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The Call to Play

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Abstract

This article explores the nature of play and its presence and potential in teaching and learning encounters. Play is portrayed as a movement that can characterize the process of learning and teachers' reflections on their practice. The exercise of *techne* and *phronesis* are found to be key but problematic elements in this movement. The paper is in the form of a conversation, a medium calling the authors themselves to play with the play that might occur in classrooms. Thus, the authors' play is itself a subject for inquiry. Their interplay warrants considering play to be an elemental activity for reconceptualizing teaching/learning practices.

As new academic colleagues in a teachers college we discover a mutual educational concern regarding the lack of genuine conversation in teaching/learning situations. Attracted further by the call of possibility and desire for community, we enter into playful conversation. On the one hand, we have some personal aims—to understand each other better and to learn from each other. On the other hand, though, we have a broader professional interest. Through our conversation below, we hope to show conversation and play as legitimate, indeed essential, activities of inquiry and pedagogical relationship in teaching and learning. Much of current educational reform is potentially hostile to these activities (for example, high-stakes achievement testing and standards such as the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium's [INTASC] with their emphasis on “strategies” and “techniques” [Hostetler, 2002]). There is critical need to retrieve these activities, which are at the center of good teaching and learning.

Some Preliminary Thoughts on Conversation and Play

So what do we mean by “conversation” and “play?” These are ideas that elude easy

definition, hence as we argue below, the need to play with them. Nevertheless, we do offer some preliminary orientation to these ideas before we launch into our conversation. Like German philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer we understand language, the medium of conversation, to be the medium of all understanding. Gadamer (1989) takes up conversation as a mode of play. He insists that to understand conversation as play it is critical not to imply any frivolousness or lack of seriousness on the part of the conversational participants, but rather, to suggest that only through suspension of participants' subjectivities can the matter at issue come to be revealed and understood. Gadamer describes this as "the primacy of play over the consciousness of the players" (p. 104). To give a trivial example, to really understand baseball, one really has to be a player. And while players surely bring individual talent and style to the game, at least if they want to play well, they cannot play the game any old way they want; their "subjectivities" have to be suspended. Good base stealers do not try to steal a base whenever they want. They take their cues from the game—the score, the inning, the number of outs in the inning—and the common concern of winning the game.

Similarly, Gadamer (1989) asserts that the movement of a genuine conversation transcends distinct viewpoints (pp. 378-379). Part of this movement involves a focus upon some subject matter. This conversational play has an aim—understanding the subject matter at hand. And because the aim is understanding, participants must "transcend" their current opinions: "To reach an understanding in dialogue is not merely a matter of putting oneself forward and successfully asserting one's own point of view, but being transformed into a communion in which we do not remain what we were" (p. 379). This "communion" does not imply agreement; people still will speak from their own experiences and other "prejudices." Still, the aim is to speak as the conversation demands rather than merely as one's own current beliefs demand.

We hope to gain insights into this sort of conversational play. For example, to what extent can one really "transcend" one's viewpoint? Do we really accomplish anything through our conversation? When we begin we are not sure what will happen. One of us has been a serious student of play; the other has only toyed with the idea. One of us has spent a great deal of time observing and analyzing teachers at play in their classrooms; the other spends very little time in classrooms. One of us takes an interpretive approach; the other was schooled in the analytic tradition in philosophy. What sort of play can we have? What sort of conversation?

The Subject Matter of Our Conversation

The object of our conversational play is the aesthetic play that might occur in classrooms. By aesthetic play we are referring to an attunement to the creating process in sense making; a sensitivity (on the parts of teachers and students) to the many nuances and possibilities present in learning situations and a willingness to take up the call to play (see also Barone, 1983; Dewey, 1934; Eisner, 1992; Gadamer, 1989; Grumet, 1993; May, 1993). We use data from a two-year inquiry (Note 1) into the nature of play in a middle school attempting to value the creating process, primary to the arts, across the entire school curricula. This provides opportunities to converse about

how teachers might play with ideas, yield to play in their classrooms, or perhaps resist the call to play.

