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### Abstract

The aim of this article is to show *that* and *how* philosophy and philosophical thinking can be of relevance for the preparation of future professionals in adaptive physical activity (APA). To this end we utilize philosophical insights from the human science perspective on two central issues, namely *experience and intersubjectivity*, which are weaved together in an analysis of a reflective journal produced by an APA-student. More specifically, by drawing on phenomenological and pragmatist philosophy, we show how the meaning of APA – as *adaptive* – is created through a complexity of individual and shared meaning making processes between APA educators, students, and the people they meet in their practicum. Through this article, we hope to show that and how the human science perspective can provide tools to understand the students, their learning and their involvement in the educational program.

*Keywords:* philosophy, human science, intersubjectivity, experience, reflection

Experience, Intersubjectivity and Reflection: A Human Science Perspective on Preparation of  
Future Professionals in Adaptive Physical Activity

The aim of this article is to show *that* and *how* philosophy<sup>1</sup> and philosophical thinking can be of relevance for the preparation of future professionals in adaptive physical activity (APA). Rather than doing this through exegesis of some philosophical issue, we will show how we think philosophically about what we do as educators in APA. This purpose might appear as strange, because as McNamee (1998, p. 75) has argued in the context of physical education:

There has always been an air of suspicion about those who think philosophically about the nature and values of physical education....Physical education teachers are apt to claim that theirs is essentially a practical vocation; a calling to the teaching of physical activities that can help students to live better lives. What need have they of a philosophy?

Bearing in mind the common roots of APA and PE (Sherrill & DePauw, 1997), there is reason to believe that this kind of question can be raised within the context of APA: What use is there to philosophical thinking in something which in its essence appears to be a practical matter?

The physicist Richard Feynman is famously attributed the statements that philosophy of science is about as useful to scientists as ornithology is to birds, and that where scientists are explorers, philosophers are tourists. Others have made the more odd comparison of saying that “philosophy is to cognitive science what tin cans tied to a car are to a wedding” (Thagard, 2009, p. 237). These are attractive formulations for those who will not have anything to do with the project of thinking about our thinking, but the statements do not in

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<sup>1</sup> In this article we take philosophy to be far more specific than merely a general outlook on life (e.g. “my philosophy is...”). In the academic sense, philosophy “is a way of thinking about certain sorts of questions...[such as] religion, right or wrong, politics, the nature of the external world, the mind, science, and numerous other topics” (Warburton, 2004, p. 1-2).

themselves refute the potential usefulness of philosophical thinking in APA. Ultimately, questions concerning the usefulness of philosophy to APA rely on the strength of the arguments that can be provided for and against it.

When the word philosophy is used in the context of APA it is mostly intended to designate a personal orientation or attitude towards one's work with people with disabilities (Jespersen & McNamee, 2008). Rarely, philosophy as an academic field of study is engaged with (Goodwin & Rossow-Kimball, 2012, Reid, 2000). In the APA literature, which can be characterized as philosophical in academic terms, three different lines can be discerned; work on philosophy of science in APA research, classification in Paralympic sport, and ethics.

Challenging research assumptions in behavioral, biological and socio-cultural APA-research was the topic of a special issue of the journal *Adapted Physical Activity Quarterly* (Bouffard, Streat, & Davis, 1998; Shephard, 1998; Slife, 1998). Articles in that issue spurred a debate around the application of the scientific method of the natural sciences to APA and the critique mounted against this methodology from a postmodernist perspective (Bouffard, 2001; Shephard, 1999, 2001). More recently, the concept of evidence-based research and practice has been debated (Bouffard & Reid, 2012; Reid, Bouffard, & MacDonald, 2012; Standal, 2008). Debates of this kind will be based, either implicitly or explicitly, on positions held in philosophy of science.

