's touches were sometimes difficult for me. I was not prepared for my research partner to touch me in any fashion. While tickling was as a warm way to greet someone, it sometimes grew into an awkward, repetitive form of a continuous encounter. Touching and being touched exceeded the limit of intimacy in a way I did not experience as a pedagogue. It was easy to set my boundaries when he sometimes reached out for me in a clearly sexual manner. Then I would tell him where he was able to tickle me and where he should not touch me.

These moments required a different kind of analysis and understanding than, for example, analysing the visual perceptions of our collaborative image making, such as interacting with colours and forms. It would be banal, although surely easier, to discuss our different brush strokes than to discuss the unexpected physical encounters with my research partner. This became especially difficult when I realised that not all of Thomas's touches were appropriate. Again, I was able to see all of this from a different perspective when reviewing the videos than when reflecting directly on the experience. In my diary notes, I have not even once written about the 'forbidden' touches. It is difficult to say how much I, for example, saw him touching himself and how much I disavowed what I did not want to see. I was, however, very surprised to see the video of the session that I described at the beginning of this chapter. I have concentrated on writing about our visual and tactile encounters, without saying a word about his sexual arousal. One reason for my disavowal is that I am not comfortable writing about other person's sexuality. That is a discourse that aggravates the notion of ethics when writing about the 'Other'. Even though a sense of responsibility was a key part of my pedagogy, and even though the touching was usually quite 'innocent', for some reason some of the tickling moments made me feel that I was moving ethically onto a fragile surface. I think my uncertainty came from a feeling of missing having the words or language to talk about it.

Moments when his tickling turned out to be a fixation that continued and did not stop were even more difficult for me than the inappropriate touching. I wanted to support his behaviour, whatever it might have been, and I did not want to send a negative message to him, but I did not want to go through something unpleasant for myself either. It seemed important for me to make our working moment pleasant for both of us. Often, immersing oneself in a continuous fixation is understood as something negative in autistic behaviour, as a 'black hole' of the 'dark side' of autism. Fixations, such as spinning, uncontrollable laughter, constant questioning, repetitions, and obsessions, are characteristic of autism, and they are often understood as being harmful and as something that person should try to control. Grandin (1996) does not think that indulging in fixations would be harmful in all cases. She says that taking a fixation away could be unwise. Instead, she sees a great possibility in guiding a fixation into something constructive. Her fixations reduced her arousal and calmed her 'over-active nervous system'. Concentrating on the fixation can help a person block out other stimulations that cannot be handled. (Grandin & Scariano 1996, 32 & 105.) Fixations were actually a way for Grandin to control herself. These repetitions and obsessions are inconvenient for other people, but not for the person with autism him/herself, just like Thomas's tickling was sometimes inconvenient for me. At the same time, I realised that tickling was helpful for Thomas, and that is why I wanted to learn to find—if not enjoy—it as something pleasant.

## THE FLESH OF OUR WORLD

*Thomas has headphones on his ears, but he is not listening to any music at the moment. I prepare the painting session for us. Thomas sits by the table and looks very bored. He speaks quietly about tickling and scratches his head. He stares off somewhere in the distance and does not pay any attention to me. I fix the paper, pour water for us, and sort out the paints and brushes. He glances at a magazine in front of him and gently blows and smoothes out its surface. Then he switches on the music. He quickly pulls himself up straight, starts to hum along to the music, wags his head passionately and waves his hands rhythmically. He has a big smile on his face. Then he laughs, closes his eyes, takes a deep breath—and swings his head again wildly. Apparently, there is a rapid beat to the music. I would not know, as I cannot hear his music; all I can see is his embodied and strong reaction into it.*

*He grabs scissors and starts to cut paper. He has a box in front of him that has small pieces of paper from magazines and he cuts those small pieces of paper into even smaller pieces. I try to induce him to paint with me. I switch with him and take the paper box and scissors from him. I start cutting the pieces of paper, hoping that he would go paint instead. This is how we have worked a couple of times before, each taking turns painting and cutting. He is not in the mood for painting. He*

*switches on the music and starts dancing again. He finds more room for himself at the back of the room and then moves out into the hallway. He dances sensuously and with passion. Laughing out loud and tossing his head from one side to another, he stretches his neck and moves his entire body with joy. After dancing awhile, he comes back to the table to continue cutting. I am left alone with my painting. I am hardly paying any attention to what I am painting. I am just waiting for Thomas to come work with me. The room is quiet except for the cutting sound of the scissors.*

Thomas's experience is clearly embodied. This embodiment arises from the music that he is listening to. I find his becoming lost in the music and the separation of time and space similar to the desire that Jan Jagodzinski (2005b) describes in his book *Music in Youth Culture*. Jagodzinski finds listening to music to be a complex and pleasurable experience that makes it possible to see the body differently. He refers to Deleuze's and Guattari's concept of Bodies without Organs (BwO) as a way of describing a virtual dimension of the actual physical body. By BwO, they mean a potentiality of traits, connections, affects, movements, and so forth, of the body, 'the field of immanence of desire, the place of consistency proper to desire' (Jagodzinski 2005b, 19). BwO can be understood as a hyperbody, an extension of the body that exists outside of the organic body. Music can activate our bodily drives or desires, *jouissance*,<sup>47</sup> and sometimes make the physical body seemly disappear as the acoustic body floats on its own, leaving the listener only with a disembodied voice (Jagodzinski 2005b, 39–40). I see Thomas's movement in space as an alliance with the world, as an active drawing out and activation of his virtual potentials. Maybe this is exactly how Thomas connects with the world. According to Jagodzinski, music provides subliminal intensities at the bodily level. I do not know if Thomas experienced pleasure or not, even though it looked enjoyable. Often, a musical experience can be pleasurable for the listener. According to Jagodzinski, 'The affect of music has to deal with extremes. [...] On the one hand it points to the impossible excess of pleasure, and at the same time there is a repetition of the Same. ... [Music is] where the drive meets desire' (Jagodzinski 2005b, 28 & 33).

In many art forms, the knowing body is an obvious factor. As most of us have learned, body and mind are not separate, even though the Western tradition has taught us that this is the case—and still in many ways we believe it to be the case. The knowing body is apparent in embodied art forms, such as dance or music. However, visual art making includes the same kind of embodied knowledge. By this, I do not mean trained choreography in any fashion. Jaana Houessou (2010) writes about thinking through the body when painting (see also Kallio 2006, 2007). She writes about professional visual artists whose embodied relationship with artistic materials and artistic expression is fluent after years of practice and engaging in a lived relationship

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<sup>47</sup> *The psychoanalytical term jouissance means both pleasure and pain, enjoyment and suffering.*



with the art making process. She emphasises that embodied thinking is different from intellectual thinking. It is connected to touch, and therefore what one understands remains non-conceptual. While painting, she does not need to actively think about her choices. Her body knows what to do based on experience. Decisions are unconsciously formed, both holistically and in an embodied manner. She refers to Jaana Parviainen and compares painting to the buto dance. Through the buto dance, the dancer returns to a pre-objective level where s/he is open and sensitive to the becoming of the world, without any planning of movements beforehand. Parviainen sees the buto dance as a possibility to turn towards actual and intensive being and self-reflection. Correspondingly, Houessou experiences a continuous and sensitive presence and openness through the process of painting, one that liberates her from the outer world and her goal-directed endeavours. (Houessou 2010, 169–175.)

Letting go of the dichotomy between body and mind makes it possible to understand painting as a process of thinking through weight and thinking through touch and of thinking about painting as a place of being-aside. In Merleau-Ponty's thinking, the body-subject is not just a subject in the world, but is essentially a subject *from the world* (Värri, 2004, 46–47). With his late concept of flesh (*la chair*), Merleau-Ponty clarifies how all embodied beings are firmly part of the flesh of the world as organic, continuously moving and thinking beings. The world comes into being in time and space through the moving and sensing body. With the concept of flesh, it is possible to think of the world and body as folded together. The body belongs to the objects of the world, being one of the objects, part of the flesh of the world, pressed against other objects, that is, other bodies. Through the senses, people are the same flesh as the world: in the world and from the world. (Merleau-Ponty 2006a, 19.) One can never be detached from the lived flesh of the world; one lives as flesh all the time (Hotanen 2008, 101). The body for Merleau-Ponty is 'I' in relation to the world (Hotanen 2010, 138). Different devices and extensions of bodies are also part of the flesh of the world and its enfolding.

We are an embodied part of the world before we are able to think about what the world is like. Through the knowledge of flesh, the world is simultaneously private and communal. An understanding of the world is created through the body, but it follows a communal existence. The body is the beginning of the world, a zero point of the dimensions of the world and an ultimate measurement of the world. For Merleau-Ponty, flesh is also important between bodies: 'My flesh reach towards other flesh, and the others are "flesh of my flesh". I touch another as a touching body, even though I cannot reach his touch in a same way than my left hand does never completely converge to my right hand's touch. [...] I touch the other, and at the same time he is untouchable to me.' (Hotanen 2008, 114.)

Western phenomenological and embodied philosophy seems to have been written for and by abled individuals (Merleau-Ponty 2006b; Husserl 1990). It is written for those whose sense organs function without needing any specific attention. That is no

surprise; after all, the entire world functions and is thought about from the perspective of able and privileged (white) men. The themes of body, senses and touch have been discussed explicitly for decades, especially in France, and this discussion in many ways has its roots in a much longer history of philosophy. Aristotle discussed touch as one of the fundamental senses in his work *On the Soul* (2006): while it is possible to live without other senses, without touch one would die. Being a firm part of the flesh of the world and letting go of the dichotomy between body and mind is consequently an ableist assumption: the knowing body is an able body. Although phenomenological flesh is the flesh of the world, and not attached to any singular body—abled or disabled—an embodied experience must also be involved. Flesh and knowledge of the body have assumed a position related to an experience of the body at some point in time. There seems to be an encapsulating idea of a metaphysical subject, which serves as an example of a knowing and normative body that needs to be unravelled. The ableist body within Western phenomenology needs to be confronted by adding ideas concerning all kinds of bodies. Scholars in the field of disability studies argue that all bodies are socially constructed. This argument encourages to criticise the notion of the body and its alleged freedom.