One of us was the researcher in this school attending to the consequences of aesthetic play in classrooms for learners, learning, teachers, and teaching. Three teachers participated in this inquiry by providing artifacts of their planning processes, interviews pursuing theory/practice relations, and extending full access to their classrooms for researcher participant/observation documentation. Two of the participants (Diane and Laurie) were sixth grade teachers responsible for all core subject matter. The other participant (Lorraine) was a seventh/eighth grade humanities teacher responsible for integrating language arts, social studies, and health. Each participant understood that her role and place as a teacher was to foster greater attention to the creating process across all sense making on the parts of students. Excerpts from these teachers' accounts serve as an opening into conversation. The reader is invited to take up these questions too, to embrace the hermeneutic task "coming into conversation with the text" (Gadamer, 1989, pp. 331, 350).

Teacher Accounts

Diane, a teacher, comments:

Every once in a while I step back from the flow in my classroom and panic. I ask myself, can students name specific concepts? I dislike these moments. They interrupt the momentum created. I think I am always cognizant of substantial learning. But, when I find myself and my students most lost and caught up in inquiry processes, I feel myself called back to label the learning. (Int. #1, 4/3/98)

Laurie, another teacher, notes:

Some students just don't get it. The answer or solution is not going to fall from heaven. I get exhausted saying, "There is not one right way, but many ways." I have to derive pleasure from every little step experienced in this regard. Some days the movement towards this seems painstakingly slow. I do know that the only way to convince students otherwise is through involvement in their schoolwork. (Int. #1, 4/3/98)

A third teacher, Lorraine, comments:

I find it incredibly difficult to discuss this sort of work with others. People who espouse creativity for creativity's sake don't like the structure involved in setting things up so that students can self-organize and allow things to enfold and move to more complex levels; people who are more linear are frustrated by the lack of closure and my inability to share a nice set of step by step lesson plans. I've often wondered what these sorts of lessons would look like to some outsider who is just visiting for the day. How would they make sense of the wonderful connections to past encounters as well as to future ones? Would such lessons seem unfocussed, chaotic? And that is one of my current frustrations: how to look at curriculum with a bigger picture in mind and not just a bit at

a time. (Int. #8, 6/6/00)

These thoughts are the subject matter that drew us together. Thus, the conversation has begun. How shall we understand play? How should it be part of a teacher's work?

Conversational Play/Playful Conversation

Margaret. Diane's words suggest aesthetic play is a movement that takes hold of the learning encounter. She experiences an attunement within the inquiry process that absorbs her attention. Laurie knows this movement of aesthetic play, too. She claims personal involvement is the necessary catalyst for her students towards a felt understanding of aesthetic play's relation to learning. Lorraine is keenly aware of the connectiveness of this learning movement from parts to whole, back to parts again. It is impossible for Lorraine to distinguish any one discrete part. The learning in Lorraine's classroom is recursive and related, with encounters having a history and a future. I observe students in all three classrooms actively structuring what is encountered in learning situations. These students are positioned to be receptive to sensory qualities and relations between self and subject matter, constructing and re-constructing, questioning and re-considering, on an on-going basis. Seemingly, aesthetic play is intimately and necessarily tied to the making, adapting, changing processes of created learning encounters. Dewey (1938) terms such a learning encounter an "experience" that is a "moving force" (p. 38). He further stresses that failure on the parts of teachers to take this moving force into account betrays the movement altogether. Attending to the movement requires sensitivity, searching for attunement within the development of the movement itself and not fixed on a predetermined end.

Karl. What you say about aesthetic play intrigues me. It has an attractive combination of familiarity and strangeness. On the one hand, I like to think that I value both playfulness and an aesthetic sense in teaching and learning. But I'm not sure I think about those things the way you do. I'm not sure I play with them the way you do.

