

MODALITY: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL CONCEPT FOR EXPRESSIVE ART THERAPIES

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Summary

This article goes more deeply into the concept of modality put forward by Paolo Knill as a key concept of expressive art therapy. A photograph of PK animating a workshop disturbs the author's mental image of who PK is, leading him to point out how enriching it is to be able to entertain different ideas at the same time. The concept of *work* is questioned and completed by that of *working*. The frequent confusion of mediality with modality is clarified, modality being a phenomenological concept that is specific to expressive art therapies. Six modalities are presented and described, as is their utility in planning interventions, accompaniment and evaluating treatments.

Experiencing Paolo Knill

One day, after the last Spring Symposium in Lisbon, I found myself face to face with a photograph of Paolo Knill. In it, I saw him at work during a community art session and through it I discovered a person other than the Paolo Knill I remembered. (From now on I refer to Paolo Knill as PK.)

I was astonished at the contrast between this photograph and how I picture the man. I felt a kind of shock, a questioning.

Although a mental image is built up gradually through the accumulation of lived moments and is relatively stable over time, a photograph simply captures an instant, and sometimes quite unmercifully at that. A photograph raises questions by underlining particular aspects of the subject, drawing our attention by setting them outside time and space. A photograph's effect, perhaps its main effect, has to do with what it does not show – the not-showing of time and space beyond its edges and the feelings it cannot account for. And so, a photograph prompts us to use our creativity and our imagination to understand it and find a place for it in the flow of our existence.

My mental image of PK, already complex, was essentially that of an active and dynamic man. I've often said to myself how much I would like to have his energy at 70, let alone when I am 80! His slim build doesn't give away his age! He emanates vitality at all times, playful creativity, childlike and unceasing. In his workshops he leaps between participants' artistic successes and mess-ups with feline aplomb, snatches them up and in a flash, turns them into primary elements for a new expressive proposition, so furthering the creative flux. Teeth bared or full of fondness, his look evolves with every moment. Despite surgery, I know he cannot see well. Occasionally his Swiss-

German accent is difficult to understand, so much so that workshop participants are obliged to exercise their freedom to interpret instructions that can sometimes be overly directive. My lived experience of this moment captured in a photograph had not altered the longstanding image I had of him.

But now, this photograph showed an old man whose small eyes, though reddened and tired still sparkled with a loosely controlled grin, a dry and bony body, pursed lips drooping at the corners, whitened hair and wrinkled forehead, a vaguely bitter smile hinted at in profile, a piercing yet tender gaze. A sensation of being overtaken by, and yet still surfing, the tide of events.

Was this the same man? Of course I knew and felt it was. But what then?

The photograph had taken me by surprise, it had shocked me, taken hold of me and thrown me off balance. It had left me feeling uncertain of myself and of what I knew, uncertain about the image of the PK I remembered. And yet, both images warranted attention; both images could exist alongside each other.

It is a curious experience to have two different pictures of the same person; one through a staged event - that of PK leading a workshop, and the other through an image - a photograph that relates an event. Can different ways or modalities of apprehending the world, give us access to different aspects of reality?

Even though this photograph offers me an image of a man, associated ideas quickly emerge from my imagination, called up by the emptiness that surrounds the photograph itself.

▲ How can I honour this old man, this creative being, this friend? By writing about him? By feeling the creative breath blow through me?

▲ What will become of EGS when Paolo Knill and Steve Levine are too old? What do they want to do with it? What do they envisage? Can a creation, an institution live independently of its creators? How best to safeguard their creation which is also partly our own? By talking about it or by taking their research even further?

▲ I remember my feelings of attachment for another man, a childhood father figure, most of all the way he looked during the last few months of his life before sickness took him away. A look that said what words could not; I'm getting weaker, Me, always a fighter and a winner, now I'm losing.

But won't that happen to us all, aren't we all the same? A final childlike seeing acceptance of his own fragility, no more running away from it in thoughts and actions, like he used to when he was in full health.