The embodied relationship to the world is different for somebody whose perception of the world is limited. What does being in the world in an embodied and sensorial manner, being part of the flesh of the world, mean for a person whose senses give out illogical information and whose senses increase their resistance to the world rather than help them engage with and belong to the world? Again, I turn to a person with autism to describe this condition. Mukhopadhyay writes about his earliest experiences with his body and the sensations he had of his physical existence:

*I had no concept of my body. So I never paid attention to it. And I never enjoyed experiencing it. My hands were mere objects which I used to pick and throw. My hands which I flap now as a releasing tool of energy, was a mere extension of my shadow at that time. I remember that when I saw my shadow, I put the hands out to make my shadow complete.*

*My body was a mere reflection in front of the mirror. When I stood in front of a mirror, I remembered that it was me. For it looked like my photograph which I saw often because I pointed at the faces of the family album when mother asked me which face belonged to whom. So when I had to point at my own face, I knew that I had to point at the face which was similar to that of my reflection. (Iversen 2006, 100)*

Mukhopadhyay did not have an experience of his own body as a lived body. He did not even remember that his body belonged to him other than when he saw himself in a mirror. In his thinking, his body was separated from his mind in a Cartesian way. His body appeared to him as an image in shadows or viewed through a mirror.

Although, individuals with autism often have complicated sensory dysfunctions and often feel that their nervous system is constantly malfunctioning, either because it is overwhelmed by the sensory input that the body receives or because it is receiving too little input, these dysfunctions are very different. The different embodied experiences are based on different sensorial experiences and appear in varied combinations and at different levels of intensity. There is no such thing as an autistic experience as such. I cannot read anything into my interpretation of Thomas's embodied experiences based on Mukhopadhyay's testimony. Mukhopadhyay's narrative, however, helps me understand the variety and complexity of different embodied experiences of the world. It also shows the difficulty of how the body is discussed in the phenomenological tradition. However clear it might be that the experience of the body determines what one experiences in the world, Mukhopadhyay's and Thomas's experiences bring further understanding to and broaden our notions of body and touch.

For non-autistic people, embodiment and sensorial experiences are often so self-evident that one hardly pays attention to them, unless s/he is, for example, a dancer (Heimonen 2009) or an artist, as described in Houessou's (2010) research. However, studying only the phenomenological body of dancers or painters would limit our embodied understanding of it. Many of the individuals with autism seem to pay attention to their embodied relationship to the world and to other people—though maybe not to phenomenology—through an awareness of the world around them while being cognizant of and interested in their surroundings. As Ashby & Causton-Theoharis (2009, 505) suggest in their research, differences in motor control and bodily awareness makes acting on those intentions very difficult. Mukhopadhyay continues writing about his embodied experiences:

*My readers should not be guided by the idea that the boy [referring to himself in the third person] had no 'awareness' of the things that happened around him.*

*The main difficulty was that the boy was losing control over his body. A sense of denying its existence was so strong, that he could not respond to a situation the way it should have been done. (Mukhopadhyay & Wing 2000, 17)*

## PAINTING TOUCHES US

*We sit next to each other. We start painting a large piece of paper. He is concentrating on the lower right corner, as usual, painting with ultramarine blue. I am painting a brownish and greenish area in the middle of the paper. We both take more colours and enlarge our areas with quick brush strokes. My brown island touches his blue. He starts tickling my hand. After the 'tickling break', he continues with the blue colour, making little round movements around my painting*

*area, painting the edges of my brown island: systematic short strokes. Our islands begin to merge into one another; concentrating on little spots at a time, the brushes circle around each other.*



*A collaborative painting by Thomas Kaarni and Mira Kallio-Tavin (2005).*

*The last corner gets filled in like the others, with ultramarine and Prussian blue. When everything has been painted for the first time on the paper, we take a little break, with me just sitting and looking at the painting and him painting the paper plate. He rolls his brush in thick red paint and then starts to add it to the bluish parts of the painting with long and fuzzy strokes. Soon after that, he wants to do some tickling, and he grasps my shirt and tries to look inside of it. I shake my head and take his hand away. He does not seem to be offended at being rejected. I join him, painting with dark blue, similarly adding paint here and there. Thomas's brush travels around the paper fast—first a little bit red paint and then a lot of bright yellow paint. He smiles and grins, touches my hand and waits to be touched. He makes me smile, too. The yellow paint blends into the red. His corner is about to turn all yellow and orange. I add light blue in the middle. More tickling. We paint now in rhythm with one another, concentrating on our own islands again. He stays in his corner, colouring it over and over again. And some more tickling—suddenly Thomas is very interested in my hair bun—and then he adds orange next to the large yellow corner, just before we decide the painting is finished. The painting is about to be finished when there are already many layers of paint, when there are fewer paint brush movements on the paper and when Thomas finally sets his brush on the table and leans back against the chair.*

In the journal entry, I wrote about Thomas pressing his brush hard against the canvas. He rolled the brush, pushing it to its limits, making symmetrical lines, again and again. Thinking (*penser*) happens through the weighing (*peser*) of the body: painting is thinking, or weighing, or just being in the world; it is being in the messy, unclear lived world of different, sometimes conflicting, sensorial and embodied experiences. When looking at his paintings, it is possible to feel his body's weight and movement against the painting, to feel the hard, sometimes furious, brush strokes or sometimes a lighter dip of the brush on the paper.

We are both inexorably subjects of the symbolic codes and rules of both our culture and of the institutional art world. Through education and schooling, we are bound to the symbolic order, which is always outside of the 'self' (Tavin 2010, 52). Interpreting Thomas's art working as something savage or free of culture and education would be a mistake. Although he is not familiar with art criticism or the art world as such, he has participated in art education while at school and in different therapeutic contexts, and he has been influenced by the symbolic codes, rules and techniques, just as he is influenced by them when working with me. Just I bring the education and culture that I belong to along with me into every artist and educational situation that I take part in, I also bring it into my working sessions with Thomas. This is the mechanism by which he has learned to make and perform art. He does not, however, necessarily recognise the art historian and art theoretical conventions that can be interpreted visually influenced our paintings.

One could, just by looking at our artworks, interpret them as belonging to the continuum of modernism. By only looking at our artworks detached from their original context, it is possible to think that the colours, forms and brush strokes were either well planned from an aesthetic standpoint, or, on the contrary, not consciously planned at all—similarly as the work by abstract expressionists. I believe that spectators' perceptions change when they hear about the randomness behind the 'painting actions'. The paintings themselves do not reveal much about our painting sessions. The many levels and depths of the encounter, like the multiple layers of paint, often visually disappeared during the process. Analysing the paintings through visual elements, such as colour choices and compositions, would touch upon banality. Neither is it possible to find any narrative or significance in the paintings. The paintings are traces of the ephemeral events of our being-aside. The significance of the painting as an action or event is more important than the painted object, a painting on a piece of paper. Through this action, the painter is as much an object as the painting.

Just as our art making should not be analysed as a part of modernist art, it should not be confused with any other artistic movements either. Our painting together was an encounter between two people, a way of making a connection. The paintings were produced as performative acts during this encounter. It is, actually, easier to describe what our artistic encounter was not about rather than to talk about just what it was

exactly. None of the existing categories, such as disability art<sup>48</sup> or outsider art<sup>49</sup>—not to mention therapy, which is the most common misunderstanding of our collaboration—are suitable or helpful for us. Although many scholars have written about art making by people with autism and by other people with disabilities, I find our work together radically different from anything that has been described in art education before. This difference makes our work together difficult for someone else to comprehend, since it cannot be defined based on existing categories. In my opinion, the TV documentary filmmaker wanted to see a disability artist practice, such as *disabled people doing art with artists*, which he could then have easily categorised as an existing type of art making.

Our painting took place in this world, as a performative action, through our different desires and wishes, between blurriness and clearness. According to Nancy (1999), the painting itself is always on a threshold. It is never quite at the destination. This is how people look at paintings: from a threshold. That is also what touches and moves us, because the painting affects and influences the limits of our vision. The painting is not an object, but our relationship to the world. We cannot penetrate the painting, even though we are already in it. That is the in-between place of the painting, the threshold that maintains an intimacy with the untouchable. This brings us back to the notions of discreetness of touch. Actually, looking at a painting is more a matter of touching than of seeing. (Nancy 1999, 22–26.) Inevitably, Thomas's and my painting together is a matter of touching rather than any kind of visual practice.

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48 Art educator Jennifer Eisenbauer writes about a critical distinction that is made between disabled people doing art and disability artists within the Disability Arts Movement (2007, 9). The idea of a disability artist engages in a critical process of questioning the way in which the notion of disability is socio-politically constructed. In contrast, the idea of disabled people doing art emphasises on the representation of difference through a curriculum of admiration and appreciation, in which individual artists are admired for their ability to create work similar to other able-bodied artists. While I appreciate the ableist ideology underpinning the idea of the disability artist, I do not find our work with Thomas similar to this movement either.

49 Outsider art emphasises the idea of being culturally and socially the 'other', an art making subject that does not belong within the established art world. Terms such as isolate art, maverick art, folk art, visionary art, inspired art and schizophrenic art, along with l'art brut and self-taught art, autodidactic art, untutored art, idiosyncratic art, original art, estranged art, anti-cultural art, unfettered art, the art of the artless, unmediated art, breakaway art and art without precedence or tradition are all labels that have tried to capture the idea of outsider art (Jagodzinski 2005a, 225) (see also Finnish contemporary folk art, aka ITE art; for example, Haveri 2010). Already in the early 20th century, the art world became interested to the art created inside mental institutions and other facilities, and the term 'outsider' is nowadays used with some irony since outsider art has become a style co-opted by educated 'insider' artists (Wexler 2005, 214). It is obvious that our collaboration is not part of this art form.