There is so much you bring up. I try to grab onto something to play with. I think about the idea of play itself. To tell you the truth, I'm not sure I see much evidence of a sense of play in Diane's, Laurie's, and Lorraine's comments, and not just in the sense that they all appear stressed. For example, why should Diane dislike the moments when her momentum is interrupted? Can't she play with those moments? Why does Laurie insist that there is just one way to "convince students?" Isn't that an issue to play with? And Lorraine seems to make people who disagree with her into adversaries. Can't she just play? Perhaps the point is that if you want to be serious about play, play isn't an idea to play with?

Margaret. On the contrary, play cannot be play in theory alone. It is dependent on the play. Further, I see Diane, Laurie, and Lorraine totally engaged in play. But, it is play that is not necessarily harmonious. If play demands being attentive to the emergence and development of the movement itself, vigilance is required that is evidenced in uncertainties and tensions. In fact, the movement only exists through these ruptures. The

ruptures expressed by Diane, Laurie, and Lorraine surface the following questions in my research work throughout the 2-year inquiry:

- Given the emphasis in schools on outcomes and results how can teachers be encouraged to focus on acts of mind instead of end products in their work with students?
- Given the orientations toward technical rationality, to fixed sequence, how do teachers experience fluid, purposeful learning adventures with students in which the imagination is given room to play?
- Given the tendency to conceive of planning in teaching as the deciding of everything in advance, how do teachers and students become attuned to making good judgments derived from within learning experiences?
- What can we do to recover the pleasure dwelling within subject matter? How can teachers and students engage thoughtfully in meaningful learning as opposed to covering curriculum?

Karl. Those questions are supremely important. I too think it is important to help teachers break out of the technical mindset that is so prevalent and be able to see other possibilities. But, as you do, I wonder how to do that. I wonder about just how strong a presence an undesirable technical rationality has in teachers' thinking. I think there is possibility in the play you describe, but I'm not sanguine about its ability to overcome the dominance of technical rationality.

For instance, Diane, Laurie, and Lorraine appear to have a particular game in mind, one that, in light of your questions, is concerned for acts of mind as opposed to end products, fluidity and imagination rather than fixed sequence, judgment within learning experiences in contrast to deciding everything in advance, and dwelling with subject matter rather than merely covering subject matter. So, they would seem to have a pretty good idea of what their game is. How could they experience ruptures, as ruptures unless they had some expectations of what a smooth process would be?

Don't get me wrong. I'm not saying teachers shouldn't have expectations. And I'm all for this kind of game. But I'm not sure what all this tells us about teachers' practice, particularly, how far they have distanced themselves from a narrow technical mindset.

I don't know if Diane, Laurie, and Lorraine see it this way, but there is the possibility here that play will be made into a matter for technical rationality of the sort you question. The unquestioned aim is play, and the only relevant questions concern how to get there, how to overcome the inconvenient ruptures that might occur, how to ensure that students "get it."

There is a more radical form of play that involves playing with the end itself. I'm thinking of Gadamer's (1989) conception of *phronesis* (typically translated as "practical wisdom"), a form of knowledge different from *techne* (technical wisdom) and needed because, "What is right . . . cannot be fully determined independently of the situation that requires a right action from me" (p. 317). Oftentimes, people confuse what is

practical with what is merely *technical*. Both are concerned with action in the world, but while *techne* is concerned for production of particular ends, *phronesis* is concerned for *good action* (praxis), which includes production but is more encompassing. Practical wisdom requires reflecting on the good (Irwin, 1997), determining what is right to do in particular circumstances, and not just determining how to achieve accepted ends.

This is what I had in mind when I asked whether Diane, for example, needed to be more playful. I wonder if she herself feels that at some level. She says she is “called back to label the learning.” Yet she also says she dislikes that. Earlier you said that this play is not fixed on a pre-determined end, which sounds similar to the point I’m trying to make. Yet are Diane and the others really as engaged in play as you say, or is she actually more attuned to the technical rationality you criticize?

