Chapter 8
Signs of good dialogue

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Abstract

In this chapter, I will use the method of reflective practice research to explore signs, emotional and/or rational, body and/or mind, that bring life to the good dialogue. The research question is: What happens in the moments of good dialoguing? I have chosen one example to explore where the dialogue did not go quite as planned, and I had this feeling of failure in relation to the students. Thereafter, one example when these bobbling, energizing feelings of being a part of a good dialogue happened. The topic for both of these dialogues is the students' experiences with being out in schools in Norway, practicing their teachers' skills with pupils in primary, secondary and high school.

Keywords

Dialogue, SMTTE, *phrónêsis*, discretion, intuition, teacher education

Introduction

In the process of and after some dialogues, I have these feelings of uplifted energy. A bobbling, energizing and great feeling. My feelings, intuition, body and thoughts just know that this was a good dialogue. Like it is obvious that it was. Of course, I recognize from theory that listening, good discernment, respect, reciprocity, inclusion, trust etc. were present. But still, when I study what was really happening phenomenologically, it is not easy to directly pinpoint what made it so good. By exploring two examples from dialogues with teacher students in higher education, I will use the method

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of reflective practice research to explore signs, emotional and/or rational, body and/or mind, that bring life to the good dialogue. I have chosen one example to explore where the dialogue did not go quite as planned, and I had this feeling of failure in relation to the students. Thereafter, one example when these bobbling, energizing feelings of being a part of a good dialogue happened. The topic for these dialogues is the students' experiences with being out in schools in Norway, practicing their teachers' skills with pupils in primary, secondary and high school. The students are anonymous, and where some reflections can be recognized, I have asked for permission to use them. This chapter's research question is: What happens in the moments of good dialoguing?

> Many of us spend a lot of time in meetings or e-mailing with others, and not a lot of time communicating with ourselves. The result is that we don´t know what is going on within us. It may be a mess inside. How, then, can we communicate with another person? (…) We walk, but we don´t know that we´re walking. We´re here, but we don´t know that we´re here. (…) Please do come back home and listen. If you don´t communicate well with yourself, you cannot communicate well with another person (Thich Nhat Hanh, 2013, p. 14-15, 22).

Two concrete experiences with dialogues and the search for "talking signs"

In this chapter, I am exploring two dialogues with teacher students. In both dialogues, I asked the students to find an example of a situation where they experienced that they succeeded well as educators, or that surprised them positively, or that they found particularly interesting. In addition, I also asked them to find an example of a situation that did not go so well, or that did not go quite as planned, or where they failed in relation to the pupil(s). In this way, the dialogues had the exploration of concrete experiences or reflective practice research as their starting point. This comparative dialogue format has been developed and tested with students over several years by Guro Hansen Helskog, and it´s one of the dialogue formats used in *Philosophising the Dialogos Way*. What I find most interesting about this dialogue format is that Helskog highlights the comparative aspect of dialoguing. Helskog reflects upon this in *Philosophising the Dialogos Way towards Wisdom in Education* (2019) and states:

> One way to define knowledge is to say that knowledge implies the ability to put opposite views up against each other. This makes it possible to see

> both or different sides of a subject and view it from different perspectives. Thus, a simple facilitation move could be to ask for opposite arguments, statements, perspectives, or examples (counter-arguments, counter examples) when someone says something. (…) by listening to different arguments, statements and examples, their networks of ideas and meaning are likely to expand, and they are likely to be able to see many aspects, dimensions, and viewpoints. This might in turn help them develop their ability to weight argument and perspectives, and also become more doubtful, critical, and thus humble with regards to bombastic arguments and "truths". Dialogos philosophical dialogues are, therefore, not intended to find solutions for problems, whether personal, practical or political. Rather, they are intended to open up multiple possibilities and perspectives" (p.180).

Inspired by the work of Helskog and reflective practice research methodology as suggested by Norwegian professor Anders Lindseth, both the students and I did exactly the same: We searched for counter-examples from practice with students (or pupils) that we could explore phenomenologically, critically and theoretically. Helskog reflects further:

> (…) "reflective practice research is not experience from a distance, as observation *of* practice, but experience of participation *in* practice. The reflective work in Lindseth`s approach begins with what he calls "original reflection". In the narration of experience, where the researcher speaks "from the heart", "directly from the liver", without being concerned about rhetorical and/or genre conventions or political correctness. The next step is a critical reflection and thereafter a theoretical reflection" (Ibid., s. 33-34).

Both dialogues left me in a search for what Hallvard Håstein calls "talking signs" (personal conversation, 18.11.2021) – the signs that give me directions when it comes to the question: How do I really know that what I have contributed to and been a part of is a good dialogue or the opposite? Håstein describes the category of "signs" in his didactic model SMTTE with the questions: "What observations do we hope to make along the way? More precisely: What do you want to take as a sign that you/we are probably on the right track?" (2017, p. 13, my translation). In other words, to develop signs, it is important to have a clear goal. My goal is good dialogue. But good is pretty vague. What are those moments of "good dialogue" really about? My first story goes like this:

"Is it okay for you to merge the groups? You see, we have free time and practice follow-up on Thursdays for our students". Yes, I thought. It is effective to do so for all involved. Thursday came, and as always, I turned on Zoom a quarter of an hour before to be out in good time.