## BEING DISTINCT AND INCOMPLETE



*A collaborative painting by Thomas Kaarni and Mira Kallio-Tavin (2006).*

*At times, our painting sessions remind me of a board game, in which each of us aims to conquer an area on the board and make the larger area mimic one's own style. Once conquered, the 'other' is accepted based on our personally established conditions and style. Sometimes it appears as if we are in a competition: it seems that Thomas will not tolerate anything that I paint on the paper. Thomas paints over the areas that I have painted. I switch spots and try to produce something before he manages to paint over that, too. While I am persistent in my aspirations, I can see how Thomas might get frustrated. When working in collaboration, the touch of my paintbrush is lighter and my strokes are shorter. Thomas does not place value on these qualities. Instead, he works systematically towards creating a consistent surface and keeps smoothing out my loose strokes with a new layer of colour. My invasion of his surface must be annoying. Occasionally, I invade Thomas's painting area intentionally. I have considered it my right to disturb his space to evoke a reaction. I believe that encountering requires that some kind of stimulus take place. Importantly, Thomas seems to understand the spirit of this game. He never directs his frustration at me. What happens on the paper does not happen between us as persons.*

My primary intention with our collaborative work was to think about our shared events in more complex ways than just as a way to jointly make art in a shared space. I wanted to see if there was a possibility to maintain our singularities while working

together. This aim included acknowledging our different desires, fantasies and miscommunications, factors of an encounter that are easily ignored. After working for two years with Thomas, I was not sure if there had been something that could be called dialogue. All that I was sure of was that we had encountered one another in a shared space and time that I call being-aside. I believe this being-aside also included being-together, being-singular and being-distinct and that it by no means was ever an immediate contact. Being-aside did not mean togetherness without any cracks, without indifferences, nor without moments of being in a state of incompleteness. Similarly, moments that were relative to dialogical moments, or that might have been dialogical moments, took place occasionally but not all the time. Those moments could not be forced. A pedagogical approach required a dialogical I – Thou attitude so that those moments could happen. We had as many I – It moments as we had I – Thou moments. Being-aside necessarily had to allow space for being distinct and singular. This was part of the discreetness, as was the silent nature of our work. Appreciating the quiet was connected to listening to another person. Nancy's notion of standing on a threshold could be useful for pedagogy. Encountering another person is always an unfinished process; it is incomplete and forever remains something that is in progress. It means not getting to a destination. Pedagogical fantasies often include ideas of fulfilment and satisfaction. Instead, pedagogical encounters are often left with unanswered questions and with points of confusion.

Earlier I asked, how could I be the ethical pedagogue that I wanted to be without trying to violate or disturb the other person, but at the same time trying to offer something more than just facilitating the painting sessions—and giving room and space for both of our singular subjectivities? Although I found Levinas's passive openness to the 'Other' useful as a pedagogical attitude, the messiness, contradictions and frustrations of our encounter reminded me more of the pedagogy of flesh and of the idea that we are at the centre of the flesh of the world. In this sense, struggling with togetherness always includes affecting one another, how we relate to the world, and therefore it includes violating one another's ego. Within the field of education, we tend to think that change means development and that education is intimately linked to progress and change—change towards something that could be called a transformation, or *becoming*.

Education is an essential part of becoming a part of society: everybody needs to be taught how to behave in order to become a part of the larger society, to become a self-fulfilled rational subject (Säftröm 2003, 20). Jagodzinski and Wightman (2005, 1–13) have suggested that art educators should consider un(becoming) instead of becoming as a way of creatively deconstructing the educational process. Perhaps un(becoming) allows more space for all the messiness and incompleteness that is so crucial to pedagogy. While becoming promises organic wholeness, harmony, transformation and growth toward some progressive end, un(becoming) conceals its uncanny, frightening and strange tensions, those that make us face the ambiguities and paradoxes of life (Jagodzinski & Wightman



2005, 1–2). Un(becoming) gives space for *degrowth*,<sup>50</sup> for *not-knowing* and for being *distinct-between-us*.<sup>51</sup> *Distinct-between-us* has been derived and cultivated from Nancy's notion of being-with to emphasise the singularity and incompleteness instead of the *with* that are a part of being. Staying on a threshold, uncertainty, the uncanny tensions and not penetrating the process of knowing are also essential parts of *distinct-between-us*. This notion is not very far from the concept of being-aside that I have chosen to use.

It is obvious now that such notions as *others are orientated towards the world through their bodies just like I am* or that *knowledge of our own embodied subjectivities helps us to understand that there are other embodied subjectivities*, as Merleau-Ponty stated (Hotanen 2010, 146), are not enough for us anymore. Not everybody is orientated to the world through their bodies and senses in similar ways. An embodied subjectivity does not necessarily bring with it much knowledge of the world or of other persons' experiences of it. This becomes obvious when being face-to-face with another person: her/his experience is not mine and I cannot relate anything from my own experience to their experience. For Levinas, embodiment is the primordial level where a resistance of the Other's otherness happens together with conscious understanding. This is essential to understand in pedagogical contexts: a person cannot hide his/her resistance because it is partially embodied and happens before s/he even understands it. My resistance to the 'Other' showed up on many levels—and at first I did not acknowledge my resistance. Thomas's resistance to the 'Other' was also embodied. Paradoxically, a person has to welcome the 'Other' before even consciously making any decision about how, and if at all, wanting to welcome the 'Other'. Levinas talks about hospitality (*l'hospitalité*) as a part of the process of encountering the 'Other', the appearance of the face, which happens on the embodied level. (Tuohimaa 2001, 36.) An ethical approach opens up the ego because, when it is engaged in dialogue with another person, this causes new tensions to our way of thinking, experiencing and desiring. Each encounter is a unique ethical event. Being takes place *aside* from the 'Other', distinctly and incompletely.

This chapter has focused on contemplating the embodied working conditions of our relationship and what this meant in terms of the pedagogical fields discussed in this research project. I have challenged the adequateness of the phenomenological body to capture disabled body experiences, I have explored the notion of being-aside in more depth and I have pondered the essence of touch and space between and among us: our private, shared and extended space. In the next chapter, I will return to the collaborative moments through the video *Being-Aside*.

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50 *Degrowth is a concept developed as a criticism of economics. It is a political, economic and social movement based on anti-capitalist and anti-consumerist ideas. The idea is that reducing our levels of consumption does not mean reducing our living standards. Instead, it emphasises sharing work and consuming less and devoting more time to cultural and communal activism. I find this concept appropriate for art education: a pedagogue should not aim to solely increase knowledge, harmony and organic growth.*

51 *I have translated the term distinct-between-us used by the researchers Heimonen, Kallio-Tavin and Pusa from a Finnish term kesken-erillisyyks.*





Chapter 8.  
CRITICAL  
SELF-RECOGNITION  
THROUGH VIDEO



*Still image from the video Being-Aside (2012).*

In this chapter, I reflect on the video *Being-Aside*, which I produced while working on the thesis. The video is 14 minutes, 37 seconds long. All of the material was videotaped during my meetings with Thomas. It shows Thomas and me on different days and in different situations. In the following pages, I examine the video and the pedagogy, which I claim strike a balance between ambitious ethical goals—that is, passivity, openness and vulnerability in front of the ‘Other’—and the counter-transference affects and defences that inevitably influenced our behaviour. Furthermore, I define some of my own pedagogical desires and fantasies in this project, and when and how they became apparent when reviewing the video. The pedagogical conditions that I have discussed theoretically thus far are considered visually throughout the video. The video is a method for conducting visual research and a tool of thought.

In this chapter, I am the learner, developing my understanding and an awareness of how my presuppositions affected our collaboration. Following Jack Mezirow’s ideas on reflective and transformative learning (1998, 8–9), I search for a justification for my own beliefs and analyse what still was unfamiliar to me. This learning process happened while reviewing the video material over and over again and filtering that material through the use of theory and through editing the video documentation, including reframing the video material. In other words, I consider my own pedagogical desires and educational fantasies through visual expression.

Since the early days of philosophy, the sense of desire that is bound up with education is deeply intertwined with the desire for knowing (Todd 1997, 1). In this thesis, the notion of knowing is, however, challenged and rethought through the ideas of not-knowing and degrowth. The thesis views pedagogical desire quite differently than traditional understandings of academic hunger and a passion for knowledge. Desire has been associated with love: the love of wisdom when seeking knowledge, wisdom and enlightenment. It has also been associated with the libidinal dynamics between a teacher and student: with the student as an innocent, empty vessel lacking her own desires and the teacher as the phallic fullness of knowledge. (Todd 1997, 1–3.) The teacher fills the ‘student with knowledge, acquire[s] the desires of the teacher, and display[s] those knowledge/desires back to the teacher, untouched, unsullied, uncontaminated as it were, by the student’s own thinking, desires and ways of knowing’ (Todd 1997, 2).

The above mentioned uni-directional, penetrative and incisive model of desire in education is familiar to all of us. At the same time, more deliberative and transformative notions of pedagogy have taken a strong account of education as a practice of freedom (for example, Freire 1989) and as a dialogic process in which knowledge leads to reflective, deliberative action (Todd 1997, 1–3), with the pedagogical desires shrouded under the ideologies of dialogical intentions and still waiting to be uncovered. When working with a person with autism, these shrouded desires showed through clearly: the ‘other’ did not participate in the social interaction that took place, which usually helps to blur such desires. My own art pedagogical desires and struggles with (non-) teaching and its impossibilities were disentangled for the purposes of visual analysis. Pedagogical desires and fantasies steered my own behaviour, no matter how aware I thought I was of those desires and fantasies. Reactions and feelings, such as frustration and enjoyment, took place and also show up in the video. Todd discusses similar feelings in pedagogical encounters: ‘Psychoanalysis has taught us that what transpires in the everyday practices of education [...] involves complex layers of affect and conflict that specifically emerge out of an encounter with otherness. Feelings of guilt, love, and empathy, to name but a few, powerfully work their way in and through pedagogical encounters [...]’ (Todd 2003a, 4).

While reviewing the video material, I paid critical attention to how and why I reacted to the other person during our collaborative time of work. I paid attention to what types of behaviour were repeated and during which particular situations. I was especially interested to see if I reacted based on my pedagogical or artistic desires or fantasies and how they influenced my ethical desires: passivity, openness and vulnerability in front of the ‘Other’. By assuming a certain pedagogical responsibility for the way I reflected these desires in front of the other’s face, I found it necessary to recognise that I sometimes reacted based on my own desires and fantasies when becoming more conscious of the affects and educational pre-conceptions and regulations impacting the art educational situation. The collaborative work was,

more than anything else, a process of negotiating between and transforming existing realities. The video uses the strategies and tactics of contemporary art, such as re-conceptualisation, juxtaposition and projection (Marshall 2011, 1–4). The video material has been re-conceptualised and edited from the video documentation material. This re-conceptualisation offers three different and simultaneously possible projections of the same event. These three possibilities, *(Un)becoming Educated*, *Touch* and *Other*, are juxtaposed as a conceptual collage.

