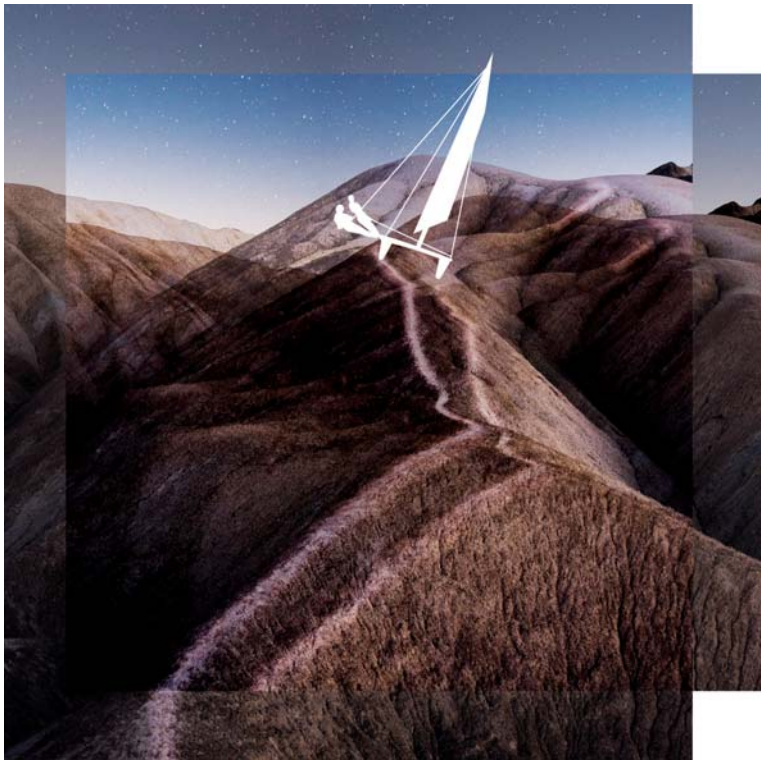
Michael Noah Weiss (Ed.)

What is Good Folk High School Pedagogy?

Seven Philosophical Investigations in Dialogue Form



Reflective Practice Research

LIT

Michael Noah Weiss (Ed.)

What is Good Folk High School Pedagogy?

Reflective Practice Research

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Before Starting: Outlining Philosophical Dialogue as Research

Michael Noah Weiss

1. Introduction

In 2014, on a warm summer evening, I was sitting on the balcony of an Airbnb flat in Athens together with Sigurd Ohrem, one of the contributors to the present anthology. Over a glass of Greek wine, he tried to explain the uniqueness and benefits of a folk high school – a school with no exams and no grades. I listened and heard what he said, but I did not understand. I was puzzled and wondering why anyone would spend a whole year at such a school without receiving any formal reward, e. g. in terms of ECTS points or at least in the form of a certificate describing their acquired qualifications.

Maybe I did not understand at that time, but the fact is that between 2010/2011 and 2020/2021 as many as 80,369 students attended one of the over 80 folk high schools in Norway (NOU: 2022: 16). On average, that makes 7,500 students per year. And not only that, as the recent EPSI Rating Norge – a survey of student satisfaction – shows, folk high schools rate significantly higher than the higher education sector in this respect (EPSI, 2022: 6). An outcome

that leads some to the conclusion that higher education institutions should learn from folk high schools (Mikkelsen, 2022, 14.12.).

When it comes to the learning content, if one can call it that, folk high schools offer a great variety of subjects ranging from extreme sport, snowboarding, and surfing to theatre play, e-sport, painting, music, photography as well as more classical subjects like psychology and philosophy, just to name a few. Field trips and journeys abroad are done on a regular basis and all schools offer dormitories where the students live together. Of the over 80 schools – 85 in 2022 (NOU, 2022: 16) – a bit more than half of them have a humanistic value base, while the rest have a Christian value orientation. Furthermore, these schools are not an invention of the recent past. They were founded by the Danish priest and pedagogue Nikolaj Frederik Severin Grundtvig, with the first school opening in Denmark in 1844. Still today, one finds folk high schools in all Scandinavian and Nordic countries. There are certain differences between the schools of these countries, which I will not go into here since the present publication mainly deals with Norwegian folk high schools. The latter have two general goals, which are also enshrined in the Norwegian Folk High School Act (The Folk High School Act: 2003): *Bildung* and public enlightenment. At this point, I will not explicate these two concepts further; more detailed accounts of them can be found in some of my other publications (Weiss, 2017a; 2021b; 2023).

Pedagogically speaking, these schools have always stood and still stand outside the conventional school system, as their history shows (Mikkelsen, 2014). And this is also what makes them so interesting: for not being part of the educational mainstream leaves room for creative forms of teaching and educational development work. The variety of concepts and approaches present in folk high school

pedagogy is, for example, outlined in the anthologies *Med livet som pensum* (Ohrem & Haddal, 2011; in Engl.: With life as curriculum) and in *The Nordic Folk High School Teacher* (Lövgren, Hallqvist, Rahbek & Lysgaard, 2023). From Socrates' dialogic approach to John Dewey's experiential learning to Wenger's communities of practice to social pedagogy and existential philosophy in general – just to name a few – the list of theoretical models and perspectives that are relevant to folk high school pedagogy is long and extensive. And so is the diversity of pedagogical practices.

After the previously mentioned conversation in Athens, I had the chance to work on different projects at different folk high schools and experience this diversity firsthand. Several of these experiences are further investigated in some of my research publications (see e. g. Weiss, 2017a, 2021b, 2023; Weiss & Ohrem, 2016; Ohrem & Weiss, 2019). When it comes to research at Norwegian Folk High Schools in general, it has to be stated that this field is still quite 'unplowed', as also a recent NOU report points out (NOU, 2022: 16). Though there are certainly a few scholars, like Johan Lövgren from the University of South-Eastern Norway, whose research focus is on folk high school pedagogy (see e. g. Lövgren, 2017a, 2017b, 2018, 2020, 2022; Lövgren, Hallqvist, Rahbek & Lysgaard, 2023), the research activities in Norway are on a much smaller scale compared to other Scandinavian countries.

With that in mind, the idea for this book was born, although I carried it around for several years before actually starting to work on it. The idea was to bring forth the folk high school pedagogues' and teachers' voices and to investigate their ideas of good folk high school pedagogy together with them, based on their experiences. Something that has not been done so far. What took me so long to

realize this project was the impression that I first needed a proper methodology for such an enterprise. And the issue of the proper research method brings us to the guiding question of this introductory chapter.

1.1. The guiding question

The question that guides this introduction reads as follows:

- *Why choose philosophical dialogue as a research approach to examine pedagogical practices at folk high schools?*

The short answer to this question is: I am a philosopher and as such, it seems natural to me to do dialogues and philosophical investigations. The longer answer, however, requires an examination of the epistemological questions that arise when understanding philosophical dialogue as research.

Those readers who are not interested in such theoretical and apparently "dry" investigations and reflections can simply skip this chapter. Reading it is not indispensable in order to understand the dialogues in this book. However, if one wants to know *why* the chapters of this anthology are written in dialogue format, the following pages might be enlightening.

2. Outlinging dialogue-based research

2.1. Philosophical dialogues as an academic genre

Grundtvig, the founding father of the Nordic folk high schools, suggested dialogue as the main pedagogical method for this type of school (see e. g. Korsgaard, 2017: 283). He advocated *the living word,* as he called it, as the best way for learning. While the written word would

merely contribute to the memorization of facts, in his opinion, dialogue would help the students get a deeper understanding of the topic at stake (see e. g. Ohrem, 2011). Furthermore, a dialogical approach to learning appeared to be more democratic, with the teacher and the students meeting at eyelevel and sharing and investigating thoughts, ideas and experiences together. In other words, to Grundtvig, dialogue was more 'down to earth' and closer to real life than any other teaching method. Even today, dialogue still plays a central role in the pedagogical approach of folk high school (see Haddal & Ohrem, 2011; Ohrem & Weiss, 2019).

With dialogue playing such a prominent role in the pedagogical history of folk high schools, it might seem natural to also employ it as a research approach to examine more closely the educational practices of this type of school. However, can philosophical dialogue be understood as a research method at all?

In fact, "book versions of conversations are not uncommon in philosophy" (Hattie & Larsen, 2020: 1). One finds a number of quite well-known scholars of the discipline of philosophy who employed dialogue as their main form of investigation and writing style in some of their publications. Plato is probably the earliest example, with his *Socratic Dialogues* (Plato, 2009), which had and still have a profound impact on Western science. A more recent example is the founding father of modern hermeneutics, Hans-Georg Gadamer, whose later works often took the form of philosophical conversations (see e. g. Gadamer, 2001, 2003). Another famous example is Paolo Freire and Myles Horton's *We Make the Road by Walking,* a book that, apart from its introduction, solely consists of the philosophical dialogues on education that they had at the famous Highlander Education and Research Center (Horton & Freire, 1990). Also in the field of ethics, as an-

other main branch of philosophy, we find Herlinde Pauer-Studer's *Constructions of Practical Reason,* in which she presents conversations with key figures in the field like Martha Nussbaum or Christine Korsgaard (Pauer-Studer, 2003). Herbert Pitschmann and Fritz Wallner developed and published their approach to the philosophy of science – so-called Constructive Realism – in dialogue form (Pitschmann & Wallner, 1995). Even in the last few years, several academic monographs and anthologies came out that belong to this genre (see e. g. Burton, 2021a & 2021b; Rosa & Endres: 2016). Arguably the most famous of them stems from the field of philosophy of education: *The Purpose of Education* by the often-hailed and often-criticized John Hattie in conversation with Steen Nepper Larsen (Hattie & Larsen, 2020). The list could continue, but it already appears clear that philosophical investigations carried out and published in dialogue form are not something entirely new. On the contrary, as an academic genre, it has a long tradition as well as specific, unique features that distinguish it from others. One of these features is the relation between the dialogue partners. As I shall show in the following, this relation has a direct impact on the research process as such.

