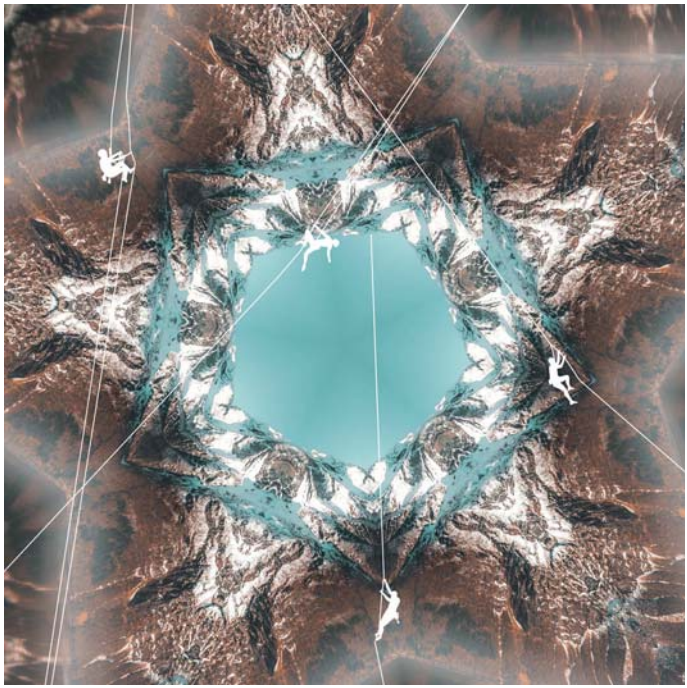
Michael Noah Weiss and
Guro Hansen Helskog (Eds.)

Reflective Practice Research in Higher Education Pedagogies



Reflective Practice Research

LIT

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Edited by

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Volume 2

LIT

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Table of contents

Preface by Anders Lindseth

Results of scientific investigations may explain how the world we live in is structured, how it functions, or what it means to us to be a part of it. Sometimes the distance between explanations and reality makes it difficult to apply the results of scientific research in a fruitful way. That is why the quest for practice-near research has come up. It is a wish that practitioners who know what they need to understand become able to carry out research. The aim of such practice near-research is to make our world more understandable, to make practice more satisfying, and to make it easier for us to find orientation in life.

Historical background of reflective practice research

Before modernity, philosophy and science were about understanding the meaning of being related to the phenomena of life. Such understanding was regarded as necessary to get along on the path of life in a satisfying manner. In the beginning of modernity, the view of the researcher was more directed toward the outer, factual and objective world. This change has led to immense technological development. However, our ability to find orientation in life seems not to have improved to the same extent; we might say that we know more and understand less. As a reaction to a science that gives us knowledge more than understanding, philosophical hermeneutics came about in the middle of the 19th century, and phenomenology started as a movement at the beginning of the 20th century. Like philosophical hermeneutics, phenomenology emphasized the necessity of understanding life on the basis of our acquaintance with lifeworld phenomena, our preunderstanding. Reflective practice-near research, short: reflective practice research, is situated in this hermeneutical and phenomenological reaction to objectifying science.

With his phenomenology, Edmund Husserl wanted to enable a science that could be an alternative to the widespread naturalistic and reductionistic sciences of his time. They were naturalistic because they wanted to explain all human achievements, including spiritual achievements, from natural processes. The sciences were reductionistic because they traced their research objects to features of the outer world that could be easily identified and measured. Husserl emphasized that we need to investigate our lifeworld, which we know from lived experience but often understand too poorly. It is necessary to reflect on the meaning of lifeworld phenomena, of our experiences in all kinds of activities.

In everyday life, we know phenomena because we are naturally directed towards them in our activities. We have access to the world. But we form perceptions and opinions about our world too quickly. We must put these opinions in brackets, i.e., we must refrain from already knowing what phenomena and activities mean until we can have a closer look at them. Husserl called this époche (pause, restraint) and emphasized that by holding back our opinions, we can leave the natural attitude and enter a phenomenological attitude. He used the Greek term *noema* for a phenomenon's meaning that must be assumed in order for the phenomenon to appear at all, and he used the term *noesis* for the mode of access we have to this decisive and essential meaning through our mental acts. Husserl (1950, §§87-96) meant that we should be able to determine the *noema* exactly by variation of *noeses*. Although he undertook a series of phenomenological studies that have been inspiring to many researchers, Husserl did not state exactly how this was to be done. So, we have a number of different phenomenological approaches. Furthermore, it has become clear that phenomenological description and analysis must necessarily include an important element of interpretation. Although philosophical hermeneutics and phenomenology can be seen as two different developmental lines of thought, in the philosophy of Martin Heidegger (1975), these two lines converge. We may talk about hermeneutical phenomenology, or phenomenological hermeneutics. Reflective practice research is a further development of this tradition – a tradition from which many of the so-called qualitative research methods derive.

Ontology, epistemology and methodology

Reflective practice research is a way of elucidating lifeworld phenomena developing in time – in everyday life, in practices, in work, in professions, in cooperation with others, in research, in all kinds of activities. Speaking is *discourse* developing in time. We may also engage in comprehensive discourses like health care, teaching, social work and so on. In all human activities, we participate in discourse meaning, sometimes with enthusiasm, or we may suffer under our participation in discourses and try to step out of them. As we participate when discourses change, reflection on discourse meaning is important. Without such reflection, it is difficult to become aware of unfortunate practices and participate in discourse improvements. So, the ontology, the doctrine of being presupposed in reflective practice research, is about the discourse meaning of the lifeworld.

The knowledge we want to develop is about our way of relating to the phenomena with which we must in life activities. This kind of knowledge

we call *understanding*. When our activities are functioning well, then we may concentrate on them and not on understanding their meaning. When action is needed, too much reflection may be inappropriate. But our participation in lived experience is not always satisfying. To be able to understand and, if necessary, improve our practice, we have to express our lived experience and investigate its meaning. If we miss the opportunity to reflect on our experiences, we will hardly find a way to improve our practice. The results of reflective practice research are good (valid and reliable) when people who know the field of research from the inside can recognize and understand something new and interesting. A kaleidoscopic variety of perspectives may shed light on the possibilities of practice approaches, as suggested by Helskog and Weiss (2023)

The method of reflective practice research should not be regarded as a recipe for doing research but as a possible and reasonable way of moving from a research perspective to a research result. We start from lived experience, which shows us that we need a closer understanding of the meaningful contexts we live in to better orient ourselves. We often start with an experience of discrepancy between our expectations of a practice and its experienced outcome. And we show how it is possible to proceed thoroughly and conscientiously to arrive at a research result that can cast an illuminating light on our situation. The first step on the way of investigation is concrete reflection through telling, followed by critical and theoretical reflection, ending with a reflection on method (cf. chapter 1 of this book)

The fact that this method shows a way to go in research corresponds to the original meaning of the Greek word *methodos*. In Greek philosophy and poetry, it was an issue that life is a dangerous *way*, Greek: *hodos*, on which we get into crises. Plato recommended a meta-*hodos,* i.e. a *methodos*, a dialogical way to better distinguish between good and bad alternatives in life. He recommended a *dialectical method* (Ritter, 1980, p. 1304f).

In the tradition of hermeneutical phenomenology, the shift from a natural to a phenomenological attitude is not difficult to understand. The natural attitude is an attitude in which we judge, we know already, we conclude, we state the facts and take for granted what is meant. To shift to a phenomenological attitude, we must refrain from making judgements about the factual and accomplish *epoché* or *bracketing*. The natural way of doing this is to narrate from lived experience. When narrating, we naturally refrain from judging and concluding. We are interested in relating what we have experienced. Then the listener may also not judge but participate in the story: "So this you have experienced, so that is what you thought." In the telling, both the teller and the listener participate in the narrated meaning. Then they may consider: What are the important themes

here? When bracketing is accomplished, we of course have not put our preunderstanding within brackets because then the meaning would also disappear. We have put within brackets our judgements about the factual in order to become open to our own lived experience and to the understandable meaning implicit in this experience.

When we narrate out of lived experience and write down the narration, we produce an autonomous text, a text that expresses its own meaning. It tells about being-in-the-world. This is not a factual world outside the text, but rather a world revealed by the text. Through lived discourses, we participate in this world – and through narratives, we become aware of the meaning of this participation. Narratives touch us when they shed light on our lived experience of discourse participation. Being touched by discourse meaning leads us to lived truth as opposed to correctness, connects us to the ontological level of the lifeworld and is fulfilled in understanding. We have been formed by discourse and tradition (prefiguration), and by telling what touches us, our preunderstanding may be transferred into a liberating expression (configuration), an expression that opens up new possibilities in life (refiguration) (Ricoeur, 1984, p. 54-77). A process of improvement in understanding may begin.

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Introduction

This anthology is the result of a partnership between us, the editors, in developing higher education pedagogies over the last few years, with a focus especially on teacher education. Our collaboration started immediately after we first met each other at the International Conference of Philosophical Practice in Bern, Switzerland, in 2016. The collaboration has resulted in several co-facilitated Dialogos philosophical practice workshops (Helskog, 2019; Weiss & Helskog, 2020) inside and outside teacher education, as well as several co-authored articles (see e.g. Helskog & Weiss, 2021a; Marcussen, Weiss & Helskog, 2021). Up until now, our joint work has circled around research in our own teaching practice, with the aim of gradually influencing teacher education to seek inspiration from and place itself in the humanities rather than in the social sciences (see Helskog & Weiss, 2021b). Our stance is that teachers, who now need a master degree in order to qualify as teachers, need to develop practical wisdom and ethical and existential sensibility in addition to theoretical and evidence-based knowledge. This goes also for those who work as teachers in higher education in general, educating professionals such as nurses, social workers, therapists, soldiers, police, or other teachers.

When initiating the present anthology, we took our collaboration one step further. We now created an interdisciplinary research group with members primarily from the University of South-Eastern Norway. Some having participated in the inter disciplinary phd-course Pedagogical Competence Development and Educational quality led by Guro in the years 2018-2023, others having collaborated with Michael on Folk highs school pedagogy, and others with us both in the field of philosophical practice or in general teaching and research work in higher education. In the context of this anthology, the research group have worked closely together in the phenomenological, hermeneutical and epistemological exploration of pedagogy in higher education, thus edifying each other through reflecting upon our teaching practices and contributing to the further development of reflective practice research. This research approach, which focuses on developing practical knowledge, was initiated at Nord Universitet in Norway by Professor Anders Lindseth and colleagues. The approach takes its point of departure in experiences from professionals' concrete practices, which are then reflected upon critically and theoretically, gradually leading towards deeper and more universal levels awareness of, for instance, existential and ethical aspects of one's educational actions. Hence, all the contributors of this anthology take their point of departure in concrete examples or cases

from their own practice as educators in higher education. Some of the cases are so-called *experiences of discrepancy*, that is, experiences of failure, unsatisfied expectations or the intuition that something is not quite right in one's practice. Others are experiences of wonderment and awe, or of being existentially moved. The overall aim of the contributions has been to give *expression* to something that has made an *impression*, as Lindseth (2015, p. 247) puts it, and further, to investigate themes emerging from these experiences, reflecting upon them in more general, theoretical and philosophical terms. Since all the authors take their point of departure in experiences from practice, the natural choice of writing genre is the essay (Lindseth, 2020, see also Weiss, 2015, Helskog, 2017). The contributions thus roughly follow this structure:

1. Concrete and original reflection, where the experience is narrated "straight from the heart."
2. Critical reflection, where 2-3 core themes are drawn from the experience guided by the question, "What is at stake in this narrative?"
3. Theoretical reflection, where the themes are reflected upon in more general terms, drawing on philosophical as well as theoretical perspectives and research literature.

Facilitating the reflection and writing process

The process-oriented writing structure was inspired by the work with the anthology project "Creative academic writing", which Iben Brinch[1] was editor for together with Norunn Askeland in the period 2017-2019 (Askeland and Jørgensen, 2019), in which Helskog contributed with an essay about essay writing (Helskog, 2019). We invited professor emeritus Anders Lindseth to be part of the research group, also giving him a guiding role with us in the writing process. Hence, the writing process itself was an experiment in reflective practice research.

Having roots across a variety of primarily USN study programs, but also in other higher education contexts such as gestalt therapy and military education, this book shows the potential of reflective practice research as a way to develop both professional practice, teaching practice and research practice, as illustrated through the following 12 chapters:

In chapter 1, Helskog and Weiss challenge the currently dominant approach of so-called evidence-based practice and research by means of a concrete experience of discrepancy during a workshop in teacher

[1] Iben Brinch changed her last name from *Brinch Jørgensen* to Brinch during the years between the two anthologies

education. As an alternative, reflective practice research is suggested in terms of a relational and dialogical *methodos,* which opens up for a kaleidoscopic multi-perspectivism without falling prey to relativism while simultaneously fostering practical wisdom in terms of phronesis.

Chapter 2, by Siv Merethe Kapstad, discusses the characteristics of a student-centred learning environment and the basic pedagogical assumptions that might lead to success in such an environment. In the discussion, it is argued that when there is a change in the roles of the actors involved, the framework of the education must also change to enable the incentives for all parties to be linked to the premise of learning as a journey.

In chapter 3, Johan Lövgren describes a teaching experience of a university class for which he did not have time to prepare. With several years of experience as a folk high school teacher, he ended up with a session based on a *Bildung*-pedagogy with the focus on dialogical processes and reflections involving the whole person of the student.

Chapter 4, by Johan Bergh, examines the concept of role models in a Norwegian military context. Through a reflective practice approach, the author puzzles over two particular significant personal experiences that made everlasting impressions on him. In the course of the chapter, he concludes that as defenders of liberation, military leaders and teachers must engage in liberating, not oppressive actions as something crucial both for personal and institutional development.

In chapter 5, Pål-Erik Eidsvig reflects on his own practice as a math teacher in order to learn and develop as a researcher. By sharing a concrete situation from his time as a high school teacher, he examines what it means to see the individual pupil and how the theme of self-efficacy can be related to that.

In chapter 6, Kristin Støren and Anne Liv Kaarstad Lie use two narratives from participants at a conference for school leaders, reflecting upon how school leaders might have gained new understanding. They discuss the use of reflection as a pathway to explore the association between the use of rich data sources and the deep learning process. In the discussions, the interpersonal relations are linked to assumptions in the national core curriculum.

The starting point of chapter 7 by Iben Brinch is an experience of trying out the practice of writing place- and material-based texts with a group of PhD students. The author asks if and how this type of writing can be used pedagogically not only to motivate the scholar for writing but also to promote transformation both of the scholar and the students, getting closer to a theoretical understanding of the phenomenon of place- and material-based writing as a discourse, social practice, and form of rhetoric.

Chapter 8, by Camilla Angeltun, explores signs that bring life to the good dialogue, reflecting upon one example of a teacher-student dialogue in teacher education that did not go so well and another example where the dialogue created a bobbling, energizing feeling in the author.

In chapter 9, Vikram Kolmannskog reflects upon his experience of facilitating the workshop 'Buddhist Practices and Gestalt Therapy', in which the theme of *death* appeared suddenly and unexpectedly. The author describes and reflects upon the exploration of the phenomenon, identifying the core themes of "daring to explore death", "looking deeply and directly at death", and "dialoguing about death". The author argues that reflecting on such themes can be enriching and a resource for continued teaching practice.

In chapter 10, Shari Bloom presents compiled vignettes reflecting her own and her students' experiences with Dimensions in Testimony, an interactive digital storytelling app where students can virtually dialogue with a pre-recorded real-life Holocaust survivor named "Pinchas." The reflections raise concern about ethics and the possible somatic and liminal void that emerges in relation to interactive "inquiry-based" artificial intelligence technology that turns humans into digitized humanish chat-objects.

In chapter 11, Sebastian Rehnman and Anders Lindseth – two philosophical counselors and professors of philosophy in higher education – reflect on their experiences of seeking to deepen not only their understanding of themselves but also their understanding of understanding ourselves in confidential conversations. They argue that conversing confidentially is neither "inner" nor "outer". The text is written by Rehnman.

While chapter 11 focuses on conversing, chapter 12 focuses on individual journaling, where Sebastian Rehnman explores the relationship between the diarist`s experience and the diary, arguing that the connection between writing and experience is conceptual, and that well-being is about leading a worthwhile life.

Summing up

Altogether the 12 chapters provide a variety of perspectives on the theme *higher education pedagogies*, in line with the kaleidoscopic epistemology outlined and argued in chapter 1 by Helskog and Weiss (2023). While Thorsted and Hansen (2022) use the word epistemology only about Husserl-inspired phenomenological research, we argue that since research, in one way or another, deals with generating new knowledge or insight, there is not really a way to escape epistemology even when it comes to writing phenomenological research texts. The writing down of research will

always be about sharing insight, whether one chooses what Thorsted and Hansen call a first order factual approach, a second order existential being-approach, or a third order revelational mystery approach to experience. All three approaches are relevant to reflective practice research, as all three approaches will generate insight derived from a practitioner's experience.

The editors
Michael Noah Weiss and Guro Hansen Helskog

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Chapter 1

Reflective practice research and kaleidoscopic epistemology

Guro Hansen Helskog[1] & Michael Noah Weiss[2]

Abstract

The first part of this essay represents an example of Reflective Practice Research, while the second part examines the epistemological nature of this research approach. We begin the essay by sharing a concrete experience of discrepancy from one of our Dialogos workshops. Through critical (phenomenological-hermeneutical) reflection upon the experience, we draw out two core themes, namely *self-understanding* and *good practice*, both essential to the education of good practitioners in any human-oriented profession. In further theoretical reflection, we point out that the currently dominant epistemological way to approach such themes is through so-called evidence-based research and practice. We challenge and criticize this approach for lacking personal involvement – an aspect that is vital for developing practitioners' self-understanding and practical wisdom or good practice. As an alternative we suggest a relational and dialogical *methodos* in terms of Reflective Practice Research. We root this research approach in classical philosophical practices as well as in modern forms of phenomenological research. We argue that epistemologically speaking, Reflective Practice Research opens up for a kaleidoscopic multi-perspectivism without falling prey to relativism, while simultaneously fostering practical wisdom in terms of phronesis.

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[1] Guro Hansen Helskog is professor of pedagogy at the University of South-Eastern Norway. She has developed the so-called Dialogos approach to practical philosophy and published several action and reflective practice research works. Helskog has been central in developing a national Norwegian course supporting parents after divorce.

[2] Michael Noah Weiss is an associate professor at the University of South-Eastern Norway in the Department of Pedagogy. He took his PhD in philosophy of science at the University of Vienna and has since published several research works on philosophical practice; among others, he edited *The Socratic Handbook.*

Keywords:

Reflective Practice Research, kaleidoscopic epistemology, phronesis, teacher education, higher education, pedagogy

Introduction

We have a double intent with this essay. Our first intent is to provide an example of how so-called Reflective Practice Research might be brought about, using a three-stage framework as suggested by Anders Lindseth (2017a). Our second intent is to explore what we have called the epistemological nature of Reflective Practice Research.

Regarding the first intent, we take our point of departure in describing a concrete experience from our own practice as teachers in higher education. Describing such a practice experience also represents the first stage in the Reflective Practice Research process, called *concrete reflection*. It is an *experience of discrepancy*, that is, an experience of failure, unsatisfied expectations, and wonderment. In the second stage – *critical reflection* – we explore the experience critically, that is, phenomenologically and hermeneutically, drawing out core themes from the experience by asking what is at stake in the example. In our example, we discovered that what was at stake was different expectations on *what it is to be a good teacher*, and *what it implies to become one*. In the third step of the Reflective Practice Research process – *theoretical reflection* – we reflect theoretically upon these themes in more general terms, drawing on philosophical as well as theoretical perspectives and research literature. By working through our experience in these three stages, we touch upon some fundamental problems in current pedagogical practice as well as in pedagogical research. This leads us to our second intent, which is to explore the epistemological nature of Reflective Practice Research. In this regard, we argue that the phenomenon of "good teaching" can be fruitfully understood through the metaphor of the kaleidoscope and the notion of *kaleidoscopic epistemology* (Helskog, 2015) as an approach of multi-perspectivism.

Overall, our essay can be read as a meta-philosophical reflection that also has implications for research dissemination. In the format of an *essay*, the text is rooted in the tradition of the humanities rather than in the tradition of the natural and social sciences, where the research report is the most common format. Though our example is drawn from teacher education, our line of reflection and argumentation makes the essay relevant to everyone interested in the development of practical knowledge and wise

action as such, whether in teaching, nursing, therapy, law, police or military practice, or other fields.

Part 1 – Our Reflective Practice Research example

In order to fulfill our first intent, we begin by sharing one of several experiences of ours that has left us with a feeling of unease concerning some developments in the culture of pedagogical practice and research (see for instance Helskog 2003; Helskog and Weiss 2021). The experience will be used as a peephole into some key challenges in the education of practitioners who in their future professional lives will be responsible for other human beings.

1.1. Original and concrete reflection

A few years ago, the two of us facilitated a two-day Dialogos workshop with second-year students in teacher education at our university. A Dialogos workshop is designed as a process where philosophical, ethical and/or existential questions about what it means to be human in relation to other people and phenomena in the world is pondered and investigated from different perspectives in order to gain a deeper and more fundamental understanding of what we in everyday life tend to take for granted (see Helskog, 2019a, 2009, 2008). This particular Dialogos workshop had the overarching topic: *Developing life skills* (in Norwegian, *"livsmestring"*) *through philosophical dialogue.*

Life skills is one of three interdisciplinary themes in the new national curriculum, with the second theme being *democracy and citizenship* and the third being *sustainable development* (UDIR, 2017). Teachers in all subjects are required to integrate these themes into their pedagogical practices across all school levels and subjects. This is why the themes are also central to teacher education. In our practice, we have chosen to treat these interdisciplinary subjects as interconnected. Ideally, as we see it, developing into a person who is good at practicing the art of living for the best of herself and others will also imply developing a democratic orientation and an urge to be a participating citizen who lives sustainably and strives for sustainable development overall.

We thus organized the workshop in line with this preunderstanding. For instance, one question we explored during the two days was "What does it imply to respect nature?" and another was "How can I educate for sustainable development?" We also explored, respectively, a) the art of questioning (inspired by the practice of Socrates), b) values behind negative emotions (inspired by Stoic philosophy), c) "The Art of Living" (inspired by the

classical Greek notion and purpose of philosophizing), and d) wise action: I act wisely when… (inspired by the philosophy of Aristotle). Hence, there are deep connections between the phenomena explored with the students and the classical philosophical and pedagogical tradition.

On the first day, after we reflected upon a poem written by a 13-year-old who had experienced her parents` divorce through an approach inspired by Matthew Lipman`s Philosophy for Children, we moved on to a comparative Dialogos dialogue based on the question, "What might it imply to live well?" While the first dialogue was purposely kept "shallower" and abstract, in the second philosophical exercise of the workshop, we wanted the students to dig deeper. They were invited to find, formulate and share a concrete personal example where they once experienced living well, i.e., applying the right life skills in a given situation. The example was supposed to be self-experienced, but now emotionally closed. Moreover, the students were instructed to anonymize the experience in order to protect other people in their examples, while at the same time agreeing that what was said in the room would remain in the room. For this reason, we will not go into detail as to the content of the philosophical dialogues we had those two days[3].

Despite our enthusiasm and positive expectations, it was quite difficult to get the group into the flow of collaborative inquiry, dialogue and wonder, both in the rather critical-analytical first dialogue and in the more existential-ethical second dialogue. Only a few students seemed to dare to reflect openly in the group in the first dialogue. The same few were able to find personal examples in the second dialogue, and even fewer were willing to share their examples.

This did, of course, change a bit during the two days of the workshop, but our overall impression was that the students seemed unable to let go and engage openly and honestly in the philosophical dialogue process. Of course, we did not force anyone to do anything, but several students struggled throughout the workshop to endorse our approach. They remained rather distant and reluctant to fully participate.

During breaks, we discussed our difficulties and dissatisfaction with how the workshop developed. Why was it so difficult for the students to engage freely and openly in the dialogues? Was it something about our way of facilitating the workshop with this particular group of students? Why were so many of the students hesitant or even resistant to enter into the flow of dialogue? Were they unable to, were they afraid to, or were they

[3] Our work is reported to and approved by NSD (Norsk samfunnsvitenskapelig datatjeneste), in accordance with standards of research ethics.

simply unwilling to? They did, however, seem to listen carefully and be fully absorbed in the examples and reflections of those few who did engage freely and openly, so it was obviously not that they were disinterested or unengaged. What was it, then, that was in play and at stake here? What was holding so many of the students back?

1.2. Critical (phenomenological-hermeneutical) reflection based on our experience

In the previous section, we narrated our experience, and in this section, we will move on to the next stage in the Reflective Practice Research process, the critical reflection. Here, we will reflect upon the question, "What is at stake in our narrated experience?"

The meta-reflection round at the end of the workshop gave an indication. Many of the students had expected to be lectured on the overarching theme of the workshop (developing life skills and the art of living through philosophical dialogue) and learn different dialogue tools and dialogical skills that they could then apply directly with kids in the classroom. They did not expect to engage personally with the phenomena. Rather, they had expected to sit back and be lectured and taught skills in a more traditional and technical way. Our expectation was the contrary; we expected the students to willingly and thoughtfully engage with the phenomena and each other in open-ended phenomenological and hermeneutical dialogue that would eventually lead them to *wonderment,* as outlined by Guttesen & Kristjánsson:

> There is a fine and delicate distinction between *awe* and the type of wonder that is referred to as *contemplative wonder*. *Awe* is the emotion of being momentarily captivated by the experiencing of something inspiring, as if being struck by a lightning, and through that experience one feels one's smallness in the face of the vastness of existence (Schinkel, 2021, p. 44-45; Kristjánsson, 2018, p. 144-151), while *contemplative wonder* refers to a philosophical attitude of a kind that is not confined to philosophers. It is aptly described as being 'on the other side' of *awe*, as it is all about experiencing the grandeur of existence and the position of Man in it – in such a way that one wants to experience more. Another kind of wonder is what is called *inquisitive wonder* (Schinkel, 2021: 45), which is another term for curiosity […] In an educational context, *wonderment* combines *awe* and *contemplative wonder*. (Guttesen & Kristjánsson, 2023)

Our expectations – not to speak of our hopes about *wonderment* – seemed to have come like an unpleasant surprise to *them*, just as their reactions came as a challenging surprise to *us*. We struggled to create the contemplative atmosphere, the dialogical flow and awe-inducing wonderment that, at their best, emerge quite immediately in Dialogos workshops.

While our stance as pedagogues in teacher education is that it is essential to reflect on one's life practices both as a human *being* and as a teacher *becoming* in order to become a good teacher, many of the students seemed to assume that acquiring the right skill set would do the job. And here we arrived at a fundamental discrepancy between our perspective and the students' perspective at this particular point in their lives. With Husserl (1970, p. 108f), we could say that our lifeworlds were different, or with Gadamer (2004, p. 270f), that our fore-meanings or pre-understanding were different. How can these differences be interpreted?

The students in our example were second-year students. Most of them were young enough to have had their entire primary, secondary and upper secondary education in a school increasingly governed by curricula oriented towards predefined learning outcomes regarding skills and competences, with results measured through national and international test regimes (see Helskog, 2003; Karseth, Møller and Aasen, 2013; Engelsen 2015). Moreover, they had their first two years of teacher education training in a higher education culture pressured by the expectation that practice in the field of education should be evidence-based (see Kvernbekk, 2018).

What already came to the fore were the different perspectives and pre-understandings on what it means to *become* and *be* a teacher. This brings us closer to what could be called *the ontology of a good teacher*, centrally dealing with the question, "What *is* a good teacher, really?" Directly linked with this ontological question are the *normative* questions "What should I do in order to *become* a good teacher?", asking for the right education, and "What *should* I do in order to *be* a good teacher?", asking for the right practice.

When we now go back to our experience of discrepancy, it is obvious that the students had a different understanding of what it means to be and become a teacher, and thus about what good teaching is, than we had. And here we can ask, What is it that brought them there? What path were they on that made them arrive at their conclusions, and what was ours? What experiences in their lives convinced these students of their perspective about what it means to become and be a good teacher? Was it first and foremost a question of the right knowledge, skills and techniques rather than of one's attitudes and practices? And what made us, as pedagogues and facilitators of this workshop, convinced that the latter is essential to good teaching in teacher education?

Already here, we can see the significance of posing, reflecting on and investigating ontological questions in higher education, like teacher education, nurse education, etc. If these questions are not taken seriously, we literally do not know what we are talking about when we are talking about our own profession as pedagogues, engineers, psychologists, nurses,

etc. This does not only jeopardize our professional (and personal) self-understanding and identity, but it also opens the gates for ideologies, which are then either tacitly accepted or simply not realized as such. Whether professional studies at the university level can afford such professional self-ignorance appears to be a mere rhetorical question.

While ontological questions deal with understandings (*What is…?)*, questions that ask for the way that led you to the respective understanding are not so much ontological but *epistemological* (*How do you know? How did you arrive at this understanding and this conclusion?*) in nature. And here, when it comes to epistemological questions, we do not think so much of conventional research methodologies as of *method* in its original sense: The term was introduced by Plato (Lindseth, 2015, p. 47). Consisting of the two words *meta* (over) and *hodos* (way), Plato used the term *methodos* in order to illuminate that even though we cannot *re*-walk the way of life (*what happened, happened*), we can *re*-flect on what happened, and learn from it (ibid.). This way of reflecting was what Plato had in mind when introducing the term *method*. Lindseth admits that we often use this term differently today, but in order to preserve Plato's conception of it, Lindseth suggests that there are generally two types of methods (ibid.): *Monological* methods, which resemble standardized procedures leading to a predictable outcome, and *dialogical* methods, where both the procedures and the outcomes are open. The latter already indicates what kind of method Plato preferred when it came to his philosophical investigations, namely, dialogue. With that, dialogue can be seen as one of the oldest research methods, and this epistemological way of reflection still appears to have relevance in today's science when it comes to ontological questions like *What is a good teacher, nurse, soldier, etc.?* and normative questions like *What should we do to educate good teachers, nurses, soldiers, etc.?* With that, we arrive at two general themes or phenomena that seem to be at stake in our narrated experience, namely *self-understanding* (ontological) and *good practice* (normative). This leads us to the theoretical reflection part.

1.3. Theoretical reflection

In the following third stage of the Reflective Practice Research process – the *theoretical reflection* – we will further explore the ontological theme of "self-understanding" and the normative theme of "good practice" through relevant theoretical perspectives related to teaching for practical knowledge in higher education.

In this section, we will point to an aspect of the dominant culture of education (lower and higher) that most of these young students are raised in

that we ourselves see not only as a possible hindrance for the development of their self-understanding and understanding of what it implies to become and be a good teacher, but also as a possible hindrance to the development of the self-understanding of higher education teachers and researchers in other fields dealing with human relations. The aspect we choose to focus on is the demand that teaching practice in education at all levels, in lower as well as higher education, should be research- and evidence-based (which is then assumed to be *good practice*). What does this imply?

Kvernbekk (2018) identifies three elements in the culture of evidence orientation. First, the political domain demands that researchers create more and better research-based knowledge, and second, that practitioners should use research to create desirable results and improve existing ones. Within this picture, we also find the idea of evidence-based practice – an idea first established in medicine in the mid-1990s. The core of evidence-based practice is the pragmatic quest for desirable results and the prevention of undesirable results, with the aim of finding out "what works".

Those in favor of evidence-based practice in the field of pedagogy argue that rigorous educational research over time will create the same kind of progress within education as we have seen within medicine because interventions are tested and evaluated thoroughly before being put into practice. Advocates for this stance are, e.g. Slavin (2004; 2002), Hattie (2012; 2009), and Nordahl (2010; Nordahl & Overland, 2021).

Those opposing evidence-based practice argue that evidence-based practice is a threat to the development of virtuosity, ethical deliberation, practical wisdom, professional judgment, context sensitivity, moral practice and so forth. Advocates for this stance are, e.g. Biesta (2015; 2010; 2007), Hammersly (1997), and Hansen (2007; 2008).

Kvernbekk's (2018) own stance is that causality has a legitimate place in most practical pedagogy: if we have aims we want to reach, we must be able to plan how we are to do it; if we want good results, and if we wish that these good results should be replicable, then this requires a foundational causality. The task of pedagogical research, hence, is amongst others to convey these causal elements. Kvernbekk (2018) does, however, criticize evidence-based practice for tending to emphasize research at the expense of practice. She argues that because the demands of rigorous research evidence are so high, the demands for structured implementation are also high, yet she concludes:

> If EBP is to be a success, the research story and the local-practice story must be brought together, and this is the practitioner's job. The researcher does not know what is relevant in the concrete context faced by the practitioner; that is for the practitioner to decide. (Kvernbekk, 2017)

Hansen distinguishes between what he calls a) a pragmatic, problem-solving and critical line of teaching and research (2007, p. 18) and b) an existential, moral and wonder-based line of pedagogical teaching and research (ibid.). While practitioners of line a) ask questions like "What works?" and "What is to be done?", practitioners of line b) ask questions like "What is experienced as meaningful and wise to do in this particular moment? What is or should be the ethical criteria for "what works"? "What is this really about, deeply speaking?" He further argues that the teacher needs to engage personally in questions like "Who am I, the person who is teaching these young people?" "Who are the young human beings for whom I am responsible? Where am I in my thinking, my speech and my actions in this organization? What do I indirectly convey about who and where I am? What is the deeper meaning of my work as a teacher? What is my good vision? Do I enhance "the good life" for my students with what I am doing at this moment?"

Research into the existential, ethical and normative lines of pedagogical practice is often not considered research at all by those arguing for evidence-based practice. Rather, there appears to be an evidence hierarchy in which research drawing on inspiration from the natural sciences is valued the most: The best "evidence" is conveyed through randomized controlled trials that give quantitative data. It is argued that such evidence has the highest reliability and validity, while research based on experience and professional deliberations is considered the least trustworthy (Kvernbekk, 2018).

As a consequence, the tendency both in higher and lower education pedagogies seems to be that the focus on evidence-based practice and evidently rather instrumental implementation of research results makes the space for open dialogue, reflection and personal growth both of students, teachers and the researcher obstructed and limited (see also Løvlie, 2013). This educational culture in which the students in our example are embedded and have been raised might have taught them to be obedient and do their best to fulfill predefined aims and objectives based online a) of Hansen`s distinctions above, rather than being self-reflective, dialogical and wondering, in line with line b). Quite likely, elements of this culture were playing out through the students` reluctance to participate in the Dialogos workshop, even though we do not have hard-core evidence for it (here it has to be mentioned that the group members were familiar with each other, they were in the same class and had a good time together, so trust or insecurity was not an issue). Whereas both the Dialogos approach (Helskog 2019a; 2009; 2008) and the Daimonic dialogue approach (Weiss 2021a; 2017a; 2014) were developed to foster wisdom, phronesis and thus *Bildung*

with students, the curricula that the students were brought up with focused on measurable competences. The idea has been that learning should be visible and measurable. Such a culture, however, does not only limit the development of the students' self-understanding. It also limits the development of the self-understanding of teachers and researchers in higher education, toning the dominant understanding of good pedagogical practice in an instrumental direction. Teaching in line with this ideology is more about applying the right methods and reaching predefined, measurable goals than about developing one`s own and students` existential self-understanding and maturation, as well as ethically sound practice, which is always situational and unique to the context a practice is embedded in. Even though there are justifiable technical-instrumental aspects involved in good professional practice, this aspect is normally not sufficient for a practice to be *good*, morally speaking.

Following this evidence hierarchy also results in a hierarchy of how to disseminate research. On top of the hierarchy is the so-called IMRaD structured research report; IMRaD refers to "Introduction, Methods, Results and Discussion" (see NTNU, 2022). The reports should ideally have undergone a "double-blind review", meaning that traces that can reveal who the author is should be removed from the report prior to peer-review. During the review process, the reviewers are kept anonymous too. The idea is that the removal of the author will secure a neutral, unbiased and objective evaluation of the research carried out, corresponding to the idea that research should be generalizable and replicable in new contexts and that results should be transferrable to new situations. From such research, testifiable and falsifiable results and knowledge supposedly arise, which can then be implemented by practitioners. The least trustworthy are, from the perspective of advocates of evidence-based research, publications based on research where the experience and voice of the researcher are pivotal, such as an action research article or a reflective practice research essay.

At the same time, however, as our impression suggests, this is where reflective practice research can come in as a research approach that *opens up* this space. It does so by encouraging the practitioner-researcher to take his or her point of departure in experience and through promoting traditional methods of research and writing stemming from the humanities, taking an ontological-phenomenological starting point rather than a positivistic-epistemological one. Where the evidence-based practitioner and researcher would take his or her point of departure in abstract, general and presumably objective and universally replicable research findings, the reflective practitioner-researcher takes his or her point of departure in so-called particular,

concrete, subjective and unique experiences. We say "so-called", because our stance is that as human beings, we experience life in contexts that are embedded in wider contexts, not only historically, culturally and ideologically, but also biologically. The strings of relational embeddedness can be followed from the individual to the local to the national to the global and cosmic. Thus, our stance is that there is something commonly human that can be drawn out of any particular experience (Helskog 2019a).

This is not "new". On the contrary, it has been implicitly and explicitly dealt with by classical philosophers and scholars throughout history, both in western and eastern traditions, as we will soon show by pointing out a few examples from the long and well-elaborated culture and history of the humanities. The humanities, as one of the two main academic traditions, is concerned with the classical questions regarding what is right, good, true and beautiful (see also Kjørup, 2007). They discuss fundamental questions regarding experience, existence, values, meaning and consciousness and study topics such as the edification of human beings, how we create meaning in life and the world, and the relationship between the individual and society. The humanities include disciplines such as history, philosophy, literature, linguistics and traditional pedagogy, which are all concerned with understanding unique texts, events and phenomena in their particular contexts, whereas the social sciences are more often concerned with models, typologies and sometimes generalizations. (Nordenstam, 2000).

Halås et al. (2015) argue that the humanities are particularly suited to understanding and developing knowledge about professional practices in terms of creative, meaning-making, judging and value-creating action. Already, the term *humanities* refers to an idea of research that sees the human being as a feeling, thinking, creative and active creature, they claim (ibid., p. 12).

Some of the greatest classical sources that are referred to across modern science disciplines today were based on personal experiences that are subjective, particular, concrete, contextual and unique. Yet the texts of these authors have inspired researchers and philosophers up to this day. Some of these classical sources are unique not only in content but also in their written forms and writing styles – revealing a certain stance regarding wisdom (see Helskog, 2016: "What do we lose with the stifling academic genre demands of our time?"[4]). In the following section, we will give examples of such texts. We chose to call these texts examples of reflective practice research simply because their authors were all concerned with how to live and act well, broadly speaking.

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[4] In Norwegian: "Hva mister vi med tidens kvelende akademiske sjangerkrav?"

1.3.1. Classical forms of reflective practice research

Through the genre of *written dialogues,* Plato`s work is an early example of how concrete experiences formed the basis for philosophical investigations for the purpose of getting a deeper and more universal understanding of certain virtues and how they eventually can be practiced (see for instance Plato a, b, c and d). Even though Socrates often managed to lead his interlocutors into confusion (*aporia*), they could raise their existential and ethical awareness in these dialogues, implying a deeper understanding of the general human condition (e.g. by becoming aware of their own not-knowing, as one general aspect of this condition). Aristotle would call this existential and ethical awareness *practical knowledge* or *practical wisdom* (*phronesis*) and distinguishes it from theoretical knowledge (*epistemé*) and technical knowledge in terms of know-how (*techné*). One of the works of Aristotle frequently referred to by scholars today is the Nicomachean *Ethics* (Aristotle, a.), a series of *lecture notes* collected by his son Nicomachus. In his notes, Aristotle brings forward his deep insight into the general features of human virtues that are still relevant for researchers and laymen today (see e.g. Weiss, 2021b). The same can be said about the written work of Roman emperor and Stoic philosopher Marcus Aurelius, who included exercises, examples and diary notes of different kinds (1997), while in the period 1570-1592 Michel de Montaigne wrote and revised his influential *Essays*, stating that they were designed to explore some traits of his personal character and humors (1992). The *Essays* were published in 1580 and cover a wide range of topics ranging from drunkenness, anger and being sick to repentance, experience, sleep and cowardice as the mother of cruelty.

Even the scholar praised and accused of creating the final rupture and dichotomy between the opposing stances in research as outlined previously, initiating the Enlightenment period, wrote his research in a deeply personal manner: René Descartes' *Meditations on First Philosophy, in which the existence of God and the immortality of the soul are demonstrated* (1641) comes in a form similar to diary notes. Descartes describes how he has cut himself off from the outer world in order to follow his thought to the end in solitude, exploring whether he can be sure that he is. His famous conclusion is *Cogito ergo sum* (I think, therefore I am). He did not need to doubt that he is anymore, yet the mystery of *who* he is is still there. Another important scholar, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, wrote *Emile, or On Education* (1762), the book that is claimed to have introduced childhood in European culture, and thus inspired the later field of pedagogy. This important classical contribution to the philosophy of education was distributed in the form

of a *novel.* Friedrich Schiller, on the other hand, had his *letters* to the Duke of Augustenburg published as a book: *Letters Upon the Aesthetic Education of Man* (1774).

In our own time, the famous scholar Simone de Beauvoir, who disseminated her philosophical investigations of topics such as freedom and responsibility, means and aims as well as gender questions through novels, plays and essays (see e.g. 2009), can be mentioned. Her German colleague Hannah Arendt, one of the major philosophers in the 20th century, wrote her famous report of the trial against Adolf Eichmann in Jerusalem based on her observations and reflections (1963).

To sum up, the classical scholars mentioned above disseminated their research in a variety of genres, covering dialogues, lecture notes, essays, meditations, novels, letters, plays and observational reports. As humanistic researchers, they took their point of departure from personal experiences, practices and/or concerns, reflecting upon them in their own unique manners. Their texts have nevertheless inspired researchers throughout the centuries. Paradoxically, today these texts are often read, studied and analyzed without taking into consideration the living, experiencing, breathing and feeling human being who wrote them and who struggled to come to terms with his or her human condition and cultural situation (Helskog, 2016). However, these researchers were, as were also the classical Greco-Roman philosophers, primarily life philosophers. As Pierre Hadot showed in his ground-breaking book *Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault* (1995), the classical philosophical schools were aimed at promoting morally and existentially good lives for those engaging in the philosophical practices promoted. Important to note: these life philosophies were not studied as texts. Their common springboard was lived experience. When brought into text, they turned into works of reflective practice research, so to speak. That is, a reflective examination of one‘s own life and practice. By taking their point of departure from their individual experiences, the authors were able to create something unique, while at the same time giving general reflections on the issue at stake that are relevant to human lives across global cultures to this day.

Following this line of thought, we would go so far as to argue that all good philosophy is reflective practice research. This form of research was not about gathering information and analyzing data but about trying to understand life while living it. This makes the reflective research work of these great minds relevant to this day, as the phenomena and general aspects of the human condition that they examined, like courage, responsibility, love, etc., are still relevant to all of us. Hence, it is in this sense that

the personal experiences that have informed classical research works in the humanities have proven both valid, reliable and generalizable throughout the centuries. People across generations have resonated personally with this form of practical knowledge and wisdom and found it useful in their own lives, both privately as well as professionally; however, in a broad phenomenological-hermeneutical way rather than in a narrow "scientific" manner. Yet some, like, for instance, the Yoga Institute in Mumbai, claim to teach "the science (and also technology) of yoga", using the concept "science" in an experiential way. Their argument is that the practice of yoga has endured the test of between 5000 and 10000 years of experience, and that it has worked for the betterment of people's lives to this day (see Patañjali, 2001; Yogendra 2007; 2009).

In this respect, Hans-Georg Gadamer, can be brought into the discussion. He asserts:

> When Aristotle, in the sixth book of the Nicomachean Ethics, distinguishes the manner of 'practical' knowledge… from theoretical and technical knowledge, he expresses, in my opinion, one of the greatest truths, by which the Greeks throw light upon 'scientific' mystification of the modern society of specialization. In addition, the scientific character of practical philosophy is, as far as I can see, the only methodological model for self-understanding of human sciences if they are to be liberated from spurious narrowing imposed by the model of the natural sciences. (Gadamer, 1997, p. 107)

More than two decades later, the "spurious narrowing imposed by the model of the natural sciences" (ibid.) appears to be more present than ever in the human sciences, while practical knowledge (not to be mixed up with technical knowledge, as we will see) is rather residing in them like a ghost. And today, this is what the humanities, including pedagogy, sometimes look like to us – a haunted house deprived of its true spirit.

In a certain sense, the present essay can therefore be read like an invitation to the spirit of classical reflective practice research to return home again, to put it metaphorically.

In the following, we will turn our attention to modern forms of reflective practice research. The approach, by the way, does not only appear to offer valuable potential for the development of self-understanding and practical knowledge in the humanities, as Gadamer demands, but also for research in the natural sciences, as we shall argue.

1.3.2. Modern forms of reflective practice research

While the notion *reflective practice research* was first used by Anders Lindseth (2015), the approach as such is, as we have seen, embedded in

classical humanities as well as in modern phenomenological and hermeneutical research, with Husserl and Heidegger as foundational figures. This implies that, of course, phenomenology and hermeneutics have developed into many-facetted approaches to research over the years. For instance, Thorsted and Hansen (2022), in their book on existential practice phenomenology, distinguish between three forms of phenomenology and phenomenological research. These are, respectively, epistemological knowing-oriented phenomenology inspired by Husserl (1970), existential being-oriented phenomenology inspired by Heidegger (1972), and mystery-oriented phenomenology inspired by Levinas (1987) and Marion (2002)[5].

In their book, Thorsted and Hansen (2022, p. 183-249) distinguish between the Danish words "oplevelse" and "erfaring", which both normally translate to "experience" in English. "Oplevelse" is normally seen as an experience occurring as an event, that is, within a limited moment of time. "Erfaring", on the other hand, is often used for experience that is processual and has become deep rooted (practical) knowledge, insight and wisdom. We choose here to call the two forms of experience respectively *event-experience* and *insight-experience*.

A researcher that applies a Husserl-inspired knowing-oriented phenomenology is, according to Thorsted and Hansen (2022), concerned with the so-called factual and with the surface or outside of language. Husserl-inspired phenomenology operates with "first order event-experience" oriented towards the affective or subjective feeling and first order insight-experience oriented towards generating knowledge through cognitive reflection upon the first order event-experience.

While a Husserl-inspired researcher is epistemologically oriented, a researcher that applies a Heidegger-inspired being-oriented phenomenology is concerned with what Thorsted and Hansen (2022) label the existential and the depth, or the inside of language. Experience is here seen as of second order. Second order event-experience implies, existentially speaking, being touched and moved as a basic mode, while second order insight-experience implies existential insight gained through existential reflection over the second order event-experience of being touched and moved.

While a Heidegger-inspired researcher is existentially oriented, a researcher who applies Levinas- and Marion-inspired phenomenology will, according to Thorsted and Hansen (2022), be concerned with metaphysical

[5] There is no room to go more deeply into these distinctions within the frame of this article, but the interested reader can go to the sources referred.

experience beyond language. Experience is in their scheme classified as third order. The third order event-experience is here a revelation and a hunch of something that is emerging, while the third order insight-experience is the ethical and spiritual wordless insight and wisdom that is gained through an openness for the mystery and that which "calls" us in the third order event-experience.

Thorsted and Hansen (2022) use the word *epistemology* only about Husserl-inspired phenomenological research. However, since research, in one way or another, deals with generating new knowledge or insight, there is not really a way to escape epistemology even when it comes to writing phenomenological research texts, whether one chooses the first order factual approach, the second order existential being-approach, or the third order revelational mystery approach to experience, as suggested by Thorsted and Hansen. All three approaches are relevant to reflective practice research, as all three approaches will generate insight derived from a practitioner's experience. However, practical knowledge in the sense of *phronesis*, also often translated as prudence, virtuosity or even mindfulness (Weiss, 2017c; Helskog 2019), in the sense that "the experienced professional is often capable of intuitively judging what a situation demands, and then act in accordance with this in a wise manner" (Halås et al., 2015, p. 9). And virtuosity – or better, the lack of it – might also have been a central aspect in the experience that constituted the starting point of our investigation. Thus, even though we acknowledge that the second and third order forms of phenomenological research and teaching practice reaches deeper and are more powerful than factual-oriented research and teaching, we also acknowledge that it might take many years of practice to be able to conduct good second- and third order phenomenological research and teaching, especially if one is embedded in a means-aims oriented culture where more or less instrumental research based knowledge reigns. Second- and third order phenomenological research and teaching will touch and move not only the researchers but also the readers of the research, and not only the students, but also the teachers themselves as exemplified for instance in the epilogue in Helskog (2019). At its best, it might lead to human flourishing.

Having claimed that there is not really any way to escape epistemology when teaching and doing research, it is now time to move into part 2 of this essay and to the question *What is Reflective Practice Research in epistemological terms about?* Hence, we are now moving one step further into a transcendental-philosophical reflection upon our earlier concrete, critical and theoretical reflections.

Part 2 – On the epistemology of Reflective Practice Research

When one takes a closer look at the methodological sides of the approach of Reflective Practice Research, one finds several references and similarities to certain dialogue approaches in the discipline of philosophical practice, like Nelson and Heckmann's Socratic Method (Nelson, 1922; Heckman, 1981; and also the Dialogos approach (Helskog, 2019, Weiss & Helskog 2018).

Though today there exist many different approaches to philosophical practice, a common denominator among them appears to be that the vast majority of "philosophical practitioners are convinced that philosophy is not only a worthwhile academic task but should also be accessible for everyone as it is an activity useful for a good life as well", as Staude and Ruschmann state in the introduction of the anthology *Understanding the Other and Oneself* (2018, p. ii). In this anthology, they also point out that deep *reflection on one`s own practice* as a philosopher is "the basis for research on philosophical practice", and such research "on the methods, experiences, ideas and reflections is needed to develop the field of philosophical practice further" (ibid: vii). Hence, the practice "needs philosophical reflection itself" (ibid.), they argue. This line of thought puts forward an idea central to Reflective Practice Research but also relevant to our previous experience of discrepancy with our students: the need to reflect on one's professional practices with the prospect of (self-)understanding and (self-)improvement.

While Staude and Ruschmann seem to suggest a possible form of research on philosophical practice, Lindseth is expanding this idea to all kinds of professional practices. Nevertheless, both Staude and Ruschmann, as well as Lindseth, are advocating a research stance that sees reflection as a means of research, as does Finn Thorbjørn Hansen. He argues that for a Socrat and a historian of ideas like him, references to "objective reality" can be difficult to take seriously, especially when it comes to topics of the more existential, ethical, aesthetical or philosophical kinds (see e.g. Hansen, 2007; 2008). These are topics belonging to the humanities and not to the social sciences, he argues (see ibid.). In the humanities, the foundational attitudes, values and worldviews of the researcher are constitutive of his or her work. The "objective" glance is determined by the lens – that is, the value perspective – one is looking through. For the Socrat, the psychological science becomes, broadly speaking, a rather stiffened and institutionalized philosophy (Hansen, 2008). Certain researchers within the educational research tradition that advocate quantitative measures

refuse to acknowledge that qualitative research in general, and philosophical reflection upon practice in particular, count as research, or at least as 'proper research' (see e.g. Hargreaves, 1997; 1999; Oakley, 2001). This research tradition possesses what is in some fields called 'the gold standard of research', namely the *randomized control trial (RCT)*. We could add that for many social science researchers, philosophical reflection as research approach is likely to be seen as 'subjective' and 'lacking rigour'. A similar accusation comes from traditional philosophy towards reflective research (see e.g. Walderhaug, 2018). However, the craft of a philosopher is dialogical, and the similarities between academic philosophy and philosophical practice are many. Marianne Walderhaug, after doing interviews with academic philosophers, came to the conclusion that the work and methods of these philosophers were similar to her work as a philosophical practitioner, but the differences were that these academic philosophers engaged in dialogues with texts, while she engaged in dialogue with inmates in prison, where she was working (Walderhaug, 2018). So, here again, we arrive at what Lindseth called the dialogical method, which essentially represents a practice of reflection (Lindseth, 2015, p. 47f).

2.1. Ontology and responsibility

In section "2. Critical reflection", identity and self-understanding were pointed out as general themes that were at stake in the initially described experience of discrepancy from our workshop. In our subsequent line of argumentation, we related this theme to the fundamental philosophical question "Who am I?" and stated that this question was ontological in nature. Now, the ontology that is currently dominating the natural and social sciences operates with notions of a nominal universe – a universe that is structured by laws that exist independently of the observer. The assumption that there would be a world "out there" (object) that we just needed to observe with the proper tools so we could arrive at true knowledge represents what is called a positivist stance. This stance, especially when it found its way into the humanities in general and into pedagogy specifically (see for instance Myhre, 1980), was criticized already at the beginning of the 20th century. In the 1930s, the famous Vienna Circle dissolved, failing in its intention to develop an objective scientific language (see Putnam, 1985). In the 1970s and 1980s, the movement of Radical Constructivism then appeared to have put an end to positivism as a legitimate scientific stance by bringing up indisputable arguments against it (see Watzlawick, 1984). Nevertheless, the previously mentioned assumption appears to be still present in several disciplines, e.g. in pedagogy or psychology, like an underlying cold that you never really get rid of. To a certain degree, it

also seems to be present with the students from our previously described workshop. They thought if we taught them the right techniques and the right evidence-based knowledge, they could just apply them as if they would apply a hammer. With the right knowledge and techniques, they would hit the nail on the head. In ontological terms, this resembles an almost mechanical worldview.

As with many others, Lindseth sees such a stance as problematic not because of the thought that existence is structured by laws but because of the thought that the world is there as a structure independent of us as a subject (see e.g. Lindseth, 2017a, p. 255). This view implies that knowledge about the world becomes ethically neutral, he claims. Knowledge is reduced to theoretical knowledge (epistemé) and becomes a pure description and statement of facts, while practical knowledge (phronesis) in terms of reflecting the practice of norms and values, ethics and morals is given little room. Instead, this dimension of knowledge is reduced to something subjective or intersubjective that has nothing to do with the world and the ontological. However, as soon as we see reality as participation, in line, as we shall see, with the theories of Buber and Skjervheim (see Buber, 2010; Skjervheim, 2002), we can no longer see this knowledge as ethically neutral. Instead, our ways of researching the world require that we take on the role of responsible subjects that are co-creating the part of the world that we are researching, something that was, among others, convincingly shown by the representatives of Radical Constructivism (see Watzlawick, 1984). It was specifically Glasersfeld (1984) and Foerster (1984) who pointed out that the cognitive process of knowing is not so much a process of depicting the world but a creative process in which we also contribute to the phenomenon we are experiencing. Our interpretation of these authors does not mean that there is no world and that everything is constructed; rather, it means that there is no neutral place in this world. There is no neutral knowledge. And of course, there is no neutral practice of this knowledge.