Margaret. It is not a particular game that Diane, Laurie, and Lorraine have in mind, but a way to be with others and otherness. Aesthetic play has the character of an event; the happening of experience. You are stripping play of its historicity and dynamism by labeling play a set game with imposed rules and specific outcomes. Rather, aesthetic play assumes an organization and direction for learning emerging in accord with the movement. Such alertness to perceive relationships amongst parts is akin to the aesthetic teaching/learning encounters struggled for in these classrooms. The ruptures are essential and not mere inconveniences. Dewey (1934) notes that sensitivity to the intimacy of relations that hold parts together is at the heart of the nature of a medium: “Only when the constituent parts of a whole have the unique end of contributing to the consummation of a conscious experience, do design and shape lose superimposed character and become form” (p. 117). It seems aesthetic play manifests itself as a medium for learning. And, I find it is within the medium, the movement of play, that the strengths of aesthetic play are revealed in Diane’s, Laurie’s, and Lorraine’s classrooms. I am aware of recursive patterns that permeate the movement of aesthetic play and constitute the needed context. It is a context always in the making, like Gadamer’s (1989) view of play as a pattern or structure continually reconstituted by those who play along. But, as Dewey (1934) suggests, “I find underlying ‘conditions’ that foster and sustain aesthetic play such as patterns of attentiveness, personal involvement, emotional commitment, and room for the creation or invention of meaning.”

These recursive patterns create spaces to play with ideas, search for connections and see possibilities for students and teachers. Students and teachers become players in such aesthetic learning encounters with these patterns folding, unfolding, and feeding back into each other and themselves. Thus, these recursive patterns form philosophical imperatives asking students and teachers to live in particular ways in classrooms. The arising pragmatic implications appear to engage participants in ongoing reflection and deliberation. All grapple with the seductive call of aesthetic play in teaching and learning . . . sometimes surrendering, sometimes resisting . . . fearful of calcifying the life, the movement, the beauty from aesthetic play and/or held suspect by emphases on sequential, hierarchical curriculum implementation and learning outcomes.

The teachers’ thoughts exemplify the active undergoing (open, vulnerable, receptive

attitude) and doing (responding, organizing, discerning) entailed in Dewey's (1938) notion of experience as a "moving force" (p. 295). Gadamer (1989) points out that a fundamental negativity or reversal occurs through this relationship between undergoing and doing. And, like Gadamer, I see this as being positive and healthy, as a catalyst for transformation. Its value can be judged only on the grounds of what it moves toward and into. This is my sense of *phronesis*, as necessarily intimate to the act of experience itself. As such, *phronesis* undermines distinctions between being and knowing, matter and form, means and ends and lives in-between as a fluid reality. *Phronesis*' concern with particularities demands attunement to process, the act of creating meaning, thus a movement is generated, always moving towards. I concur with Dewey (1938) that this movement can be betrayed. Perhaps what you hear in Diane's voice is fear of betraying the movement of play as a fluid reality.

Karl. You do a lot to provoke me here (in a good way) so please bear with me as I go on for a bit.

I don't think I'm "stripping play of its historicity and dynamism." I think what I'm doing is pointing out that play can take some number of forms. You describe a particular sort of play, which you're entitled to do, of course, but it *is* play of a particular sort. After all, play *can* take the form of "a set game with imposed rules and specific outcomes." People "play" chess, baseball, poker, and all sorts of other games like that. I'm not saying Diane and the others are doing and thinking the wrong things necessarily. However, I do think we need to be clear about what they are doing.

You read a lot from the teachers' comments that I simply do not see. You know much more than I do about these three people and their teaching, so I'm not saying your analysis is incorrect. But even if your analysis is correct, I don't think you have eased my concerns. You just suggested that what I might be hearing is "fear of betraying play as a fluid reality." If that's right then that would do more to confirm than to relieve my suspicion that play has become a fixation that might be in conflict with *praxis*. Insofar as *phronesis* is aimed at the good, shouldn't we be talking about betraying people or the good or justice or something like that?