2.2. On the nature of dialogue-based research

In one of his articles, professor of dialogic practice Finn Thorbjørn Hansen examines several explicitly dialogue-based research approaches, like Kreiner and Mouritsen's *analytical interviewing* (2006), Brinkmann's *epistemic interview* (2007), Dinkins' *Socratic-hermeneutic interpreviewing* (2005) and his own approach, called the *Socratic research interview* (Hansen, 2015a). Leaving the differences between these approaches aside, there is one aspect they have in common that, according to Hansen, distin-

guishes them from conventional research interview techniques: In conventional qualitative interviews, knowledge production is carried out after the interviews and behind 'closed doors' at the researcher's desk by analyzing the data of the interviews; however, in these four approaches, the desk is transferred into the field, so to speak, with the interviewer and the interviewee sitting at it together as co-researchers (see ibid., 2015a: 179 & 188f). In this case, knowledge is not created *after* the interview by the researcher but *in* the interview together with all participants involved. Here, we arrive at a common definition of dialogue derived from Matthew Lipman's *Community of Inquiry* concept (see Lipman, 2003: 20f), where dialogue means to investigate a topic, a question, and a phenomenon *together*. In other words, the dialogue participants are *inter-viewing*, that is, looking into something together from different perspectives. Against this background, Gadamer should be mentioned again, "for whom the 'interview' has become a significant category of philosophical output", as Malpas puts it (2018). Hence the question, why has it become a significant category for him?

If we assume the development of new knowledge as a key feature of research (see e. g. Lindseth, 2017a: 16f, 2017b), then dialogue in the sense of *inter-viewing* also has to yield some sort of new knowledge. Otherwise, the previously mentioned publications consisting of philosophical conversations would make no sense in an academic context. According to Gadamer, the form of knowledge addressed here is essential to the humanities (Gadamer, 1997: 107), and this kind of knowledge was probably the reason why Gadamer chose to conduct and publish his later philosophical inquiries in the format of dialogues (see Malpas, 2018: 2.1., 3.2. & 3.3.). So, which form of knowledge are we talking about?

3. Practical knowledge and its role in the humanities

3.1. Three fundamental forms of knowledge

In his article, "How does a competent teacher become a good teacher?" Gerd Biesta presents two spheres of life as introduced by Aristotle: *bios theoretikos* and *bios praktikos* (Biesta, 2015: 14). As we shall see, understanding the difference between these two spheres proves vital in order to understand modern science, research and academia in general.

As the name already indicates, *bios theoretikos* deals with theoretical aspects of life, like mathematical laws and eternal principles of nature. The form of knowledge that corresponds with this sphere is theoretical knowledge, which Aristotle called *epistemé* (the etymological root of the term epistemology). The activity to develop *epistemé* is *theoria* (thinking), the Greek term for contemplation. One is easily tempted to assume that science and higher education as we know it today can be attributed to the *bios theoretikos.* In reference to Popper, Kuhn and others, Biesta however refutes this assumption (ibid.) and ascribes, e. g. teacher education, to the sphere of *bios praktikos* (ibid.). The reason for that is elaborated in the following.

Hardly surprisingly, *bios praktikos* is the sphere of practical knowledge. However, according to Aristotle, practical knowledge can be divided into two different forms of knowledge: *techné* (in simple terms, *know-how*) and *phronesis* (*practical wisdom* or *prudence*). *Techné* is the type of knowledge required in order to build a boat, for example. Without knowing *how* to build a boat, a boat cannot be built. The activity that corresponds with *techné* is so-called *poiesis* (making). With the activity of *poiesis,* we find an answer to why Aristotle divided practical knowl-

edge into two: *Poiesis* comprises any activity that has its goal beyond itself (see e. g. Staude: 2015: 43). To give an example: If you build a boat, the goal of this activity is not the building process. Rather, the goal is to make something that lets you travel over water safely. Similarly, when building a house, the goal is not the activity of building in itself but to live in that house after it is finished. Seen from that perspective, one might erroneously assume that know-how knowledge was the reason Biesta attributed teacher education to the sphere of *bios praktikos.* For a teacher certainly needs know-how and practical skills when teaching youngsters. This is not the case, however. The reason is to be found in so-called *phronesis*.

Phronesis is often translated with the terms "prudence" or "practical wisdom," and it can be described as "the ability to do the right thing in a given situation – i. e. the concrete teaching situation – with regards to human flourishing, that is, the good life overall." (Weiss, 2021b: 248; see also Gadamer, 2004: 314) With this definition, the moral character of phronesis comes to the fore. It is moral knowledge, as Gadamer asserted (ibid.: 312), and to his teacher, the philosopher Heidegger, phronesis was "nothing other than conscience set into motion …" (Heidegger, 1997: 39). By relating phronesis to the term "conscience", another central aspect is addressed. Instead of a set of general ethical principles, phronesis represents a form of situational knowledge that rather resembles what one would call *awareness* or, as McEvilly suggested, *mindfulness* (2002: 609) more than factual knowledge or mere know-how.

In reference to the old Greek philosophers, like Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, several scholars, such as Gadamer (e. g. 2004: 315 or 318) or Gallagher (1992: 198), have pointed out a fundamental and somewhat disturbing feature of phronesis: It can only be learned but not taught. There are no universal principles or general theories connected to

phronesis that can be taught or imparted, as is the case with the laws of physics, for example. No wonder that to Aristotle, phronesis was not a question of factual knowledge but of experience, and "experience is the fruit of years" (Aristotle, 1980: NE 1142a 6–7). Hence, developing phronesis rather resembles a form of experiential learning (see e. g. Dewey, 1916: 184), one could say. Thus, if it is not teachable, it appears to be legitimate to ask whether such a form of knowledge can be incorporated into any curriculum of higher education programs at all.

Surprisingly, Gadamer answers this question not only positively, but he even assumes phronesis as *the* form of knowledge the human sciences should seek after:

> 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: 107)

It is important to note that when Gadamer speaks of practical knowledge here, we must not confuse it with technical know-how and skills *(techné)*. "Practical knowledge, phronesis, is another kind of knowledge," as Gadamer put it (2004: 18).

This question brings us to the kind of activity that is connected to phronesis, namely *praxis* (doing). The main difference between *poiesis* (making) and *praxis* (doing) is that the latter has the goal within itself; that is, instead of building a house with the purpose of living in it, the activity of praxis is doing it for its own sake. For example, in or-

der to learn to play guitar, we have to play guitar; that is, we have to *practice*. Aristotle distinguished between bad praxis (*dyspraxia*) and good praxis (*eupraxia*); the latter is sometimes also translated with *excellent praxis* (see e. g. Aristotle, 1980: NE 6.5: 1140b4–7).

Good praxis can be understood as a *doing* that promotes human flourishing and well-being; in short, it can be defined as 'doing well', as Anscombe suggests (1981: 70). With its orientation towards good praxis (eupraxia), that is, with human flourishing (*eudaimonia*) as its end, it becomes obvious that the activity of praxis implies a strong ethical dimension. It is not simply about the mastery of skills, which would make it a matter of *techné;* instead, praxis is a question of *virtue*.

3.2. Phronesis and its relevance in teacher education

By relating praxis to virtue, we find the reason why Biesta assigns teacher education to *bios praktikos* (Biesta, 2015: 19f) – an aspect which is not irrelevant for a book like the present one that deals with folk high school pedagogy. For in light of Aristotle's understanding of praxis, the term *teaching practice* gets a new connotation. Suddenly, it is not only about managing and applying proper teaching techniques anymore; but teaching becomes a *doing* that intends to promote human flourishing and well-being with the students. Therefore, when Biesta asks in his same-named article, "How does a competent teacher become a good teacher?" (2015), his answer, in short, is: by developing *virtuosity*.

In Gallagher's *Hermeneutics and Education* (1992), we find a hint as to how virtuosity can be developed and how it relates to phronesis:

> Socrates suggests that one must look to oneself in order to become virtuous. In effect, the knowledge that one can learn but not be taught is self-knowledge. If virtue is knowledge, it is in some sense self-knowledge. There is no teacher who can tell me who I am in a way that is superior to my own possibility of finding out for myself. (ibid.: 198)

Gallagher adds that self-knowledge "is intimately linked with *phronesis* and thinking for oneself" (ibid.), something which was already been explicated and pointed out by Gadamer (see e. g. 2004: 314). Hence, we can arrive at the conclusion that phronesis and virtuosity (which for Socrates were the same (Gallagher, 1992: 198.)) are essentially about the ability to see oneself – as a whole human being – in relation to the given situation one is standing in and become aware of what one can do (*praxis*) in order to foster human flourishing (*eudaimonia*).

This personal involvement illustrates why phronesis cannot be reduced to mere factual knowledge or know-how and, furthermore, how virtuosity is interrelated with self-knowledge. Furthermore, it also becomes clear why McEvilley spoke of mindfulness when explicating the term phronesis (2002: 609): one cannot be mindful if one does not personally relate to the situation one is confronted with. Hence, the virtuosity of the teacher, as discussed by Biesta (2015: 20f), implies not primarily the handling of knowledge, skills and competences but the self-awareness of the teacher with regards to how he or she can realize *eupraxia* (good praxis) with the students. The dialogues of the present book represent philosophical investigations in order to achieve exactly that – examining in what ways different folk high school teachers understand and realize eupraxia.

3.3. Phronesis and what became of it in today's academia

Interestingly, the three forms of knowledge as introduced by Aristotle, namely epistemé, techné and phronesis are – at least partly – represented in all curricula of any European higher education program after the so-called Bologna process. The learning outcomes of any curriculum are divided into *knowledge* (epistemé), *skills* (techné) and *competences;* however, the latter does not really fit the term *phronesis,* as outlined previously. This is also the central critique of Biesta in his article, "How does a competent teacher become a good teacher" (2015). As an example, in the Norwegian "Core Curriculum on values and principles for primary and secondary education" (Udir, 2017), competence is defined as "the ability to acquire and apply knowledge and skills to master challenges and solve tasks in familiar and unfamiliar contexts and situations. Competence includes understanding and the ability to reflect and think critically." (ibid.: 2.2.) Clearly, this definition of competence falls short of the central aspects of phronesis, such as the ethical orientation towards well-being, self-knowledge, personal involvement, and so on. There is one gleam of hope, though, that the essence of phronesis is not entirely lost in relevant higher education policy papers that refer to the three forms of knowledge introduced by Aristotle.