In relation to classification in Paralympic sports, the issue of fair play has been raised by Jones and Howe (2005). Drawing on literature from philosophy of sport on what constitutes fair play in sporting competitions, they argued that a balance must be struck between "facilitating the opportunity to demonstrate worthy athletic performance in meaningful contests, on the one hand, and avoiding unfair meaningless no contests, on the other" (p.133). This is both a philosophical and empirical problem, where one must take account of the a priori arguments about what constitutes fairness in sport, as well as produce

processes of classification that reliably and validly can determine the class an athlete belongs to. The most well-known case in Paralympic sport is Oscar Pistorius' quest to participate in the Olympics. Though strictly not about classification in Paralympic sports, it has raised significant philosophical interest for instance in relation to what athletic performance is in the first place (Jones & Wilson, 2009), what it means to be human, as well as questions of trans-humanism and cyborgization (e.g. Norman & Moola, 2011; Swartz & Watermeyer, 2008; Van Hilvoorde & Landeweerd, 2010). There is however a danger that all philosophically oriented questions in the Paralympic context gravitate towards the issue of Pistorius' Olympic participation (Burkett, McNamee, & Potthast, 2011). That would be a pity, since there are numerous other questions about eligibility, classification and the use of technology that simply cannot be settled empirically, and thus are in need of philosophical clarification (McNamee, 2011). Indeed, we would argue that this intersection of philosophical and more natural science orientated research is one of the few examples of where interdisciplinarity is attempted in APA (see Burkett et al., 2011).

Ethics is another, quite recent topic in the APA literature. Goodwin (2008) explored ethical aspects of the goal of functional independence in APA contexts. In so doing, she challenged the dichotomy between independence and dependence, and argued for the necessity of ethical reflections around these issues. Later, Goodwin and Rossow-Kimball (2012) developed this work by outlining four sets of ethical theories (i.e., principlism, virtue ethics, ethics of care and relational ethics) that can serve as tools to foster ethical reflections among APA professionals. In conclusion, they highlighted two themes that they saw as “worthy of in-depth ethical thinking, [namely] disability as subject and reflective instruction” (p. 305).

Standal (2011) has published a case-study concerning the ethics of peer-modeling in the rehabilitation context. The study discussed potential problems with using peers as

resources for learning. These problems fell under the themes (a) a naïve conception of empathy, and (b) the potential for symbolic violence. Through reflections on these problems, it was argued that “we have entered an ethical landscape where the question of *how to meet the other* becomes pressing” (p. 55. Italics added).

Silva and Howe (2012) utilized a Foucauldian analysis of practices that might work against the goal of empowerment. They also introduced the capabilities approach developed by Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum. Capabilities in this context refer to “the range of opportunities that people face to become or be what they value” (p. 33). In addition, Silva and Howe (2012) called for reflexivity among APA professionals

A common theme in the literature on ethics in APA is a call for reflections on the practice of APA and increased reflexivity among professionals. Our intention with this article is therefore dual: we want to make a contribution to the literature that asks for increased reflexivity, with a specific emphasis on preparation of future professionals. In addition, we also want to show that philosophy indeed can be useful for the field of APA. Thus, we quote John Dewey in stating that we:

...shall not, therefore, apologize for engaging in a certain amount of philosophical analysis, which otherwise might be out of place. [We] may, however, reassure you to some degree by saying that this analysis is not an end in itself but is engaged in for the sake of obtaining criteria to be applied later in discussion of a number of concrete and, to most persons, more interesting issues. (Dewey, 1938, p. 33)

Regarding the call for increased reflexivity among professional practitioners in APA, the question of how reflection and reflexivity can be developed during professional preparation is not easily resolved (Standal & Moe, 2013). A challenge is that the notions reflection and reflexivity are unwieldy and used in a manifold of ways (Fendler, 2003). Their

application to educational practice is characterized by a large variety in terms of how their goals, means and ideas are conceptualized (Procee, 2006).

### **Purpose and Perspective**

We situate our perspective in the context of human science (Giorgi, 1992). Briefly put, human science denotes an approach to research that grew out of the German idea of *Geisteswissenschaften*, i.e., that human phenomena are inherently different from natural phenomena and thus must be studied with other methodological means than *the* natural scientific method. Even if the difference between natural and human science nowadays are considered as being less marked, it is primarily the interest in subjective experience as the study object which is the hallmark of human science. One of the essential characteristics of human beings as humans is that our existence is relational: we become ourselves in worlds shared with others (ibid.). Thus, taking subjective experiences, subjectivity and intersubjectivity seriously is important in the human science perspective.