Maybe the reply is that people are betrayed if teachers are insensitive to the particulars, connections, and movements that you associate with play and which I agree are important elements of a genuine *praxis*. But here is where I feel the need to make some discrimination between sorts of play.

I understand that Diane's "call back to label" may stem from her close attention to the movement of the inquiry process and other co-temporal processes, but if her focus is on the good rather than first or solely on the "momentum," then I'm not sure why she should dislike these moments. Maybe there's still a sort of "fluidity" in her thinking, but then I'm not sure it's the sort of fluidity we want. This is why the language you use to describe *phronesis*, that it lives as a "fluid reality," strikes me as inadequate. For one thing, it's not clear to me Gadamer (1989) says this fluidity "can be judged only on the grounds of what it moves toward and into." How about his concern for tradition and

continuity, for example, which suggests obligations not only to what lies ahead but also to what lies behind, in some sense? But more important, if one really wants to be “fluid” in the sense of being responsive to the good in particular circumstances, then it seems to me one would be fully prepared to let go of play if necessary. Maybe one would do that cautiously or with some regret at the loss of something desirable, but I’m not sure “dislike” reflects the attitude I’m looking for.

I don’t mean to say Diane and the others shouldn’t be *techne*-oriented. Surely it is important at times for teachers to be producers, producers of play, for example. And *techne* can involve the sort of play you describe (if I’m understanding it) contrary to the narrow view that technical rationality is only crude means-ends thinking (see Dunne, 1993). Nonetheless, I believe it’s important to keep the distinction between *phronesis* and *techne* before us, even if they are more closely related than people think sometimes.

Margaret. The distinction between *techne* and *phronesis* that I make is that technical mastery assumes a constant relationship between means and ends assuring a certain predetermined product. *Phronesis* assumes no escape from contingency. The object of *phronesis* is the movement or play itself. The attention to process shapes the aesthetic play that I have seen and felt in these classrooms. Such aesthetic play has a structure. But, I caution that the structure is not a representative fixed form. The conditions or patterns, talked of previously, create a structure for a living form—allowing for and supporting play that unfolds. Both Gadamer’s and Dewey’s concern for continuity is paramount; the past informs the present with implications for the future. Therefore, the play is always particular to the situation. There are few certainties; the direction is unpredictable and varied. An ongoing reciprocity between self and other is created and it is necessarily a fragile relationship. But, it is such fragility that acts as a catalyst for the fluid movement of play. It is also this fragile, tentative relationship that students and teachers grapple with. The pull to certainties is evidenced in labeling learning, resisting or turning away from the movement of play, and grasping for representations. I hear in the comments of these teachers a catching of selves in this act. Perhaps, this catching of selves offers a way to look at the notion of play, understood as deliberate action in the world (Arendt, 1958). The capacity to see what is at stake in a particular situation and the capacity to make the right decision and act appropriately embraces *techne* and *phronesis* simultaneously; both sharing the central moment of teaching—application.

Karl. I don’t think there is anything in your first points that I’m disagreeing with. For instance, I agree that there is an appropriate structure in the play you describe but which cannot be “fixed.” But it still seems to me that there is an important ambiguity in how to understand that fluidity you talk about. For example, while you say that looking for labels reflects a pull to certainties and a resistance to play, I would hope that it reflects just the opposite. Gadamer (1989) writes that “experience is initially always experience of negation: something is not what it is supposed to be” (p. 317). (Perhaps this was your earlier point about negativity.) So maybe this is what is happening when the teachers “catch themselves.” But if one really were open to the experience, then in this case why would one assume that searching for labels is antithetical to play? To entertain the perhaps shocking idea that maybe certainties have a place in one’s teaching after all—

that would seem to be the very essence of play.