In its revised version of 2017, the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) (see European Commission, 2018), to which all the national qualifications frameworks of the European countries as well as the Qualifications Framework for the European Higher Education Area (ibid.: 16) are linked, we find – next to *knowledge* and *skills* – *responsibility and autonomy* as the third qualification category, instead of *competence*. Indeed, *responsibility* appears

to be a term that has more to do with phronesis than competence does. At this point, though, I do not intend to go further into the discussion about the EQF. Rather, in the following, I will take a closer look at how responsibility can eventually be related to phronesis.

3.4. Phronesis as responsibility

When Heidegger defines phronesis as "conscience set into motion" (Heidegger, 1997: 39), then phronesis can be interpreted as a *responsible response in action*. In other words: If we understand responsibility as some sort of response-ability, that is, an ability by which we can respond to a given situation in a morally reflected, mindful way, then this resembles phronesis in terms of "the ability to do the right thing in a given situation – i. e. the concrete teaching situation – with regards to human flourishing, that is, the good life overall." (Weiss, 2021b: 248) Interpreting responsibility in this way, it is not only the ethical character of phronesis that is reflected. Also, virtuosity, as the ability or awareness to respond to a situation with regards to human flourishing, as suggested by Biesta (2015: 19f) appears to be addressed, namely, in terms of being able to improvise in such a situation, like a jazz musician, in order to turn one's *doing* into *eupraxia* (good practice). Furthermore, acting responsibly appears impossible, if I do not relate myself – as a whole human being – to that given situation. With that, self-knowledge as an essential dimension of phronesis (see Gallagher, 1992: 198) is taken into account. In short, when understanding responsibility in this way, several key aspects of phronesis seem to be retained. The question now is, how can we understand the role of phronesis in terms of responsibility as the third form of knowledge – or rather ability – in academia?

To safeguard the 'soul' of phronesis, we have to understand knowledge more in terms of insight, even in a quite literal sense: To gain insight, literally, means to *see into something*. Metaphorically, it is as if the curtain suddenly rises, and we see the whole scenery on the stage. Raising the curtain, clearly speaking, is like raising awareness. And raising awareness is vital in order to develop responsibility, that is, the ability to respond to a situation in such a way that the response is a deliberate response towards the good life (eudaimonia). Here, the role of meaning in relation to responsibility comes into account, as Viktor Frankl points out:

> Man is not he who poses the question, What is the meaning of life? but he who is asked this question, for it is life itself that poses it to him. And man has to answer to life by answering for life; he has to respond by being responsible; in other words, the response is necessarily a response-in-action. While we respond to life 'in action' we are also responding in the 'here and now.' What is always involved in our response is the concreteness of a person and the concreteness of the situation in which he is involved. Thus our responsibility is always responsibility *ad personam* and *ad situationem*. (Frankl, 2000: 29)

Frankl addresses two essential aspects of responsibility: Firstly, what we perceive as responsibility is always a question of what we experience as meaningful in a given situation. Secondly, responsibility always depends *on* the person *in* the concrete situation. In other words, responsibility cannot be generalized (and therefore – just like phronesis – cannot be taught). This brings us to the question, how can response-ability – next to knowledge and skills – be developed or made visible through research? Which research methodology appears to be suited for this purpose?

4. Research that allows for phronetic knowledge development

4.1. Monological vs. dialogical methods

The term *methodos* was introduced by Plato, and it consists of two words (Lindseth, 2015b: 47): *meta* (over) and *hodos* (way). Plato used this term in order to point out that even though we cannot re-walk our ways in life (what we have done, we have done, and what happened, happened), we can at least reflect and think about our concrete actions and experiences (ibid.). By walking this 'meta hodos', that is, by reflecting on our ways in life, we can learn and develop ourselves. In his *Socratic Dialogues*, Plato showed how this methodos is practiced, namely in the form of dialogues. In most of the dialogues described by him, ethical and existential issues like love, virtue, etc. were examined. Often, the point of departure of these conversations were concrete experiences shared by Socrates's interlocutors and, not rarely, these interlocutors left the conversation in aporia, that is, in confusion. Instead of reaching a conclusion about what, e. g. courage, would mean, they apparently went with less knowledge from the dialogues than what they came with. One might get the impression that rather than producing new knowledge, existing knowledge was deconstructed and destroyed in the *Socratic Dialogues* of Plato. And in terms of factual knowledge, this clearly seems to be the case – what Socrates' interlocutors thought they would know turned out to be based on mere beliefs rather than facts. However, this does not mean that the dialogue partners did not learn something from the conversation. Their leaving in aporia and wonderment can, in fact, be taken as a sign that they became aware of something that made an impression on them. It did something

to them; it moved them in their way of seeing life (*insight*). And this can be called methodos.

Today, we have a different understanding of the term *method*. Lindseth speaks of two kinds of methods: monological and dialogical methods (ibid.). Monological methods are standardized procedures of production where the outcome is not only predictable but intended. Such methods resemble what previously has been described as technical knowledge. In contrast, there are also dialogical methods. Their outcomes cannot be predicted, and one does not know where one stands at the end of a dialogue (which can also be a dialogue with oneself).

With respect to what has been pointed out so far concerning responsibility, it appears that the way to do research on responsibility has to be dialogical. Through dialogue, as a way of reflecting on life experiences or professional experiences, one can develop and become aware of one's own response-ability. This also is expressed in the fact that responding to each other is vital for those participating in a dialogue. In a dialogue, as Lindseth puts it,

> The Other invades my world as vulnerability and silent appeal, as something invoking my responsibility even before I begin to understand. Understanding the Other is in particular subjected to the appeal for responsibility. (Lindseth, 2020a: 355)

Furthermore, with Frankl, we can say that responsibility rather *shows itself* in concrete experiences and situations rather than being present in theories or know-how. It is through the meaning that reveals itself in a given situation that responsibility can manifest itself through our actions (see Frankl's "response-in-action" (2000: 29)). And in this context, dialogue – in the true sense of the word – appears to be a proper research method since the Greek *logos* is another word for meaning, as Frankl pointed out, while *dia*

means ‘through’. Hence, in a dialogue taking its point of departure in concrete experiences, *meaning* (*logos*) – and, with that, our response-ability – can shine *through* (*dia*).

4.2. Phronetic research and philosophizing

What we have seen so far is that phronesis (or, in our case, response-ability) differs fundamentally from epistemé and techné. Hence, it requires a distinct research *approach* based on a dialogical method, as suggested by Lindseth (2015b: 47). In this context, Halvor Bjørnsrud should be recognized, who, in reference to Flyvbjerg (1991) and Hermansen (2001), outlined an epistemological framework called *phronetic research* (Bjørnsrud, 2005: 138). In his explications, he points out the following: The knowledge form of epistemé represents a *know-why* in terms of universal principles and theory (see Flyvbjerg, 1991: 72), and techné represents know-how in terms of principles of production (see ibid.). Both forms of knowledge have to be extricated and liberated from the context of concreteness (Bjørnsrud, 2005: 138). This is what the Ancient Greek term *analysis* actually meant: *to untie* – untying and separating complex, different elements or substances. In order to present a theory or principle and its universal, general nature, it has to be untied from human everyday life and from concrete practices (ibid.). Analysis, in this sense, however, does not work with the knowledge form of *phronesis*. The reason is, as mentioned previously, that this form of knowledge is only learnable but not teachable – since there are no general phronetic principles that could be taught or imparted (see e. g. Gallagher, 1992: 198; Gadamer, e. g. 2004: 315 or 318). Phronesis is practical knowledge, or better, practical wisdom; as such, it is the wisdom of practice. If this wisdom or knowledge is segregated from the practice in which it is involved, it loses its essence and

meaning – an essential aspect that already came to the fore with Frankl when he states that "Responsibility is always responsibility *ad personam* and *ad situationem*." (Frankl, 2000: 29). Therefore, as Bjørnsrud asserts, the context is inherent in phronesis, and *phronetic research* requires context-relatedness (Bjørnsrud, 2005: 138). Furthermore, Bjørnsrud concludes that since *phronetic research* is not about "unearthing" universal principles, it should focus on the *interplay between the general and the concrete by means of reflection* (ibid.)

For several scholars and philosophers throughout history, the interplay that Bjørnsrud outlines represents the essence of *philosophizing,* which could also be called a movement between the individual and the universal (see e. g. Weiss, 2015a: 215f). For Pierre Hadot, this interplay – whether done in dialogues with others or with oneself – represents a key-exercise towards wisdom, as he points out in his famous and critically acclaimed book *Philosophy as a Way of Life* (see e. g. Hadot 2010: 211f). Though, as he points out in this book, so-called *maieutics* (Socratic midwifery), as presented in the Socratic dialogues of Plato, represent one of the oldest examples of this interplay, many other philosophers and philosophical schools adhered to it (ibid.). Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* is just one of many famous examples (2009). In the 1920s, the scholar Leonard Nelson, inspired by the Socratic dialogues of Plato, developed a dialogue format that had this interplay between the concrete and the general at its center so that his students could learn to *philosophize* instead of merely *learning about the history of philosophy* (Nelson, [1922] 2004). Nelson's approach was further developed by his student Gustav Heckmann ([1981] 2004) and still represents a key method in the discipline of so-called philosophical practice (see e. g. Weiss, 2015a). The list of scholars who incorporated this interplay as outlined by Bjørnsrud, which

according to him is vital for the knowledge form of phronesis, could be extensively expanded. Instead, however, I propose to cut through to the following point: This interplay, which represents an examination of general aspects of the human condition, is essential for the activity of philosophizing, as several scholars assert (see e. g. Teichmann & Evans, 1999: 1; Lahav, 2016: 20; Helskog, 2019; Weiss, 2017b). As such, this interplay cannot only take place *in* a dialogue. Rather, the interplay *is* a dialogue between the concrete and the abstract put in motion by the dialogue participants. It is this that makes a dialogue philosophical.