Before four of the students and their two practice teachers logged into the conversation, I thought of Emmanuel Levinas and "the face of the other." What does Zoom really do to the meeting of the "other person's face"? Do we feel the same ethical responsibility digitally as in real life? And, when we constantly, through Zoom, meet our own face, do we develop a greater ethical responsibility for ourselves too? Suddenly, a square popped up on the screen, and I jumped. It was time to get out of Levinas and into the here and now, present in the practice conversation, which was what I was supposed to do. One of my students had logged on, and we got into the conversation quickly. The conversation went on for a few minutes while we waited for the others. Then the others logged on from a meeting room at the school and one more from home. In front of the screen sat the two teachers, and far behind, I see my other two students. It looks like they're all sitting around a long, square table. The table is perceived by me as far away, and I feel an immediate need to get my students closer to the screen. Something is not right, and I feel uneasy. But I say nothing. Except for a few nods and a sentence here and there from the students at the back of the room and from home, I had to admit in the evaluation afterwards that this conversation took place mostly between the two teachers and me. It was an interesting conversation between three teachers, but still, it was really the teacher students this was about. The conversation never got into the student's experiences in practice in the way that was originally intended. Already in the first second of the conversation, I received signs that we were not on the right path to the goal of a good dialogue. Not because the dialogue was silent but because the students could not find their way into it. My questions were mostly answered by the practice teachers and contributed more to a kind of interview session between me and the practice teachers. We did this "interview session" for about an hour, and the dialogue never came into being.

Secondly, I would like to tell a story concerning a dialogue that went quite contrary: I was looking forward to listening to how Lara was doing out there in practice. The Zoom dialogue was to take place at around 10 a.m. on a cold February morning. She was out teaching at a secondary school and had sent me before the conversation her reflections on several incidents from practice. Both for better and for worse. I was looking forward to this conversation. The reflections I had received beforehand were brave, honest and thoughtful. Already by reading her reflections, I knew that I was dealing with a student with a lot of experience in the teaching profession and with a high degree of self-insight and connection towards herself. In the dialogue, the practice teacher, the student

Lara, and I participated. I immediately noticed that the relationship between the student and the practice teacher was safe and trusting. They had a great connection, I thought. Already in the first shared sentences, I quickly found the baseline or connection between myself and the two others. I felt I could calmly rest in the security the two had already established. All this made it easy for me to be present and attentive from the first second. I did not have to use any of my thinking power to clean up dialogue noises. Signs like lots of smiling, sharing stories and equal space were established as a safe baseline. One question that felt important came forth: "When I listen to you, it sounds like you are using your sensitivity in a good way. What I mean is that you used a lot of discernment and intuition in that classroom. Do I understand you right?" The dialogue stopped for a few seconds, and I studied Lara's face. I could see in her eyes that her pupils were going up towards the left corner, a sign that she was going back to her experiences, I thought. The good relationship that had been established between the practice teacher and the student allowed this room for contemplation to remain, and we could all rest in it. In those seconds, I asked myself, Is it important values I strive for in myself that I see in this student, or do I see her? In a dialogue, there will always be a risk connected to being honest about how one listens. Instead of sharing a mental landscape that is similar enough to achieve a sense of those "meeting moments", the other may feel put in a box. And worse, feel put in the wrong box. This was a truly critical "here and now moment" in the dialogue, I thought inspired by Daniel Stern's thoughts on "here and now moments". Lara began to signal a readiness to answer my question. She spoke a little slower now, as if it were important for her to face this question correctly. Yes, as if it meant something for her, I thought. I could see that this reflective student balanced the experiences she had gained while at the same time letting herself think while she spoke. Then she chose the words she wanted to share in the dialogue in a caring and thoughtful way. I am dealing with a philosophical nature, I thought to myself. I must be aware now, so I see Lara and not just my own recognitions of important values to strive for, I pondered further. Is that what creates good dialogues? Recognition, a form of common ground? "Yes, when I'm in that classroom, I use a lot of discernment and intuition; I have a well-developed sensitivity that makes it easy for me to quickly read people. In the example I talked about earlier, it was an important factor that made this lecture so good", Lara says thoughtfully. The practice teacher nodded and gave clear signs that she had also noticed this ability in the student. I had come across something that was important to Lara, myself, and the practice teacher.

From that moment of meeting, the dialogue went from *throwing a ball to floating together in a dance.* There was no time and place, just dialogue and an equal exploration of the topic without rules or roles. And, when they had to end the dialogue because of other work obligations, I was surprised to see that one hour had passed by. After the dialogue, I was energized, and I had this bobbling feeling, telling me that this was a really good dialogue.