I agree with you that *techne* and *phronesis* come together in application. But, again, we need to think about how they come together. It still seems to me that the “technical” can dominate in ways that are undesirable.

Margaret. Carr (2000) also identifies this dilemma. Application taken up in a technician manner ignores the particularities of context and follows procedures to a pre-given end. Thus, technical application avoids questions about the good reducing action to predefined behavior, substituting finite goals for transformational thinking, and replacing judgment with predetermined rules and skills. Rather, non-technician application considers what is at stake in a situation. This is not a generalizable imposed wisdom but rather specific to a moment, unanticipated. So, yes, the nature of application is the direction our conversation has taken. And, I agree that the question of how *techne* and *phronesis* come together is problematic. In fact, the moment I begin to address this I am lured by what you describe as “technical domination that is undesirable.” I find the “important ambiguity” you speak of to be concurrently disturbing and beautiful; disturbing because I inadequately struggle to express the significances for teaching and learning; beautiful because these significances are striking. Perhaps it is the interplay of *techne* and *phronesis* that warrants consideration. This would displace identification with each entity and focus attention on the relationship achieved in-between. The in-between discloses understandings and practical wisdom living within the movement. Application is where this conjuncture is exemplified. *Techne* and *phronesis* cohere into sensible moments. A unity permeates application that is an embodied lived conjuncture. Thus, application is an elemental response placing the body at the center of our conversation. I see a need to develop a place for the body in teaching and learning that fosters such interplay of *techne* and *phronesis*. Catching oneself in the act can be the inaugural event towards attunement and discernment, for as the application of a moment lives in sensation its life takes application through understanding. All too often I fear that teachers succumb to “technical domination that is undesirable” because of demands to perform, manage, and execute polished, efficient lessons. Taking up the call to play creates space to live otherwise in classrooms. Taking up the call to play is risky, continuously questioning what is worthwhile in particular situations. Taking up the call to play involves pursuing this question as simultaneously open and determinate, finitely contextualized and infinitely potential. The responsibility entailed is implicit. Play can reconceptualize the practice of teaching, integrally embracing *techne* and *phronesis*. I also find hope in this embrace towards addressing the questions raised earlier of emphases in schooling on end products, fixed sequence, and imposed plans.

Karl. There is much more that needs to be said, and we cannot say it all here, but when you bring application to the forefront I think you set the arena in which any further conversation has to operate. Application is an important concept for Gadamer (1989), of course (and a notoriously difficult one). I’m not sure it focuses us on the “in-between” so much as the “over-and-above,” but if the point is that the locus of concern must be the particular occasions of teacher judgment and action, I think that is right. There may be danger in *techne* dominating *phronesis*, about which I think we are agreed, but that is

a danger that ultimately can only be faced and overcome in the sort of “movement” you talk about.

So what are we to say then to teachers like Diane, Laurie, and Lorraine? “Don’t let an undesirable technical rationality dominate your practice?” That’s great advice, isn’t it? Maybe what we can and should advise and support is that teachers not be afraid to “catch” themselves. As you suggest, perhaps catching oneself can be the event that inaugurates the struggle for wise practice. That’s easy to say. A narrow conception of technical rationality makes a vice out of disruptions. What emerges is an aesthetic that contrasts starkly with the aesthetic implied in your conception of play, which I take it, was your point in the questions you posed earlier.

But we have reason for optimism, don’t we? Your research suggests so, doesn’t it? Perhaps the desired attunement can be taught. I’m not sure what all you have in mind when you talk about a place for the body, but in so far as an obstacle to play is teachers’ (mis)understanding of the nature and importance of production, perhaps we can attack that by teaching the relevance of the body. Again, it seems to me the problem is not *techné* per se but rather an impoverished conception of it. Dunne (1993) argues that “without a sensitivity and responsiveness of the body (through hands, eyes, etc.) the ‘mind’ of the *technites* cannot comprehend the form” of the object to be produced (p. 353). Perhaps by opening up the possibility of attunement in this way (i.e., physical as well as intellectual) we can show that it does not work against teachers’ legitimate concern for production while at the same time setting the stage for further development of that attunement.