As Bjørnsrud notes, due to this interplay between the concrete and the general – one could also say between theory and practice – phronetic research requires context-relatedness (Bjørnsrud, 2005: 138). Now, what established research tradition takes context-relatedness, that is, concrete practice and action, centrally into account? Following Bjørnsrud, we find one possible answer in the tradition of so-called *action research*. Action research has a long tradition in what could be called the field of classroom research (Eikeland, 2011), with roots in the works of Dewey (1910), Collier (1945), Lewin (1946) and Corey (1953). However, as we will see in the following, since action research today serves as an umbrella term for various research methodologies, we need to take a closer look at which of them can "host" the requirements of phronetic research.

4.3. Three general forms of action research

Bjørnsrud presents three fundamental, general forms of Action Research as outlined by Carr & Kemmis (1986: 202f): *Technical, Emancipatory* and P*ractical Action Research* (Bjørnsrud, 2005: 38f).

In *Technical Action Research*, the participants are subordinate to the researcher who decides the direction of the project and develops the respective research questions (see Carr & Kemmis, 1986: 202). The practitioners only apply what they receive from the researcher in the form of new strategies and approaches.

In *Emancipatory Action Research*, the practitioners direct the course of the investigation in order to solve specific problems. While "for Carr and Kemmis, only emancipatory action research is true action research" (Zuber-Skerritt, 1999: 11), Bjørnsrud (2005: 40f) understands this form of action research as action learning rather than actual research since the development of theory is a marginal issue in this approach.

In *Practical Action Research,* then, the relation between the researcher and the practitioners is based on dialogue in terms of mutual cooperation (Bjørnsrud, 2005: 38). The researcher's role is Socratic in nature and intended to foster prudence (phronesis) with the participants (ibid.). Hence, the researcher becomes a sort of facilitator, encouraging the practitioners to reflect on their own practice (Stenhouse, 1975). In this form of Action Research, development happens basically through self-reflection. The overall intention is that participants develop understanding on the one hand and the (further) development of theory on the other.

In the way these three general forms of action research are outlined by scholars, it seems clear which of them meets the requirements of phronetic research. However, Practical Action Research seems to have even more on offer when justifying philosophical dialogues as a research method, as we will see in the following.

4.4. Dialogical Action Research

As mentioned earlier, Lindseth distinguishes between two basic forms of method: the *monological* and the *dialogical* (see Lindseth, 2015b: 47f). In the broad field of action research, one can find an example for the latter in what Alrø and Hansen called *Dialogical Action Research,* an approach that could be subordinated to *Practical Action Research* for several reasons. As in Practical Action Research, so too in dialogical action research, the researcher is understood as facilitator, like a Socratic midwife (Alrø & Hansen, 2017: 9). Furthermore, as its name indicates, dialogue plays a central role in this approach in terms of the conversations and forms of interaction that happen in this version of action research (ibid.: 8). Alrø and Hansen use a conception of dialogue that strongly resembles Lipman's *Community of Inquiry* concept (see Lipman, 2003: 20f). They outline dialogue not simply as a specific conversational format but as an inquiring and wondering way in which the participants relate to each other, to themselves and to the field in which they are working and reflecting upon (Alrø & Hansen, 2017: 9). The starting point for such dialogues is the practitioners' experiences of something meaningful, something good, of "golden moments" that made an impression on them and with which they, together with the action researcher, want to come into dialogue in order to get a better understanding of these experiences (ibid.: 11; Hansen 2014; 2016). Here, a unique feature of Dialogical Action Research comes into its own, which does not always seem to be in place with Practical Action Research in general: In reference to Reason and Bradbury, who assert that "action research is about working towards practical outcomes, and also about creating new forms of understanding" (Reason & Bradbury, 2001: 2), Alrø and Hansen emphasize that action research does not

always have to have the former, that is, practical outcomes, as its primary goal. Rather, the action research process can also be oriented towards the development of ethical and existential *Bildung* as well as towards a new understanding of life and what it means to be human (Alrø & Hansen, 2017: 11). With Pahuus (2015), they state that this kind of action research is not initiated by a concrete, tangible problem the practitioners need to have solved but rather sparked by an often vague, intangible longing, which the participants do not always find words for from the beginning; it is set in motion by an experience that made an *im*pression on them, which they now seek to find *ex*pression for (Alrø & Hansen, 2017: 11). It is this experience the practitioners and the researcher want to come into dialogue with; it is this concrete experience they want to bring into dialogue with more general perspectives on what it means to be human (ibid.: 14). In that way, we can understand why Alrø and Hansen assert that Dialogical Action Research seeks a *humanization of human life* (ibid.). And here, we are back at Phronetic Research with its interplay between concrete experiences and general aspects of the human condition (see Bjørnsrud, 2005: 38).

Before we go on to the next section, let me first summarize what we have examined so far. In previous sections, we have seen that dialogue-based research differs from conventional forms of research in that dialogue-based research is not done after interviews and conversations are carried out (Hansen, 2015a: 179f). Rather, the actual research happens in the research, together with the dialogue partners. The form of knowledge that is yielded in such an approach is phronetic, as I pointed out earlier. Phronesis, in more modern terms, can also be understood in the sense of responsibility or response-ability. By taking a closer epistemological look at phronetic research (see e. g. Bjørnsrud, 2005: 38), we have learned that this form of

research does not so much require an *analysis* in the actual sense of the word as it needs an *interplay* between the concrete and the general. For only by means of this interplay can the context-relatedness on which phronesis relies be safeguarded. I then went on to more established research approaches that could allow for phronetic knowledge development and presented three fundamental forms of action research. As it turned out, one of them, namely Practical Action Research, shows several dialogical features, including the mentioned interplay. With Dialogical Action Research, which I suggested as a subcategory of Practical Action Research, an important aspect of action research emerged that often appears to be undervalued and marginalized, namely that action research is not merely about finding proper solutions to concrete problems. Rather, as Alrø and Hansen stress, action research can also take its point of departure from a rather vague longing for understanding and wonderment about what one is actually doing in one's professional practice (Alrø & Hansen, 2017: 11). And that requires not only a dialogue between the participants of such a project but also a dialogue between concrete experiences and general aspects and perspectives on the human condition. How such a dialogical method can be outlined we be seen in the following section on so-called Reflective Practice Research, which represents the underlying *methodos* for the dialogues presented in this anthology.

4.5. Reflective Practice Research

Understanding his own research approach as a dialogic method (2015b: 47f), Anders Lindseth, a pioneer of philosophical practice (see e. g. Lindseth, 2015a), coined the term Reflective Practice Research (Lindseth, 2017b). Though he never labeled his approach as action research, it

certainly bears similarities to Dialogical Action Research. Not only that Lindseth and Hansen both are philosophical practitioners and that both base their research on a dialogical methodos (that is, a dialogical way of reflection and investigation); also, both approaches take their point of departure in a practitioner's wonderment about experiences from his or her own practice (Lindseth, 2017b: 243f; Hansen, 2015b). Furthermore, taking practitioners' longing for deeper understanding seriously, both approaches intend to foster the development of practical knowledge in terms of phronesis (see e. g. Lindseth, 2017a, 2017b; Hansen, 2015b).

Since I understand Reflective Practice Research as a form of Dialogical Action Research, the main reason why I have chosen the former as the underlying approach or methodos of the research dialogues presented in this anthology is easily explained. The overall goal of Reflective Practice Research is to support a practitioner in improving his or her professional practice by developing practical knowledge (phronesis) through reflection on that practice (Lindseth, 2017b: 244). Hence, good practice (eupraxia) is a major perspective of this approach and an aspect of high relevance with regards to the question, "What is good folk high school pedagogy?" After the preliminary deliberations in this chapter, it seems to be established that not only is good folk high school pedagogy a question of good practice (that is, a practice that fosters human flourishing (eudaimonia) with the folk high school students), but also that good practice is intrinsically connected to phronesis in the sense of responsibility (or response-ability). In fact, when one takes a closer look at different Reflective Research projects, for example, from the broad field of pedagogy (see Weiss & Helskog, 2023), then one realizes that the practitioner's (e. g. a teacher's or university lecturer's) responsibility towards the respective (pedagogical) practice

is addressed and responded to by the practitioner throughout the whole research process. Whether the research is about conducting a workshop (Kolmannskog, 2023), the impact of a new technology on one's teaching and (pedagogical) worldview (Bloom, 2023) or on one's attitude as a teacher in general (Bergh, 2023; Løvgren, 2023; Eidsvig, 2023), this responsibility is at times made more explicit (see e. g. Helskog & Weiss, 2023; Angeltun, 2023), while on other occasions it comes into prominence in more implicit ways, simply through the interplay between the concrete and the universal, which represents an integral part of the Reflective Practice Research process (see e. g. Lindseth, 2020b: 97f). For example, when a pedagogue expresses a suspicion that something was or felt not right in a specific teaching or learning situation, then it is his or her responsibility that is "activated" and "calling" here; it is his or her "conscience set into motion", to use Heidegger's definition of phronesis (1997: 39). The pedagogue's response-ability is "telling" him or her that the given response in this situation did not cor*respond* with his or her response-ability. And this "call" of the practitioner's response-ability is "guiding" all the steps of reflection in the Reflective Practice Research process, so to speak. What these different steps of reflection are about is outlined in the following paragraphs:

1. **Concrete reflection**: An investigation based on this research approach consists of three steps (Lindseth, 2020b: 97f), where the first is called *concrete reflection*. In this step, an experience from one's (professional) practice, e. g. as a teacher, nurse, etc., is described. The experience can be one that made the practitioner wonder or even perplexed because something did not go well or something unexpected happened (Lindseth calls this experience of discrepancy; see e. g. 2017b: 247). How-

ever, one can also reflect on an experience where something happened that made an impression on the practitioner, e. g. that something went really well in terms of good practice (*eupraxia*). In this step, by the act of narrating and writing it down, a once-experienced phenomenon is re-lived, so to speak. As such, it represents a form of re-flection, according to Ricœur (2007: 265), because one has to find the right words that properly *ex*-press what one was once *im*-pressed by, as Lindseth points out (Lindseth, 2017b: 247).