Critical reflections on the difference between "throwing a ball to floating together in a dance"

In the first experience, I was stunned by how "the devil is in the details", or how the placement of the bodies and the framework conditions worked against us. When I couldn't spot this at first sight, I opened my dialogue toolbox, and then I started adjusting. But, instead of adjusting the frame, I started to adjust myself. I became very "on" in an attempt to get everyone into the conversation. Anders Lindseth emphasizes in the book chapter *Reflective practice research* the importance of what he describes as original reflection: "It is about finding words for a feeling, - for an experience that could not be forgotten, because it disturbed or in a special way made an impression" (2017, p. 258-259, my translation). My original reflection in this situation gave me the feeling that something was not right, or what Lindseth calls a "discrepancy". What was at stake in this feeling of uneasiness? One answer could be that equality and inclusion were at stake here. What does it mean to be in, and feel, equality and inclusion? Mirjam H. Olsen elaborates on the concept of inclusion in the article *What, how and why* as follows:

> This [inclusion] is a complex concept that can be understood in different ways, also within the school system. Haug (2005) points out that researchers have not found a clear, common definition or understanding of this concept among those who are actors in the school. By reviewing various research reports on inclusion, he believes that he has isolated four work tasks that are essential for achieving inclusion. It is to increase the community, increase participation, increase democratization and increase dividends. Students should be able to take part in social life and experience belonging to a group and class. They must be active participants who make contributions based on their prerequisites. Their voice must be heard, and they must have an education they can use both professionally and socially (2010, my translation).

In this situation, the students were silent and never actively participated. Not because we teachers did not want to hear or include the

students in the dialogue. I am sure we all had the best of intentions. Rather, this exclusion had its root in the physical framework, the location of the bodies and the choice of a digital solution. And, not to forget my use of questioning techniques on speed. The feeling of "a group" never came into being, and group dialogue was difficult, maybe impossible, when the frame and communication divided. This could easily have been avoided just by adjusting the physical framework conditions. I should have pondered and questioned my uneasiness in the situation and made a wise judgement to change the circumstances. What I believe was really at stake in this situation was something more fundamental: I did not fully understand or trust my skills of intuition and critical judgement, which so clearly received important signs of discrepancy. In the end, that contributed to a lack of wise discretion on my behalf. When pondering this experience, I realized that in dialoguing, there might be some kind of a pyramid. Intuition and good discernment could be understood as fundamental skills that create an abundance (or not) for the manifestation of good intentions and goals. Connected skills I would like to place at this fundamental level for dialoguing are: *Presence or mindfulness, intuition*, *connection towards oneself and others* and *phrónêtic discretion*[2]. For a deeper understanding of these skills in action, see chapter 9: *Dear tangerine, where did you go?* (Kolmannskog 2023). We could call these skills in action or virtues, and when they work properly, right practice or *praxis*. Michael Weiss (2018) elaborates on the term *praxis* in the book chapter *Phronesis – The Backbone of Philosophical Practice*: "The term 'practice' has its roots in the Greek word *praxis*, which can be translated as *deed* or *action*. Differing it from *theoria* (in the sense of *theorizing* with the goal of truth) and *poiesis* (in the sense of doing with the goal of production), *praxis* for Aristotle means thoughtful and reflected doing with regards to action (see i.e. Aristotle, Met.: 1064a). If a dialogue is seen as a type of action (i.e. as inter-action), namely one which is based on thoughtful and reflected doing (i.e. reflected speaking and thoughtful listening), then it can legitimately be interpreted as a form of *praxis*" (p. 5). In addition, when *praxis* is at work, it opens an abundance for the next level to work properly: *Active listening*, *open body language*, *questioning techniques*, *good voice use,* etc. In the first dialogue, I made errors on both levels mentioned, but I do believe that it was my lack

[2] *Phrónêtic* discretion or deliberation is what the Aristotelic virtue of *phrónêsis* consist of. The virtue of *phrónêsis* includes self-insight, self-reflection and ethical considerations.

of wise discretion connected to not listening to my intuition that was the most crucial error. Another interesting point this first experience uncovers is that the right goals, attitudes and values are necessary but not enough to achieve good dialogue. In addition, the right knowledge and techniques are needed in the situation in order to make my good intentions and goals happen. But it is not enough to have good intentions, knowledge and techniques; I will also need skills such as presence or mindfulness, connection towards myself and others, intuition, wise or *phrónêtic* discretion and self-insight. Those skills are connected to self-formation and demand a lot of self-development. Goals, attitudes, values, knowledge, techniques and skills are integrated and acted upon in situations in a lot of different ways. Practical wisdom (*phrónêsis*[3]) organizes and integrates different forms of knowledge and makes use of them in the situation, with the goal of solving the situation in the best way possible for myself and others. In chapter 10; *Missed Connection: A Semi-Liminal Encounter with a Digitized Holocaust Survivor*, Bloom highlights and reflects upon an unease when this context sensitivity is missing in the dialogue with Pinchas: "I contend that what is at stake with this technology is hermeneutical injustice, lack of heart-based connection, and a possible disconnect from our own sense of humanness in an increasingly digitized world (2023 p. 168). I agree with Bloom; the machines can't beat humans at this fundamental level, can they? To summarize visually, the pyramid could look like this:

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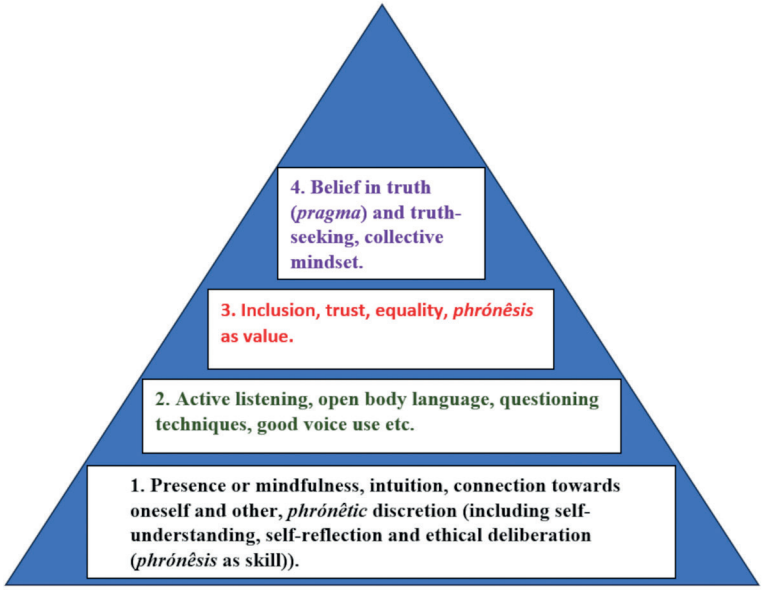
[3] Aristotle mentions several intellectual and ethical virtues, but in this context I will first highlight the two main virtues *sophía* (theoretical wisdom) and phrónêsis (practical wisdom). *Sophía* is in many ways the most precious and valued virtue for Aristotle. He distinguishes between *sophía* and *phrónêsis* as follows in Nicomachean ethics: "Sophía involves reasoning regarding universal truths, while phrónêsis includes an ability to think rationally". Aristotle points out that "Intelligence is not just about universals either. It must also be aware of details, since it is concerned with action and action is about details" (2005, p. 872). For the time being, we are on well-known ground and Aristotle does not challenge our time much. But, Olav Eikeland takes us deeper into Aristotle in the book *The ways of Aristotle* when he writes: "Aristotle has several separate ways of distinguishing different forms and ways of knowing, introduced in *Book VI of Nicomachean Ethics (1139a21-b5)*, but treated and commented on in many other places as well. Different forms of knowledge and ways of knowing constitute a multidimensional *gnoseology*, even more than a one-dimensional epistemology in Aristotle. (...) To understand Aristotle, it is therefore important to set aside the model of modern science (2008, p. 80).



But when I think this through, I feel a bit of unease because values and attitudes are not just ends, they are also the means for acting in the first place. Also, skills like mindfulness and *phrónêtic* discretion can be both goals, values and attitudes and, at the same time, virtues in practice. But still, one important point this brings forth is that dialoguing is not just a way of speaking or a technique to acquire; it is a *way of being in the world.* Right practice or *praxis* could be seen as the food and warmth of dialoguing seen from this individualistic stance. But still, dialogue is an action involving more than one individual. How can we understand collective *praxis*? One way to reflect upon the golden now-moments of collective *praxis* is Daniel Stern´s dialogical "here and now-moments". In his research on conscious now-moments in his book *The Present Moment* (...), Stern divides the moments into three main categories: the common moments, critical moments and meeting moments. Critical momentary moments can suddenly occur in dialogues, and they are heavily charged with "closeness" and a need to act. Following such critical moments, a moment of encounter can occur. In these moments, there is a meeting where two parties achieve an intersubjective meeting with attention to what the other is experiencing. They share a mental landscape that is similar enough to achieve a sense of "specific adaptability." The redemptive moments of meeting usually come right after critical moments that prepare the ground for them because the moment of meeting meets the need for a solution to

something that arises in the critical moment (2007, p. 156-157). Liv Lassen and Nils Breilid use a metaphor about these meeting moments in the book *The Good Conversation with Students*: "It is when the dialogue changes from throwing the ball to each other to flow together into a dance" (2014, p. 25, my translation). This way of thinking brings something collective to the phenomenon of connection.

Skills, knowledge, techniques, etc. seem very subjective and non-theoretical; how do I know if it's the right kind of skill, knowledge or technique, etc.? Or how do I know if the dialogue reaches beyond just non-theoretical statements and subjective opinions? Lindseth (2020) points out in the book *To focus on professors*[4] (…): "Although it is [reflective practice research] practically oriented, it is by no means non-theoretical, as theoretical assumptions will constitute a significant part of the knowledge that is expressed in practice, and thus these assumptions must also be the subject of reflection" (p. 78, my translation). In addition, if we look at the word dialogue itself, it is derived from the Greek *dia* and *logos* and means through words or reason. The Greek word *logos* can be understood in several ways: as an external universal reason/words or as an individual's words/reason. But anyway, dialogue points to the action where two or more participants perform speech acts that aim towards understanding more about a phenomenon or the case in question. In this sense, what makes the dialogue good should be characterized by the participants having these already mentioned attitudes, values, knowledge and skills that make the stretching towards a better understanding of the case in hand happen. This is not as easy as it sounds because a prerequisite is that the participants are able, open and willing to stretch out of their own mindsets and build a common mindset with others, a mindset where "truths" or seeing the case itself (*pragma*) becomes a goal worth aiming for. Another way to put this is that achieving *pragma-adequate* insights becomes a higher goal in the dialogue than achieving recognition for one's own perspectives. A collective mindset calls for the virtues of humility and ethical sensitivity, as pointed out by Helskog and Weiss in chapter 1(p. 26). When a collective mindset is safe and sound, nuances, disagreements, contradictions and meeting moments will be welcomed into the dialogue as something valuable. Being disturbed in your thinking is a fertile and necessary happening, and there is no need to defend the I or ego and turn the conversation into a debate or monologue. This does not mean that you should marry the people who love to disturb others. Some disturbances are not at all beneficial or close to being acted