Margaret. Your reference to “over and above” speaks to the transformational possibilities that arise out of aesthetic play, occurring in-between self and other, arising out of the purposes and immediacy encountered. I am somewhat cautious about the words “over and beyond” because they could be interpreted as a higher type of knowledge. Rather, the transformational knowledge you allude to is intimate to the action itself. It is this awareness of knowing within experience that *phronesis* precipitates. Interwoven into such critical judgments is *techné*. An impoverished understanding of technical knowledge confines *techné* to what is fixed and certain. But, the realization that all decisions are determined by the possibilities of *techné* allows me to see these aspects woven together, derived from within the act or application. It is such a significance that aesthetic play addresses.

Karl. I acknowledge your point about the danger of my “over and above” language. That is another issue generated by our conversation. And, I am struck by the generative character of our conversation. But that fecundity does not happen by itself; play is hard work. It has been difficult for me to take up this sort of inquiry. I’m not sure how receptive I have been. Have I become more appreciative of this approach? Have I been appropriately playful in response to your challenges? I think you have prompted me to play with different ways of presenting my claims, but it seems to me that I’ve stuck to my claims pretty consistently. Maybe that is acceptable. Perhaps we still can claim to have achieved a fusion of horizons such as Gadamer (1989) describes. This fusion does

not require agreement. As Richard Bernstein (1991) states it, “There is a play, a to-and-fro movement in dialogical encounters [as opposed to in “adversarial confrontations”], a seeking for a common ground in which we can understand our differences” (p. 337). Our conversation confirms for me that we share an interest in these issues as well as a basic understanding of their nature and significance.

If we respond to the call to play and as a result see the possibility for further play, as I think we have, that is noteworthy. To discover such possibility is neither inevitable nor insignificant. I believe that is shown in our conversation as well as in the teachers’ struggles that we have explored. Seemingly, taking up the call to play is not something one can put down again. Yet, successful play is not assured. You have convinced me that play can powerfully affect and effect the practice of teaching. Can educators create conditions where its power will be realized?

Conclusion

Dewey (1934) clarifies our understanding of reaching a conclusion as “no separate and independent thing; it is the consummation of a movement” (p. 38). Similarly, our conversational play creates knowledge, but this knowledge is discovered within the play of appearances. The interplay reveals these appearances to be neither an object or a concept, but rather, a spirit of inquiry emerging on its own volition. As we succumbed to this spirit, we gave up individual control, confronted our thinking, and found it altered by what emerged within the inquiry process. The control became constituted within the play itself as the call to play gave way to a movement that revised and enlarged understandings. Similarly, we hope the reader became a player. And, indeed if this is the case, the evocative, generative character promises to move into many unanticipated understandings. This is Gadamer’s (1989) thesis in identifying such play as the clue to ontological experience (pp. 104-110). To learn about other(s) and in turn self, to create and concomitantly be created, is elemental, ontologically basic to the primacy of being. Educators must ask themselves if this is not the heart of learning? If so, such play ought to be accorded central consideration within education. If educators choose to take up the call to play, the conditions lie within the movement of play. And, its ensuing power is to be realized, appearing again and again. All taking up the call to play do so forever.

Note

1. The data represented are part of a two-year inquiry conducted at a middle school with a mandate to infuse arts making processes across the entire curriculum. Twenty-six students and their parents, 3 teachers and two school administrators participated throughout the enquiry. Data collection consisted of on-going interviews with all participants, student work/artifacts, teacher work/artifacts, and classroom observations. For a more detailed account of the Creative Arts Centre, Milton Williams School, Calgary Board of Education, Calgary, Alberta, Canada refer to Macintyre Latta (2001) *The Possibilities of Play in the Classroom: On the Power of Aesthetic Experience in Teaching, Learning, and Researching*.

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