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. While researchers who use phenomenological or hermeneutical approaches are most often aware of their own participation, researchers who use "objective" approaches are often not aware of it, or act as if their stance is a neutral observer stance. Thus, "scientific" approaches often become naïve. While the phenomenological and hermeneutical approach holds that the basic condition of human beings is *motion* and *change* in and through the relationship to oneself, to other people and to phenomena in the world,

the "scientific" approach often treats phenomena as static objects that can be fixated and taken out of their contexts. The psychological lab where "research objects" are taken in for tests is an example of this attitude. That this attitude is problematic was, e.g. shown by constructivist researchers who sneaked into a psychological clinic as "patients" without the psychologists knowing it. Even though these researchers behaved completely normal in the clinic, the psychological staff never realized that these "patients" were not mentally ill and treated them as if they were (see Rosenhan, 1984). That such an attitude is far from objective seems to be at hand with this example. Moreover, in such a positivistic approach, concepts are usually stripped of everything that cannot be explored and measured empirically, which in itself represents the starting point of a so-called *logical circle*, where nothing else is being confirmed in the end than what was assumed to be confirmed in the beginning (see e.g. Hugh, 1911, p. 389). Even in much of psychological wisdom research, there is an encapsulation of the researcher, the research informants or "objects", and the phenomenon wisdom that are being investigated. In the eagerness to measure wisdom, the research is at risk of becoming a non-participative, objectifying and unreflected form of research that, in some respects, is directly opposed to the dynamic issue at stake, which is wisdom. In other words, some forms of human research as we find it today has little to do with the development of practical knowledge (phronesis) as Aristotle suggested in general terms, and Gadamer specifically for the humanities (Gadamer, 1997, p. 107). Rather, highly dynamic and many-facetted phenomena is often studied in static, fixated and mono-facetted ways. Instead of this static, one-dimensional, nomical approach, we will suggest a dynamic poly-dimensional approach.

Lindseth (2017b, p. 21f) states that the dominating ideology of our time is the notion of knowledge development as something that is gained as we direct our eyes towards the objects in the world and collect as detailed information as possible, whereby the subject analyses the information in such a way that general knowledge appears. Because it is easy to become a victim to prejudices and fallacies, it is claimed that we need scientific methods to make sure that the knowledge gained is valid and reliable. Thus, it is important to ensure that we do not commit mistakes in the research process (Lindseth, 2005a, p. 153f). The paradox is that in the attempt to secure methodical correctness, everything that cannot be investigated empirically and give reliable general knowledge is defined away. In a conception of the world and of knowledge where we are always already participating, such an understanding becomes naïve. Lindseth argues that it is a form of "superstition" to believe that it is possible to reach

objective knowledge independent of the researcher`s subjective structuring consciousness and activity. Moreover, the result of such approaches is that we are left with a crippled, fragmented and reduced image of the human being and the world and a very narrow conception of knowledge. We might argue: These conceptions are crippling both research and education at all levels, as well as the human psyche and outlook. Our ability to engage in intimate relationships with others, with nature and with the world shrinks as we learn to objectify the world and others. We become increasingly separated and isolated in our own world of fragmented I-it relationships, as Martin Buber called it (see 2010).

Finn Thorbjørn Hansen takes a similar stance and claims that it is important to differentiate between methodical-scientific approaches and philosophical-hermeneutic approaches to research (2008, p. 241-244). While the first is based on "evidence-seeking" approaches that are inspired by the natural sciences, the latter is based on personal experience and *being*, demanding research approaches that are open for interpretation. This does not mean, as Hansen argues, that we should not use scientific approaches, for instance, in educational research. Rather, in our context, it means that the philosophical practitioner and researcher should know both of these very different but complementary approaches and use them when appropriate. Here, it is not enough to distinguish between quantitative and qualitative research methods, Hansen argues, since the scientific methodological outlook has a tendency to move into qualitative research that has "empirical knowledge" and "evidence" as an aim for the work. Instead, he suggests, when ethical and existential dimensions of teaching and supervision are at stake, *phronetic knowledge* should be the turning point.

As previously mentioned, phronesis is the Greek notion for practical knowledge or virtue, which Socrates, Plato and Aristotle were concerned with. The phronetic dimension is, according to Hansen, more fundamental than the epistemological and functional dimensions of teaching (or philosophical dialogue facilitation). It is generally not enough to use an epistemological approach to knowledge and wisdom.

> If one wants to learn how to stand in the open, a phenomenological, sensual and listening attitude on the one side, and a hermeneutical, dialogical wondering attitude is needed, which is connected to phronesis and the Socratic eros. (ibid., p. 244)

Hansen's approach is similar to Lindseth's, who argues that a participative ontology opens one up to seeing knowledge development as a reflection of lived experience, which can open one up for new insights and give a better basis for orientation and meaning in life. Participative

researchers do not only study the world around them; they also study the understanding they bring to the world. They recognize that their knowledge and understanding have limits and that they will never get out of this condition of insecurity (see Socrates' notion, "I know that I don't know"). When they realize this, they no longer believe that their research methods will give them access to a world independent of their own consciousness and thus "unknown" to them. On the contrary, before methodical research is possible, people are already familiar with the world. If we take this seriously, we risk being wrong because it is impossible for us to reach full understanding and knowledge, but this does not matter because the phenomena of the world appear in our consciousness, and therefore it is always possible to reflect on our knowledge and improve and develop it (ibid.).

2.2. Kaleidoscopic epistemology

A dialogical and participatory ontology opts for an equally dialogical and participatory epistemology that is oriented toward making visible the different possible connections between fragments within a greater whole. Our suggestion is to call it a *kaleidoscopic epistemology* (Helskog, 2015). The noun *kaleidoscope* refers to an optical instrument in which bits of glass are shown in continually changing forms by reflection in two or more mirrors set at angles to each other. The bits of glass are held loosely at the end of a rotating tube. The corresponding adjective *kaleidoscopic* is defined as changing form and pattern – continually shifting from one set of relations to another. In the context of philosophical pedagogy and reflective practice research, the metaphor can be used to understand how perspectives and patterns might change as we view a topic from different angles and through a changing twist of the conceptual or experiential angle taken. In the course of a dialogue, the different examples, interpretations, and ideas that are brought up can metaphorically be compared with the pieces of glass in the kaleidoscope that create different patterns depending on the questions that are asked, the kind of nuances that are focused on or drawn out based on the criteria applied, and the elements that other elements are compared to. Therefore, even though a philosophical dialogue on the same topic – let us say the topic of care – is structured in a similar way several times, the content and results will differ every time because patterns emerge based on the preconceptions, examples and perspectives of the concrete participants. A concept dialectically explored in relation to concrete examples will bring about new kaleidoscopic patterns and thus eventually new content to the concept.

Hence, a kaleidoscopic participatory and dialogical approach makes it impossible to fixate on narrow self-conceptions, ideologies, theories or models. Rather, every self-conception, ideology or theory is opened up for dialogue with other models, ideologies and theories and with the lived experience of researchers or philosophical dialogue participants. 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 into dialogue with the positions from different perspectives. Within a kaleidoscopic epistemology, opposite perspectives can shed light on different elements of a phenomenon and be meaningful in their own right.

A critique might be that this would lead to relativism, as there is no room for the notion of "truth" if such a metaphor is applied. We disagree that this is a possibility. It is not the case that "anything goes". Only perspectives, examples, concepts and theories that are related to the overarching topic or question explored are relevant. Thus, the options will be limited, and what kind of patterns – e.g. what lines of argument, what networks of ideas – emerge is not entirely accidental. Nor are their possible combinations unlimited. On the contrary. The possible patterns created by the kaleidoscope are limited by the character of the glass pieces that are in it at a given point in time (and also if new glass pieces are added). Similarly, the possible patterns that can emerge in a philosophical dialogue will be limited by the topic, that is, the phenomenon that is examined as well as the content brought into the dialogue and the way this content is formed with regards to the topic in the course of the dialogue. However, instead of fixating on one pattern, several patterns can dynamically enlighten each other, bringing out a bigger and truer picture of complex issues. For instance, by focusing on one aspect of a phenomenon and drawing it to the foreground, other aspects are pushed to the background. What comes to the foreground and what is pushed to the background can change if the perspective on a phenomenon changes. Likewise, by shedding light on some aspects, other aspects are left in the shadows. This is not something that can be done objectively or neutrally. It is done by the structuring mind of the researcher or by all the participating subjects.

2.3. Researchers and researched as *participants* in a shared world

An ideal in a relational and participative ontology and an equally relational and participatory kaleidoscopic epistemology is thus – in research as well as in philosophical dialogues in general (which represent a form of

investigation too) – that the participants should look at the phenomenon or topic at stake from different perspectives without the ambition of reaching complete or absolute knowledge about the phenomenon. This can sometimes include opposing positions that both have meaning and hold aspects of "the truth" (the latter, a term that can be highly misleading, which is why we replace it with the term "the world" since it seems to fit better with what we try to point at, also with regards to the term "worldview"). They do not need to be seen or treated as competing positions. Rather, they can mutually inform each other and contribute to a fuller picture of "the world". For instance, in the encounter with two opposing theoretical perspectives, an experiential phenomenon might appear in two different kaleidoscopic patterns that can mutually enlighten both the theoretical perspectives and the experiential phenomenon.

Even though the researcher, the dialogue facilitator and dialogue participants take different perspectives and positions in relation to phenomena, they still take part in a shared world. We are all thrown into this world, even though we see different aspects of it from our respective positions and perspectives. This appears to be a rather banal statement. Still, it seems that we all tend to forget about it from time to time. A story that depicts this banal insight is the Indian Jain parable of the blind men and the elephant. The parable has several Indian variations, but the main content can be summarized in the following way (see also Helskog, 2019):

A group of six blind men had heard that a strange animal had been brought to their village, but none of them were familiar with the shape and form of this animal, which they heard was called an elephant. They were curious and wanted to inspect it by touching it since they could not see. When they arrived, they all got to touch different parts of the animal. One of the men was touching the trunk and claimed that the elephant was like a thick snake. Another was touching its ear and claimed that the elephant was a kind of fan. The third blind man, who was touching the leg, argued that the elephant was like a pillar or a tree trunk, while the fourth, who placed his hand on the side of the elephant, claimed that it was like a wall. Another who held its tail described it as a rope, and the last felt its tusk, stating that the elephant is like a hard, smooth spear. They simply could not agree on how to describe the elephant.

The parable of the blind men and the elephant can be interpreted as a metaphor for people of different cultures, ideologies and worldviews relating to the same phenomenon in the world – here the elephant – from their differing limited perspectives. Or, transferred to the world of research, it can be interpreted as a metaphor for researchers from different research traditions claiming to have found the one right way to approach and interpret

a phenomenon. In the parable, each blind man, seen individually, is only partially right. If they, however, had spoken together in genuine dialogue, listening to each other's experiences and trying to understand and describe the elephant by combining their different interpretations and perspectives and trusting the experiences and descriptions of the others, they would possibly have gained a broader understanding of how the shape of an elephant i.e. "the world" or even "the universe" can be described. Yet they would never get a full understanding. It would still be partial.

The Jaina philosophers point out that every object has infinite aspects, by which it is judged from different points of view. Every judgment that we pass about a phenomenon is therefore true only in relation to a particular aspect of the phenomenon seen from a different point of view (Chatterjee & Dhirendramohan, 2007, p. 29). Thus, Jaina philosophy seems to imply a perspectivism that has a parallel in European phenomenology. In his book on the basics of phenomenology, Dan Zahavi (2019, p. 10-11) proposes the view that phenomenology is the philosophical analysis of different forms of givenness that appear *perspectival*, always from a certain *angle*, and that

> It is possible for one and the same object to appear in a variety of different ways: from this or that perspective, in a strong or faint illumination, as perceived, imagined, wished for, feared, anticipated, or recollected (ibid., p. 10).

With the parable of the blind men in mind, it also becomes apparent why the idea behind a kaleidoscopic epistemology is not based on relativism. On the contrary, it *is* based on perception and empirical data, to put it bluntly. Each of the men can give reasons for his description of the elephant due to his *experience* with the elephant i.e. the world/universe. They did not simply fantasize about what an elephant might be like. No, they had direct contact with the phenomenon at stake. However, direct contact with the phenomenon is not enough to get a deeper understanding of the phenomenon. A better understanding can first begin to unfold when the different experiences, impressions, thoughts and perceptions are brought into dialogue with each other. Not the least: In a multi-cultural and multi-regligious world, listening to each other in dialogue and taking in the perspective of each other, is crucial if we want to develop our understanding.

Two banal examples can illustrate this point further. The winners and the losers of a war are likely to tell very different stories about the same incidents of that war, depending on their perspectives and the aspects they focus on. Also, some would claim a certain point in history as a "beginning", for instance, for the formation of a state, giving this state a claim to an area that now belongs to another state, while the other state bases their claim on another "beginning" in history. At their worst, opposing views

can escalate into war. Likewise, in the private sphere, parents who are divorced will most likely explain the reason for their divorce in completely different ways, based on their often-opposing experiences. Only if the parties engage in open, honest dialogue with each other can there be a hope of reconciling the different perspectives and creating a shared, deepened and expanded understanding. Of course, this demands of the parties that they be willing to take in the perspective of the other. That is, to return to the parable of the blind men and the elephant, each experience of the elephant is assumed to represent a part of the phenomenon, and the parable, in terms of what we earlier called a poly-dimensional approach, shows how anyone who puts forward an unconditional view of reality, denying the possibility of other aspects and views of that reality, necessarily has an imperfect and far too limited view. Hence, dialogical research is also a call to epistemic humility.

In this respect, Gadamer's philosophical approach of hermeneutics can be brought into account again. In his famous work *Truth and Method* (2004), Gadamer not only strongly criticized the humanities for their epistemological orientedness towards the natural sciences but also extensively elaborated the significance of dialogue in order to develop understanding, as he, for example, did in his "Analysis of historically effected consciousness" (ibid., p. 335-382). As Malpas writes,

> Gadamer views understanding as a matter of negotiation between oneself and one's partner in the hermeneutical dialogue such that the process of understanding can be seen as a matter of coming to an 'agreement' about the matter at issue. Coming to such an agreement means establishing a common framework or 'horizon' and Gadamer thus takes understanding to be a process of the 'fusion of horizons' (*Horizontverschmelzung*). (Malpas, 2018 - see "3.2. The Happening of Tradition")

The need for dialogue between horizons comes to the fore as a term that can summarize the essence of the blind men and the elephant. The researcher or dialogue facilitator in this picture is no different from the blind men. She or he too has a limited perspective, though ideally she or he has seen more of the part of reality that is to be studied than the participants. However, sometimes this is not the case. The researcher or dialogue facilitator does not necessarily have a deeper understanding or broader perspective than the other participants in the research- or dialogue process. The researcher or facilitator might even be "blinder" than the other participants in the respective investigation. This calls for a humble openness (see Weiss, 2017b; Helskog 2009, 2019; Hansen 2008). Also, the researcher and facilitator need to be open to the possibility of having his or her perspectives and beliefs altered when entering into a truly philosophical

research or dialogue process. This also shows the ethical responsibility of the researcher and dialogue facilitator. If the dialogue can impact him or her in profound ways, this can also be the case for other participants. Hence, the first and most important virtue of the researcher and facilitator is humility and ethical sensitivity, in order to keep the balance between intimacy (which at its worst takes the form of intrusion) and distance (which at its worst takes the form of cold observation without participation). The researcher and facilitator should serve the participants to the best of his or her abilities.

Ironically, we arrive at an important insight here concerning the second universal aspect we put forward in "3. Critical reflection": *good practice*, which is neither *epistemological* nor *ontological* but *normative* in nature. Nevertheless, we can see here how a kaleidoscopic epistemology informs good practice. Namely, in the sense that *good practice* is not so much about the question of the right techniques. Rather, *good practice*, as a desired *norm* (we probably all wish to be good in what we practice), first and foremost asks for approaches that can highlight and reflect *diverse* practices. Only then can we get an idea and eventually a deeper understanding of what good practice is and how it might be realized. The present anthology is an attempt at such an approach based on Reflective Practice Research. And eventually, this publication might contribute to illuminating what good practice might be about in the context of higher education pedagogies.

Final remarks

We started this philosophical investigation by presenting a case from our own teaching practice in higher education, which made us wonder. During a Dialogos workshop with our students in teacher education, it became obvious that some of them refused to go into existential self-reflection. Rather, they were expecting that we would "hand over" some dialogical skills that they could just apply and replicate without any personal involvement. They wanted a recipe, so to speak.

In the second stage of our investigation – the critical reflection – we examined the question of what it is that is at stake in this case. In this respect, we arrived at two key themes: a teacher's *self-understanding* and *good practice.* While the former points at the importance of posing and investigating *ontological* questions in teacher education (e.g. *What is a good teacher?*), the latter requires asking *normative* questions (e.g. *What should I do in order to be a good teacher?*).

In order to examine such questions, we suggested in the third stage of our investigation, called *theoretical reflection*, a hermeneutical

epistemological way strongly related to the original meaning of the term *method*, namely *a way of reflection*. That reflecting on one's (professional) practice can also represent a form of research was then explicated in terms of Lindseth's understanding of the *dialogical method* as a research method. In this regard, we presented Lindseth's approach to Reflective Practice Research and by exemplifying it with a variety of contributions from classical philosophy, we argued that reflective research, starting in personal experience and concerns, has had a central place in academia for centuries. We then set out to examine the question, "What is Reflective Practice Research in epistemological terms?"

In this respect, we arrived at the conclusion that a positivistic stance, which is still widespread in the humanities, jeopardizes the development of a form of knowledge that appears to be essential, especially in professional studies: *phronesis* – that is, practical wisdom or prudence. In a further step, and based on the assumption that research, in general terms, represents an activity that produces knowledge, we pointed out that theoretical knowledge in terms of *epistemé* as well as know-how knowledge in terms of *techné* is not sufficient when it comes to study programs like teacher education and also teaching practices in higher education in general. It also needs phronesis, and the dialogical method seems to be a method to develop this form of knowledge further. This dialogical method – as a hermeneutical method – opens for different and even contradicting views. The epistemological question then is not which of them is true, but rather how can these different views contribute to expanded consciousness, a bigger picture and a deeper understanding of what we do and who we are as practitioners, researchers and finally as human beings. We called our perspective *kaleidoscopic* epistemology and explicated this perspective by means of the Indian Jain parable of the blind men and the elephant.

If we now close our line of argumentation like a circle and return to our starting point, namely our experience of discrepancy in our Dialogos Workshop with the students, then especially one thing seems to become apparent: Existential themes like *life skills* in teacher education require the participants to engage with questions aiming for *self-understanding* and *good practice* (and not mere good techniques or knowledge). For that, a *dialogical methodos* seems not only *a way of reflection*, but also *the way to go*.

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Chapter 2

To learn or to be taught – is that (still) the question?

Siv Merethe Kapstad[1]

Abstract

There is increasing interest in adopting student-centred learning in higher education. It is assumed to strengthen students' learning and have greater relevance to working life. Student-centred learning activities are not necessarily preferred by students and student-centred learning is known to require significant effort, a clear overview and self-regulation. This essay discusses the characteristics of a student-centred learning environment and the basic pedagogical assumptions that must lead to success in such an environment. The discussion is based on pedagogical theory and practice theory and argues that when there is a change in the roles of the actors involved, the framework of the education must also change to enable the incentives for all parties to be linked to the premise of learning as a journey.

Keywords

child welfare, student-centred learning, *Bildung,* learning journey

Introduction

"I have never learned as much as I have in this course, but I have had to learn everything myself!" a student once said to me at the end of a course that I gave. The learning in this course was based on the principles of student-centred activities, with an emphasis on the ability for critical reflection in connection with authentic cases from the child protective services. This happened a few years ago, and I cannot be sure if the student's comment was exactly as quoted above, but I have not forgotten this feedback, and I have many times found myself thinking back to this episode. Therefore,

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when I was asked[2] some years later to choose a situation or incident from my own practice as a university teacher and process it through critical and theoretical reflection, this episode was once again brought to mind.

This essay is structured by first presenting the background to this experience and the methodological approach. The original reflection is then presented as a narrative, followed by critical and theoretical reflection. In this section, I examine what was at stake in this situation and enter into a dialogue with pedagogical philosophy, theory and research to discuss it. The discussion is structured around five interrelated aspects of the phenomenon of learning: the environment as an opportunity for learning, student diversity, conditions for autonomous learning, the learning journey and framework, and pedagogical practice. In the concluding remarks, the reflections are summed up and possible implications for education are presented.

Background

Child welfare education is one of three social work programmes in Norway. Graduates are qualified to work with children and young people, and child welfare practitioners have the skills required to identify needs and provide help to vulnerable children, young people and their families (Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, 2019). The guidelines state that graduates of the programme must be capable of providing "the right help at the right time" (Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, 2019, section 2). The ability to make sound professional judgements is therefore a key skill for child welfare professionals (Devaney & Spratt, 2009; Grimen & Molander, 2008).

There are strict requirements for professionals that their work must be of high quality, within the framework of the law, and it must lead to positive change for clients. Child welfare professionals typically exercise discretion in their assessments (Læret & Skivenes, 2016). The knowledge and skills the child welfare student/professional acquires through education and practice must be transformed from the general to the contextual and individual (Grimen & Molander, 2008, p. 179). Professionals must therefore use their judgement when facing situations that cannot be solved

[2] As part of my competence development, I took the PhD course "Pedagogical Competence Development and Educational Quality" at the University of South-Eastern Norway in 2021. This course, which was led by Guro Hansen Helskog and Glenn-Egil Torgersen, included pedagogical philosophy and ethics. Reflection and philosophical dialogue about one's own practice and competence was a common theme throughout the course, all facilitated by Helskog.

by clear recommendations or rules (Grimen & Molander, 2008, p. 179). In child welfare work, there is considerable leeway for the use of professional discretion. The work of a child welfare worker will interfere with other people's lives, and the question of what characterizes good practice is raised in meetings with vulnerable children, young people and their parents.

The combination of a high degree of discretion, opportunities for very intrusive interventions and the vulnerability of the clients requires considerable professional skill from child welfare workers. Complex professional competence can be explained as a combination of theoretical, profession-specific and personal competence. These forms of competency form part of dynamic relationships in the practice of the profession. Grimen (2008, p. 71) uses the term "practical syntheses" to explain the knowledge bases of professions. Practical synthesis refers to how theory and practice are part of a complicated interplay, where the theoretical multidisciplinarity of the professions is validated through their requirements and tasks. The knowledge base of a profession has a heterotelic purpose (p. 73) because it serves "certain values".

Methodological approach

In this chapter, experience, reflection and theory are combined in order to understand more of what unfolds in practice and extract new knowledge from this experience. This understanding is revealed by using theory to describe and explain (Sæverot & Kvam, 2019). As participants in practice, we are part of what happens through our experiences, actions and our person. Practice takes place continuously and is shaped by more or less conscious actions and traces from the past (Kemmis, 2012). Situations and experiences in practice can bring forth valuable information and knowledge about practice, which can be extracted by taking the experiences seriously and processing them. In practice, one constantly encounters situations and episodes where something unforeseen happens. There may be episodes where what takes place diverges from one's expectations; the external reality does not match one's inner thoughts. Such experiences of discrepancy (Lindseth, 2020, p. 83) make one stop and wonder. Such situations or experiences can, through reflective contemplation, lead to new insights and knowledge that can benefit practice.

> Such an inquiry is then not about *justification*, but about understanding and discovering connections; it takes place within a *context of discovery*. Then we need a *reflexive method* that seeks inner evidence for the insights we work forward. (Lindseth, 2020, p. 96, author's translation)

Danielsen (2013) notes how practical knowledge is not the same as evidence in traditional research but argues that it must nevertheless be justified in practical research that the knowledge obtained is sustainable. In reflexive practice research, the researcher seeks a shift from an action-oriented approach to a more thoughtful and reflexive perspective. Kvarv (2014) suggests the concept of "intersubjective understanding" as a means to validate practice research. The reader must be able to follow the research process through the presentation of the experience via theorizing and reflection, where the researcher's preconceptions and experience are accounted for, contextualized and discussed. In this way, theoretical concepts can be used to grasp the experience and critically reflect on this with the aim of enhancing knowledge and understanding. Reflexive practice research is thus a hermeneutic process because "the practice experience is understood in a theoretical perspective which at the same time is challenged by the experience" (Danielsen, 2013, p. 18, author's translation).

Original reflection

I had been a lecturer in child welfare for just over a year. A colleague and I ran a development project that focused on the use of digital and student-active learning methods (Kapstad & Ovrum, 2019, 2022; Ovrum & Kapstad, 2019, 2021). The purpose was to strengthen the students' basic knowledge and enhance their understanding of the work of the child welfare service, in terms of both investigations and interventions. We restructured a ten-credit course by building a digital learning path, creating e-lectures and constructing a fixed case. We also set aside time for weekly tutorials for students. We exchanged ordinary lectures with dialogue-based class meetings and told the students that we expected them to have worked on assignments (e-lectures and self-study in addition to group work) as preparation for face-to-face classes and group work. In the face-to-face classes, we expected the students to participate in discussions with each other and with the lecturer. There was good attendance in all the classes, excellent student engagement in the tutorials and greater use of theoretical insight when the students analysed and discussed practical dilemmas.

The learning design we developed was based on principles of learning where the learner is an active participant. Through collaboration, case assignments, supervision and reflection, we wanted to help the students develop their theoretical understanding, methodological skills and ability to see the specific aspects of the individual and situation. We wanted to facilitate a learning environment where students were trained to use discretion in making assessments when faced with various authentic issues in child welfare work.

We obtained oral and written evaluations from the students during and near the end of the course. It was in one of the meetings with the student group at the very end of the course that one of the students exclaimed: *"I have never learned as much as I have in this course, but I have had to learn everything myself!".* She waved her arms in a gesture to her fellow students as if she were asking for their opinion. She received many nods, and several said, *"I agree!"*

I perceived the student as resigned, frustrated, and on the verge of becoming a little angry. The frustration she expressed was directed at a learning process that she was not used to but from which she had found that she learned a great deal. In the same group, I had received feedback that they wanted clearer answers during tutorials: "We're asking for a reason", a student said, trying to explain that she expected answers. In our sessions, we emphasized not providing the students with answers but rather encouraging them to reflect deeply on the issues they had to enable us to arrive jointly at solutions. In tutorials, we asked the students questions such as, "What issues are you facing here?", "Why do you want to choose this solution?" and "Are there alternative ways to understand this?". Little by little, we found that the students became better at using their knowledge to improve their skill in expressing opinions and arguments. The students worked hard at the assignments they were given and became involved in the academic work of identifying various issues and discussing the significance of these for practical child welfare work. *"I have never learned so much"* gave me feedback that we had succeeded in creating good conditions for learning. We had had ten weeks with a steep learning curve, and many students had persevered and done an excellent job. The statement *"I have had to learn everything myself"* made me more thoughtful and worried; I reflected on what the students might have expected when signing up for this course.

Critical and theoretical reflection

The student`s statement above made an impression on me and became an expression of how complex, demanding and yet rewarding learning processes can be. I felt that the student was frustrated and emotional because the examination was approaching, causing some anxiety amongst students. Nevertheless, the episode made me dwell on what the student had said and how I could use this to understand more of the learning processes. Kemmis describes how what unfolds in practice here and now is "shaped by often unseen hands and habits inherited from the past" (Kemmis, 2012, p. 893). With such a perspective on practice, it makes sense to see the statement of the student in relation to intention, action and experience related to the phenomenon of learning.

Strand (2016) refers to Plato`s Meno (Løkke, 2005) to explain this phenomenon. Learning has no uniform definition, and different educational traditions will emphasize different aspects of learning. However, there are three principles that recur: learning as a process, learning as transformation and learning as relational. Strand (2016, p. 85) elaborates:

> This means that the phenomenon of learning must be understood as transformative processes that form part of, and cannot be studied detached from, the dynamic relationships between the learner, what is learned, and the learning methods. (author`s translation)

Through a dialogue, Meno changes his approach to learning. It is as if he is thrown from stronghold to stronghold when confronted with the Socratic dialogue. In his search for answers, he encounters new questions, and gradually, he realizes how a reflective attitude to the questions he seeks answers to leads to new insights. The dialogue shows how learning is a relational phenomenon in the sense that there is a dynamic link in any learning situation between the different aspects of learning (Strand, 2016).

In the episode referred to above, what was at stake in that situation? The student seemed almost surprised, as if she never would have expected to learn as much without getting answers and a blueprint for learning. Her statement was, to some extent, a complaint about having to learn everything herself and shows that her understanding of the competence she was developing was linked to an instrumentalist form of learning. The statement implies an expectation of being taught rather than taking an active stand as a *learner*. It revealed to me that although the curriculum states that learning is transformation, with an emphasis on enhancing reflection and authentic learning, this way of learning was actually quite new to her! I understood that the students sought clear answers and were somewhat disturbed by the questions they were given as answers. In the encounter with a student-centred learning environment that is based on principles of *Bildung* (student formation, holistic self-development), the expectation of being taught will make it difficult for the student to adapt. The statement can therefore be seen as an expression of an understanding of learning itself (Strand, 2016, p. 94). I will therefore use this experience to reflect on how the student role changes in student-centred learning environments and how to create conditions for a learning environment that enhances *Bildung* and professional development.

I will briefly explain below why it is so important that child welfare students gain experience and seek learning as active participants. Graduates of this professional programme are qualified to work in a certain field of expertise. A key aspect of this qualification is to present students with theoretical, factual and practical knowledge (Trevithick, 2008).

Child welfare work is a field characterized by conflict, ambiguity and complexity (Munro, 2019). High demands are placed on the achievements of the child welfare service, which must also be within the framework of the law. Child welfare work often involves wicked problems that are not clearly defined (Rittel & Webber, 1973). The theoretical and practical components of the programme prepare the students for future professional practice. Lindseth (2009) discusses how the requirements that the professional encounters in practice involve something more than applying theory and evidence-based knowledge. Professionals must use their insight and competence in specific contexts and individual situations. Lindseth (2009) describes this as a form of practical knowledge, a responsiveness to challenges.

In developing this responsiveness, students need to be encouraged to take part in their own learning and professional development. It requires an integration of knowledge (Dale, 2011) and the ability to critically reflect on and assess the validity of knowledge when dealing with various practical issues. This is a personal formation process that must take place within a community (Hellesnes, 1992; Varkoy, 2010). The ability of child welfare workers to respond will have major implications for children and their families who are in need of support. Practical knowledge becomes relevant in encounters with challenges and tasks in practical work and is developed by critically reflecting on one's own professional practice.

The environment as an opportunity for learning

In policy management documents and reviews, student-centred activities are emphasized (Damşa et al., 2015; Meld. St. 16 (2016-2017), 2017; Meld. St. 16 (2020-2021), 2020). Such learning activities seem particularly suitable for meeting the demands of the knowledge society and labour market (Meld. St. 16 (2020-2021), 2020).

The reason why student-centred activities are preferred is related to the need for reflective and independent professionals who are able to meet the demands and challenges of the field at all times. In a changing labour market, the importance of lifelong learning is also key, which requires the ability to self-regulate and monitor one's own learning (Damşa & de Lange, 2019b). Student-centred learning has been suggested to meet these demands and to be particularly suitable to enhance student learning processes with its emphasis on participation and joint decision-making and its focus on students' needs and development. Damşa and de Lange (2019b) suggest that it is not the learning that is student-centred but rather the environment in which the learner engages. A student-centred learning environment is a structured setting for students to act upon their learning needs by

engaging in the activities provided and receiving the support and guidance available (Damşa & de Lange, 2019b).

The statement on which this essay is based is derived from a course structured according to principles of student-centred learning. The learning design was carefully tailored to encourage in-depth learning, independence, and the ability to analyse, assess and exercise professional judgement in the face of complex dilemmas in child welfare work. The student activities were prepared by teachers who provided supervision and advice and participated in theoretical and practical discussions on child welfare matters. Practising analytical skills in a professional context involves sharing opinions and building knowledge together.

In collaboration on cases and practical dilemmas from the child welfare field, the students met different perspectives, understandings and arguments. The learning activities and tutorials were designed to encourage them to explore their professional identity.

Although student-centred learning is highlighted and preferred as a way to enhance quality in education, this approach might be challenged by the fact that educational programmes are governed by fixed learning outcomes (Damşa & Lange, 2019a). For students, this can appear as two different worlds that are difficult to reconcile. To put it briefly, on the one hand, they are encouraged to seek knowledge on their own terms, monitor their learning processes and engage in learning activities in collaboration with peers, while on the other hand, they must relate to learning outcomes that seem quite fixed. This discrepancy may make students hesitate to participate in novel learning activities because they are unsure whether the activities will get them where they want in terms of academic results. Society places high demands on academic results, and I wonder if this might influence how students approach learning activities that do not "tick off" one or more learning outcomes but rather emphasize reflection and *Bildung.*

Student diversity

I was surprised that the student stated that she had to learn everything on her own since she had been an active participant throughout the course and therefore contributed to and profited from the joint building of knowledge. The episode illustrates a situation that I imagine many university lecturers might recognize: students are not necessarily ready to be part of a student-centred learning environment, and they may struggle to see the value of learning in this way.

Her statement helped me to direct my focus towards the degree of effort needed and the importance of prerequisites and preferences for learning in a student-centred learning environment.

Motivation can be said to be the driving force in learning processes (Brennen, 2006). It is an orientation towards learning. The way students orient themselves and act in a learning environment will be affected by what they want to achieve and why. Understanding the relationship between motivation and self-regulated learning is crucial (Pintrich, 1999). Students who are driven by intrinsic motivation direct their focus towards their own learning process in order to enhance their competence and ability to think critically (Pew, 2007). If the motivation for learning is primarily externally controlled, it may be more difficult for students to maintain motivation for activities that they do not necessarily consider beneficial (Pew, 2007). Participation in joint knowledge building can be perceived as less meaningful by this student group (Stevenson & Sander, 2002).

There is a wide variety of students in higher education (Meld. St. 16 (2020-2021), 2020). In child welfare education, there is variation in age, experience and knowledge among the students. The interaction in the learning environment will necessarily be affected by these differences. The composition of the student group is an important factor for the teacher to consider. What will be the right level of progression? How to handle possible wide variations in the ability to self-regulate and reflect? How can the learning process be enhanced? These are some of the many questions to be answered in order to create conditions for a learning environment where exploration and independence are central. For some students, it is necessary for the teacher to function as a "temporary motivational bridge" (Pew, 2007, p. 22) and thus demonstrate the advantage of taking an active part in the learning community. Through reflection, dialogue and action, students' experiences can be incorporated into what is learned and create new opportunities for learning and development.

In andragogy, Knowles (1970) reminds us of the importance of incorporating adult students' own experiences and the knowledge they already have. This can strengthen their experience of relevance and involvement and provide greater ownership of the learning process. Such an approach highlights life experience as a source of knowledge and can be fruitful in reflexive practice in the classroom. The notion that personal experience and previous knowledge are valuable sources of understanding and new insight might encourage students to take part in learning activities jointly and individually. A student-centred learning environment must be inclusive. For lecturers, it will be important to explore the learning environment in the group and whether it is perceived as possible for the participants to enter into discussions that affect basic values and academic standpoints. If connections between the past, present and future are clarified in the learning environment, this can help to strengthen students' engagement in

the subject (Havnes, 2015; Knowles, 1970) and their motivation to join a professional community (Hellesnes, 1992).

In my practice as a university teacher, I have found that diversity in a student group can be an advantage and a prerequisite for learning with and from each other. Some of the younger students might have less life and work experience than the older ones. On the other hand, younger students are often more used to problem-solving from high school and show more appreciation for the ideas of others. This might be more challenging for older students. These factors may lead to a greater difference in a group of students between those who manage to assert themselves in line with increased demands for participation and those who do not (Lea et al., 2003; Ovrum & Kapstad, 2019). In student-centred learning, it is considered important for the teacher to take student diversity into account when facilitating learning. Students' learning preferences and their ability and motivation to learn (Biggs & Tang, 2011; Stalheim & Nordkvelle, 2019) should be part of this consideration.

Conditions for autonomous learning

In efforts to renew and develop educational practice, discussions often involve how programmes can better meet the requirements for lifelong learning in the labour market (Damşa & de Lange, 2019b). Nevertheless, programmes still largely consist of teaching and learning activities that bear the mark of "handovers" (e.g. Damşa et al., 2015; Fossland, 2015; Nerland & Prøitz, 2018).

The transition from more traditional teaching methods to student activity involves a change in the actual approach to learning. Kupperman's (1996) article still seems relevant in this context. In his "Autonomy and the Very Limited Role of Advocacy in the Classroom", he warns against a form of teaching that is based on a transfer of knowledge from the expert to the novice. Advocacy refers to the teachers' presentation of views and directly or indirectly requiring support for their position. Instead, teachers should encourage students to think for themselves and express their opinions. Kupperman argues that students must be allowed to develop as autonomous thinkers. This means being able to argue and reflect on political, structural and social issues without being afraid that a lack of complete agreement with the lecturer will have a negative effect on their marks.

This must take place in a learning environment where different voices are allowed to be heard, and arguments are welcomed and debated. Autonomous learners ask questions and actively engage in a dialogue about what is being taught.

The transition from more traditional teaching methods to student-centred activities can be demanding for some students who have to change their approach to their studies and their learning process. It requires an understanding of their role as active members of a learning community. Participating in a student-centred learning environment can therefore represent a challenge, requiring independence, motivation and the ability to self-regulate learning (Pintrich, 1999). Consequently, it is important that students understand the intention behind the learning design and find it meaningful to participate actively in the learning environment.

To achieve this, it is necessary to facilitate a learning environment that encourages students to use and develop their critical and reflective abilities. Achieving student activity understood as autonomy in the learning situation means that students are given space and time to reflect on and express their positions, attitudes and values, which must also be integrated into the theoretical, factual and personal knowledge base (Havnes, 2015; Mezirow, 1997).

Learning Journey

An essential part of my tertiary pedagogical practice involves facilitating learning and seeking to create good conditions for learning. This work includes ongoing assessments and adaptations to optimize the dynamic relationships of the phenomenon of learning. One of many methodological considerations is to maintain a balance between establishing a good structure and creating room for manoeuvre. It is important to create learning environments that encourage the desire to learn more and to become a well-qualified child welfare worker. In my work, I have considered frustration as part of the learning process. Investigating, testing and especially changing one's opinion are demanding and create frustration, which then can lead to the necessary friction and drive needed to develop and push forward. The episode I mentioned made me reflect on how I as a teacher can be sure that this frustration will not be an end in itself. It could make students want to give up. A lecturer might find it more rewarding to practice advocacy in the classroom – take on the role of the expert. As Kupperman points out, this would be an unethical way to practice pedagogy and would hinder the development of the professional competence sorely needed in child welfare.

Skjervheim (1992) presents two presumed contradictions in pedagogical theory and practice: persuasion and conviction. The relationship between persuasion and conviction is fundamental to pedagogical philosophy and is linked to the discussion of *Bildung* in education. Persuasion is linked to a more technical view of teaching, where the aim is to pass

on knowledge to the learner (student), while conviction is more related to free pedagogy, where the learner (student) must develop freely. However, education is more complex, too extensive and too important for such a dichotomy to be sufficient. Skjervheim (1992) argues for a third alternative, namely a dialectical practice. He refers back to antiquity and the Socratic dialogue. Here, the goal is to promote insight through meeting the other where the other is: becoming involved in what is to be learned in the case and engaging in an exchange of opinions related to this. It is by understanding and dealing with the tension involved in providing a framework and space that the teacher's skills come into play (Skjervheim, 1992). The role of the teacher is to facilitate and participate in a dialogue about what is to be learned. It involves acknowledging what unfolds in the social interaction, building on experiences, opening up to the unknown, and engaging in inquiry and reflection. In this way, the learning environment can consist of active participants who help to develop the dynamics of the learning and thus gain new insight.

Learning is about crossing boundaries where one's own horizon of understanding is expanded by opening up to other people's ways of thinking (Hellesnes, 1992). Border areas can be a "chaotic no-man's land" (Brunstad, 2009, p. 56). When two horizons meet and unite, *Bildung* can occur (Varkoy, 2010, p. 94). Understanding and action are mutually dependent, according to Hellesnes (1992, p. 93). Therefore, dialogue leads to changes in both understanding and action. Support in the learning process, understood as dialogue and reflection, increases student understanding to enable the chaotic and frustrating elements of learning to remain manageable and useful, and does not discourage students from wanting to explore more. Varkoy (2010) describes the concept of *Bildung* in a similar way and emphasizes that this involves "venturing away from oneself into the unknown, stretching one`s own limits in order to properly find one`s true self" (p. 88). Studies of student-centred learning environments show that they require a high degree of independence and the ability to self-regulate (Damşa et al., 2015). Taking an active part in one's own learning process and contributing to knowledge construction with others requires discipline and effort. If the teacher no longer presents all the answers, the students themselves must articulate and test their own hypotheses. This requires not only the ability to analyse and balance different points of view but also an ability to reflect and be independent. Such conditions for learning will enhance the development of professional competence and the ability to handle difficult situations in practice. Dialogue is central to this development. The statement *"I have never learned as much as I have in this course, but I have had to learn everything myself!"* indicates how demanding learning

can be in the spectrum between persuasion and conviction, cf. the concept of Skjervheim (1992).

Frameworks and pedagogical practices

Student responses can be understood in light of the demands and contradictions that exist in learning and the environment. Students may encounter fewer learning situations as they follow the path from wonder and investigation towards new insights than they had expected. The education might be more tied up in old teaching patterns than expected. In order to create learning environments that enhance quality and prepare students to become skilled professionals, it is of great importance that students learn how to learn and that the incentives and framework of the education are in line with such an understanding.

The teacher's individual practice is partly shaped by framework factors such as changes in educational policy, and such changes have indirect and direct consequences for the actions and choices made in practice. A change in focus from whole-class lectures to more student-active approaches and the incentives that are communicated through factor calculation and a focus on fixed learning outcomes will affect student-teacher interaction in practice. Kemmis describes learning practices in terms of ecologies of practices (Kemmis, 2012, p. 887), where different practices are influenced by and affect each other. Physical, contextual and social elements affect what unfolds in practice. In order for educational programmes to achieve their goal of a more student-centred learning environment that prepares students for the tasks that await them in practice, and qualifies them for lifelong learning, this must also be reflected in the framework around the programmes.

In this way, a structure of various departments, levels and actors is formed, which together constitute practice. In this perspective, the scope for changes in educational practice is both limited and promoted by the external framework.

Concluding remarks

Reflexive practice research is based on lived experience in practice. Such situations arise in moments of surprise and wonder (Brinkmann, 2014; Fujii, 2015). This essay is based on one such experience. Conducting reflexive practice research is similar to the circular reflection work of a reflective practitioner, as described by Schön (1987, 1995). When one encounters surprising situations, the question of what is at stake in the situation is indicative of one's further reflection. The practitioner is thus part of a reflexive practice by daring to explore the situation and learn

from it. In this way, the reflective dimension can both inform practice and be challenged in practice, while the actions become the starting point for reflection. Reflexive practice research can provide new knowledge about practice, but also strengthen the practitioner's ability for professional artistry (Schön, 1995), or a responsiveness in practice (Lindseth, 2009).

"I have never learned as much as I have in this course, but I have had to learn everything myself!" was a statement, an experience and an opportunity to gain new insight. In this essay, I have reflected on how it can be understood in an educational context where the dynamic relationship in the learning process is key. It reveals the complexity of learning. For me, it was an important reminder that student-centred activities indeed require certain qualities in the learning environment and that operating in the spectrum between persuasion and conviction is not necessarily rewarded with satisfied students – initially. To provide good conditions for learning implies monitoring students` frustration. Education should promote *Bildung* through a learning journey. But, to achieve such a goal, the learning environment must be tailored to include internal and external resources in order to enhance independence and critical thinking. Suitable conditions for exploration and inquiry must be established and developed in the pursuit of practical wisdom. In such a perspective, learning should not be directed towards fixed outcomes but rather lead to an independent, reflexive ability to constantly seek new horizons. The child welfare worker will encounter difficult situations and dilemmas that call for theoretical, practical and personal knowledge. To enhance the quality of child welfare education in order to prepare students for the transition to work requires an understanding of how to facilitate a learning environment that provides *Bildung* and the ability for lifelong learning.

In the discussion on how to raise the quality of professional education, experiences from practice can provide valuable input on the actions of those involved and on how the framework of the education promotes or constrains the desired development. Moreover, understanding the depth of reflexive practice and the development of responsiveness in practice is a matter of enhancing professional competence.

It requires time and space to build learning environments with a focus on co-creation, *Bildung* and autonomous learning. How educational institutions facilitate this through strategic guidelines and frameworks is a very important aspect of what unfolds in practice. Developing professional competence is a transformative way of learning; it takes time and hard work, and frustration and adversity are part of the learning process. In other words, authentic learning equals hard work over time for everyone involved. Evaluations of the educational practice should take this into account. It reveals the need for an overarching approach to discussing the

conditions and development of practice and calls for what Kemmis (2012) refers to as creating "communicative spaces" (Kemmis, 2012, p. 898), in order to discuss the pedagogical practice and its framework. This essay is a contribution to this discussion, emphasizing knowledge acquired in practice as a source of understanding.

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Chapter 3

Identity development in higher education: teacher's training informed by folk high school pedagogy

Johan Lövgren[1]

Abstract

In this chapter I analyse my first lecture as a full-time academic, an introduction to pedagogy for primary school teacher's training. Finding no time in a full schedule to prepare, I fell back on my experience from twenty years as a folk high school teacher. The focus of the lecture became the student's negotiation of identity and internalisation of values connected to the occupation they prepared for.

The chapter implies that there is a need for educators to challenge the values of students in higher education. A critical analysis of the introductory lecture asks if the pedagogical ideals and practices of the folk high schools can contribute to higher education with a focus on personal development. Theoretical reflection presents a model for learning that involves values and identity while arguing that such learning holds a process-oriented substance. To develop such learning, the values must be embodied by the teacher.

Keywords

Identity development, values in HE, folk high school pedagogy, teacher education.

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Introduction

It is 4.30 in the morning, and I am preparing my very first lecture as an associate professor at the University of South-Eastern Norway. After my first weeks as a full-time academic, my head swam after what to me seemed like an unreasonable number of different department meetings. These, combined with my efforts to understand the university's different systems of digital communication, filled my waking hours. There had been little to no time left to study the course literature and prepare for this morning and my first meeting with the students – an introductory class in pedagogical theory.

For over twenty years, my primary position had been that of a folk high school teacher. I had combined this with finishing my PhD and working part time as a researcher at Swedish and Norwegian academic institutions. But now the size of my projects and the demands from a growing research network had made this double occupation unworkable. While it grieved me to leave the role of folk high school practician, I looked forward to being a full-time academic with much more room for research and writing.

I had enjoyed meeting my new colleagues at the pedagogy department but was taken back by their stories about students with low motivation and high dropout rates. Clearly engaged and very capable lecturers related experiences of students habitually eating in class while giving their primary attention to social media on electronic devices.

I shared the responsibility for the introductory class in pedagogy with a colleague who had a background in counselling teenagers. As we had both met many young adults with traumatic experiences from their early school years, we saw the importance of the work of primary school teachers. Provoked by the accounts of demotivated students, we agreed that a central aim for our introductory course would be to give the students a vision of the task that they trained for. By focusing on the children that they would meet and the possibilities that a primary school teacher has to influence these children's lives, we hoped to increase their engagement in the course.

Concrete reflection

When I started preparing for my first lecture, these felt like very high aspirations. There had been no time left to read all the course literature or to design my outline for the semester. The weeks of trying to get an overview of the organisation of the university had not just left me with no time for reading, but I was tired and had to dig deep to find motivation for my preparation.

"What would be the most vital learning these new teachers' students could receive?" I asked myself. The answer I found was: "To see the goal

for their studies and get a vision of the importance of the task they were training for". Could I use my experience as a folk high school teacher to design an introductory lecture that engaged the students in such a reflection? The competence I had was to build classes on interaction and dialogue to motivate my students and initiate their reflection on the values they represented.

A few hours later, I had a basic design for the lecture, shaped by my backbone as a teacher. In my tiredness and lack of formal preparation, I fell back on the teaching methods I really knew, the dialogue-based teaching that I had practiced with my students at the folk high school.

The Nordic folk high schools

To put the presented reflective analysis in context, a short introduction to the Nordic folk high schools is needed. These schools have a 175-year history in the Nordic countries, and the movement has been described as a central component in the democratic development of the region (Tøsse, 2004; Lövgren & Nordvall, 2017; Andersen & Björkman, 2017). The schools represent a *bildung*-pedagogy with a focus on dialogical processes and reflections that engage the whole person of the student (Mikkelsen, 2014; Korsgaard, 2011; Straume, 2013). There are over 400 schools spread over the Nordic countries; 80 of these are found in Norway. The Norwegian folk high school law affirms the schools' role as alternative pedagogical institutions without exams, a set curriculum or a grading system (Folkehøyskoleloven, 2002).

At the folk high school where I had worked, the main courses focused on sports and travel. As a teacher in philosophy, psychology and religion, I had to work hard to motivate students for these subjects without the aid of tests, grades or exams. Both as a practitioner and in my research, I developed dialogue-based teaching grounded in the pedagogical philosophy of NFS Grundtvig (Lövgren, 2018; Grundtvig, 2011).

The introductory lecture

As I met the students five hours later, I looked forward to getting to know them and trying out an introductory class based on folk high school pedagogy. The lecture was loosely structured into four main parts, consciously open to being changed by the student's input. The presentation below follows the four main parts of my design as they developed in the four hours the students and I spent on the lecture. In the following section, the structure is used in a critical analysis that connects the practice account to the chapter's final theoretical reflection.

Part 1. Getting to know each other

To get to know the students, I asked each of them to present their hobbies, backgrounds and why they joined the program. As I had always done with my FHS students, I took time to ask follow-up questions of each student. In response, I shared anecdotes from my own life, and we laughed together over our common associations with things like the national prejudices of their dialect and home region, what it's like to be the oldest of five siblings or why you spend fifteen hours a week on handball training. Besides having a laugh and getting to know each other, I got to hear the students explain their own motivations for becoming primary school teachers. The maturity reflected in their answers as well as the personal engagement impressed me. They talked about their hope of being able to help children grow and their aim to support the children who didn't function within the system.

Part 2. Sharing bad and good experiences of teachers

In starting up the main part of the lecture, students were asked to join in groups and share stories of their own primary school teachers. The initial task was for each of them to find an example of a teacher who a) did not support learning in the classroom and who b) did not create an inclusive fellowship among their pupils. As they referred to personal experiences, we connected these to the motivation they had given in the presentation for wanting to become a teacher. One student told of how she was humbled and ridiculed by a primary school teacher. Another related having a sister with learning disabilities who fell out of the school system after being confronted with the expectations of an elitist junior high teacher.

As we moved on, the same groups shared experiences of teachers who a) had supported learning in the classroom and b) who laid the groundwork for an inclusive pupil fellowship. As we talked about their experiences, I would ask things like, "Why was that teacher so important to your learning?" or "What was it that teacher did to include all the pupils?". A few times I would respond by telling anecdotes from my own life, as a teacher, as a pupil and as the father of a child with a learning disorder.

Part 3. The case of Trym and Eva

After an hour of sharing stories about our personal positive and negative experiences with teachers, the students were presented with a case based on the detailed story of two fictional children called Trym and Eva. I gave them a detailed account of how the two children met when Eva and her mom moved in next door to Trym's family. The two children soon became best friends, and though very different in character (or maybe because they

were so different), they bonded closely throughout their preschool years. Trym was a quiet and thoughtful boy who loved books, while Eva was full of life and always presented new ideas for how to change the games they played. When they started first grade, Trym was already reading his big brother's schoolbooks from third grade, while Eva's mother had just consented for her to be tested for ADHD after several concerned reports from her kindergarten teachers.

After a ten-minute introduction to the case, students worked in pairs, writing a text in which they imagined how the two children would experience their first weeks at school. As each couple presented their versions of Trym's and Eva's initial school experience, I was again impressed by the depth of the students' reflections. They saw such a variety of potential problems and positive experiences that these two children could potentially experience. I was also struck by the understanding they showed for how the first weeks as a pupil could potentially affect the rest of a child's schooling. In our discussion about the different developments of the case that they presented, we often returned to our own experiences as pupils in primary school.

After a break, the students were given the task of being the primary school teachers who received Trym and Eva on their first day at school. I asked, *"How would you plan the first weeks of schooling for these children?"* and *"What learning activities could meet the needs of these two children and their classmates?"*. While the students worked on this task, I walked around and discussed different learning activities, but most of all, I helped the students connect their role as teachers to their own experiences and the teachers and pupils they had known.

As we talked through their ideas for activities that could meet the needs of both Trym and Eva, we connected the games and learning activities to stories of our own experiences. In response to the students often very personal accounts, I responded by telling them of children and young people I have met whose lives had found a new direction through one engaged teacher. As it became natural in the flow of the discourse, I used my own experience as an example of this, sharing with them how one specific teacher had helped me land on my feet after my parents' divorce at the age of ten.

Part 4. Concluding dialogue

As the 4-hour lecture was coming to an end, we summarized the different parts of the session and connected the theme to the here and now. Our hours together gave weight to the statement:

> *"The education you are entering certifies you to be the teacher who meets Eva and Trym on their first day of school."*

Based on the past four hours and the progression of the lecture, we reflected together on the impact that a primary school teacher has. I asked:

"What can you do to prepare yourself for this task?"

The following dialogue became so absorbing that we forgot the time, and I was scolded by a waiting lecturer for not emptying the lecture hall in time for his students.

The rest of the first year

In the following weeks, lectures with the first-year students connected more directly to the course plan and to their assigned literature. As the students entered the world of pedagogical theory, I sought to connect the material to our shared experience in that first session. We often found references in the learning theories or didactic perspectives we were analysing to that initial time of sharing.

During the students' initial semester, I observed these students as they became established in their role as university students. What was their driving force? Where there any signs that our first intense session and the follow-up in the months to come had affected their motivation for becoming a primary school teacher? Were they connecting the literature they read and the pedagogical theory they learned about to their meeting with children in a primary school?

Such an observation is, of course, tinted by my own hopes and aspirations, but I saw signs and heard references of such a connection. Like when I overheard one of them saying to the other students "we are studying for the world's most important job". In the end of term evaluation, I found that students asked for more case-based discussions and referred back to that first lecture in pedagogical theory.