Our embodied collaboration, which I described using the concepts of being-aside, touch, shared obmutescence and face-to-face encounters, suddenly appeared on the editing screen as a voyeuristic and disembodied (camera) gaze. I was able to rearrange, repeat, delete and extend, as well as shorten, the time in the way that I wanted to. The medium offered me the possibility to view our collaboration differently, from a distance. It also offered me the possibility to take a great deal of freedom when re-conceptualising our encounter. There might have been ways to bring more dramatic and visually more interesting details, transitions and narrations into the short film. However, I did not want to bring such drama and visualisation into the video. I wanted to maintain my own ethical viewpoint, which included physical proximity, as much as possible. My aspiration was to produce a video with an essence of an embodied presence. I hope that as an approach, this presence grasps our being-aside in the same way that the disembodied eye of the camera would capture an embodied presence. Perhaps this intention could achieve the same ends as an embodied (camera) eye/gaze.

## (UN)BECOMING EDUCATED

In the first part of the video, I struggle with the educational presuppositions of learning and with what our collaborative work is supposed to be about. It breaks through the pre-conceptions and fantasies of art working and art teaching, of there being a lack of development and of the reactions caused by disappointments, such as frustration.

Thomas sits by a table, cutting little pieces of paper. I get started. I wet the piece of paper. I organise the paints and brushes. I am in front of the camera—at the centre of the event as a knowing subject. I chew gum in a relaxed way—I am in control. Thomas sits and stares. He scratches his head. While he is looking bored and not interested in anything that I am preparing us for, I seem to be confident. I am the artist and pedagogue who is preparing the artistic moment for us. I have no hesitation about what is to come. I do not know exactly what we will do, but I trust that art will be created. The large wet paper in front of the camera is intended for our collaborative artwork.



*Still image from the video Being-Aside (2012).*

Thomas does not collaborate with my intentions. The only time he looks at the paper is when he casts a strange gaze upon it, raising his eyebrows, rolling his eyes. He listens to music from his headphones with all of his body, while cutting little pieces of paper with scissors. I am persistent with the idea of painting with him. I try to get him involved by changing places with him. While grasping his scissors, I indicate that I wish him to continue with the painting that I have started. This effort does not help. He goes dancing in the corridor. I cut the paper into pieces. Doubt and frustration: he will not come back to paint with me. Working together in a quiet atmosphere seems like my fantasy in this part of the video. In that fantasy, there are embedded desires of an encounter another that includes a certain level of interaction with the art materials and with each other, perhaps reactions to one another that would lead to us making works of art together and learning from each other. I am trying to create a placid, smooth, programme-free, tacit moment, one that takes into account my partner's own will. Instead, I end up in an awkward situation, since my partner does not want the same things that I do: he wants anything but to quietly work on art together. He wants to listen to his loud music without sharing it with me. He wants to dance. He is not on the same wavelength as me when it comes to the desire to create a piece of art, unless it is to cut paper.

I sit and stare. For about a minute, I sit still without moving, just staring straight ahead while Thomas keeps cutting away. I am bored and frustrated, and I feel forced by the situation to try to do something else. I just do not know what that would be. One might wonder, who is supposedly the person with autism in this situation? After a little while, I go closer to Thomas: more cutting paper into little pieces. I try to go back to my painting. I change colours so as to get more interested in the insipid work. Changing colours does not help. Instead, I slowly become more interested in his work. I go closer to him to learn more about what he is cutting. There are hundreds of pieces of paper in the box and, in a way, the job is endless: he can keep on cutting them into smaller and smaller pieces endlessly. It seems to be important that the pieces be the same size. When he sees a piece that is bigger than the others, he cuts it into smaller pieces. And, when that piece is smaller, all of the other pieces need to be cut into smaller pieces, too. The pieces are lying on top of each other. On the side of the box, there is an area that he keeps clear of paper. Clearly, he has a system. He looks happy and laughs, and then continues cutting.

In the section of video on *(Un)becoming Educated*, we do not look at one another. We seem to be isolated in our own particular and idiosyncratic worlds, being-aside each other without interacting at all. One time I touch Thomas, when taking the scissors and the box away from him. He touches his shoulder, showing me he wants to be tickled there. I scratch him and then we move on, we go back to our isolated and separate way of being. This is the only physical encounter in the video. It is a short, inconspicuous, physical touch that happens so rapidly that the viewer might not even notice it. *(Un)becoming Educated* is the most tedious part of the entire video. It has moments that are difficult to tolerate because they are so slow and ponderous.

In *(Un)becoming educated*, my fantasy was that I could somehow transfer my desire to paint to Thomas. I initially thought that just pulling out the art materials and starting to paint in front of him would induce him to take part in the flow of the art making process. It is a paradoxical notion in the first place: that desire could be taught to and learned by anybody. The desire to teach the un-teachable constitutes, in part, the unsaid in educational encounters. (Todd 1997, 1.) Instead, the one who becomes an object/subject of change is the educator. I call this change (un)becoming because it constitutes a struggle against all that one has learned within formal education. By formal education, I mean the process of teaching students, whether implicitly or explicitly, about development, effectiveness, becoming, producing, accomplishing and achieving.

Un(becoming), as jagodzinski and Wightman refer to it (2005, 1–13), includes both becoming and the unbecoming in a pedagogical sense.<sup>52</sup> Within this ambiguity and uncanny tension between becoming and unbecoming, it is possible to see the paradox of the pedagogical fantasies about transformative education, or a transforma-

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<sup>52</sup> In this research project there is no crucial difference between (un)becoming and un(becoming).



tive community-[arts-]based project, and the incomplete and unsettled realm of (un) becoming. The transformative learning process turns out to be something very different than becoming—or becoming knowledgeable. A pedagogical type of becoming thus happens, although differently than one usually thinks.

When taking into account Levinas's radical notion of responsibility for the other, it is clear that the pedagogue is no longer in the position of power. Understanding pedagogy as consisting of less power and control brings along with it other factors, such as the guilt of not being responsible enough. The pedagogue is then, in Levinas's terms, given over to the 'Other' as a 'hostage', s/he is 'vulnerable' and 'exposed' to the 'Other', obliged to take into account the demands of the 'Other' that s/he encounters, and therefore teaching 'brings me more than I contain'. (see Levinas 2008, 51; Todd 2003a, 17). This means giving up the position of being on the 'safe' side of knowledge; meeting the 'Other' means taking responsibility for the 'Other' from a position of vulnerability. In part, this vulnerability comes from the unpredictability, uncertainty and open-ended situations where responsibility is located.



*Still image from the video Being-Aside (2012).*

In this first part of the video, the pedagogue, meaning myself, struggles with the situation. I try to entice Thomas to get involved with the painting materials. The artistic materials seemed to be much more relevant materials to work with than the

materials that Thomas was interested in. While painting is a legitimate artistic form, cutting paper seemed a useless job, just something that a person with autism does as a repetitive fixation. By immersing himself in the cutting, Thomas practiced the ‘black hole of the dark side’ of autism that is usually tolerated because it is understood as something that calms the person with autism down, but it is hardly understood as a ‘constructive’ way to make something. Nevertheless, I open myself up to this practice and at the same time to the other person. I first get frustrated and then become interested in the other’s logic, in the other’s way of thinking and acting.

Teaching Thomas would have been forcing him into my ‘Same’. Compelling Thomas to paint seems ridiculous now. Why would it have been important, and important for whom? Would it have been important to me, or just for the project? Why did we not cut paper as a type of artwork? Why did I insist on painting? On the other hand, turning pieces of paper into artwork for a gallery exhibition would not have been much different from any other practices of my sameness. In the video, I want to show that cutting paper—the action of cutting itself—is a type of art making. More importantly, cutting paper is Thomas’s practice, something that gives him pleasure, similarly as Temple Grandin’s squeezing machine gave her pleasure and comfort (Grandin & Scariano 1996, 106). One can see Thomas’s happiness from the look on his face at the end of the first part, his concentration and laughter while cutting pieces of paper. This frame ends the first part of the video *Being-Aside*.

## TOUCH

While the first part of the video is about separation, the second part, *Touch*, offers a different insight into the idea of being-aside. *Touch* is about coming to the border of touching one another: it is about tacit communication, about touching the paintings with paint and brushes and about rhythmic movement together and next to one another. This movement continues from one image to another. *Touch* illustrates Thomas and me on different days, in different situations, but it maintains the idea of one event as a continuation. It is about (un)becoming and repetition, and it is about an event that seems to repeat itself without much variation, without becoming anything else except for what it is: repetition. *Touch* has been edited from the video material from many separate meetings during the two years’ time that we collaborated and created artwork together. Still, it may not register as many different events, but more as one continuous event. The idea is that this part of the video is a collage, one that creates a single entity. This event, *Ereignis*, maintains the singularity of each individual moment, showing that any of these moments would be enough to tell us about the aspects of touch and togetherness between us. Including many moments in the video is more of an artistic choice, a re-conceptualised conceptual collage; by creating a rhythm, the video presents an image of the touch and the (un)becoming of our paining moments. This is our continuous board game, where conquering, competition and transposition take place.



*Still image from the video Being-Aside (2012).*

The knowledge practiced here can be called non-knowledge, since it does not rely on controlling or mastering something or on anything that would be known beforehand. However, both of the participants have a great deal of knowledge. It is important to acknowledge that one knows something, and that one has known things before (Baraille 1988, 51–52), and that an attitude of openness and wonder requires a certain degree of certainty; that is, that the certainty that the event can be made safe for the participants. While the pedagogue must be certain about certain aspects of the encounter and the learning process, this need not include knowledge about the ‘Other’ or about the work that is being done. Neither can be known beforehand. The participants do not know exactly what they are doing, but they are doing it intensively. The sensorial and immediate reactions to the other’s touch and to the continuous painting movement are like an unknown game. This non-knowledge, which bumps up against our stable sense of knowing, is what opens us up to carnal knowledge and the pedagogy of the flesh.

*Touch* starts with an image of us sitting across the table from one another. Thomas tickles his hand with a clean paint brush. I start doing the same thing to his hand with another brush. We both smile. The brushstrokes continue in the next frame, where Thomas is painting with thick red paint. His hand is moving slowly, and then he begins tapping. The paintings and the particular moments change, but the movement

continues: little yellow spots and long red circles. First, I cut little scraps of paper, and later on he continues this action. We take more paint, thicker paint, more water. It seems as if this painting will never be finished: painting as an act is a happening, the (un)becoming, one that does not really go anywhere. As an act, a happening, the painting seems important for both of us.