[4] The word used in the original text is "dosenter". That means professor competence but with a special focus on teaching and development of practice.

out with the good intention of searching for truths[5]. The point is, even though the skills, techniques and intentions, etc. are something that need to be acquired and developed in the individual, the definitions or basic statements agreed upon as an outcome of dialogue-action or as a result of right practice (*praxis*) could be connected to having a direction towards truths. As a matter of fact, if we look at the meaning of the words themselves in the Greek language truth-seeking and truths give an important direction in dialoguing. In addition, truth-seeking and truths have the potential to bring a collective dimension to dialoguing. In the second dialogue with Lara, I believe I experienced both this collective mindset and this direction towards a more nuanced definition of intuition and discretion.

Theoretical reflections concerning *phrónêtic*-discretion and intuition

What was really at stake when I asked the question concerning intuition and discretion in the dialogue with Lara and the practice teacher? This was a critical moment in the dialogue, and the question did not come from any theory or technique, and it was not planned beforehand. To me, it felt like something intuitive in me triggered that judgement. Of course, I didn't fully trust my intuition because I am trained not to, but still, I popped the question. Based on the response from Lara, my action in that situation was at least fruitful for the dialogue. However, it is difficult to prove that the action was right or wise in a strict or objective sense. Is it possible to measure or, in some way, study the degree of "right actions" or "wise actions" in dialoguing? Evidence-based practice (EBP), first established in medicine around the mid-1990s, has as its core the question of how we should produce desirable results and prevent undesirable results. In other words, you want to know what "works" (Kvernbekk, p. 136-137). When you know what "works", you can apply it to similar situations. Would the first dialogue have been more successful if I had asked that particular question in that context too? Of course not; it's not the action itself we want to replicate, it's the correct *praxis*. If so, how do we understand intuition and its connection to *phrónêtic*-discretion?

In order to understand intuition and its connection to *phrónêtic*-discretion, it´s interesting to bring in Olav Eikeland's readings of Aristotle in the books *The Ways of Aristotle* (2008) and *On the tracks of a seventh constitution* (2022). Aristotle showed a great deal of respect for *nous,* which is usually

[5] Truths defined in accordance with correspondence theory of truth; in the meaning of truth is correspondence to, or with, a fact.

translated as some kind of intuitive intelligence or just mind (2008, p. 78, 2022, p. 466). "*Nous* as the ability to see with the mind, is like other ethical and intellectual virtues. We do not have any of them fully fledged from birth, the way we have sight, hearing, and the other special senses. Intellectual and ethical virtues need to evolve and develop through being practiced" (2008, p. 215). "The eyes of the soul" can be understood as our intuitive ability to see, recognize and answer the relevant or *pragma*-adequate in the situation. In the meaning of, *nous* reads the details of the situation inductively, upwards from the particular, and it grasps and defines principles, both from the universal and the particular (ibid., p. 78). Today we might call this gut feeling or intuition – that ability in us that suddenly makes us know something without being able to fully explain why we know it. Although intuition today is an unrecognized source of reliable knowledge, Aristotle understood this ability as an important intellectual quality in us. Actually, theoretical wisdom (*sophía*) is said to be composed of two virtues immediately "below" it, namely *nous* and *episteme* (theoretical knowledge) (ibid., p. 78). This means that in the striving or in the love for wisdom (*philo-sophía*), intuition should be taken seriously. Furthermore, *nous* gives us the ability to grasp the axioms, or the repetitive and stable patterns of reality around us, in the form of a defining process. The "eyes of the soul" can be experienced in the situation as a form of recognition effect. First, perhaps a little hidden, and gradually we might get in touch with a language, grasping the basic principles and definitions needed to understand the situation. This process of gradually getting clearer on the basic principles and definitions, needed to handle situations in a wise manner often rests on a very important *praxis*: dialogue. In this sense, *nous* is also essential for practical wisdom or *phrónêsis,* which consists of a right kind of discretion or deliberation. Helskog uncovers a similar understanding when she reflects on the Aristotelian *phrónêsis*:

> *Phronesis* refers to our cleverness and our sensibility and ability for sound judgement in the particular, i.e. our practical wisdom in "the changeable world". (…) *Sophia,* on the other hand, is concerned with insight in the general, eternal, and unchangeable world. It implies being tuned into "what is"- that which could not have been different. In one interpretation, *phronesis* and *sophia* can be seen as two sides of the same issue, however different. Both involve insight or sight. One interpretation might be that *phronesis* implies *sensing being*, while *sophia* implies *understanding being*. While *sophia* might be seen as a combination of episteme (scientific knowing) and *nous* (spiritual-existential knowing), *phronesis* relates to the situation where everything falls into place in a holistic, intuitive, experiential understanding that is sensual and has a here-and-now character. (2019, p. 31-32)