▲ And for my father, who for this past year has hardly been able to walk, who thinks more slowly than before but with a perspective on events that makes you think he still has many years ahead of him. Every minute is lived with a fullness that but for a few fleeting instants, escapes us when we are young. A father from birth, a friend through life.

▲ The enjoyment I get from running my own training institute, like a community art project, adapting administrative and managerial thinking to human and interpersonal needs. Profits, however real, can also be counted in terms of human achievement and cooperation and go well beyond any financial return.

▲ The idea that reality is multidimensional, that aspects of it have different forms depending on how they appear and the way we encounter them in the world. The thrill of letting different realities co-exist without reducing them to a single one; the pleasure of letting them drift on ahead, before pulling them together, not too tightly, making sense of life, of becoming, renewed, more sensitive and true.

▲ And the idea too, that if reality is multifaceted, then every person has freedom and responsibility to make choices, shape their destiny and give form to their personal truth.

▲ Photography, like any other art form, questions the accepted order of things. First it sets you off balance. You accept the questions it raises and then you generate answers. You deploy your whole being in the very act of grappling with the questions.

Some years ago, I commented on and developed PK's concept of crystallisation (Stitelmann 2003) and enhanced it with the concept of composting. Since it is one of PK's essential contributions to Art Therapy, I would like to look further into the often misunderstood concept of modality. PK's concepts of modality and inter-modality are central to Expressive Arts Therapy, along with his concept of work, which is closely linked to modality.

Unfortunately, modality is often used as a synonym for mediality, which refers to particular media

used for expression. Sometimes the term is taken for art, in which expression is given form, or confused with sensations used to make connections with art works.

Modality is a phenomenological concept that helps us think about the way we engage our attention when we encounter an art work, rather than telling us about the art work itself, or the psychological experience of its maker.

Working through, work and working

Traditional art therapy movements anchored in psychology, consider the products of creative processes, or art works, as products of a creator, and more specifically, of his/her psyche. The idea that unresolved aspects of psychological problems, unconsciously find a way to be expressed and even resolved through the artistic process, has been ardently put forward and verified time and time again.

For some therapists, such productions benefit from verbal interpretation; links are made with psychological problems and explained in order to undo the psychical knot. It follows then that productions can be seen as expressions of illness, while health is associated with the development of talk, generally explanatory talk. The art work is linked with aspects of its creator's psychological suffering, which is considered to have caused the art work. Thus the creator, freed of his/her blockages, is better able to give shape to his/her existence. In this kind of therapy, art and different media are used with the intention of bringing out the impalpable and psychological unknown. For some, artistic productions reveal the psyche, allowing us to understand and analyse it and so make diagnoses. For others, artistic expression is a transformational act through psychological growth, brought about by the art making process, which is itself a symbolisation, such that verbal explanations are unnecessary.

In this orientation of art therapy, the right medium is one which will convey the psychological aspects that are thought to be most in need of expression. The internal world of the client and therapeutic relationship established by a therapist and client partnership are the principle points of departure; the means of expression are merely tools, they mediate between the therapeutic partners and between the creator and his/her unconscious. Sensory issues are carefully considered; particular physical/bodily channels of communication with the world are favoured by one or other type of medium; whether these channel of communication are necessary for stimulating one or other psychological aspect that is lacking expressivity. In this kind of art therapy particular art

forms and media can, much like medicines, be prescribed or advised against because of their purported effects, as if we knew their psychological effects in every kind of situation. For example, it would be deemed inappropriate to use liquids when working with autism, as they could stimulate anxieties of liquefaction that are associated with this pathology; it would be inappropriate to use drama with schizophrenic patients or those with borderline disorders as it would stimulate depersonalization; on the other hand, painting and drawing would be prescribed for psychotic patients as these afford possibilities to express a whole range of emotions and fantasies using colour and shape. In this orientation, materials and sensations are thought of as things, means, ways of knowing more about the person's internal world, itself considered a thing, whose equilibrium is necessary for health. The level of reality worked upon during therapy is the internal world. In this instance we talk about *working through*, the elaboration of psychological problems and life experiences through a human relationship, mediated by creations and interpretations.