Critical analysis

It was while working with this chapter and becoming engaged in a critical analysis of the introductory lecture that I realised how much the basic structures of the session reflected my experience as a folk high school teacher. As I described and structured the lecture, I saw how the frustrations from the larger context combined with the tiredness and the pressure of having little time to prepare the class made me retreat to the methods that had become a part of me during my 20 years of practice as an FHS teacher.

Though the analysis of the described practice experience has followed the three steps of concrete, critical and theoretical reflection, it has in many ways been a wandering back and forth between the three phases. The

second main section of the chapter mirrors this wandering by connecting the concrete retelling of the account with a critical reflection and indicating how this has led on to the final theoretical section. In this section, I will go through each part of the lecture and ask what purpose or aim the applied learning activities had. To show how these connect to the final theoretical section of the chapter, each part will be connected to concepts from learning theory. The third and final section will develop these concepts further and combine them in a model describing the dialogue-based learning represented by the folk high schools.

Part 1. Building towards an intersubjective meeting

The introductory part of the session can seem to be just a shallow and unproductive time of laughing and being silly together with the students. To me, the aim of just having fun together would be good enough in itself as an opener for a class. But the purpose goes deeper than sharing a laugh. Humour can, if used rightly, help everyone to feel more comfortable and safer. The questions and follow-up themes that we laugh about are steered towards positive themes that bring us together. In sharing from my own life, I let the students enter into my personal sphere as I am entering into theirs.

This introduction starts to build a connection with each student. In a sense, I am using personal contact and humour to build towards a form of learning that is the heart of folk high school pedagogy. The equal sharing between me and the students and the laughter establish the basis for a *living interaction* in the lecture, nurturing a form of dialogue that is based on a subject-to-subject interaction. Through my sharing and involvement with the students, I also steer my own position as a teacher to offer the students a *lived example* of the values I want them to embrace, giving them an opening toward *an embodied learning.*

Part 2. Developing an identity as teacher students

It is a conscious choice to start part 2 with negative experiences of a primary school teacher. Somehow, I think negative experiences are easier to remember or find. Also, negative experiences display the power that a teacher has in such a vivid way. It is easy to empathize with a child who has been bullied by a teacher, and so the first learning activity in part 2 initiates a process of identifying and empathising with the pupils my students are training to teach.

Together, the sharing of positive and negative experiences of teachers becomes a reconnection with their own time as pupils in primary school.

The identification with the vulnerability of being a pupil has the potential of building respect for the children they will have in their care. It can also hopefully initiate a *personal development* towards a teacher's identity, where the ideal is an intersubjective meeting with their pupils.

The stories of teachers who had a positive impact on their students' lives can help map the outline of a positive teacher role. The exercise aims at initiating a *reflection* on their current role as *legitimate peripheral participants in a community of practice* through the process of remembering role models and what a teacher has meant in their own lives. These examples are connected to developing their own professional identity. Having voiced the aim of becoming "good teachers" connects their identity as students to being legitimate peripheral participants in the community of teachers having a positive impact on their pupils.

Part 3. Two pupils personalised

The two fictive first graders, Trym and Eva can serve as a two possible personalisations of children the students can identify with or that they know. The section connects the students' memories and the motivation they presented to two specific children. The idea is to give the empathy that was voiced in their motivation for becoming teacher students a practical focus by describing two pupils and their needs. To fulfil their future tasks as teachers, they need the tools their university studies can supply them with to meet students such as Trym and Eva.

Asking the students to plan the activities connects the emphatic training with theoretical perspectives that will be central to their university courses. By introducing a case in the lecture, we move from what can be described as *explorative learning* towards a more *embodied learning*. Though the focus is on two specific children, the learning in the section moves from a focus on *reflection* towards a *process-oriented substance*.

Part 4. Concluding dialogue

The conclusion of the lecture is the part where I have no notes or plans. If the first three parts have initiated the processes intended, then the students will take over here. The learning practices were intended to connect their initially expressed motivation for becoming primary school teachers to their role as university students. Such processes of re-evaluating values and development of identity follow a *noncoherent learning trajectory*. As we try to track such a development, it will appear in *the form of a hybrid*, observed only in *bits and pieces*.

The overall process of the lecture aims at an internalisation of the possibilities and responsibilities of a primary school teacher. The engagement

in this final discussion indicates an intense *negotiation of meaning* related to central parts of the identity of the new community of practice that they establish as university students. The negotiation involves boundary objects and practices that have been presented in the lecture. The aim of the process is to connect their identity as university students to an identity as legitimate peripheral participants in a community of practicing teachers. A community where a central reification is the endless value of each child and the teacher's role is that of a custodian of what is most precious in all of society.

Theoretical analysis

The process of theorising the lecture

In the critical analysis, I found that my experience from the folk high school's educational practices had been applied as tools to connect the personal motivation expressed by my students to the theoretical studies that they had before them. The initial lecture could be viewed as an experiment where folk high school pedagogy was used to meet a challenge in the university's programme for teachers' education. Each of the four main parts of the presented analysis is connected to theoretical concepts that will be further developed in the final section of this chapter.

The first theoretical perspective on the analysed lecture is that of the educational philosophy of NFS Grundtvig and the 19th-century development of FHS pedagogy. These are concepts that have shaped the thinking and practices of the folk high school movement in the Nordic countries. Grundtvig's educational philosophy has also had a significant influence outside the Nordic region. A Danish study maps close to 700 schools worldwide that trace their roots to his educational ideas (Bugge, 2013). Another sign of Grundtvig's influence would be the parts of the EU's adult education programme that have been named after him (Eurostat).

The second part of the theoretical analysis is the product of my own empirical research and theoretical studies (Lövgren, 2018; 2019). In these publications, I have combined perspectives from more contemporary theories of learning and identity development to create a theoretical model describing folk high school pedagogy. In the section below, I will describe the development of the model and apply the concepts in it to the analysis of the introductory lecture.

Grundtvig's educational philosophy

To analyse an educator's pedagogical practice, we have to see what lies behind the choices made and activities initiated. Researchers such as

Gert Biesta (2015) have shown how pedagogical philosophy will shape a teacher's practice. In the analysis of my own practice and my way of meeting my students, an important perspective will be the basic values that have formed me as an educator.

My educational philosophy and the values that shaped that introductory lecture are shaped by the educational and religious ideas of NFS Grundtvig. The theoretical analysis will therefore give an initial background to his philosophy and to some central concepts connected to education.

Grundtvig sees the pedagogical ideal of the Danish schools of his day as destructive (Holm, 2019), arguing that their limitation to teaching in Latin can only produce "soul-destroying rote learning" (Korsgaard, 2011, p. 28). Grundtvig promotes a dialogue between teacher and student in a "school for life", where the needs of the whole student are seen and developed. He describes "the Gordian knot of enlightenment", which must be untied by keeping a focus on personal development without losing the social aspect, by developing the individual without becoming individualistic (Grundtvig, 2011, p. 76).

The Danish professor and Grundtvig scholar Ove Korsgaard (2000; 2002; 2004; 2011) gives the concept of a *living interaction* the central position in the pedagogical philosophy that shaped the folk high schools. Grundtvig describes living interaction as an ideal for the interaction between teacher and student, as well as between the students themselves and the student and the world.

Grundtvig's central ideal of a living interaction could be descriptive of each of the phases in the 4-hour lecture. From the introduction, where we bantered, joked and laughed at details in students' presentation and my own background to each of the discussions. there was a "give and take" between me and the students. Behind the actual meeting between teacher and student lies a theological and anthropological position that has shaped the Grundtvigian folk high schools.

The humanistic, creation-based anthropology that Grundtvig represents has been described as the value that carries the pedagogy of the folk high schools (Mikkelsen, 2014). If the values behind Grundtvig's anthropology are allowed to shape the teacher-student relationship, the outcome will be an intersubjective meeting (Weiss, 2017). I would trace the respect for my students and the focus on their positive intentions that characterise the described introductory lesson to many years of internalising Grundtvig's anthropology.

When I brought these ideals with me into my initial lecture at the university, my question was: How could a living interaction become a part of a university lecture? And if so, what would it mean for the further

development of my new students? They had just entered education to become primary school teachers. Their background stories and the anecdotes from their own schooling showed that they had an initial motivation to become "good teachers". But I also knew from my new colleague's experiences that this initial motivation seemed to drop off as they became established in their student role. The focus then becomes to initiate a process that can follow the students through their time at the university and shape their values and practice as new primary school teachers.

Theorizing folk high school pedagogy

In the second stage of theoretical reflection, the described lecture experience is connected to the development of a theoretical conceptualisation of folk high school pedagogy. In my research on the Nordic folk high schools, my practical experience as a teacher has been challenged by empirical observations as well as theoretical and methodological perspectives. This process has connected theoretical concepts into a model designed to describe folk high school pedagogy.

In the main section of the theoretical reflection, I present an overview of the concepts and theories that have been applied to describe folk high school pedagogy. These will then be connected to the elements in the critical reflection of my experience in bringing the pedagogy of the Nordic folk high schools with me into a university lecture. The connection is made to theorise the possible advantages of bringing folk high school pedagogy into a professional program at a university.

The conceptual model is based on the analysis of several periods of ethnographic fieldwork at Norwegian folk high schools from 2012 to 2022 (Lövgren, 2014; 2018; 2022). The field studies share a focus on students' experiences and learning at folk high schools. The analysis of the empirical material from these students' accounts is connected to finding patterns in the learning described by students at a folk high school. In what is best described as an ongoing abductive process (Afdal, 2008), theoretical perspectives were tested to help conceptualize the students' experience of folk high school pedagogy.

Etienne Wenger's social learning theory – development and critique

One theoretical perspective has followed me throughout my research on the Nordic folk high schools. The social learning theory, with its focus on the establishment of a community of practice, describes many of the processes that can be observed in a folk high school. Concepts such as *legitimate peripheral participation* and the negotiation of identity capture central

learning processes in folk high school pedagogy. But the theory presented by Wenger also has limitations and represents a limited understanding of learning (DePalma, 2009; Lövgren, 2018). The following section will give a short introduction to concepts in Wenger's theory that are seen as central in the analysis of the introductory lecture that is the focus of this chapter.

With the introduction of the concept of legitimate peripheral participation, Lave and Wenger give the metaphor of apprenticeship a central position in their social theory of learning. The relationship that introduces a newly established learner to the community, providing the competence required for becoming a legitimate member, is used as a model for social learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 65-83). Wenger later defined the book's main intention as an effort to revitalize the concept of apprenticeship (Wenger, 1998, p. 11). An apprentice gains access to a community in a position that is peripheral in the sense that he or she is only just starting to learn the fellowship's craft or trade. At the same time, his or her membership is legitimate, and they obtain a starting position for entering the community. In a process of legitimate peripheral participation, the curriculum that is the goal for the learning process is not defined by a syllabus or found in a textbook; it is defined as a part of the community of practice itself (Wenger, 1998, p. 100).

Identity is developed on the one hand through participation in social practices, while on the other hand, it is described as individually negotiated. In Wenger's definition of the term, identity traces each individual's learning trajectory (1998, p. 158-161). *Negotiation of identity* is a theoretical construction that is reiterated throughout Wenger's writing. The construction becomes even more integral in the later redesign of Wenger's social learning theory (Wenger, 2010, p. 184-186; Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015, p. 19-27), where concepts such as multimembership and the negotiation of a learning trajectory are further developed (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015, p. 22-24).

The students in my first-year class of primary teacher's education are in the process of initiating what Wenger would describe as a Community of Practice (Wenger, 1998). The newly established community is in an intense process of negotiating their identity as students as well as the meaning of their practices and the reifications that these practices are built around. As students in a teacher training program, they can be described as apprentices, holding a position of legitimate peripheral participation (Lave & Wenger, 1991). The goal of the described lecture is to clarify their own initial motivation for wanting to enter this new community of practice. The lecture centres around the role that they are training for and seeks to connect their negotiation of meaning to the role of a primary school teacher.

Three types of value-based learning

To further analyse my introductory lecture as a university lecturer, the presented concepts from Wenger are combined with other theories of learning to build a model for value-based learning and identity formation. The model is based on empirical research in folk high schools and will be connected to the four parts of the lecture described in the critical analysis. The conceptualisation of learning in the folk high schools that the model describes can be seen in the different educational practices introduced in the introductory lecture.

The central findings from my research and its abductive analytical process have been condensed in a diagram that depicts three types of value-based learning. In the critical analysis presented in the second main part of this chapter, the four parts of the lecture were connected to concepts that can be found in the diagram.

	Reproductive learning	**Explorative learning**	**Embodied learning**
Conception	Centre/ periphery	Movement	Hybrid Bits and pieces
Learning trajectory	Inbound	In- or outbound	Noncoherent
Content	Substance	Process	Process-oriented substance
Method	Monologue	Dialogue	Embodiment Incarnation
Aim	Knowledge	Reflection	Personal development
Teacher's role	Master	Initiator Catalyst	Lived example
Area of learning	Curriculum, laws and ordinances	Investigative processes	Values Identity

The analysis of the empirical material from the ethnographic observations of the folk high school students' learning was connected to the wider field of learning theory. In this abductive process between the empirical

analysis and studies of learning theory, the seven descriptive levels in the diagram emerged. Each of these levels adapts concepts used to describe learning by writers and researchers from different academic disciplines connected to learning and personal development.

The three types of learning are not mutually exclusive; they will often appear in the same practice and even have parallel occurrences. However, they differ in the kinds of learning trajectories they induce. They are also distinguished by the role of the teacher and the type of learning to which they are intended to relate. The discourse that the models carry with them varies in that it can be described as more or less monological or dialogical.

Reproductive learning

In the first type of reproductive learning, the students' values are shaped by the process of formal learning. Here, an example would be a lecture where knowledge of the second-year curriculum in primary school is taught as a basis for understanding the values that uphold the Norwegian school system. Such classes induce different types of learning trajectories, but a central aspect can be described as following a monological discourse. The learning process has a clear goal: a centre, which is the aim of an inbound learning trajectory. The learning has a defined substance, and the teacher fills the role of the master in Lave and Wenger's model of apprenticeship, making his or her knowledge available for the students to reproduce. In the introductory lecture, my focus as a teacher was not on factual learning, but later lectures would have such a focus, i.e., knowledge of the laws and ordinances that govern the Norwegian school system.

Reflective learning

In the second type, called reflective learning, the process can be described as a movement where the learning trajectory can be either inbound or outbound. The learning that the students describe here has no predetermined goal, but each individual follows a trajectory driven by the process itself. As the students participate in reflective learning practices, they challenge established borders and start investigative processes. In this second type, the process of reflection is the goal of the practice. The teacher has the role of an initiator or catalyst, starting up a process without needing to steer it in a specific direction.

The second type of reflective learning was present when the students remembered their own experiences as pupils in a primary school setting. Here, my aim was to create a movement where the learning trajectory had no specific goal or centre. I was the initiator or catalyst of an investigative

process whose purpose was to engage students in reflection on their own memories.

Embodied learning

The third type, called embodied learning, is built on students' descriptions of a learning where the content is embodied in a person. The values are taught by meeting lived examples made manifest in the person of the Other, often represented by a staff member. This learning holds a substance, but one that is process-oriented and will not be captured in terms of a specific centre of learning. In describing the embodied learning, there is no single detectable learning trajectory.

The third type of learning is spread throughout everyday life, found in bits and pieces, as a hybrid. Embodied learning describes a kind of learning that, according to the folk high school students in the empirical studies, is especially developed within the folk high school setting. The space provided by not having exams or a set curriculum gives room for processes where borders are tested and identities defined. As the students describe their folk high school experience, they project an image of learning that shapes their values and identity. The analysis of the empirical material from my fieldwork shows how the framework and practices of the folk high schools accommodate for embodied learning.

To apply these conceptualisations to our analysis of the introductory lecture, we must first explain the concepts and the context in which they have been introduced. To do this, the following paragraphs will present a theoretical background for the concepts by connecting them to their respective theoretical frameworks. Meanwhile, the reflective analysis will, in a parallel process, apply the presented concepts to the four parts of the critical analysis.

Hybridity, noncoherence and the concept of substance

As researchers, we must ask how learning that is aimed at reflection on values can be observed. The central element in the analysed introductory lecture has to do with reflective processes where values are shaped, and the identity of the teacher students is challenged. The three first levels in the diagram relate to the concepts of hybridity, noncoherence and substance. These three levels are all related to how the shaping of values in a learner can be observed and how it appears in our empirical analysis of the learning activity.

When sociologists describe how values are present in contemporary society, the term hybrid is used (Ammerman, 2014). Ethnographic research

has given new information about how values and religion are lived, and this knowledge has led researchers to make metaphors such as bricolage (Bender, 2013). Engler argues for the use of hybridity to describe the presence of values in society (2009). Another way of conveying this view is with the argument that we should look for values in bits and pieces (Afdal, 2013, p. 211), with a descriptive use of the term syncretic (Law et al., 2013:175-176) or by using the metaphor of the rhizome (Bender, 2013, p. 25). These terms and concepts are used to give an idea of the multi-directionality and diversity of values and religion in the 21st century.

The second level uses the term noncoherence, which is used by John Law in his critique of developments in social science research (2004). He argues for noncoherence as a valid and necessary result in areas of social science. To understand human behaviour, we have to accept that there are areas where scientific methods will not capture a structured and valid observation.

To give a framework to the third level, the concept of substance is connected to Ger Afdal's overview of theories connecting values in contemporary society to learning theory. He defines the learning of values in a broad sense as movement and connects this definition to an analysis of religion as movement (2013, p. 13-18). Afdal argues that the learning of values should be analysed as a process, not as a product. He describes the presence of substance in the changing character of learning and develops a picture of the learning of values as "a substantial process" (p. 221-222).

How can these three concepts be relevant to our analysis of how folk high school pedagogy and the shaping of values are present in the analysed introductory lecture? If we want to observe embodied learning of values, the hybridity of values observed in practice is essential. If it is true that the process-oriented content of embodied learning has a noncoherent learning trajectory, then this kind of learning cannot be observed other than as a hybrid, in bits and pieces

Bakhtin and the dialogical discourse

In his literary analysis, Bakhtin describes what he calls an authoritative or monological discourse as "a compact and invisible mass – one must either totally affirm it or totally reject it" (1981, p. 343). In opposition to this monological discourse, he develops the definition of an internally persuasive discourse (p. 275). This discourse is described as "affirmed through assimilation", a process "tightly interwoven" with the people active in it (p. 345). Being involved in internally persuasive discourses is, for Bakhtin, fundamental for the development of an individual consciousness. He describes this as the converse of meeting an authoritarian discourse (p. 344).

To enter into a dialogical discourse, as described by Bakhtin, is a good definition of the aim of the introductory lecture. The internally persuasive discourse that Bakhtin describes is interwoven with the learner's identity. Such a discourse cannot be forced, but it is the product of an assimilation into the person of the learner.

Concluding reflection

Wenger's social learning theory provides a perspective where the students in my primary teacher's class are in an intense negotiation of identity. They need to define their newly established community of practice and understand their newfound role as university students. The lecture enters the sphere of negotiating identity and seeks to refer it to the role they will have as primary school teacher. The ambition was to initiate a reflection on the responsibility the role carries and the meaning it holds. The signs observed during the rest of the school year as well as in the formal evaluation of the class indicates that students might have mowed towards these goals.

But it is important to refer a *discussion of results from the analysed lecture* to the diagram that depicts a model for the three types of learning. The three first levels imply that the process-oriented content of embodied learning is only found in bits and pieces as a hybrid. It is noncoherent and will therefore not be observed in a structured, analytical manner. Firstly, this must be a warning not to push the result focus of this chapter's analysis.

Secondly, the analysis has something to say about how we evaluate embodied learning as a part of higher education. If, as my research proposes, embodied learning is often noncoherent and found as a hybrid, then the research that sets out to evaluate it must be aware of this. To evaluate or map such embodied learning, we cannot apply the traditional methods of research that demand coherence and observability to register results.

The analysis of folk high school studies shows that students' experiences of embodied learning can be connected to *the context and framework of a folk high school*. It is the third type of embodied learning that is at the centre of our theoretical reflection on how folk high school pedagogy can be an active part of a university lecture. This kind of learning appears in the lecture as a process-oriented substance that can be described as noncoherent, appearing in bits and pieces as a hybrid. To produce personal development, learners must meet an embodiment of the values that they are challenged by. There must be a lived example to convey the values and identity that this kind of learning involves. The theoretical reflection in this chapter asks if this third model of learning can also be achieved within the context of a university lecture. If so, are there processes and learning

activities developed within the folk high school setting that can be adapted to a more formal university setting?

The analysed lecture reflects my experience in these two parts of the Norwegian educational sector. I would suggest that a focus on embodied learning in higher education is becoming more and more necessary. My colleague's references to the problems of lack of motivation in the students at the teacher's programme implies a need for developing values in our students. But most of all, in my meetings with the students, I experience a hunger for this kind of identity-affirming learning where not only factual learning is reproduced. The introduction of reflective learning where students are introduced to investigative processes covers some of the need for a more developmental focus. But there is also a need for embodied learning, where the lecturer meets the students in a living interaction where personal development is the aim and the teacher dares to enter the role of a lived example. I would suggest that the pedagogical ideals and practices developed by the folk high school movement could contribute to introducing such learning in higher education.

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Chapter 4

The role of role models in military leaders' practice and education

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> *"But while to say the true word — which is work, which is praxis — is to transform the world…" (Paolo Freire, 2005, p. 88).*

Abstract

Essentially, this essay examines the concept of role models in a Norwegian military context. Military leadership education in Norway has changed significantly since I first attended the Royal Norwegian Naval Academy (RNA) in the early 1980s. Military teachers, as role models or ideals, are still in the same powerful position. In this essay, I reflect on the possible impacts of role models in both Naval leadership education and practice. Through a reflective practice approach, I puzzle over some significant personal experiences that I consider as landmarks in my career.

Role models may be regarded as liberators or hindrances in a military "Community of Practice" (CoP) in which midshipmen through four years of learning and *bildung* processes are a part of. These processes may also be considered as taking place in a community of learning (CoL). Paolo Freire states this: "Attempting to liberate the oppressed without their reflective participation in the act of liberation is to treat them as objects which must be saved from a burning building; it is to lead them into the populist pitfall and transform them into masses which can be manipulated" (Freire, 2005, p. 65). As defenders of liberation, military leaders and teachers must engage in liberating, not oppressive actions. This, I believe, is crucial both for personal and institutional development.

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Keywords

Military leadership, higher education, community of learning, community of practice, reflective practice, trust, integrity, research on practice, reflections on research on practice.

Introduction

This reflective essay encompasses some intertwined elements. The overarching theme is about military role models – good and/or bad and their possible liberating or limiting impact. It is also about notions of role models in my military "upbringing" as a midshipman[2] at the RNA as well as a personal, decisive experience concerning the effects of leadership on my first commission. The term "role model" draws on two prominent theoretical constructs: the concept of role and the tendency of individuals to identify with other people occupying important social roles (Bell, 1970; Katz & Kahn 1978; Slater, 1961); and the concept of modeling, the psychological matching of cognitive skills and patterns of behavior between a person and an observing individual (Bandura, 1977b; 1986). Organizational behavior and career theorists have suggested that identification with role models is critical to individual growth and development (Dalton, 1989; Erikson, 1993; Hall 1976; Krumboltz, 1996; Schein, 1978; Speizer, 1981). Role models may also be regarded as liberators or hindrances in a military "Community of Practice" (CoP) (Wenger 1999). The above-mentioned processes may also be considered as taking place in a community of learning (CoL) (see for instance Chapman et al., 2005).

There is one influential incident which happened during my first years in the military that deserves attention. In 1986, the tragic Vassdalen disaster happened, where 16 drafted soldiers were killed in an avalanche. At that time, leadership in The Norwegian Armed Forces (NAF) was mostly order-based. To put it somewhat extremely, you were to follow orders and not question them. This changed significantly after the tragic avalanche disaster. Luckily, one might say, the disaster spawned a wide-ranging debate. The debate eventually resulted in what is called the reform of the Norwegian military leadership, which addressed the organizational structure of the military, its organizational culture, procedures, and leadership ideals. The solution to the above-mentioned challenges was the management philosophy known as mission command[3] (Chief of Defence 2012). This, in turn, would also influence Norwegian military leadership education

[2] Military student at the RNA.

[3] Mission command translates to: Oppdragsbasert Ledelse (OBL) in Norwegian.

(Kjellevold Olsen, 2017), probably for the better, by introducing broader participation in decision-making and leadership processes. The Vassdalen disaster and the changes that later took place may explain some approaches to or differences in leadership that I have experienced. My experiences with military leadership education at the RNA and later in praxis as a commissioned officer have made some everlasting impressions.

Reflective practice may be regarded as one of the ways that professionals learn from experience to understand and develop their practice (Jasper, 2003). Kolb (1984) draws attention to the fact that when we want to learn from something that has already happened to us, we need to recall our observations of the event and then reflect on those observations in some way. Kolb suggests that we frame some action as a result and that this possible course of action is seen as our 'learning'. This will then inform any action that we take as a result of the experience. Reflection is considered a process or activity that is central to developing practices (Dewey, 1933, 1938; Loughran, 1996). It also retains connotations of thinking processes and contemplative self-examination. (Leitch & Day 2000). Applied research, practically founded, is normal science – research that is based on the prevailing paradigm without threatening it (Freely after Kuhn, in Lindseth, 2020, p. 77). Through the above, I may come to a deeper understanding of certain experiential phenomena.

Norwegian military leadership education has changed significantly since I first attended the RNA in the early 1980s. This was in the Cold War era. Military teachers, as role models or ideals, are still in the same powerful position. In this essay I reflect on the possible impacts of role models in Naval leadership education and practice. I use my attendance at the RNA, but foremost one of my experiences as a commissioned officer, as my reflective case. Role models at the RNA are linked to their own formation, or *bildung* (Klafki, 2007), culture, and practice. Through a personal narrative, I will shed light on the latter and how it affected me. By using the reflective practice approach (Lindseth, 2020), I also puzzle over a particular significant personal experience that I consider cardinal in my military career.

It strikes me that many officers in the Norwegian military I have met tend to have been bound by their former education and practice – their own *bildung.* I have gone down that road myself, mainly because of a lack of critical consciousness, reflection, and an early excessive faith in the existing system. I may, as such, have taken on the role of oppressor. That is, "The oppressed suffer from the duality which has established itself in their innermost being. They discover that without freedom they cannot exist authentically. Yet, although they desire authentic existence, they fear it. They are at one and the same time themselves and the oppressor whose consciousness they have internalized" (Freire, 2005, p. 48).

But Freire also states this: "Attempting to liberate the oppressed without their reflective participation in the act of liberation is to treat them as objects which must be saved from a burning building; it is to lead them into the populist pitfall and transform them into masses which can be manipulated" (2005, p. 65). I will, therefore, reflect on my own practices as a commissioned officer, possible role model, military teacher, supervisor, and learner. I will also puzzle over how my understanding of liberation, learning and practice improvement began and where I believe it is going. To again return to Freire: "In order for the oppressed to be able to wage the struggle for their liberation, they must perceive the reality of oppression not as a closed world from which there is no exit, but as a limiting situation which they can transform" (p. 49). Role models have thus played an important role in my own struggle. This leads me to the original reflections, the tales I must tell.

Episode 1 – original reflection

Bergen – autumn 1983. I reported to the RNA with high expectations. Somehow, RNA was not exactly what I presumed it to be. I expected that our military teachers were supposed to be persons with very high standards, or something that is perfect or the best possible (see for instance Olsen et al., 2021). They very early told us that we were the best of the best of Norwegian youth. Shouldn't they then also be like that? Let me first point out: Some of our military teachers were also class teachers. That is, some of them also oversaw certain administrative and managerial/leadership tasks in addition to being teachers. They were also role models by wearing uniforms with visible higher ranks, such as lieutenant commanders and above. In other words, they had positional power (Van den Brink & Steffen, 2007). In this sense, there were dominance relations between "us" and "them".

Some of them taught military leadership, and leadership is not the property of a person (McGregor, 1960). Leadership "refers to interpersonal processes in social groups, through which some individuals assist or direct the group toward the completion of group goals" (Segal, 1981, p. 45). Norwegian military leadership also relies heavily on trust as a foundation for OBL (CHOD 2020). Trust is a tool that helps individuals deal with uncertainty and, in a better way, expect different outcomes (Luhmann, 2000). Military leadership is also about counselling. That is, a concern for the subordinates' well-being (e.g., Pellerin, 2008). Counselling includes active listening and can offer a safe place to confide and resolve problems and issues (Ibid.). In other words, it is a dialogical approach.

I therefore did not expect some of my military teachers to engage in such a "top-down" or authoritarian approach as educators, but some still did. I myself have for many years embraced a dialogical approach in many situations in life, and I still consider dialogue to be my preferred praxis. And "true dialogue cannot exist unless the dialoguers engage in critical thinking… thinking which perceives reality as process… thinking which does not separate itself from action, but constantly immerses itself in temporality without fear of the risks involved" (Freire, 2005: 92). To a certain extent, I was therefore disappointed with some of our military teachers who did not engage in dialogue. Without dialogue, there is no communication, and without communication, there can be no true education (ibid., p. 92-93).

I have for some time claimed that this positional power, visible through the military rank, is one of the most effective hindrances to effective and constructive communication. And I have on several occasions raised this particular question: If we are not able to or do not have the leverage to address difficult questions, how will we then be able to move on and better ourselves? Later, as I went into service as a commissioned officer, I experienced both good and bad military leaders who had a significant impact on my choices later in life. One military leader especially affected me – in many ways. As Lockwood et al. (2002) state: "People may be especially likely to be inspired by…negative role models, who represent a feared self, when they are intent on avoiding failure" (p. 854). On the other hand, positive role models can inspire one by illustrating an ideal, desired self, and highlighting possible achievements that one can strive for (Lockwood & Kunda, 1997; 1999).

I remember thinking that my military leaders at that time were supposed to be positive role models, but a few disappointed me gravely. Some, though, had the ability to engage me in fruitful dialogue, conversations, and discussions. For that, I am grateful. They gave me hope, and hope is an integral part of what it is to be human (Webb, 2013). In leadership and psychological literature, there is a saying: "Bad is stronger than good". That is, bad emotions, bad parents, and bad feedback have more impact than good ones, and bad information is processed more thoroughly than good (Baumeister, Bratslavsky, & Finkenauer, 2001). And as Freire states: "Human existence cannot be silent, nor can it be nourished by false words, but only by true words, with which men and women transform the world" (p. 88). Therefore, if I am ever to question anything, I cannot be silent. I will forever vividly remember the following intertwined experiences that deeply affected me.

Good role models are, in my opinion, not easily found. They are still important to us because they can provide a basis for trust, a holding point,

and someone to identify with and admire (Bowers et al., 2016). In this sense, I believe role models may act as positive contributors to one's own actions. Also, in a learning context, there will be several encounters and role models (see for instance Magnussen et al., 2021; author's translation). But can role models also become idols in whom you blindly trust – a danger? I believe they might, because without questioning or critically reflecting on your role model's intentions or actual behaviour, you may well find yourself going astray. A blatant example of a dangerous role model is the attack on the U.S. Capitol in Washington, D.C., in January 2021. It was the cataclysmic end of a treacherous Commander-In-Chief without honour, but he is still a role model for many as I write this. This leads me to the next tale.

Episode 2 – original reflection

I expectantly arrived at my first commission as a platoon commander after graduating from the RNA. I reported for duty with the commanding officer (CO) and his first officer (XO). This was a boot camp for drafted soldiers (recruits) in the coastal artillery, the new soldiers' first military experience. I was given command of a platoon in which I had three petty officers (NCOs) under my command. Teaching, instructing, and providing guidance were essential parts of this commission, both for the young aspiring officers and the recruits. As such, I was a practitioner, teacher, supervisor, and possible role model. But I was also a learner in the early stages of a military career, as all new graduates are.

The following experiences were, for me, a turning point in my perception of military leadership education and practice. One day, when we were to carry out a field exercise, I experienced this: At the final planning meeting, the CO ordered: When we now carry out this exercise, remember to wear the same gear as the recruits and eat the same field rations as them. Be good role models. That seemed fair enough at the time. When we later that same day met the XO and CO out in the woods, they carried with them bacon and eggs and wore raincoats and rubber boots. They did not even try to hide it. I was shocked, disappointed, and angry with them. This also raised several questions in me: How could they so blatantly ignore their own orders? Is that how you lead by example? Or is that how you wish to appear as a role model for younger officers and new recruits? What were they thinking? Could it be that my image of a military leader was based on an illusion?

I realized in that very moment that this encounter could not go unnoticed. Therefore, at the following debriefing meeting after the exercise,

I raised, for me, a somewhat problematic issue in public. I asked the CO and XO this: Why is it that you two, when you explicitly order us to lead by example, do not follow your own orders? And I exemplified it. The room went silent and icy cold. I remember seeing the CO become very angry, but he did not answer me directly there and then. He wanted me to meet him in his private chambers. Chills ran down my spine. What would happen next? Was he going to excuse his actions or teach me to do things the way he did that day in the woods?

Later that same day, he called me to his office and gave me a rough reprimand. I was, as a first lieutenant, not in the position to shame him or his XO in front of others. This was, according to him, not the way to address such issues. He pointed out clearly: If I were ever to attempt this again, he strongly advised me to address him man to man in confined quarters. Or else, it would have consequences for me. Fear struck me then, and I politely said something like, "I understand, Sir", and then he ordered me to leave. Was I to know "my place" in his entourage? I was shaken, not stirred, and I did as he ordered, but something happened in me at that moment. My reflection was that the XO exercised a certain authoritarian or restrictive leadership style, which put fear in me, and the experience of fear makes the alternative of speaking up less attractive (Guo et al., 2018). Authoritarian leaders assert absolute authority and control over employees and expect unquestionable obedience (Cheng, Chou, Wu, Huang, & Farh, 2004).

I felt oppressed in a way, but I did not fall apart emotionally. After all, I had completed a thorough military education which had made me somewhat emotionally resilient. One way to define resilience in the military is the ability to adapt to adversity or rebound from adverse situations (see for instance Bonanno et al., 2006). Emotional resilience may be a particularly important quality for helping professionals, as it can help them adapt positively to stressful working conditions, manage emotional demands, foster effective coping strategies, improve wellbeing, and enhance professional growth (Morrison, 2000; Collins, 2008; McDonald et al. 2012; Stephens, 2013).

Critical and theoretical reflection

There are especially three interconnected themes or issues I have been occupied with during the critical reflection over these two stories. They have been important for me both as a military practitioner and teacher in both CoPs and CoLs. The themes, or issues are liberating or limiting leadership, trust vs. fear in leadership praxis, and integrity – from a somewhat

learning-wise perspective. For me, integrity has not always been easy to exercise. It has caused me pain and suffering, but also the utmost personal satisfaction.

Liberating or limiting leadership?

I believe my experience with the CO has several layers or aspects to it. E.g., How did the experience in the woods affect me? And later at the debriefing meeting and finally in the CO's office? What did I expect, or did I really expect that? One might suggest that these experiences took place in both a CoP and a CoL. Why? Because I was, as mentioned above, still a learner. Yet I was also a commissioned practitioner and possible role model responsible for training and leading enlisted soldiers. I was responsible for helping to boost morale, leading by example, as well as orchestrating the professional development of my subordinates. What was at stake here was my very liberty, or emancipation – my right to express myself in the face of an oppressor without fear of consequences. Maybe I was naïve, but for me, it was a bedrock for my own sanity as a human being, albeit in a military hierarchy. Emancipation is about liberating oneself from "upbringers" (educators, parents) to lead an independent and free life (Werler, 2015, author's translation). Even so, I experienced a leader who limited my actions at the time. And I did not like it. We cannot engage in "the hypocritical formula, "do as I say, not as I do." (Freire, 2000, p. 39).

My CO took on the role of oppressor in the sense that he imposed his own understanding of leadership on me. I do not question his right to do this, but I very much question his motive(s). That is, was I not free to pursue my own understanding of effective leadership? Or as Hegel testifies: "It is solely by risking life that freedom is obtained; . . . the individual who has not staked his or her life may, no doubt, be recognized as a Person; but he or she has not attained the truth of this recognition as an independent self-consciousness" (Hegel, 1967, p. 233). For me, this was essential. I simply had to express my personal inner beliefs about good leadership. Why should I not? For me, obedience was not the path I wanted to pursue. This again leads me to Freire, who states: "Engaged in the process of liberation, he or she cannot remain passive in the face of the oppressor's violence" (2005, p. 37). Also: Human beings are not built in silence, but in word, in work, in action-reflection. (Ibid., p. 88). Word and practice should therefore go hand-in-hand. But hierarchy may inhibit voice as individuals have a fear of reprisal (Hilverda et al., 2018). Also, employee voice has an essential role to play in effective problem-solving, better decision-making by supervisors, and organizational learning (Morrison and Milliken, 2000; Detert and Burris, 2007).

The CO's reaction to my question in the aftermath of the exercise makes me wonder about the following quote by John Dewey: "The most notable distinction between living and inanimate beings is that (the former maintain themselves by renewal). A stone when struck resists. If its resistance is greater than the force of the blow struck, it remains outwardly unchanged. Otherwise, it is shattered into smaller bits. Never does the stone attempt to react in such a way that it may maintain itself against the blow, much less so as to render the blow a contributing factor to its own continued action" (p. 1). It seems to me that by reacting the way he did, he protected himself from my "blow" and, through this protective resistance, preserved his own continued actions. This has made me wonder many times in life: In which way do I react when made aware of my own behaviour? I since took voluntarily part in an extensive leadership development program in which I was given the opportunity to address my innermost fears and notions, not to mention how others reacted to my behaviour. This program made a significant difference for me later in my military career and has helped me better understand both my own and others' feelings and actions.

The CO's reprimand in his office also made me afraid, very disappointed, and angry. I was afraid in the sense that I thought I had ruined my entire military career. I was disappointed and angry because at the RNA, we were mostly taught to lead by example – and (mostly) in dialogue. And this experience proved to be the opposite. I have been thinking, why was that? And how would I now practice my own leadership? Which choices was I to take? For me, one thing became especially clear: I would never say one thing and do another. This was, for me, about integrity. I made myself one promise that day. I would forever try to stand with a straight back in my leadership positions. A praxis that I have tried to maintain – though not entirely without failure – throughout my military career. I may have been somewhat overconfident at times and thus did not monitor my own actions when interacting with others. This relates to hubris, which is the result of false confidence, leading to excessive pride about one's own abilities, attributes, or successes but without contempt towards others (Silverman et al., 2012).

As mentioned above, this experience with my CO raised many questions for me. First and foremost, I developed my own understanding of emancipative military leadership in dialogue and discussions with my subordinate NCOs and with my peer platoon commanders. I claim that this was, as Freire states: "While (the living thing may easily be crushed by superior force, it none the less tries to turn the energies which act upon it into means of its own further existence") (p. 1). I believe this was an existential question for me at the time. I could easily have followed my superior's

example that day in the woods and indulged in eggs and bacon, but I did not because I did not consider it "the right thing to do". I could also easily have exited or withdrawn from the situation. This again leads me to the following: "No matter how well a society's basic institutions are devised, failures of some actors to live up to the behaviour which is expected of them are bound to occur" (Hirschman, 1970). Even if this quote is taken from economic theory, this may have applied both to me and my CO at the time.

These stories have also inspired me to ask myself, Have I been indoctrinated or liberated from birth? Am I, as an individual, bound by previous patterns of thought and practice? (E.g., Molander, 1993). What, then, is freedom? Have I, through military leadership education and practice, been liberated, fenced in, or maybe even oppressed? I will therefore first elaborate on the ethical side of the experience. What is the right thing to do? I believe that it depends. But we must consider context first because learning is inextricably linked to context (Scribner, 1999). So, if we are to learn from experience, context must therefore be an integral part of learning.

I must admit that I have not always learned from my own experiences, or maybe not even from other's. One might consider this related to situational awareness or understanding. The concept of situational awareness (SA) is used to describe the condition in which a person, group or organization has both an overview and understanding of a situation. Endsley (1988) has defined SA as "the perception of elements in the environment within a volume of time and space, the comprehension of their meaning and the projection of their status in the near future" (Endsley, 1988, p. 97). This is fundamentally problematic because we do not perceive things the same way (see for example Carbon, 2014). Should we not then engage in fruitful dialogue to improve, or at least engage ourselves in an approach for improving a better common ground?

Liberation in praxis, teaching and learning is considered important in the Norwegian military community. We strive to develop "a critical reflective professional competence with the personnel" (FPG, p. 17). For me, this is about, e.g., liberation from existing paradigms. This may appear as a contradiction. Why? Because there are rules in the military. Some things are allowed, some are forbidden; some things are done, some are not done. The rule may suffice; it precedes judgment and is the basis for it. But then does the rule have no foundation other than convention and no justification other than usage and the respect for usage? (Compte-Sponville, 2002, p. 24). In the (Norwegian) military CoL, we therefore support the development of qualities like equality, cooperation and independence, respect, responsibility, courage, creativity, initiative, innovation, and flexibility (FPG, p. 17).

What did you learn in school today, dear little boy of mine, was once sung by Pete Seeger in 1963. These lyrics may well apply to both the military and other higher learning institutions. Freire states: "The conflict lies in the choice between being wholly themselves or being divided; between ejecting the oppressor within or not ejecting them; between human solidarity or alienation; between following prescriptions or having choices; between being spectators or actors; between acting or having the illusion of acting through the action of the oppressors; between speaking out or being silent, castrated in their power to create and re-create, in their power to transform the world" (p. 48). Role models in a CoL therefore have the capacity to liberate learners from their original state of mind. In this I mean that teachers and leaders in general have a golden opportunity to liberate others.

CoP can be regarded as "a model of situational learning, based on collaboration among peers, where individuals work to a common purpose, defined by knowledge rather than task" (Wenger 1998). On the other hand, CoL may be regarded, if one considers Dewey, as a process of transmission by means of communication of habits of doing, thinking, and feeling from the older to the younger (Dewey, 1922, p. 3). In this sense, the two seem intertwined, with much in common. Therefore, I consider this experience to be important for both learning and practice. And I find it somewhat complicated to separate the two. And ethics (e.g., honesty and integrity – which implies trust) are intertwined with military leadership (see for instance Lagacé-Roy, 2008).

Some ethical considerations

With regard to ethics, I believe my experiences raise some essential ethical questions, such as, what was the right thing to do at the time and how to do it? Therefore, let me explore some ethical sides of my experience, by asking this first question: What was the right thing to do in the woods? Or, in my case, did I do the right thing? Professor Paul Otto Brunstad (2009) states this: "…therefore leaders have a special responsibility to front the organizations against everything that threatens its borders…Some of the leaders' tasks is to protect against attacks from without, but also internally, against inner resolution…" (p. 53, author's translation). So, in this matter, I could be regarded as his inner enemy who threatened his very existence as CO. In other words, I challenged his authority. Not only that, but I probably threatened his very "empire", in which he at least held positional power.

What was I to expect? To have my points of view accepted as fair and just? Let me return to Brunstad: "A just leader appears as credible and reliable in facing his employees. A just leadership style lays the foundation for trust and predictability (p. 22, author's translation). But also consider

this: "Some problems seem almost insolvable. May that mean that one has disregarded a key factor – oneself and one's role in it?" (Brunstad, 2019, author's translation). My point being: For me, this concerns virtues, or morals. As I made my choices in these matters, I made them out of my intention to do what I thought was good. It has been said ever since Aristotle that virtue is an acquired disposition to do what is good. Good is not something to contemplate; it is something to be done (Compte-Sponville, 2002, p. 19). Therefore, action is of the essence. Regarding morals, what could be more important than how they are lived and applied? (Ibid.) I believe these quotes have made my point.

Maybe I overlooked my own impact as "challenger"? It is fair to say that I got myself into trouble that day. What I did not do was look myself in the mirror and ask: How would I react if someone challenged me in public? The mirror plays a key role here. "By looking oneself in the mirror, be mirrored by others", and by not listening to what others say about oneself, one may gradually reveal the x-factor, or "the beam in his own eye", as the character Jesus Christ once allegedly said. "This kind of mirroring often hurts" (ibid.) It occurs to me as I am writing this that I probably have overlooked myself as part of the "problem" in somewhat similar situations a few times in my life and professional career. This recognition not only hurts, but it also inspires me to additionally question myself and my practice for the purpose of bettering, or at least to come to a certain peace with myself.

Doing the right thing may not be easy because it may challenge "… own initial outlooks and thus of the principles and systems they produce" (Scharff, 2021). Was I then, or am I a product of the system? Or merely a product of my own outlook? Consider this: "While gratefulness in leaders promotes desire and willingness to work among employees, to be overlooked will have the totally opposite effect" (Brunstad, 2009, p. 23, author's translation). If you, as an employee, experience gratitude from your leader, will you not then be encouraged to do the right thing? To turn the issue around: If you are merely a product of the system, will you then rather be encouraged to "do things right"? As a twist to the above quote by Scharff.

Trust vs. fear in leadership praxis

The above division has been a subject for leadership researchers for decades (Drucker 1986). Peter Ferdinand Drucker is regarded as "the founder of modern management" (Denning, 2014). Drucker distinguished between management and leadership[4]. Much later, in 2012, the Norwegian Armed Forces (NAF) acknowledged this distinction in the new policy

[4] E.g., p. 27.

on leadership. In which you can read: "Military leaders often operate in the range between operational deliveries and administrative reporting and control" (p. 6). This may seem like a dilemma, which it truly is. The first concerns the Norwegian military leadership philosophy – *oppdragsbasert ledelse* (OBL/mission command). OBL encourages the use of creativity throughout the organization. The successful application of mission-based management is the result of junior leaders at all levels taking targeted initiatives based on their senior officer's intentions (Ibid).

This leadership philosophy is based on trust: Senior staff must be able to feel confident that their subordinates are willing and able to accomplish the task. Subordinates must be confident that their superior will appreciate independence, initiative and innovation (p. 8). The latter - administrative reporting and control, refers to the implementation of New Public Management (NPM), also in military governance. NPM in military governance challenges my message that trust is crucial for military leadership. NPM, on the other hand, has its roots in liberal politicians' underlying mistrust of staff and decision-making in the public sector (Busch, Johnsen, & Vanebo, 2002, author's translation).

As Drucker put it: "Management is a discipline. But management is also people" (p. 6). Or: "Efficiency is concerned with doing things right. Effectiveness is doing the right things" (p. 36). Here, we must acknowledge the difference between efficiency and effectiveness. "Efficiency concerns itself with the input of effort into all areas of activity. Effectiveness, however, starts out with the realization that in business, as in any other social organism, 10 or 15 percent of the phenomena—such as products, orders, customers, markets, or people—produce 80 to 90 percent of the results" (ibid.). Therefore, leadership (and management) applies to both structure and individuals.

Given this, we may well regard leadership as a crux in which words of meaning can be or are embedded. When we again consider Freire, who states: "Human beings are not built in silence, but in word, in work, in action-reflection" (p. 88), we may see that leadership is more than just words. It is also highly action-oriented. But leadership can also be dangerous. According to Professor J. K. Arnulf (2020), the dangers can be divided into three interconnected but slightly different areas. Leadership as an illusion, the dark side of charisma, and so-called "derailed" leadership – that is, tyrannical or incompetent leadership (Arnulf, 2020, p. 81, author's translation). Also, this coincides with destructive, or toxic leadership. Williams (2005) notes that toxic leadership appears in degrees, from the clueless who cause minor harm to the overtly evil who inflict serious damage.

As leaders, we must avoid this at all costs. We should rather strive to liberate the hearts and minds of our students and employees. Because "…

they prefer the security of conformity with their state of unfreedom to the creative communion produced by freedom and even the very pursuit of freedom" (Freire, 2005, p. 48). This recognition tells me that a good role model has not only the capacity to do good but also a moral obligation towards those who cannot see beyond or even comprehend their own perceived borders. In this, trust is essential because trust is most critical in situations that involve risk, vulnerability and being interdependent with other people (see Stouffer et al., 2008).

I regard being dialogical in encounters with students and subordinates as a strength. But it requires trust and faith in myself and in the learners. "Without this faith in people, dialogue is a farce which inevitably degenerates into paternalistic manipulation" (Freire, 2005, p. 91). "Dialogue becomes a horizontal relationship of which mutual trust between the dialogues is the logical consequence" (ibid.). This leads me to another quote from GML: "Credibility is all about creating trust based on personal properties and competence, and by caring for others" (p. 13, author's translation). In a military sense, this clearly indicates the importance of trust. This also becomes clear in the military leadership handbook (2008), which states: "…it is incumbent on leaders to understand that trust is not limited to interactions between individuals and must be understood in terms of the general community" (p. 529). Trust is therefore not only interpersonal but must be regarded in a wider sense. Trust may be considered a force that binds us all together if executed with sincere integrity. As Freire again states: "To say one thing and do another—to take one's own word lightly—cannot inspire trust". (p. 91).

Role models are therefore, in my opinion, much like good leadership: Even if you are not entirely sure what it is, you will probably know it when you see it (Rosch & Kuzel, 2010). But role models are also subjective entities in the sense that they are different in the eyes of the beholder (Magnussen et al., 2021). Good role models, or leaders, may well inspire you to further exploration, but they may also lure you into darkness if you imitate them uncritically. You may well, therefore, explore your own ways based on your own values. As Gustav Heckman (2004) puts it: "For translating values into reality it is crucial when we act that we do not suppress fleeting awareness of our values and/or our conscience". This leads me to the final theme in this essay, which I consider paramount for all leaders, military or civilian.

Integrity – a learning process?

By challenging any perceived paradigm, leaders may, by mere encouragement in these, for me, existential issues, hopefully be able to both reflect on

and put into action at least some new ideas that can improve practice. And I cannot deny that actions speak louder than words. But words do matter, and language changes our perceptions of the world (Scientific American, 2017). Therefore, as educators, leaders, or role models for that matter, we cannot deny the fact that we are in a position to impact others in ways of thinking and acting. This suggests that you at least have the opportunity to significantly impact those who you interact with within a CoL. In this, integrity is vital for military professionals, and a conception of good professional behaviour that best serves a profession's guiding aims (see Wolfendale 2009). Furthermore, integrity is that of soundness of moral principle and, specifically, uprightness, honesty, or sincerity (Nillsen, 2005).

I will return to my experience at my CO's office, where I was told clearly that I was not, in any way, in a position to challenge neither him nor his XO. What did I learn from this? Learning is a very complicated matter (Illeris, 2009), but I have also experienced it to be highly rewarding. You may well consider the military community at large a CoL. By that, I mean this: One of the main tasks for Norwegian military personnel is teaching others. That is, systematic teaching with effective work and evaluation methods is important (FPG, 2006). Also, a main issue is to "educate reflective professional practitioners" (p. 4). But what did I learn, or what did I expect to learn, from the incident at the CO's office?

One thing stands out clearly: I would never, ever do what he did. For me, this was like going back to the dark ages, in which fear of the inquisition was clear and present. It was about integrity. The incident shook me to my innermost foundations. But it also made me think: What went wrong here? And what did I do as a learner? I felt oppressed and deeply disturbed. But I also found myself in a world of possibilities. I claim that this learning experience coincides with this: "In order for the oppressed to be able to wage the struggle for their liberation, they must perceive the reality of oppression not as a closed world from which there is no exit, but as a limiting situation which they can transform" (Freire, 2005, p. 49).

Military role models in a CoL are expected to create a good teaching environment by facilitating and organising the individual, the practice companionship, and the development of the organisation (FPG p.23, author`s translation). As a learner in a meeting with a senior officer, or teacher, if you wish, my CO probably would have gained respect and possibly admiration if he had facilitated the exchange of opinions or views. Instead, he instructed me in a way that could have been a closed world from which there was no exit, as seen in Freire above. Nevertheless, he created a situation in which I had the possibility to transform. A principle of Kantian

ethics is that one cannot deduce what one should do from what is done. Also, Kant (1966) writes: "He is merely what education makes him". From that statement, I imagine that my CO was merely a product of his own military education and the context in which it occurred. My point being is that he and I were products of different views on leadership and, as such, divergent in our understanding of learning through dialogue and critical thinking. For me, it is all about integrity –walking the talk.

My moral compass tells me that oppression in this case can be transformed into deep learning (see for instance Fullan, 2013). Meaning that every situation that can be experienced as oppressive may spark a decisive fire in you. A fire that can burn through the darkness that you may have experienced. I may seem to have strayed somewhat from my original point, which is learning, but my personal experiences tell me nevertheless that learning from oppressive experiential phenomena may be transformed into a liberating force. One that, in this case, I may have longed for, and as such, a liberating factor in my own process.

This particular oppressive situation, which I perceived it to be, taught me that I had a choice. Taking the role as the oppressed or not, or as Freire (2005) states: "…no longer oppressor nor longer oppressed, but human in the process of achieving freedom" (p. 49). Acknowledging that I, as a learner, could be regarded as a threat did not occur to me then. Later, as I am reflecting on this day, I wish my CO could have at least considered accommodating my perspective of his own actions. Maybe, just maybe, he could have acted differently. To again quote Freire: "Discovering himself to be an oppressor may cause considerable anguish, but it does not necessarily lead to solidarity with the oppressed. Solidarity requires that one enter into the situation of those with whom one is solidary…" (ibid.). But perspective-taking was not an issue here. That is, to recognize that different actors have different experiences of the same events (LaRusso et al., 2016). He imposed his view on me without even considering asking for mine or others' opinions. As such, he became more of an indoctrinator than a teacher.

From a learning perspective, this experience can be regarded as some sort of collective incompetence (Irgens, 2021), meaning that if we are to be better practitioners, we should learn to see the patterns we have created and become a part of and learn how to break those patterns that no longer are efficient (Irgens, 2021, p. 153, author's translation). To learn how to better our professional practice, there is a need to learn how to learn (ibid.). Bettering professional practice, or the development of the profession, is a key message in the basic pedagogical view of the Norwegian Armed Forces (FPG, p. 17). A crucial part of this lies in the human perspective. "All

professional activity within the Defence takes place together with other people. And the Defence sees man as self-deciding and independent and wishes to develop a critical reflective professional competence with the personnel so that they can act flexibly, and situation-related without losing their ethical and moral points of view" (ibid.). This implies integrity, which is generally considered to be 'internal honour', that is, doing what one thinks is right because doing otherwise would undermine one's sense of one's own self-worth (see Robinson, 2007).

The above message to military officers, teachers and role models seems clear to me. If you are to develop both learners and the organization (as you are expected to), you must, under any circumstances, not oppress anyone. You are expected to be a liberator of others' hearts and minds. As leaders and role models, we are not excluded. This, timely enough, coincides with a message from the Norwegian Chief of Defence: "Mission command emphasises leadership through shared attitudes and a common mindset rather than the strict application of rules, exaggerated control and scrutiny. Good role models show the way by their readiness to take risks, consistent behaviour, positive attitudes, and ethical judgement. The concept of role model therefore includes both acting as a good example and possessing a robust set of values" (pp. 9, 11, author's translation). Also, as we wrote in GML (2012): "Integrity means one is totally on the level in relation to oneself and one's subordinates; is true to oneself and one's own principles, is aware of one's strengths and weaknesses in a self-assured, credible way without needing to put on an act" (p. 13).