There are two interrelated motivational backgrounds for our interest in a human science approach to professional preparations in APA. First, we have been involved in educational efforts that have stressed the importance of evidence-based research and practice. Our observation is that the rhetoric surrounding the students in such programs leads them to use the term ‘subjectivity’ in a pejorative sense: subjectivity is undesirable and should be avoided at all costs. Secondly, in our own research on students’ practicum learning, we have observed that some students shy away from reflecting on their own experiences, telling us that doing so is ‘only subjective’ (Authors, 2014). Thus, we find that the realm of subjectivity is not easily accessed when we teach future APA professionals.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> As Szostak points out in his article in this special issue, it is important for APA to embrace and encourage a broad definition of *evidence* in which no form of research or knowledge is a priori taken as superior. We wholeheartedly agree with this.

These observations have challenged us in the sense that we have become interested in how we can retrieve a positive and productive understanding of subjectivity in our education of future APA professionals. Due to our backgrounds as a physiotherapist and a physical education teacher, with a shared interest in phenomenological philosophy, we want – in this paper specifically, but also in our academic lives more generally – to rehabilitate subjectivity in APA through a human science perspective. To this end we will utilize philosophical theories on two central issues, namely *experience and intersubjectivity*, which both serve as a backdrop for our educational efforts.

In order to contextualize our discussion, we will present an excerpt from a reflective journal written by a student in our one year APA program. This empirical material is taken from a study we have conducted on students' learning in and through practicum (Authors, 2014). More specifically, the journal entry is written after a ski camp:<sup>3</sup>

*I want to highlight an 11 year old boy I spent much time with. The boy had CP where the functioning of the right leg and arm was affected. While skiing, this meant that he had little control over the right leg, and he had not learned how to plow or turn. He did not go down slopes without a track, because he could not control his speed or stop. We trained a lot on trying to plow with only one ski. We also practiced balancing and turns. Despite a lot of practice, trial and error with different techniques, we did not progress. He fell a lot and eventually lost his motivation. At one point, he said that "there is no point in this, I'm never going to make it anyway." During the week he neither learned to plow, swing or even to stop. When nothing worked, I felt incompetent and I noticed the boy lost confidence in me. As for my professional skills in teaching skiing, I did things right. I talked with several other students who did not*

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<sup>3</sup> Note that skiing is a culturally significant activity in our context, both in the sense that being able to participate in skiing, as well as being able to teach skiing, can be seen as important competences.



*have any better suggestions for how to teach it. I felt that I lacked experience with what was possible. Perhaps the challenge was too big? Maybe he should be allowed to continue to ski around in the flat trails and be happy with it? My incompetence was to not understand what would be best for him. In another situation I think I will be more careful to initiate projects that I do not know if will work. And if you are going to try and fail (which is often needed) I should maybe stop a bit before so it won't be too many failed attempts.*

In the rest of the paper we will weave our discussion of experience and intersubjectivity around this little story.

### **Experience and Reflection**

Broadly speaking, the problem with experience in philosophy can be described as the problem of how objects (including other subjects) in the outer world can be known by human subjects. A dividing line can be drawn between empiricists on the one hand and intellectualists on the other (Bengtsson, 2013). Whereas John Locke claimed that our minds are tabula rasa, “white paper, void of all characters” (as quoted in Bengtsson, 2013, p. 40), Kant and other intellectualists would hold that understanding the outer world through experience is impossible without the pre-existence of categories and cognitive structures. The big epistemological questions between empiricists and intellectualists are, of course, not simply a distinction between the existence or non-existence of a priori mental structures. A satisfactory account of this issue is well beyond the scope of our paper, but as Charles Taylor (2005) claims, the challenge for these two philosophical positions has been:

to account for experience, in the sense of taking in information from the world. In a sense we have to receive this information, we are the passive party. In another, we have to know how to ‘grasp’ it; we are active. How do these two combine? (p. 45)

What Taylor proposes is the need for a non-dualistic ontology, i.e., an understanding of being and world that does not entirely separate subject from object.