Two things decide if the discretion is *phrónêtic*: that it is directed towards the right ethics (*aretê*) and that it is directed towards the intention and action of successful functioning for both the individual and the community the individual is part of (*eudaimonía*) (Eikeland 2022, p. 454). Eikeland points out that if the deliberations or discretion are not based on right ethics, the action will quickly coincide with *deinótês* or *sunesis* (a kind of cleverness or quickness of mind or understanding or particularity of particulars) (2008, p. 223). What makes *phrónêsis* special is that it distinguishes between right and wrong and cannot be used for evil purposes. As Eikeland writes: "So, deliberation really distinguishes *phrónêsis* in its relation to *praxis*" (2008, p. 101). This connects our intuitive ability to see, recognize and answer the relevant or *pragma*-adequate in the situation (*nous*) and *phrónêsis* deeply together. Did my question to Lara come from the fact that I grasped an axiom or a basic human quality that is important to the wise and professional teacher? In the meaning of, Did I recognize something *pragma*-adequate in that situation? If so, intuition and my judgement to act on my intuition could be connected to truths[6]. The thought processes and activity in *nous* are often referred to by Aristotle as *nòêsis* (intuitive thinking or just thinking). And *nóêsis* is fundamental for all the other intellectual and ethical virtues in Aristotelian thinking. *Sophía* (*nous* and *episteme*), or theoretical wisdom, is a pure intellectual virtue. Eikeland names it "the head of all intellectual and ethical virtues", i.e. the leader of both the ethical and intellectual virtues (2008, p. 78). But, as Eikeland reminds us, a body depends on its head, and a head cannot come into being without a body. In other words, *nous,* as an important part of *sophía*, plays a role in all human activities. When we create or make something (*poíêsis*), use or consume something (*khrêsis*) and when we act and hopefully act right (*praxis*), we do need intuitive thinking. When we encounter situations, we experience different dimensions: somethings we recognize as familiar and stable, somethings new to us, somethings stand out as important, other aspects are in the background. This cocktail calls for an integrated use of knowledge-forms in the knower to understand the known. And practical wisdom (*phrónêsis)* is getting this integration of knowledge-forms in the right order to do right action (*praxis*) in order to handle the situation wisely. In this way, truths, understood as 'the case in matter' corresponding correctly with the reality as it is (*pragma*)*,* and wise action (*phrónêsis*) is connected. If I think about it, there can be no *phrónêsis* if there is nothing to hang on to that is truer than other things. A relativistic or subjectivistic epistemological

[6] Truths defined in accordance with correspondence theory of truth; in the meaning of truth is correspondence to, or with, a fact.

stance is in danger of losing wisdom and stepping into what Farrell et al. denominate as the "'*post-truth' era"*: "Going a step further, some argue that we have now entered an altogether new epistemological moment — the 'post-truth' era — in which the public's trust in facts and evidence more generally is eroding" (2019, p. 192).

Intuition, understood as *nous,* is connected to truths or the *pragma*-adequate, sometimes in a clear manner and sometimes in need of a clarifying dialogue. In Eikeland's readings of Aristotle, it is of great importance that practical wisdom (*phrónèsis*) is not separated from theoretical wisdom (*sophía*). He writes: "As will become clear, the modern concepts of "theory" and "practice" are too simple and coarse. They are unable to catch the distinctions operative in the philosophy of Aristotle. (…) practical thinking needs truth and understanding *as an aid,* without truth and understanding becoming an ultimate and independent aim in itself" (2008, p. 71). We are looking for an integration between theory and practice in the philosophy of Eikeland that is different from the ways of thinking today. As a result, a different kind of understanding of truths comes forth; truths are not to be found when looking at the dialogue itself from distance. It´s in the happening inside the *praxis* itself. Finn T. Hansen highlights a similar understanding in the article, *Phronesis and Authenticity as Keywords for Philosophical Praxis in Teacher Training* (2007): "The existential dimension I will be elaborating on will rather be understood in the tradition of the late Heidegger, Hannah Arendt, Gabriel Marcel and the Danish philosopher K.E. Løgstrup. They emphasize that 'life meaning' and our fundamental values in life are not something we "construct" or invent but rather something we 'meet' or 'hear' or that 'happens to us' in our engagement *in* life" (p. 15). Lindseth uses the notion of "original reflection" (2017, p. 258), (…) that is about finding words for a feeling, – for an experience that could not be forgotten, because it disturbed or in a special way made an impression" (p. 259, my translation). He further highlights the phenomenon of "discrepancy" as an important starting point to reflect critically and theoretically upon. From the above perspective, capturing and studying discrepancies or disturbances could be understood as identifying and reflecting upon happenings when our intuitive ability to see, recognize and answer the relevant or *pragma*-adequate in the situation (*nous*), connected to *phrónêsis* and *sophía*, got somehow disturbed. From this perspective, research on the discrepancies received in the first dialogue, in my failings to trust my skills, might be of higher importance in my strivings towards improved *praxis*. Gradually improving the insights concerning the signs of "not being on the right path towards the goal" could bring me closer to uncovering what intuition and *phrónetic*-discretion really are about. In

addition, there seems to be no technique, method or user manual that can make those good moments happen. As Hansen points out: "(…) the wise thing to do in teaching-student-relation can seldom-if ever-be deduced from general rules and prescriptions or methods but has to be sensed in the situation in a more experienced and intuitive way. In those specific "teachable moments" (Garrison, 1997), it is often not a question about what has worked, but what works or will work in this concrete and particular case" (2007, p. 16).