In another traditional strain of art therapy, the therapeutic partnership is interested in art as a level of reality. The beauty and expressivity of the art work, its aesthetic success and its effect on the on-looker are important elements. Here, there is no analysis of psychological causes and life experiences that could be linked to productions, even if it is accepted that the artistic process sometimes has indirect, secondary psychological benefits. For instance, in terms of self esteem, making sense of life or stabilising relationships. The medium used and artistic thinking are essential elements: the plasticity of clay, the space and lighting of a stage, the type of character to be acted out, the colour tones of paint, the appropriateness and expressivity of a drawn shape, feelings evoked by poetry... Clearly, this is all about art and the medium used: the creator gives him/herself over to using the medium in an art work; putting something of him/herself into the work is a bonus that could engender secondary and indirect benefits. In this instance, we talk about *work*.

The phenomenological art therapy movement, developed in Lesley College, among other places, and then within the EGS network by PK, with other practitioners and researchers, proposes a third perspective. This is where neither the psyche nor the material used is the essential level of reality, but the meeting of multiple material, immaterial and human elements in a creative experience that is happening.

From this perspective, the art work is not a thing, no more so than the psychological experience. Rather, it is a process of unfolding, extending, opening and spreading, of encounter, a formation of forms, a process of *Gestaltung* (Hans Prinzhorn). The word *work* allows us to conceptualise the art work as well as the process of work. It also allows us to consider how the art work works on us.

Even so, we should be talking about *working*, the working out of forms which unfold and spread out.

Forms appearing in this *working* are entities that develop in space, in a place that is here, a place of co-presence, where art works, materials, people and the environment intermingle. They develop in time, in the present moment, not determined by minutes and seconds, but a phenomenological perception of existing in lived time, as David Stern so eloquently tells us in his book “Le temps présent en psychothérapie”. Forms develop in terms of modalities, in terms of the kind of attention human beings develop, through which they can be in touch with the world.

It's a complicated kind of system of environments, each endowed with different modes, ways of being – a bit like the parallel universe of science fiction – through which experience unfolds, leaving participants more or less free to go from one to another.

We are not interested in thinking about the art work, the medium or the psychological material in isolation, but as a complex whole relating to a situation; the process and its becoming, the fact that it becomes and the manner in which it does become; giving rise to reflection upon meaningful elements of the form, making sense of the experience and feeding a desire for more experiences to come.

Modality and mediality

PK's main ideas about modality were developed in his book 'Minstrels of Soul' where he puts forward 5 modalities for consideration: image, sound, act (play-acting, staging, fiction), word and movement.

For PK, music is about the modality sound, as it wouldn't exist without some way of producing sound and a sense of hearing. John Cage's composition 4'33, consisting in four minutes and thirty three seconds of silence, confirms this idea. Hearing and not hearing sound: silence is an essential dimension of music. 4'33 draws our attention to the use of sound and time in music composition.

PK uses the idea of imagination to explain modality. For him, modalities are modalities or ways of imagining. Imagination is the stuff of dreams, musings and reverie, reflected in human being like trees in still water. “Imagination is the visiting place of soul.” (PK)

He sets an everyday, literal way of thinking against dream thinking, rather like Marion Milner did in “On not being able to paint”, where she differentiates rational thinking from a thinking in images that is active during periods of pictorial creation, which supports the most archaic processes of the unconscious and preconscious psyche.