We will not follow this approach here (but see Author, 2009 for an application to APA). Instead we will go to a philosopher who also sought to overcome the subject-object dichotomy, namely John Dewey, one of the great American pragmatist philosophers, whose work has had great influence on educational thinking (Menand, 2002). Though Dewey often described his philosophy as empiricist or even experimental empiricism, his version of it

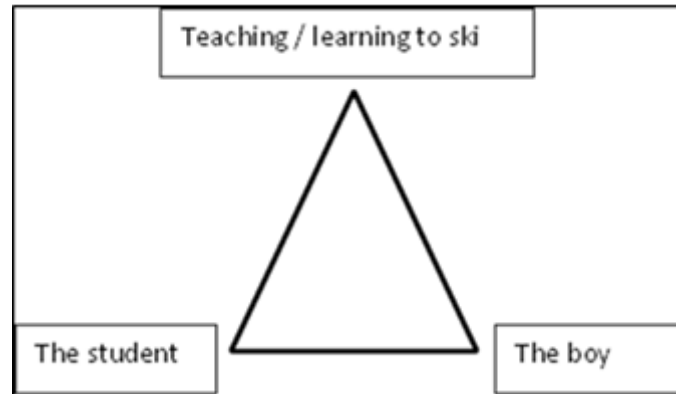
is not appropriately conceived as one-way traffic from somewhere (the physical environment, or an “external world” about which we can only conjecture), but *as an interaction between a creature and its environment....*The subject of experience is not a passive recipient of information; it is an active creature adapting its routines, modifying its habits, reconfiguring its dispositions, and it is the effect on its routines, habits or dispositions that determines what parts of the given the animal has taken (deliberately or otherwise) to constitute its experience. (Tiles, 2010, p. 102. Italics added)

As implied in this quote, there are two important principles in Dewey’s educational theory of experience, namely the principles of *continuum* and *interaction*. The former implies that every experience takes up something from previous experiences and in turn modifies the quality of later experiences: we can only make sense of our current experience in light of previous ones. In educational terms, experiences are directed towards growth, i.e., that the subject of experience develops physically, intellectually or morally. However, not all experiences are educative. Growth must be directed towards a desirable end in the sense that the value of the experience “can be judged only on the grounds of what it moves toward and into” (Dewey, 1938, p. 38). This means that experiences also hold the potential of being mis-educative.

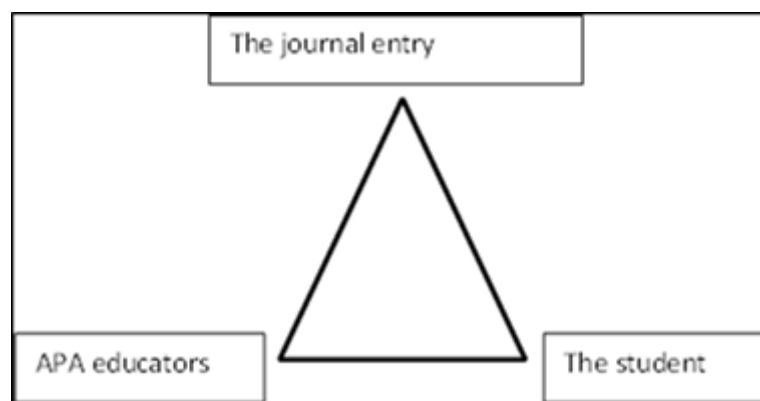
*The student's reflections around what was going on in the situation with the boy can serve as an example of how she activates former learning to reflect upon what was going on in the described situation. Continuity with former experiences is what helps her in order to make sense of what – in her opinion - is going wrong in the situation. Following this, the situation can also serve as a description of a learning situation 'on the edge' – an experience that could end up as mis-educative for both of them. Will the boy ever want to ski again? What did he actually learn? For him, the result of not improving his skills in skiing could be mis-educative if skiing was a desirable end for him. He could end up thinking "I am unable to ski." On the other hand, not learning to ski could be educative in the sense of providing an experience that leads to growth towards a realization of what his interests are: "Am I really interested in skiing? Is it worthwhile spending time on skiing?" The student has already started her reflection towards growth – she already has ideas about what she will do differently next time. However, the situation could be mis-educative for the student as well if she generalizes her experience to coming situation: "It didn't work that time, so my efforts won't work this time either."*