2. **Critical reflection**: After the previous, more phenomenological step (the experience as a phenomenon that is *re*-lived and *re*-told), follows a more hermeneutical one, which is called *critical reflection*. The guiding question here reads: *What is at stake in the narrated experience?* (see e. g. ibid.: 80, 85, 93, 97) By examining this question, more general themes inherent in the narration can come into focus, themes that are relevant for other practitioners as well and are therefore more universal in nature. If one assumes that the activity of philosophizing is centrally about examining general aspects of the human condition (see e. g. Lahav, 2016: 20), then it is not least due to this step of critical reflection that Reflective Practice Research represents a research approach of philosophical investigation as well as of phronetic research (Bjørnsrud, 2005: 38).
3. **Theoretical reflection**: In the last step, called *theoretical reflection*, the identified universal themes derived from the experience are brought into dialogue with relevant theoretical concepts, approaches and ideas (Lindseth, 2020b: 97f). Here, one can see whether the reflected experience offers some sort of new knowledge, insight or understanding that was previously not embraced or detected by the existing theory of a discipline or profession, or whether the given response in action in

the narrated experience can be informed by theoretical perspectives.

As one can see by means of these three steps, the reflection and research process of Reflective Practice Research represents an interplay between concrete experiences and general themes, theories, concepts, etc. that Bjørnsrud asserted to signify so-called phronetic research (2005: 138). In Lindseth's approach, the concrete experience, that is, the context-relatedness, is not "analyzed away" at any point in the process. Rather, it forms the base of all three steps of reflection.

For those who are interested, more in-depth descriptions of Reflective Practice Research, especially of its phenomenological and hermeneutical implications, can be found in various publications (see e. g. Lindseth, 2017b; 2020b; Helskog, 2021; Weiss, 2021a; Helskog & Weiss, 2023). An anthology, which shall be explicitly mentioned here, was edited by Halås, Kymre and Steinsvik and called "Humanistiske forskningstilnærminger til profesjonspraksis" (in English: "Humanistic research approaches to professional practice", my translation) (2017). This book contains not only two of Lindseth's fundamental texts on Reflective Practice Research (2017a & b), but it also shows how different research methods like the interview or observation can be used in order to reflect on professional practices in the manner of the humanities. With its orientation towards humanistic research, this anthology was without doubt one of the sources of inspiration and why Guro Hansen Helskog and the editor of the present anthology started a book series on Reflective Practice Research in 2020 at LIT publishing (in which the present anthology is also published as a collaboration with the book series "Folk High School Research"). The purpose of the Reflective Practice Research series is to philosophically ex-

amine pedagogical practices from different academic disciplines in order to foster the development of experience-based, practical knowledge in terms of phronesis (see e. g. Weiss & Helskog, 2023). Investigating phronesis also represents a red thread in Helskog's and my works prior to this book series, whether written together or individually, with several of them employing a Reflective Practice Research approach (Helskog, 2013, 2014 & 2016; Helskog & Weiss, 2021; Weiss & Helskog, 2020; Weiss, 2017b, 2018, 2021a & b).

With respect to the present anthology, it must be said that even though Lindseth understood his approach as a dialogical method, it was initially not outlined as a research dialogue format. It was not until the present project that Reflective Practice Research was developed further into a form of philosophical investigation, which is carried out by means of dialogue. The reasons for choosing such a design are explicated in the next section.

4.6. Philosophical investigations in terms of Reflective Practice Research dialogues and how they were practiced in the present project

As we have seen on several occasions earlier, a philosophical investigation is characterized by the movement between the concrete and the general, that is, the examination of general aspects of the human condition (e. g. responsibility, care, love, etc.) by means of concrete life experiences (see e. g. Hadot 2010: 211f; Lahav, 2016: 20; Helskog, 2019; Weiss, 2017b). Such an approach is already found in the Socratic Dialogues of Plato.

In order to take this movement or interplay between the concrete and the general into account, each dialogue in the present anthology is based on the three-step investigation

of Reflective Practice Research. After a short prologue and introduction, the participating folk high school pedagogue shares a concrete practice experience (*concrete reflection*). In the second step, this experience is examined by means of the question, "What is at stake in this experience?", in order to identify more general and universal themes inherent in the narration (*critical reflection*). In the third and last step, these themes are brought into dialogue with relevant theoretical perspectives (*theoretical reflection*). Each dialogue concludes with a short epilogue giving a summary of the conversation with a focus on good folk high school pedagogy. After the actual dialogue, which was recorded on Zoom, the dialogue partners transcribed, further edited, and developed the text until both were satisfied with the result. In other words, even after the actual dialogue was finished the research continued as some sort of meta-reflection process.

In this respect, dialogue-based research, as outlined by Finn Thorbjørn Hansen, can be discussed. As he points out, though there are certain differences between them, the research approaches based on dialogue have one central aspect in common: Research does not happen *after*, but *in* and *through* the dialogue and together *with* the people involved (Hansen, 2015: 179 & 188f). Consequentially, the researcher and the dialogue partner, e. g. a practitioner, become not only co-researchers, but the dialogue *as such* represents the research (ibid.). It is this aspect that seems to strongly relate to phronetic research as described by Bjørnsrud, where the context-relatedness essential for this form of research can only be safeguarded through the interplay between the concrete and the general (Bjørnsrud, 2005: 138). Hence, understanding the dialogues of the present anthology as phronetic research makes it clear that there cannot be and should not be an analysis *after* or based *on* the dialogues that would result in phronesis, which in

our case is the *responsibility* of the folk high school pedagogues. Rather, it is primarily through the interplay between the general ideas and the concrete experiences that are brought into and forward in the dialogues that responsibility comes to the fore in a context-related manner. Therefore, the dialogues as such *are* the research. Were I to have chosen a different research approach than dialogue-based phronetic research, chances are high that I would have ended up with an understanding of responsibility and – strongly connected to that – of good practice (eupraxia) of folk high school pedagogy untied (that is, *analyzed*) from any context-relatedness and, hence, from precious pedagogical value. For what are pedagogical theories, models and concepts worth if they are not interrelated with the context of pedagogical practice? When Peter Singer states that "Ethics is not 'Good in Theory but not in Practice'" (Singer, 2011: 2), the same could be said about pedagogy: It cannot be good in theory but not in practice. And in order to figure out whether it is good in practice, the context of this practice has to be an integral part of the whole research. One could also put it into the words of Reason and Bradbury, who, in clear reference to Immanuel Kant, state that "action without reflection and understanding is blind, just as theory without action is meaningless." (Reason & Bradbury, 2001: 2)

That dialogue was chosen as the central writing format for the present publication on a decision that can be explained further when taking a look at the explications on meaning in terms of responsibility, as outlined by Frankl: When Frankl asserts that "Man is not he who poses the question, What is the meaning of life? but he who is asked this question" (Frankl, 2000: 29) and that "he has to respond by being responsible," (ibid.) Frankl basically says that responsibility depends on meaning and that "meaning is connected to context." (Dahlberg, 2011: 22) Con-

text here means nothing else than the lifeworld of a person, that is "the concreteness of the situation in which he is involved." (Frankl, 2000: 29) When Merleau-Ponty concludes that "because we are in the world, we are condemned to meaning" (see Merleau-Ponty, 2005: xxii), we could add with Frankl, 'and therefore condemned to responsibility.' Hence, if we want to investigate and reveal the response-ability of teachers in terms of their "response-in-action" (Frankl, 2000: 29) concerning good folk high school pedagogy, we have to illuminate their professional lifeworld. In other words, if the dialogues were carried out and then only their essences would be included in a research publication, an essential element would get lost along the way: the context, the described concrete situation in which the respective teacher is practicing, doing and responding to his or her pedagogical mandate. And this would mean that the actual meaning of a teaching practice, of an educational "response-in-action" (ibid.), is 'thrown overboard', so to speak. Hence, the dialogues of this anthology were transcribed and then further developed and edited by the dialogue partners, with the intention that responsibility in terms of phronesis and its various situational *meanings* (*logos,* see e. g. Frankl, 2000: 68) can 'shine' *through* (*dia*) – and here we are back at the necessity of a dialogue – based research approach (*dia-logos*) (for further explication on the term *dialogos*, also see Helskog, 2019 and Frankl, 2000: 59).

In this process of trying to let the contextual meanings of responsibility 'shine' through (dia-logos), my role as researcher is indeed that of a Socratic facilitator. My dialogue partners and I are on an "equal level"; we form a Community of Inquiry (Lipman, 2003: 20f). We are investigating, wondering and reflecting on the shared practice experience together in order to get a deeper understanding of it, especially with regards to the guiding question, "What is good

folk high school pedagogy?" In order to do so, we also bring our experience and our ideas and thoughts around it into dialogue with theoretical perspectives. Consequentially, it is these aspects that bring the Reflective Practice Research dialogues of this anthology in line with Practical and Dialogical Action Research (see Bjørnsrud, 2005: 38f; Alrø & Hansen, 2017).

At this point, however, it might be legitimate to ponder whether these dialogues also yield answers to the overall question, "What is good folk high school pedagogy?" The answer is negative if one expects a final, all-encompassing, abstract answer. The reason is not to be found in the chosen research approach but in the fact that we are dealing here with a normative question. As such, it is intrinsically *context-related,* and contexts can vary and change. And insofar as there are answers to the overall question of this anthology, they exist in terms of *examples*. The seven dialogues presented here *exemplify* what good praxis (*eupraxis*) of folk high school pedagogy can look like; they *describe* how folk high school teachers can show responsibility, that is, how they can respond to their pedagogical mandate; they *illustrate* what is meaningful for the teachers in their respective pedagogical situations and how they respond to that meaning. Using examples instead of general definitions when it comes to phronesis (and hence good practice) is not new, as Biesta points out; we can already find such an approach with Aristotle, who "does not provide abstract definitions of what practical wisdom [*phronesis*] looks like, but tries to make this clear through examples." (Biesta, 2015: 19). Of course, had the dialogues been conducted with other pedagogues, then other examples would have emerged. As examples, they are never all-encompassing, but they are concrete. And if *phronesis,* in terms of response-ability, cannot be taught but only learned, and if phronetic research requires context-

relatedness (Bjørnsrud, 2005: 138), then the seven dialogues – as exemplary, context-related knowledge – might help the reader see possible ways of how to practice good folk high school pedagogy. And in that way, he or she might get an *understanding* (*phroneo* in Latin, by the way) of what good folk high school is about. And with that, we also arrive at a first answer on the guiding question of this chapter, which reads, "*Why choose philosophical dialogue as a research approach to examine pedagogical practices at folk high schools?"*

4.7. The litmus test

For those still unsure whether the Reflective Practice Research dialogues as employed in this project can be understood as *research*, let me suggest a brief litmus test: Kalleberg suggests four elements (here written in italics) that constitute any kind of scientific research (1992, 1995). Thus, let us see whether the research dialogues in this anthology meet the necessary requirements:

1. ***One cannot do research without a research question. A question or questions define the direction of the project.***
   With regards to the present project, the guiding question reads, "What is good folk high school pedagogy?" This question gives direction to the subsequent dialogues.
2. ***Empirical data is gathered.***
   In the case of this anthology, the empirical data is represented in terms of the concrete experiences and cases of the pedagogues that are shared and then philosophically investigated.
3. ***Terms, including models and typologies, are used.***
   An example of a key term or concept used in the following dialogues is *Bildung*, which is quite central to folk

high school pedagogy, but other pedagogical key terms like *learning, knowledge, etc.* are also brought up.