Again, I am tickling Thomas with paintbrushes. He tickles himself as well. He has moved on to brushing his neck and chin. I continue scratching his hand with the brush. Later, this view changes and Thomas tickles my hand with a brush. We are sitting and standing, we reach out to the other side of the paper, and we sit next to one another, side by side. Thomas spreads blue paint and I mimic his hand movements with dark brown paint. He cuts the paper into pieces while I paint, then I take a turn, and after that we paint together. Later on, I sit and watch him painting. I watch him painting the paper. In the next clip, he is tickling my hand with a clean paintbrush, and then he is painting a piece of paper again: happiness and an enjoyment of painting, with a hint of awkwardness. I cannot hide my sense of being disturbed by Thomas's touch. I smile, but when his tickling continues for too long, I pull away. Thomas paints again with thick layers of paint. It is so thick that it constitutes a third dimension. We work in a quiet atmosphere, we are serious, and the brushes make sounds that mix with Thomas's humming noises.

He reaches towards my neck and tickles me again. At first, I do not pay any attention, and then I take his hand away, smiling. I am cutting scraps of paper and placing them in a box while Thomas is painting. My clipping is slow and clumsy compared to his quick hand movements. He fills in the circles that I have painted: deep brown circles. Then he moves on to painting the colour palette. The palette is covered in thick, deep red-brown paint, just like the painting itself, which by now is covered in many layers of paint. I am still painting hard, trying to keep up the speed. We continue for a little while with another painting, standing around it. He paints the palette with slow motions. The earlier fast repetition has now become a lazy touch. The paintbrush touches the palette gently every once in a while. He crosses his hands. The painting sessions are over.

Touch has different meanings in this video. It is present in the sounds of the paintbrush touching the paper and palette. Touch takes place when making the paintings and it happens between our bodies. We react to the tickling differently: he wants to be tickled more and more, while I am trying to avoid his touch. I feel that I might be hurting his feelings by pulling away from him, but I cannot just sit and let him tickle me everywhere he wants. In this part of the video, I do not know how to deal with his touch.

In the section on *Touch*, we draw while sitting next to each other on different days; the video shows a succession of movements. He looks at my drawing hand, he looks at me sitting in front of him, and he looks at the camera a couple of times. This is different from the beginning of the video when he did not react at all to me or the camera.

Some parts of *Touch* show me in a way that is odd. While it had been important to be critical of my withdrawing from his touch, I was surprised to see how differently I reacted to his tickling on different days. Thomas's attempts at tickling me in these images are strange for me to review. He tickles me under my chin and he tickles my hair, as if I was a puppy, and he makes me laugh like a young girl. While in these parts of the video I seem relaxed and happy, at the same time I hardly recognised myself. I thought that my embarrassment would have come from different sources than this. By forcing myself to review material that is not very flattering, I am able to confront my defences and reactions. I thought of myself as someone who tries to struggle with Thomas's tickling and who confronts the fact that I sometimes pulled away from him, or moved his hand away impatiently. I was stunned to see this other part of my reaction to his tickling, when I was relaxed, enjoying myself and giggling. For some reason, it had been important to me to keep up the idea that I had been withdrawing from him. That is what strikes me as responsible and appropriate for a pedagogue. Withdrawing, however, is not necessarily an ethical encounter. But, most importantly, it does introduce the Third, and reminds me about justice and politics and how they will always have an inevitable role in pedagogy.

As stated before, standing on a threshold and living with uncertainty and the uncanny nature of the encounter with the 'Other'—whatever it might entail—and abstaining from truly knowing something is at the core of the pedagogy, and perhaps especially at the core of the lived, messy and incomplete pedagogy of the flesh, which forced me to encounter my ideological fantasies. This statement addresses the question that I have been discussing throughout the thesis: What pedagogical understandings of (un)becoming arise at the crossroads of ambitious ethical goals and pedagogical desires? An education of (un)becoming stems from degrowth, not-knowing and being distinct-between-us. These pedagogical approaches give room for being-aside, a pedagogical space where togetherness meets singularity, where incompleteness is valued and where one can ponder and be amazed and stunned by the 'Other' and the 'self'. I find the amazement of 'self' to be of greatest value in this part of the video. This sense of amazement has to do with the strangeness of the otherness in me, which will always remain with me, since it is not something that I can ever get to know about myself. I can only acknowledge that this foreign and hostile strangeness exists within me (Levinas 2008, 38), but I will never get to know what it exactly is. However, I think that by knowing about this 'Other' in myself, I will be able to value the otherness in the 'Other' and, consequently, become more ethical.



*Still image from the video Being-Aside (2012).*

Responsibility is at the core of ethics. Being responsible means having an ethical awareness of another person's difference: it has to do with understanding that otherness and difference are also a part of who I am and that I exist and live in relation to them—not to destroy them (Varto 2005, 94). Responsibility in pedagogy means deeply appreciating the other person's difference and alterity and resisting a totalising type of thinking in ourselves that tries to shape the 'Other' to be the 'Same' as us. Unless we consciously decide to act ethically towards others, we fall into an automatic routine of taking bits and pieces of the other person, grabbing from the 'Other' only the parts that suit us, while ignoring the parts that do not please us and filling in the gaps that seem to be missing from our own sameness.

In this part of the video, we interact more than before. This interaction is not just an easy type of togetherness. It is the 'risky uncovering of oneself [...] where no slipping away is possible' (Levinas 1998, 48 & 50). For me, it is a condition of communication that comes close to the type of communication that Levinas describes as *saying*. This is a different type of attitude than the responsible pedagogy evident in the video. A pedagogy that includes *saying* is participatory; it involves seeing the 'self' as 'Other' by taking new steps and becoming fully responsible through getting involved. This is how a pedagogical responsibility in the face of ethics and desires and fantasies is challenged—and shown—in this video: that is, it is a performative

activity towards the other. Sometimes this activity, that is, this orientation to the 'Other', is manifested as passivity.

*Touch* is an assembly of our different encounters. It is a juxtaposition and collage of those moments that touched me, when we were busy together, when we were sitting next to each another, side by side. In this part of the video, I have learned that togetherness does not require making eye contact. Learning this took a long time: while practices of looking are deeply significant in the culture generally, in an art education context they seem to be even more so.

## OTHER



*Still image from the video Being-Aside (2012).*

The third part of the video, *Other*, illustrates the affects of our being-aside, such as our pleasure at being together. This part of the video unveils certain pedagogical fantasies and how they often stem from an aspiration to enclose the 'Other' into the 'Same' space with 'I'. Nevertheless, the 'Other' remains separate. The 'Other' is never what one assumes. As soon as the 'Other' seems to be comprehensible, the 'Other' escapes. The 'Other' is always more than I can imagine; I have no control over the 'Other'. I can never understand the 'Other', and the 'Other' is not just a representative of her or his different cultural or ethnical background or of her or his particular

disability; rather, s/he is 'Other' precisely because of her/his radical alterity. But, I can be curious, and remain curious, about the other's difference. The basis of the ethical relationship is to reply to the other's different and unique invitation. That means that in every relationship, I am the only one responsible and my responsibility is unabandoned and endless.

In all encounters, it is essential to take seriously the other person's alterity, meaning that I may find that the 'Other' inhabits a world that is basically other than mine, and that s/he is essentially different from me. In everyday contexts, we seem to get along with people that think and act in the same way as we do. These situations can easily make us forget that the other person is the 'Other', separate from 'I' and infinitely unknowable (Levinas 2008, 36 & 39; Todd 2003a, 3). It is important, however, to realise that I am also the 'Other' to myself. In this part of the video, I become an 'Other' to the spectator: the *Other* shows Thomas as 'self' and me as the 'Other'. I am the object of gaze when Thomas is behind the camera. Thomas is behind the camera even when his own face is shown—he is behind and in front of the camera. This ability to be on both sides of the camera is possible because of the technical feature of the camera. The video camera has a flip screen that made it easy for Thomas to see himself on the video camera while it was taping him and me.

The third section of the video, *Other*, has a different approach than the other two. While the first two parts of the video show issues that are interesting for me as a pedagogue, the last one gives space for Thomas's perspective. Almost all of the video material in the *Other* has been taped by Thomas. It starts with an image of him gazing off into the distance. He sweeps the room with the camera, showing the space, a porch, a little part of me and the ceiling. All of a sudden, the camera's movement changes direction and then takes a different turn again, finally ending by zooming in on me washing the paintbrushes. Throughout the entire section, he is playing an active role: he grabs the camera, he gazes at things, he touches them, and then, at the end, he tells me that he is done with videotaping by answering 'no' to the question of whether or not he wants to continue. In this part of the video, the camera is moving differently and the entire perspective has changed. One can see his gaze, what he is looking at, whom he is looking at and how he wants to be seen in the video.

The lack of an eye contact was one of my first struggles during our collaboration. That is why I initially thought that Thomas was not looking at me at all. In a couple parts of the video, Thomas is, however, clearly gazing at me. His gaze at the beginning of the *Other* is especially important because it does not strike me as an empty 'autistic' gaze, but one that is seemingly circumspect and thoughtful. Through this gazing, as well as by touching, Thomas partially objectifies his partner, me. For example, he tapes my backside while I am washing paintbrushes. I become the 'Other' in the narration. He is in charge at this point.



At the end of the video, it is difficult to know who is recording whom. The camera moves around rapidly, showing the two of us sitting together. The camera shows the ceiling and both of our faces next to each other. The camera seems to be on our lap, as if we were both holding it. I look at him and smile. Suddenly, he comes closer to me and it almost looks like he is going to kiss me. He grasps my face between his hands and gives a gentle hug. He also glances at the camera, like he knew this hug would be recorded.





Chapter 9.

# SELF, OTHER AND THE THIRD

One essential area to discuss with respect to the research questions is the relationship between 'self', 'Other' and the 'Third' in the collaborative art project. I needed to understand what it meant to strive for togetherness and to simultaneously stick with singularity. Working with the 'Other' was as much blinding as it was eye opening. Working as an art pedagogue together with another person also made it possible for me to become absorbed in my own art making. It showed clearly how meaningless the idea of community can become as soon as one immerses oneself in a singular art making project. However, it was important to find out that we shared was not necessarily communal. One can remain singular while being plural. More importantly, the questions of singularity and togetherness are formulated via a negotiation with the educational, cultural, political and institutional realms and all that is included in each encounter between two people. Throughout the research project, I became more aware of the challenges within community-[arts-]based projects. I came to understand what face-to-face demands stand in contradiction to the community's insistence on a shared and externally given identity.