The principle of interaction implies that in experience a transaction between an individual and the environment takes place. This is referred to as an interaction between the objective conditions that constitutes the environment and the internal conditions of the subject, understood as the needs, desires, purposes and capacities of the individual. It is the obligation of the educator to construct an environment (i.e., to manipulate with the objective conditions) so that the learner can have experiences that match his or her capacities and desires. At the same time, the learner must also undergo changes, so that there is a mutual adaptation in the educative situation (Dewey, 1938).

*The interaction in our case can be described as a triangular relationship between the student, the boy and the material (i.e., teaching/learning to ski). This can be expressed with this figure:*



*The student sees herself as both being an educator, responsible for adapting the educational material so that the external and internal conditions match each other in order to help the boy progress with his skills in skiing. However, she also sees herself as a learner. This means that there are two layers in this situation, and the second layer can be expressed with another figure:*



*In this figure, figure 1 is the educational material shared between us as educators and the student as learner in the journal entry. Our analysis of this very mundane situation reveals the complexity that students are exposed to during their practicum.*

Educative experiences have both an active and a passive part. Experience is something the subject undergoes in the sense that what happens to us to some extent is

beyond our control. But, there is also an active part, which means that the subject actively takes or grasps the experience. This active process is in the works of Dewey referred to as inquiry or reflective thinking. These processes come about when the subject is confronting an indeterminate situation, i.e., a situation where it is not straight forward how one should go on.

Dewey saw reflection as “an active persistent and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusion to which it tends” (Dewey, 1910, p. 9). This form of thinking is for Dewey the primary road to educational experiences. However, he was unclear about the precise steps to be taken in the process of inquiry (Rodgers, 2002), but they involved *presence to experience*, the ability to *describe and analyze the experience*, and finally to *test possible hypotheses* on how to solve the problem through intelligent action. Reflective thinking is therefore conditioned on practical experiences and basically worthless unless its consequences are tested in action: “What is unequivocally clear is that for Dewey the human subjects under scrutiny need themselves to be conceived of as experimenting” (Tiles, 2009, p. 104). When considering the Greek word for experience, *empeiria*, we can come to see the intimate relation between having an experience and doing experimentations, since the verb *peiraô* means to attempt or undertake.

*Though not described in any detail, it is clear that the student experiments over the course of the winter camp. She refers to trial and errors, which in Dewey’s terms would be to test possible hypotheses on how to go on. The student’s text can serve as an example of active and persistent consideration of experience. She systematically examines the situation, what she did and did not do and how it was related to her former knowledge about learning to ski.*

*Our experience is that many students come to our program with the idea that they will be provided with a method for adaptations, a cook book recipe for how to work in situations like the one described in the text: “Tell us what do!” However, the nature of adaptive*

*physical activity is that there is no one method (Bouffard & Streat, 2003). What we can provide them are theories and updated research knowledge of what might work and what have worked, but we cannot issue any method that will work in future instances. We also provide them with practicum experiences where they can experiment with their knowledge and experience in open-ended situations. Therefore, it is crucial that our students learn to trust their own abilities to experiment while they experience. We as educators encourage the students to reflect together and alone, for instance through writing about their experiences. We ask them explicitly to look out for situations that 'stands out' and to question themselves about what is going on, who am I in this situation, how can I understand this relation, and so on.*

### **Intersubjectivity and Reflection**

The figures above and the description in our student's reflective journal entry describe the core of an educational situation, namely the meeting between an educator, a learner and a subject matter (Gallagher, 1992). It is also in Dewey's terms a description of a problematic situation, where the student does not know how to go on, but where she draws both on her own and her peers' previous knowledge and experience with adaptive skiing. What is additionally interesting in relation to the topic of this paper is how she highlights her own subjective experiences of struggling as well as how she understands the boy's subjective experiences of failure. In short, she understands the two of them as inter-subjects (Crossley, 1996) in an educational relation. We will explore this aspect of the educational relationship further with the aid of the concept intersubjectivity. In keeping with our human science perspective, we will here draw on phenomenological philosophy.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Granted, there are different phenomenological theories about intersubjectivity (Crossley, 1996; Zahavi, 2001), but at the level of detail that we can go into here, our presentation should be fairly uncontroversial.