4. ***The research process is characterized in terms of an argumentative movement between question(s) and answers.***
   A dialogue essentially consists of questions and answers and the movement between them, as are the dialogues of the present project.

In reference to Kalleberg, Bjørnsrud (2005: 43) adds a fifth criterion: ***The production of formal texts like reports, articles and similar publications.*** In this way, new theories can come forward, which then can be discussed in reference to other theories. The present anthology as such also meets this criterion – not only is it a formal text and a publication, but in the dialogues references to other theories are explicitly made, especially in the third step of each investigation called *theoretical reflection*.

Hence, as seen in light of Kalleberg's four elements (and Bjørnsrud's fifth), the philosophical dialogues carried out and presented in this anthology can legitimately be called *research*.

5. Presentation of the dialogues and the research ethics

The research ethics underlying this project are, on the one hand, the ethics of dialogue with values like open-mindedness, mutual esteem, fairness, honesty, humbleness, respect, tolerance etc. at its core (see Weiss, 2015b). In addition, the project was accredited by *NSD – Norwegian Center for Research Data.* NSD approved the design and the processing of the research dialogues, on which the chapters of this anthology are based on. Furthermore,

the identity of any eventual third parties was – as required by NSD – kept anonymous. Moreover, to formulate it in the words of the guidelines given by The Norwegian Committee for Research Ethics in the Social Sciences and the Humanities (NESH), consent from these anonymous third parties was neither possible nor necessary, for there was "no direct interaction between the researchers and those involved" (NESH, 2022: § 18) in the experiences shared by the practitioners since these experiences often date back years. In this respect, it has to be emphasized that due to the employed Reflective Practice Research design, it was the respective practitioner (that is, the participating pedagogues) and his or her practices that were in the focus and under investigation in the dialogues.

The different dialogues of this anthology can be briefly summarized in the following way:

In the dialogue "When Education is at Risk" with Filipina Millenberg, a teaching experience is shared and reflected upon, which seems to represent a concrete example of Biesta's idea of "the beautiful risk of education" (Biesta, 2013). How a folk high school teacher can deal with this risk is further investigated in the course of this conversation.

What "The Crux of Being a Folk High School Teacher" might be about is examined closer in the dialogue with Kjetil Hareide Hallre. As it turns out, stepping out of one's conventional role as a teacher and just being a human being might appear like a paradox, but it seems to be an essential dimension of folk high school pedagogy nonetheless.

The dialogue "No Fish Pudding" with Steinar Bryn examines a peace-building project that was carried out at the Nansen Academy. In the course of the conversation, a dialogical room is outlined that has four 'walls.' It is then investigated more closely how these four 'walls' provide for a good dialogue and for good folk high school pedagogy.

The dialogue "The Human Landscape" with Benedicte Hambro focuses on how folk high school students' personalities can be challenged and fostered and how this relates to becoming an active citizen. Related to that, the question of how one can learn to live together with others even though one might have different opinions is examined more closely.

In the dialogue "Golden Moments", Sigurd Ohrem shares an experience that at first does not appear to be pedagogical in nature. However, as the dialogue unfolds, a pedagogical attitude is examined that resembles the Taoist *Wu Wei*, that is, doing by not doing, and how this attitude might play a vital role in the students' Bildung-process.

In the dialogue "So that Life Becomes Bigger" with Johan Lövgren, a course about learning to deal with difficult feelings like grief and sorrow is presented and reflected upon. How this course relates to a good folk high school is further investigated in this conversation.

"Pedagogy for the Rich" is not only the title of the dialogue with Brita Phuthi, but it is also the name of an educational program that was put into practice at several folk high schools. Its main intention is to make the students aware of their own attitudes towards life and the world and how one can contribute to societal change.

6. Concluding remarks

In this introductory chapter, I discussed and examined the question, "*Why choose philosophical dialogue as a research approach to examine pedagogical practices at folk high schools?"* Doing dialogues and then calling them research is certainly not a conventional methodology. As I tried to point out, however, in the case of the present project, it appeared to be a valid option for the follow-

ing reasons: Good folk high school pedagogy is a question of *eupraxia* (good practice) and good practice a question of phronesis. Phronesis – which I operationalized for this project as *responsibility* – requires a specific form of research, in contrast to conventional methodologies intended to develop the knowledge forms of epistemé or techné. So-called *phronetic research* (see e. g. Flyvbjerg, 1991; Bjørnsrud, 2005: 138) was identified as a suitable form of research required for this project. At its heart lies the interplay between general ideas and theories on the one hand and concrete examples and experiences on the other (see ibid.). For only through this interplay, this movement – which many assume to represent the activity of philosophizing (see e. g. Teichmann & Evans, 1999: 1; Lahav, 2016: 20; Helskog, 2019; Weiss, 2017b) – the context-relatedness, which is inherent in the knowledge form of *phronesis*, can be safeguarded. Since this interplay between the concrete and the general is represented in both Reflective Practice Research (see e. g. Lindseth, 2020b: 97) and philosophical dialogues in general (see Weiss, 2015a), it appeared legitimate to combine both into what I called Reflective Practice Research dialogues. Even though this specific form of research dialogue is quite new, dialogue is already incorporated centrally in several other practice-oriented research approaches, like in Practical or Dialogical Action Research (see Carr & Kemmis, 1986: 202f; Bjørnsrud, 2005: 38; Alrø & Hansen, 2017). Philosophical dialogue *as* research methodology was explicitly outlined by Finn Thorbjørn Hansen (2015a). In fact, one can find several academic publications in the humanities and the social sciences written in dialogue form, some by well-known authors (see e. g. Gadamer, 2001; Horton & Freire, 1990; Hattie & Larsen, 2020; Pauer-Studer, 2003; Pitschmann & Wallner, 1995; Burton, 2021a & 2021b; Rosa & Endres: 2016). Against this background, it appears

legitimate to investigate Nordic folk high school pedagogy by means of a dialogical approach, not least since the dialogical spirit of Grundtvig, the founding father of these schools, still seems to live on in the daily pedagogical practices of these schools.

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When Education is at Risk

Filippa Millenberg & Michael Noah Weiss

1. Prologue

The first dialogue of this anthology is somewhat special in the sense that it presents and investigates a pedagogical situation that took place at a Swedish folk high school, whereas all other dialogues focus on Norwegian schools. There are certainly differences between the folk high schools in Sweden and Norway, differences that are not further discussed here since the case shared in the present dialogue could also have taken place at a Norwegian school.

After some informal talks in connection with the work on "The Nordic Folk High School Teacher" (Lövgren, Hallqvist, Rahbek & Lysgaard, 2023), the present dialogue was performed in early November 2021. At that time, Filippa Millenberg was writing her PhD thesis on folk high school pedagogy at Linköping University. Already during her studies in teacher education, she felt that the ideas of *Bildung* and popular education (*folkbildning* in Swedish) were somewhat missing. For her – who understood learning in a more holistic way with the focus on personal development and growth – the reason to become a teacher, to put it bluntly, was because she wanted to prepare and equip (in Swedish *rusta*) people for life. Therefore, parallel to her teacher education, she enrolled in a program to become a

folk high school teacher. After three years in the ordinary school system, she started at a folk high school where she taught for 10 years before starting her PhD studies.

In the course of the following dialogue, Filippa shares an experience that for the dialogue partners appears to be a good example of Biesta's idea of "the beautiful risk of education" (Biesta, 2013). Based on this experience, it is examined when a folk high school teacher should take this risk, when it becomes too risky, and what it actually is that is risked when taking this risk.

2. Dialogue

2.1. Concrete reflection

Michael N. W.: Filippa, with 10 years working at a folk high school, I assume you have significant experience regarding the question, "What is good folk high school pedagogy?" In order to examine this question, I would like to invite you to share a concrete experience, a concrete pedagogical situation you were involved in that you think represents good folk high school pedagogy.

Filippa M.: In this case, I want to pick a story in which I worked with a group of students where some of them had some bad experiences from their former schooling. Others in the group had achieved good results in previous schooling, and the reason for their being in this group was that they lacked qualifications in some subjects, which meant that they could not apply for university. Their goal with the studies was thus merit. The group consisted of many different people at different ages, from different backgrounds and with different approaches to learning and to life in general.

One of the girls, for example, had a very strict and straightforward attitude in terms of "I want to enroll in a higher education program; I don't have time to waste, and in this one year at folk high school, I do what I am asked to do, and the rest is of no interest to me". Then again, there was a guy in this class; let us call him Tom. Tom had been bullied at his previous school. He had this self-image that he was not able to accomplish what he was supposed to and what he was asked to. He was very insecure and tried to protect himself in many ways. Tom would come five minutes late every morning, opening the door very silently and walking to his desk with his head kept down. I would always greet him when he came in, saying, "Good morning, Tom. Welcome!" He was not saying much, just nodding.

I recognized that this other girl that I just described, let's call her Sarah, was a bit annoyed about Tom being late every single morning. I did not do much about that; I didn't make a comment, nor did I talk to him about it. I felt secure in my way of handling the situation. One morning, however, Sarah rose up from her chair and shouted, "This is not OK any longer! You come late every single morning", and then to me, "And you even welcome him every day. This is my time for studying, and he is interrupting." In this aggressive tone of voice, she continued for a while.