As a part of the *Art Without Borders* project, there were such demands as enhancing awareness of autism in society and advocating justice for people with autism in society: the project emphasised the right to practice art, the right to be seen, the right to be celebrated, and so on. At the same time, and somewhat paradoxically, these demands meant entering ethically into an area of violence: they advocated promoting otherness from the perspective of totality. The 'Other' is celebrated from the perspective of where one (artist) wants to be celebrated her/himself. That is the totalised thinking that limits our conception of other people through our own sameness, the realm that Levinas calls *Same*. That is not necessarily what the 'Other' in the project wished for. The effort to create a sense of justice is an essential endeavour. Simultaneously, it is destructive for ethics. When social justice is promoted via international coverage of heavily supported and financed community-[arts-]based projects, there is a risk of becoming misguided ethically and losing sight of what is important in our encounters with the 'between' people. There were, however, encounters within the *Arts Without Borders* project. Just as each encounter always includes a certain amount of discomfort caused by the required changes to and expansion of 'self', it is important to acknowledge that there needs to be an encounter so that a change, any kind of change, can take place (Deleuze 1994, 139). As I mentioned at the beginning of the thesis, I was eager to expand myself by encountering another person, to change my previous pedagogical notions.

The most meaningful part for me was to realise how unhelpful the methods taught in teacher pre-service education are when working with people with disabilities, and how useless the cognitive paradigm is for such encounters. While facing this new pedagogical understanding, I was also able to understand the meaning of working together in a shared space, of directly encountering another person. This was only possible by not trying consciously to establish any kind of dialogical connection. Criticality and transparency towards my own actions made it possible for me to become more aware of,

and therefore more responsible for, the pedagogical factors that emerged. In this thesis, this means analysing my own behaviour and recognising my motivations, principles, affects and emotions. It became clear to me that when working in collaboration with another person, it was imperative not to try to solve or develop final definitions of the other person or what it means to be/function in a spatially bounded relationship. The 'other', my partner, will always remain undefined, and thus, what needed to be studied was distinct from the mutually agreed upon time and space of our cooperation, in which both people are separate and the shared space creates a sense of 'us'.

Levinas's notion of the third party, that is, the politics and justice of ethics, forces the ego to respond to more than one 'Other', and therefore, it is an essential part of ethics.<sup>53</sup> It brings politics into an encounter that would otherwise remain an experience without justice. Levinas's notion of the 'Third' enabled me to critically review my practices with my research partner. Without this review, I could have left our space of being-aside; I could have thought that this space is all there is, just the two of us in a 'bubble' of togetherness and distinctness. Thomas's and my being-aside fascinated and held us in a grasp, like the embrace of lovers, as Levinas calls the face-to-face relation, and it would be convenient and interesting enough to remain in that space. However, the ethics of the 'Third' required me to step outside of our togetherness and to look carefully and critically at the politics of our being-aside. It made me confront the moments that I had claimed were open and not-planned beforehand, but which actually were filled with intentions and notions that I wanted to carry out in our meetings. Our open encounter in a democratic space was loaded with preconceptions, presuppositions and guidance. I was forced to recognise the *said* in the pedagogy that I had practiced, which I had initially claimed only included the performative *saying*.

The 'Third' came into existence through reflecting upon my experience, through criticising my own behaviour, through the philosophies and theories that I have explored here, through looking back and through (un)becoming educated. The ethics that I found to be so significant early on needed to be brought into a larger context. In a way, the entire research project became the 'Third' in the encounter between 'self' and 'Other'; it became the 'Other' of the 'Other',<sup>54</sup> binding together the face-to-face ethics between us with pedagogical statements and politics, which I have written about in this thesis. To quote Levinas once again:

Metaphysics, or the relation with the other, is accomplished as service and as hospitality. In the measure that the face of the Other relates us with the third party, the metaphysical relation of the I with the Other moves into the form of We, aspires to a State, institutions, laws, which are the source of universality. (Levinas 2008, 300)

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53 I have discussed Levinas's notion of the 'Third' in the sixth chapter.

54 I am not using the concept of an 'Other' of the 'Other' in the same way as Lacanian theory deploys the term, that is, as paranoia.

I follow Levinas's idea that the 'We' constituted by 'I', the 'Other' and the 'Third' are an essential part of the politics and laws that are practiced in and outside of institutions. This thesis is part of the institution, forming a politics that are based on 'Us', on an encounter between two people and the Third as well as an encounter between the educational, cultural, political and institutional realms.

In pedagogy, the 'Third' is always present. In this thesis, this relationship is understood as a space and as an opportunity to understand the chasms and rhizomes involved in the multiple and complex embodied realms of the pedagogy of the flesh. Since the 'Third' includes responding to more than just one person, and since the ego must decide whom to respond to first, pedagogy is a never-ending ethical oscillation of balancing between the 'self', the 'Other' and the 'Third'.

In the next section, I will answer the first research question: *How can a collaborative art practice help create an ethical relationship with the 'Other', and how might this collaborative practice be described, discussed and interpreted visually?* The 'Other' here and elsewhere in the thesis is written with a capital 'O' because this question is not about encountering a particular person, but about encountering the Otherness in us at a philosophical level: it is about how the 'Other' appears to the 'self' and how the 'self' appears as 'Other'.

## ALTERITY IN COLLABORATION AND IN THE VIDEO

To start with, I have to understand the preconditions for an ethical relationship that were created during the collaborative art project. I came up with four tenets for an ethical relationship. First, getting to know the 'other' does not necessarily create a sense of ethicality. Contrary to what common sense might suggest, ethicality occurs as a result of leaving the 'other' not-known. Levinas says that getting to know the 'Other' does not lead us to a better ethics. Knowing the 'Other' would only mean controlling the 'Other', making her/him the 'Same' as me, and trying to understand the other's alterity, which is an impossible effort. One might think that getting an experience of, for example, working with people with autism, would lead towards a better understanding of people and working with people with autism. This is when the process of learning about the 'self' and learning about the 'other' becomes confused. It is only the disability that we are able to learn about, not about the person with the disability. Levinas says that one does not learn how to be with others from her/his own experiences. This statement is difficult to support, since the process of constructing knowledge seems axiomatic here.

Second, an ethical relationship with the 'other' is asymmetrical. Contrary to common beliefs, the ethic of reciprocity (Christian), on treating the 'other' just as you would like to be treated is not based on an ethical relationship. According to psychoanalytical theory, and to Levinas as well, the relationship between the 'self' and 'Other' is nonreciprocal and asymmetrical. One cannot conclude anything

about the Other's needs or desires based on one's own needs, since I am never able to totally comprehend the 'Other'. The issue of symmetry becomes much more complex and broader when it comes to pedagogy precisely because a pedagogical relationship is asymmetrical from the start. According to Levinas, the pedagogue is responsible asymmetrically for the 'Other' and also for the Other's responsibility. The pedagogue's ethical responsibility cannot include the Other's participation or response to that responsibility.

Third, power and violence are always an essential part of a pedagogical encounter and they need to be considered, otherwise pedagogical relationships would be dangerous and uncontrollable. This is obviously closely related to the other two statements above, the notion of not-knowing the 'Other', the asymmetry between the 'self' and 'Other' and the ethical responsibility of the 'self'.

Fourth, community-based thinking can be a challenge, even an obstacle, for ethics. Because a community is *nobody*, and because it is impossible to encounter *anybody*, the idea of encountering others within a community is an abstraction. While community-[arts-]based projects often aim to build a sense of 'true togetherness' and to create an understanding of the differences among those in society, they commonly end up maintaining artificial ideologies of a sublime existence, where a shared identity is built based on somebody else's politics and superficial efforts to create togetherness.

While I found the criticism of community helpful when outlining the contexts of the ethical work, I needed other ways to understand the nature of our collaboration. Letting go of the educational ideal of progress was only possible after realising the nature of our work, after processing the pedagogical approaches that I was truly able to rely on. That helped me to acknowledge the alterity of the 'Other'—that the 'Other' will always remain unknown to me—and what that meant to me on a deeper level: I needed to acknowledge not only the other person's different needs and desires when working together, but his different existence, his different perception of the world as a framework for our existence together, because the essential starting point for being together is to acknowledge our differences. From Buber, I learned that the effort to engage in dialogue is never meaningless. Opening up to another person, 'listening' to him and reducing my own role in the encounter helped me realise the need to learn how to transform the 'self'. The dialogical ideal brings meaning to the encounter only when the dialogical attitude is internalised (Värri 2004, 75). By recognising the otherness and alienness in myself, and by understanding that otherness and difference are also a part of me, I found that there was the possibility for an ethical encounter and an ethical pedagogy. 'The alterity of the Other is its being-origin' (Nancy 2000,11). That means that the alterity is a key part of the originality of the origin, that is, it is the key element for *us*. For Nancy, the otherness, or being-other as he calls it, is not a question of an 'Other'; rather, it is a question of the alterity of the world. This is the world that we are

a part of. The ‘Other’ originates in the same world, which is also why *we are the others*. (Nancy 2000, 11.)

Levinas asks if it is possible to construct a politics that maintains an ethical relationship with the ‘Other’, one that does not reduce the ‘Other’, but, rather, preserves its alterity. Levinas’s crucial question is not, ‘To be or not to be?’ Rather, it is: How can the state be justified in the face of the ‘Other’? (Simmons 1999, 90.) This idea is followed by the question, how could this kind of collaboration maintain an ethical relationship with the ‘Other’ without reducing the ‘Other’, but instead by preserving its alterity? And how can pedagogy be justified in the face of the Other? For Levinas, hospitality (*hospitalité*) operates in two realms, a private realm and an ethical realm, but it can also be found in face-to-face situations and in what is public and political. The public realm forces the self to politically welcome all of humanity, while in the ethical and private realm the ‘self’ is obliged to welcome only one individual stranger. However, since politics is always violent and totalising, the practice of political hospitality requires an ethical transformation of the public realm. (Gauthier 2007, 158; Critchley 2010, 46.) The ‘Third’—the political, institutional and public—is tied together with my pedagogue-researcher identity, while the private and ethical is what ultimately guides the face-to-face encounter between two people.