As mentioned above, a general, philosophical problem has been to account for how human subjects can experience objects in the world. The problem of intersubjectivity is a version of this, namely how subjects can get knowledge of other minds.<sup>5</sup> From a human science perspective, however, our interest is not primarily in intersubjectivity as a relation between minds, but as an embodied relation between human beings (Overgaard, 2006).

For phenomenologists, intersubjectivity is not primarily an epistemological relation (how to *know* others), but an ontological condition in the sense that it is a fundamental relation between a subject, the other(s) and the world (Zahavi, 2001). This means that intersubjectivity is not derived in the sense that we first exist as individual subjects who subsequently form relations with other subjects through reflection. Rather, we pre-reflectively exist as subjects in relation to other subjectivities. The world is always *our* shared world; not a private experience of an individual (Overgaard, 2006). Therefore, the experiencing subject cannot be detached from the common field of experiences that arises in intersubjective encounters (Zahavi, 2001).

*The student's text provides us with a window into how she makes sense of the intersubjective encounter with the boy and how she understands the common and shared field of experience. She is trying, indeed struggling, to make sense of what the boy's subjective experiences are like. Also, she is trying to make sense of herself and her own actions.*

*The point raised above about methods for adaptations can now be further elaborated. We hold that APA does not exist outside of intersubjective relationships. Of course, there are textbooks and research literature that describes adapted physical activity, but adaptive*

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<sup>5</sup> This is often referred to as the problem of other minds (Zahavi, 2001). A classical solution to this problem is the “argument from analogy”: Since I do not have the same access to the other's mind as I have to my own, my access to the other's mind must be mediated by the bodily behaviour that I can read off from the other. That is, if I see that you are crying, then I can, by extrapolating my own experiences with crying, infer that you are probably feeling sad. This solution is not adequate from a phenomenological perspective, because it underestimates the difficulties of self-experiences (i.e. the access that I have to my own self) and overestimates the difficulties of experiencing the other (Zahavi, 2001).

*physical activity* (Howe, 2008), *as an active, dynamic, and on-going process can only come into being when inter-subjects meet in a shared field of experiences.*

If we think of intersubjectivity as an embodied system formed by the three poles, *I, other and world* (Zahavi, 2001), Merleau-Ponty (2002, p. 410) has stated that:

between this phenomenal body of mine and that of another as I see it from the outside, there exists an internal relation which causes the other to appear as the completion of the system. The other can be evident to me because I am not transparent for myself, and because my subjectivity draws its body in its wake...in so far as the other resides in the world, is visible there, and forms a part of my field, he is never an Ego in the sense in which I am one for myself.

In addition to underscoring that our relations with others are embodied, a relevant point for our purpose in this quote is the way Merleau-Ponty describes the subject and the other. By saying that the subject is not transparent to oneself, he means that we do not have full and complete knowledge of ourselves. In addition to mineness (i.e., the certainty that I am me; my familiarity with myself), there is also an anonymity or otherness to every self-experience: there is something that we do not fully understand. Similarly with regard to the other, she is different from me, yet also an Ego like myself. That is, had she not been different from me, she would in fact have been me, but at the same time she is also not totally other than me, since we are both human beings. Thus, a fundamental aspect of intersubjectivity is that the relations between I and others are characterized by identity-within-difference (Dillon, 1997). This identity-within-difference presents a potential for reflection in educational situations.