There I was, standing in this chaos, thinking, "What am I going to do now?" I knew about Sarah's perspective, and I knew about Tom's experience being bullied and having low self-esteem, but I was not really prepared for this to happen on that specific morning or any morning, to be honest. So, I just told Sarah, "Ok, I heard what you said; that is your perspective. I have mine, and I think Tom has his. I suggest that we put this aside for now and go on with what we are supposed to do and then sort it out later. Is that OK with you?" And it was. Thinking back, I do not think they were OK with it, but since they did not protest, I went on.

At the time when this situation occurred, the class was reading and working on some texts about historical movements. Each student was supposed to choose a specific historical person, imagining that he or she would be this person. Then they would meet each other and create a dialogue between these different historical figures about their movements and how they struggled, what they experienced, what their problems and challenges were, and what kind of solutions they would come up with. The students were working in different groups, putting up these dialogues based on the persons they would play. When they went into their groups, I asked Tom, "Would you join me for a while?" He accepted, and we went out of the classroom. I said to him, "You know, about what happened this morning: I think that you are coming late because you have been bullied previously. And when you come in five minutes late, no one can mob you. So being late is something you do in order to feel secure in the classroom." (I said this without really knowing; I thought it was that way, and I tried it out.) And he replied, "Yes, that's the way it is. And you know that?" "Yes, I know it", I said, and "I think we have to make Sarah aware of this too. The way she attacked you is because she doesn't understand. And she needs to understand your situation, even if it might be hard for you to tell, but we can do it together." When saying this, it seems problematic because I am the one who encouraged Tom to share his life story, but I don't think I forced him; I knew him so well, so he could have said "no, I won't", but still, here is a risk. First, Tom was a bit doubtful, but I suggested a specific day so he would have time to prepare and think about it. Then he went into the classroom again, saying, "OK, I'll come back to you tomorrow." Then I asked Sarah to come out with me, and I said, "I do understand you got furious this morning, and I heard what you said. Can you tell me a bit more about what you are thinking and why

you became so angry?" She replied, "This is just not the proper way to behave!" I replied, "But maybe you should know why Tom behaves the way he does?" Sarah thought she knew and replied, "Well, he is just bad-mannered. That is why he does things like this." So, I asked her, "Are you willing to listen to his story? Would you be willing to take part in a dialogue with the three of us?" Sarah accepted, but more or less half-heartedly.

After the talk with Sarah, there was a break, and during this break, Tom came to me, saying that he was willing to tell Sarah his story. So, after the break, the three of us went out. I started the dialogue by acknowledging that this situation happened this morning and that we obviously had different perspectives on it. I also stated that by sharing our perspectives on it, this situation offers a brilliant way of learning about life and being human. Then I invited Tom to explain why he came five minutes late every day. And he told his story, and while he was doing that, you could see Sarah changing her body language. She looked down, was silent, and was not as edgy as she would normally be. After Tom told his story, I said, "Sarah, I knew Tom's story; therefore, I made it a bit easier for him to sneak into the classroom. Also, I didn't want him to tell his story to the whole class since Tom was not ready for that." It was a hard situation for all of us, and Sarah started to cry and said, "I am so sorry!" She was straightening up and wanted to leave the room, but I said, "Just stay here for a while." We continued talking, and finally I said, "Look, Sarah, I don't want you to feel ashamed. This is just about sharing perspectives and learning about ourselves, and we are going to cooperate in this class for the rest of the year. We are going to be respectful, and since you know about this situation now, we can go on without hard feelings. Is that OK for you?" It was OK for her. Then Sarah asked, "What are we doing when we go back to the room?" I replied, "I

don't know. What do you think?" And she said, "Don't say anything about this. Let's not talk about it any longer." I agreed and asked whether that also was OK for Tom, and he said yes. So, we never said anything to the rest of the class. We never spoke about it again. However, the thing was that after a while, Sarah and Tom were cooperating really well together. In the first three weeks after this incident, they would just talk more often to each other, and after these three weeks, they started cooperating and sitting together, having coffee break[s] together in the dining hall and discussing things. They actually took an interest in each other.

This story, for me, says something about good folk high school pedagogy. To me, it is clear that the ideas about acknowledging what Grundtvig said, "människa först" (in English: "the human being first"), are becoming blood and flesh here. Being human among other humans – its complexity but also its learning possibilities – are at hand in this somewhat hidden curriculum.

Michael N. W.: This is a fascinating story for several reasons. However, before going into them, I have some questions. First, you said that after some weeks, Tom and Sarah started to cooperate quite closely. How was it for Tom and the others in the class? Was he engaging more with the others too? How was the whole group dynamic then?

Filippa M.: I would say that after Sarah and Tom started to bond, Tom was also more recognized in the class. Sarah had a high status in the class; she was straightforward, and she was also quite certain about things. So, when the two of them came together and started to cooperate, Tom was all of a sudden recognized as somebody important in the classroom in the sense that he made it clear that he actually could do things, that he understood things, that he could put his own perspectives on things, and so on. Even though he

was not talking all the time. I also think he became more a part of the group after they started to get to know each other and cooperate in different kinds of schoolwork.

Michael N. W.: If I understand you right, then Tom went through some kind of transformation in terms of his self-esteem. Since he was bullied previously, he probably never had much self-esteem; for example, that he would think of himself as being able to contribute to a community in a constructive way and that he was seen. With what you have said, it appears to be quite obvious that suddenly he was seen; he was recognized, accepted and kind of integrated. He received a different status in the class, so to speak. How was that for Sarah? Did she also change her social and emotional behavior?

Filippa M.: I think she actually did, but I also think that it was quite hard work for her to change her way of viewing other people. When she started at the school, she was so certain about things in terms of "This is just the way it is". The situation with Tom was not necessarily a wake-up call for her, but it nevertheless told her something. For example, that studying is not just about doing what you are asked, and then you are just out of here. Tom, by sharing his story, told her that studying in this context is so much more. I think that through that, she got a new understanding of people like Tom, about whom she previously thought were not serious. Before that incident with Tom, she would think that such people come late into class without caring, that they don't contribute to anything, whereas she would. At the end of the school year, she would make statements like, "When I entered the folk high school, I had to convince everyone about how things are, while now I know why people sometimes think differently and I am not responsible for them believing in my view." However, she would never say that from that moment on with Tom,

she would see things differently herself. And if you had asked her what she learned at folk high school, she would never say anything about who she was or what people's stories were. She would always say, "Well, I got my certificate; now I can go to higher education. And that was my goal." Nevertheless, I am still convinced that she also learned something else than the subjects of study, such as social and emotional behavior, but I am not sure whether she herself could see that clearly at the time. I don't think she was able to verbally express that. I don't think she was able to reflect at that time.

2.2. Critical reflection

Transformation

Michael N. W.: I think this is a good point to go over to the next step of the dialogue, called critical reflection. In this step, one of the main questions is, "What is at stake in this story?"

In this respect, it seems obvious that Sarah had a straightforward perspective on learning, on what learning meant and what education meant. She would not – at least not in front of others – recognize that learning can also take place on a social or emotional level. Nevertheless, she obviously did learn something in this regard. It appears to be the same with Tom. What he learned in that case was not so much about a certain subject, it was not about getting in line with the standards of the formal education system. Rather, it was more about realizing that he also can manage to be recognized and to be seen in a community of peers. His social status changed and he contributed to that change. Therefore, I assume *transformation* as one of the central aspects in this story. I don't know what you think about it and there are for sure other aspects or themes too.

Learning to live together in dissonance

Filippa M.: I think you are right. Sarah had a very clear idea of what was supposed to go on in this class in terms

of her view on what learning is about and how it should be done. Like, you have a task to do in a given subject and as a student you should respond to that, learning was in Sarah's world linked to a subject and the outcome of her work is a specific task. However, that would just be one part of life that you as a teacher and as students bring into the classroom. According to Sarah's view, you don't bring in your whole life into the learning process. That was not interesting or relevant for her. In contrast to this view, Tom did bring his hard and difficult experience into the classroom, and I actually did not get the impression that he thought this experience could not be part of the learning process. I think he had a similar view to Sarah. However, I do think that along his studies his own experience about school, being bullied and what learning is all about changed. I think he actually viewed schooling and his own abilities in a different way after this year at folk high school. He appeared like a human being among other human beings and got to see himself with new eyes. In fact, I think he also learned something about the ideas of knowledge and learning which are central to folk high school pedagogy. I don't think Sarah picked up these ideas in the same way, but by the end of the year I think she also learned something, like on emotions, who she was, and so on.

Furthermore, I assume that sometimes when you work with students like Sarah, you have to be quite robust in your own role as folk high school teacher. That is, to acknowledge the views of your students, which are different from yours and still inviting your students to try to work on another way of viewing learning and knowledge. In a way you are saying "I know that you understand learning differently but let me teach you my way, follow me and give it a try." Of course, you would face skepticism and resistance from some students when you choose such an approach. Sarah, for example, had often said "I don't think your right;

I don't think this is the right way to do it". About some exercises, she would even say, "This is like being in a primary school, working with scissors and glue. No, I am not going to do that!" By the end of the school year, she would at least say, "Well, OK, I will do as you suggest." In other words, you could see a change of attitude with her, but still, she was a bit suspicious all the time, thinking that this was not what school should be like. This is not about the teacher using power to take the students where he or she wants them to be or to get them to think and view things the same way as the teacher does. This is about giving humans a chance to be more human and to be able to see themselves in relation to other humans, to learn to live in the dissonance, which is central to living in a democracy. But this is just an invitation; students can say "no, thanks".

Connecting worldviews

Michael N. W.: Maybe Sarah just did what she did because you asked her. Nevertheless, even though she was suspicious about it, she joined you in the private talk with Tom, for example. What happened after that talk, that is, the whole process during the remaining school year, could not have been foreseen by you as the teacher. You could not see it coming that after some weeks, Tom and Sarah would cooperate so closely. In a way, this talk was the turning point.