And finally, the never-ending search to understand dialogue as truth-seeking

The word "empirical" comes from the Greek word *empeiría* and could be understood as "repeatedly stretched for the same *pragma* (fact) or experience". In a way, we could say that to be empirical is to perfect *the soul's eye* to see the case itself, or *pragma.* If it`s possible to get a clear vision in all of life's aspects, we are the *phrónêmos*. Then we can trust that in similar situations, we will see *pragma* and we can trust our own *noetic* thinking and *phrónêtic* discretions. As Heidegger puts it in *Plato's Sophist*: *Phronesis* in Aristotle's work discloses "the right and proper way to be Dasein" (1997, s. 34). But, on the road towards fully fledged wisdom, if that is even possible, we will need the *phrónêtic*-disturbances to help us forward. This means that, in accordance with reflective practice research, a valuable phenomenon to investigate is the discrepancies or life's disturbances, as already mentioned. Because when things go wrong, there is a resistance from outside colliding with our understanding of things, telling us that our discernments are not so *phrónêtic* yet. Or the "happening of truth" somehow gets out of the ordinary and reveals itself to us. How you connect with yourself and those disturbances is of high importance. In fact, science should be all about creating dialogical environments with reflective spaces for scientists that welcome different perspectives and create those important disturbances. That might secure objectivity to a higher degree than finding the "golden method" for research. Then we could ask: What is a good empirical method, or in other words, what kind of "repeatedly stretching for the same pragma or experience" should we choose to answer: *What are the signs of a good dialogue*?

Eikeland points out that our mainstream scientific method, which he refers to as *theôrêsis* to distinguish it from what Aristotle referred to as *theôría*, is based on an objective and distant view, where there is a distance between the one studying and the case being studied. In the Aristotelian sense, this is a secondary theoretical concept that was only used if there was

a body that had to be studied from far away, e.g. astronomy. The primary way to gain knowledge about something and thereby develop theory was *theôría*. *Theôría* is not as clearly separated from the practical as *theôrêsis*; it is not "objective scientific methods" that lie at the heart of *theôría*. It is dialogical *empeiría,* as Eikeland suggests (2022, p. 404, 454). In other words, if we want to study dialogue, we will not get close to "truths" by using a *theôrêsis*-method of `repeatedly stretching for the same pragma or experience´; our best shot is using dialogues or dialectics as our method.

> Both Plato and Aristotle start out as participants in and from a world that is quite "fluid". From this "world below" they try to find out where it crystallizes into identifiable, repeatable figures or patterns. They did not agree on the status of these patterns; on how to understand them. But they were not merely detached observers from a distance (Eikeland 2008, s.71). (…) This whole process, then, clearly indicates how Aristotle thinks "inductively" from below and from within practices about the formation of the **epistêmai**. Modern scholars, however, usually start out from a very different point of view- outside, at a distance, an affected, observing merely perceptually- with words, rules, or concepts as if these were self- explanatory, self-identical, unambiguous entities also springing from a different source" (2008, p.70).

From an Aristotelian point of view, I can then argue that both reflective practice research and the dialogue present in both concrete situations mentioned above can be linked to scientific thinking or theory in that it is a scientific method in itself to practice dialogue. Or, more precisely, it was the main scientific method in the thoughts of Aristotle to practice the right kind of dialogue. Or in Aristotle's words in *Topica:* "(…) from the principles proper to the science proposed for discussion nothing can be derived about the principles themselves, since the principles are primary among all <the truths contained in the science>; instead they must be discussed through the common beliefs in a given area. This is distinctive of dialectic, or more proper to it than to anything else; for since it cross-examines, it provides a way towards the principles of all line of inquiry" (Topica, 1.2,101a-101b673). That brings us to one of the goals of this book too: to get back to the roots of science. The most important question is not: What kind of method takes us closest to truths? The question is: What kind of *praxis* will, in this particular situation, create the best conditions for truth to uncover, and what kind of scientific method takes us closest to that uncovering? Truths, or the 'case in matter' corresponding correctly with the 'case itself', could be understood as trapped inside the dance between participants and the concrete situation as a happening rather than a construct. The goal is not truths, but right practice in itself

to get close to the happening. As both Heidegger and Aristotle show, it can be uncovered (*a-letheia*) in dialogues exploring concrete situations. As Helskog and Weiss point out in chapter 1, *Reflective practice research and kaleidoscopic epistemology:*

> In more general terms, when it is about what Lindseth called *dialogical method*, the researcher and practitioner is already *immersed* and participating in the reality which he or she describes and analyses, regardless of how phenomenologically or scientifically «objective» his or her approach is. (…) Instead of this one-dimensional, nomical approach, we will suggest a **poly-dimensional approach** that is in line with Lindseth's dialogical research approach (p. 21).