*Even though it sound trivial to say that the other is different from me, it holds a vital point, namely that without this difference the student's ability to see the boy as himself would disappear. This is important because instead of being held fast in the image of a 'generalized CP-boy,' he will unfold for her as an individual. Similarly, the student can appear as herself*



*for us. Identity-within-difference opens up a space for reflection where – for the student – what is known from earlier experiences (identity) is questioned by what she doesn't know (difference). We encourage the students to be aware of this space for reflection, because that is where the potential for learning and professional development is located.*

In the essay *Participant and spectator*, the Norwegian philosopher Hans Skjervheim (2002) outlines the difference between taking part in an intersubjective relationship and being a spectator to the relationship. The difference amounts to participating in the relationship by virtue of having the attitude of asking “what are you saying?” as opposed to standing aside, objectifying the relationship by asking “why does he say so?”

*When it comes to learning something from a given situation like the one described above, there is a need for both types of question and as can be seen in our example, the student does ask these questions. She answers the question of what happened by describing in detail the ski-session and then goes on asking herself why it went out as it did. The crucial point is that when the why-question is asked, it must be asked with the attitude of not wanting to explain the behavior of the boy, but of wanting to understand both oneself, the other, and the interaction that took place. Seeking explanation may end up with positioning the boy, thus closing the situation, rather than keeping inquiry going.*

### **Concluding Remarks**

Why does philosophy matter in the preparation of future professionals in adaptive physical activity? Philosophy – in our case a human science perspective informed by phenomenology and pragmatism – provides us as educators with a framework to understand the students, their learning and their involvement in the educational program in certain ways. We assert that acting from such a framework influence the way we communicate with the students about APA, about them and their role in it and about the people they meet. More specifically, the framework posits the student (in this case) as an active generator of

knowledge. This knowledge is gained not through detached contemplation, but through active engagement with the learning material. The framework is also useful because it highlights the subjective experiences of learners. This is what we have tried to show by weaving a text from a student with outlines of two philosophical topics.

We teach our students about subjective experiences as an important and established path to knowledge, not just for the participants they meet in practicum, but also for themselves, as students and future practitioners. Knowledge about what it means to be a relational, intersubjective body, embedded in the world with others is different from the knowledge students of APA are exposed to when they are confronted with other forms of disciplinary knowledge.

Our paper is primarily not about research, but there are still good reasons to consider interdisciplinarity as it is presented in Szostak's paper in this special issue. The chief reason is that APA-students have to integrate disciplinary knowledge in their process of becoming and working as professionals. The people they will be meeting in the future work are not constellations of bio-mechanics, physiology, psychology and culture, but rather full-blooded human beings.

Surely, knowledges from all these disciplines are indispensable for the students when they are preparing for a life-time career in APA. For the purpose of this paper, perhaps the key insight from Szostak is how interdisciplinarity requires an attitude; a certain reflective approach that also would be useful for education. No disciplinary knowledge is in principal superior over others and continuous reflection on one's own and other disciplines' strength, weaknesses and biases is necessary to develop practitioners who can handle the interdisciplinary nature of their occupation. Thus, we argue that regardless of their disciplinary home ground, educators of APA need to take up the attitude of interdisciplinary thinking described by Szostack. If APA-educators do not have explicit and self-conscious

standpoint on these issues, they risk transmitting the tacit prejudices of their discipline to new generations of professionals. Therefore, the recommendations in Szostack's paper are valid and relevant education as well.

What we aim to provide students with is knowledge that makes them able to pose new questions about themselves as practitioners in APA, what they are involved in and who they interact with. The human science perspective should ideally help the students to integrate that kind of knowledge with intersubjective sensitivity thus enabling them to work productively with people in unknown situations. This, we would argue, is an attitude which bears similarities to the concept of transdisciplinarity as presented by Szostak, the intention and willingness to include the viewpoints and perspectives of the people one is working with in professional settings.