Anthropologists also frequently differentiate between mythical thinking, which produces works of

art, ritual and mythology, and rational thinking. Wilfred Bion, a celebrated psychoanalyst, proposes that we see reverie as dynamic thinking in dream, musing, artistic creation and free association. For Bion, this kind of thinking offers human beings a sense of existing and meaning, allowing them to change and evolve throughout their lives. At the Atelier in Geneva, Switzerland, we differentiate three kinds of thinking, each having its own particular logic: everyday, scientific and dream thinking.

For PK, the soul speaks through dreams and reverie. In dreams, the imagination is experienced passively, while in reverie it is more actively lived.

In traditional arts and rituals, PK observes that the imagination is primarily a way of thinking in action. He notices that, in general, art works are intermodal – that is, they unfold themselves through several modalities at the same time or in succession. We only have to think back to the medieval tradition of mystery plays, when whole communities acted out the lives of mythical figures, with specific songs, costumes and accessories, in particular places, usually in the church square or in the city streets.

For PK, modality is a modality of imagination, a dimension in which the imagination develops. In “Foundations of Expressive Arts Therapies” he maintains : “It is important to understand the sensory aspects of imagination.” He associates modalities with the sensory capacities of creator and spectator, as well as with the different arts.

Arts such as painting and sculpture are, above all, concerned with *image*, poetry and fiction with *word*, music with *sound*, dance and mime with *movement* and drama with *act*. He emphasises that the arts can be experienced through several modalities. We can 'hear' a painting by the sound of the paintbrush on paper, we can 'feel' a piece of music through the musicians gestures and movements. No art can exist without a primary or dominant modality. By this, he underlines the existential and phenomenological dimension of any contact with an artistic occurrence.

My exchanges with other art therapy professionals, even expressive art therapists who refer to phenomenological thinking, have led me to realise that the concepts of modality and mediality are regularly taken one for the other. When in fact, an essential aspect of expressive art therapy rests in their differentiation.

Mediality refers to the medium, to the materials used to create the art work. Photography uses images, painting uses coloured pastes, sculpture uses stone These materials are completely

other, they are not-me, and it is this, in large part that is their force. Their otherness raises questions for us; they bring the potential and limitations of their materiality to the art work, with and through which the creator must develop his/her creativity.

In fact, making the art work, the *working*, has two outside influences: the creator's internal world and the materials used. These outside influences, as well as the phenomenon of their encounter within the *working* are the origins of the creative process, which can be considered like a reverie that happens in their in-between.

The core idea of modality is not to do with description so we can know and define otherness or things, but with feeling and understanding our encounter with the world. Materials and art works express aspects of this encounter, in order to understand the reality of our existence better without hindering the unfolding of that existence. As such, modality is a phenomenological concept.

By confounding modality and mediality we lose the essential specificities of each.

This mistake is partially due to a materialist and naturalist way of seeing things within current society and contemporary art therapy, that says a creation is a thing that exists because it can be perceived and measured, and is therefore by nature, separate from the self. Accordingly a creation can only be known by what we can objectively perceive of it, which in its turn, can be subjected to explanatory mental activity originating outside the said creation. We struggle with the notions of subjectivity and intersubjectivity.

It seems to me that the error of using modality and mediality as synonyms of each other in expressive art therapy is also linked to a deviation from the phenomenological position by PK himself. In effect, PK has wanted to deliver the artistic happening from the clutches of psychology, which in itself is an extremely interesting idea; in doing so, he has come to emphasise the art work and the process of creation, in other words, the key elements of artistic work, rather than the psychological experience of the creator preceding creative action. Sometimes, he can attach more importance to the art work, direction and choreography than workshop participants!

There is however, an element of contradiction in his intentions: PK proposes that modality is a *modality of imagination*, which is, despite everything, a psychological perspective, since he defines imagination as dream thinking, reverie and art.

Distancing oneself from psychology in favour of the art work runs several risks and disadvantages.