So, in the end, the important questions are not related to truths, measure or control. It is; what is right *praxis*? What kind of dialogue is Aristotle really talking about? Just any dialogue would not do; it must be the right kinds of "*pragma*-adequate-stretching" dialogues. In the meaning of all involved is striving for right practice (*praxis*) and *pragma*-adequate insights. In this way I do not believe in giving up faith in reaching more and more *pragma*-adequate insights. The truth could rather be seen as an uncovering or happening from within the practice situation (*a-letheia*) that is captured by the individual (*nous*), with more or less *pragma*-adequate and with more or less need of a defining process so that the individual can gradually get more and more *pragma*-adequate understandings (*episteme*). The activity of truth-seeking is a valuable ideal to keep; it gives direction, motivation and defines wisdom. In kaleidoscopic epistemology, the point is not to exclude anything; it is about: "A dialogical participatory perspective is thus a movable perspective, in which opposite perspectives can contain elements of truth, or rather, meaning. Instead of or in addition to arguing for and against different positions and ideas in order to establish one`s own, the dialogically oriented researcher can go in dialogue with the positions from different perspectives. Within a kaleidoscopic epistemology, opposite perspectives that can shed light on different elements of a phenomenon, and be meaningful in their own right" (Helskog and Weiss, 2023 p. 23). How to get close to the "happening of truth" seems to change according to particular situations and questions asked.

But still, dialogue has an important task in scientific thinking. Eikeland brings in a very interesting reading of Aristotle that points out that Aristotle never gives *nous* a definite activity, like, e.g., *phrónêsis* is doing good and *episteme* is deduction and demonstration. Eikeland proposes that *nóêsis* and dialogue are defined remarkably in the same manner. Eikeland (2008) elaborates:

> I find it quite reasonable, therefore, to conclude that **nous** as a specialized intellectual virtue, differentiated from those other intellectual virtues, which either demonstrate deductively (**epistêmê**), calculate (**tékhnê**), deliberate (**phrónêsis**, **deinònês**), or persuade (rhetoric), is a **héxis dialektê**. The surviving *Corpus Aristotelicum* does not use this designation. But there is absolutely no reason why Aristotle should not use it or could not have used it. On the contrary! The **héxis dialektikê** is a trained disposition or *habitus* for doing dialogue, … (…) **Nóêsis** is the name mostly used for internal reflective thinking, while dialogue or dialectics is mainly external, spoken or written. But, the task, the structure, and ways-of-working are the same for dialogue and **nóêsis** (p. 222).

The external activity of *nóêsis* could be understood as dialogue. This could mean that dialogue is the means to get in touch with intuition, or the "eye of the soul". The sudden feeling of recognition, or like something temporarily hidden is finally getting the right words, is a good sign. These basic definitions or principles are different from knowledge that accumulates through pure rote; it´s more like recognizing something you have always known; it was just hidden. Those basic definitions could be understood as something more than subjective knowledge. One way to look at it is to understand it as tested or proven experience or wisdom; tested through time and generations of people, it has proven itself to be more *pragma*-adequate. In Eikland´s words:

> Røyndomen[7] <tested/proven experience > forms the core of an everyday concept of experience that has not yet been destroyed by the empirical tradition's attempts to reduce the meaning of "experience" to sensory impressions and perception or to "experience". (…) Although *some* may, not all non-perceptible, non-material quantities without clear and delimitable existence in time and space, can with a fairly simple decisions be thought away or reduced away in our daily practice (2022, s. 143-144, my translation).

Another way to explore this topic is by leaning towards the Stoic understanding of reason or *logos;* "(…) doing philosophy meant practicing how to 'live': that is, how to live freely and consciously. Consciously, in that we pass beyond the limits of individuality, to recognize ourselves as part of the reason-animated cosmos. Freely, in that we give up desiring that which does not depend on us and is beyond our control, so to attach

[7] This is a New Norwegian word difficult to translate to English. The closest translation might be tested or proven experience or the difference between momentary experience/singular moments and collected experience. In the German language the difference is captured in the words "erfahrung" and "erlebnis".

ourselves only to what depends on us: actions which are just and in conformity with reason" (Hadot, 1995, p. 86).

Some concluding remarks

So, in what way has this reflective practice research brought new insight to my research question? What happens in the moments of good dialoguing? There is no easy answer to this question. Some aspects of dialoguing are, to a greater degree, controllable by the individual. In this sense, we can choose to develop the right abilities in ourselves needed to be part of good dialoguing, like the right goals, attitudes and values related to wanting well. Likewise, we can learn, develop and control the amount of knowledge and techniques needed to make our good intentions and values happen in the dialogue. In addition, we can practice and trust the skills of intuition and *phrónêtic* discretion – skills depending on mindfulness, connection towards self and others, and the art of being humble and grateful for all the *phrónêtic*-disturbances given to me by the resistance of what is not "me". Dialogue is not just a way of speaking or a technique to master; it's a way of being in the world; it's a *praxis.* Still, even though we do everything in our power to practice right, some aspects of good dialoguing depend on factors outside the person. I cannot control other living beings, and I cannot control the "happenings of truth". But still, to me, this reflective practice research has uncovered a possible connection between intuition, *phrónêtic* discretion, truth-seeking and the direction towards "gradually seeing reality closer to what it is", which brings an important dimension to those moments of good dialoguing.

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