We shall also not forget this: "It is about the organization's ability to learn, and to translate learning into action" (ibid., p. 7). The importance of learning is clearly stated in at least two of the Norwegian Defence Forces' normative documents. But this has no meaning if it is not practised. Functionally, oppression is domesticating. To no longer be prey to its force, one must emerge from it and turn upon it. This can be done only by means of the praxis: reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it (Freire, 2005, p. 51). Therefore, the oppressed must confront reality critically, simultaneously objectifying and acting upon that reality (ibid., p. 52). This, I believe, requires bold individuals with an extended understanding of reality. But it is also dependent on leaders who truly identify with and understand their subordinates. As stated in GML: "Effective leadership is thus an effect of three relationships: 1) between leader and subordinate; 2) between personnel and their duties (objects, events); and 3) between the leader's appraisal of and relationship to him or herself" (p. 12).

This leads me to this notion: If you are a military leader, teacher, and possible role model, you must engage in, and at least try to understand

yourself, and those you interact with. To further connect learning to leadership: "Being a good role model implies self-awareness and deep understanding of oneself and the surrounding world. By meeting others in a frank, open and straightforward manner, the leader shows respect and inspires confidence and trust. Treating people's ideas and opinions, culture, experience, and background with humility is also to show a form of respect and may be important in facilitating cooperation" (p. 11). This notion may be equally relevant to higher civilian educational institutions.

Teachers in higher educational institutions are in a position to deeply affect those they educate. This demands that you engage in frank and affectionate dialogue, even if this makes you vulnerable. Dialogue, as the encounter of those addressed to the common task of learning and acting, is broken if the parties (or one of them) lack humility (Freire, 2005, p. 90). The question may therefore be: How can I dialogue if I consider myself a member of the in-group of "pure" men, the owners of truth and knowledge…? (ibid.). If I consider myself a part of an "elite" that holds the answers to "reality" or the world, can I ever seize those precious moments where students and subordinates engage me and one another in the quest for learning more than they do now?

As I have reflected upon earlier, to be a military commissioned officer in learning and/or educational environments, integrity is of the essence. When you have a visible military rank that, in praxis, provides positional power in a hierarchy, which the military per se is, you have the power to oppress anyone with a lower rank. To put it another way, it is the power to impose structure and/or obedience on others. For military leaders, this reality requires careful consideration and understanding of one's own actions. As Freire states, "true dialogue cannot exist unless the dialoguers engage in critical thinking…thinking which perceives reality as process, as transformation, rather than as a static entity—thinking which does not separate itself from action…" (Freire, 2005, p. 92).

I claim that if you really wish to engage in real dialogue, not false dialogue, military officers need to understand their impact on others in their daily work. It strikes me that only a very few officers I have met have engaged themselves in true introspection and critical reflection and maybe accomplished enlightenment. According to Immanuel Kant, the motto of the Enlightenment is: "Have the courage to use your own mind![5]" I certainly have, but it has sometimes cost me. But the courage to use one's

[5] In German: "*Habe Mut, dich deines eigenen Verstandes zu bedienen*!" (Kant, 1784/1975b, p. 53). The German word *Verstand* may be translated into the English words *mind, reason,* or *understanding*.

own mind requires general education (Lindseth, 2022). Also, it requires courage to question your own understanding and to put it to the test in conversation with others (ibid.). I have hopefully been enlightened through education, practice and countless encounters with both text and people. Being a learner, who I was – and still am, I am continuously in the process of acquiring new knowledge and understanding. Through this, I have been utterly aware of the importance of showing consistency between theory and practice, which can be considered integrity (see also CHOD, 2012, p. 13). It has been a bumpy learning process.

Let me lastly consider this: "It is not our role to speak to the people about our own view of the world, nor to attempt to impose that view on them, but rather to dialogue with the people about their view and ours". (Freire, 2005, p. 96). To me, this has to do with true humility in meeting with others who have a different understanding of the world than mine. How can we then, as educators, communicate effectively in light of integrity and practice what is true and not false? Are we, in praxis, so bound by our history that we are unable to separate ourselves from our activities and thus are unable to reflect upon it? I believe reflections on practice and thought should not be underestimated. Akbari (2007) suggests that reflective teaching will make teachers question clichés they have learned during their formative years and will also enable them to develop more informed practice. As a leader and role model, this may equally well be applied.

Concluding remarks, considerations, and further questions

In this personal essay, I have puzzled over some experiential phenomena that made everlasting impressions. I have been thinking about these experiences several times over the years. By having a military CO and military teachers at the RNA who made position an overly clear issue in my early military years, I was challenged to the bone. I cannot say that I was entirely surprised, though, since my CO and I had very different educational and practical backgrounds. As for my military teachers at the RNA, some provided me with a deeper understanding of good military leadership. But also, some pulled rank in an oppressive way. A hindrance to effective learning.

As a newly commissioned officer, I experienced oppression, not liberation, which I somewhat naïvely expected from my superior officers. I also experienced false dialogue, or no dialogue at all, distrust, silencing, and fear and loathing in a military and educational setting. These experiences have forever made me aware of military leaders' actions, which, in my opinion, speak much louder than words. As Freire (2005) again puts

it: "There is no true word that is not at the same time a praxis" (p. 87). Therefore, integrity in word and action may also be considered a prerequisite for building and maintaining trust. Through this, there is also legitimacy in the face of subordinates, students, and the public. Is that not what we ideally strive for?

My sincere belief is that we must engage in meaningful and fruitful dialogues, obliging us to permanently rethink the very foundations of our military discipline. For the time being, there is relatively scarce general research in this field of dialogical military leadership education in Norway. Therefore, there is food for thought and research for years to come. I believe CoPs and CoLs have the potential to allow both military practitioners and scholars to challenge and improve their practice. Maybe also in higher education at large. Are we as scholars not obliged to challenge our own, or also our students and peers' understanding?

If your leaders, or even your own leadership praxis, has no other purpose than cementing the current reality, what then? Are we not expected to expand our understanding of leadership? This, I believe, is my fundamental conundrum. CoPs and CoLs are vital for further professional development. For the individuals in them, for those who take an active part in it, and for society at large. Leadership is too important to leave to positional managers alone. It must be nurtured by those who take an interest in it and by those who are elevated by liberating processes. As Freire (2005) also states: "… the pedagogy of the oppressed cannot be developed or practiced by the oppressors. It would be a contradiction in terms if the oppressors not only defended but actually implemented a liberating education" (p. 54). Therefore, as defenders of liberation, military leaders and teachers must engage in liberating, not oppressive actions. This, I believe, is crucial both for personal and institutional development. In my opinion, liberation of oneself and others must therefore be paramount for all officers or any military leader and/or teacher, regardless of where and when they serve[6].

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[6] These reflections over my personal experiences came to be during a Ph.D.-course in Reflective Practice Research in Higher Education Pedagogies at the University of South-Eastern Norway.

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Chapter 5

"You are my fourth math teacher; how can you teach me math?"

Pål-Erik Eidsvig[1]

Abstract

In this essay, I will tell a story that started with a comment from a former pupil I had in high school in mathematics. His comment made me reflect on my own practice as a math teacher. Even with a lot of experience, it is possible that this may obscure new ways of teaching. If we can be more flexible when planning our teaching and lectures, there is a greater chance to reach even more pupils. When teaching at the university, I have this in mind, where the focus is on an active student and myself as a reflective teacher.

Keywords

Self-efficacy, flexibility, to see the individual, motivation.

Introduction

As a former pre-high and high school teacher and now a pre-school teacher at the university, I will tell a story from high school in this essay. I will use philosopher Anders Lindseth's three steps in reflective practice research as a guideline. By using this framework, it helps me reflect on my own practice and learn to develop myself as a researcher. For further details about the method, I will recommend reading chapter 1 in this book. By telling my story, I hope this will help other future preschool teachers reflect on their own praxis. Hopefully, with that result, even more pupils will succeed in mathematics.

In the first part of the essay, I start with my concrete reflection; thereafter, I will move on to the critical reflection and, finally, the theoretical reflection.

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In the theoretical reflection, I discuss the concept of self-efficacy developed by the psychologist Albert Bandura. According to him, self-efficacy plays a major role in shaping human behaviour, motivation, and achievement. The importance of facilitating dialogue and asking open questions, like in the Socratic dialogue, will also be discussed.

To facilitate communication among students, it is essential that we be flexible when organizing our lectures. Furthermore, if we manage to differentiate classes into smaller groups, it could be easier to follow up with students. For instance, when I am using vertical surfaces, the students must take a more active role in their learning when discussing different solutions and strategies for problem solving. To let the students be even more prepared for their practice, I have organised different types of simulations where different topics have been lifted. For instance, feedback from this form of organising my lectures has given me fruitful insight and made me even more reflective on my own praxis.

Concrete reflection

"You are my fourth math teacher; how can you teach me math?", was a comment I got from a pupil four weeks after I started up with a new class in a new year at high school. Even though I had many years of experience, I felt this comment block my brain for a "few seconds", while my thoughts raced over my role as a mathematician teacher. I am not sure, but I think he saw my facial reactions, such as blushing, as I fumbled with my whiteboard pencils. Although I had been teaching similar classes in the same field, I had never heard such a comment. My former experience was such that a major part of the class had low confidence and some were bored with mathematics, but I thought I had reached them with my enthusiasm for mathematics.

So even with my experience, in a period of four weeks, I had not convinced him that he could perform and learn better mathematics. I implemented many things from my teaching practice. I had done repetition on the whiteboard before starting up with new themes. I let them work alone, in pairs, and in a little bit of a flipped classroom. So even with my excited and active role as a mathematics teacher, I had not hit a nerve or triggered any form of understanding in him so far.

With my teaching experience, I thought I had gained a thick skin. But his comment showed me that my skin wasn't so thick after all. His comment struck me more than other comments from previous pupils. I heard myself thinking, "Yes, you are his fourth teacher, and you are not so special".

After the school day ended, I went home still thinking about my teaching methods and practice. I started to reflect on my practice and thought that my teaching was not so special. I was just an ordinary brick among other teachers. He did not say that I was a poor math teacher, but he said it in a manner that made me feel that it was my fault for not reaching him and not being able to teach him mathematics. I wondered if this comment would be made in sports. For instance, "teach me how to be a good swimmer", or "teach me to be a good football player". It was strange, and I thought that after all my years in the school, one comment from a pupil would make me reflect on whether my teaching was good enough.

At the next lecture, I found it natural to chat with him and talk about his experience with my mathematics lectures. I soon recognized that he was not so comfortable in the beginning, but I must admit it was exciting for me also, although I had tried to make the meeting and conversation unformal. I have arranged many meetings through my years as a math teacher, but I thought this was different because I felt the need to show him that I am better than his impression of me.

As the conversation moved on, it became clear to me that he had not participated in so many conversations with his former math teachers. I asked him if he was challenged in mathematics and how often. Not so often, he answered. My first thought was that I wanted him to talk about mathematics, challenge him, and set demands.

One of the first things I did was organize my way of lecturing. Not only because of him but for everybody in the class. Instead of standing alone at the whiteboard, I organized the whole class into groups and gave tasks on five different topics with increasing difficulty and progression. Many of the tasks were relatively easy to solve, but that was conscious. After a week, I felt the atmosphere in the classroom get warmer. Someone would say that this is obvious since they were getting to know each other better, but I felt most of the pupils took part in the warmness.

One day, when we were talking about the tasks, the pupil said to me: "I don't have a math brain". I thought it was surprising and nice that he wanted to talk about his feelings for mathematics. I asked him why he felt so, and he answered, "Because nobody in my family has been clever in math". My immediate response was, "So that means you can't be clever in mathematics?" He looked surprised and said "No". I continued, "You have shown me and your group that you are capable of solving tasks at a medium level, that you have taken an active part in your learning, and that you have participated in the group discussion". I asked him if he thought it had influenced him that the other family members weren't so clever in mathematics, and the answer was "maybe". I thought that perhaps some

of his low confidence in mathematics and a passive role were triggered by a "self-fulfilling prophet" for him. I asked why he managed a high grade in gymnastics, and he said, "Because I like it". More and more, it became obvious to me that his parents, his surroundings, and himself combined to create low self-confidence and a passive attitude toward learning in him.

After approximately three months, I felt I had gotten in better touch with him. He seemed to be more interested in understanding his missing parts, for instance, the summation of fractions. By involving me in what he wanted to improve, I gave him and his group appropriate tasks. I did not push him to start up with the syllabus and placed that on hold. Maybe it was my practical wisdom that decided it had to wait. This meant that he and I had to find his lack of knowledge before we moved into more advanced mathematics.

I felt that I had a nice dialogue with everyone in the class now, and many of them improved at solving problems and explaining the different solutions to each other. My pupil in my story moved further and further away from the stage of just remembering toward the stage of understanding. In this period, he was funny and smiled when he managed to explain.

One day, I asked what his plans were for the rest of the year and if he had thought about what he wanted to work on. I said I had suggestions for helping him overcome the syllabus and said, "You need to take a bit more active part in your plans". We need to stake out a plan that will help you through the syllabus. "I will", he answered.

After approximately four months, I arranged a formal written test with a number of tasks from the syllabus. I must admit I was nervous, but I knew he had raised his mathematical understanding. This was also a test for me. I hoped I had managed to capture his interest in mathematics and motivate him to take a more active role in his own learning. I became relieved. His results were roughly above average. I will never forget the smile on his face. When he saw the mark, he beamed happily and thanked me for seeing and helping him. I am not sure if I saw a tear in his eye, but I became emotional. During the rest of the school year, I was still focusing on what we had staked out.

The whiteboard was, of course, still in use, but to a much lesser extent. As the months progressed, I still had questions and challenged him in areas within the syllabus. He was making progress. At the end of the school year, we arranged a common written test for all pupils in the same field of study. He had made a great leap forward, and he thanked me a lot for my remarkable help. One week before the school year ended, I got a phone call. A voice said, Thank you for your patience with our boy; we now have a member in our family that can do math.

Critical reflection

With over 15 years of experience in junior high and high school, the few words from the pupil made me reflect even more on my teaching practice.

There could be many reasons why he said those words, but in the following, I will figure out the topics that are at stake in this story.

Experience may obscure seeing the pupil

Even if I have a lot of experience and have been educated in pedagogy and mathematical didactics, that does not mean that my register is fully completed. Of course, I have received feedback from my pupils, their parents, and the results of the exam. However, I am not sure that this is synonymous with my lectures and sessions being good all these years. Of course, I could improve my methods of teaching. Since all teachers get feedback, many reflect on their own praxis, but I am not sure if it is inner or outer motivation that makes them reflect on their own praxis.

If I am using almost the same examples year after year and doing my own practice without extensive cooperation with other teachers and at other schools, the possibilities are great that my form of teaching will not be updated, and I am on my own track.

It is of great importance that we keep in mind that classes consist of individuals with different social and academic backgrounds. Our lessons need to take this into consideration, and we should do our best to be flexible according to plans and assessments.

To really see the pupil, we need to make allowances accordingly by changing plans and adjusting the curriculum until the pupil has understood the basic parts. We don't need to rush with written tests that just confirm the poor results from the last written test. My own experience is that some of these tests end up in the garbage without my notes having been read or at least understood.

To see the pupil, we also must set demands. There are several instances in my career where my manner of communication was too nice and passive, causing the pupils to think it was the same for me whether they had done their homework or not. When thinking back, perhaps I had been too kind and affectionate when the pupils did not do their homework.

Since the class consists of individuals, we should facilitate opportunities to give them choices to let them show their mathematical competence in different ways.

Theoretical reflection

In my years as a contact teacher, I have heard parents say: "I don't have the ability for math" or "I don't have a math brain", as their child is sitting

beside them. But I have never heard them say: "I don't have the ability to learn English" or "I don't have the ability to learn social studies". These comments have made me wonder many times when talking about their child's progression in mathematics. It is strange that some people might actually believe that weak results or missing parts of understanding in mathematics are hereditary. I am sure that every parent always wants the best out of schooling for their child.

I still believe that some parents have a great understanding that their child is performing weaker in mathematics relative to other topics at the school. Maybe it is because they have had the same experience with mathematics. In the same meetings, I have heard parents say that topics like history and social science are typical "memorizing topics", and the ability to get better marks is much easier. In these meetings, I have tried my best to encourage the pupils and argue that it is possible to perform at a high level in mathematics if they want. I don't think that my experience is unique. I believe that there are many similar stories where low self-efficacy is the result.

Building up self-efficacy

My pupil's belief in his ability to successfully complete a task or achieve a specific goal was low in the beginning. I had to motivate him. I had to gain knowledge and found a very interesting article by the Canadian Psychologist Albert Bandura. According to Bandura (1994, 1997), self-efficacy plays a major part in shaping a human's behaviour, motivation, and achievement, where low self-efficacy can lead to feelings of helplessness, frustration, low motivation, and giving up easily when faced with obstacles and setbacks. This was a new start for me.

Since I had to see my pupil do better and let him grow into believing in himself, I also had to better organise my teaching. I had to let the class show different ways of demonstrating mathematical competence and make my mathematical tasks better. Moreover, I had to focus on what Sullivan et al. (2015) argue: that tasks with multiple ways to solve the problem may trigger enthusiasm and motivation. By using other strategies they are familiar with, the students develop and gain a better understanding.

Stillman et al. (2009) explain that when students are solving challenging tasks, they are on the edge of their comfort zone. These types of challenges may give the students the experience that the right solution is not easy to find, like real problems, which are often complicated. It was challenging to find appropriate tasks that could trigger him and the rest of the class. One of my solutions was to open up mathematical tasks. Sullivan et al. (2015) argue that tasks that can be solved in different ways demand an open structure. So-called low floor–high ceiling tasks, where low floor

indicates tasks that are not so difficult to start with and high ceiling indicates tasks that may trigger other kinds of solutions on a higher cognitive level. Tasks that fulfil those "criteria" may help students at different levels with different strategies. I had to beware of what Ponte and Quaresma (2016) are arguing for, which is that mathematical tasks that demand explanations and analysing solutions and strategies are challenging since the students don't have strategies to solve the problems.

I had to facilitate activity and get my pupil more motivated, where Bruner means we should have a focus on the child as an active problem solver (Manger et al., 2013). Moreover, two of the four major themes Bruner is emphasizing are motivation and structured learning. Structured learning can be understood as the basic foundation of the topic, where the focus in lecturing should be understanding and not memorizing (Solerød 2012). I will also highlight Skemp (1976), who emphasized the importance of relational understanding instead of instrumental thinking. I had to let my pupil develop a deeper understanding, especially in algebra, where he had missed some major components in his former schooling.

In the article by Berggren et al. (2019), it emerges that to increase students' academic performance, there has been an increasing interest in different strategies in the classroom. An important factor in the students' achievements is the teacher-student relationship (Hattie, 2009). "The teacher-student relationship that involves trust, compassion, caring and attention which are key elements in creating a positive educational climate" (Berggren et al., 2019). In my case, I had to let him feel more care and attention. Like Philosopher William James says, to have success as a teacher, it depends on two things. The ability to "meet the student directly*"* and for the second, the ability of "pedagogical judgement" (Løvlie, 2004).

It was important for me to see him and for the class to have mathematical discussions with each other, where they could show mathematical competence. My first priority was one of the eight elements Niss and Jensen (2002) call communication competence and adaptive reasoning as the five strands of proficiency by Kilpatrick et al. (2001).

In the mathematical discussions, it was important to be aware of that I did not have any preferred solutions or leading questions, what Herbal, Eisenmann & Breyfogle (2005) call *funnelling*. But according to Newman (1990), this form of teaching is also fruitful if the problems are complex and sometimes also productive. I experienced the importance of asking questions, for instance, the words "why" and "how". Schoenfeld (1992) also shows that repeating questions may trigger the student's self-reflection and thinking, and afterwards, the student will ask themselves questions. I believe that to facilitate Dialogic communication, the focus should be

on exchanging ideas and strategies. According to Truxaw and DeFranco (2008), a more inductive classroom will help students construct and articulate their mathematical meanings.

This leads me to a study by Naalsund (2012), where she interviewed pupils related to the tasks in the international TIMMS test. The results showed that the Norwegian results are relatively weak in algebra, (Bergem et al., 2016). The main results from Naalsund (2012) showed that the pupils understood the methods in mathematics they used and the argumentation, but she got very few explanations as to why they solved the task in that way. Most of the students said, "I just followed a rule". From her study, we can see that formal procedures are used in a highly algorithmic manner and not so much for a deeper understanding.

I had a strong feeling that my pupil's low self-confidence and motivation in mathematics were a combination of the people around him and himself. I still believed my focus was to keep up our plan. I could not fall back and relax; I had to improve and use my lectures to strengthen his motivation for mathematics. In my case, and according to Buber, we must respect the other person. To meet another person in this manner requires an ethical attitude by showing openness, respect, trust, and responsibility (Botnen et al., 2011). I was also aware that it was not my intention to form him in any way. Like Skjervheim (1996) says, "We cannot form students as if they were made of chrome and metal like a subject-object relationship".

Studies by R. J. Rosenthal and L. Jacobson (1972) and the so-called Pygmalion Effect showed that if teachers believe that their pupil is a high performer or a late bloomer, they are nicer to them, teach more material to them, and give more differentiated feedback when they get the wrong answer. The study also showed that the kids started to think of themselves differently, and in the end, they were transformed and performed significantly better.

Conversely, if the teachers think the pupil is a low performer, they don't want to teach them very much and are willing to accept a low-quality response. Even this project was controversial. I think teachers must keep in mind that perhaps some pupils are thinking that, "My teacher does not challenge me enough relative to others in the class". In my case, I am very aware of saying that my pupil's former teachers were not clever enough to follow up on him and meet him with higher expectations in mathematics, but I can't categorically reject those thoughts.

At the University

When teaching the preschool teachers at the university, I try to share my experience from my own praxis as a teacher in junior high and high school.

I must admit that I feel there are expectations from the students that give me the same feeling I got with my pupil in my story. There are many skills that we must prepare the students for. Like Shulman (1986) is talking about, they need specific skills and PCK (pedagogical content knowledge). It is not enough to learn know-how, like techne; they also need phronesis to get the practical wisdom in the classroom.

Since the students need to learn more mathematics and, at the same time, didactics, it must be a mix of both parts. The challenge is, when I am lecturing on a difficult topic, how much should I teach before I let the student group try to process and understand the topics by themselves? If I teach too much, there is the possibility that some of my students are taking after me, and we are reproducing too many teacher-controlled lessons.

In my practice, I try as much as possible to activate the students within the resources I have. For example, I use vertical surfaces where they can discuss mathematical problems and sketch up and discuss different solutions for the rest of the students in the group. Some of this inspiration has come from Liljedahl (2020). By organizing them into groups, it has been easier to simulate situations that can arise in the classroom, some of which are from my own background. To illustrate, I use situations where there are no obvious solutions or answers and where the students must use their practical wisdom.

I use problem-based learning, where the students must work in groups and simulate different kinds of tasks and topics from the syllabus. One of the goals is to let them show different types of mathematical competence. For example, I divide the students into groups of four, where two should act as students and two should act as teachers. Then they must simulate how to teach fractions, with the "pupils" following up with questions for the "teachers". The students have enjoyed this form of working, and I think this has been fruitful since "both sides" need to articulate their meanings. In this setting, we have been arguing that we need different tools to help the pupils navigate the mathematical landscape.

The importance of asking open questions is a major part of my lectures at the university and in problem-based learning. I regularly tell the story of what Sokrates demonstrated for Menon (Løkke, 2014). Sokrates wanted to show that all learning is not remembering. By asking open questions to an arbitrary poor boy from the street, Sokrates managed to build up the boy's understanding of the Pythagorean theme by just asking questions.

After telling the story about the street boy, it has been natural to discuss what potential every pupil has. Since many are performing better at oral mathematical exams in an approximate period of two days and nights, a natural question would be, how is this possible? In that period,

the pupils have worked on different topics, and through most of the period, the teachers have been interlocutors. Still, with this in mind, we have discussed how we can organize our lessons better.

I hope that by telling my story, there will be a great deal of potential and willingness to organize and customize our mathematics lectures differently. Our long experience, lack of experience, rigid plans, and the syllabus may obscure new ways of thinking. But "what is best for the pupil?" For me, it started with a few words from a pupil with low self-efficacy in mathematics. He really made me start reflecting on my own role as a math teacher.

Hopefully, this will be fruitful for my students at the university and their pupils in the future.

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Chapter 6

To reflect on practice in school development

Kristin Støren[1] & Anne Liv Kaarstad Lie[2]

Abstract

In Norway, there has been a revision of the national curriculum, and reflection has been included in the definition of being competent. This competence is relevant for teachers and students to develop a growth mindset. Reflective practice describes this self-forming dialogue as a driving force for recognizing, describing, and communicating one´s actions to be able to learn in a continuous way. Reflection is a mental process related to both cognition and metacognition with the purpose of achieving an understanding of a specific situation or phenomenon and acting upon that understanding. With attention to 21st-century society`s needs for competence and creative and innovative solutions, reflection is a key asset. The development of schools as learning organizations requires both the establishment of a learning culture and methods to frame reflective processes.

In this chapter, we will describe and linger upon how school leaders at a conference reflected on self-experienced narratives to gain new understanding, and we will reflect on the use of reflection as a pathway to explore the association between the use of rich data sources and the deep learning process. Two narratives from participants at the conference are used as data. In the discussions, interpersonal relations will be linked to epistemic assumptions in the national core curriculum. The article will discuss what's at stake for school leaders in professional learning communities.

Keywords

School development, professional learning, reflective practice, appreciative inquiry, triangulation of data

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Introduction

In Norway, a new national curriculum was introduced in 2020. The curriculum states that the values and principles of school practices shall contribute to the development of the competences of citizens in the 21st century. Reflective practice is a key concept and a value in the core curriculum, both for students' learning and for teachers' professional development. It is described as a principle among values and principles for and in education. One chapter in the curriculum is delegated to principles for practice, and in this chapter, reflective practice plays a key part in school development:

> Professional school development finds place when teachers have the opportunity to ask questions and look for solutions in a professional learning community that focuses on students' learning and development. All employees must play an active part in the professional learning community for the development of the school. This includes reflection upon value-based choices and areas of development and the use of research and ethical considerations to set aims and make measures. Well-established structures for cooperation, support, and coaching among colleges in and between schools will promote a culture of sharing and learning. (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2017, author's translation)

Professional reflection about practice differs from everyday reflection when it comes to self-formation. While most of us reflect upon our actions as a part of our navigation in and around everyday life, reflection about practice and reflective practice have a stronger connection to theory, a more defined structure, and a more deliberate purpose. Still, it can be hard to grasp and define the exact meaning of professional reflection. Walsh and Mann (2015, p. 351) state that *"the many differing (and even conflicting) perspectives on what reflection actually means make it difficult for researchers and practitioners to operationalize it in any meaningful way*".

In this chapter, we will share two narratives from school leaders and get to know what is at stake for their formation in the face of the regulations in the new curriculum. We will use these narratives, together with descriptions of reflective practice in the core curriculum, to analyze, discuss, and reflect upon reflective practices. The data is randomized and obtained from a school leaders' conference. The aim of the conference was to get to know the stages of dialogue for professional teachers learning. The participants used a reflective model for dialogue called the Triangulated Analysis Model (TAM). The focus area in this model is to triangulate reflections over rich data (narratives and understandings) together with existing big data (results from national tests, exams and surveys) to understand and develop practice. We will start by introducing the narratives.

Narratives shared with us at the conference

To get an understanding of the TAM model in use, we decided to collect and investigate reflections from users of the model. The participants at the school leader conference were asked to write down a story that contributed to forming the participant as a leader. The school leaders were then asked to retell the story to a co-participant at the conference. After writing down their stories and retelling them to a co-participant, the participants reflected on their stories in pairs. On the basis of these reflections, the participants were asked to describe a challenge in their organization that they would really like to do something about. They wrote down their challenges. Based on the challenge, the participants were asked to describe a desired solution, but a solution that did not involve more money, more people or more time. The challenges were transformed into solutions. Based on these solutions, the participants were asked to transform their solution into a research question. The question should preferably include both a learning outcome and a learning environment for the students. The participants came up with numerous interesting research questions, such as *"How can we involve the pupils in the analysis of the results of national tests to engage them in developing literary skills and numeracy skills?"*, *"How can the students get more involved in the planning of learning activities?",* and *"How can we develop a learning culture that embraces seeking new knowledge about teaching strategies?"* After this process, the participants were offered the opportunity to share their stories and reflections. The leaders were invited to share their narratives with each other orally and with the researchers in writing. The aim of the sharing was explained, and a digital platform for sharing anonymously was created to make the sharing safe and easy for the participants. The included task description shows the challenge:

TASK:

a) Telling the narrative/story (INDIVIDUAL)

Reflect on a story you have experienced as a school leader that has contributed to form you as a leader and draw/write the story in a way that will help you share it with others.

b) Critical reflection (PAIRS)

Retell your story and explain WHY this story is important to you and what it says/means. How can you explain this story?

After the conference, we sorted the shared narratives and chose two different narratives for analysis. These two reflections are the subjects of our analysis. We decided to analyze the narratives as a comparative discourse analysis, comparing the narratives to the principles related to professional learning communities in the national curriculum "Kunnskapsløftet".

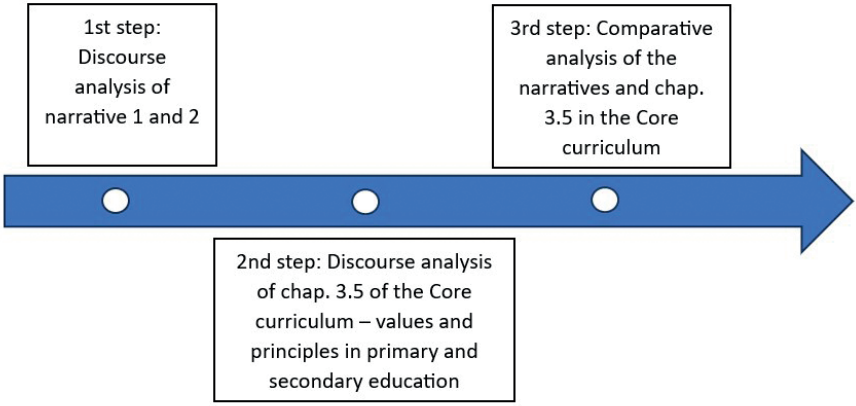

Figure 1: The three steps of the comparative discourse analysis

The first step was to present their stories and get familiar with the participants' own reality through the way they expressed themselves (cf. Czarniawska, 2006). We paid attention to the way they faced cultural conditions and their positioning in the face of work-related topics. We were able to familiarize ourselves with the individual's perceptions of the tasks and become familiar with what was at stake and how they create meaning from their experiences.

In the second step, we started the process by doing a discourse analysis of the two shared narratives and chapter 3 in the national curriculum. We then looked for patterns and described five areas of focus. These areas of focus were used to compare the discourse in the curriculum document to the discourse in each of the narratives and to compare the two narratives with each other.

Narrative 1 (translated from Norwegian to English by the author)

A few years ago, all the principals in the public schools in a town in the southern part of Norway decided they wanted to make a common local curriculum plan to make education less dependent on the school you attended. The union was supportive. Still, there was some resistance from several teachers. We decided to involve teachers from all the schools in the curriculum work. We spent three days at the ski resort "Gautefall" – working hard, sharing and bonding. This made the process successful. It

resulted in a common curriculum plan – as intended, but it also resulted in a better understanding of curriculum work, a better understanding of the Norwegian national curriculum, and it resulted in us being better prepared for the revised national curriculum plan being implemented a few years later. "To dare is to do!"

Narrative 2 (translated from Norwegian to English by the author)

A teacher at a school close to my school presented how they work with test results, such as national tests and national mappings of students' achievements. That day, "I saw the light" and realized the purpose of national tests and the potential benefits for both individual students and the learning community.

Critical reflection 1 (translated from Norwegian to English by the author)

This narrative made me realize that (1) it is both difficult and necessary to continue the work when you meet resistance. Critical questions give us a broader perspective and can be helpful in the development process; (2) a rooted understanding of the national curriculum is important for the development of the school as a learning organization; and (3) the process of developing a common language and common understanding is a continuous process.

Critical reflection 2 (translated from Norwegian to English by the author)

Initially, I was negative to the tests. I regarded them as a ranking of students. But this experience made me see the potential value behind the test results – behind the numbers.

The narratives show cognitive, emotional, ethical, and practical dilemmas that have been life changing for the school leaders. Participating in the process, you could see, feel, and hear engagement. We will now reflect on these narratives and what they hold to try to understand the process the school leaders participated in and how reflection played a role.

Reflection upon the narratives

To interpret and make meaning of the two narratives and chapter 3.5 in the core curriculum (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2017), individually and in relation to each other, we have used both a social-semiotic frame and a social-philosophical frame.

Michael Halliday (1978) introduced a social-semiotic framework to understand and make meaning of the world. He used three perspectives: an ideational perspective to make logic and experimental sense of reality; an interpersonal perspective to interpret and create an understanding of power and roles in communication; and a textual perspective to systematize and make sense of textual interactivity, cohesion and lexical aspects and chains.

Foucault (1966) introduced a contextual perspective to make meaning of the order of things, the truth, different perspectives and acceptable discourses. Different underlying epistemic assumptions determine the ways of thinking and understanding a phenomenon. For Foucault, discourses are related to how people organize the ways they speak to achieve specific goals. In that vision, we speak and think of accustomed and regular ways in which we wrap in an ideological sense. To create meaning and understanding, you must therefore interpret the epistemic assumptions.

Fairclough (1989) describes the relationship between language and institutionalized practices and power. He is regarded as one of the founders of critical discourse analysis. Fairclough distinguishes between power relations ***behind*** language, such as (1) the speakers' position at a micro level and (2) community power at a macro level, and power relations ***of*** language, such as (3) language to maintain power, (4) language to enhance impact, and (5) language to create influence on action.

In the analysis of the narratives and chapter 3 of the core curriculum, we have used Halliday's framework in combination with epistemic assumptions and Fairclough's five dynamic language-power relationships. **The ideational meta-function** can help us understand how the texts communicate the idea behind a phenomenon or a theme – both in the narrative and the contextual representation. When we link representation to epistemic assumptions, we can interpret the ideational perspective based on these assumptions. When we relate the representation of ideas to the speaker's position and community power, we can interpret the power relations behind the representation of ideas. Finally, when we relate the representation of ideas to language to maintain power, enhance impact, and influence action, we can interpret power relations within the representation of ideas. **The interpersonal meta-function** can help us understand how the text can function as an exchange of views. Halliday (1998) defines two types of actions in language: to give and to demand, and two types of contents: information and service. This results in four different categories of semiotic actions: (1) to offer (give service), (2) to constant (give information), (3) to order (demand service) and (4) to question (demand information). When we link interpersonal relations to epistemic assumptions, we can interpret the actions

from different views on learning in professional learning communities. Helskog & Weiss use the metaphor kaleidoscope about these different interpretations that form new patterns (chapter 1). When we link interpersonal relations to the speakers position and community power, we can interpret power relations between the writer and the receiver of the text. Finally, when we regard interpersonal relations to the power relations of language, we can interpret power relations within the semiotic actions in the text. **The textual meta-function** can help us understand how the text is constructed, how the discourse is visible throughout the text, and the coherence between the sections of the text. When we link textual perspectives to epistemic assumptions, we can interpret different epistemic assumptions and how they are linked in the composition of the text. When we link the textual relations to the speaker's position and community power, we can interpret the power relations behind the text. Finally, when we regard the textual relations to the power relations of language, we can interpret the power relations between the ideas represented in the text and the participants in the communication. We can interpret how different types of information are valued and enlightened and how they are framed and constructed.

Perspectives / Meta-functions	Epistemic assumptions	Power relations behind language		Power relations of language		
		Speaker's position	Community power	Language to maintain power	Language to immense impact	Language to create influence on action
Ideational perspective						
Interpersonal perspective						
Textual perspective						

The perspectives have been combined in a rubric.

What is at stake and how can we create meaning from the local curriculum narrative?

In the narrative about local curriculum work, we get to know what is at stake by being introduced to the leader's desire to succeed in the development process of a local curriculum plan. The process depended on the engagement of several participating teachers and school leaders. First, there was some resistance from the teachers involved, but after going through with the process, the resistance turned into engagement and success. The school leader telling this narrative is reflecting on why this happened and concludes that gaining success is dependent on the ability to really try

what you believe in – even when you meet skepticism and resistance. We can see this clearly in his/her closing statement in the narrative: "To dare is to do!"

The narrative explains how you must give your co-workers time to understand and grasp the concept before you give up on leading a process. Teachers, like people in general, tend to be skeptical of change before they get the whole picture and the idea behind the initiative for the process of change. The school leader in this narrative has learned to give the participants some time – to let the information and the aim of the project sink in. In some ways, it seems like the leader has found the power within his/her position to believe in herself/himself and stand strong in the first phase of a development process, the phase where you give information and ask for cooperation and co-engagement.

When we link the ideational perspective of the narrative to epistemic assumptions, we can see signs of constructive and social-constructive views on how we gain new knowledge. The speaker reflects on how the project resulted in both a better understanding of curriculum work and of the national curriculum plan among the involved participants. Knowledge was gained through the cooperation between teachers and by developing the plan. The work process resulted in new knowledge. This suggests that new knowledge is gained through cognitive effort and interaction with peers and is constructed in this process. You can also link the narrative to a pragmatic and situated epistemic perspective. The participants developed the curriculum in a process where support and leadership were provided and working with experts affected their new knowledge.

The speaker's position as a school leader reflects the power relations behind the narrative. The fact that the united principal group initiated a common local curriculum plan can be related to community power that influenced the process and the narrative. Both the speaker's position and the community's power must have influenced the process in an enforcing way. Still, there is something vulnerable and fragile in the story. In the narrative, the informant reflects on having the courage to seize power, position, and opportunity. In the end, it is about believing in yourself as a leader –believing in your thoughts and ideas enough to fight for them.

When we regard the representation of ideas in the narrative to power relations within the language, we can see signs of language to influence action and enhance impact. The main intention behind the local curriculum project was to establish a more equal practice between and among the schools in the municipality. The narrative is about how the informer convinced the project's participants that a common local curriculum plan was a necessity in a more equal education setting. And it turned out

to be a success. Not only did the municipality get the common and local curriculum plan, but they also gained a better understanding of curriculum work and the national curriculum plan. The leader/advisor aimed for one gain and got three.

The interpersonal perspective shows how the informant addresses the other participants at the conference to share his/her knowledge gained from this narrative. The speaker communicates by giving information to the co-participants. This can also be regarded as offering service or help since the narrative provides reflections on how to lead in a successful way. There are no demanding language actions in the narrative (such as orders or questions), only the offering of information and the indirect offering of service/help.

When we link interpersonal relations to epistemic assumptions, we can interpret how new knowledge is gained. In the communication of the narrative, knowledge is shared. This is adding a dimension to the social-constructing perspective from within the narrative. A narrative can be used for reflection and the reconstruction of knowledge. The sharing of the narrative reflects an understanding of the construction of knowledge, where established knowledge can be challenged through shared reflections.

The speaker chose to share his/her story with the rest of the participants at the school leader conference. The speaker is addressing the other participants as colleagues. This can be related to community power behind the language as well as to the speaker's position. The informant wrote down his/her story at the conference because the story meant something to him/her. This narrative made him/her look at leadership in a new way. Yet the story is staged by the task given at the conference. But it was optional to share the narrative with the group. The fact that the speaker chose to share the narrative can be related to the speaker's position. The speaker found the narrative worth sharing. The sharing of the narrative also reflects qualities in the interpersonal relationships among the participants at the conference. The interpersonal perspective can be understood as action in language to encourage and inspire the other participants. These actions can be regarded as power relations in the presentation of the narrative.

The text is constructed in chronological order, beginning with a challenge and ending with a successful solution. The narrative is constructed and told as an inspiration and an encouragement to the other participants. When we link textual perspectives to epistemic assumption, we can see a combination of a social-constructive and pragmatically situated epistemic perspectives. New knowledge is constructed through cooperation and co-production in the narrative. The narrative is shared as an encouragement to other leaders. This reflects an epistemic perspective where knowledge

is constructed in cooperation and can develop through reflection and other perspectives. The sharing of reflections can challenge other's understanding and enhance new and enriched understandings of a phenomenon.

The construction of the narrative and the sharing of the narrative suggest the speakers' position and community power. This is related to the speaker's position in the narrative and in the telling of the narrative, and the two are reinforcing each other. To dare to tell a story about daring to lead other school leaders combines the ideational and interpersonal dimensions in a trustworthy way. The speaker uses his/her position and community position, both from the experience told in the narrative and in the telling of the narrative, to inspire and influence other school leaders to try to lead what they believe in.

What is at stake and how can we create meaning from the narrative about data from national tests?

In the narrative about data from national standardized tests, we get to know the leader's experience of what is at stake when it comes to the use of data on student achievement. The leader brings us along in his/her realization of the potential use of data from national standardized tests. He/she tells us about his/her inner confrontation with an established understanding of the phenomenon. The leader's learning experience is expressed as an "aha" experience: "*A teacher at a school close to my school presented how they work with test results such as national tests and national mappings of students achievements. That day 'I saw the light'."* The learning takes place by virtue of collaboration with a teacher at a nearby school, and it is in the sharing of the teachers' reflections that our informant realizes that there is more to national tests than ranking students and schools. The results can be used to help the students and to develop the school as a learning organization.

When we look at the ideational perspective behind the narrative and link it to epistemic assumptions, we can see signs of a social-constructive view of how we gain new knowledge. The speaker reflects on how the narrative from the neighboring schoolteacher made him/her gain a new perspective on the potential use of the results from national tests. This suggests that new knowledge is gained through both others´ and your own reflections, and that you can widen your cognitive horizons by reflecting on other´s reflections that differ from your own. You learn by cognitive conflicts and by investing in cognitive effort and interaction with peers. Knowledge is constructed in this process. We can also see signs of positivistic epistemic assumptions. In the statement *"I saw the light,"* there are signs of a view on knowledge that can be gained or captured. Knowledge is out there in an objective sense.

The speaker's position is influenced by the formal position the informant has as a school leader. This is again reflected in the power relations behind the narrative. In this case, the power position might make it more challenging to gain new perspectives. Many leaders feel they should know better than their employees. There has been a debate about standardized tests in Norway since they were introduced almost 20 years ago. The arguments about the ranking of students and schools have been raised quite high, and this has caused a gap between teachers and school leaders (cf. Dale et al., 2011; Hodgson et al., 2012; Aasen et al., 2012). School leaders feel loyalty to the data-driven directives they are given from the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training and their leaders in the municipality, but they also feel loyalty towards the teachers at the school they are leading and their points of view. In this loyalty dilemma, many school leaders have felt they have to pick a side in the conflict. The narrative reflects the initial position the school leader held in this debate and explains how the school leader changed his/her view. To get arguments from a teacher about the potential use of data from national tests and to get a new perspective and a new understanding from this, affect the speaker's power position.

When we regard the representation of ideas in the narrative to power relations within the language, we can see signs of language influencing action and enhancing impact. The narrative is about the informant's realization of the value of the potential use of test results. The narrative is told to share this experience with the other school leaders at the conference. The power within this narrative can be linked to language, enhances impact and influences action. The school leader is sharing a narrative about changing his/her view. The purpose of sharing the story is to inspire others. The knowledge that is shared by the school leader can, if picked up by other school leaders, benefit the students and the process of developing the learning environment. By regarding data as a source of information, data from national tests can be used to find effective improvement measures.

The interpersonal perspective shows how the informant addresses the other participants at the conference by sharing his/her enlightenment. The speaker communicates by sharing his/her understanding of a phenomenon with the co-participants. There are no demanding language actions in the narrative (such as orders or questions), only the offering of information and the indirect offering of service/help.

When we link the interpersonal relations to epistemic assumptions, we can interpret the informant's view of how new knowledge is gained. In the communication of the narrative, the speaker shares her enlightenment to help others widen their perspectives. This reflect epistemic assumptions

that can be linked to a social-constructive learning perspective. A sharing of a reflection upon an enlightenment can be used for reflection and reconstruction of knowledge for others. The sharing of the narrative reflects an understanding of the construction of knowledge, where established knowledge can be challenged through shared reflections.

The speaker chose to share his/her story with the rest of the participants at the school leader conference. The speaker addresses the other participants as colleagues. This can be related to community power behind the language as well as to the speaker's position. The informant wrote down his/her story at the conference because the story meant something to him/her. This narrative made him/her look at data on student achievement in a new way. The story is staged by the task given at the conference, but the speaker chose to share the narrative, and this can be linked to the speaker's position in relation to the co-participants. The speaker was confident enough to share the narrative, even though the theme of the narrative is controversial. This reflects qualities in the interpersonal relationships among the participants at the conference. The speaker felt confident enough to share a personal reflection about a controversial theme with the others.

The power relations within the interpersonal perspective in this narrative can be understood as action to enhance and influence new understanding of the phenomenon among the co-participants. The narrative is told to inspire and challenge the other participants.

The text is constructed *in medias res* – starting with the description of the enlightenment and then explaining the process of gaining this new understanding. The narrative is told as an inspiration and an encouragement to the other participants. When we link textual perspectives to epistemic assumptions, we can see signs of a social-constructive perspective on learning. The narrative is shared as an inspiration for other leaders. New knowledge is constructed through cooperation and co-production, both in the narrative and in the interpersonal sharing of the narratives at the conference. This reflects an epistemic perspective on how knowledge is achieved. In the narrative, knowledge is constructed through cognitive challenges of what we think we know. In this case, the challenge is given through the sharing of a narrative. A new understanding can be built through reflection on new perspectives. The sharing of reflections can challenge the established understanding and enhance new and enriched understandings of a phenomenon.

The construction of the narrative and the sharing of the narrative suggest the speaker's position and community power. This is related to the speaker's position in the narrative and in the telling of the narrative, and the two are reinforcing each other. Telling a story about how another narrative

enlightened you and changed your perspective on student achievement data, can be regarded as an action to inspire and challenge the other school leaders. The speaker uses his/her position and community position to inspire and influence other school leaders to see the potential in using data on students' achievement to set measures and help students progress in their learning.

What is at stake and how can we create meaning from the chapter 3.5 in the core curriculum?

Chapter 3.5 in the core curriculum describes how professional environment and school development should be realized: *"Schools should be a professional environment where teachers, leaders and other members of staff reflect on common values and assess and develop their practice."* (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2017). The chapter functions as a description of how the school should develop as a learning organization and describes the school as a societal institution, the teacher as a role model, value-based school development, knowledge-based school development, reflective school development and practice-based school development. A professional learning environment is described through these key assets. The teachers should be role models, and the school should be a professional environment based on reflection upon values, knowledge, research and practice.

The ideational meta-function can help us understand how chapter 3.5 communicates the idea behind the development of professional learning communities (PLCs). When we link the chapter to epistemic assumptions, we see signs of social-constructive assumptions but also signs of pre-fixed knowledge assumptions related to evidence-based school development.

School development is described as an ongoing process based on interaction between the members of the school's staff. The staff should be aware of their function as role models for the students; they should base their practice on the values in the core curriculum; and they should reflect upon, develop and update their teaching practice. The teachers should develop their practice as a group. *"Teachers who reflect together on and assess planning and implementation of their teaching develop a richer understanding of good educational practice. This must be done while bearing in mind the profession's knowledge base and the core values for primary and secondary education and training."* All of this agrees with social-constructive epistemic assumptions. School development is also linked to setting target measures and realizing the school's purpose. These are examples of fixed knowledge assumptions and can be related to evidence-based and behavioristic epistemic assumptions.

The speaker in the core curriculum is the governing authorities. The core curriculum has status as regulation of law. This means it sets legal standards and regulates the practice in the schools. The descriptions in the core curriculum are legally binding for the schools. The sender has the power to give directives. This represents power relations behind the language, both from the speaker's position and from the government (community power). When we regard the representation of ideas in language to maintain power, enhance impact and influence action, we can find power relations within the representation of ideas. The chapter gives directives to the schools and the teachers about how to develop the schools' practices and how to establish a professional learning environment among the teachers. The chapter has immense impact and influences action on how to establish the school's PLC.

Chapter 3.5 functions as a description of the characteristics of well-functioning PLCs and directives to the schools in Norway about how to develop these professional environments. When we explore the exchange of views in the text, we can see that the dominant semiotic actions are orders and the stating of facts. The speaker combines these two semiotic actions in the directives to the receiver. We can see this in the opening statement: *"Schools should be professional environments…"*, and we can see it in the following paragraph: "*School as a societal institution is obliged to base itself on and practice the values and principles that have been established for primary and secondary education and training."* We can see examples of explicit orders: *"Teachers must consider carefully what, how and why pupils learn, and how they can lead and support the pupils' education and all-round development optimally."* And we can see examples of the explicit stating of facts (giving information), such as *"Teachers who reflect together on and assess planning and implementation of their teaching develop a richer understanding of good educational practice."* If we relate this to epistemic assumptions, we find signs of knowledge being transferable (from the authorities to the teacher). The stating of facts and the directives are related to behavioristic epistemic assumptions where knowledge can be shared and transferred from an authority. We don't find semiotic actions in the form of offers and questions in the text. If we use this to explore the power relations behind the interpersonal perspective of the text, we can see asymmetrical relations between the speaker and the receiver of the text. This is related to the formal position the sender holds as a law-enforcing authority.

The power relations of the language in the text clearly show action to maintain power, enhance impact and influence action. This is not hidden but clearly stated in the interpersonal semiotic actions.

When we look at the ideational perspectives in the text and compare the to the interpersonal perspective, we can see that the epistemic assumptions differ between the perspectives. While the textual ideation has strong connections to a social-constructive view of learning, the interpersonal perspective reflects a more fixed and behavioristic view. The chapter explains how teachers should use reflection, values, and sharing of perspectives to gain new knowledge and develop practice. This ambivalence is linked to the power relations behind the text and the asymmetric relations between the authorities and the receiver of the directives. It is also linked to the power relations of language; we can see power relations between the ideas represented in the text (how the schools should establish well-functioning professional environments) and the participants in the communication (authorities and teachers). The lack of coherence between the ideational representations in the text and the interpersonal communication can be linked to a well-known parenting strategy: *"Do as I tell you and not as I do!"*

Two narratives and a core curriculum

When we compare the two narratives, we can see expressions of values and principles. Stories are important sources of information about the person and the social and cultural context they are part of. In the discussion, we will see the stories as narratives that convey a point with a moral incision, like Coffey & Atkinson (1996, p. 63) use. We draw attention to messages about what leads to success or defeat in the face of the person's professional duties.

Both narratives tell stories about life-changing experiences as school leaders and are related to possibilities for action. The first narrative explains how the school leader experienced changing how a group of teachers viewed local curriculum work by involving the teachers in a process. In the second narrative, a teacher changed the way the speaker viewed the use of data from standardized tests. Both narratives are about building new knowledge through challenging each other's understanding and through shared reflection, but while the school leader in the first narrative is the inspiration and source for building new understanding, both for the teachers and for himself/herself, the school leader in the second narrative gets challenged and inspired by another person's narrative. Both speakers explain their narratives as life-changing for them as school leaders, but there is a difference between the first and the second narrative when it comes to initiating action. While the speaker in the first narrative initiated action herself/him and learned from the process, the speaker in the second narrative was a reflective participant in a reflection initiated by somebody else. The first speaker acted upon a challenge. The second speaker was

acted upon. Still, both speakers gained new knowledge and understanding from these experiences.

Both narratives can epistemically be related to a social-constructive perspective on learning. New knowledge and understanding are constructed through reflection, shared reflections, and cognitive dilemmas. Yet there is a difference between the epistemic assumptions in the two narratives. While the author of the first narrative describes the process of gaining a new understanding as a performative, practical, social, and constructive process, the author of the second narrative describes the process as a cognitive, constructive, social, and enlightening process. In the second narrative knowledge is out there to be found as well as constructed.

Both narratives describe processes that changed the way the school leaders viewed their assignment, their role, and their function as school leaders. The first narrative describes a dilemma, a choice, a solution, and an experience. The school leader experienced that boldness, effort, and engagement in what you believe in can be necessary to challenge the existing practice and the existing view of a phenomenon. The participants in the local curriculum project contributed and gained new understanding through the process in which they were involved. The school leader experienced that resistance and critical questions can function as reflections when they are framed and included in a developmental process. The leader's role seems to have changed through this process. In the beginning, there was a lack of trust and shared ambitions. At the end of the process, there was shared knowledge, new understanding, and shared ambitions. Both the speaker's position and the community power among the participants in the project became stronger. The speaker is sharing the narrative to enhance impact and influence action for the co-leaders at the conference. He/she is sharing a success story to inspire others to do the same.

The second narrative describes how the leader gained new knowledge and understanding by listening to a narrative about the use of student data. The narrative is about having fixed assumptions about national tests and then experiencing an eye-opening reflection. The school leader used to dislike standardized tests because he/she related them to the ranking of students and schools. The narrative about the way another school used the result data was an eye-opener for her/him. The sharing of this narrative with the other participants at the conference can be seen as an action to enhance impact and influence action on two levels: first, to inspire other leaders to look at the data from national standardized tests as a source to help students progress, and second, to relay to them the importance of reflection on your own assumptions to gain new and enriched understanding.

Both narratives offer information and perspective. They function interpersonally as offerings to the co-participants at the conference. The relations between the speakers and the co-participants are symmetric. There are statements of fact, but these statements are related to the speakers' understandings. The narratives offer information in a humble and reflective way to enhance impact and influence the other participants thinking about the phenomena. There is coherence between the ideational and the interpersonal perspectives in both the narratives.

When we compare the two narratives to chapter 3.5 in the core curriculum, we can see both differences and coherence in epistemic assumptions. We can see differences in semiotic actions, and we can see differences and coherence between the presentation of ideas and the exchange of views.

Within the ideational perspective, there is coherence in epistemic assumptions between the two narratives and chapter 3.5 in the core curriculum. They all emphasize a social-constructive approach to learning. The learning process is described as a process where we learn through shared reflections and the construction of new understandings. There are two exceptions to this dominating pattern: The second narrative also includes behavioristic assumptions and reflects ideas about the objective existence of knowledge. These assumptions are linked to the phrase, *"I saw the light"*. School development in chapter 3.5 is linked to setting target measures and realizing the school's purpose. These fixed knowledge assumptions can be related to evidence-based and behavioristic epistemic assumptions. Still, socio-constructive perspectives dominate all three texts.