- ▲ Loss of a phenomenological perspective which demands the sensory encounter of phenomena as distinct from professions of admiration or confidence relating to creations.
- ▲ Fewer chances of benefitting from psychological thinking and research, even though some psychological movements such as Gestalt, systemic and some post-Bionian and Winnicottian psychoanalytic movements offer interesting reflections on the art work which could enrich our way of thinking.
- ▲ Loss of a critical attitude towards the art work, which is essential for a scientific perspective. Clinical experience shows that sometimes, the expressive content of art works and the manner in which it is presented can be due to psychological defence mechanisms or resistance to the therapeutic process, an artistic trick, an act of non-living. If we do not know how to recognise it, we are at risk of encouraging this kind of non-living, when the goal should be to encourage an unfolding of life.

The concept of modality is complex and intersubjective, and is probably misunderstood because it is not yet sufficiently defined. At this point I would like to make some precisions about the concept, with a few complementary reflections. Nevertheless, much work still remains to be done to develop PK's intuition of modality into a full concept.

Modality

The term is used in several scientific domains: linguistics, logic, psychology, philosophy, music, law, statistics where it takes on different meanings. However, it seems to me that it expresses three important ideas.

Different situations have essential particularities that the term 'modality' seeks to express. Modality then, is that which differentiates one situation from another. For example: *This painting is blue; or This sonata is played in a minor key; or even Ice is a modality of water.*

Different actions take place according to the particular way in which they are each executed. For example: *To lead a workshop you must suggest a warm-up activity, followed by the workshop itself and finally a period of reflection, often verbal. To validate the contract you must answer questions 1 to 6, then date and sign it.*

Suggestions can be implied and not necessarily articulated explicitly. Qualitative aspects are expressed in this idea of modality. For example: *This apple is nice. Or Would you like to do this? or Could you do this, or Are you allowed to do it? or Unfortunately I'm experiencing a paralysing sense of stage fright.*

These ideas all concern art therapy but the last of them is of direct interest as it allows us to consider how the speaker, the creator experiences their 'production', how they approach the situation, action or suggestion. This is a phenomenological perspective. The object being apprehended is considered as a kind of opposite, towards which we are turned and towards which we direct our intentionality. Modalities can then be considered as aspects of Husserlian intentionality.

An intentional encounter takes shape within a modality and gives rise to both object and subject together. As such, modality is neither the subject's sensoriality nor the object's materiality, nor even art and the cultural norms within which transitional creations develop: modality is the dimension in which an encounter between the subject and the world takes place. Modality is a dimension of poietics.

I suggest we look at modality in so much as it is the way in which a happening unfolds, the way we turn towards it and the way we experience it.

Although it is possible to live each moment of our lives in several modalities, in reality it is impossible to experience them all at the same time. We can only be aware of one, or maybe two of them in any one lived moment. The others are relegated to the back of consciousness. We experience this impossibility in *complete arts* such as opera and cinema, where it is difficult to focus on every aspect at once, which can also make for a better appreciation of their aesthetic power.

Looking at a painting I see colours, a large spectrum of colour dominated by bluey greens, rhythmic brush strokes and an assortment of short, energetic strokes around the edges of the canvas. I can make out longer, wider, vertical shapes in the middle, a man, a child, a cloud. Memories, imaginings, emotions resonating within me unfold and spread out from this visual contact. At that very moment I am living in a modality of image, for seconds, minutes, maybe longer. There is the world and there is me, existing as image. I no longer feel my body, standing before the painting, I no longer hear the wooden parquet creaking when other visitors walk past me, nor catch the whiff of floor wax or the blooming chestnut trees in the gardens outside, I cannot taste the thyme fragranced fish that I ate for lunch, nor am I aware of the uniformed security guard who is calmly pacing up and down the room, while the stream of visitors flows from room to room. I can only see in colours and lines, in spacial rhythms bound up with the painting. Memories emerge from the depths of my mind, landscapes from my childhood or my youth and the feelings they evoke, with me now in the painting.