When interpreting my own appearance in the videos, I had to encounter the two realms of hospitality, the private and the public realm. I was already aware of the public domain without the need for any (video) analysis. The ‘public’ domain was somewhat similar to the ethically pure ideal pedagogy that I had already separated from the pedagogy of the flesh at the beginning of the research project. A public and ideally pure pedagogy belong to the area of the *said*, that is, to the pre-known notions of education and art, curricula, institutional frameworks, politics, principles and philosophies that guide the pedagogy. The public realm, as something that is already fixed and *said*, is easy to comprehend, unlike the private realm, which is the area of *saying* and which is where I need to confront my own ideologies critically. Understanding the public realm through the Levinas’s notion of the ‘Third’, however, made the dualistic approach more complex and caused the ideal notions of ethical pureness to become mixed up with the pedagogy of the flesh. The private encounter was surprising, since my immediate reactions to the encounter helped me to peek into the strangeness of myself. It was important for me to understand that this kind of private encounter in fact constitutes the actual ethical realm. This understanding developed especially when I was editing the video material. This was a different approach to the same video material that I had worked with throughout the many years of the thesis project.

The process of using the recorded material to produce a video (the footage was initially meant for—and had been used as—documentary material and an aid for memory) helped me generate a more complex and versatile interpretation of the collaborative art practice. When an event is interpreted through a visual work, the researcher might come up with different interpretations than s/he would have when relying solely upon



diary notes or other more traditional documentation materials. I believe, however, that this supposed difference is only fictional. A documentary, just like a diary and other written material, are already interpretations; they represent a series of choices, such as the themes and perspectives used in each method of interpretation and description. The difference between, for example, a documentary and artwork, has nothing to do with their level of truthfulness; rather, the difference has to do with the ways in which the 'truth' is reported. Actually, in many ways artistic forms are more 'honest' because they do not claim to be 'true'. Varto (2007) states that a documentary is the most dangerous form of artistic research because it gives the most power to the researcher. Visual documentary materials are nevertheless a fascinating method of research, since they give the researcher the possibility to discuss issues that might be difficult, or even impossible, to discuss only through written language in a way that is, on the one hand, tied to the reality, and, on the other hand, to an attitude that does not avoid revealing varied perspectives. (Varto 2007, 21 & 23.)

The visual work with the video material made it possible to see things in a new light and to interpret and describe things differently than before; for instance, it made me more aware of the process and my own involvement in it. This awareness was different from reviewing and writing about the collaborative moments. While writing the narrations was a way to describe and interpret the phenomena as openly as possible, through the visual work phase I was able to further elaborate upon and concentrate more deeply on the themes that I had already discovered when writing about what took place. Making visual choices forced me to see and interpret the events differently. When I wanted to state something in the video, and reviewed the material that showed me making the statement, I realised that the events had not always played out in the way that I had remembered. For example, my interpretation changed and my understanding of the 'self' changed when seeing myself giggling when painting with Thomas or when I found material that I had not paid attention to before, such as Thomas's own video production at the end of one tape.

In this section, I have answered the first research question about having an ethical relationship with the 'Other' and about how a collaborative practice can be described, discussed and interpreted in a video, and also what happened to the face of the 'Other' when the 'Third' was acknowledged. In the next section, I move on to discuss the second research question: *What are the possible relationships between disabled body experiences and concepts of the phenomenological body? And, how can the study of disabled body experiences further inform the concepts of the phenomenological body?*

## THE CHALLENGED BODY

Theories on the phenomenological body understand the body as being simultaneously singular and shared: even though I can only gain information about the world through my own body, I understand that others can gain information in the same

way that I do, since they also have sensing bodies. From the phenomenological view individual's experiences might be different, but each of these experiences is still part of the flesh of the world.

Clearly, this does not mean that our embodied experiences would be similar, or even shareable. This becomes even more complex when thinking about bodies that are significantly different on a sentient level, or when a person feels that they lack a sensorial body in the way described in theories on the phenomenological body: as an ultimate measurement that makes it possible to reach towards other people's experiences, as the others are 'flesh of my flesh'. As a touching body, I can touch, but I will never experience this touch. (Hotanen 2008, 114.) It seems justifiable to claim that regardless of the ablenes of the body, the body is the measurement of the world. Through the sensing body, one experiences the world. The testimonies of some individuals with autism, however, seem to insist upon the opposite. Mukhopadhyay writes about how he has no concept of his body, and how he was only able to remember that he has a body when he saw an image of it in a photograph or as a reflection in a mirror (Iversen 2006, 100). He also writes about how he feels that sometimes he is losing control of his own body and how he has wanted to deny the existence of his body (Mukhopadhyay & Wing 2000, 17). Since his body does not seem to offer him much of a way to measure, he needed to find other ways to experience the world.

I understand that my question about phenomenological body theories and disabled body experiences is somewhat paradoxical. A phenomenological body, although singular, is not any specific body. Phenomenology does not state that there is only one ideal embodied way of being in the world. One could claim that Mukhopadhyay's (2000) testimony about the strangeness of his own body is not much different than the strangeness of the 'self' and 'Other' in other circumstances. It would, however, be misleading to compare non-autistic and autistic body experiences since they are something very different (Frith 2003, 98–99). Behind the notion of the phenomenological body, there are echoes of the non-autistic experiences of the self-evident, fully functioning sensorial body. This is why I have stated in this thesis that disabled body experiences and thoughts about the phenomenological body are in contradiction to one another. I do not base this statement on anything specific idea that can be known from experience since it is impossible for me to know what Mukhopadhyay's, or Thomas's, embodied experiences were like. The testimonies of people with autism, however, have made it possible for me to see these issues from a broader perspective, and therefore, to view such phenomenological assumptions with suspicion.

Persons with autism can connect with the world very differently because of their *altered perceptions of sensory input*. This sensory input may be over or under-reactive to the stimuli around them. The testimonies from people with autism or from their family members suggest that this creates a major communication block between the individual with autism and the world. Sensorial experiences are described as being both important and difficult; perception is described as an overwhelming sensory experience

or the senses are described as being completely separate from one another. Likewise, a person with autism might be extremely fearful of other people's touch. It might be that other people's touch feels too intense. Grandin (1996) wanted to be touched just as much as she disliked being touched. Sometimes, this desire became a painful experience that was impossible to bear. These types of contrary and multiple sensory experiences come close to the concept of *jouissance*. Pleasure can quickly become pain since there is only so much pleasure that a subject can bear. Beyond this limit, there is *jouissance*, the 'painful principle' where pleasure becomes pain.

It is wrong to believe that people with autism do not have social desires. This thesis has stated quite clearly that social interests can take different forms, one that many in the ableist society cannot recognise. The different mode of social behaviour causes issues with communication. Often, an altered sensory experience is understood as an issue of communication rather than an existential question about our embodied being in the world. While communication might be limited (for example, spoken communication can be limited), there are many narrations from people with autism who have connected with other people through writing, typing or drawing with the help of different devices and technology. Tracy Thresher and Larry Bissonnette are two men with autism with a limited capacity for verbal speech.<sup>55</sup> They both experienced their lives as socially isolated individuals in mental institutions or adult disability centres. When they learned to type, their lives changed dramatically. Their story, and the film made about it, is an example of how the body needs devices and extensions to connect to the world. This is an example of what it means to be the flesh of the world through technical devices, which is quite different from Merleau-Ponty's thoughts on perception and how it is related to the organic phenomenological body.<sup>56</sup> Merleau-Ponty developed Husserl's late phenomenology as a criticism of Descartes' dichotomy of mind and body and found that perception happens through the moving, feeling, sensing and perceiving body (Heinämaa at al 1997, 45). As discussed earlier in this thesis, for Merleau-Ponty, bodies are part of the 'flesh of the world'. Through the 'flesh of the world', we are in a tight relationship with one another: our intersubjectivity is essentially inter-bodied (Hotanen 2010, 135 & 146), and touch deepens our sense of togetherness. While Merleau-Ponty emphasises that perception helps us understand ourselves not as *having* but as *being* bodies, it might be just the opposite for a person with autism.

According to phenomenological thinking, perceiving persons do not analyse or calculate their perceptions. Instead, they trust that their perceptions constitute their embodied relationship to the world. (Hotanen 2010, 135–136.) This statement stands in contrast to, for example, Grandin's (1996) testimony. In her book, she mentions

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55 See the film about Tracy Thresher and Larry Bissonnette: <http://www.wretchesandjabberers.org>

56 In our contemporary culture, it is fair to claim that most people (not only people with disabilities) live through different devices and that assumptions about the organic body have changed dramatically in the last few decades.

several times that she knew she was not able to trust her body and its perceptions. While she is a knowing person, in her experience her body was not. The ableist assumption, however, is that a body has knowledge and that it can be trusted. That is how one belongs to the flesh of the world—through her/his own flesh. If my body does not transmit this experience, then the situation is dramatically different. Then the situation is as it was for Mukhopadhyay, who moved his body just to remember that it in fact existed. An experience of touch can be quite different when one does not contextualise it, when one does not *know* it. It is possible that some individuals with autism actually feel that their body is separate from their mind in a Cartesian way (see also Osteen 2008, 3). However, this would be an unsatisfactory, if not impossible, solution to understanding the disabled body experience in the contemporary world and in contemporary philosophy. Merleau-Ponty's notion of body and flesh belongs to his own age, and it needs to be updated so that it can take into account, for example, post-human theory and new technologies instead of only the humanity of abled bodies.

To conclude my discussion of notions of embodiment in this thesis, it is important to acknowledge how different my and Thomas's embodied and sensorial experiences of touch were during our collaboration. For me, while we were working together touch was an indication of being part of the flesh of the world and the phenomenological view seemed to support my experience. Touch might have been awkward for me occasionally, but it also made sense to me, just as painting and our togetherness as being-aside made sense to me. My understanding changed during our collaborative work. I learned that I do not know Thomas's experience and what it means for him to touch and to be touched. I was only able to enlarge my understanding of embodied experiences by including a perspective other than just the abled body perspective. It became more and more clear to me that touch does not mean the same thing for the one who touches as it does for the one who is being touched, and that our embodied existence varies just as much.

The body can be thought of more broadly than I had realised before. Thomas's relationship to his musical devices, and to other important objects, seemed to do something crucial to his entire embodied being.<sup>57</sup> These virtual extensions of 'self' can be called bodies without organs (BwO), or hyperbodies, since they exist outside of the organic body but are connected to the embodied experience. For example, music can offer subliminal intensities and the repetition of pleasure (jagodzinski 2005b, 28). Music can be thought as an embodied extension of the physical body. The way that Thomas handled the video camera, the way he perceived the world through it, participated in it, made choices and communicated with it, was clearly different from what he did without the camera. The ideas of hyperbody and BwO provide an interesting and important topic for further research. With this thesis, I was only able to scratch the surface in terms of understanding the issues pertaining to the challenged body.