When we compare the socio-constructive epistemic assumptions in the ideational perspective to the epistemic assumptions in the interpersonal perspective, the incoherence between the narratives and chapter 3.5 becomes clear. Within the interpersonal perspective of the core curriculum, semiotic actions are dominated by stating facts and giving orders. This indicates an asymmetric relation between the speaker and the receiver and suggests that knowledge and understanding of a phenomenon can be transferred from the speaker to the receiver. This differs from the epistemic assumptions communicated both in the representation in chapter 3.5 and also in the ideational and interpersonal perspectives within the two narratives. While we can see a clear dominance of the socio-constructive epistemic assumptions in both narratives and in the ideas communicated in chapter 3.5, the communication itself in chapter 3.5 differs and represents more fixed epistemic assumptions. The authorities are ordering the schools to develop professional learning environments where knowledge is gained through shared reflection on values, research, and empirical data:

> *"... everyone in the environment must reflect on the value choices and development needs, and use research, experience-based knowledge and ethical assessments as the grounds on which to base targeted measures. Well-developed structures for collaboration, support and guidance between colleagues and across schools promote a sharing and learning culture."*

This incoherence can be seen as a paradox and can be related to the schools' difficulties in establishing a democratic culture where not only the teachers have a mission to participate in professional learning communities but where the students have the same mission. Twenty-first century competencies emphasize an approach to learning where the aim is to create new knowledge and change the established hegemony. This is difficult to realize in processes where communication defines fixed understandings, facts are determined and there is little room for reflection. The relevant question to this paradox would be to what degree the interpersonal epistemic assumptions in chapter 3.5 influence the learning processes in the schools. The traditional approaches to teaching and learning in schools are fixed, authoritarian and behavioristic. The teacher shared his/her knowledge with the pupils. The pupils were enlightened by what they were taught. The present national curriculum in Norway communicates the ambition to change this way of learning, along with international trends and the need for the capacity to create new solutions in society. This is what is communicated through the ideas and representations in the core curriculum. The question is what effects interpersonal perspectives have on this attempted change. Will the orders and the stating of facts support the change process or function as a paradox and legitimize the authoritarian approach?

To try to get a clearer picture of the implications of framing professional reflective processes, we will discuss reflective practice as an approach to school development and use these theoretical perspectives in our reflections about the narratives and the core curriculum.

Reflective practice as school development

While reflective practice occupies a high level of acceptance and is generally well regarded, what it is and how it might be developed are more problematic. Åsvoll (2012) compares reflection as a cognitive-constructive process (ea. Piaget, 1953; Vygotsky, 1978) and reflection as an intuitive and social process (cf. Dreyfus et al., 1986, 2004) and argues that reflective intuition can be used to remedy shortcomings in teaching plans and help to create and resolve unpredictable issues. Weiss (2021) describes this self-forming dialogue as an unruly driving force that drives men's windows into individuation. The self-forming process *(paideia)* can lead to

practical wisdom *(fronesis).* The discourse lies in the fact that it does not have to lead to practicing wisdom since the same force can also drift towards self-criticism and destructiveness. And it is at this moment that reflection is linked to actual professional practice as a positive force. Åsvoll (2012, p. 13) states that reflective intuition and cognitive reflection should be considered different aspects of reflection that can reinforce each other. Helskog (2019) has developed a methodical model with six dimensions for wisdom-oriented pedagogy. Dialogue is at the center of the six dimensions and connects the particular experience with the universal. The six dimensions are: (1) spiritual ideal, (2) existential emotional, (3) relational communicative, (4) cultural-historical, (5) practical-ethical, and (6) critical-analytical. Hansen links the model to wisdom development and argues that the model can inspire self-reflection but also function as an analytical framework in philosophical dialogues (Ibid., p. 46).

Lindseth (2017, 2020) uses the term *reflective practice research* to describe the learning process based on one's own thoughts and shared reflections as empirical resources. This can be linked to the discrepancy that occurs between professional practitioners and professional actions. In the discrepancy, teachers can research practical knowledge. Personal references and narratives are used as empirical sources to improve knowledge and gain new understanding. Practical knowledge differs from theoretical knowledge by being relevant and useful in real-life situations and enabling you to find ways through challenges and dilemmas.

Reflective practice, as a methodical approach to improving practice, is linked to the thoughts of John Dewey (1916, 1933) and further developed by Donald Schön (1987; 2017). While Dewey emphasized experience and reflection in the learning process, Schön extended "reflection in action" to "reflection in and on action" by arguing that tacit knowledge only becomes conscious knowledge when reflected upon. Kolb (1984), influenced by Dewey, developed a four-stage model for reflective practice: (1) find a concrete, real-world personal experience; (2) reflect on the experience by reviewing it and learning from it; (3) conceptualize the experience (concepts, elements, and themes); and (4) plan and try out new practices from what was learned. This leads to a new experience, which can again be reflected upon. The reflective cycle has been developed and renamed by numerous theorists, among them Baker et al.´s (2017) "active reflection in action learning cycles", Fergusson et al.´s (2018) "micro-reflecting circle" and Cooperrider et al.`s (1995) "Circle of appreciative inquiry". Appreciative Inquiry (ibid.) uses a systematic, proactive approach to reflective practice by focusing on desired change and the creation of visions. The proactive approach in appreciative inquiry can be linked to a

process of reflecting on one´s work and beliefs in the supportive/confrontational environment of one´s peers for the purpose of gaining new insight and self-formation in professional communities. Reflection on practice is linked to both the individual's insight and the peer community´s insight and learning. In the discussion resumed about military leaders` practices (in chapter 4), Bergh uses these words: "As leaders, we should rather strive to liberate the hearts and minds". Appreciating individual understanding, insight, and knowledge as part of the learning processes of the community is a mutual need relationship when reflecting on the profession's values in actions.

The participants at the school leaders conference used a model influenced by Cooperrider's "Circle of appreciative inquiry" adjusted to fit the regulations in the core curriculum in Norway. This model was developed by the authors in cooperation with school leaders in six municipalities two years earlier and named "Triangulated Analysis Model" (TAM). The focus area in this model is to triangulate reflections over rich data (narratives and understandings) together with existing big data (results from national tests, exams, and surveys) to understand and develop practice.

Even though the aim of the process is fixed through the regulations in the core curriculum, the content of the reflections and the outcome from the reflection processes are open-ended. The engagement and the reflections at the school leaders conference suggest that the regulation of reflective practice can frame and support reflective processes. The narratives and the participants' reflections on the narratives show that methods for reflective practice can lead to engagement, change, and new understanding. Even though the core curriculum states that reflection is a key part of being competent and should be a part of the learning culture for both students and the professional learning communities, the content of the reflections and the reflection methods are open. In this combination of state-regulated and locally developed solutions, understanding reflective processes and methods is crucial – not only to access reflective processes but also to understand the processes and integrate them into the learning processes.

Reflection on the use of reflections as school development

In this study, we have researched and reflected on how reflective practice can be realized through dialogs in phases. We called this a model or a method for including data collection and triangulation of data as research elements in the reflective process about what's at stake in schools. We have used two narratives and chapter 3.5 in the core curriculum to better understand how school leaders can triangulate data to create new

understandings of phenomena. A perceived mandate for teachers is to be able to reflect on experiences, assess them, and further develop practices based on reflexive judgment. The reflections show emphasis on socio-constructive epistemic assumptions both in the narratives and in the values for actions in professional learning communities. However, the reflections also show deviating aspects from these dominating features. These are related to the interpersonal epistemic assumptions, which again led to reflections on the consequences of these semantic actions within the core curriculum.

The narratives show that creating new knowledge through shared reflections is an important aspect of school leadership for the school leaders. Both narratives emphasize a social-constructive and democratic approach to developmental work, both within the ideational perspective and within the interpersonal perspective. When we link these reflections to the phase model, we see that the narratives are used to define proactive research questions and as data to describe the current situation. Reflection and analysis of data are used to develop specific aims, implement measures, and, when the time comes, evaluate change. The participants reflect on action throughout the process but focus on one phase at a time. Narratives and reflection on narratives in relation to other data are essential in these processes to establish understanding.

While reflective practice is associated with creating meaning about your own practice to develop and grow as a professional, research-based reflective practice can serve as a method to develop practice in professional learning communities. The phase for dialogs can support these processes. The interface between the reflective practice in the narratives and the collected and triangulated data in the principles for professional learning community work in the national curriculum in Norway shows that we can use reflective practice in these processes and gain new perspectives. Both reflective practice and research-based development are stated as important aspects of establishing a learning organization. These two aspects can be combined, and then the dialogs get steps or a design for the reflection and learning process and fulfill the principles for reflective development in the curriculum in a more authentic way. Our participants used narratives to share reflections about themselves as school leaders and used the reflections when they described desired solutions and set aims.

By enriching the evidence-based perspective on school development with a broader picture, a more practical picture, and a more flexible and relevant picture of what is at stake in the schools, the reflections, the measures, the aims, and the actions in the school development process can become more relevant and meaningful. Reflection can be a source of

cognitive and emotional growth as well as a source of practical knowledge about how to live and practice, and a source of wisdom.

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Chapter 7

Rampant texts and potted plants. Place- and material-based writing and the transformation of academic authorship

Iben Brinch[1]

Abstract

The phenomenon examined in this article is the social practice (Reckwitz, 2020; 2002) of writing place- and material-based texts in academic contexts. We find the background for this example of reflective practice research in the wonder or the "experience of discrepancy" (Lindseth, 2017): Why does knowing of, reading, or getting a writing exercise to write place- and material-based texts foster a motivation to write, even for the academic writer in an academic situation? The wonder was informed by trying out the practice of writing place- and material-based texts with a group of PhD students: could this type of writing be used pedagogically to provide the scholar with a resource not only for motivation for writing but also for transformation as an individual and scholar? Through practical and critical reflections on the practice the article gets closer to a theoretical understanding of the phenomenon of place- and material-based writing as a discourse, social practice, and form of rhetoric.

Keywords

Placed-based writing, material-based writing, reflective practice, practice theory

Introduction

I was truly inspired by reading a small black book with poor photography on the front page. As I started reading the book, I realized that the picture

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was of a plant growing wildly out of a ventilation canal on an American university campus, a shot taken by the author herself. The motive clearly reminded her of the fact that she shared a real world with her students and that her obligations as a university teacher in academic writing was to empower the students to live their lives in this world. Framing the picture was the title *Transforming Ethos. Place and the Material in Rhetoric and Writing,* printed in yellow font with classical serifs, and under the picture was the name Roseanne Carlo (2020), the author. The book appeared personal, modern and classical at the same time, and of course speaking to me with all the buzzwords of my small world of academic interests: place, material, rhetoric, writing, ethos and – the one making me most curious – *transforming*[2]. I was motivated by this book, not just to read on and reflect, but to *write myself* as well as *to try out the prescribed writing practices of place-and material-based writing with my own students*. And I did.

After reading Carlo's book, I was supposed to write a review of it, but following the example set by the writing style and the content of the book, I wrote about the book *and* myself – my own places and things (Brinch, 2021). For example, the aquarium with the fish staring at me found its way into the text together with the view out of the window and me longing for the land of my youth on the other side of the sea. I did not expect any feedback on my review, so I was surprised when a master's student from another university wrote that she found comfort in reading the text, that it had confirmed the very reason she was engaged in rhetoric and intellectual work at all, and that she had been reminded of the fact that rhetorical power, agency and empowerment can be found in the individual and start with the personal experience. What was going on here?

So far, this introduction reveals what the Norwegian scholar Anders Lindseth calls an *experience of discrepancy* ("diskrepanserfaring") (2017, p. 247) because I imagined that certain texts had a different impact on their readers than expected. What is important for this chapter is what I did *after* writing the book review and turning my further actions into an example of *reflective practice research* (Lindseth, 2017; McGuirk, 2017). I decided to bring the phenomenon – the newfound motivational chain of inspiration to write place- and material-based texts – into my practice as a university teacher to examine it further. I asked myself if it would be possible to recreate the motivation for writing in a pedagogical setting in higher

[2] See chapter 2 of this book where Johan Lövgren explore identity development in higher education and chapter 12 where Sebastian Rehnman writes about reflective writing under the title "Writing expressively for one's well-being: partly constituting oneself through self-reflection."

education, even with young scholars in their (sometimes anxious) thriving for becoming researchers and academic authors. The idea of using a writing exercise to encourage participants to write a place- and material-based essay for the participants on a PhD course was born. My pedagogical practice as a course leader had to change to open a space for this new kind of writing practice. The change would be experimental testing of the hypothesis that *scholars, by using place- and material-based writing, would write texts that are more transformative for themselves and more engaging, even transformative, for others.*

This chapter has already started a hermeneutic-phenomenological *slow reading backwards* to the phenomenon of inspiration from Carlo's place- and material-based academic text: "By reading the end in the beginning and the beginning in the end, we learn also to read time itself backwards, as the recapitulation of the initial conditions of a course of action in its terminal consequences." (Ricœur, 1991, p. 110). A slow reading backwards is a hermeneutic reading where you examine the horizons that are established in the texts and by the texts in the practice, and this method is supposed to shed light on the phenomenon (Ricœur, 2008). The unfolding chapter will consist of the first two steps of *concrete* and *critical* reflections, following Lindseth's suggestions, before continuing to the third step of *theoretical* reflections (Lindseth, 2017; 2020). This means that the chapter twines two threads that intertwine and make the text: reflective practical research fostered by the experience of discrepancy, which made me reflect concretely and critically when trying out place- and material-based writing with PhD students, and a theoretical and methodological reflection raised by this example, asking how place- and material-based writing can be understood as a phenomenon in scholarly practice.

Concrete and critical reflections of place-and material-based writing in the education of PhD students

The experience of discrepancy

Reading backwards and grasping the original *experience of discrepancy* (Lindseth, 2017) require that I slow down and re-experience my original thinking. I already had the impression that certain texts often have a deep impact on their readers, namely texts or text fragments based on life-writing such as letters, memories, self-biographies, or fiction based on the author's own life. What was the secret of the chain reaction of wanting-to-write-essayistic-texts-about-places-and-things-by-knowing-about-the-phenomenon? Was it because it opened a space to include your own

perspective as a clear "I" in the text? Or was it the inspiration of the loose, essayistic form? My intuitive answer was that it is part of the reason, but not all. Was it because of the autobiographical approach? No, it is even more than that. Could it be because of the specific stories about and reflections on places and things that mean something to the writer? Yes, but there is still more. Is it because we as readers understand that these places and things are co-constructive of the identity of the academic subject? Yes. Is it because we want to explore our own places and things with the purpose of understanding more about our own identities and transformations? Yes, we want to write texts like this because they are explorative and create transformations for us as subjects.

The questions and answers in the previous section are intuitive and reflect my own prejudice (fore-judgement) more than telling the truth about the phenomenon unveiled. On the other hand, my questions are asked and precipitately answered based on knowledge already present for me – or rather, *in* me. This is the practical knowledge based on my development of the craft of writing (*techne*) and the *phronetic* knowledge about what is good and clever to do when writing and with the texts produced. This practical knowledge comes together with the *epistemic* knowledge I have about theories of creative non-fiction writing practices – textual creativity, style, and rhetoric (Jørgensen & Askeland, 2019; Jørgensen, 2019; Jørgensen, 2020)[3]. The questions just asked above are examples of the *concrete reflections* of what knowledge the experience of discrepancy reveals. Concrete reflection is originally Paul Ricœur's conceptualisation (Lindseth 2017, p. 353) of the process of dwelling on the grasping of the phenomenon as we proceed with our semiotic approach. We must then turn to the next step and become *critical reflective* of what is going on in this process of semiotic grasping in the process of understanding the phenomenon, and finally, we can turn to *theoretical reflection* and explore if we find some general truth in the specific. In the following section, I will discuss the phenomenon of place- and material-based writing in the education of scholars in terms of the first two kinds of reflections, the concrete and the critical.

The experiences of a course leader

The essayistic, autobiographical writing that Roseanne Carlo speaks of as a valuable pedagogical resource in higher education is rhetorical, but not in the way we usually think about rhetoric:

[3] The author Iben Brinch changed her name from Iben Brinch Jørgensen in 2021.

> This kind of writing is hard to assess with a rubric—it's not the writing of logos; rather it centers ethos and pathos. When we write from a perspective of inquiry and openness, we dive into what we don't now, what we can't express, and we must work through that scariness and vulnerability. Writing with inquiry at is center traces where we've been, what we've thought, how we've felt rather than stripping all this away by coming to the point of announcing our arrivals. (Carlo, 2020, p. 7)

Carlo has a chapter – "For an Affective, Embodied, Place-Based Writing Curriculum" on how she practiced this kind of writing with her students at the Writing Program at CUNY, College of Staten Island. First, she made writing exercises that would make the students write about the places of their life-worlds: the campus, their homes, their neighbourhood and city. This was educational in a specific direction: "When students learn to articulate their places and see themselves as members of communities, their education becomes more meaningful to them." (p. 139). Eventually, they should write directly about housing for authentic audiences and publish it in the local media. These exercises had the purpose of creating civic engagement and a sense of belonging in the world. The other chapters of Carlo's book are theoretical chapters discussing place- and material-based writing. The most remarkable, though, are the passages containing Carlos own stories about her places and things. And why is that? Because she establishes a clear character or voice – a textual ethos – in the book, using a stylistic form of first-person focalization, description, narration, scenes, and dialogues. Her writing practice makes her experiences authentic and therefore trustworthy. Along these passages, Carlo also argues for the pedagogical and transformative potential of the writing practice, and by that, her book is persuasive and motivating for trying out both writing and teaching this way.

I wondered if I could start a meaningful learning process for a group of PhD students. Could they find any kind of motivation by trying out place- and material-based writing? Could they be convinced to use this kind of writing in their academic writing practice? Would they connect more strongly to their own writing process or texts? Would they experience a transformation of ethos – of character – while writing? Would they see writing as a learning resource for themselves as researchers, academic authors, and university teachers? The PhD course was already planned when I started wondering. To proceed to action, I had to get the other course leader, a colleague, on board this silent ship setting out for El Dorado. When he was loaded, the next step was to find room for the writing practice in our teaching practice. I realized that I had to make the implementation almost invisible so as not to take any focus away from the students

reading the course literature, participating in the discussions, and writing their course essays as planned.

The course was a five-day course in March and April 2020 with the title "Pedagogical resources and learning processes" – ideal for legitimizing trying out writing as a learning resource and process of learning (also see Brinch, 2023). The course was digital because of the pandemic lockdown. Helped by the situation, we had room for self-study in the afternoons after the lectures. I suggested making a "writing task" for each afternoon, and my colleague agreed. I composed an exercise during the day with lectures and discussions and introduced it to the students before ending the online part of the course. In practice, I wrote drafts for the exercise and mailed them or sent them in the Zoom chat to my colleague for his consent. Before the very first course day, I created a writing log for each student – with their own name in the title – on the digital learning platform, inviting them to post reflective texts, questions, or wonderings. Before meeting at the seminar, they should post a presentation of themselves and their PhD project on the writing log. After this they posted the texts from the daily writing exercises, and on one day the task included commenting on the writing logs of two other participants.

I introduced the students to Carlos's book and the thoughts about place- and material-based writing in one of the first lectures together with theories of writing as a resource for thinking and researching. The planned writing practice was pedagogically and theoretically framed by that. But I did not have the courage to make more than one writing exercise that was place- and material-based. Why? In a moment of (self-)critical reflection, I guess there were several reasons: as mentioned, I did not want to steal the focus or distract the students from the main purpose of the course, and – a little embarrassing to admit – I did not want to expose myself as being in a state of wonder and not in a state of clear, epistemic knowledge based on research. Thus, the most important was that I was afraid of doing damage to the students if it turned out that they later – after using this kind of writing practice – would be met with rejection and devaluation from peers, supervisors, reviewers, and conference audiences. As you can see, the reasons had something to do with the writing practice within other practices and a lot to do with my own experiences with academic authorship. I decided on two approaches for my pedagogical practice: First, to just briefly lift the veil of the potential of this kind of writing practice, I only made one writing exercise on one single day, asking for place- and material-based writing. In the exercise, I actually made the exercise an alternative so that the students could choose to write a traditional reflective text on a theoretical question instead. Second, I created the exercise so that the students

would reflect on this kind of writing as *a pedagogical resource*; they would then be connecting the place- and material-based writing with a reflection on one of the central concepts of the course. All twelve students chose the alternative of writing a place-and material-based essay, which was surprising for me in the situation. But when I reflect on it now, it is actually the first confirmation of the appeal of the phenomenon of writing such texts, not because you have read another place- and material-based text like Carlo's text, *but because the very idea of writing such a text is motivating*. The exercise sounded like this:

> Alternative 2 (first A, then B): A. Take a walk in your neighbourhood (could also be indoors or in your garden) and take a few pictures of both large-scale and small-scale views and objects. B. Write a short text (could be a photo essay, including some of your photos) based on the walk and the pictures with this question in mind: "How can experience of place be a pedagogical resource for me?". Post (at least part of) the text on your personal writing log on Canvas.

By creating the exercise and exposing the students to it, I created a rhetorical discourse, forcing the students into a responding role in a way that called for them to subjectively position themselves as writing persons in time and space. Together with widening out the perspective on the phenomenon, the student's texts created validation by getting more experiences from other perspectives and other learning processes.

If you have not guessed it yet, my story till now consists of concrete – and some critical – reflections on my experience of discrepancy. Lindseth says that the only way to *dwell* on the experience of discrepancy is to *tell*: "We must tell how it reveals itself in concrete situations" (Lindseth, 2017, p. 247, my translation). According to Lindseth, we must retell and rewrite until we find that our story is true enough for its purpose, which reminds me of Clifford Geertz's concept of *thick descriptions* as deeply reflective writing (Geertz, 2017).

The students' writing

What did the students write? And how can we understand more of the place- and material-based writing as a phenomenon and a writing practice through their texts? The eleven texts analysed here reflect on three different places: the working station at home, the living space at home and view out of the window, and the surrounding nature and cultural landscape seen when walking. The things described follow the same pattern, and (almost) everyone had both small-scale pictures and pictures of views: a PC/Mac, books, the living room, the dog, natural landscapes, trees, tracks in snow,

railways, pathways. Many of the students have pictures of plants, either indoor plants or outdoor plants. It was early spring at the time they authored their essays, and the season was a resource in the learning process because of the blooming or renewal that it reminded them of.

The forthcoming critical reflection is based on a close reading of one of the texts[4]. It is an interpretation of the *praxis* of the place- and material-based writing practice in an academic rhetorical situation. The interpretation is based on "Maria's" photo essay from her tour around her own house. "Elisabeth" comments on the text. As you will see, the mental flowering and new beginnings are metaphorically thematized, but the confusion and despair are also reflected on.

> Maria's essay: *Today I had a hard time formulating my thoughts after the seminar. There were so many different aspects that I found relevant for my research project, but I got some type of a writer's block. So, I found myself talking to myself instead of writing, reflecting on meaning-making through language and what happens to learning when the social processes are more online these days. The computer has become a tool not only for me to use for writing or searching for information, but also a tool that gives me the opportunity to discuss concepts with others or hear other people's interpretations of what I myself wrote or said – opportunities to create meaning and to learn. So I took a picture of my desk and "home office" and then as I looked at it, I saw other things that reminded me of what I need to do when I "get stuck" in my reflections. I was reminded of my own experiences of learning through objects around me to take a break and do something else for the evening. And that it is a good thing to get frustrated in learning sometimes and have the patience to wait it out – you never know what it gives in the end. Here are some of the other things that helped me this afternoon [four photographs]. Books from different courses that reminded me of some other learning situations and frustrated discussions about learning and teaching with colleagues and friends. Pictures from a sailing adventure some years ago. And the flowers I saw when taking a walk to clear my head – a sign of spring and maybe more…*
>
> Elisabeth's comment: *I have reflected on many of the same things that you bring up in this post. After these lectures, I have felt like my head is going to explode. There is so much to take in and reflect upon that it has been difficult to put it down in words. So I am planning on using the strategy that you mention – take*

[4] For a comparative analysis of the topics in all the texts see Brinch 2023.

> *a break from it and see if things are clearer in a few days. I have some ideas for my course essay, and I hope they might develop in my subconscious. I also find it useful to talk issues through with myself sometimes, just like you say. I am so envious that you have flowers in your neighborhood now! I haven't seen any yet, but hopefully they will pop up soon! :)*

My first, and idiosyncratic, reading of Maria's text makes it clear for me that I, as her teacher, have put her in the current situation of a course day that had been heavily loaded. Her frustrations hit me as a negative evaluation and made me want to change the architecture of the course or do something differently for future students in other courses. I find myself reading the other essays, searching for a similar critique, and I do find other logs with descriptions of feelings of thronging thoughts, but not as overwhelmingly paralyzing as it appears to be for Maria. I could have interpreted Maria's text as a rampant critique of the course, but that would not be an adequate reading and would not bring me to a greater understanding of the practice of this kind of reflective place- and material-based writing. I must see the text as a wild plant in the ventilation canal.

Then it strikes me that Maria has found gold for herself without knowing it: She has found coping strategies – involving writing reflectingly – for future writing blocks and feelings of overwhelming knowledge production in herself. These are "learning resources" that can come to matter for her somewhere in her future professional life as a writing scholar. It is through an interpretation of how the text develops that I make this hypothesis: Maria writes about her confusion and that she had a writer's block, but the writing block seems to have vaporized while her conceptualization of the PC as a learning resource has taken form – by writing about it! In the short text, it even shows that she interacts with her own figuration of things in a reflective, hermeneutic process: she takes pictures and then sees something new about her thinking by watching them in a circular process of seeing the importance of places and things in her transformative process.

Elisabeth's comment shows that she, by reading Marias's text, explores future actions for coping with learning and becoming herself. What strikes me as not so good – leading the two of them away from El Dorado – is that neither of them realizes that the "talking to themselves" has only become visible for themselves and the other because they have *written about it*. It is through the text and publishing for peers that the thoughts become resources for themselves and others. In this case, Maria's thoughts made Elisabeth surer of her own thoughts and resources for learning and developing professionally. Unfortunately, Elizabeth is surer of *not* wanting to write down her thoughts and continuing to think by writing. And then we have the

plants: Both Maria and Elisabeth identify with the growing processes of the potted and wild plants. The situated and living plants seem to become tangible reflections of the persons' scholarly growth and motivational reminders of perpetual transformations.

Changing the writing practice in the education of scholars?

Through retrospective story telling in autobiographical form, the scholar can become aware of the emotions and attitudes that he or she has constructed and maybe will reconstruct in new educational or professional situations. For this purpose, writing a journal can be useful as part of the practice:

> Making this knowledge, emotion and attitude explicit allows them to be examined and related constructively to new learning. A journal is an ideal vehicle for this exercise since it can provide present and anticipated future contexts alongside working in the past and it can provide the opportunities to return to past experiences on many different occasions. (Moon, 2006, p.74)

To write about one's thoughts and memories of the profession that you are striving to make a part of yourself might be enlightening for everyone – including the PhD student transforming into a researcher, lecturer, and author.

As I mentioned, I created a writing log for each student, and my experience was that this choice was rather central to the experiences that the students had with all the different texts, including the place- and material-based texts. Central here was the fact that they had a semi-public audience with each other and the course leaders. The fact that the writing logs were semi-public made the texts less idiosyncratic in their reflexivity, on the one hand, and more consensus-seeking and, by that, constrained by the context of the broader academic writing practice, on the other. Because the course was online, the learning platform turned into *the shared place* for performing for all of us – as subjects, professionals, and developing-professionals. The places for educational processes have an impact as places, and by their materiality for the practices, so do digital places and the homes where the students were situated while practicing (Schatzki, 2021). The situation made the writing log and the interaction between the students commenting on each other's texts much more important because it was *the* place of interaction together with the online lectures and discussions during the five days. The self-presentations made on each writing log had much more to say for the creation and development of ethos – as

a trustworthy person and textual voice – than they would have if we had interacted physically.

As far as I know, it is not common to use learning journals (see Moon, 2006) – or writing logs – in the education of PhD students. Often, the PhD courses are short and arranged so that the students have great freedom to choose from a reading list and form their course essays purposefully with their final thesis in mind. It is far more common to use reflective writing in education, like teacher education, that involves working within asymmetric power relations and seeks to develop a reflective metalanguage about the practice. Thus, using a writing journal will strengthen any student's "transformative agency" (Lund & Vestøl, 2020) because it gives her a resource that makes her own process visible and traceable for herself and empowers her to make informed changes.

Using a writing log would, in my eyes, give the participants in the PhD course a valuable and central resource that they could draw upon in the very situation that the course created for them and maybe somewhere in their future practice as scholars "when it matters" to them, as Gert Biesta says (Biesta, 2022, p. 75). But to make them realize the potential of the learning journal for *themselves as selves*, they had to write something that mattered there and then. And that was why the exercise had to include personal places and things: Where you are, what you do, what you see, and what you think matters now. The writing researcher Jennifer A. Moon discusses the connectedness of the development of self and the development of self as a professional: "Because most journal-writing draws expression or exploration of emotion and attitude into the 'open' in writing, it has the potential to link personal and professional education and development" (Moon, 2006, p. 72). Moon even seems to have the same link as Carlo in her book on transforming ethos, namely that developing self as a subject and character and developing a present self in the text are interconnected: "In the context of the development of self as a professional, a number of writers talk of the development of 'voice'" (Moon, 2006, 72), the development of confidence (p. 73), and the development into "professionals" (p. 73). In the last one – becoming a professional – the element of reflexivity (the self-reflections) can be absent, and the "coherent presentation" is the most important to make the audience sense a present subject in the text (p. 73). The *writing log* about how the writing proceeds, stops, flows, etc. is a form of learning journal and a resource, especially for the transformation of *scholarly authorship*. Maria's text was a writing log – though unintentionally so – about the influences of places and things in her scholarly processes of manifesting learning in text.

A theory of place- and material-based academic writing

The writing as a social practice

In my view, both my own review of Carlo's book and the students' essays became *poiesis* (making) and *praxis* (action) – which is *not* possible according to Aristotle's theory:

> … action and making are different kinds of thing, since making aims at an end distinct from the act of making, whereas in doing, the end cannot be other than the act itself. (Aristotle *Nicomachean Ethics*,1140 b 1-5, citation from Balaban 1990, s. 185)

Trying to avoid nemesis saying that Aristotle was not right, I want to open the door for the possibility that place- and material-based writing is making and action at the same time, meaning that the author seeks both the transformative power of the writing process and the transformative power of the realized text – for others, for changing our shared surroundings. To this, I add that this making/action is not just realized by discourse or symbolic signs but also by *doing,* in the use of certain places and things. By this, I point to writing as not just a personal enterprise but a *social practice*. The German socialist and practice theorist Andreas Reckwitz defines a social practice as "doings" and "sayings" that "present themselves first and foremost as certain regular bodily activities." (Reckwitz 2002, p. 211). What we call institutions or schools within the academic field is then "nothing more than nexuses and sequences of social practices". This means that we can recognize a practice by the repetitive bodily activities "in which certain forms of understanding are expressed". In the practice, we *use* things and places – we even use things, like computers and the internet, to transcend time and place. In this respect, "[c]ertain things act, so to speak, as 'resources' which enable and constrain the specificity of a practice" (Reckwitz, p. 212). In the case of Maria's example, this aspect became clear: the situatedness at home, because of the pandemic situation, made the homely surroundings like potted plants and bookshelves act together with the technical devices and software for interaction with other academics. The use of the home and its surroundings, as well as the understanding of how they could be used, was performed bodily, expressed bodily (using places and "things") and written in words.

In this last section of the chapter, you will find the third kind of reflection, *the theoretical reflection*, which supplements the concrete and critical reflections in the former sections while lifting the perspective on the writing practice into a more general reflection. I begin with a conceptualization

of what I consider to be the "matter" – or concrete phenomenon – that place- and material-based writing creates (and that can be a resource to others). I see three aspects that the making/action of writing place-and material-based essayistic texts create within the academic field:

1. *A discourse about places and things* that *conceptualizes* the places and things as well as reveals the *relations* that the writer has to them personally, socially, and culturally. The discourse could also *deconstruct* existing conceptualizations and understandings of the writer's person or individual biography or the social, cultural, and collective meanings of places and things.
2. *A rhetoric* that opens a space *for identification (or division) for the reader*: The reader consciously or less consciously engages because of either the discourse about places and things or because of the practice of life-writing that the text points to. The reader is confirmed, inspired, urged, tempted, and provoked to "re-act" by producing her own rhetoric, for example, by writing a similar text.
3. *A social practice* where the particular writing practice and the texts activate, reflect, represent, and evolve *knowledge* of how places and things can be resources for transformations of the scholarly writer (as a person or a professional and as a distinct, stylistic voice in the text).

These three aspects overlap and intertwine, but in the following, I will discuss them consecutively.

A discourse about places and things

Writing may be the way to understand our own knowledge production and development as scholars (Menary, 2007). Ricœur points to the nature of writing like this:

> Indeed, writing opens up new and original resources for discourse. Thanks to writing, discourse acquires a threefold semantic autonomy: in relation to the speaker's intention, to its reception by its original audience and to the economic, social, and cultural circumstances of its production. It is in this sense that writing tears itself free of the limits of face-to-face dialogue and becomes the condition for discourse itself *becoming-text*. It is to hermeneutics that falls the task of exploring the implications of this becoming-text for the work of interpretation. (Ricœur, 2008, p.17)

What does this mean? It means that writing has a transformative potential in that it "opens up new and original resources for discourse" for the writer, for the reader and for the shared circumstances of writing,

reading and interpretation. It also means that to understand writing as a transformative practice, we must interpret what writing *does* when it talks about experiences:

> The text creates a distance between the author and the original experience by transforming what was lived through to something examined. The story becomes 'experience-as-objectified'. This distanciation produced by the text can be understood as an epoché in the sense that it establishes a reflective space that allows the experience to emerge as theme. (McGuirk, 2017, 129).

James McGuirk, professor of philosophy, suggests in this cited article about reflective practice research that we must see the stories *as stories* in the research narratives (McGuirk, 2017, p. 128).

Academic writing is a form of practice within other practices of research, and the two layers of practice have a dialectic relation in the creation of the novel on one side and in the limitations of thoughts on the other. The paradox in the reflective practice research is that the only way of doing the core action of reflection is by writing, and you will never be able to have a transparent text where the text itself does not co-construct the understanding. Another problem is that it is difficult to see where the experience begins and ends since it is constructed also by the writing about it in the process. This again points to the fact that writing practices within different epochs of research and across disciplines can create different thinking – meaning different ways of knowledge production – and with that follows validation and devaluation of different forms of writing and texts. It also means that the discourse about places and things will never be perfectly adequate, and the research on social practices and the use of materials will never be finished. Research on writing as social practice means to "occupy an analytical standpoint" and to "delimit and thematize" it (McGuirk, 2017, p. 118, 121). The only way we can do this is "to seek the text itself, on the one hand, the internal dynamics that govern the structuring of the work and, on the other hand, the power that the work possesses to project itself outside itself and to give birth to a world that would truly be the "thing" referred to by the text (Ricœur, 2008, p. 17). In other words, we must do hermeneutical interpretation of the text in its context, and if the writing itself is the phenomenon we want to know more about, it is the writing in the practice that is the centre of exploration.

The dialectics between what we *say* – or write – and what we *become* was pointed out by Hegel in *The Phenomenology of Spirit* (2009): We create our society, its culture and rules and must then seek to change or improve our character to live with it, by it and in it (see p. 251-273).

Thoughts and emotions shape and nurture experiences with the material world. One way of becoming conscious of the nature of one's thoughts, as well as the flow, volatility and depths of emotions, is by writing about this world. The writing opens a space for introspection and, over time, also a source for seeing patterns – for example of who we become as scholars by our practices and use of materials, including books, texts, devices, etc. – all that we understand as resources in our enterprise. At the same time, writing is a way of thinking: it organizes themes, it structures, it establishes connections and perspectives, and it creates a pace and rhythm in our bodily actions through the making of letters and words, typing, punctuation, questioning and answering. Writing filters our experiences due to this bodily doing, as do the discourse and writing practice that we find ourselves in. All of these are constraints in the situation that we write within. Eventually, the text itself becomes part of what leads us in one direction and not another, creating an understanding of the experiences we write about and a logos pointing out how to proceed with the exploration. We even create a way the text should be read – we make a model reader, as Umberto Eco called it, and we create a reflection of ourselves in the form of the author's voice. Both creations are constructions and shape our next step of writing and, therefore, thinking and researching.

A rhetoric of identification

In a rhetorical perspective, place- and material-based texts function due to *identification.* A reader's identification (Burke, 1969) with the *substance represented* in a text could be an identification with the conceptualizations of the places and things (what they "are"), with the quality of sensing and perceiving places and things, or with how one can relate to spatial surroundings and materiality existentially, emotionally, socially, and culturally. For example, I strongly identified with the rampant plants on the front page of Carlo's book, as well as with Carlo's bodily experience with her campus and the emotions of a need for change in the writing pedagogy. One might also think that some discourses about places and things do not create identification but *division*, for example, if someone unjustly (in the eyes of the audience) claims a piece of land to legitimize a later invasion (Burke, 1969, p. 22). When it comes to identification, a reader can identify with "the power that the work possesses to project itself outside itself" (Ricœur, 2008, p. 17) – meaning the power of the text as *textual substance*. This involves an understanding of the power of the writing practice for knowledge production qua the story telling, descriptions, exemplification, text structure or rhetorical style dwelling on places and things. It also implies a recognition of another person's (the author's) use of writing as a resource

to transform themselves into textual subjects that can act rhetorically. One can identify with the agency that the writing gives, so to speak. In the identification process the reader "loses herself": "As reader, I find myself only by losing myself. Reading introduces me into the imaginative variations of the ego (…). For the metamorphosis of the ego…implies a moment of distanciation in the relation of self to itself; hence understanding is as much disappropriation as appropriation" (Ricœur, 2008, p. 85). It is in the losing of oneself in the other's text that one can find motivation for trying out the same route. Maybe we saw a glimpse of such an identification in Elisabeth's comment on Maria's text. This is why reading can strengthen your scholarly agency too.

Together with these different forms of identification (or divisions) the rhetoric of a place- and material-based text has the power of "*consubstantiality*". The American rhetorician Kenneth Burke writes about consubstantiality as a form of identification that makes the individual identify with something or someone (by themselves or others), and yet the individual is not the same but different from what it is identified with. Burke explains his theory like this: "For substance, in the old philosophies, was an *act*; and a way of life in an *acting-together*; and in acting together, men have common sensations, concepts, images, ideas, attitudes that make them consubstantial" (Burke, 1969, p. 21). This explains the lust for writing your *own* text about *your own* places and things when you have experienced another's practice of this kind of writing: You act together with them based on an identification with the substance and the textual substance as a resource, but you want to find your unique approach that can extend the matter of places and things to you in your transformation. At the same time, the consubstantiating actions seem to create groups – or social practices – based on two different ways of expressing interest in the substances: either they practice a discourse of validation of places and things and the personal, social, and cultural relations to them, or they share the understanding of the writing practice and texts produced as valuable for knowledge production and as transformative resources. And some, like me, consubstantiate with both, resulting in a book essay about my own places and things, a promotion of Carlo's book, and ideas about writing such texts.

A social practice of writing

Paul Ricœur has a theory of the triple mimetic function of the texts in terms of *pre-figuration*, *con-figuration,* and *re-figuration* (McGuirk, 2017, p. 131; Ricœur, 1984). We might see the contours of the phenomenon by following these functions backwards: The *refiguration* is the act of reading and interpretation and points to the potential future action of the reader,

writing herself: "Interpretation has a futural aspect, in the sense that it concerns what can be as much as what is or what has been." (McGuirk, 2017, p. 132). Thus, the motivation for writing is based on the author's *configurating* text – the making of the text. The creation of the texts is the scene and spectacle of the storytelling, where the author develops an ethos while playing out a writing practice. The reader must identify – consubstantiate – with the text production so that they can enter a similar scene and perform in a similar way using this writing practice. But to be really motivated to write place- and material-based texts, the reader must find interest in the past experiences that made the author able to write in the first place. The reader must identify with the necessity of seeking similar *prefigurative* experiences with places and things. One could say that the reader must recognize both the writing practice and the previous experiences with places and things as resources to understand the transformative agency of writing *and* to be able to make these resources matter for themselves.

Acts of "valorization" and "de-valorization" (Reckwitz 2020, p. 52) of places and things as resources for transformation and scholarly improvement are a central part of the development of this particular writing practice. Reckwitz says this about the connection between practices, knowledge, and resources. "When human agents have developed certain forms of know-how concerning certain things, these things "materialize" or "incorporate" this knowledge *within the practice* (…). Things are "materialized understandings", and only as materialized understandings can they act as resources" (Reckwitz 2002, p. 212). On the other hand, the materiality of places and things influences, as Hegel pointed out, the practices and the very existence of a practice. This last point is very important for the writing practice of place – and material-based writing. The practice is influenced by the materiality of many places – the subject's individual places of importance from his or her life, the home space and its surroundings (especially important in the case described), and the campus or other study/working/writing places and their surroundings. The understanding of the materiality, emotionally as well, is continually at stake in the rhetorical process of identification by the reader. This means that the materiality influences the practice both directly and indirectly in a complex ongoing process. If one seeks social change, as Carlo did for her students and their communities, by practicing this kind of writing, it is not just up to the discursive and rhetorical texts but also the places and things themselves. So, the rampant plants must be taken into account too because they influence the practice. They make a university teacher react – photograph them, write about them, put them on the front page – and the reader to identify. We must not just write about places and things but change them as well in

the ongoing practice. Places and things can be actively used in this way: Pot a plant while writing an essay, watch the growth, and write about what it does to your transformation and what kind of resource it is for you.

Conclusive remarks while leaning into reflective practice research

By the concrete and critical reflection on the use of place- and material-based writing for the PhD students, I see that what I describe is not solely a chain of wanting-to-write-essayistic-texts-about-places-and-things-by-knowing-about-the-phenomenon. The students were not exposed to a text as I was to Carlo's text, they had a general introduction and a writing exercise. Maybe the absence of a text made the process of consubstantiality even more powerful? The motivation for writing might not just be created by reading and being inspired by other's texts; it can also be activated by opening up for the specific practice and by the shared situation and its shared places and things. And maybe something else was going on: Maybe the students doing this writing exercise re-activated earlier readings of place- and material-based texts, personal essays, or photo essays? Bakhtin's theories of dialogism and polyglossia would support that idea (Bakhtin, 1986). Inspiration and motivation do not (only) come from texts just read or lectures just listened to; they are also activated by social and educational practices and by processes of association and remembering. What seems as important for my practice as a course leader on a PhD course is that the writing exercises were framed pedagogically so that the students realized that they were going to write reflective texts and publish the texts for each other. This coloured their texts in the absence of an inspirational text. When they commented on each other's texts, they created an actual chain of transformation while consubstantially practicing the writing practice and making the texts rhetorical while seeking identification.

My experiences recounted in this chapter seem to say that reflective writing should be public to some degree – for peers and teachers at least – to become texts for identification, consubstantiality, and the development of scholarly authorship. But I must add that even a personal learning journal might have been transformative too since all reflective writing – even just written for yourself – always already has yourself as a reader and because you still work stylistically with your voice. You are the audience in the near and far future and in different shapes as self and professional self. By reflection on your writing, with or without an audience, you can transform your writing practice to become the open and curious scholar

you want to be. By writing about places and things, you can create a discourse and a rhetoric as well as perform a writing practice for making the real world matter for scholars and scholarly practices – it might lead to transformations for yourself and for other identifying individuals and research fields.

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Chapter 8
Signs of good dialogue

Camilla Angeltun[1]

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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Chapter 9

‘Dear tangerine, where did you go?’ Exploring the phenomenon of death in a Buddhist-informed gestalt therapy training workshop.

Vikram Kolmannskog[1]

Abstract

In September 2021, the author of this chapter, a gestalt therapy professor and Zen meditator, facilitated the workshop ‘Buddhist Practices and Gestalt Therapy’. One subject emerged quite organically and unplanned: Death. The author describes and reflects upon the exploration of the phenomenon of death and, in particular, how he approached this as a Buddhist-informed gestalt therapy teacher. Three main themes are identified and reflected upon: daring to explore death; looking deeply and directly at death; and dialoguing about death. While these are not simple and straightforward guidelines to follow, reflecting on them can be enriching and a resource for continued teaching practice. The chapter ends with a poem.

Keywords

gestalt therapy, zen, death, meditation, psychotherapy

Introduction

I am a professor at the Norwegian Gestalt Institute University College (NGI). I am also a lifelong meditator. While I appreciate different wisdom traditions, currently I mainly practice in the tradition of Zen master Thich Nhat Hanh. Since the early days, gestalt therapists have been interested in and have practiced Zen Buddhism, including one of our founders, Fritz Perls (see for example his autobiography *Perls,* 1969). In September 2021, I facilitated a three-day workshop at NGI exploring this intersection.

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The workshop was part of a continuing education programme for gestalt therapists. One subject emerged quite organically and unplanned during these days: Death. In this chapter, I describe and reflect upon our exploration of the phenomenon of death and, in particular, how I approached this as a Buddhist-informed gestalt therapy teacher. I end with a poem (for poetic inquiry as a method, see Guttesen & Kristjánsson, 2022; Elliott, 2012; Prendergast, 2009).

Methodology and method

I am grateful to Guro Hansen Helskog, who first introduced me to 'reflective practice research' and invited me to contribute to this anthology.[2] The research and writing of the present chapter have benefited from the dialogues and workshops for anthology contributors facilitated by the editors. The overall methodology has been described in the book's first chapter (Helskog & Weiss, 2023). Here I will focus on the particulars of how I proceeded as a researcher. In this tradition, the researcher and practitioner are often the same person. This was also the case for me.

Immediately after the workshop, I made voice recordings on my phone about what seemed important to me. Two months later, I was reading *No Death, No Fear* (Hanh, 2012) in bed one evening. For the past year or so, I have been particularly interested in death and preparing for the fact that several beings of importance to me – my parents, Thich Nhat Hanh and others – will most likely pass away soon. I had planned to start with the original reflection the next morning. That night, I thought about the workshop as a whole and what now seemed important to me. What stood out was how death had emerged and our exploration of this. What I remembered and chose to focus on was clearly influenced by my overall interest over the past year.

The next morning, I first wrote out the experience as I remembered it. I read and rewrote the text a few times. Then I listened to the voice recordings. These reflected that, even immediately after the workshop, I had been interested in, among other things, the emergence of death and our exploration of this. I did not make any major changes in the text on the basis of the recordings, only some minor changes with regards to the chronology and timing of certain events, since I trusted the recordings to be a more precise recounting of the events as they had occurred since they were closer in time.

The next research phase of 'critical reflection' involved reading through the text several times and identifying main themes. I paid special attention to where I had felt some tension and discomfort. I spent quite a lot of time

trying to name the key themes, write something about each, and then refine the themes more. During this phase in particular, I also benefited from the dialogues and workshops organized by the anthology editors. In the 'theoretical reflection', I have especially focused on literature from Buddhism and gestalt therapy but also draw on other literature about death.

Death in the workshop

From the beginning of the three-day workshop, I repeatedly tried to model as well as explicitly emphasize certain norms. Dialogue, openness and curiosity are key values in gestalt therapy and pedagogy. Similarly, in the Zen tradition, there is an emphasis on community, collective insights, the beginner's mind and the 'don't know'-mind. In both traditions, direct experience is given priority over dogma or theory. The title of the workshop – 'Buddhist Practices & Gestalt Therapy' – reflected this. I introduced the students to certain *practices* from the Buddhist tradition, especially the tradition of Zen master Thich Nhat Hanh. These included open awareness/mindfulness, walking, eating and self-compassion meditations. Then I invited them to individually and collectively reflect on their experiences with the practices, including how they related to gestalt therapy.

While meditation on death (*maranasati*) is central in the Buddhist tradition, I was not planning on including this in the three-day workshop where many students were completely new to Buddhist practices. During the workshop, however, students referred to deceased family members and death at different times. Some mentioned parents who had passed away and for whom they were still grieving. One student remembered her deceased father and felt his presence as we did walking meditation in a nearby forest. As already mentioned, I have been particularly interested in death lately. This must also have made me more attentive to it. During the first two days, I didn't focus on it, however.

As planned, I started the third and final day by placing a bowl of tangerines in the middle of the room, with all of us sitting in a circle around it. I told a story about how some children had come with food every morning to the Buddha while he was meditating under a tree. One morning, they brought several fruits, including tangerines. I invited the students to take one tangerine each as I was telling the story. I described how the Buddha invited the children to join him in enjoying their tangerine – being aware through touch, smell, sight, sound and taste – and I invited us all to do the same. I continued recounting how the Buddha described how that the tangerine contained the entire cosmos: rainwater, sunshine, soil, a flower, a person picking it, and a person now eating it. And I invited us all to

look deeply at our tangerines. Slowly, we ate the tangerines. Without any specific, conscious plan, I left the empty bowl in the middle of our circle.

During the sharing afterwards, several mentioned that the experience had felt sacred to them and that they had felt an intense intimacy with the tangerine, life and cosmos. Then a student raised the subject of death again. She was sad and crying while sharing that her best friend was attending a parent's funeral that day. I mostly chose to listen. 'This is life,' the student said at some point. I allowed for silence, and I made my choice explicit to her and the group. What can one say, really? I wrote 'Life & death' on a blackboard. Then we went for the first break of the day.

After the break, quite spontaneously, I guided everyone in a reflective meditation:

> 'Dear tangerine, where did you go? Where did you come from? Were you born at some point? Can something appear out of nothing? Are you dead now? Can something become nothing? And what about us? Do we appear as something from nothing? And then turn to nothing? Doesn't everyone and everything constantly change and continue in different forms? Do we not continue in the world through our thoughts, words and actions?'

I invited everyone to write down their individual reflections. For the sharing that followed, I chose to use a fishbowl structure (see for example Wambeke, 2009). I invited those who wanted to, to sit and share in a 'fishbowl' in the middle of the circle, close to the now empty bowl. Others remained as observers in the circle outside. Students could leave and enter the fishbowl. I stayed outside and was silent. Several students in the fishbowl referred to their beliefs. Some found comfort in their childhood faiths. Several had a Christian faith. One or two spoke about a belief that everything is energy. Someone mentioned that they had been inspired in this workshop to not be too attached to their views and beliefs but open to collective insights, also asking others what their experiences and reflections had been during the meditation. A few students referred to what they had actually discovered from the tangerine meditation. One student shared that her grandmother continued through her words and actions, that she was still alive in her heart, and that they could still be in conversation. She mentioned that she had never shared this with anyone before.

During the fishbowl sharing, I noticed that some were speaking a lot about their beliefs while others engaged in a way that seemed more in line with the Zen and gestalt norms of direct experience, openness, curiosity, dialogue and community. I didn't want to have the final word and conclude by saying something at the end. I said that I had appreciated the sharing and

that I didn't want to conclude by saying anything more. But then I added that Buddhist practices invite us to see what we can discover for ourselves here and now, for example, through the tangerine meditation, rather than remaining attached to any particular belief. Then we went for a break.

During the break, I felt some unease and tension. I wondered whether I had been respectful enough of everyone's sharing. I also wondered if we should return to the subject of death after the break. It didn't feel like we had finished our exploration. But I also felt a little stressed for the first time in the workshop. It was the final day, and I wanted to return to my plan and introduce them to some more practices before we finished.

After the break, I introduced a self-compassion meditation, as I had planned prior to the workshop. First, I guided everyone in doing this as an individual meditation. I imagined that they could bring in experiences related to death here if that was what was still needed. Later, I did a demonstration of how a therapist might use the self-compassion meditation relationally with a client. A student volunteered to do this with me. She brought up her deceased father and their complicated relationship. I guided her in the self-compassion meditation. Then towards the end, I shared some of my thoughts, being clear that she could discard what I shared or choose to chew on it for a while. I suggested that perhaps what she had done now – holding certain difficulties in awareness and compassion – was something that her father hadn't been able to do, that she also did it for her father and all her ancestors, that the father and ancestors were all continuing in her and that something was now transformed for all of them, that the change that occurred here and now had effects that stretched far back into the so-called past and far into the so-called future. A few tears appeared on the student's face. She said that my words had touched her, that she imagined her father as a young person in his own family, and that she had gone from a sense of being very small and suffering to a sense of something much more spacious.

Critical and theoretical reflection

What was important in my practice as a teacher in this narrative? What was at stake? I have identified three themes that are closely tied to each other:

a. Daring to explore death
b. Looking deeply and directly at death
c. Dialoguing about death

An overarching attitude is don't know-mind or cultivated uncertainty, crucial in both Buddhism and gestalt therapy (see for example the preface

in Kolmannskog, 2018). Similarly, Helskog (2021) identified epistemic humility as one of three main ethical demands in her paper on exploring death with children. I will touch upon this attitude as part of all three themes.

Daring to explore death

As teachers (and more generally, humans), we don't know what will happen during an exploration with students (or other people in general). While plans can bring a sense of control, they can also make us rigid and blind to what emerges as important here and now. I had planned to introduce certain Buddhist practices during the workshop. Exploring death was not one of them. But then death emerged. Letting go of one's plan – especially if there is strong investment and identification with it – can be experienced as a small ego death. Opening to what is new and unanticipated can be experienced as birth. To consciously do this may take some courage.

Gestalt therapy 'creates a context (particularly in its group form) for the practice of virtues such as courage […]' (Naranjo, 2004, p. 187). Zen promises not only courage in the face of fear but that '[y]ou can break through to freedom and fearlessness […]' (Hanh, 2002, p. 24). My experience is that courage and fearlessness come at least partly from what is central to both traditions: the cultivation of awareness and being present with what emerges, regardless of the current situation. While Zen and mindfulness meditation is concerned with 'here and now', gestalt therapy has been defined as 'meditation in an interpersonal context' (Naranjo, 2004, p. 199) and summed up as 'I and Thou, here and now' (Simkin as quoted in Kolmannskog, 2018, p. 6).

Having several years of meditation and gestalt therapy experience supported me in the workshop, especially when something unexpected emerged. Awareness gives me a sense of spaciousness. I can be like the vast sky with clouds coming and going or the vast ocean with waves coming and going. Awareness also gives me a sense of stability – a firm ground to stand on or even yield to. Prior to the workshop, my main preparation had in fact been practicing various meditations myself, including open awareness/mindfulness, which is what I was planning to introduce to the students. I made a loose plan that I adjusted as the workshop proceeded. Throughout the workshop, I was aware of, and kept letting go of, a small sense of self, the strong identification with plans and performing well. In some ways, the workshop felt like a meditation retreat where I, as the teacher, was practicing along with the students. By the third day, I also felt a high level of trust in the group. As Thich Nhat Hanh says, 'The practice of meditation is not an individual matter. We have to do it together […]

The next Buddha may take the form of a community […]' (Hanh, 1994, unpaginated).