But I can leave this modality and experience the same painting because of the musical instrument held by the child in the painting. In my imagination I can hear the strings of a lyre being plucked, birdsong emanates from the wood in the background and from the park next to the gallery. The creaking parquet annoys me, a small girl is crying, she reminds me of my own daughter, when she was little, quite some years ago I no longer see the painting's colours, nor the rhythmic organisation of its lines and dots, I see the inside and outside worlds in sounds.

Switching from one modality to the next, I enter another parallel world, interior and exterior environments change, they are the same, but not quite; they are other realities. I realise that when I am in a particular modality, I distance myself or am distanced from the possibilities of other modalities for a certain length of time. I can control this intermodal movement and more or less pass from one world to the next, as I wish. Just as it is difficult for non-musicians to hear several lines of melody played concurrently, in a symphony for example, it is difficult to perceive a smell, colour, movement and a word at the same time.

Sometimes doors open between worlds, and new attractors, as PK calls them, beckon: another visitor's colourful outfit pulls me out of a world of sounds and throws me back into colour, the rhythmic sobs of the little girl recall the rhythmic spacing of tree trunks in the background of the painting and a door reopens onto the world of images. The undulating step of a woman passing close by opens a door to the world of movement. At each doorway I can choose to enter a different world or stay where I am.

Although every human being is able to journey to each of these worlds, I think we have favourites or ones where we feel more comfortable. I am sensitive to the world of images, particularly colours, rhythms and lines, the use of space. I am sensitive to the world of sound; loud noises upset me, a chance sound can seem musical; a speaker's voice comes to me as a tessiture, a range of tones as much as a string of meaningful words. And I am sensitive to tastes and smells. Each of us can encounter the world in six ways, six modalities, and in such a way that we become specialised, develop a greater capacity for enjoyment and pleasure in some of them more than others.

Week after week, clinical experience confirms the possibility that existential suffering can also largely reside in one of these modalities, leaving the others available for the enjoyment of life. We will pick up this idea again, later on.

Classical therapies essentially develop through the modality of word; expressive and poetic therapy unfurls and unfolds within all modalities of existence.

PK proposes 5 modalities: image, sound, act, word and movement, I would suggest the addition of

a sixth one that opens towards the world of taste and smell. Although their close sensory association in the arts points to a single combined modality, I could imagine them as two separate modalities, but further research would be able to clarify this point.

Personally I am quite sensitive to this modality, such that my creativity and that of some of my patients find it to be fertile ground. The world of taste-smell gives rise to a certain number of therapeutic openings. For example, ten years ago we developed a workshop at the university hospital in Geneva for patients with neurological disorders resulting from accidents. One of our tools in this workshop was a range of smells. We realised that it was an extremely dynamic way of forming a relationship with these patients, and for them to use their creativity, despite major injuries and handicaps. I have often performed and led culinary art workshops, which allow participants to engage with the world of tastes and smells and to accomplish some interesting therapeutic work that would not be as possible in other modalities. One thing which drew me to oil painting was the smell of linseed oil. Every art work can be experienced in different modalities. Every modality has its own particular vocabulary and grammar.

Image modality manifests itself as space, colour, light, rhythms of lines and dots, representations of shapes, relationships between content and the formal support or container. In order to 'feel' an actual image you need to be in its presence, in a visual face to face. States of depression have sometimes been linked to low levels of light, whereby visual contact with the image is compromised.

Sound modality is about the vibration of air and space. The notion of time is involved; sound requires a certain amount of time to manifest itself as rhythms, tempos, tones, long and short waves, melodies and harmonies. Feeling sounds is related to where you are and where the sound travels from or through. It's impossible not to hear a sound if it occurs where you are; you cannot close your ears as you can your eyes. Inspiration for many a torturer!