We also aim to provide our students with an understanding that APA is not something in itself: it is not a method for life-long participation in physical activity and it is not a tool that automatically secures inclusion. Rather, APA – *as adaptive* – is always by necessity something for someone. To stress the “someone” for the students is to point out “the other” as a significant meaning maker. It is not as if the students from an expert position make APA meaningful for someone else. The meaning of APA is created through a complexity of individual and shared meaning making processes, based on all the participants' earlier experiences, their engagement here-and-now and their investments towards the future. Therefore, APA has to be understood as an ongoing creation of meaning which involves the students themselves and the other(s) as they interact.

How is this paper a contribution to increasing and/or improving reflexivity in APA? First of all, we hope to have shown the value in thinking about our own thinking as educators. The arguments we have advanced can and should be challenged, and possible discussions around these topics may improve our reflective understanding of what APA can or should be.

A further point is that Dewey reminds us that experience is something taken or grasped.<sup>6</sup> It is not given automatically by placing students in practicum situations. We as educators, as well as our students, undergo experiences passively, but it is that active grasping of the meaning of the educational situation that leads to learning and development. The process of grasping is accompanied with reflective thinking: the aspect of the situation (for instance the boy's statement that "there is no point in this") which is grasped becomes an object of reflection.

Experience and reflection are not new concepts and practices in education. The references to John Dewey are nearly 100 years old, but are still considered relevant. In addition, reflection and reflective practice have a history in the education of physical education teachers (for reviews of this literature, see Standal & Moe, 2013 and Tsangaridou & Sidentop, 1995). Although Connolly (1994) has published on reflection in APA practica, the present paper heeds the calls from Goodwin and Rossow-Kimball (2012), Silva & Howe (2012) and Standal (2011) to improve reflective practice in this area. Thus, we will argue that our emphasis on subjective experience and reflection as means to develop student's knowledge is a timely contribution to a field of study and professional practice where such perspectives are under threat from evidence-based practice initiatives (e.g. Jin & Yun, 2010). Although evidence-based practice is not necessarily problematic, the ugly versions (Bouffard & Reid, 2012) of this movement attempts to rob professional practitioners of exercising their experience-based judgements (Standal, 2008). This means that although reflection is not a new topic in education, we would argue that now, more than ever, Thus, a continued focus on subjectivity and experience in APA appears relevant and necessary.

Regarding the literature on reflection in physical education teacher education, the literature reviews published (Standal & Moe, 2013; Tsangaridou & Sidentop, 1995) suggest

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<sup>6</sup> Note the embodied connotation of *grasping* experience. This points towards an epistemology of the hand (Brinkmann & Tanggaard, 2010) intimately connected to the pragmatist's primacy of practice.

that developing the reflective capabilities in the students is challenging. We (Authors, 2014) have earlier identified a paradox in APA-students' value orientation in the sense that the students in that study clearly reflected *from* certain values, but were unwilling to reflect *on* those values. Our contribution in this paper is to distinguish between the object of reflection and the resources and interests that one reflects with and from. Put differently: when we think, our thinking is aided with theories and concepts. As educators, we equip our students with theories and concepts that both guide their awareness during practicum (why was the student concerned with the boy's subjective experiences rather than his heart rate?) and assist them in their reflections after practicum. Thus, parts of educating future professionals in APA is about deciding which tools for reflection they are provided with during their education. The human science perspective that we have outlined here has value as a tool for reflection for us as educators, because it provides a framework for how we understand the students as learners.

In this article we have illustrated how philosophy opens up a reflective space for us. However, one might still ask how philosophical thinking could be useful? van Manen (2007) answers this question by referring to Martin Heidegger:

It is entirely correct and completely in order to say, "You can't do anything with philosophy." The only mistake is to believe that with this, the judgment concerning philosophy is at an end. For a little epilogue arises in the form of a counter-question: even if *we* can't do anything with it, may not philosophy in the end do something with us, provided that we engage ourselves with it? (Heidegger, 2000, p. 13, as quoted by van Manen, 2007, p. 13)

What we have attempted to show in this article is how human science represents a theoretical framework for planning, doing and understanding our pedagogical practice and ourselves as educators. Moreover, by having our students read texts from philosophy and dwell on

experiences they have from their practica, our aim is that students realize that it is just as important that they reflect on, learn and change from the experiences they have.

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