All of this enabled me to let go of my plan and explore the phenomenon of death with the students. Mostly, I enjoyed this. During the break afterwards, however, I felt some unease and tension. I returned to my plan. I wanted to perhaps regain a sense of control. This is not necessarily wrong, of course. Often in gestalt therapy training, I need to balance opening to what is emerging here and now on the one hand and getting through a curriculum and what I have planned on the other. There is no one right way to do this. I trust my awareness of the situation and what seems to be needed. However, I do wonder if part of the reason I returned to the plan in this case was because some of the exploration, in particular how it ended with the fishbowl sharing and my comment, had felt somewhat uncomfortable to me. I could perhaps have spent more time becoming aware of this, perhaps even disclosing it somehow to the students. I will return to this later under the other themes.

What happened in the workshop took courage for a reason that is more directly related to the subject as well. Death specifically is taboo for many people in contemporary Western culture (Aries, 1974). In gestalt therapy, however, death is explicitly named and explored as one of the existential pressures (Masquelier, 2007), and most gestalt therapists are familiar with some sort of exploration of this phenomenon. Still, I felt that some courage was needed, even in a group of gestalt therapists. Part of the reason may be that death can involve a range of different beliefs and experiences that feel very personal. The students had a variety of spiritual and religious backgrounds. Even existentially-oriented gestalt therapists may have beliefs about death that differ from Zen. Impermanence and change are appreciated in both traditions. Thich Nhat Hanh (2002) distinguishes, however, between the relative dimension – e.g. the wave has a beginning and end – and the ultimate dimension, where the wave is always also water and the ocean. In the ultimate dimension, there is no-death and no-birth. Meanwhile, Western existentially-oriented therapists typically stress the finality of death (Yalom, 1980; Masquelier, 2007).

Moreover, I was somewhat cautious of having this exploration in a secular institution. In her paper on death, Helskog (2021) also raises the issue of secularization, including the fear of stepping over the boundaries of what is allowed in a secular institution. In contrast to some other educational settings, however, gestalt therapy training is meant to be very experiential, exploratory and personally developing. This takes us to how I chose to explore the phenomenon of death with the students, namely through direct experience and dialogue. As will become clear in the next sections, this can also involve some fear, unease and courage, however.

Looking deeply and directly at death

According to Naranjo (200, p. 253), 'the invitation to suspend conceptual thinking' is one of the most important resemblances between Zen and gestalt therapy. Thich Nhat Hanh (2002, p. 16) writes, 'Direct experience is the only way'. This had been my emphasis throughout the workshop. I also strived for this in the exploration of the phenomenon of death. But I felt a certain unease and tension about something. What does it mean to look deeply and directly at something? How can concepts help? How can they block?

In his beautiful biography of the Buddha, *Old Path White Clouds*, Thich Nhat Hanh (1992) tells a story of how the Buddha, on the morning of his awakening, shares his discovery with some children. The children had brought him fruit to eat. Buddha asks them to sit with him and have one tangerine each, encouraging them to eat the fruit with awareness. An important insight is that of emptiness, or what Thich Nhat Hanh calls 'inter-being': The fruit has no inherent and independent existence (or non-existence), nor do we: fruit, rainwater, air, sunlight, soil and people inter-are. In the story, the Buddha does not merely tell the children about inter-being. He invites them to explore for themselves. A teacher can point at something, but each person needs to look for themselves. Perhaps they even discover something more or different.

After the first tangerine meditation, when a student spoke of death and grief, I first chose to respond by listening and silence. This felt important, to hold the mystery of death and the reality of grief in awareness and compassion. Then, after the break, I spontaneously created a meditation for us all to do, inspired by Thich Nhat Hanh. The Zen master has very simple, poetic ways of inviting us to explore the phenomenon of death, for example, asking a cloud where it has come from and where it has gone, or inviting us to look and see the cloud continuing in the rain or even the tea we drink (Hanh, 2002). We don't have to wait for what we think of as Death with a capital D. In the initial tangerine meditation, I had invited the students to explore the tangerine with full awareness and also look deeply to see that the tangerine was made up of non-tangerine elements such as the sunshine and rain, that everything 'inter-is', as Thich Nhat Hanh puts it. Afterwards, the empty bowl suggested the tangerines were gone, but were they really?

An important component of Buddhist meditation practices is *vipashyana/vipassana* (Pali/Sanskrit), to look deeply at our experience here and now to see what we can discover. An important quality is don't know-mind. At the same time, sometimes concepts may be skillful means in the process of discovery, including concepts such as impermanence and

inter-being (Hanh, 2002). They are like the finger pointing at the moon. In the guided meditation, I introduced such concepts in the form of more or less leading questions: 'Can something appear out of nothing?' 'Can something become nothing?' 'Doesn't everyone and everything constantly change and continue in different forms?' 'Do we not continue in the world through our thoughts, words and actions?'

Often, when I teach gestalt therapy, I prefer to first invite students to experience something for themselves, then share about their experiences, and only later do I introduce concepts that may be helpful to understand the experiences. I felt a certain unease and tension related to the tangerine meditation. I had perhaps an ideal of a completely open exploration. And the tangerine meditation wasn't. Now, with time and reflection, I feel less unease and tension. It is clearer to me that meditations and explorations may be very non-directive, such as certain open awareness/mindfulness meditations, or they may include the introduction of specific concepts and the invitation to reflect on these. The latter may not be completely open explorations, but neither are they introductions of dogma since students are invited to reflect and look for themselves. The role of concepts in Zen and gestalt therapy may be more complex than what it seems at first.

My unease and tension may also have been related to an expectation that the students would discover something quite specific through the meditation. When introducing concepts in meditation, this is part of the art, I guess: To hold these concepts very lightly and be open to what others discover. This also applies to the students, however: Some students seemed to have strong convictions and fixed concepts, hindering them from discovering something new in the meditation. Perhaps I could also have been clearer about what I wanted them to share in the fishbowl: discoveries from the tangerine meditation and reflections based on these rather than beliefs that they had from before. I continue this reflection as part of the theme of dialogue.

Dialoguing about death

The way I see it, the tangerines hadn't disappeared into nothing. They had become part of us. Now they have somehow even contributed to this chapter. Similarly, we constantly affect and are affected by others, a truth recognized and appreciated in gestalt therapy (see for example Kolmannskog, 2018). Thus, we could say that we continue in others, and others continue in us. As Thich Nhat Hanh (2002, p. 19) clarifies, '"To be or not to be is not the question"'. Nothing can be on its own. We inter-are. This has become something I see as true.

Sharing my view with others may take some courage. I was cautious about sharing my own views on death. But I think there was good reason for this as well. As a teacher, one holds a particular role and authority. It is not a dialogue between equals. Timing can be important to consider. When I did share some of my own views, it was at the end of the self-compassion session with a student, after she (and other students) had made some discoveries and reflections on their own. I also stressed that it might or might not make sense to her and that it was entirely up to her to discard or keep what I said. This is in line with how dialogue is practiced by gestalt therapists (and teachers) (see for example Kolmannskog, 2018, especially chapter 1).

I first let the students share their experiences and reflections using a fishbowl structure. My initial idea was that I should stay out of this and not interfere with my own views too much. Some students seemed to have had insights that are common in practices such as the one I guided – and in line with my own view: One, in particular, felt that her grandmother continued in her through the grandmother's words and actions. Others in the fishbowl spoke about beliefs about death that they seemed to have had for a long time, at least prior to the tangerine meditation. Some asked and listened to their fellow students in line with norms of dialogue, openness and curiosity. Others seemed more concerned with their own beliefs. Listening to them, I practiced letting go of my own views and expectations and opening up to them. However, I kept feeling a certain frustration as I heard several students say, 'I believe', 'my belief', etc. On the one hand, I wanted to again emphasize direct experience and guide them towards what they had discovered here and now. At the same time, I wanted to be respectful of beliefs that seemed very personal and important to the students.

While many people, not least in multi-cultural and secular societies, are very concerned with respecting people's different beliefs, the Buddhist approach is to be cautious and skeptical of all beliefs. According to Thich Nhat Hanh (2002, p. 11), 'Freedom is above all else freedom from our own notions and concepts. If we get caught in our notions and concepts, we can make ourselves suffer and we can also make those we love suffer'. As already mentioned, even concepts such as inter-being are merely meant as skillful means and not absolute truths to cling to. I wonder if I was perhaps clinging a bit too much. But I also wonder if I should have confronted the students, who seemed rather fixed in their beliefs.

Later, I reflected on this in light of the tension in gestalt therapy and pedagogy between challenge and support. According to Naranjo (2004, p. 191), 'Fritz [Perls], like the archetypal Zen master, was a wielder of the stick: he was a master of ego-reduction […]' Not all Zen masters are the

same, however. Thich Nhat Hanh has a very different style. And so do I. But, as I reflect elsewhere,

> It may be that I—and many other current gestalt therapists—now experience a (too strong?) shift towards support, following a period where Fritz Perls and challenge and confrontation were more dominant. An integration of the polarity in gestalt therapists and the therapy is also important. According to professor in psychology and pedagogics Nevitt Sanford, learning and growth occur when a proper balance between support and challenge is struck, and the person is ready for the change. What constitutes the proper balance depends upon the particular person and the situation here and now. (Kolmannskog, 2018, p. 41)

Gestalt therapy draws on Martin Buber's work on dialogue (see for example Kolmannskog, 2018, especially chapter 1). According to Naranjo (2004, p. 270), 'Buber was particularly coherent with what could be said of Fritz, principally in regard to Buber's conception of a 'holy struggle' with the other and the responsibility of challenging.' True dialogue can involve challenge as well as support, and I may need courage to be more confrontational. But, as is so often the case, this is also a matter of being aware of the situation and what seems to be needed here and now. I could perhaps have confronted the students who shared strong beliefs about death. But someone with strongly held beliefs may not be ready to let go and be open to something else yet anyway. What I could have done, however, was make us all aware that the subject of death seems to bring up some strongly held beliefs for many of us.

Later, I have also sought to better understand the attachment to beliefs in light of literature outside the Buddhist and gestalt therapy fields. While conscious awareness of death may have several positive effects such as increased presence, gratitude and disidentification (Yalom 1980), Terror Management Theory has shown that less conscious reactions to death anxiety include self-centeredness, clinging to one's beliefs and even demonizing those who don't share your worldview (Solomon, Greenberg & Pszcynski 2015). We need to be aware of these possible dynamics not only in a group of students but also in ourselves as teachers – and more widely in society, of course.

I find it very inspiring how some Buddhist teachers have practiced 'don't know'-mind and opening up to others. Kornfield (2009, p. 372) describes the wisdom of uncertainty that he experienced with one of his teachers, the Thai meditation teacher Ajahn Chah:

> When a senior western nun left the Buddhist order to become a born again Christian missionary, and then returned to the monastery to try

> to convert her old friends, many were upset. "How could she do this?" Confused, they asked Ajahn Chah about her. He responded with a laugh, "Maybe she's right."

Similarly, I have experienced the Dalai Lama often respond, 'I don't know' (see for example the preface to Kolmannskog, 2018). This is very different from clinging to our own beliefs and concepts - including Buddhist concepts – and wanting to convert someone and win a conversation.

In Indian wisdom traditions, including the Buddhist, there is a famous parable of an elephant and some blind men. There are several variations, but the essence of it is that the blind men describe the elephant in very different terms depending on what part of the elephant they are in touch with (the flat and large ear, the solid and column-like leg, etc.). None of them is right alone, but together they are closer to the truth of what the elephant is. There is a parallel to the phenomenological stance in gestalt therapy here. Yontef (1993, p. 279) speaks of 'phenomenological ascent', a level of awareness where one knows that there are many different, equally valid perceptions of the world and is constantly opening up to these.

While insisting on one's own truth as absolute is wrong, it may also be wrong to not share anything at all. In the parable, each person shares their truth. As already mentioned, I did share more of my views during the self-compassion session with a student later in the day. This may also have influenced the other students, who were exploring vicariously through her. The student certainly seemed to have had the experience of her father and other ancestors being alive in her still, even when the relationship with the father was a difficult one. The insights I shared could be a finger pointing towards the moon for some of them. And I remain interested in what other fingers point at. The cosmos is vaster than I can imagine, after all.

(Not) the end

In this chapter, I have explored how death emerged, and I chose to explore it during a gestalt therapy training workshop. I identified three main themes of importance: Daring to explore death; looking deeply and directly at death; and dialoguing about death. I have started wondering if these apply more generally to any situation when a difficult subject arises in a group. They may certainly be of some relevance. My focus has remained on death, however, and I trust that this specific subject was of some importance to the themes.

These themes are not simple and straightforward guidelines to follow. I could at times feel a certain tension, stress or unease in my body and

mind. It may have been related to the balance of holding on and letting go, of sticking to a plan and being with what is emerging, of sharing my insights and letting the students explore for themselves, of balancing support and challenge, and more. Reflecting upon my choices and teaching practice has enriched me and will hopefully be a resource for both myself and readers in our continued teaching practice.

There is little actual exploration of the phenomenon of death in contemporary Western culture, so my experience with the students was that there was a hunger to explore and even to get some answers. At times, I felt that there might be a conflict and tension between wanting me, as the teacher and Buddhist 'expert', to give some answers on the one hand and their attachment to certain personal beliefs about death on the other. I also wonder if there was an expectation to somehow finish and conclude about death. I don't think we can and should conclude anything certain. Perhaps I could have made this clearer as well and supported us all better in being with the discomfort of wanting to know and not fully knowing.

The wave has a beginning and an end. The workshop had an end. I wanted the students to get as much out of it as possible. That we can finish something once and for all is an illusion, however. An illusion that can be strong in gestalt therapy as well with its focus on finishing 'unfinished business' (see chapter 1 in Kolmannskog, 2018). When I remember that waves can affect each other (so-called 'interference' in physics), that the energy continues as heat and sound and in other forms when a wave breaks, that each wave is also water and the ocean, as Thich Nhat Hanh says, and that the ocean is vast and mysterious, I can let go and trust that the workshop was enough. We have limited time, and we have eternity.

While working on this chapter, several beings who are dear to me seemed to have 'passed away', including Thich Nhat Hanh, fondly known among students as Thay. I end this chapter with a poem that I wrote the day after the Zen master 'passed away'.

Dear Thay

I wanted to see you
Like others who had seen you
In Plum Village,
Be in your presence,
Meet you in person as we say,
But that spring I was supposed to come,
I don't know if you know,

My mother-in-law passed away,
And I stayed with her son.

Then I realised
We were meeting
In a different, very powerful way:

You entered me in bed
As I read your words of love and wisdom,
Your poetry.
You walked through me in the pine forest
As my feet peacefully touched the ground.
A kiss you called it, the intimate meeting of foot and ground.
You were inside me and all around in the Oslo Sangha
As we practiced as one.

Now they say Thich Nhat Hanh has passed away.
I sit down and look at the plum tree in my garden,
Bare,
Covered by snow.
I'm pretty sure it will bloom again in spring,
But I don't know,
A silent Sunday
In winter Norway.

A tear forms in one eye,
But then immediately also a smile.
Hi,
I recognise you.
I remember how you said the cloud never dies
But falls down as snow and rain,
Rests as a lake,
Is the water in my sweet chai.
I recognise you,
A small teardrop in one eye.
Everything will fall,
Everything will rise,
Nothing really dies.

I look at a photo of you smiling.
Then I put it away.

I see you smiling in my mind,
Here and now, inside,
And then:
A smile on this face,
What I call mine,
No inside, no outside.
Who are you? Who am I?
Just smiling.

I say thank you to myself.
I say thank you, Vikram.
I say thank you, Thay.

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Chapter 10

Missed Connection: A Semi-Liminal Encounter with a Digitized Holocaust Survivor

Shari Bloom[1]

> *"Meet Holocaust survivor Pinchas Gutter. Through Dimensions in Testimony, students and educators can ask questions that prompt real-time responses from a pre-recorded video of Pinchas-engaging in virtual conversation, redefining inquiry-based education."* Pinchas Gutter - Dimensions in Testimony | IWitness (usc.edu)

Abstract

Using Anders Lindseth's (2017, 2020) reflective practice as a methodological starting point, I present compiled vignettes reflecting my own and my students' experiences with USC Shoah Foundation's Dimensions in Testimony, on their educational platform- IWitness, an interactive digital storytelling app where students can virtually dialogue with a pre-recorded real-life Holocaust survivor, "Pinchas." The main research question that propels my analysis is: "What is at stake in these digitized interactions with Pinchas?" Specifically, I want to understand whether real connection and empathy are fostered by such technology or whether it flattens creative imagination and limits one's esoteric connection with the past. Relevant literature related to memory, witnessing, and dialogical epistemology will be presented. Theoretical reflection inspired by Walter Benjamin's (1936) critique of the effects of technological changes presented in his essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" will be emphasized. The reflections presented herein raise concern about ethics and the

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possible somatic and liminal void that emerges in relation to interactive "inquiry-based" artificial intelligence technology that turns humans into digitized humanish chat-objects. I contend that what is at stake with this technology is hermeneutical injustice, a lack of heart-based connection, and a possible disconnect from our own sense of humanness in an increasingly digitized world.

Keywords

Reflective Practice Research, kaleidoscopic epistemology, digitalization, technology, heritage, enchantment

Meet Pinchas

On the screen is an old bald heavy-set man sitting awkwardly in a black, plush fabric chair that seems two sizes too small for his stocky frame. The armrests are almost up to his shoulders, creating the sense that the armrests are containing him in the chair. He is wearing a simple button up light blue collared shirt, dark blue sweater vest and black slacks. His shiny black shoes seem firmly planted on some type of invisible ground. The figure is very still but his blinking light blue eyes catch the viewer's attention. He seems to be staring at the viewer or just passed them. The student is invited to speak into the microphone and ask Pinchas about his time in the concentration camps. The student speaks into the microphone "What was it like?" Pinchas responds in a slow tone and shaky voice characteristic of a man almost 90 years old who has seen too much.

The student turns away saying something about the whole experience being "creepy".

Introduction

As a PhD researcher in the field of digitalization and heritage, I often question whether technology is truly the answer to helping people preserve memories and connect with history. I am particularly interested in lived experiences, in the people behind the objects. Stories of people who have survived traumatic experiences figure prominently in my work. I am also an educator, hired to teach master's students who specialize in the field of human rights education. My students are from around the world and are based in Norway. Much of our coursework emphasizes critical thinking and the need for empowerment from the bottom up rather than the top down. Paolo Freire's work figures prominently in our foundational framework. It is in this context that I have

become drawn to reflective practice methodology to engage my students in understanding their world.

Reflective praxis research, the methodology developed by Anders Lindseth (2017, 2020), can be considered a practical extension of Freire's model of problem-posing education to encourage critical literacy. According to Freire, "in problem-posing education, people develop their power to perceive critically *the way they exist* in the world *with which* and *in which* they find themselves; they come to see the world not as a static reality, but as a reality in process, in transformation" (Freire, 2000, p. 83). Whereas Freire encourages people to critically reflect on their positionality in their world through the lens of empowerment, Lindseth (2020) implements these ideals of critical literacy by presenting a methodology of transformative reflective practice where participants are prompted to explore "what is at stake?" in various situations they encounter (p. 93). Asking about the stakes is a form of problem-posing in which the participants begin to engage the world as a transformative space because there is meaning in it. Lindseth (2020) explains that when a researcher investigates other people's practical knowledge, it is about working towards a possible common understanding (p. 100). By asking about stakes as a departure point, dialogue tends to open, which may cause one to feel more compelled to reflect on a deeper, more expansive level. The aim is not to magically come up with solutions to the problems posed, but rather to reflect on the experience and oneself in relation to the experience (Anders 2018, p. 244 as cited in Weiss 2021, p. 243). For example, often these stakes-based discussions include delving into the ethical implications of what one has witnessed or experienced. The participant actively engages in "meaning making" by pondering this simple yet complex question of what is at stake.

Hansen (2023) expands on Lindseth's reflective practice research by articulating the ontological and epistemological potentials of this methodology. She explains that "a participative ontology opens for seeing knowledge development as a reflection over lived experience, which can open for new insights and give a better basis for orientation and meaning in life" (see chapter 1, Helskog & Weiss 2023). This characterization echoes my assessment that reflective practice research can be viewed as an expansion or application of Paolo Freire's model of problem-posing education to encourage critical literacy. "Participative researchers do not only study the world around them, but they also study the understanding they meet the world with" (Helskog & Weiss, 2023). Hansen goes further in her elaboration by presenting what she describes as a "kaleidoscopic epistemology" that emerges. Helskog and Weiss (2023) build upon Lindseth's foundation

and emphasize a multivocal epistemological application of Reflective Practice Research in pedagogical contexts. They explain "that the phenomenon "good teaching" can be fruitfully understood through the metaphor of the kaleidoscope and the notion *kaleidoscopic epistemology* (Helskog, 2015) as an approach of multi-perspectivism." This multi-perspectivism aligns with the philosophical dialogical nature of reflective practice by allowing for people to reflect on their experiences and situate or re-situate their knowledge.

I chose to use reflexive praxis methodology because it allows me to situate my experiences in relation to my students, engaging a multi-perspective kaleidoscopic approach to explore my own bias and perspectives about the technology**.** This methodology was chosen specifically because **"**a kaleidoscopic participatory and dialogical approach makes it impossible to fixate narrow self-conceptions, ideologies, theories or models" (Helskog &Weiss, 2023). It is important to note that this method is subjective in that "by focusing on one aspect of a phenomenon and drawing this to the foreground, other aspects are pushed to the background…by shedding light on some aspects, other aspects are left in the shadows" (Helskog & Weiss, 2023). This aspect of the shadows cast in a kaleidoscopic approach is a biproduct of the themes that emerge through dialogue, and in fact, some would say that this potential shortcoming is a strength because it encourages new perspectives to emerge through "the structuring mind of the researcher or by all the participating subjects" (ibid. 2023).

My other reason for utilizing this methodology is because I see the need to philosophize as essential for personal and societal development. In the current times, technology is evolving faster than the human, and there is a struggle to manage how one can situate themselves in this fast-shifting technological world propelled by corporate and governmental policies that seem to push for digitalization of key areas of life. The push for digital tools in the field of education has become increasingly emphasized, but what does this look like in practice?

I asked student volunteers to be my co-researchers go to USC Shoah Foundation's online educational platform, IWitness and try out Dimensions in Testimony, an interactive digital storytelling program aimed for classroom use as a way for students to virtually dialogue with Holocaust survivors. "Pinchas" is the survivor featured in the prototype, and it is our interactions with him that will be referred to herein. In this essay, I fuse the students' sharing of their experiences into vignettes propelled by the question, "What is at stake in these digitized interactions with Pinchas?" Aside from theories around the theme of memory and dialogue, I apply Walter Benjamin's (1936) insights from his essay "The Work of Art in the

Age of Mechanical Reproduction" (abbreviated WA henceforth) as a way of addressing the logistical and ethical issues that may arise when an audience engages with recorded images of people on a screen. Specifically, I question whether this emerging technology has the potential to create a liminal digital dialogical space of empathetic connection with people of the past, presented on the flat screen of a laptop. I contend that what is at stake in Dimensions in Testimony is humanness, connection with a person who is eager to share his experiences with future generations.

I argue that these interactions, without proper contextualization, are problematic and flatten the potential for engagement and creative imagination. With the decontextualization of a person from the past "interacting" on a computer screen in the present time, the potential for hermeneutical injustice cannot be ignored. By hermeneutical injustice, I mean the way the medium and technology might affect how the person, "Pinchas" in this example, interprets his own life and how others may interpret his personhood and life experiences.

Contextualizing the Technology of Dimensions in Testimony

In 2019, the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA), a group that works to uphold the 2000 Stockholm Declaration pledge to "strengthen, advance and promote Holocaust education, research and remembrance," announced a renewed commitment to Holocaust education and presented a revised *Recommendations for Teaching and Learning about the* Holocaust, published in partnership with UNESCO. IHRA suggested utilizing a participatory learning model with an emphasis on critical thinking, self-reflection and integrating new media to educate people about the Holocaust. It emphasized the importance of preserving oral history and engaging with the testimonies of survivors as integral to Holocaust and genocide prevention education. With digitalization and technology becoming increasingly integrated into our daily lives, a push towards digital heritage preservation and education is emerging, specifically in the field of Holocaust studies and new media. This new field of memory studies has been described by Dr. Matthew Boswell as "virtual Holocaust memory." It "involves forms of cultural and educational encounter[s] that are highly experiential, digitally mediated, and linked to powerful utopian narratives about personal development and political resolution (such as the refrain "never again")" (https://gtr.ukri.org/projects?ref=AH/ M009432/1). (Boswell, as cited in Walden, 2019, p. 622).

My initial interest in this digital dialogical project stems from my previous research about how ancestral dialogue, whether real or imagined,

may have the potential to mitigate intergenerational trauma transmission (Bloom, 2018). In my research, I focused on Jewish postmemory and how many second- and third-generation descendants of Holocaust survivors felt a sense of guilt about whether their grandparents and parents would feel that their memory was being properly honored and respected by the present generation. In my conclusion, I envisioned a hypothetical situation in which people could actively engage and converse with their ancestors about the past and how the lessons of the past can be applied to present and future generations. I was pleased to find that there was already technology being developed to do just that, with the aim of Holocaust education – via Dimension in Testimony and the IWitness platform.

Dimension in Testimony technology is an evolution from the Shoah Foundation's traditional video testimony filming of Holocaust survivors. The video testimonies were often drab and depressing multi-hour videos of Holocaust survivors sharing their experiences of the atrocities they lived through and were often left unwatched by the general public. The video testimony project evolved into a pilot project of interactive testimony with the help of AI and VR technology. The project can also be found in select Holocaust Centers around the world through the *Dimension in Testimony* exhibition project where the public can ask questions to a holographic projection of a Holocaust survivor and the holographic-like person responds. Due to the expense and accessibility issues around the hologram of the survivor, the program was adjusted for classroom settings via their IWitness platform. How it works:

> "On average, each survivor answered more than 1,000 questions, which were pre-recorded using ultra high definition 3d filming techniques. When a live audience asks a question, the technology matches this with the responses." It is marketed as enabling the audience to engage with survivor's testimony "more deeply than would be possible with a normal film – preserving the experience of meeting a survivor of the Holocaust." (Retrieved from https://www.gov.uk/government/news/interactive-forever-project-comes-to-the-va)

In reaction to people wanting to create and/or interact with these video testimonies at home, Dimensions in Testimony was developed for schools and the general public to access online via their educational website- IWitness. Dimensions in Testimony allows people to have one-to-one interaction with the digitized recorded testimonies, allowing questions to be posed to the recorded human. With the help of artificial intelligence, the response deemed to be the most fitting answer from all the hours of recorded responses is cued up for the viewer, similar to the key word technology in chat bots. It stops short of being a full fledge dialogue in its current state,

but with the technology progressing rapidly, it is only a matter of time before these recordings become so seamless that it will be like talking to the person in the flesh, or will it?

Methodology

I was introduced to Reflective Praxis through a workshop led by Guro Hansen Helskog and Michael Weiss in which they used Socratic methodology to interrogate lived experiences. Currently, they are using this method in educational settings with great success. What they found was that students are hungry for connection but often do not have the starting points to engage in deep reflection. Particularly in traditional school systems that focus on test results and quotas, the lack of reflectivity is jarring (Helskog & Weiss, 2021).

In reflective practice research, one's own narrative and experiences are the empirical material that form the basis of reflection and wonder about their own experiences, in which they draw out themes and, in this case, elucidate the stakes of what they observed and experienced, namely the possible implications for society at large (Lindseth, 2020, p. 80). Lindseth (2020) emphasizes the need to move away from the natural science standards of proof and rigid objectivity and towards a more organic, personal, integrated, and body-based knowledge – a situated knowledge (p. 81). This reflective methodology counters the concept of objective knowledge because the phenomenon that is being researched and explored is internally processed, then dialogically processed, and ultimately situated in the complexity and multiplicity of one's lived experiences, including but not limited to culture, worldview, emotions, and interests.

This philosophical and hermeneutical awareness of our different life worlds that we give meaning and theory to is at the core of this methodology. It is this awareness of situated knowledge that gives voice to my students (and their future students). It encourages them to hold personal knowledge sacred while being open to developing and accessing theory that can then be selected, expanded, refuted, and situationally applied to their practical knowledge. This leads to deeper, multilayered reflection, internally taken in and processed, and outwardly dialogical. Reflexive practice research is commonly researched in first person, driven by a compelling question or discrepancy that the researcher is trying to understand. It is a space of trying to delve into the unknown, which often includes talking with other researchers, not necessarily as formal interviews but more as a way of philosophizing rather than utilizing the traditional methodological framework of "HDM (hypothetico-deductive method)" (Lindseth, 2020, p. 99-100). Lindseth emphasizes that conversations with others can be useful,

but when a researcher investigates other people's practical knowledge, ideally, they are working towards common understanding (ibid.).

I chose to focus on the experiences of my student volunteer co-researchers to investigate and compare my experiences with Pinchas with theirs. My aim was propelled by the hope of finding common understanding in the form of the themes and issues that arose. I explained to the student volunteers that I was writing an essay in which I use reflective praxis methodology to process and situate my experiences with Dimensions in Testimony in relation to theirs to get to the core of articulating what is at stake in our interactions with Pinchas. I invited the student volunteers to go directly to the website and try it out. I presented Dimensions in Testimony without context; I said to them, "As future teachers, you are given this website to access the program *Dimensions in Testimony* for you to decide how and whether this is technology you would like to use in a classroom context." I encouraged them to keep in mind the technology's potential and downfalls and how they can use Dimensions in Testimony in their classrooms. I invited the students to meet with me one-to-one over Zoom to talk about their experiences and make them concrete, so that they could be explored and discussed dialogically (Lindseth, 2020, p. 97). I did not limit them to where they chose to start since I was aware that my own starting point was strongly biased by my own situated knowledge, and I wanted to know what their impressions were first. The students then critically reflected on what they experienced – what was it about? They layered meaning onto the experience and shared their feedback (ibid). After hearing their concrete reflection, I then proceeded to use the question prompts that Lindseth encourages for this methodology: "What was this experience about? What was wrong with this experience? What was at stake here? (Hov, 2015, Lindseth, 2020, p. 93).

After this was discussed, I shared with the participants the theories I chose for this essay and asked whether they had more insights that would fit the theoretical framework I chose or whether there were themes that needed to be included. Initially, I exclusively focused on Walter Benjamin's work as the framework to address the technology of reproduction and its effect on perception and relationality to history. After talking with the students, it became clear that themes of justice and connection needed to be featured; otherwise, the act of omitting the themes that emerged for them would be a form of silencing the students' contributions. Thus, the order of the research process went from concrete experience to critical reflection and then to theoretical reflection, leading to gaining practical wisdom (Lindseth, 2020, p. 98). Below are our experiences presented and compiled in vignette form.

Concrete Reflection

My impression

I look at Pinchas, my first impression is that he has a grandfatherly presence. His skin is strangely white, like a bluish white, his eyes are piercingly light blue. He is so small on my screen, I squint to see his face. I think of my own grandfather and whether I would want to see him like this. I think of the collected photos, the memories of him, how I wished he told me more about his life. Would I want to see him like this? I think of when he died, and the years leading up to it, the withdrawal, the quietness of a once robust man. Something about this technology makes me so sad. I feel a pit of nausea come over me. For me, seeing Pinchas is personal. He reminds me of the old men my grandfather knew. Maybe it's his Jewishness, his accent, but I see him as a shell of an old generation, and I do not know what to make of it. I am reminded of the saying "ghost in the shell", I cannot seem to get those words out of my head. He is a ghost, his image is a shell, but at the time of this writing, Pinchas is still alive, so is he omnipresent? He has made a career out of being a public witness giving his testimony of surviving the Holocaust to many. I tell myself to look up the book that is written about his life (Memories in Focus, 2017*) but for the purposes of this analysis, I want him and the technology to stand alone. The question I ask myself is whether he is enough. I think of Walter Benjamin's words about the loss of aura of those immortalized on film, I think of images of the Holocaust I was exposed to at too young of an age, by the teacher who was a descendant of a survivor. I think of the tattoos on the arms of the old men who I grew up around, whose concentration camp prisoner identification numbers sat at eye level for me at 5 years old. I find myself grieving the language of Yiddish, a language my grandfather understood fluently but never taught me. I remind myself that my grandfather was not a survivor of the Holocaust, he worked and raised a family in the United States during the war, while some of his brothers fought in the war. I wonder what it was like for him existing in that space. I hear the words in my mind "never forget"– the anthem of my childhood. The Jewish guilt remains strong. To me this interaction with Pinchas is unnerving. I am more interested in being in front of him – of connecting, of seeing him as a type of surrogate for my relative. I realized that I am not interested in what he has to say, I just want to feel his presence.*

Here are some of the students' initial reflections, which for the purpose of this article is combined into a vignette:

Student 1, Teacher of social science in upper secondary high school in Norway.

This is impressive technology, professional, everything looks like it was thought through, but his words felt very dense. He spoke a lot and gave out

so much information at once. If I was to use this technology in a classroom setting, I would have to take a good amount of time to get to know this new resource. Understanding and using new technology and new resources is difficult, and this particular program was a bit difficult to navigate. So, for us teachers, I wish it was more intuitive to access and use. For example, I decided to be spontaneous and just talk into the microphone to ask Pinchas questions. Pinchas seemed to answer some questions very quickly, especially if it was about history and the Holocaust. But questions like "have you ever been in love? Do you like animals?" More personal questions did not get a reply. In that way, you can lose something of a "personal" connection because it was hard to get to know him. He would say "I don't want to answer that….Rephrase…Maybe you can ask me something else." Then questions about his professional life, for example, yielded so much talking from him that I lost interest in his words, and I feel my students would lose interest too. Is the goal to get to know Pinchas or to access his information? There seems to be a text resource with the app that provides background information about Pinchas if you choose to read it, but once that was read, I became less interested in hearing the same information from him. I rather go deeper, more personal. I do see how this could work with the new national curriculum (in Norway) which focuses on interdisciplinarity. You can build lessons around it, but for my students, much of his language is complex and there needs to be additional lessons around this experience. I am not sure if there was a clear objective in talking to him, for example what about his testimony should be focused on? Is it just to learning about the Holocaust? In a way it seems like he is a person that represents something that happened in history, but after this, what are the students supposed to have learned? What has it (the interaction) done for and to them? How is this relevant today? How about contextualizing this and applying it to our society? I guess a teacher is needed to propel this further, because as it is now, it is more like a person talking about the Holocaust. Could students make their own testimonies to link it? History learning, learning agency is not just done by talking to a person, where does it (the interaction) go for the students? Here, now, and in the future? How do we use Pinchas's interaction to propel people to ensure that atrocities like the Holocaust do not happen again? Where are the students in this interaction? It seems they are receiving a lot of information, but it is really not that interactive.

What really struck me is that this conversation/interaction did not feel like what happens in real dialogue, between two people. For example, to take it to extreme, if I have something on my heart that is troubling me, I, like most people reach out to a real person. A dialogue, the ideas,

connotations, interaction, between two people, cannot be staged. It happens in the moment, call it magic, it happens. It (this technology) takes away the deep connection that happens in conversation. Conversation is unplanned, you never know what might happen within you when you communicate with a person. Also, he (Pinchas) looks strict or stern, while he is waiting for questions – authoritative. His presence and facial expression do not invite you to be curious. I ask myself why him? Why did the creators choose him as the representative survivor? His facial expressions while waiting for the next questions were so uninviting. This is not natural. This is not a dialogue, but instead of going to google, I could get an easy answer from here. Maybe it is an alternative to googling?

With more testimonies and perspectives, the project has the potential to get more interesting. His is only one story, one person – one story, but there are thousands of other stories. It is like he is owning the narrative, sitting with a lexicon, given a lot of authority to share his personal testimony. He cannot own the whole narrative. We need those testimonies, but it is not the whole story, it is one of many. In a historical context, I feel that it is a bit more empathetic when someone writes personally.

I would say that when it comes to using this technology or technology in general, I would guide students to be aware of what is out here, teach them how to handle the technology in front of them and to be critical. There is no need to use technology in the classroom all the time. I understand the need to teach digital competency, but not everything needs to be done on a computer. It is a balance, we are living with technology, it is how we communicate, but know to be critical. Using Dimensions in Testimony is a way to start conversation with students about connection, and the good and bad aspects of this technology – what worked and what did not. How would you present your testimony? What is an empathic and respectful way to integrate knowledge in a way that is relevant to our times?

Student 2, international teacher student from country in political turmoil:

Instead of the microphone, I used the chat text feature. I read Pinchas's bio on the website, familiarized myself with him and started with the question "what is most relevant thing that happened in your life?" I did not want to ask questions that seemed to have already been answered in the background blurb about him. I wanted to know what he learned in life. I know this project is about heritage and the Holocaust, but I have studied the Holocaust and really, what is point of asking him the most important lesson of the Holocaust like the guide suggested? I see him (Pinchas) as real person, and instead I wanted to know more about him personally. I felt like he is still alive, so I

wanted to connect. Maybe it's my own perspective of someone coming from a country that has been through wars and trauma. I do not think it is right to ask victims of the lessons, they are victims who suffered. I just want to hear their heart. I was very optimistic in my questioning because I wanted to hear the perspective of a survivor who is wiser, who is reflecting after a lifetime beyond the Holocaust. Yet all the answers to the questions I asked were super focused on the Holocaust. For example, he said "World is Dangerous place" so I asked, "What is your definition of a safe place." He replied saying "the concentration camp was a place of torture." He turned my optimistic questions negative, he kept speaking of torture, killing, concentration camps. I asked him, "What do you fear the most, to live or to die?" He said something like, the only fear that I had during the Holocaust was the gas chamber. Everything he said seemed Holocaust-based. Nothing beyond the Holocaust. I wanted to know how he passed that time since then, I want to know, now what do you think? I wanted him to reflect on his near-death experience.

Finally, I decided to ask him to tell me about his loved ones. Instead, he told me everything about himself, a long biography…super long. Long answers no one wants to read. I am not interested reading, "in this year this happened…" It was draining, so detailed, so I stopped. This is not natural.

My first impression was "oh wow, he's alive and in front of me talking and once the conversation started, the feeling went away. I would say that this technology can keep his memory alive, for example, you remember the name of this person. I could compare his experiences with that of others I read about, I guess. I liked looking at his image, I feel I would know him if I saw him somewhere else. The image they chose of him is blinking and it looks like he is actually sitting on the other side of the screen for a moment. My first impression was that this is a live person. I remember thinking oh he's sitting right here. This can be a good way of learning about the Holocaust and some might find it useful. It might have potential uses in post-conflict situations for certain people. I just wanted more connection, optimism, and humanness in the dialogue. I think I would rather hear the experiences of a woman, maybe I would have connected better with her. I just wanted more philosophy and positivity, more reflection.

Putting together the Kaleidoscope: A Multivocal Critical Reflection of What is at Stake

What is at Stake, my initial thoughts

For me, what is at stake felt personal, therefore I chose to begin this section by referring to my students' experiences first to see how they process their experience. After, I reflect on my own positionality as well as "what is at stake."

What is at Stake for "Student Teacher 1"?

What I see from the above vignette is that accessibility was important, as the teacher is brainstorming ways to make the interaction with Pinchas more interactive and engaging. She views Dimensions in Testimony as one of many teaching tools, but for her, what is at stake is the fact that this was a frustrating interaction, and she felt the need to intervene and mitigate it for her students. She sees it as a potential starting point for larger philosophical topics such as the positives and negatives of using technology to present testimonies and how technology can feel counterintuitive to natural dialogue-based learning. She emphasized a "heart-centric" approach to dialogue and connection.

From Student 1, I extracted that what was at stake was the need to explore the hermeneutical injustice that comes from limited narratives. As Student 1 says, "he is not the spokesman for all." She was concerned about the impression Pinchas gave and questioned why he was chosen as the prototype representative for the Holocaust. She was concerned that the students would be turned off by his presence as well as by his long, dense narrative. She wanted her students to know that Pinchas was just one of many people who had a range of experiences surviving the Holocaust. Also, his answer to more "human" icebreaker-type questions was so lacking that it caused resentment towards the technology and, in a way, towards Pinchas himself, so was this technology really presenting all facets of Pinchas's humanity?

What is at Stake for Student 2:

Student 2 saw the potential for connection, which it seemed she craved. What was at stake for her was that the technology was very promising, and she was drawn to Pinchas, but he seemed to focus so much on the past that the present and future felt like an afterthought. It seemed like the app creators were not quite aware of Pinchas's ability to motivate and spin his experiences in a positive way that would leave those seeking motivation and inspiration to persevere to continue. Both students mentioned a need for a "heart-to-heart" connection. Both commented on his physical presence but had very different experiences of his "humanness," or lack thereof. Student 2 felt that much of the history of the Holocaust has already been heavily documented, and she wanted the technology to expand it rather than rehash it. She also questioned how this technology might work in her home country, which was currently in a dire situation where censorship was overwhelming.

My Thoughts of what is at Stake after reflecting on Students' feedback:

Utilizing this methodology, I identified two to three key themes of what is at stake that emerged after reflecting on the students' feedback. I then synthesized their experiences and applied theory to delve deeper into the nuances of what is at stake on a theoretical and tangible level. I distilled the main themes of what is at stake into the following keywords that seemed to be repeated often by the student volunteers: "Heart-centered, story, connection, truth, and future." I used these key words to launch my own reflections on what is at stake with the utilization of this technology. Furthermore, I would expand this and say that what is at stake is essentially our own legacy, humanity/humanness. Particularly, I use the above keywords as launching points to focus on areas I wish to delve into in the subsequent theoretical reflection subtheme sections of this essay. The following sub-themes fall under this theme:

1. The Liminal Space of Witnessing and Dialogue
2. Hermeneutical Injustice: Encounters with History and Illusion
3. How Technology Can Inhibit Human Connection: Disappearing Auras and Fleeting Connection

Since this type of technology is being expanded and encouraged for classroom and archival use, I ask: To what extent can interactive conversations with digitalized humans be the future of heritage and digital storytelling? Does it do justice to the memory, or does it turn the person into an object and a spectacle, distracting from the person's innate humanness? Can this go too far?

One shared issue at stake that the students allude to is that of hermeneutical injustice, which appears to be a byproduct of the limitations of technology, programming and the humans who designed the technology. By "feeding" real-life Pinchas with questions that they felt were important and needed to be recorded and preserved, a bias was created. Pinchas was shaped by the questions the program designers initially asked him; thus, his humanness was flattened and limited as he could only respond to the right keywords. In essence, he is something of a sophisticated chatbot, and when his limitations are highlighted, the "human" connection can break, turning him from digitized human to flat film cued up to what the programmer felt would be the right parts.

For example, Professor Valtysson (2017) of the University of Copenhagen explains that much of the research in the field of participation and digital media "has been characterized by discourses of digitization and preservation rather than of access and use" (p. 559). Henningsen, E., & Larsen, H. (2020) write about the "fetishization of the digital." By this

they mean that in pushing for digitalization in the culture and education sectors, questions about whether digitalization is really the right approach and whether it is ethically sound tend to be overlooked in the rhetoric and heavy funding that go towards "digitalization" (p. 335). Often, questions of how memory operates and how stories are told and related over time are set aside during the "push for preservation."

Ideally, one of the goals of the digitalization of heritage is to cultivate a "historical present," which is a socio-cultural space where memory and history are embodied in the present (Berlant 2008, p. 848). For example, Connerton (1989) describes how social memory operates on many levels and, at times, needs to be addressed in the context of remembering and "reclaiming" that which has been socially neglected or forgotten (p. 21). Pierre Nora (1989) describes sites of memory as places where a traumatic event occurred or where memories are commemorated (p. 7). Museums and exhibitions about the past are sites of memory. Halbwachs (1980) describes a socially constructed 'phenomenon of memory' (p. 24). Ignatieff (2017) explains that "What human beings share…is a common desire, in their own vernacular, for moral order. For a framework of expectations that allow them to think of their life, no matter how brutal or difficult, as meaningful" (p. 202). Assmann (2008) focuses on the role of culture and memory transmission as integral to one's identity, sense of communal belonging, and overall well-being. When cultural memory is lost, the psychological repercussions on the individual and on the group can affect communicative memory, which can cause a group to feel helpless and assimilate to dominant power structures. In these situations, there may be a call for rediscovery and a renewal of interest in accessing narratives that help shape collective history.

I argue that by presencing people from the past, this AI VR digitalized human interactive technology can be a tool of digital immortality and digital resurrection that may challenge how one frames their place in the world and possibly have the potential for meaning-making for their own lives and those who "dialogue" with them after they depart from their earthly lives. What is at stake is the question of what it is to be human, how memory is transmitted, and whether there is something very human lost in these virtual "connections." As Hansen and Weiss (2022) explain, "Our ability to engage in intimate relationships with others, with nature and the world, shrinks as we learn to objectify the world and others. We become increasingly separated and isolated in our own world of fragmented I-it relationships, as Martin Buber called it" (Helskog & Weiss 2023).

I believe that Dimensions in Testimony can show the range of ways people seek to address a core organic human need – to feel like their

life matters. Humans are inherently social beings, and these examples demonstrate that meaning-making can be closely linked with interactivity and a sense of connection.

- Does this technology create false connections and, by doing so, limit and flatten our sense of humanness and creative imagination, or does it foster connection and empathy for the students?
- Is this a true dialogue or authentic encounter? The digital human is contextualized according to the time in which the recording took place. They would know or understand the time their viewer /student lives in. It is also one-sided in the way that the digitized human would not know the personality of the person asking questions. They would not be physically there to experience the presence of the spectator, so is it a true connection?

Furthermore, I would expand this and say that what is at stake here is the concept of our own humanity at the turning point of digitalized history, where AI algorithms are employed to create virtual humans, where people are turning into holograms and beamed across the world, and where technology can be at once magical and manipulated. It is a place of potentials and for harm, and I ask my students where they fit on this spectrum and how they envision the future of humanity if technology continues to evolve.

A quote that resonates with my positionality regarding what is at stake revolves around the question of whether we can say that Pinchas or the interaction was "real." By real, I mean whether it is our imagination filling in the gaps of the interaction or whether Pinchas in this current form has the "integrity" of being a virtual being. Peter Levine (1997) explains that the "realness of an image is reinforced by the intensity of the arousal associated with it" (p. 210). What "arousal" or reaction is elicited from interacting with digital Pinchas on the screen? Which emotional response can validate or enhance the "realness of his image" as well as the "realness" of the interaction itself?

I noticed that often my questions touch upon the existential question of what it is to be human. To be remembered and to preserve ancestral memory for future generations is often engaged within the context of religion, tradition, and faith. Why is that? It is a liminal space of an ancient question: What is life? Why are we here? Where do we belong? Questions directly related to themes around mortality and the afterlife are age-old. Shamans and mediums straddle worlds in their communications; different religious traditions and cultural practices address memorializing, how we process traumatic memory, how stories are told and navigated and how compelled

we are as a collective to avenge or correct historic wrongs. Is justice and the future of humanity in our hands or god's hands? Do we look forward or back? Does history repeat itself, and if you have faith, what does it matter?

Grob (2008) refers to the question of "what is at stake" in "the act of remembering". He explains that the dynamics of remembering "implies subjects who remember and whose identities and values shape their memories; at the same time the act of remembering creates an educational space in which our memories can help redefine our identities and commitments." What memory commitments can this educational space be activating? I would expand the notion of the "educational space" to include references to humanistic values. For example, memory is intricately related to concepts of personhood, being or soul, whether one applies personhood to the physical or spiritual. When discussing memory, the space becomes instantly liminal, like the concepts of tangible or intangible heritage, or rather, what is passed on between people and generations. Dimensions in Testimony in its current form seems to engage this space, yet whether the students or participants look at Pinchas in this way is to be discussed. I also appreciate that these students who spent the semester studying Freire, critical literacy, and concepts of empowerment feel that some aspect of humanity is lost and not being fulfilled by this technology.

Theoretical and Philosophical Reflection

The Liminal Space of Witnessing and Dialogue

> *"The etymology of dialogue does not derive from di, meaning "two," but dia meaning "across" and as such, it suggests not so much engaging in something that is shared, such as a version of the "common good" about which we can then begin to talk, as it does the image of a bridge that spans a gap or difference."* (Todd, 2015 p. 59)

The idea of dialogue as a way of bridging the gap of understanding for the sake of the common good may be one of the key motives propelling the use of this technology. For example, Helskog and Weiss (2021) describe *"The relational-communicative wisdom dimension"* of dialogue. This dimension emphasizes the existential nature of building connection through dialogue. By "developing the ability to engage in profound, meaningful dialogue and heart-to-heart communication with others, with the aim of reaching mutual understanding, and thus to engage in the lives of other people in ways that make others and oneself grow" (ibid., p. 80). They also emphasize the ethical implications of this dimension because it encourages giving voice to the participant in ways that establish what they are comfortable with and

"being able to judge when such connecting is inappropriate and stay within limits that prevents unwanted intrusion into the life world of the other" (ibid.). The concept of boundaries and unwanted intrusion is very important and touches upon the theme of hermeneutical justice and the ethics of dialogue. Hermeneutical justice emerges when boundaries are respected, and the narrative (and its delivery) is controlled by the speaker within reason. This is also why what emerges from this digital Dimensions in Testimony interaction seems to throw into question whether this is a true "dialogue"? Is the speaker really controlling the message if it is digitized? Is this interaction something akin to what Freire would describe as the banking model of education. For example, Freire calls for a critical literacy in which people are self-reflective and see themselves as co-creators of knowledge. Freire (2000) explains:

> Dialogue is an existential necessity. And since dialogue is the encounter in which the united reflection and action of the dialoguers are addressed to the world which is to be transformed and humanized, this dialogue cannot be reduced to the act of one person's "depositing" ideas in another, nor can it become a simple exchange of ideas to be "consumed" by the discussants. (p. 88-89)

When speaking of Freire's well-known characterization of depositing information vs. bottom-up critical thinking, the deeper question that echoes is about receiving information vs. synthesizing knowledge or information to create meaning that reverberates personally in the students' lives in a way that leaves an impression or possibility for future use. For example, Larry Green and Gary (2016) refer to "the relationship between experience and meaning, between ontology and epistemology," which "moves the emphasis away from 'received wisdom' in favor of the process of meaning making" (Gendlin 1997, as cited in Green and Gary, 2016 p. 48). What the students explain here is that Pinchas is presented by the creators as the giver of information, but upon further reflection, I am not sure if the information participants receive from him would be considered wisdom. We need to really question the definition of wisdom. What the student volunteers emphasized is that they want to create meaning from his words, and they ask whether meaning-making occurs in this space. Some felt that they needed to put the effort into synthesizing his information to create meaning, which shows that perhaps he was not "designed" to create meaning for the students but rather to give raw information for them to synthesize. Perhaps in this way, this project was successful since it allowed students to see what the digital person was or was not able to provide, and therefore, if they chose to, they could use their own creative imagination to fill those

gaps left in the so-called dialogue to create or negotiate a more personal meaning to their interaction.

This space where not everything was answered by digital Pinchas could be considered a liminal space if presented under the right conditions and can encourage reflection where "ambiguity and ambivalence are finally being acknowledged rather than abolished" (Green and Gary, 2016, p. 52). By acknowledging the vagueness and ambiguity, both students and teacher can question what is omitted and whose responsibility it is to fill in the gaps. It is in this ambiguous liminal space that the technology can be a case or catalyst for a reflective dialogical classroom space where ambiguity and the liminal can be discussed. With proper guidance, the emerging dialogue about the shortcomings of Dimensions in Testimony has the potential to expand students' perceptions of what they are experiencing as well as the ethical and futuristic implications. "Modern thought, impatiently grasping for concepts, is quick to dismiss or discard experience that cannot be framed within objective, conceptual thinking, as not worthy of analysis, or to deem it simply it as experience yet-to-be objectified (Marcel 2011, Green and Gary, 2016, p. 56). If presented in an existential light, this "experience yet-to-be objectified" is fertile ground for utilizing reflective praxis methodology to encourage larger reflection about human nature, perception, and technological interventions. So, for example, according to Biesta (2013), the experience of ''being taught'' versus ''learning from'' requires an openness to transcendence. Could the notion of "being taught" be applied to Pinchas's words, but the action of "learning from" require a more reciprocal engagement? When conversing with a person from the past who is on the verge of their own mortality, the student views them as someone with end-of-life knowledge. For the students, the elder's reflection on their life is the gem of this person's wisdom, rather than in hearing a rehashing of the subject's life story, especially one that has already been documented. Details about the person's life are just details, but the students are craving the big picture, a more existential dialogue. They seem to want philosophical interaction, possibly even mentorship. There is something strangely transcendent happening in the student's desire for connection with the person present on the screen in the not quite dialogical space of Dimensions in Testimony.

Green and Gary (2016) characterize "modern education" "as the development of curiosity via critical thinking, the pedagogical aim for a time of liminality needs to be the cultivation of wonder that is open to the emergent" (p. 57). This yearning for true existential connection is tangible and noteworthy, but when technology does not allow for emergence or denies the student this, can the teacher create that space? "Openness to the

emergent" can also include the discomfort that emerges when technology and the analogue converge in the mind. There is a sorting out that happens in the question of "what is real" that can be swept away or more fully explored.

Perhaps this technology seeks to freeze Pinchas and his life into a point in time while the students view him as something timeless and to be engaged with. Perhaps there is a craving there. The word that might be used is "authenticity". Can Pinchas be considered an "authentic human" once his words are fed through a chat machine? To what extent is Pinchas a historic being or an ahistorical being or is he a "being" at all? Todd (2014) explains that the pedagogical space where dialogue and conversation occur has a liminal potential (p. 55). "Such pedagogical spaces can be seen as sites of liminality, or threshold spaces, whereby the self undergoes a process of change occasioned by what lies in-between what one knows and what is utterly strange. The liminality of pedagogical spaces is very much concerned with actual encounters in the present instead of with measuring our experiences (of others) against the standard of some idealized view of humanity" (Todd, 2014, p. 59).

Dimensions in Testimony is a pedagogical space in which the past is presenced in a digital encounter, in which those who had formerly been alive are preserved to be interacted with. Why are the ethics of this not being addressed? Why is it taken as a given that it is okay to resurrect the dead for the purposes of storytelling? I feel that this should be addressed in relation to the "liminal" potential. The other question that emerges from this characterization is the liminality of memory itself. Lambek (2016) explains:

> We must understand memory as essentially incomplete; memory is perspectival, and the perspective is a continuously shifting one. The voicing of memory is transitional, no longer fully subjective, and not yet fully objective before it is legitimated in collective constructions like history textbooks, ritual commemorations, or legal testimony (or vice versa). (p. 242)

In the context of witnessing, there is the assumption that the speaker is the truth-teller, the person giving their testimony. To whom? In a media age, this often looks like digital or online truth-telling. But often this is one-sided, speaker to listener, testimony to witness, one could say that Dimensions in Testimony might try to offer a shift in this dynamic.