Word modality is to do with the existence of words and language. Words can indicate metaphoric sounds, material things, human facts, relationships between things or events, actions, feelings, imaginings. Sentences make it possible to assemble them in more and more complex ways, to make abstractions, speculations. The spoken word requires a human presence, actual, written, recorded. Words can be used for everyday thinking, useful and functional. They can be the vector for rational thought, approaching the status of mathematical symbols, or they make speculative and philosophical reflection on the human condition possible. Words can recount events, invent and narrate stories, they can be forged into poetry. Meaning, breathe and sonority, culturally defined or emanations from within. Sentences can be pulled apart to recover the roots of language and thought.

Words and language hold cultural sway. Much human conflict can be attached to misunderstood and miscommunicated words.

Movement modality is equally multidimensional. It can manifest itself through body posture, when we can experience vertical, horizontal and diagonal positions, through movements within the body, rhythm, contraction and relaxation. It is a modality that opens up the field of touch, contact with the world via the skin. It is the moving about in space, adapting different parts of the body, torso, limbs, in front, behind, above, below... Movement puts the body in space, in relation to other human beings. In the 1960s, studies of proxemy highlighted the cultural dimension of physical communication and accepted physical distances between humans during their interactions.

Act modality is about staging fictional identities. We are ourselves and someone else at the same time; we inhabit stories and invented realities. It is a world of 'as ifs' where the limits of imagination are the limits of possibility. Play time-space is defined, players encounter each other and act as if they were characters who live an imaginary life. Made-up, invented, fictive, even if they are meant to tell us something about reality, they are neo-realities. Imagination, emotion, physical presence, stage setting are major ingredients. In this world, identities are set against each other. Some actors cling to a role and graft their own lives onto it. Everyone can explore hidden or shrivelled dimensions of their identity through fictional role play and staged life stories.

More than any other, taste-smell modality lets us experience what it is to consume the world, where salty, sweet, bitter, acidic, spicy, smooth and fruity tastes and smells circulate on the edges of our being, in the undergrowth of a world that infuses us. Have you ever eaten your own or someone else's art work? What happened next?

Each sense facilitates particular modalities, but is not the modality. Each art form affords an enjoyable, aesthetic and playful experience of modalities, relying on underlying cultural norms, but is not the modality. Each kind of worldly material sets modalities in motion, but is not the modality. Modalities are different ways in which we encounter and are oriented towards the world, the way the world opens itself up to us and questions us. Modality is the way transitionality unfolds and manifests itself.

The therapeutic use of modality

Getting to know a patient, like any other person, takes place in the different modalities available to us. Modalities are dimensions of the relationship we weave together. What capacity for transitional

encounters do we have in common? We each have our preferences, our particularities, facilities and difficulties; we have each explored and like exploring some worlds more than others. Some of these are useful to our daily lives, others are filled with desire and creative impulses, and some with monsters, anguish and suffering. Some seem like gardens, others are deserts or wild virgin forests. In which ones will we meet?

Experience has led me to understand that for the most part, the lack of living expressed by patients at the beginning of therapy, which has motivated their request for therapy, is stored in one or two modalities, leaving other modalities available for them to manifest themselves in a dynamic and creative way.

There was a schizophrenic patient who, despite possessing sensory capacities, lived his body without feeling either hot or cold, hardness or softness. He stood upright in the middle of corridors, rigid, like a plank of wood, his head raised towards the sky. He heard voices speaking to him, chastising him. It was futile to venture into the worlds of word or body, he was unable to form a relationship there. So we did drawings, mostly without talking, and sometimes when he quietly hummed a tune to himself, I did the same. It wasn't until much later that words were reinvested; initially there were words we could use to describe the drawings and objects in the world, and then gradually we began to talk about movements linked to drawings and relationships between people.

And then there was a young boy who told me long stories, not really with words, but with noises, actions, action figures, things he could bang or rub together, things he could push around, pierce and poke. He couldn't draw; his body jiggled about as though it didn't belong to him, his limbs flung about in all directions as if torn by indecision. But his stories were densely peopled; he changed his tone of voice and the noises he made for each character and revisited them week after week in a complicated story where two groups confronted each other ferociously, until the bad guys died, but who always came back to life. In each session, he organised the room so that he had space to reconstruct the battle scene; the whole room became a play-set.