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<sup>57</sup> *Thomas had a special relationship to photographs taken of him and his family. He wanted to see over and over again the same pictures of his childhood and of his family members.*

## PEDAGOGICAL (DE)GROWTH AND (UN)BECOMING EDUCATED

In this section, I will answer the third research question: *What pedagogical understandings about (un)becoming arise at the crossroads of ambitious ethical goals and pedagogical desires?* By ambitious ethical goals, I am referring to Levinas's ethics on passivity, openness and vulnerability in front of the 'Other'. At the crossroads of my ethical goals and pedagogical goals, I placed the pedagogical conditions for the project the desires, fantasies and counter-transference affects and defences that I find stemmed from psychoanalytical theory. As part of the research project, I began to understand that passivity, as well as many other ambitious ethical goals, is an inherent part of pedagogical fantasies. While it is possible that one never gets to achieve those goals, I think it is crucial to retain them as part of an everyday pedagogy. Change, development, transformation, learning and all that can be called *becoming* are strongly built inside of us and in our expectations. Disassembling them became one of the most important aims of this thesis.

The idea of valuing progress in education usually goes without question. That is often the case within pedagogical research. In most research, the 'other'—the student—who works with the pedagogue is often seen as somebody who needs to *become* educated, while the pedagogue already has reached that level. This research project treated this student/other person as somebody who did not need to be educated, who did not need to be changed. Early on, the engagement depended on the failure of the cognitive-constructivist paradigm; the aspiration towards development, learning and progress was not the only way of looking at pedagogy, and most importantly, not the most suitable way to look at it when working with a person with a disability. This approach stands in contrast to mainstream cognitive-constructivist art education, which could be called a goal-oriented learning that is based on our cognitive abilities. The idea that the 'other' would not to be changed ended up being a more complex statement than was assumed at the beginning of the research project. The many factors that affect our encounters and that are difficult to recognise were explored in this research project. They included, for example, the pedagogue's own affects and defences, such as frustration and enjoyment, and the hidden pedagogical fantasies and desires for development, which were guided by preconceptions that were difficult to acknowledge without deeper self-analysis and self-recognition.

Acknowledging and critically studying the biases, deeply embedded desires and expectations I brought to this research and artistic interaction were inevitably part of the process. Influenced by my pedagogical training and socio-cultural-political framework, I at first could not hide from the wish that our work would have led to change, to learning and to communication. At the beginning, I wished that Thomas would benefit from our work in a concrete way and that we would reach a contextual, shared understanding. Setting a goal for a project is strongly promoted by contemporary Western societies and a norm for all education projects. One example of these

expectations was the questions that came from the audience each time I was presenting my doctoral study: How did Thomas change during the process? What did he learn? Did he show any signs of recovering? Did he reach out to you? Models of cognitive development and goal-oriented progress would only have restricted the development of the research project. While I acknowledge change in myself and in my personal practices, I am not able to assume that any changes in my work with Thomas could be seen as development and progress per se. Thomas did not need any kind of recovery or to be changed.

It is often argued that pedagogues need to be learners as well. It is stated that students are not empty 'banks' into which knowledge is deposited. Instead, learning, that is, *becoming*, should happen together. In this thesis, I have claimed that I was the only one that learned something. I claimed that it was not him, but me, who needed to *become*, to learn, so that I could review what happened to me during the process. During the process, I *became* critical of my own actions and aware of some of my own 'patterns', and I *became* knowledgeable about the fact that my affects influenced on my own learning and that my emotions did so as well, whether they included anxiety, frustration, boredom or apathy.

During that process, I became more aware of the different types of learning our being-aside included. We learned many things about, and as a result of, working together, much more than I had initially thought we would. We, for example, learned when the artwork that we were working together on was about to be ready. This happened repeatedly in the same fashion, and I started, without even noticing it, to rely upon these signs: first, the painting rhythm slowed down, and second, it was only ready after a certain amount of paint had been applied to the paper. We also learned to communicate; we learned to work according to the rhythm of tickling. I learned that I was not as emotionally distant from Thomas's touch as I had initially thought. My pulling away from Thomas's touch was, more than anything else, representative of a pedagogically pure ideology, while my real behaviour included enjoyment and more direct encounters. This kind of informal togetherness was not easy to determine based on the pedagogical notions of encounter. It might have been so difficult to see that it could easily have been forgotten. The demand of the Levinasian 'Third' in me made it possible to critically acknowledge the different ways in which we encountered one another. The ethics of the 'Third' brought along with it the responsibility to answer for something more than just the *self* and *other*, and made me face the moments that we shared more critically. For example, I had to acknowledge my own enjoyment as much as my frustrations. I also became more aware of the praxis of gazing, seeing and being seen, that is, how I see the 'other' and how I am to be seen. It was important to recognise the value that is culturally given to eye contact, especially when it was lacking. It was just as important to find evidence of the gaze in the video material, to see that we had in fact been looking at one another. It was important for me to perceive that there were different manners of gazing, and that I was not the only one who was looking.

I have discussed many of the things that Thomas and I learned together, and how I became more aware of these things during the course of our collaboration. One might ask: What then is the role of (un)becoming, not-knowing and degrowth? This kind of pedagogy does not aim to prescribe something specific. Instead, it means moving (rhizomatically) towards something that is not already known. Teaching should not remain inside of the already known realm. As stated many times, one does not know the 'Other' and that is why pedagogy will always remain on the threshold between knowing and not-knowing. This pedagogically uncanny attitude is what I have called (un)becoming. In this thesis, I have problematised the 'becoming' and the 'knowing' subject, troubled the subject as the one who (un)becomes. While this research project, and indeed the entire process of engaging in collaborative art making, required a negotiation and transformation of my and Thomas's existing realities, the critical pedagogical notions needed a closer and deeper analysis. Seeing the 'Other' and the 'self' as subjects of learning to 'become' is tied to the notion of continuous growth. Both becoming and growing represent movement in a certain direction, towards fulfilment and satisfaction. We know, however, this will never happen: we know that after we have grown, we will need to grow more, and the one who is to become will keep on becoming. A person and the entire moment of encounter will therefore always be incomplete. This incompleteness gives space for amazement and wonder. When claiming that an encounter is a process of unbecoming rather than of becoming, and of degrowth rather than growth, something needs to be in transition. Hence, it is the existing educational and pedagogical realities that must continuously change.

## THE LAST NARRATION

*I stand behind the door to Thomas's house in Pohjois-Haaga, Helsinki. It has been seven years since our last meeting. Since that time, many things have occurred for both of us. Thomas has moved a couple of times and now, at 28 years of age, he lives in a group home and goes again daily to the Autism Foundation for work and activities. On many weekends, like today, he comes to visit his parents. For the last seven years, I have been writing the thesis and working with the video, and now I want to show the video to Thomas and his parents.*

*Thomas comes to open the door. He looks at me briefly and says hello. It is difficult to say if he remembers me or not. Thomas's father asks me about the expression on Thomas's face when he opened the door, and he assures me that Thomas surely remembers our time working together. One proof of this statement is the many paintings of our collaborative work on the walls of the living room and bedroom. Thomas's father says proudly that many of their friends and other visitors in their home have complimented the paintings. One of the paintings was recently borrowed for an anniversary exhibition at the Autism Foundation. I did not expect to see all*

*of the paintings on the walls, and I am a little surprised. I have not been the only one processing the collaboration between us that took place seven years ago: Thomas and his parents have been thinking about it as well.*

*Thomas sits in his room in front of his computer and at first he does not seem interested in the video that I want to show him. However, when he sees himself in the video clipping pieces of paper, he comes to sit on the couch with his parents in front of the screen. While we are looking at the beginning of the video, Thomas's mother tells me that he does not cut paper anymore. She also tells me that Thomas is not as keen to tickle anymore in the same way that he was before. Thomas watches the entire video without much reaction. Sometimes he smiles a little, but most of the time he looks rather serious. It is impossible to know what sorts of memories it brings back for him, if any, and what sort of thoughts he is having about the video. For me, it is important to see him watching the video. It seems like the end of a long journey.*

*Watching the video together with Thomas, and seeing Thomas and his parents watch the video, adds an important level to the entire process. While I have been pondering the role of embodied and disembodied gaze and our different gazes in and outside of the video, his reviewing of the final edited video seems to me very significant. Watching the video together with him is a different kind of process of objectification: here we are gazing at the video together, being-aside, looking at ourselves on the screen, painting, getting frustrated, enjoying ourselves and having fun, tickling and cutting paper. Watching ourselves moving on the screen is not different from any other film, except that we have a memory of those events, or at least we know that we have been a part of them as we see ourselves in the video. The distance from the events all of a sudden seems rather enormous: while seven years is not that much time in and of itself, the distance seems greater as we sit gazing together, sitting on the couch in Thomas's parents' living room. Our being-aside belongs to the past, to those events in the rooms of the Autism Foundation. Our being-aside was temporal; it took place at a particular time around a particular series of events. While we both might have a memory of those events, they are not anything that we could decide to go back to.*

*I am well aware of how differently we are looking at the video and of the fact that we are interpreting the video quite differently. Thomas's parents bring a third viewpoint to the video: they see the video as parents; they pay attention to how Thomas acts and reacts. The parents' comments cause me to realise how important the way I represent Thomas on the video is to them. I am suddenly thinking that maybe there is too much tickling, that maybe Thomas's hug at the end is too intimate for the parents to see. I realise I have not thought about the parents' gaze before.*



*Sitting there side by side with Thomas causes me to realize what an important process this entire nine years project has been for me. It has not only been a learning process or a way to gather material for a doctoral thesis. It has truly been a point in my life during which I encountered another person and myself. Seeing Thomas now again makes me wonder if I would do things differently if we started to work together again. I am sure I would, otherwise this entire journey would have been meaningless.*

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**Encountering Self, Other and the Third introduces an ethical and pedagogical approach to encountering another person. It discusses art pedagogical dimensions of dialogue and philosophical notions of the Other. It also deepens ideas of the 'self' as a critical pedagogue, and the Third through ideas of justice and politics in education.**

Levinasian notions of the radical Other and the Third are explored in the context of disability studies and a collaborative arts-based research project. The research project explores and develops embodied phenomenological notions in the context of autism. This context is not defined as something different or special and therefore exclusive and separate from other pedagogical situations. Instead, the knowledge that was formed as a result of encounters between two people is informative for other pedagogical situations. Further, traditional art educational notions of learning and axiomatic developmental beliefs of education are challenged.

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