Yerushalmi (2011) explains that people's agency to remember and to forget can be an active process. "A people can never 'forget' what it has never received in the first place." Therefore, remembering is an act of

transmission of that which has been "accepted as meaningful." The role of the current generation to filter what they find meaningful and worthy of transmission is a form of selectivity, omission, and censorship. "The break in transmission can occur abruptly or by a process of erosion" (ibid.). This conscious or unconscious hermeneutical injustice will be further discussed in the next section.

Hermeneutical Injustice, An Encounter with History or illusion?

> And each of these methods of evading memory is related to larger social and political circumstances of their recounting. As remembering is a social act, so too is forgetting. The contemporary landscape of memory is created through the modern ars memoria, which involve not so much feats of hypermnesia as of strategic forgetting. (Herman, 2016, p. 191).

In the context of philosophical pedagogy and reflective practice research, it was my hope that the students' individual experiences using this technology would provide a space for existential reflection about such themes as mortality, justice, and legacy. The duality of life, which Zygmunt Bauman (2011) characterized as "mortal and immortality" makes death and life co-present, a "ghostly presence: the obsession of all cultures and religions with bridge-building between admittedly brief biological life and life-after-death", a space where bridges can be built between worlds (Bauman as cited in Jacobsen & Davies, 2011, p. 386). This "bridge-building" can spur one to become preoccupied with death and fearful of life, or it can motivate one to make an impact, create a legacy, have offspring, take photographs, document their existence, and leave a mark somehow. This technology is marketed as the latter, and it was my hope that the participants might also perceive these large themes. For example, one might say that the above interaction was "other-worldly." It was meant to immortalize those before they die, to live on after death. Here is a person who was recorded when they were alive, and now, after death, they are reembodied and accessible in holographic or screen form, ready to make "eye contact" and talk to the public. When people who have been historically silenced are given space to share about their lives, this is an act of liberation, of re-humanizing oneself in a larger societal context.

> Moving from silence into speech is for the oppressed, the colonized, the exploited, and those who stand and struggle side by side a gesture of defiance that heals, that makes new life and new growth possible. It is that act of speech, of 'talking back,' that is no mere gesture of empty words, that

> is the expression of our movement from object to subject—the liberated voice. (hooks, 1989)

In this format, Pinchas is the Levinian "other" with whom the participant seeks to dialogue. "For Levinas, speaking to the Other- a dialogue- is an ethical relation. To do otherwise, Levinas insists, is to reduce the Other to an Object" (Levinas cited in Marková, 2016, p.161). Since Pinchas is not in earthly form, there is an imbalance because he does not have the capacity to truly engage. Yet an ethical relation is taking place; the student may feel subservient, pressured to keep the legacy alive and share his story further. But to what extent is this an ethical relation in the Levinian sense since Pinchas is not quite human and this is not quite a dialogue?

Is "digitized" Pinchas a person or an object? Human, posthuman, or digitized human? Can his words be considered "historical testimony" or a "liberated voice" if it is filtered through computer algorithms, cueing up what it deems to be appropriate responses to the spectator's select questions? The information might be given to the public, but as the students discussed, the question of what you do with it is a major concern. What is the listener supposed to do with this information? Where does empowerment fit in? Who is the intended listener? Who does this technology truly serve? Then again, in the context of never forgetting the trauma of the Holocaust, there is a humanitarian call for stories to be remembered and shared with future generations.

I encourage students to question the limits of technology as memory keeper. For example, what does it mean when Pinchas can only answer certain questions? How is that epistemologically sound? Perhaps this technology uses antiquated concepts of knowledge as information and dialogue as merely questions and answers, but has the nuances and synergy of these historic testimonial encounters. For example, Walter Benjamin explains, "The authenticity of a thing is the essence of all that is transmissible from its beginning, ranging from its substantive duration to its testimony to the history which it has experienced. Since the historical testimony rests on the authenticity, the former, too, is jeopardized by reproduction when substantive duration ceases to matter. And what is really jeopardized when the historical testimony is affected is the authority of the object" (ibid., p. 221). In the context of Dimensions in Testimony, the students became disenchanted in a sense. They were not suspending disbelief; they were questioning "the authority of the object."

If Dimensions in Testimony seeks a space for producing or sharing history and people's narratives, the questions of who is given a voice, which topics are voiced, and which are silenced is a vague space that is not alluded

to in the technology. How much of the testimony is scrapped, asked to be retold, or geared to specific audiences or to yield specific emotions or calls to action? This dynamic is at the core of what historians and archivists (amongst others) grapple with. In *From Silencing the Past – Power and the Production of History*, Michel-Rolph Trouillot (2015) notes:

> For what history is changes with time and place or, better said, history reveals itself only through the production of specific narratives. What matters most are the process and conditions of production of such narratives. Only a focus on that process can uncover the ways in which the two sides of historicity intertwine in a particular context. Only through that overlap can we discover the differential exercise of power that makes some narratives possible and silences others. (p. 25)

The themes of presence, authenticity and temporality may lead one to question whether this digitized person has been created for "historic" uses. I contend that while the digitized human may be created or immortalized for documentation, there is a level of affect that goes beyond the notion of history. This digitized person is speaking in the first person about their experiences, knowing that it will be viewed by the masses. Would this alter what they say? Also, the person is describing their experiences that may have happened over 70 years from the date they are recording their testimony. Memory is malleable and not infallible. Also, there is a distinction between historic truth and personal truth that needs to be considered whenever someone gives testimony.

Part of this existential exploration includes an exploration of how Pinchas and the student participants are situated in the time-space continuum on the screen of Dimensions in Testimony on the IWitness platform. Freire explains (2000):

> Through their continuing praxis, men and women simultaneously create history and become historical-social beings. Because-in contrast to animals-people can tridimensionalize time into the past, the present, and the future, their history, in function of their own creations, develops as a constant process of transformation within which epochal units materialize. These epochal units are not closed periods of time, static compartments within which people are confined. (p. 101)

In terms of temporality, in its current form, if you ask the digitized human questions beyond its intended use, you will get a recording of him saying that he was made in 2014 and is unable to talk about the current time context in which the student encounters him. With his statement about temporality, you are snapped out of the time continuum. Does this enhance authenticity for the viewer by situating Pinchas back in his contextual time,

or does it interrupt or snap the viewer out of suspended disbelief about the nowness of the encounter? Then again, the technology as it is now is not advanced enough for the digitized human to seem solid or completely embodied.

Walter Benjamin explains, "technical reproduction can put the copy of the original into situations which would be out of reach for the original itself. Above all, it enables the original to meet the beholder halfway, be it in the form of a photograph or a phonograph record" (WA, p. 220-221). In the examples of Pinchas, the digitized human, not only does this technology presence the person into a foreign environment, it almost literally presences the deceased back onto this physical earthly plane.

"One might generalize by saying: the technique of reproduction detaches the reproduced object from the domain of tradition" (WA, p. 221). A traditional and especially a secular or atheistic point of view would emphasize that it would be impossible for this "dead" person to be present and "alive" in any environment. If we broaden our perspective, this digitized human is "displaced" and put into a museum setting or on a laptop screen, thus disrupting concepts of culture that emphasize understanding the past in the context of the past. Benjamin explains that in most situations, reproduction limits contextuality, or the story of the work. "Even the most perfect reproduction of a work of art is lacking in one element: its presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be" (WA, p. 220) One can liken this to spiritualist minstrel-type shows where "ghosts" appeared for audiences, but it turned out the ghostly presence was merely a magic trick designed to fool the audience. The ghostly presence was part of the collective allure.

Besides the allure of the novelty of encountering a digitized human, another consideration is the intention and consent of the person being recorded. In the case of Dimensions in Testimony, this person was recorded for posterity purposes to educate the public about the atrocities of the Holocaust, with the aim that history would not repeat itself. Benjamin writes, "But now the separated image has become separable, transportable. And where is it transported? Before the public" (WA, p. 231). With the aim to "never forget" the Holocaust, the interactive recording of Pinchas is present in select traveling exhibitions and assorted Holocaust Centers around the world.

The idea that this recording will knowingly be made available to the masses changes the dynamics of the intention of the participants (both actor and receiver). Benjamin (1936) writes: "While facing the camera he knows that ultimately, he will face the public, the consumers who constitute the market. This market, where he offers not only his labor but also

his whole self, his heart and soul, is beyond his reach" (WA, p. 231). It is interesting to note that Benjamin sees these mechanical productions through the lens of their possible effect on the masses and their link to capitalistic models. While my project does not overtly focus on politics, it is important to mention that this type of technology that is designed for a somewhat personal or intimate encounter has the potential to be used for the betterment or detriment of society. Specifically, Benjamin's concern is that the mass spreading of imagery and film can be used for fascist purposes. For example, what if this recording was of someone whose testimony was created or edited for the purposes of riling up the masses? This level of encounter might be more persuasive than other forms of propaganda, and the potential for unethical applications of this technology needs to be further explored.

Digitalization, Fleeting Connection and Disappearing Auras

Dimensions in Testimony technology can be characterized as an extension or new iteration of the technologies of film and photography. As such, it is reasonable to use Benjamin's theories to see how they might be relevant to Dimensions in Testimony. Importantly, Benjamin highlights that technology cannot quite replicate true humanness, embodiment and the "aura." "This situation might also be characterized as follows: for the first time – and this is the effect of the film – man has to operate with his whole living person yet forgoing its aura. For aura is tied to his presence, there can be no replica of it" (WA, p. 229). In this way, the actor becomes less than human and less than present. The actor is more of a shell, lacking the life force that animates it. The lack of aura via the interference of the camera is disorienting and unnerving. Benjamin refers to the reflexive and reflective aspect of seeing a person on film as a state of estrangement. He describes this as the "same kind of estrangement felt before one's own image in the mirror" (WA, p. 230). Does this technology take away the innate humanness of the subject and skew our concepts of mortality?

Benjamin's concern is that the person on film's "whole self, his heart and soul, is beyond his reach" (WA, p. 231). If we look at this person's video, we know that this person is potentially no longer physically present, but does that mean that it is not emotive, that we do not experience or feel the "heart and soul" or essence of the person? Benjamin uses the phrase "beyond reach," but what would the viewer be reaching for? Is there a physicality he is referring to? Do humans ever really feel "within reach" of each other? Is it possible to truly "know" someone? Perhaps Benjamin is referring to the "shriveling up of the aura with an artificial

buildup" (WA, p. 231). He explains, "To pry an object from its shell, to destroy its aura, is the mark of a perception whose 'sense of the universal equality of things' has increased to such a degree that it extracts it even from a unique object by means of reproduction" (WA, p. 223). If we apply Benjamin's characterization, how embodied or how human is this being, "Pinchas"?

Benjamin explains that film's potentiality is in its persuasiveness, "in its unique faculty to express by natural means and with incomparable persuasiveness all that is fairylike, marvelous, supernatural" (WA, p. 228). It is interesting to note that when Benjamin refers to film, he seems to not describe the act of filming oneself (perhaps a more recent byproduct of the selfie/blogging fixated culture of the 2000s). In his characterization, there is the role of "film actor" and "audience" and the lack of presence of the live audience when filming. The audience instead becomes the critic "without experiencing any personal contact with the actor" (WA, p. 228). Noting the mechanical and unnatural technology of camera as interloper, Benjamin explains that "The audience's identification with the actor is really an identification with the camera" (WA, p. 228). Thus, technology is the gatekeeper to one's experience of the person.

In the medium of photography or film, authenticity could possibly be considered by the viewer as what is seen; for example, the person is situated in a place, and in those images, the real seems within reach. The characters appear embodied and moving; they are "real." "The shooting of a film, especially of a sound film, affords a spectacle unimaginable anywhere at any time before this" (WA p. 232). In this spectacle, the viewer sees a visual product void of the process that it took to create the experience. He notes that the spectator's viewpoint does not include "camera equipment, lighting machinery, staff assistants, etc.—unless his eye were on a line parallel with the lens" (WA p. 233). This exclusive, intimate gaze to that which is on its screen lends itself to a proximity in which the viewer can feel "present" to the moment. He writes, "The equipment-free aspect of reality here has become the height of artifice; the sight of immediate reality has become an orchid in the land of technology" (WA p. 233). His metaphor of "orchid in the land of technology" emphasizes that in the midst of all of these mechanics there is the potential to "cultivate" something precious and organic that has value for the masses.

Does this way of preserving an image of oneself, even if it includes voice and story, result in a shortening of time and space to such a degree that the person becomes ahistorical and, in turn, loses their autonomy? The word "façade" is also applicable to describe the dynamic Benjamin is referring to. As one gets physically or even emotionally closer to these

digitized humans, the digitization's effect may lose something "real." Then again, this encounter may engage more of the senses than either film or photography. It might have an "aura." "The aura is a medium that envelopes and physically connects—and this blurs the boundaries between—subject and object" (Hansen, 2008, p. 351).

This technology causes a shift in how we perceive the subject. For example, "With the close-up, space expands; with slow motion, movement is extended. The enlargement of a snapshot does not simply render more precise what in any case was visible, though unclear: it reveals entirely new structural formations of the subject" (WA, p. 236). This allows us to look closely from different angles, creating an unnatural intimacy yet a limited sense of a person. "The camera introduces us to unconscious optics as does psychoanalysis to unconscious impulses" (WA, p. 237).

If this digitization of a person is presented as being able to "make eye contact," would that create an aura that a viewer might feel some type of connection to in ways that affect them? Van den Akker (2016) writes, "The aura as the cult value of the work, distant though apparent in the work because of a historicizing gaze, gives us a sense of what has been and is no longer" (p. 46). Yet Benjamin explains, "in permitting the reproduction to meet the beholder or listener in his own particular situation, it reactivates the object reproduced. These two processes lead to a tremendous shattering of tradition which is the obverse of the contemporary crisis and renewal of mankind" (WA, p. 221). In this space bridging past and present resides the viewer, whose positionality could be considered liminal.

The questions the spectator asks shape their experience, which can be viewed from a different perspective, i.e., that the digitized human is trying to cultivate an earthly bond with the viewer. Yet, when a collective's sense of reality is altered and skewed by a technological intervention, what does that say about the future of culture, especially a culture whose identity is situated in personal and collective memory and experiences? Would it make you value life more or less? What does it say about being in the moment and appreciating the present? Is it wrong to process grief over an encounter through a computer screen?

If we are to agree with Hillman's (1975) perspective, "the modern view imagines a universe divided into living subjects and dead objects. There is no space for anything intermediate, ambiguous, and metaphorical." Then we can ask ourselves whether Pinchas in digital form is "intermediate, ambiguous, and metaphorical." If he is, then perhaps we might adjust our expectations of what an interaction with him "should" be like. Are the students truly interacting or conversing with a person or rather with an illusory being based on a person who existed named "Pinchas"

who now exists in digitized form on a digital storytelling platform for the purpose of educating people about the Holocaust?

> For many, digital technology and the Internet remain incomprehensible, leaving room for mythical and magical interpretations especially in relation to a prospect many prefer to deny: ultimate nonexistence….Ironically, it seems that science and new technology now provide the fuel for a re-enchantment of society, and the now normalized suspension of disbelief inherent in the consumption of media entertainment and popular culture helps to facilitate this process. (Sherlock, 2013)

In the context of such a traumatic event as the Holocaust, the question of "ultimate nonexistence" is deeply rooted in the context of remembering and forgetting and the technologies that may play a role in that process. This leads us to question and explore the role media and culture play in the future of preserving life stories. Whether virtual dialogue is the answer to re-enlivening the past is an emerging field that will need to be explored ethically and practically as these technologies continue to evolve.

Final Reflections

As a researcher of digitalization and heritage, I find myself grappling with the push to digitalize. When I adjust the kaleidoscope of my reflective praxis, I see the past and present and future converging, mixing, and separating out. I consistently ask myself about the beauty of books, the joys of imagination, and how, when we read, worlds come alive, gain shape inside our brains, and live there. While there is such a thing as historical truths, we are still subjective human beings shaped by our own unique wiring, socio-cultural lenses, and religious lenses, amongst many other things. I ask myself what memories are meant to be held onto, and what needs to be let go, and how and why. Obviously, the topic of the Holocaust in this paper is uniquely situated under the category of what shall be remembered so it can never happen again, but the difference between historic fact and the way people discuss their lived experiences is broad. Recently, I went to the Anne Frank House in Amsterdam. There were guided tours and codes that people could scan to hear about Anne Frank and the others who were forced to live in an attic during the German occupation. I chose to walk through the exhibit without the handheld tour devices and just feel the space, smell the air, and imagine what it would be like to be Anne and her family existing in hiding in this space. I think of Anne's diary that I read in 5th grade and how close I felt to her. I remember how she wrote about birds in a cage and craving air. Although it has been decades since I read her book, I was amazed to remember her metaphoric descriptions. I cannot

say that I ever heard Anne's voice or sat across from her in real or virtual form, but I felt a connection to her that reached beyond the typed words of her book. I ask myself again: is this digitized interactive storytelling technology really the answer to continuing the legacy of those who have gone before us?

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Chapter 11

Conversing confidentially on our challenges: two practitioners reflect on their experiences of confiding themselves in conversation

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Abstract:

Confidential conversation on one's existential and ethical issues is an ancient practice of philosophy and a modern technique of psychology. However, studies by practitioners on their own experiences of confiding themselves in conversation are rare. In this unique study, two philosophical counsellors and professors of philosophy reflect on their experiences of seeking to deepen not only their understanding of themselves but also their understanding of understanding ourselves in confidential conversations. The chapter proceeds from their experiences of confidential conversations to reflections on those experiences and assessments of related research on confidential conversations. It shows that conversing confidentially involves a mutual mood of sharing private matters in private manners. Conversing confidentially is neither "inner" nor "outer," but behaviour expressive of being confidential. This chapter is significant not only for understanding confidential conversations and training in conversational professions but also for understanding ourselves as human beings.

Keywords

confidentiality; understanding; conversational therapy; psychotherapy; counselling; philosophical practice.

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Confidential conversation

Both of us are honoured to host confidential conversations with people on their existential and ethical challenges each week. We also have the privilege to train healthcare professionals and, especially, to supervise prospective philosophical counsellors in confidential conversation each year. We are ourselves philosophical counsellors and professors of philosophy, and we too have our challenges in life and living. But what enables us all to confide in another with the challenges to our existence and ethos? That is not easily answered. There are many studies on the relation between those talking about private matters in private manners (e.g. Wampold, 2015; Flückiger, Del Re, Wampold, & Horvath, 2018) and on the training for conversational professions (e.g. Boele, 1995; Fydrich & Fehm, 2018; Murphy, Irfan, Barnett, Castledine, & Enescu, 2018; Raabe, 2014, p. 231-259; Rocco, Gennaro, Filugelli, Squarcina, & Antonelli, 2019; Svare, 2006), including a few on the trainee's mandatory counselling and the practitioner's continuing counselling for personal and professional development (e.g. Kumari, 2011; 2017; Orlinsky, 2022, p. 148-167). But in contrast to the last decades of research establishing the preeminent role relational factors have on outcome, most training programs continue to emphasize specific treatment models (De Bei, Rocco, & Salcuni, 2019), and there are hardly any studies by practitioners themselves on their own experiences of confiding themselves in conversation (though there are brief exceptions in e.g. Yalom, 1980, p. 44-45; 2010, p, 41-42; 2017). There is role play in training, but not personal and professional reflection on the practice of entrusting oneself in conversation. That is what we need.

In order to better understand ourselves, those that guest our practices and those that study with us, we two regularly talk privately with each other on issues in our lives and living. This chapter builds on two years of meeting almost every week on a digital platform. Each session lasts for at least ninety minutes, and on every other occasion we exchange positions. During the first sixty minutes, we enquire together into a personal challenge that one of us presents, and during the last thirty minutes, we talk about our talking. We exchange confidences on issues such as aging and death, loneliness and fellowship, conduct and character, virtue and vice, meditation and action, anxiety and tranquillity, parents and partners, work and leisure, identity and convention, the perishable and the imperishable. Although our cooperation seems unique – not to say special – both in terms of conversational professionals and fairly grown-up boys conversing confidentially, this practice allows us to reflect on ourselves, on our own conversational experience and on those of others when talking about existential and ethical issues.

Thus, "Talk for you is good discipline," as a rather severe Lady Reason says to Lucy Snowe in Charlotte Brontë's *Villette* (1853 II. xxi).

In this chapter, we call what we do confidential conversation. We do so in order not to use technical terms associated with theories – such as psychotherapy, conversational therapy, counselling, philosophical practice and so forth – but to use colloquial terms associated with practice.[2] For to converse and to be confidential are not theories but practices: not what we do after an exam but what we grow up into. For instance, Elizabeth Gaskell charmingly describes our human practice of confidential conversation in *Wives and Daughters*: "Molly took her little griefs and pleasures, and poured them into her papa's ears, sooner even than into Betty's, that kind-hearted termagant. The child grew to understand her father well, and the two had the most delightful intercourse together – half banter, half seriousness, but altogether confidential friendship." (1866 III) Perhaps our ordinary use of "conversation" was best expressed already by the lexicographer Samuel Johnson: "To convey the thoughts reciprocally in talk." In conversing, we speak in turn with regard to each other, communicating and interchanging what we care about. Here, conversation is akin to an interview, where people meet face-to-face to confer together. In ordinary life, moreover, we human beings converse confidentially. We converse confidentially when we tell private matters in private manners with someone we trust. The matters and the manners are closely personal, even intimate, and the conversation is private from the public and secret from others. We feel confident to share our feeling, perceiving, remembering, thinking, imagining, acting and wanting, and with slight hesitation, talk boldly with little or no doubt in others of what stands against our life and living. So, whatever theories there may be of our practices, there could not be any such theories without those practices, and our theories as well as our trainings will go berserk with us unless we stay in touch with what we are practicing. We human beings practice confidential conversation in order to humanely handle ourselves together.

We can deepen this understanding of our practice by attending to the extensive vocabulary that surrounds it. For to briefly survey this is to clarify the human life and living it expresses. Let us plot the practice with our verbal, adverbial, adjectival and substantive constructions. To confide is, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, to trust, have faith and feel assured enough to speak or write secrets and communicate in confidence.

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[2] We assume but do not argue in this chapter that existential and ethical issues are not as such issues of health or illness. We believe though nothing depends on that in this chapter.

Thus, Molly pleads with her father to trust her whereabouts, and Lord Hollingford confides to Molly "his reluctance at having to dance at all." To confide is to take a person into one's confidence and converse confidentially with the other, namely, to communicate matters of intimacy in manners of place, time, person, and demeanour. So, the old butler Robinson speaks "confidentially" to Osborne separately about his father's improper anger. To confidently communicate confidentially is also to converse in confident ways, namely in assured, trusted or bold ways, as Molly and Mrs. Hamley tell each other secrets. For one is bold to share because one trusts the other, and a person of confidence is a trustworthy person – someone in whom one has confidence, namely, trust, reliance or faith. We use then confidence both subjectively of the one confiding, trusting, relying on and feeling sure or assured, and objectively of the person who gives confidence, its object or ground, from which arises assurance, boldness or even fearlessness. Consequently, "confidence" is used both of the relation of intimacy or trust between persons and of the matter communicated between them, and both conversations and persons to whom secrets are entrusted are called "confident." But the many adjectives and adverbs signifying relative degrees and intentions of confidence – confident, confidently, confidentially and confiding – are nearly unsurveyable. Yet, all these interconnected uses express the importance of trust in human relations and the need for confidential conversation of private matters in private manners.

In this chapter, we also use everyday terms for us that converse confidentially. In everyday conversations, one person often confides in another person, so that one receives and entertains in private manners the private matters of the other. Professional conversations adhere to this everyday practice as one hosts the conversation and the other guests the conversation. Since we aim to engage the subject matter on equal terms in fellow enquiry, we do not dub the other "patient", "client" or even "confidant" but "guest", and label ourselves accordingly "hosts" of the confidential conversation. Just as we attribute the leading of the orchestra to the guest conductor and the performance of the piece to the guest soloist, so as hosts we honour the subject matter of guests in fellow enquiry. Although there is an asymmetry between the receiving of the host and the being received of the guest, we pursue symmetry in conversing about the entrusted topic. This enables not only the challenge of the guest to be entertained by the host but enables us also to change position every other conversation.

The following chapter is devoted to our practice of exchanging confidences with each other. (The next chapter deals with self-reflection through expressive journaling (Rehnman, 2023).) Scholarship on confidential conversations typically focuses on legal issues of (not) disclosing

classified information (e.g. Mosher & Berman, 2015; Sommers-Flanagan, 2015, p. 135-159; Tantam, 2002, p. 111-114, p. 287-295) rather than on personal issues of furthering entrusted cooperation. For instance, one guidebook maintains that "confidentiality is of utmost importance" but does not hint at how it occurs and is maintained (Eichler, 2010, p. 23-24, p. 36-38), while another starts on "confidence and trust" and then quickly devotes the chapter on confidentiality to legal issues (Willer, 2014, p. 103).[3] In this chapter, we instead begin with a section where we proceed from our invaluable experiences of conversing confidentially on each other's life and living or (in the jargon that may mislead us from what is at stake) existential and ethical issues. In the next section, we continue to reflect on those relevant experiences in order to understand our practice more thoroughly. The telling of our experiences of confidential conversations shows that our reciprocate behavioural manifestations, including verbal ones, facilitate our being mutually confidential in conversation. We end with a section that relates our reflections on our experiences to experimental research that would account for confidential conversations in terms of an "inner" ability behind the "outer" behaviour. Our reflective practice shows that being confidential is neither "inner" nor "outer" but expressive behaviour, including verbal behaviour, in relation to one another. This makes a unique and important contribution to understanding confidential conversation, training in the practice of confidential conversation, and understanding ourselves as human beings. Thus, our experiential and conceptual investigations will not only improve but also inspire further developments for conversing confidentially on existential and ethical issues.

Relating Experiences of Confidential Conversation

In this section, we seek to recount some particular personal experiences that we deem typical of our confidential conversations. Here we use "experience" broadly for what we felt, perceived, thought, remembered, imagined, acted and wanted in our personal dialogues with one another. Experiences entail experiencers, and thus we begin with the experience voiced by the guest and continue with the experience voiced by the host, since we assume that the voices collaborate for the sake of the former. We

[3] Willer explains that emails, social media and public places are not "confidential" and counsels that "clients [can] feel more comfortable and confident in their work with you if you can make a few minor and inexpensive adjustments to the office environment." (Willer, 2014, p. 83, 89, 97, 27). This seems to us to express a rather shallow understanding of being confidential.

relate experiences both of what we wanted to achieve and what we did not want to achieve in our confidential conversations. Since we write confidentially about what we said confidentially, we omit details and organize the section around what we did and underwent as guest and host alike in conversation. We use pronouns in this section irrespective of which of us or both of us they point to beyond our telling. We do not pretend that the story exhausts our experiences, but we aim to express the essential meaning of some of our experiences in apt words.[4]

As guest, I talk in various ways. Mainly, I fumble for words. For instance, I have this grave experience of aging and can foretell that something unsaid needs to be said but cannot foretell what it is. I grope about increasingly becoming aware of my signs of old age and the end of my life, and of near and dear falling ill and dying unexpectedly or expectedly. I need to tell something about myself, my desires and worries in my circumstances, but my experience is complex and unclear. My words for growing old hint at and give me an inkling that something else is at stake, but I cannot yet express the particulars. Pausing, it dawns on me that when everything and everyone perishes, I am lonely, but also that in the experience of loneliness, there is the experience of continuity, and that in my aging, something does not perish. I acknowledge continuous aims and achievements in my life; I recognize the experience of the imperishable, particularly in meditation, and I realize that this is a difficult religious theme I have never spoken about before. This is the unsaid that had to be said. I did not know where the telling was going and do not know where it will end; I only knew where to begin, or almost. I dare tell and enter into my story; I dare to present myself and be present in the telling, when I experience that you dare to listen attentively, be sincerely moved and respond openly to my story. This experience gives me courage to stumble towards answers for my questions, partly through talking and exploring, partly through remaining still and silently pondering what I have said and what I have not said, partly through breathing and reflecting on your brief but rare contributions. Thus, I talk confidently and confidentially.

As host, I talk in various kinds of ways. I express what I understand of and feel for you by attuning myself to the telling of growing old. Perhaps I most frequently utter what I feel or understand of what is coming to expression with "m-m", "oh?", "hm", "ah!" or "I see" between your utterances. To bring out the sense of your experience, I briefly restate what

[4] We have talked about writing twelve thick volumes under the title The Truth, but we have come to our senses by thankful remembrance of Laurence Sterne's *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman.*

I heard either in your own formulations or in my own formulations when they seem to clarify the issue, but I always want the wording to be suited to your goal and our fellow enquiry. I repeatedly ask to pursue further meanings of aging, continuity and imperishability, and ponder occasionally the suffering and dying of near and dear to enlarge upon particulars in order to elucidate the essence of your subject. Sometimes I divide parts of the experience of aging that I think may be fruitful to explore separately or suggest opposites and/or add further alternatives, but I always allow you to decide what to develop. To explicate and elaborate your experience, I ask after a while whether I may share a personal experience, but, although my experience of illness was not conducive to your exploration, you say that it allowed you to breathe and reflect as well as to experience participation and fellowship. In all our ways of talking, I seek to dwell on the immediate and specific, clarifying and deepening the particulars of your story with the generalities of philosophy, history, art and literature. I conceive asking and wondering to be the verbal form of openness and receptivity, so that you can articulate yourself in fellowship. Thus, I explore with you private matters in private manners.

As guest, I feel variously about our confidential conversation. Most basically, I feel welcome being allowed and not disallowed to tell my story of growing old. But my feelings are mixed, not only in that I am more comfortable and cognizant with some than with others, but also in that there are different kinds of feeling and that one kind may sometimes change into another kind. Most of what I feel concerns what I experience of our conversation and of ourselves. I would not converse confidentially unless I felt the setting secure, but I go through a lot more in our trusted talk. Occasionally, conversing about aging, loneliness, continuity and imperishability, amazes, confuses, delights, disconcerts, discomfits, disturbs, excites, surprises, thrills or unsettles me, and such kinds of feelings may hinder me from saying what I want to say. But another kind of feeling is more common: hope in getting to understand myself and my experience better; glad or relieved in being received; fear of losing your or my own esteem; worry over my coming loneliness; gratitude for your attention; embarrassment of my ignorance; pride in my achievements; and shame or guilt for impatience with others. Still further, I feel cheerful, irritated, jolly, confident, bored or serene by our exchange over age, illness and death, and dejected by my circumstances or collecting myself in setting words to my challenge. Yet, I know I am welcome, since I do not fear that my story will be resisted but venture in the hope of being supported. So, my feelings as guest in a confidential conversation are diverse between hesitation and determination, and diverging between what hinders me, what I value and

do not value, and what pervades my mind. They divide primarily into agitations, emotions and moods.

As host, my feelings take many forms when and where we meet, greet and seat. Overall, my feelings are ambiguous: I experience one kind as disturbances, another as values and another as suffusions, and these kinds may blend. For example, in talking of meditation, I suddenly become distracted by recalling the composed posture, mild face, tranquil gesture and keen eyes of – what? Well – Mona Lisa. Else I feel honour, joy, embarrassment and humility in conversing of aging, but also shame that I may be presumptuous or conceited of suffering and dying. I worry that I may not live up to your confidence but feel reverence for the lives we embody. I am confident that silence may speak to us and desire us to trust stillness for our topic. I am ashamed when I hear that you expect me to know what I do not know, and while I strive to stay with your communication, I realize a bit of vanity, that I fear or hate not to live up to the expectations of my age and profession but feel simultaneously honoured in being entrusted. Sometimes I feel bored, irritated or discomforted; sometimes jovial, pleased, excited, comfortable or uncomfortable. In all these kinds of feelings, I want to be true to myself, so that you can be true to yourself. To receive and become receptive of you, of myself and of our lives that are coming to expression, I briefly meditate before sessions in order to receive your challenge, representing confidence and courage in seeking to experience what is at stake. In case you do not dare to tread the path of the subject, we will pursue it together for the broadest possible experience by allowing your expressions to make impressions on me. So, my feelings as host of confidential conversations also contain agitations, emotions and moods.

As guest, my experience of talking about aging, continuity, loneliness and imperishability takes many forms of expressions. Being received and accepted, I feel less tense: eyebrows relax, gaze becomes steadier, breathing deepens, (possible) throbbing weakens and hands tend to sweat less. When I am cheerfully conversing, I calmly fold my hands in lap or open my arms in delight, lean slightly forward with smiling face, talk with clear tone, full volume and firm speed of utterance. Occasionally, I slightly blush, smirk shyly or purse my lips hesitantly, and my voice becomes unsteady in embarrassment and/or shame of my topic. I am hardly aware of this at first, but when I attempt to cover, the feeling only increases and that unsettles us. But on other occasions, I become conscious that in bracing myself, my joy takes the form of a smile or a light tone of voice, and that encourages me. My joy also seems to be infectious on you, or I see you sharing my joy in your smiling face, swaying the upper part of your body and exclaiming, "Ah!" When I hear you point out the sight of my insight in

moistened eyes and relaxed or lit up face, then tears fill my eyes, my voice sounds delight or my entire face smiles. My talking relies on whether your expressions sincerely agree or not. All these bodily demeanours express that I converse confidentially.

As host, my experience of conversing takes many forms of expressions. I am attentive and eager to be open to what you will express, so I sit with open hands in lap, and with an encouraging smile, I lean slightly forward, bend head somewhat to shoulder, lightly raise neck, seek to meet your eyes in mild expectation and await your talking. If I see you hesitate about death, I nod reassuringly, part my lips as if to encourage you to do the same in speech, but if not, I ask gently with clear tone what you would like to share here now. While we talk, I seek not to interfere in the telling on dear ones and allow your expressions make impressions on me, so that I can appropriately support you in raised eyebrows of curiosity, open mouth of wonder, cheeks pressed together in pity, hearty giggle, nodding or shaking head, open arms of delight, shown palms of prompting, jaws dropped in astonishment, and so forth. When I feel we must sort out misunderstanding on the imperishable, I may raise my index finger or in surprise, open my hands to talk with keen eyes and humble voice. I share your joy of self-understanding with tilted face, confident smile and warm tone, but may also yawn with the boredom of experienced repetition. In all this, I show that I am receptive and responding to our confidential conversation.

In this section, we have related some of our typical experiences in confidential conversing. To converse confidentially is daring to take on the challenge of entrusting another with what stands against one's life and living. Talking about private matters in private manners takes multiple expressions. We fumble and rumble for words in exchanging confidences on existential and ethical issues; we may feel diverse agitations that may hinder our conversations; many emotions of what we value or do not value in our conversations; various moods evoke during our conversations, and we show this in our verbal and bodily behaviour in profuse ways. During our dialogues, our respective bodily and verbal expressions, together with our feelings, are our mutual doing and undergoing. Thus, our fellow enquiry into existential and ethical issues embodies confidentiality.

Reflecting on Experiences of Confidential Conversation

In this section, we seek to learn from our personal experiences of confidential conversation. We reflect on our experiences in order to improve our practice, becoming better at conversing confidentially by reflecting on our confidential conversations both as guests and hosts. We reflect on

three themes that emerge from our experiences by elucidating the concepts involved. This section proceeds from reflections on the concept of confidentiality over the concept of receptivity to the concept of idiography in these conversations. Thus, we further reflective practice.

We begin to reflect that we are confidential together. It is generally assumed that in existential and ethical conversations, the guest confides in the host, but we take it that the host also confides in the guest. Although the conversations are of course confidential for the sake of the guest, we experience that they are also confidential on the part of the host. We hardly need to reflect on the guest being confidential in disclosure to the host, but a little reflection shows the host being confidential as well. For the host is receiving the secrets of the guest in the belief that the other is sincere, is working to enable the guest to be sincere with himself and is (occasionally) sharing some private matters of his own in order to strengthen the guest in conversation as well as challenge. If the host would discover pretension, insincerity or even dissemblance in the guest, then the host would be wounded, saddened, deceived or angry, and that would undermine or even destroy the host's confidence in conversing with the guest. The guest primarily becomes and remains confident that the host is able to receive private matters in private manners, but the host trusts that the challenge of receiving the other's challenge is not apparent but real. Although they may not comment on their mutual confidentiality in the topic of conversation, the reciprocity in being confidential affects them both. So, the conversation is confidential both on the part of the guest and on the part of the host. As we trust in each other, breach of confidence may not be one-sided.

What we both are confidential about in conversation seems, on reflection, to have (at least) three constituents. Perhaps we predicate the meaning of "confidential" essentially to the meaning of "conversation" in three interconnected ways: we are confidential *of* our conversation, we are feeling confidential *in* conversing, and we are confidential *for* our own sake in conversation. We will proceed to reflect on each of these constituents in our confidential conversations and elaborate on the state of those conversing confidentially.

In our common everyday practice, we obviously predicate "confidential" of "conversation." We attribute the adjective "confidential" to the noun "conversation" as the source or possessor of confidentiality. What one encounters in the presence of another ensures one that the conversation is, can be or become confidential. Yet it may not need to be anything in particular that makes the conversation confidential. For it must not be one's doing *this* or undergoing *that* or the other's doing *this* or undergoing *that* that makes the conversation confidential. For instance, although one

may have the secure setting, the other's welcoming posture, friendly mien, encouraging gesticulations or supportive utterances and/or one's own relaxed posture, composed mien, easy gestures, firm utterances, changes of confidences and so forth as one's object, it need not be anything special that keeps the conversation confidential. The conversation rather remains confidential by all our mutual doings and undergoings (at least) during it. We are grasped by the experience of everything that is given to us and the conversation as a whole shows itself to be confidential. This does not mean that the object of confidentiality is general but that the experience of confidentiality is general. It is what the conversation as a whole means to us through or throughout – or even before and after – that makes it confidential. Confidentiality is rather the tenor than the object.

However, not only are we confidential of the conversation, but we are also being confidential in conversing. The phrase "confidential conversation" may lead us to assume that there is a thing named "conversation" that is the source or possessor of confidentiality. Yet it is not the conversation but *we* that are enjoying, feeling or being confidential in conversing. Our being confidential is manifest in various ways. For instance, we believe we can trust and entrust one another with our secrets, are inclined to openly pursue them and enjoy enquiring together. We feel confidential by each other's apt responses, we sit straight but not tensed, our faces are light, eyes warm, voices strong, we are conscious of and rely on our capabilities. We are being confidential in what we feel, perceive, think, remember, imagine, do, want, in short, in everything we experience. It is each other's behaviour, including verbal behaviour, that inspires confidence, and our confidence and confidentiality are shown in the ways we are conversing in our mutual doings and undergoings. Being confidential is not strictly predicated of the conversation but of those conversing since there cannot be a conversation without those conversing. We are being confidential in mutually hoping and feeling confident that the fellow enquiry responds seriously to an existential or ethical challenge. So, we tune confidently into the confidential conversation by attending to how we are affected.

We need, third, to reflect on why we are being confidential in conversing. All human beings face challenges to their life and living, and many meet those challenges by talking with another. Although it is challenging to confide another with one's secrets, one converses in order to deal with one's life and living. For we are being confidential of our conversations mounting challenges. We entrust each other with our aging and death, loneliness and fellowship, conduct and character, virtue and vice, meditation and action, anxiety and tranquillity, parents and partners, work

and leisure, identity and convention, the perishable and the imperishable, and so forth. These are all challenges to our lives and living, but the conversation shows why we can be or are being confidential. Our reciprocal doing and undergoing makes us confidential that we can surmount not only the challenge of sharing challenges but possibly also surmount the challenges themselves. Our existence and ethos are at stake in the issues of the conversation, and we are or become confidential for our existence and ethos, namely confidential for ourselves. That we are being confidential of the conversation for our own sake can be elaborated in two ways.

First, one is especially being confidential for one's own sake because one is enabled to tell one's own particular story. One is not confidential of general issues in general circumstances. Rather, one talks of one's private matters in private manners in order to better understand one's life and living, that is, one's particular person with one's particular experience in one's particular situation. One is or becomes and remains confidential when and where one is allowed to dwell on one's particulars in one's own ways, and the other dwells on one's particulars in one's own ways. For example, one is not confidential for one's own sake because many people struggle with aging, but because we venture to explore my aging on my terms. One is not confidential because all humans perish and desire what is imperishable, but because we two dare to dwell on my experience of the perishable and the imperishable. For one is then assured of the importance of one's subject and hearing one developing that as one may not have developed it earlier to an attentive respondent increases that assurance. It is important to hear oneself and be heard by the other, to experience that we both dare to ask what is at stake for one and describe one's particulars without being explained in general terms. So, one is confidential for one's own sake because one feels that we are mutually answerable to account for one's particularities in their particularities.

Second, one is especially being confidential for one's own sake because of how the other receives and responds to one's particular story. We experience that we need to talk and make the other part of the talking, not to be explained and cleared, but to express and hear ourselves as well as to be heard, namely, to encounter the other's conduct in entertaining and answering one's telling. We are being confidential for our own sake not just by the other's words, but also by his intonation, mien, gestures and postures. For instance, the other's warm eyes when telling of my sorrow, the other's raised brows when telling of my mother's tenderness, and the other's half-open mouth when telling of my relations. The other expresses he understands and feels with one in his postures, gestures, mien, eyebrows, gaze, lips and words. We are confidential in ourselves by this responsiveness and receptivity that

embodies the other's embedded understanding of and feeling with one's story. One is being confidential for one's own sake by how the other takes in and meet with one's telling.

So, we are confidential for ourselves in the conversation as a whole because of our mutual response to our particular topic. We feel confidential generally in conversing and mean that the entirety of the conversation is confidential. Perhaps our confidence underlies all our doings and undergoings, including the words that we use. We can elaborate on this tenor of our confidential conversations and note several characteristics. Our confidential conversation is not momentary but lasts for a while. We may feel confidential in conversing now, were conversing an hour ago, or will be conversing next week. This may last for weeks or months. Yet, to converse confidentially not only takes time but also changes over time. Our confidence in conversing may moreover be strong or weak and may grow or diminish. We would not enter confidential conversation unless there was a degree of confidence, and we would not continue the conversation without a degree of confidence. But as long as we are confidential, we are inclined to converse. Saying "I feel for talking" to oneself or the other does not give one a reason for talking or one's reason for talking but expresses one's inclination and inclines one to talking rather than not talking. This inclination to converse confidentially shows itself in our facial and vocal expressions, and our manifest inclination to converse lasts as long as we are confidential and is as strong as our degree of being confidential. Thus, the tenor of our confidential conversations may be called a state or frame of mind.

Conversing confidentially is a state or frame of mind in that it is both conscious and pervasive. We are not confidential of our conversing when we are asleep or drowsy, but when and where we are alert, our confidentiality suffuses the conversation in the sense that it pervades us that converse. Although there are various forms of response in our experiences of conversing and we may each or both feel, say, tranquil or upset, cheerful or morose, jovial or bored, irritable, dejected or relaxed, the responsive experience that we mutually want to attune (at least) during a conversation is obviously confidential. We are affected by what we have felt or are feeling, what we have perceived or are perceiving, what we have thought or are thinking, what we have remembered or are remembering, what we have imagined or are imagining, what we have done or are doing, and what we wanted or wants, but confidentiality colours our entire experience. Feeling confidential may but need not have anything in particular as object in the conversation, and we show it in the private manners in which we share private matters, because our entire experience is affected at least through or throughout the conversation. Thus, our state or frame of mind, with our

lasting inclination to converse confidently as response to our experience, is a mood. We respond as guest and host alike to our experience of the conversation with a confidential mood.

In this section, we have reflected on our story of our fellow enquires into existential and ethical challenges. We have explicated conceptual connections to conclude that to converse confidently is to be in a trustful mood. For to converse confidentially is for a while to be affected and inclined to share private matters in private manners with a trusted other, and that which affects and inclines us for a while is a mood. We are affected and inclined to converse confidentially for the sake of mounting a challenge to our existence or ethos because of our mutual response to the particular topic. Our trustful mood may but need not have anything in particular in the conversation as object. It is what the conversation as a whole means to us through our mutual doings and undergoings. It is what we say and do or undergo together that maintains confidential conversation. It is not only our words but also our intonations, miens, gestures and postures that are confidential. Conversing confidentially is the outlook that prevails our fellow enquiry.

Researching Experiences of Confidential Conversation

Our experiences and reflections above show that we mutually converse confidentially on questions raised by our life and living. In this section, we wonder how we account for our becoming and remaining jointly confidential in existential and ethical conversation. We relate our reflections on our experiences of confidential conversation to the experimental theories that predominate among colleagues in conversational professions. Philosophical practitioners have hitherto paid scant attention to this (e.g. Raabe, 2014, p. 189-191), while experimental psychologists and psychotherapists standardly account for mutual feeling and understanding by an "inner" capacity behind "outer" behaviour. This "inner" ability to be confidential is either understood as the mind or as the brain. We thus arrive at two accounts in research related to confidential conversation, namely a theory of mind and a theory of mirror neurons. We argue in this section that these accounts misconceive being confidential into something "inner" behind "outer" conversation. We argue that conversing confidentially is neither "inner" nor "outer" but expressive behaviour. Thus, we clarify our practice of conversing confidentially on existential and ethical issues, and explain what colleagues have not understood or misunderstood of confidential conversation.

According to the first experimental account, the "inner" behind the "outer" behaviour is the mind (e.g. Premack & Woodruff, 1978; Frith, 2004;

Bateman & Fonagy, 2019).[5] The mind is our specific human "capacity to imagine that others think, feel, and suffer just as we do." (Bateman & Fonagy, 2019, p. xvi) But minds are "inner," the "emotions" and "understandings" of others are "hidden," and so "we humans cannot know for sure" the mind of others (Bateman & Fonagy, 2019, passim). Instead, we infer that others have minds, and such "mentalizing" or set of inferences is a "theory of mind." Thus, "individuals can be aware of other people's thoughts" and "feelings." (Bateman & Fonagy, 2019, p. 373) One starts to "access" one's "own internal and external states," and then proceeds to "making inferences on the basis of the external indicators of a person's mental states" (Bateman & Fonagy, 2019, p. 10). For example, when I am curious, my eyes are wide, when I am accepting, my brows are relaxed, and when I am considerate, my mouth is curved, so when his eyes are wide, he is curious, when his brows are relaxed, he is accepting, and when his mouth is curved, he is considerate. To be confidential, one must first be able to mentalize oneself, and then explain the movements of the other by one's hypothesis that the other has a trustworthy mind. So, guests talk privately because they infer that hosts have thoughts and feelings, and hosts respond personally because they infer that guests have thoughts and feelings. In confidential conversation, adequate mentalizing provides the "link between inner and outer reality" (Bateman, Fonagy, & Campbell, 2019a, p. 327), enables "collectively agreed imagination" and "in turn makes human cooperation possible" (Bateman, Fonagy, & Campbell, 2019b, p. 73). By mutually mentalizing one another sufficiently, we are able to trust one another and converse confidentially. Thus, our theories of inner minds behind outer behaviour enable us to talk on private matters in private manners.

According to the second experimental account, the "inner" behind the "outer" behaviour is the brain (e.g. G. Rizzolatti, Fadiga, Gallese, & Fogassi, 1996; Giacomo Rizzolatti & Sinigaglia, 2016; Mathon, 2013; Shafir,

[5] In opposition to "behaviorism" and in favor of "mentalism", psychologist David Premack and primatologist Guy Woodruff first developed this account on chimpanzees and then extended it to all kinds of "higher animals". Their now within psychological, behavioural, social and humanistic disciplines widely accepted theory of mind, they define as follows: "In saying that an individual has a theory of mind, we mean that the individual imputes mental states to himself and to others (either to conspecifics or to other species as well). A system of inferences of this kind is properly viewed as a theory, first, because such states are not directly observable, and second, because the system can be used to make predictions, specifically about the behavior of other organisms.' Premack 1978, p. 515; compare Call 2008.

2016).[6] "There is a growing consensus that addressing" brain processes such as mirror neurons is "a productive therapeutic approach." (Willer, 2014, p. 379) Mirror neurons are nerve cells that discharge when one performs an action or perceives another performing the same or similar kind of action. "The discovery of mirror neurons provides a new empirically based notion of intersubjectivity" namely "shared neural circuits." (Gallese, 2009, p. 523; similarly Gallese, 2011, p. 197) For instance, watching someone smile reassuringly, nod appreciatively or speak soothingly, "activates the same neurons of our brain that would fire if we were doing the same." (Gallese, 2009, p. 522; Iacoboni et al., 2005; Tettamanti et al., 2005) It is likewise "thanks to our mirror neurons we reproduce" another's "gesture in order to know it" (Gianni Falvo, 2018, p. xxxi). The mirroring mechanisms of our brains enable us "to share the meaning of actions, intentions, feelings, and emotions with others, thus grounding our identification with and connectedness to others." (Gallese, 2009, p. 520) So, in conversing confidentially, we entrust one another with private manners in private manners because the same neural circuits in the premotor cortex mirror each other's feelings, perceptions, thoughts, actions and intentions. One confides in the other because one's neurons mirror the other's being trustworthy, and the other's neurons mirror one's experience of being confidential. Thus, the brain knows that one can trust in and be confidential with the other.

Whether we account for the "inner" ability of confidential conversation in terms of the brain or of the mind, we will on both accounts maintain that the behaviour is "outer." The "inner" can trust and be confidential, while the "outer" conversation happens to be connected to the mind or the brain. To those espousing theories of mind or mentalizing, bodily postures, manual gesticulations and facial expressions are "external states" or "external

[6] Mirror neurons were first discovered by neurophysiologists Giacomo Rizzolatti, Vittorio Gallese and Leonardo Fogassi in the early1990s. This type of sensory-motor cell fires in the macaque monkey premotor cortex both when the monkey performs an action and when it observes a similar action made by another monkey or by an experimenter Rizzolatti 1996. The theory was later extended to other species. "Mirror neurons are a distinct class of neurons that discharge both when individuals perform a given motor act and when individuals observe another person per- forming a motor act with a similar goal. […] This statement becomes less surprising once it is acknowledged that the brain acts, first and foremost, as a planning and control system for organisms […] what is common to all kinds of mirror-based processing is that they may provide a route to knowledge of others, one which can be taken just by capitalizing on one's own motor or visceromotor representations." Rizzolatti 2016

indicators of a person's mental states" (Bateman & Fonagy, 2019, p. 10, similarly p. 330), while to those espousing a theory of mirror neurons, they are "just bodily movements" (Giacomo Rizzolatti & Sinigaglia, 2016, p. 758) as observed movements of another are "devoid of meaning for the observer." (Gallese, 2009a, p. 520-1) The utterances, tones, mouths, brows, eyes, gestures and carriages of those conversing are external indicators to which the internal designates meaning. The movements are causally related to the mind or the brain, but in themselves, they are mere motions from which another can reproduce or induce that one is confidential in conversing. The conversation happens to be connected to the "inner" capacity, but the "outer" behaviour is best explained by feeling confidential. The exchanges of confidences are outer effects of inner causes.

However, these accounts of an "inner" ability of being confidential do not cohere. First, both commit the fallacy – already identified by Aristotle (Aristotle, *DA* 408b11-14) – of predicating to a part what can only be predicated to a whole. It does not make sense to affirm or deny the meaning of "confiding," "trusting," "knowing," "understanding," "feeling," "responding" and so forth to the meaning of "brain" or "mind" but only to the meaning of "human being." We would obviously neither talk secretly nor walk briskly without sound minds and functioning brains, but minds and brains do neither walk nor talk: humans do. One can neither truly nor falsely say that brains or minds trust or are confidential, since such predicates only make sense of human beings. Second, both accounts of the "inner" ability assume that the meaning of "confidential" can initially be associated with one's own "mental representations" and consequently be assigned to others – though this was shown nonsensical almost a century ago (Austin, 1946; Merleau-Ponty 1945, p. 213-241; Ryle, 1949; Strawson, 1959, p. 15-59; Wittgenstein, 1953a, §§243-315; Hacker, 2018, esp. p. 45-56, p. 93-97, to all of which I am indebted). One cannot be said to be able to predicate confidentiality to oneself beforehand and to others afterwards, since there can (logically) be no criteria of identity for and comparison of one's mental representations of being confidential with one's current experience of being confidential. Third, it does not make sense to ascribe a theory of mind to chimpanzees and four-year old humans, since they cannot formulate hypothetico-deductive inferences. Although a few adult human beings can formulate a system of inferences, they have not mastered a theory but a practice of using "trust" and "confidential" first for the behaviour of others and then for themselves. Fourth, there are no criteria for identifying *this* mind as trustworthy and individuating *my* mind from other minds being confidential, since nothing counts for what minds say, do or undergo and no grounds make sense of attributing trust or confidence to minds. Fifth, mirror

neurons could logically only explain being confidential with someone having been correspondingly confidential, but obviously one can be confidential with someone who has not confided the same, and one can respond to someone who is confidential without having oneself confided the same. Sixth, mirror neurons can neither account for our being confidential before nor after our conversations. They could logically only explain what one is presently perceiving, but neither being retrospectively nor prospectively confidential in remembering or imagining conversations. So, these conceptual confusions imply that neither theory of an "inner" ability of being confidential cohere. Rather our theories go berserk with our practice.

We cannot, moreover, say that conversation is merely "outer." If our behaviour were barely "outer," then it would be a facade of bodily movements for the "inner." Yet, we readily use "confidential" for our conversations, since we see confidential postures, gestures and miens, hear confidential intonation, and understand exchanges of confidences. To be confidential is to express to another one's feeling and thinking on private matters in private manners, and sincerely expressing one's feeling and thinking *is* the feeling that is felt and the thinking that is thought. Expressions of confidentiality are, for instance, the guest's hopeful face, candid gaze, sensitive brows, firm mouth, clear tone, striking gesticulations, and serious talking. In this context, utterances are not sounds but expressions of privacy, secrecy or intimacy; tones are not vibrations but manifestations of hesitation, decision or trepidation; giggles are not clatters but displays of mirth, worry or timidity; cries are not noises but exhibitions of delight, grief or pain; tears are not drops but revelations of joy, sadness or pleasure; brows are not aggregates of hair but manifestations of joy, sorrow, shame, anxiety or resolution; motions are not movements but expressions of anger, conciliation, impatience or resignation, and so forth. It is moreover the host's behaviour in, for example, being adequately trained and tried, providing safe environments, appearing gently, gazing thoughtfully, smiling encouragingly, listening patiently, nodding reassuringly, winking knowingly, moving quietly, interjecting earnestly, asking solicitously, summarising carefully, paraphrasing rightly, and distinguishing readily that enables the guest to confide. In conversing confidentially, we both display what we feel and understand, and we mutually see, hear, remember, apprehend or imagine that we are being confidential. Our exchanges of confidences may evaporate, but we express, show and radiate confidence; we appear, look and sound confident, and our confidential alliance manifest itself. Our behaviours are not just bodily movements devoid or indicative of meaning, but real bodily manifestations displaying the meaning of being confidential with another. "The human body is the best picture of the human soul."