At the beginning of a therapeutic intervention, the therapist's job is to sort out the frightening and upsetting modalities from those that quiver with life and where creativity is possible. It is not only a major poetic diagnostic tool, but a way for therapists to get a feeling for the direction in which to orient themselves with the person. Once these modalities are identified, it is generally useful to start work from a place where creativity is still possible. The therapeutic alliance is built where encounters can happen.

Intermodal decentering, much favoured by expressive art therapists, invites us to move away from repetitive suffering experienced in everyday life, towards artistic spaces that are available for experiencing other feelings, sensations and ideas. It is also about moving away from suffering modalities in order to reconnect with life through those that offer more favourable conditions for transition.

Inter-modality is about the coexistence of several modalities. Clinical experience leads me to consider two kinds of inter-modality: *alternating inter-modality* and *simultaneous inter-modality*.

Alternating inter-modality supposes a more or less rapid oscillation between two or more modalities over a period of time. For example: doodling on a page, changing it graphically and giving it a title can take a couple of minutes and uses two modalities – image and word.

It is useful for the therapist to locate the doorways between worlds and to go through them, to whichever world is more favourable for the transformation of forms and human relationships, to further the person's artistic exploration and unfolding. This kind of inter-modality can be even more rapid, taking seconds or fractions of seconds, or it can be much slower, as in a whole day workshop when the morning is given over to sound and the afternoon to image.

Simultaneous inter-modality uses several modalities at a time. For example: the same doodle could evoke the smell and the movements of someone picking a flower. Two modalities are present at the same time – smell and corporeal movement, such that the modalities of image and word have faded into the background of existence; writing and drawing would then represent the mediality of this creative action. Simultaneity of several modalities can set up echoes between different forms. It is probable that these forms have less expressive and transformational power when experienced through only one modality.

Notions such as rhythm are transmodal, meaning that they facilitate the simultaneous coexistence of several modalities in an appropriate manner, holding them together as a bundle. An example of this would be dance (movement), which generally relies on music (sound); both modalities of sound and movement are inhabited by rhythm, which brings them together.

The coexistence of modalities provokes unsteadiness, surprise, a disturbance in the established order of things in the world. But this makes it possible to see things differently, to have a new outlook on the world, a new perception and experience of ourselves.

It can be useful to explore more difficult modalities during the course of therapy, when the therapeutic alliance is sufficiently developed for such a companionship to be possible. It can

sometimes happen that abandoned modalities are re inhabited, so the patient can mobilise more modalities in which to feel themselves alive. Eventually, the possibilities and resources experienced in living modalities can be reintroduced into the more difficult ones.

The evaluation of modal and intermodal progression during therapy is a fascinating aspect of art therapy, and probably one of its main particularities. Generally, the changes that we talk about in terms of modality are well received by institutions, as we are the only professionals in the institutional team that can talk about and document such things with sensitivity, in any depth or precision. A phenomenological attitude respects the patient, their lived experience, their point of view and their resources. In this respect, PK has opened the way for us, for which we are profoundly grateful.

On the one hand, we could say that it is not the work, the art work, that is important, but the working, the formation of forms, the Gestaltung, which happens in different modalities. On the other hand we can say that the art therapist's skill is the ability to accompany the patient's working with their own working. Ideally, the two will criss-cross each other and weave together a therapeutic relationship that is full of life, in which living passes from one to the other.

Let the poet in me have the last word.

One day
my gaze went from me
left its mooring

Then
the crackling of leaves in the breeze
bells in the distance
a ray of sunshine on the green meadow
grasses yellow dancing
conifers exhaling
arm flesh in cool shade
leaf sap on my tongue

The elsewhere of tides

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