(Wittgenstein, 1953b, 4.25) "For by behavior the body talks," (Cicero, DE 3.59.222) None other than behaviour expressing confidentiality can logically be experienced.

So, conversing confidentially is neither "outer" nor "inner" but behaviour expressive of being confidential. This connection between the behaviour of conversing confidentially and the meaning of being confidential can be elaborated. Being confidential does not mean that one may both exchange confidences and not exchange confidences or may as well exchange confidences as not exchange confidences. We cannot say that being confidential may as well be shown in leaving the room, turning one's back, insisting of only talking of the weather or not talking at all, as remaining in the room, turning to the other and sharing private matters in private manners. Nor could we say that we are equally confidential whether the other clenches teeth in anger and wrinkles nose in disgust or nods reassuringly and listens patiently. Conversing confidentially and being confidential are not connected as smoke may or may not indicate fire and clouds may or may not indicate rain. Rather, the behaviour of conversing confidentially manifests the meaning of being confidential. The behaviour of conversing confidentially is not accidental but proper to the meaning of being confidential. Although it is conceptually possible that some who are confidential do not converse confidentially, it is conceptually necessary that most who are confidential converse confidentially since otherwise the concept of being confidential would have lost its purpose. If no-one nowhere never were conversing confidentially, the word "confidential" would have no use. But being confidential, we properly converse confidentially, namely by showing, displaying or manifesting confidential behaviour, including verbal behaviour. Thus, the connection between confidential conversation with being confidential is not causal but conceptual, not inferential but intuitive, not empirical but semantical. Confidential behaviour, including talking, is what being confidential properly means.

However, using "confidential" of oneself and of another differ fundamentally. Although one first learnt the meaning of being confidential from the behaviour of others and then applied it to oneself, one expresses one's own confidentiality but ascribes confidentiality to others. One's own behaviour is not one's ground for but expresses one's being confidential, whereas experiencing another's behaviour is one's ground for the other being confidential. In a given conversation, the behaviours, including the verbal behaviours, of another, are constitutive criteria – logically or semantically good evidence – as opposed to inductive criteria for the other being confidential. So, we use personal predicates asymmetrically of ourselves and others. And thus, we may mistake the conversation of the other as

confidential when it is polite, self-deceived or dissimulated, but then the meaning of the behaviour is not confidential, and the behaviour shows this. Since we may mistake behaviours for confidentiality, we may (invalidly) conclude that behavioural manifestations of confidentiality and feeling confidential coincide; that we may infer, induce or project confidentiality of another. However, we fail in ascribing confidentiality to another not because the inference is improbable, but because the meaning of human behaviour is opaque. If one ignores this logical asymmetry of predicating confident, confidence and confidential to others and oneself, one may be tempted to assume that such predicates terms are used of an "inner" ability behind the "outer" ability.

The experimentalist misconceptions of the "inner" as well as the "outer" can partly be explained by the history of ideas. Any experimental research proceeds more or less reflectively from conceptions, and if it assumes misconceptions, then experiments are likely to be mistaken. The above conceptual confusions are accepted as empirical truths because of the enormous influence of the modern metaphor of consciousness as "inner" and body as "outer" (e.g. Descartes, 1644, 1.9-11). But most psychologists, psychotherapists and neuroscientists show themselves ignorant of their unfortunate heritage. For instance, David Premack studied philosophy under the positivists Herbert Feigl and Wilfred Sellars, and these together with W. V. O. Quine maintained that mental attributes such as trust and confidential are theoretical attributes – part of "folk psychology" – so that predicating such attributes to others presupposes an explanatory hypothesis (Sellars, 1956; Quine, 1960). This is a variation of George Berkeley's theme in his analogical argument from one's own mind to that of others (Berkeley, 1710, §115). Another trait in the Cartesian-Lockean tradition influences the theory of mirror neurons. Although Vittorio Gallese notes that "Lipps's notion of Einfühlung closely matches Freud's" and is "characterized in terms of inner imitation" (2009, 525), he seems ignorant that Lipps's antecedence depends on his annotations to the German translation of Hume's *Treatise of Human Nature* (Hume, 1739). This account requires that one imitate one's own confiding as the other's confiding while the other's confiding is not one's own confiding. Although the conceptual confusions of the Cartesian-Lockean legacy of experimental psychology have repeatedly been identified from its inception (Kierkegaard, 1844; Stein, 1922; Binswanger, 1962; Heidegger, 1987; Merleau-Ponty, 1945; Wittgenstein, 1980a, 1980b; Ryle, 1949, p. 301-311; Boss, 1957; MacIntyre, 1958/2004), the clarifications have sadly gone unheard generally. Inadequate reflection on the history of the ideas presumed by psychologists, psychotherapists and neuroscientists in their experiments explains

these conceptual confusions of causal connections between "inner" and "outer." But we need not repeat the blunders of the past if we give up these Cartesian-Lockean misconceptions.

In this section, we have related our narrative of and reflection on our confidential conversations to predominant experimental theories. The standard account explains either the mind or the brain as the "inner" ability of being confidential behind the "outer" conversation. We have argued that this is not based on evidence but on misconception of both the "inner" and the "outer" since these notions do not make sense. For the "outer" is not facade and the "inner" is not hidden, but our conversations show our confidentiality. We know that conversing confidentially is neither "inner" nor "outer" but manifest behaviours. We need to bring theory back to the practice where we begin our research. The above narrative and reflection remind us of what we already know but forget when we are terrorized by theories.

Improving confidential conversation

It takes courage to live. For we will not achieve some of our goods without boldly facing our challenges. We may deny or acknowledge our challenges, but if we acknowledge them, we may then either meet them on our own or with another. If we chose to confide in another, we face the additional challenge of perhaps losing the esteem of the other or of ourselves. Yet, by committing ourselves to another, we not only express ourselves but also experience the responses of the other, so that we can enquire together into the meaning of the experience and may gain deeper understanding than on our own. To exchange confidences means then to entrust and endure conversation about our common challenges in life and living. Thus, we commonly confide one another courageously.

This chapter establishes by reflective practice research that not only what we say but also what we do and undergo together enables us to confide our challenges. Our intricate interaction inclines us to inform one another of our intimate issues and our mutual expressive conducts embolden confidence and empower confidentiality. In practice, we do not misunderstand ourselves as "inner" minds or brains behind "outer" facades of our talking, but understand the confidential brows, lips, eyes, mouths, tones, gestures and words. All these express how we are affected and inclined to cooperate, and our shared experience enables, emboldens and empowers us to converse confidentially. Thus, trusting to talk together.

There are important implications for improving confidential conversation We need further research into the practice of confiding ourselves in conversation. Predominant theories mislead us to misconceive ourselves as "inner"

and our conversations as "outer," while our traditional practices are neither "inner" nor "outer" but expressive of our being mutually confidential. Yet, our expressive behaviour in exchanging confidences is commonly only partly voluntary. Although we, for example, console intentionally, we do not deliberately display most of our responses to another's existential or ethical issues. Nor can we simulate or manipulate behaviour into confidential ones. So we need further practice research into the partly voluntary behaviour expressive of being confidential not only to better understand those that guest our practices and those that study with us but also ourselves. What is it to be increasingly receptive to our mutual experience and appropriately responsive insofar as these are voluntary? How good it would be if we all became more enabled to tackle our challenges in life and living together, being and becoming more receptive to the expressive mood of entrusting one another with our confidences. To give and take, to entrust and endure our fellow human challenges. Not judging but supporting one another, emboldening one another to be truthful and trustworthy. Guests would then become confident and confidential as hosts show themselves trustworthy by the expressive behaviour of their mood.[7]

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Chapter 12

Writing expressively for one's well-being: partly constituting oneself through self-reflection

Sebastian Rehnman[1]

Abstract:

Journaling for one's wellness is an ancient philosophical exercise and a contemporary psychological technique. Although scholarship has since the 1970s recaptured philosophy as a way of life and since the 1980s produced a psychology of therapeutic writing, the relation between the diarist's experience and the diary remains unclear. This chapter demonstrates from my own experiences of and reflections on journaling that our self-conceptions do not only describe but also define ourselves, so that we partly constitute ourselves by the conceptions in which we conceive ourselves. However, the chapter contends that we misconceive ourselves through contemporary psychological techniques of journaling. For these conceive that "outer" writing and "inner" experience are connected empirically, and that well-being is resolved pain and derived pleasure. The chapter argues instead that the connection between writing and experience is conceptual, and that well-being is leading a worthy and worthwhile life. Thus, the chapter is very important for all who seek to develop themselves through journaling not only to live a pleasant life but a happy life.

Keywords

Journaling; self-knowledge; self-consciousness; Scriptotherapy; therapeutic writing; expressive writing

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Expressive writing

When we are ill, we cannot keep silent but must express ourselves in cries, words or writing. Health remains silent, says a Swedish proverb, which seems to encapsulate a universal human experience of expressing ourselves rather about illness than wellness, misery rather than happiness. Each affliction has its own scream, even if it is not the *Scream* of Edvard Munch. There is, moreover, a seemingly universal human experience that in expressing our illness, we may be better or even become well. For thousands of years, we humans have practiced writing, writing ourselves to wellness or even happiness. We want to express ourselves so as to be well and happy.[2]

The ancient tradition of *philosophia* means to pursue our wellness in illness, happiness in misery, through comprehensive understanding (Hadot, 1995b; Nussbaum, 1994; Cooper, 2012; Sharpe & Ure, 2021). Our sources begin with Socrates's heeding the call of self-knowledge in treating himself and others with fine words (Plato, *Charmides*157a).[3] These exchanges prompt for living, since one who "knows what is right, fine and good […] treasures up reminders [*hypomnémata*] for himself" (Plato, *Phaedrus* 276d). This longing for wisdom continued to be practiced through exercises, since habituation is more powerful than instruction (Musonius Rufus 5-6). These exercises included the genre of self-exploration, common but diverse in antiquity (Eichele, 1998; Foucault, 1983; Fuhrmann, 1967; Montanari, 2008). For instance, Epictetus suggests that "lovers of wisdom ought to meditate, to write each day and to exercise themselves in those" concerns they can master (D 1.1.25, cp. 3.24.103, 4.6.33-35).[4] However, since these *hypomnema* or *commentaria* were aimed for personal rather than public use, they are usually lost. One famous exception is, of course, Marcus Aurelius's exhortations to himself: "remind yourself […] and begin once to be human while you

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[2] Munch expressed the origin of the Scream in his journal of 1892: "I stood trembling of anxiety and I felt as a great infinite scream through nature." Quoted in (Eggum 1990 221). The Swedish proverb goes back to the poem "The Yeoman" (1835) by the poet, historian and philosopher Erik Gustaf Geijer:

"Var plåga har sitt skri för sig,
Men hälsan tiger still;
Därför man talar ej om mig,
Som vore jag ej till."
I quote from (Geijer 1999 13)

[3] Greek: *therapeúesthai ten psyché tous lógous kaloús.*

[4] Notice the connection of the verbs *meletáo*, *grápho* and *gymnázo*.

live." (11.18.5) Further examples are Seneca (55, 3.36.2-3), Michel de Montaigne (1595, 1.8, 1.50, 2.6, 3.11), Etty Hillesum (1986, 4 August 1941), Ludwig Wittgenstein (1998), and Michael McGhee (2000). This ancient practice of journaling seeks to form the journal-keeper through recognition and remembrance of what is worthy and worthwhile. It is "an ethical model" to live "as a practitioner of the ever-fragile *exercise* of wisdom." (Hadot, 1995a, p. 211) By attending to oneself, meditating through writing and reading on one's life and living, this tradition promises that one can partly mould oneself into what one deliberately desires to be. The journal is a means to pursue one's well-being. (Another philosophical exercise is the dialogue, which is investigated in the previous chapter (Rehnman, 2023).)

Self-expressive writing has also been part of the development of experimental and theoretical psychotherapy since its beginning in the late 1800s (Lepore & Smyth, 2002; Gladding, 2016; Moy, 2017). Clinicians advocate committing distresses to writing in order to attain health. Perhaps influenced by Freud's appreciation of written memories and imaginations (e.g. 1908), Gordon W. Allport's insistence on individual records of experiences (1942) and Ira Progoff's enthusiasm for personal integration through explorative workbooks (1992), most research has since the 1980s followed James W. Pennebaker to quantify and compute stressful thinking and feeling (e.g. Pennebaker, 2018; Pennebaker & Francis, 1996; Adams, 2011; Riordan, 1996; D. M. Sloan & Marx, 2004; Denise M. Sloan & Marx, 2018). These studies highlight that writing personally in a laboratory about traumas crystallizes feelings and collects thoughts, so as to reduce stress, improve immunity, lessen medication, lower blood pressure, decrease depression, improve grades, become employed and strengthen relations. Thus, this research measures small improvements in "both physical and psychological well-being" (Denise M. Sloan & Marx, 2018; D. M. Sloan & Marx, 2004). Although clinicians cannot establish the connection between brief writing techniques and the relief of traumas, they seek to correlate therapeutic compositions with neurological functioning and predict positive individual outcomes. Scriptotherapy promises cheap and accessible treatment of illnesses.

In this chapter, I argue that reflecting on one's experience through a journal partly constitutes one's self-conception. To show that reflective writing in part constitutes oneself, we need specific stories for specific reflections and specific investigations. I use the reflective diary in practicing philosophy personally, in counselling philosophy relationally and in teaching philosophy professionally. Here, I have chosen to tell one experience of illness in order to have a specific period and a specific topic to

relate specifically to other scholarship. In the next section, I tell my story while I reflect on it in the following section, and then relate the two sections to the final one on existent scholarship. Throughout, I focus on the relation between our conceptions of expressive writing and of well-being. In this way, I research my practice of journaling.

Experiencing expressive writing

In this section, I relate my experiences of journaling over six weeks of illness. I have chosen this not only to demarcate but also to compare with trajectories of writing for one's well-being/happiness in the final section. I retell the story of my spontaneous scribblings with quotations from my diary at the time. Since the entries are not a story and I often repeat myself in my diary, I organize the material in this section thematically. I outline the course and relate my senses of illness and wellness to my overall understanding of life, together with the place of journaling in such an understanding. Through these parts, my sense of being well appears most starkly in my sense of being ill. I thus emerge through my practice as journal-keeper.[5]

In early December a couple of years ago, I was taken seriously ill as the lower part of my abdomen was inflamed for three weeks. To set the stage, after three days of "wallowing in sweat, pain and distress," my wife must drive me to the health centre, where a nurse leads me through the corridor to a bed and tends to my blood pressure, temperature and urine. My physician examines me and worries that my blood pressure is very high and that tests show a dangerous rise of protein plasma. He deliberates whether to send me immediately to the emergency ward for intravenous antibiotics or charge me with complete rest at home with very powerful antibiotics and seek emergency care if things get worse. Following a few days of rest, I contact the telephone services about the seeming side effects of the antibiotics and mention that I sense pains to the left in my chest. The nurse promptly orders me to the emergency ward for a suspected heart attack, but the examinations show no trace of that, so I am sent home again. My troubles do not end there, though. My general practitioner calls me ten days later when cultures show my bacteria to be resistant, and so I need another course of even stronger antibiotics. Further bacteria cultures, telephone

[5] In telling my story, I checked my diary against the chronology of the brief journals of my general practitioner and the emergency staff. Although it seems rather positivist to call such a chronology "objective" (Wengraf, 2001, p. 236-239), there is an important distinction between first-person and second- or third-person tellings.

contacts and medical appointments confirm that the new antibiotics work on the infection of my urinary tract and inflammation of my renal pelvis and kidneys. In mid-January, I am cleared of acute pyelonephritis and renal failure.

Being ill, I experience as foreign to me. Since I am in good shape and hardly ever catch a cold, I am used to being well. Except for recurring migraines, I rarely keep a diary of bodily symptoms, but something being wrong presses itself on me, and I note: "May be best to write down some bodily phenomena in remembrance." During the following weeks, I record manifestations that I have never journaled before. My sense of being ill first comes to expression on a Monday morning: "Not at all well. Slept very badly. Strangely cold yesterday afternoon and especially in the evening; could not get warm. […] High fever. Constipation. Migraine since Friday evening. Palpitation? Feeble. Is my so-called general health poor?" I register that I run high temperatures, get recurring headaches, sleep with persistent disturbances, sweat profusely at night, suffer severe pains in my flanks, and have prolonged constipation, while my reddened glans burn, my swollen shaft aches, its root hurts, my urethra smarts in the all too frequent emptyings of my infected bladder, and I notice the pressure in urinating. Recording all these strange experiences in my loins changes me: "As male to dwell, to allow the name 'pelvic floor' gain reference through the pangs that any pregnant woman seems to go through." I learnt most of the words before my illness, but now they also point to me, my body parts and my bodily sensations. So, journaling symptoms is odd to me, but it expresses my being ill.

My being ill expresses itself in my feeling ill. I feel not just my sensations of pain but also the various emotions and moods I go through during my illness. I wonder how my feelings are "showing my vulnerability and susceptibility and how I answer, respond, to my susceptibility and vulnerability." I feel worry, sorrow, fear, patience, endurance, thankfulness, fatigue, equanimity, good-humour and even cheerfulness. My chief worry and sorrow is "to die prematurely or through illness become unable of self-realization in fellowship." I note that being ill "releases worry and sorrow. Am I or will I be ill again? Is the prostate underlying? Will I die prematurely? Will I be deprived of the development of our children and my life with Linda? The sea? Was this all?" I feel that what I tell myself and others of life is as yet untold. As I wait on my own for the test results at the emergency ward, I "imagine I have an hour, or one and half, in preparation of heart attack, surgery alone, possible awakening and possible half a year's convalescence." These are my fears. But in addition, I find myself:

> Very grateful for the care, nursing and consideration of Linda, the nurses and the doctor. Yes, for medical service. Without antibiotics I may have died of urinary infection and pyelitis. Yes, just think, to be able to live, even usually being well. Life, the real life that so often seems to pass us by.

This emotion recurs repeatedly: "Thankful to be alive. For what I do and can do here and now as opposed to what could have been my there and then." My emotion seems sometimes to change into a mood: "Feverish night and day. Take it curiously with equanimity and good-humour. Bethinks my vulnerability and dependence on others. I have such a lovely wife and lovely children. Thankfulness!" Such expressions increase as sufferings decrease. As I begin to recover from my infection, I feel better or even well and other emotions come to expression: "I am glad that I may spend my life with what I am doing." This emotion of joy on becoming well makes me ponder my state: "well-favoured, happy to be able to sit, to cultivate myself, to write and research." What I feel shows what I care for and what concerns me. My emotions and moods follow my situation, so that in approaching illness and death, I feel worry and sorrow, but in leaving illness and nursing behind, I feel gratitude, and when approaching wellness and life, I feel joy and happiness. So, my feeling ill blends at least sensations, emotions and moods.

I relate feeling ill to "the real life that so often seems to pass us by." I wonder whether we do not appreciate what it is to be well until we are ill. My entries respond to what I value, and I express my illness in broader brooding:

> Talked about life, death, sex, pain and disease. Perhaps diseases connected to our power of reproduction particularly challenge our lives and remind us of death, since our sexual maturity is the summit of our bodily development and reproduction its realization in the potentially deepest human fellowship.

I also muse on the life and living my illness challenges when I am able to take a slow and short stroll: "Wondered as I walked by lit houses whether they have it all and that is all. To possess, acquire, consume and enjoy consumption, acquisition and possessions." I do not feel ill merely in terms of pain and disease but also in terms of what I desire to be part of my life from beginning to end. I do not want to be ill but to be well, and this being well, I conceive not merely in terms of pleasure, health, bodily maturity and enjoyment of possessions but also in terms of becoming myself in a community of likeminded. It is such a life, such living, that I take may escape us until we are ill.

This connects with my consideration of what it is to be well in being ill. Being well and being ill are obviously relative to being or living, so I write particularly and repeatedly about what illness means to wellness:

> To suffer well. What is that? To suffer patiently, persistently, equanimously. Is that to compose myself in and through my understanding of the human good? That the good is more or higher than the absence of aches and pains? To be fully humane is for me to fear illness and death for the right reasons, with the right strength, in the right ways and in the right circumstances. To maintain this in and through suffering is to suffer well. Perhaps suffering can inform and form, yes, at best transform a right understanding of my good, of what it is to live well.

To maintain this, I journal how to feel, think and act:

> My thoughts, feelings and choices yield from the unyieldingness of suffering, but it is easier for me not to yield under my sufferings if my thoughts, feelings and choices recognize the unyieldingness of suffering. To live, or imagine suffering thus, can enable me to live well, to focus, bear in mind, the essential. But diversions and trivialities entice.

This understanding and recognition of illness leads me to

> New thoughts: I may not only be unduly attached to things, external goods, but also to myself, my life and my living. That death does not wrench more nor less. So to live with death and so to die to life. That death is annihilation of vice and life is realization of virtue. Ungraspable grasp! Inconceivable conception! […] In life the goal is transformation of soul and in death transformation of body. Peace of mind comes from living well and perhaps we can then die well. […]

I conceive of my illness in relation to wellness and understand that to be well while I am ill is (partly) to suffer patiently, persistently and equanimously. It is still ill to suffer, but I can suffer ill, namely, in being impatient, indolent and distempered. Illness and death are still fearful, but I can fear them for the wrong reasons, in wrong proportions, in the wrong ways and wrong circumstances. I experience that patience, perseverance, equanimity and calmness empower me to be myself, while impatience, indolence, distemperedness and agony fail me. Good traits enliven me whereas bad traits deaden me. That is what I mean by being well in being ill.

I seek then to comprehend my illness and wellness in terms of character, virtue and vice. I repeatedly write to grasp myself by considering the beginning and end of my life together with its parts, but in addition, I probe this wholeness:

> To consider existence, my existence, as a whole: what is that? Intricate. Unfathomable. *That*, yes, is it consideration of *that*? To ponder, attend, consider, reflect *that* I am rather than *how* I am or *how* things are with me? Perhaps my inconceivable and inexpressible existence cannot be further conceived and expressed: contemplate *that* you are! Do not attempt to explain *how* you are or not, nor *how* things are with you or not, but seek to understand *that* you are. […]

This comprehensive understanding I long for, I call the virtue of wisdom as it empowers living as a whole.

> To practice philosophy is not a profession, but a way of life in pursuit of wisdom. To lead one's life in pursuit of wisdom implies acting, feeling, perceiving and understanding, not only occasionally but also dispositionally. To gain, develop and deepen a disposition of pursuing wisdom: dispositions to act, feel, perceive and understand in chasing after wisdom.

However hard it may be for me to conceive and express my whole existence, I seek to consider and contemplate *that* I am rather than *how* I am in order to be well while I am ill. I seek to dispose all my experiencing by and for this comprehensive understanding of life. For I believe the point of such virtues as patience and perseverance is wisdom, and the point of wisdom is such moral virtues. To long for wisdom, traits such as patience and perseverance are needed, but perseverance and patience are also needed to long for wisdom. Longing for wisdom, I take it to be well when all is not well, to be happy in misery.

To sustain this pursuit of wisdom during my illness, I must reflect on myself. As wisdom would encompass my feeling, perceiving, thinking, remembering, imagining, acting, desiring and so forth, I need to ponder all those ways of my experiencing.

> To compose oneself, to compose myself, to dwell, to linger at what I sense, feel, perceive and think, yes, perhaps desire and want. To reflect, relate to what I am in my being and becoming, what I have been, is and will be. Stillness, presence, tranquillity of mind. Coming to myself in attempting to become what I am, my particularity in my particular behaviours in my particular circumstances to which my particular fellow human beings belong. Become what you are. To reflect on – realizing – what it is to love my destiny, where and when I find myself. Necessity and possibility in actuality. What I must and what I can in my self-realization, the necessary and the possible that realizes myself.

This is demanding, so I encourage myself: "Take courage in being receptive, courageously receptive and receptively courageous." That is, the "courage to meet myself in writing or talking." In order to further

such self-reflection, I journal "not to perform an action but to exercise a readiness for action. Disposition rather than occasion, character rather than circumstance." So, I attend to all my ways of experience in pursuit of wisdom. "I am glad that at least the thought of ranking my behaviours in relation to my one true good recurs. Hopefully this attention, reflection, consideration is a step or a means to the goal." But that is more easily said than done: "Oh, for not only writing but also living in that way!" So, reflecting on my feeling, perceiving, thinking, remembering, imagining, acting and wanting is hard, but I long for a comprehensive understanding of my life and living. My journaling is a way of sustaining this pursuit of wisdom during my illness. "It is in and through language that I reflect on myself more or less expressly and expressively."

In this section, I have told a story from my diary when I was seriously ill. Over the course of my disease, I journal my deepest feeling and understanding of life and death as well as of being ill and being well. The experience of not being well is strange to me, and I record my feelings of sensation, emotion and mood. To be ill and to suffer well depend, for me, on exercising patience, endurance and equanimity as well as longing for wisdom. In this reflective journaling is a way of sustaining the pursuit of wisdom. Such is my practice as a reflective diarist during my illness.

Reflecting on expressive writing

Rereading my diary and retelling the course of my illness makes me wonder how I managed to conceive of myself as I did, and I even doubt that I would be able to do so again. Yet I believe my ability can be traced through my telling and comes through by reflection. In this section, I ponder my story of being well in being ill. I argue that my frank exploration of my experience shows that my evaluative concepts cleared in writing and partly constitute my experience of being ill and being well, being me and being myself. The telling contains the reasons to my making of my illness. I proceed from a couple of early instances of awareness and elucidate these experiences. Thus, this section establishes what is at stake in the story.

My story begins with my awareness *that* something is wrong but not *what* is wrong with me: what does this experience mean? Several phenomena receive my attention over some time, but three early instances of awareness stand out. First, I am aware that my overall condition is bad. I note feeling cold, aches and pains, especially the increasing severity of pain in my flanks, so I am conscious of being ill. These sensations catch and hold my attention; I dwell on them, and illness dawns on me. Second, I apply illness for the first time to my own pelvic floor. Acute pyelonephritis and

renal failure had meaning for me earlier, but now I realize that the public and common meaning I have already mastered apply to myself. Third, I become aware that recognition of my suffering partly changes my suffering. Suffering is what I undergo, but I may undergo suffering in various moods and with various emotions. When I become conscious of my emotions and moods, they do not catch and hold my attention but crystalize as I dwell on and realize what they are. These instances then stand out in making me aware of my illness. Having my attention caught and held by sensations, applying words of disease and experiencing suffering variously is in part what it means for me to be ill. This is my realization of illness.

My consciousness of illness takes me in and takes over me. Becoming conscious of illness depends on the illness one becomes conscious of, but whatever the illness is, one does not succeed in becoming but proceeds in being conscious of it. My consciousness of being ill is not the kind of consciousness I may lose and recover in high fever, but the kind of consciousness that is the result of aches and pains in my flanks catching and holding my attention. Consciousness of illness is what occurs, happens or is given to me, so that I know (among other things) that I must go to the health centre. Being conscious of illness is not what I achieve but receive, namely recognize, reflect and realize as opposed to what my doctor and nurse may discover, discern and detect. Yet, being conscious of illness, I can then choose to pay or give attention to what I know beforehand in my feeling, perceiving, thinking, remembering, imagining, acting and wanting. I am already well aware of where my genitals and kidneys are; pyelitis weighs in on me, and I take it into account in my decisions and manners of acting; and mortality is before my mind but upon consideration, my mood is equanimous or cheerful. So, knowledge of myself and my experience is receptive and possessive, namely neither achieving but receiving nor attaining but retaining knowledge of myself. It is not passivity but possession of what is true of me and reception of what I experience. Thus, I am taken by my consciousness of illness.

To realize that I am ill is to become and remain conscious of illness. It is part of specifically human consciousness. Almost all animals are either conscious or unconscious in that they sometimes wake and sometimes sleep, and they may lose and recover consciousness in high fever, but only humans may be specifically aware of themselves. For I cannot only recognize my reflection in a mirror as dolphins, elephants and chimpanzees can, but also recognize my reflection in a language. I am able not only to see myself ill but to say myself ill. My insight into illness is not sight into myself, into my pelvis or whatever, but to say how I am. It is not introspection but expression. Without mastery of the personal pronouns “I”, “me”, “my”

and "myself," I cannot (logically) be self-conscious. Unless I have learnt the meaning of personal verbs such as "hurt", "suffer", "glad" "depressed" and "patient", I cannot be conscious of my sensations, emotions, moods and traits. Without mastery of temporal expressions, I cannot feel grateful for yesterday's nursing, content now that things are on balance all right, fear of deterioration tomorrow, and hope of recovery next week. In short, without mastery of language, I cannot realize what and how I am experiencing. It is in and through words that I can be conscious, aware, attend, grasp, apprehend, notice, mark, and recognize my illness and wellness in a specifically human way. My specific human self-consciousness and self-reflection is thus expressible in language.

Language, moreover, enables me to reason with myself about illness and wellness, misery and happiness. I can assess, deliberate, evaluate and probe myself and my experience in words. As a person, I cannot only feel, perceive, think, remember, imagine, act and desire, but also have reasons for my feeling, perceiving, thinking, remembering, imagining, acting and desiring as well as reason about my reasons for feeling, perceiving, thinking, remembering, imagining, acting and desiring. I reason about pain in my flanks, fear of death, sight of neighbours, notion of medication, recollection of sailing, imagination of patience, washing of myself and desire of being well. In all this reasoning, I weigh different considerations, examine various alternatives and decide what to do or undergo in my situation. In order for me to feel, perceive, think, remember, imagine, act and desire for reasons of illness and wellness, I must be able to answer questions such as "Why?" or "How come?", and this presupposes mastery of the use of "because", "since" or "therefore" together with the meaning of giving reasons. I can only act, be affected, want and think for reasons insofar as I can reason, and to be able to reason and reason about my reasons supposes that I can give reasons for or against my being ill or well. Only if I have learnt to give reasons for illness and wellness can I reflect and be conscious of my reasons of illness and wellness. In this self-conscious and self-reflective way, I reason about being ill and well, miserable and happy.

The realization that takes hold of me is obviously evaluative. Mastery of language enables me to express for myself and others innumerable goals, and this gives me freedom. I can evaluate what goals I should or should not pursue and for what reasons. I assess myself ill rather than well, and my sense of being ill not only diverges from but also connects with my sense of being well, and these conceptions connect with many other conceptions. I conceive of myself as ill and well in connection with conceiving ache, pain, displeasure, pleasure, worry, sorrow, joy, thankfulness, cheerfulness, dejection, equanimity, patience, impatience, endurance,

indolence, distempered, real versus apparent goods, external versus internal goods, diversions, composures, trivialities, essentials, self-realization, self-deprivation, loneliness, fellowship, virtue, vice, bad, good, misery, and happiness. These are all evaluative concepts and of several kinds. Early on, I conceive of myself ill in merely functional and hedonic terms, but later also in ethical and sapiential terms. My evaluation proceeds in terms of abdominal pains and genital function over possession and consumption to the formation of character and the love of wisdom, so my evaluative concepts are thick, explicit and elaborate realizations. From illness to wellness and, in turn, with their interconnected evaluative concepts, I conceive myself. Without such evaluative conceptions, I do not and cannot conceive myself ill or well, miserable or happy.

My evaluative concepts soak up and set up my experience. What I mean by being ill and by being well partly makes my experience into what it is. For I cannot conceive of myself ill or well without conceptions of illness and wellness, misery and happiness. How I conceive of myself and my experience – my sense of illness, wellness, misery and happiness – I have in part mastered through my history. I learnt then not theories but practices of the meanings of experience: feeling, perceiving, thinking, remembering, imagining, acting and desiring. There are, of course, theoretical concepts of my body parts and their functions – my doctor hypothesized urinary infection while my nurse supposed heart attack – and statements involving these can be verified or falsified independent of my consent. But the concepts by which I conceive of myself as ill and well, miserable and happy, are not hypothetical but fundamental, so that in conceiving myself, they do not only explain but also express my experience. I do not journal my symptoms to explain to myself that I am ill and that to be well differs, but to express my illness and what my wellness is. I do not advance a theory that may be verified or falsified of myself, but a practice that may amount to understanding, innocence or deception of myself. My entries do not stand to me as a photograph of me in my sick bed may stand to me, but they stand for *me*: they express me, manifest my feeling of illness and display my desire for wellness. The meanings of the words by which I conceive of myself as ill or well, miserable or happy, in order to reflect on myself, do not only describe but also partly define my experience. So, the connection between my reflections on myself and myself is not causal but conceptual; the conceptions do not coincide with but constitute my experience. I do not discover that my experiences and my expressions correlate empirically, but I have formed (and may inform, reform or transform) my experiences by my expressions connecting semantically. My experiences and expressions are not accidentally but properly connected. Conceiving myself ill or

well does not only describe but also define, not merely delineate but also determine my experience of misery and happiness. In being conscious of, reflecting on and assessing myself, I conceive of myself in such basic ways that I in part constitute myself and my experience.

I become more receptive and retentive of these partly self-constitutive concepts through journaling. For in writing, I exercise my abilities and inclinations to recognise and recollect myself. The many meanings of my experience connect and consolidate in formulating my entries. My aches and pains dawn on me as I scribble; my emotions crystalize as I scrawl; my moods clear as I doodle; and character traits appear as I ponder. I note the sharpness of the pain in my urethra, my thankfulness for being served breakfast, the appraisal of my worry, the severity of my dreaded loss of near and dear, my cheerfulness in being able-bodied, the happiness of the worthy exercise of my powers with others, the benefits of moments of perseverance, the puzzle of the fickleness of existence and so forth. By relating repeatedly and repeatedly relating what I spontaneously as well as deliberately feel, perceive, think, remember, imagine, act and desire, I become more attentive to my experience. I am, through my mastery of language, able and inclined to be conscious of myself, so I seek to exercise my reflective disposition to understand myself and my reasons for feeling, perceiving, thinking, remembering, imagining, acting and desiring. Through my entries, I seek to be increasingly receptive to and retentive of the expressions that not only describe but also define my experiences. Knowing myself cannot be reduced to a body of entries, but I write in order to learn how to know myself. My skill in expressing my experience may improve with practice.

In this section, I have reflected on the story of the course of my illness. I considered how I realized being ill and how human self-consciousness involves mastery of language to express one's experience. My expressions for my experience enable me to reason and to evaluate my experience. The concepts by which I express my experience are so basic that without them, I cannot conceive myself, and so they not only partly describe but also partly define my experience. My experience of illness is partly constituted by my evaluative concepts. The vocabulary that I have mastered partly makes my experiences of being ill and becoming well into what they are. Writing on my illness for wellness implies concepts that are so fundamental to understanding myself that they in part constitute myself. They are partly self-constitutive.

Researching expressive writing

In the previous sections, I have told a story of my journaling during a course of disease and reflected on how I constitute my feeling ill and feeling well partly by my conceptions of wellness and illness. In this section, I connect

that to related research. Although journaling is an ancient philosophical practice, contemporary philosophers generally neglect it (for exceptions, see Buzaré, 2011; and McGhee, 2000). Many health care professionals maintain that therapeutic writing yields "self-understanding", "self-reflection", "self-awareness" or "insight" and personal as well as professional development (e.g. Adams, 2011, p. 70, 74; Bolton, 2014, p. 14; Bolton, Field, & Thompson, 2006; S. T. Gladding & Drake Wallace, 2018; Moy, 2017; Sargunaraj, Kashyap, & Chandra, 2021), but do not account for how expressing one's experience tends to well-being. "The field needs much more research to determine whether writing our problems actually leads to resolution, and if so, how." (Adams, 2011, p. 77) In this section, I argue that much scholarship conflates at least two issues. First, I argue that colleagues commonly mistake the relation between expression and experience to be coincidental or factual rather than essential or conceptual, and that they do so because they suppose experience is "inner" while writing is "outer." Second, I argue that scholars generally misconceive the happiness to which expressive writing tends in terms of resolved pain and derived pleasure.

Experimental research on expressive writing assumes that experience and expression in fact often coincide. As smoke may or may not indicate fire and clouds may or may not indicate rain, so writing and experience may be connected. An enormous number of experiments have been devoted to explaining why expressions and experiences happen to be connected in writing. For instance, James W. Pennebaker maintains that "a computer program" established "that people revealed parts of their personalities, social behaviors, thinking styles, and social connections through their word use." (2018, p. 227) Richard Riordan contends that a theory of the usefulness of scriptotherapy can be deduced from "empirical evidence" and "measurable changes" (1996, p. 263, 266; similarly Adams, 2011, p. 71, 77). Gladding and Drake Wallace take courage from "a growing body of [statistical] research" (S. T. Gladding & Drake Wallace, 2018, p. 389), while Sargunaraj, Kashyap and Chandra seek to alleviate "the dearth of evidence" (2021). So, provided that expression may not be connected with experience, researchers seek to prove their relation in writing and discover the foremost method of expressive writing. By inductive inference from journals, the connection between expression and experience is (purportedly) established.

Research on expressive writing takes experience for the "inner" behind the "outer" journaling. Expressions and experiences seem to coincide, and this leads experimentalists to conceive that writing is "outer" while experience is "inner", since we can observe the former but not the latter.

The journal "becomes the outer embodiment of our inner life." (Progoff, 1992, p. 382) Scholars conceive of the "inner" as either the mind or as the brain. On the one hand, Progoff (1992) and Bolton (2014) take the "inner" for the mind and conceive of it as "inner space" or "inner world". Scribbles aim at the "internal and private experiences" of a mind (Sargunaraj et al., 2021, p. 75) and "self-reports give us an insight into people's theories of themselves." (Pennebaker, 2004, p. 141) On the other hand, Pennebaker has since the 1980s argued for the "inner" release of the central neural system through writing, and so the basis for Gladding's and Drake Wallace's "eighteen writing exercises to promote insight and wellness" is "literally rewiring the brain with words" (2018, p. 381). The contributors to *Expressive Writing: Counseling and Healthcare* promise to show "how writing can support neuroplasticity and actually help change our brains – and thus our thinking and behavior" namely, "authentic expression of lived experience, with resultant insight, growth, and skill-building." Thus, one is "becoming a journaling neuroplastician" and "put the brain on ink" (Ross, 2015). Behind "overt behaviors", there are the "internal ruminations" that result in "increases in the autonomic nervous system activity" and" improved cellular immune function" (Riordan, 1996, p. 266, 263). Whether scholars conceive of the "inner" as the brain or the mind, they take observable writings to coincide with unobservable experiences. So, scholarship suggests the "outer" writing to be an effect of the "inner" cause, conceived as the mind or the brain.

However, these accounts of "outer" writing for "inner" experience do not cohere. First, both commit the fallacy – already identified by Aristotle (Aristotle, *DA* 408b11-14) – of predicating to a part what can only be predicated to a whole. It does not make sense to affirm or deny the meaning of "feeling," "perceiving," "thinking," "remembering," "imagining," "acting" and "desiring" to the meaning of "brain" or "mind" but only to the meaning of "human being." We would obviously neither write nor bite without sound minds and functioning brains, but minds and brains do neither bite nor write: humans do. One can neither truly nor falsely say that brains or minds feel, perceive, think, remember, imagine, act and desire, since experiential predicates only make sense of human beings. Second, both accounts of the "inner" assume that the meaning of "experience" can initially be associated with one's own "mental representations" and consequently be assigned to others – though this was shown to be nonsensical almost a century ago (Austin, 1946; Merleau-Ponty, 1945, p. 213-241; Ryle, 1949; Strawson, 1959, p. 15-59; Wittgenstein, 1953a, §§243-315; P. M. S. Hacker, 2018, esp. p. 45-56, p. 93-97, to all of which I am indebted). One cannot be said to be able to predicate experience first to oneself and

then to others, since there can (logically) be no criteria of identity for and comparison of one's mental representations of experience with one's current experience. Third, it does not make sense to ascribe a theory of mind to writers since they have not mastered a system of hypothetico-deductive inferences for their experience but a practice of using "feeling," "perceiving," "thinking," "remembering," "imagining," "acting" and "desiring" first for the behaviour of others and then for themselves. Fourth, there are no criteria for identifying the experience of *this* mind and individuating the experience of *my* mind from other minds, since nothing counts for what minds do or undergo and no grounds make sense of attributing experiences to minds. Fifth, our brain changes do not cause experiences, but our circumstantial reasons do ground our experiences, so that one's aching loins are the reason for one's fear of being ill and not one's processing nerves. Sixth, if "experience" meant brain change, then mastery of experiential predicates would name brain changes rather than what one experiences. But that is obviously nonsense. So, these conceptual confusions imply that neither theory of an "inner" ability of experience coheres. Rather, our theories go berserk with our practices of expressing ourselves in writing.

We cannot, moreover, say that writing is merely "outer." If our scribbles were barely "outer," then the movements of our hands would be a facade for the "inner" experience. Yet, we readily use "expressive" for our writing since we see meaningful scrawls and understand expressions of experience. For to write expressively is to express one's personal feeling and thinking, and sincerely expressing one's feeling and thinking *is* the feeling that is felt and the thinking that is thought. For instance, writing about the felt pain, the lit houses seen, the plan thought, the sailing remembered, the hug imagined, the medicine taken and the outcome desired. In this context, scribbles are not untidy marks by pen or keyboard but manifestations of feeling, perceiving, thinking, remembering, imagining, acting and desiring. In writing expressively, we display what we feel and understand, and we see and apprehend that we do. Our writings are not hand movements devoid of or indicative of meaning, but manifestations displaying the meaning of our experience. "The human body is the best picture of the human soul." (Wittgenstein, 1953b, 4.25) "For by behaviour the body talks," (Cicero, DE 3.59.222) None other than writing expressing experience can logically be expressive writing.

So, expressive writing is neither "outer" nor "inner" but writing expressing experience. To write expressively does not mean that one may both write expressively and not write expressively, or that one may as well write expressively as not write expressively. We cannot say that expressiveness may as well be shown in closing the diary, clasping one's hands,

insisting on only writing of the weather or not writing at all, as in opening the diary, unfolding one's hands, and writing one's personal experiences. Expression and experience are not connected, as smoke may or may not indicate fire and clouds may or may not indicate rain. Rather, expressive writing properly manifests the meaning of experience. The writing of one's experience is not accidental but proper to the meaning of one's experience, namely the meaning of experiential predicates cannot equally be denied and affirmed of the meaning of expressive writing. Although we can conceive that some who write expressively are not sincere, we cannot conceive that most who write expressively cannot be sincere since then the concept of expressive would have lost its purpose. If no-one nowhere never wrote sincerely, the phrase "expressive writing" would have no use. But being sincere, we properly write expressively, namely manifesting what we think and feel. Thus, the connection between expressive writing with experience is not causal but conceptual, not inferential but intuitive, not empirical but semantical. Although Adams, Bolton and Progoff have undoubtedly invented many useful ways of writing (Adams, 2011; Bolton, 2014; Progoff, 1992), it is only by confusing a factual connection for a conceptual connection that they invalidly conclude that experience and expression coincide in writing. Expressing experience is partly what expressive writing means.

However, to predicate experience of oneself and of another differs fundamentally. Although one first learnt the meaning of feeling, perceiving, thinking, remembering, imagining, acting and desiring from the behaviour of others and then applied it to oneself, one expresses one's own experience in writing but ascribes experience to others on account of their writing. One's own writing does not ground but expresses one's experience, whereas another's writing does ground for one what the other experiences. In a given journal, the writings of another are constitutive criteria – logically or semantically good evidence – as opposed to inductive criteria for ascribing experience to the other. So, we use experiential predicates asymmetrically of ourselves and others. Others may of course mistake the writing of the author as expressive when it is polite, self-deceived or dissimulated, but then the meaning of the writing is not expressive, and the behaviour shows this. Since we may mistake writings for being expressive, we may (invalidly) conclude that written manifestations of experience are coincidental or factual; that we may infer, induce or project experience of another. However, we wrongly ascribe what another experiences not because the inference is improbable, but because the meaning of human behaviour is opaque, and it is difficult to crystallize one's experiences in expressions. If one ignores this logical asymmetry of predicating feeling

and thinking to oneself and others, one may be tempted to assume that such predicates are used of an "inner" ability.

Scholars assume, moreover, that writing aims at the experience of "happiness" (e.g. Pennebaker & Francis, 1996; Ross, 2015, p. 28; Gladding & Drake Wallace, 2018; Maslej, Srikanth, Froentjes, & Andrews, 2020). However, they do not account for but only allude to what this means. Riordan associates "a person's overall well-being" with "emotional resolution" (1996, p. 267), while Gladding and Drake Wallace mention that the goal is to "relieve pain" and "relieve personal stress" (2018, 380-1), Moy "healthy self-expression and emotional release" (2017, p. 15) and Adams "relief or respite from suffering" (1999, p. 6). Here, several of them use "catharsis" and "cathartic" in the psychodynamic sense of eliminating tension or repression of feelings. This relief strengthens immunity, lowers skin conductance, blood pressure and heart rate, improves grades and jobs, lengthens relationships and lightens moods (Kacewicz, Slatcher, & Pennebaker 2007, p. 273-274; Pennebaker & Evans, 2014). In short, the goal of writing is to "feel better" (Adams, 2011, p. 72). And to feel happy through relief is "a positive emotion" or "mood," juxtaposed to "joy" and opposed to "sad" feelings (Pennebaker & Francis, 1996, p. 604, 611-612, 614) since "life's highs and lows" are "joy and sadness" (Gladding & Drake Wallace, 2018, p. 388). Although writing can be "uncomfortable or even difficult at the time", it fosters "joy and pleasure" (Bolton, 2014, p. 20). So, experimentalists suggest that writers aim at the emotion or mood of happiness in relieving pain and deriving pleasure from their writing. Expressive writing furthers "happiness through words." (Gladding, 2016, p. 8)

However, scholars overlook that we use "happiness" and "happy" ambiguously. These expressions signify in very many ways in very different contexts. In one of our common uses, "happy" and "happiness" mean the favourable attitude or preference of relief, namely being pleased, delighted or satisfied and finding it pleasant, say, not to be infected and getting a clean bill of health. Yet, relief may not only be an attitude but an emotion that accompanies or transforms into joy, which we feel short or long when we or others achieve what we care for, such as health. Our emotion of joy, which we also occasionally call "happiness," commonly combines with agitations of astonishment, thrills and delights, while our attitude and emotion of relief do not merge with instances of pleasure or enjoyment. We, moreover, use "happiness" and "happy" for merry, cheerful or buoyant moods, which suffuse our feelings, thinking and leaning for a while. Yet not only may the emotion transform into the mood and vice versa, but these uses of "happy" and "happiness" interrelate with still others. These expressions relate both to enjoyments, pleasures, exuberances and

exhilarations on the one hand and sanguine temperaments and cheerful dispositions on the other. One may feel happy because one enjoys oneself, takes pleasure in the walk around the neighbourhood, is exuberant of test results, or exhilarated of restored genital function. But while we are perhaps mainly inborn with happy temperaments, so that we may be prone to generally fit expectations to circumstances (and this obviously reconnects with happy moods), happy dispositions make us ready to respond in relaxed, tranquil or contented manners. Last but not least, we use "happiness" for our self-reflection of having achieved at least some goals that make life as a whole worth living. Perhaps these uses exemplify sufficiently the ambiguities of "happy" and "happiness." What constitutes their use for the attitude of relief does not constitute their use for the emotion of joy, and neither constitute other uses, so there is no broadest meaning in common. For instance, one may be relieved of test results without joy or being happy. If we fail to recognize these ambiguities, we confuse ourselves and others with one use that may be incompatible with other uses. Scholars on expressive writing therefore mislead when they equate happiness with joy and relief.

Not only do experimentalists mislead, but they also mistake the goal of expressive writing. Their exercises seek to relieve pain and derive pleasure in order to feel the emotion or mood of happiness. But this mistakes happiness deeply. First, since the equivocity of "happiness" has been analysed at least since Socrates (Plato, *Philebus*; Aristotle, *NE;* Rosanna, 2006; Hacker 2021, p. 243-303, to all of which I am indebted), the studied shallowness of the experimentalist use is the more surprising. Second, absence of pain is not presence of pleasure or enjoyment. For although English often opposes pain to pleasure, we muddle ourselves. Not only may one write neither in pain nor with pleasure, but one's writing may also be painfully pleasurable and pleasantly painful. It may be bittersweet, delight mingled with terror, and so forth. Pains and pleasures are neither contraries nor contradictories but complementaries. Third, to live a life of pleasure is not to live a life of happiness. To be happy is "a person's overall well-being," namely doing and undergoing what is worth doing and undergoing. To lead a happy life involves, of course, pleasures and enjoyments, but these are worthy and worthwhile relative to what one takes pleasure in and enjoys. It is not worthy and worthwhile to indulge in whatever food, drink and sex whenever and wherever, nor to shrink back from whatever challenge, suffering and illness whenever and wherever, nor to relate whatever and however to whoever. To enjoy food, drink and sex well, one needs moderation; to suffer disappointments, illnesses and ultimately death well, one needs courage; and to relate well

to others, especially to care and grieve for near and dear that fall ill and die, one needs rightness. In this, we may not feel happy, since we may feel a happy mood, emotion or even attitude but not a happy disposition, temperament or living. Feeling happy responds to what we experience of our surroundings and ourselves while we are awake, whereas being happy embodies what and who we are even while we are asleep. To be happy is to lead a worthy and worthwhile life that consists partly in being courageous, moderate, fair and understanding, as these traits empower one for "one's overall well-being." All this, most experimentalist scholarship on expressive writing sadly forgets and mistakes happiness for absent pain and present pleasure.

These misconceptions of expressive writing by experimentalists can partly be explained by the ignorance they show of the history of their ideas. Any experimental research proceeds more or less reflectively from conceptions, and if it assumes misconceptions, then experiments are likely to be mistaken. For instance, Gladding and Drake Wallace confuse alleged neurological evidence for inadequate conceptual clarifications (2018, p. 381). Experimentalists allude to an account of inner/outer and pain/pleasure that Jeremy Bentham (1789, 1.1-2) and John Stuart Mill (1861, p. 210) originated and that has since predominated in the "West." Although conceptual confusions of this legacy in experimental psychology and psychotherapy have repeatedly been identified from its inception (Kierkegaard, 1844; Stein, 1922; Binswanger, 1962; Heidegger, 1987; Merleau-Ponty, 1945; Wittgenstein, 1980b, 1980a; Ryle, 1949, p. 301-311; Boss, 1957; MacIntyre, 1958/2004; Hacker, 2013), the clarifications have sadly gone unheard generally. Inadequate reflection on the history of the ideas presumed by experimentalists in their writing exercises explains these conceptual confusions. But through adequate reflection on the concepts that enter our research on expressive writing, we need not repeat the blunders of utilitarianism but can benefit from the ancient practice of philosophy. To gain a more comprehensive understanding of happiness, we must turn from the experimentalists to the philosophers. For philosophical journaling clarifies and constitutes ourselves by concepts of virtue constitutive of a worthy and worthwhile life, as the previous sections make abundantly clear.

In this section, I have argued against the consensus. I have argued that the predominant scholarship on expressive writing misconceives and misleads us. I have argued that experiential predicates do not make sense of an "inner" brain or mind in 'outer" writing but are expressive of a whole human being's experience, but that we use them asymmetrically of ourselves and of others. I have argued that only one use equates "happy" and

"happiness" with joy and relief associated with absent pain and present pleasure, but to be happy is to lead a worthy and worthwhile life that consists in traits that empower one for a happy life. To confuse these different concepts is to badly misunderstand ourselves, and this has dire consequences for the research and practice of expressive writing. To gain a more comprehensive understanding of happiness, we must turn from the experimentalists to the philosophers, as testified in the previous sections.

Improving expressive writing

Expressive writing attends to, articulates and assesses one's experience, especially one's illness, to attain wellness. Researching and teaching expressive writing is not merely about facts but about concepts, whereby we conceive of ourselves in writing expressively. The conceptions with which we conceive expressive writing partly constitute expressive writing. Research on expressive writing is predominantly experimental, but I have argued that experimental research into expressive writing assumes misconceptions and thereby misconceives expressive writing. The experimentalists conceive of us as minds or brains with an "inner" desire to relieve pain and derive pleasure from "outer" writing. This is the uncanny heritage of dualism and utilitarianism. We enter and sustain reflective journaling by how we conceive or misconceive expressive writing.

To research expressive writing philosophically rather than experimentally is to elucidate the fundamental conceptions whereby one conceives of oneself and one's experience, particularly of being ill and well. To practice philosophy is to pursue a life and living with a comprehensive understanding. But it is hard to attain such a comprehensive understanding of one's life and living, so expressing one's experience in writing facilitates it. In this chapter, I have shown how I personally practice philosophy by writing expressively from a course of disease, where I in part constitute my illness and wellness by my conceptions of illness and wellness. I also practice philosophy relationally in conversing confidentially with others on their existential and ethical issues (Rehnman, 2023), and I counsel expressive writing to further exploration of their experience. I likewise practice philosophy professionally in teaching my master and doctoral students to express their personal or professional experience together with their research projects in writing and reflect on their practices. So, I train myself and others to attend, articulate and assess the expressions, whereby we explore ourselves in writing. But the conceptions by which we not only describe but also define ourselves are so basic that they are difficult to recognise and realize. We need aid to pursue what it means to be well

or ill, happy or miserable. I conclude that future research into expressive writing must explicate distinctively ethical and sapiential exercises of journaling.[6]

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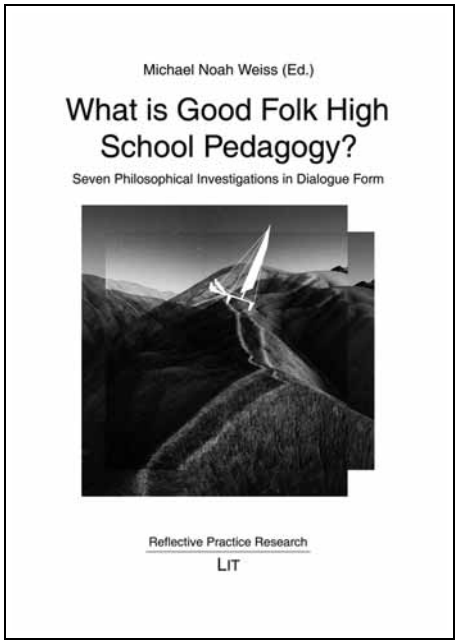

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Michael Noah Weiss is associate professor of pedagogy at the University of South-Eastern Norway and has a PhD in philosophy of science.

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