From what you are saying now, it is the term *worldview* that comes to my mind. Tom and Sarah had two completely different worldviews, and due to the talk that you initiated and facilitated, both of their worldviews could change. Actually, they could change in a way so that these two worldviews could connect, so to speak. And all of a sudden, Tom and Sarah could cooperate. Therefore, I am wondering whether *transformation*, *worldview*, *being social* and, of course, *cooperation* are key themes inherent in this story of yours. Especially cooperation appears to be quite cen-

tral in your shared experience since cooperation between Sarah and Tom was not possible before this particular talk. In order for the two to cooperate on a specific subject, for example, something had to happen on a social and emotional level first. And what happened on that level was that their worldviews got a little bit closer because they made adjustments to their individual worldviews. Sarah realized that she was sometimes too harsh in her opinions on how one should behave at school, on what a good teacher should be like, and so on. However, Tom could also realize that he in fact could make important contributions to the fellowship with the other students. In short, it was a learning process for both in terms of learning on a social and emotional level.

The beautiful risk of education

Filippa M.: Yes, definitely. Furthermore, I think that their different worldviews could actually come together just because of this initially chaotic situation in the class. It was not that the students sat down together and asked about each other's life stories. It was this chaotic situation that also made other people in this class see different worldviews, not despite but due to this clash. However, in the long run, they also experienced that something positive came out of it.

In fact, I was very close to asking Tom and Sarah at the end of the school year to share their story about what happened when they had this particular talk and what happened afterwards. Sharing that could have been a good experience for us all in that class. However, since Sarah and Tom had said back then in December that we shouldn't talk about this anymore, I felt that I had to respect that. For me, this was about finding the right balance. On the one hand, I thought that this could be a beneficial learning situation for us all, and as a group, we could respond to them at the end of the school year, saying, "Thank you; we are actu-

ally learning something from your story." For me personally, this story was such a wake-up call concerning being in uncertainty as a teacher and being in that beautiful risk of education, as Biesta called it (see Biesta, 2013). This is also about teaching being authentic; it is about bringing ourselves into a real learning situation and standing in what is an authentic and difficult situation. For me, at the end of the school year, it would have been nice to tell them that this was a really important learning process for me as a teacher too. On the other hand, I wanted to be respectful towards Tom and Sarah. Nevertheless, I think I still regret that I did not ask them to say something about this story before we went on holiday. Though I think that the worldviews of the other people in the class came a bit closer, nonetheless. Though it was not shared, the incident in December and what followed from it did something to us all in this group. I think afterwards it was about bridge-building.

The need for chaos

Michael N. W.: When you say bridge-building, then I am wondering about two things. First, the chaotic situation. From a pedagogical point of view, I am wondering whether chaos is needed in order to change a situation that is kind of stuck. In your case, the situation was stuck because of two people with very different worldviews who were also very convinced of their worldviews. The way out of this situation, which also made these two people transform their worldview, was chaos. In other and more general words, the question is whether people like Sarah and Tom need to face chaos first before they are able to transform their worldviews in order to come closer. Furthermore, are such chaotic situations also necessary for a teacher because it is in such situations that something happens? Or, to formulate it differently, if we assume that personal transformation is one of the key aspects at stake in this story, then is putting it

at stake – that is, arranging for a chance to make it happen – first possible when there is chaos?

To dare to be vulnerable

Filippa M.: I think so. And if someone would ask me what I want to learn in a teacher program, then I would say that I want to learn to handle conflicts in teaching situations. How to handle such conflicts, which approaches are available, and so on. By trying to push these conflicts aside in order to proceed in the way that is easiest to go has little to do with working with human beings in a learning situation. Rather, we need to be aware that chaotic situations can be the starting point for something to grow and for something good to come out of it. However, such a situation also demands something from the teacher, and that is *to dare to be vulnerable*, to dare to be at this risk (of education), and to say to yourself, "I don't know the way to do this, but let us do it together. Let us try it out." So, yes, I think we need a bit of chaos. Also, because there is something authentic that is revealed in the chaos. Like Sarah, who was really upset; that is, she expressed an authentic emotion. Tom, too, was authentic. In fact, he could not do anything else; he was just stuck in his familiar pattern of behavior. There is something about being authentic in the classroom and welcoming your students to be authentic with their different stories and backgrounds. Authenticity in the classroom – even if it sometimes creates chaos – fosters democratic awareness among the students. Now, what do I mean by democracy in this respect? Democracy is about living together while knowing that we will not agree on everything. In fact, what I think democracy is about at its core is being able to live in dissonance, to live in a shared space without agreeing on everything but respecting each other by knowing our different worldviews and conditions. However, even if we have different worldviews, we still live together. We are aware of our different opinions, and we

can cope with them. I think this is an unspoken aim for many folk high school teachers derived from the ideas that formed this form of education (like in 1800, the big struggles about democracy, justice, and social change), which also might include a view of the aim of education also being about becoming human among other humans, to understand the self in relation to the world and others.

Michael N. W.: You bring up an important point here when you say democracy means that we try to live together, even though we know that we do not agree on everything. In fact, this is what happened in that class. They did everything but agree. There was conflict in that situation, which you were trying to solve. And you brought up an important idea in this respect: the vulnerability of the teacher. One can see that both Sarah and Tom were vulnerable, especially Tom. Now, making Sarah see his vulnerability also meant making her see her own. She started to cry and realized that she was not perfect and that she too could be wrong. This made her realize her own vulnerability in terms of fallibility. However, you also said that it is you, as the teacher, who has to be vulnerable. In this regard, I remember you mentioning that you still regret that at the end of the school year, you did not invite these two students to share their story with the class because you found it risky. Now, the whole story began with a risky situation where you invited both for a talk, and finally, it also turned out to be risky to invite them to share their story of what happened after that initial talk. Do you think that this also had to do with your own vulnerability that you did not ask them to share? Of course, you had respect for these two students since they both made it clear right after the initial talk that they did not want to talk about it anymore. And you respected that, which from an ethical point of view, seems to be absolutely right. However, was it also because you did

not want to risk such a public disclosure, so to speak, since it could play out the wrong way and then you would have felt hurt?

Risking, or rather not?

Filippa M.: Yes, I think you are right. However, what would have happened if I had asked Tom and Sarah to share their story, and it would not have turned out well? Then I would have created something bad for the whole class – and on our last school day, where we were supposed to thank each other for this year. That would not have been good for anyone.

On the other hand, I could have asked Tom and Sarah, and they would have felt absolutely comfortable saying, "No, we won't do this." So, why did I not ask? Maybe it was because of me. This last school day was kind of a success for me, and I was afraid of getting in the way of that. If we had had another ending, it would have made me feel like I had done something as a teacher that was pedagogically wrong. In other words, I think you are right with what you said. What strikes me now when reflecting on what I just said is that the fact that I didn't dare risk 'again' also means that I excluded authenticity. Do you agree? And here I mean this balance between protecting oneself and daring to risk the possibility for authenticity and growth as humans.

Michael N. W.: Yes, but I also think that with regards to vulnerability, there is a difference between the situation at the end of the school year and that talk in December. To put it bluntly: In that talk in December, you had nothing to lose compared to the situation at the end of the school year, where you could have lost everything you achieved during that school year. And maybe you did not want to risk that? The question, though, is: Would there have been even more learning if you had dared to ask?

Vulnerability presupposes trust

Filippa M.: Definitely, because if we had told the story, I would have shared my point of view, and Sarah and Tom would have presented theirs. And then maybe other people in the class would have shared their own stories, and maybe we all would have suddenly realized that there were stories with other people in the class that had been initiated by Tom and Sarah's story, but we were not aware of them yet. So, we, as the whole class, could have made it 'our' story and not only Tom and Sarah's.

Here, I would like to add something about the "lost learning opportunity": If we all had told our stories, we would have recognized that being in a group in education, studying together, and living among others is not always easy. By saying that aloud, it also became explicit and something to bear in mind during the coming time. And maybe it had also become easier to pick up other 'risk situations' along the way. I also think that vulnerability presupposes trust, so what is at risk here might be the trust between Tom and Sarah, but at the same time, I do not think so. I do think that the trust was greater, so it would have stood the "test".

2.3. Theoretical reflection

Michael N. W.: What I am wondering about now is the phrase coined by Biesta that you mentioned: "the beautiful risk of education" (Biesta, 2013). And maybe in the next step of our dialogue – the *theoretical reflection* – we could use Biesta's "beautiful risk of education" as our main theoretical angle. On the blurb of his same-titled book, we can read that this publication is about:

> What many teachers know but are increasingly being prevented from talking about: that real education always involves a risk. The risk is there because, as W. B. Yeats has put it, education is not about filling a bucket but about lighting a fire. It is there because students are not to be seen as

> objects to be moulded and disciplined, but as subjects of action and responsibility. (ibid.: blurb)

To me, the story you told is a good example of this beautiful risk that you face as a teacher. In this story, it is not hard to see why the learning process of Tom and Sarah was rather about lighting a fire than filling a bucket. However, lighting a fire – in literal and obviously also metaphorical terms – requires more caution compared to filling a bucket. You brought in an important aspect of this risk of education, and that is the vulnerability of the teacher. Now, when we ask ourselves again, What is at stake in this story of yours? Then it seems that there was not so much at stake in that initial talk in December for you as the teacher compared to what was at stake for you at the end of the school year. At the end of the school year, it was the pedagogical success of that year – that is, the social learning of Tom and Sarah. They started to cooperate and were able to see the world differently. And exactly this you did not want to risk in order to "open up" the eyes of all the other students too, so that they could also come out with their stories and their worldviews. If that had happened, it would have added to the success you already had, of course. However, there was also the danger that by giving it a try, you would light a fire that would backfire, so to speak. In short, your attempt would fail. But in what way would it have failed? In the way that Sarah and Tom would have stopped cooperating or that it would have separated them? Therefore, with regards to Biesta's beautiful risk of education, I am wondering, when does education become too risky? When are we not willing anymore to risk our own vulnerability as teachers?

When it's not worth the risk

Filippa M.: If the trust between us is at risk of being erased. And if my own vulnerability would risk being too costly for the participants or for me without, for example,

seeing a potential of a 'learning outcome' by being vulnerable. Do you see what I mean? If I, for example, were to tell a participant that his or her behavior or way of acting in the classroom hurt other people and even me, and I suspected that the participant could neither handle it nor understand and learn from it, but only seeing it as criticism, then it would not be worth risking my own vulnerability. It would be too costly, both for the participant and me.

Michael N. W.: When asking when we are not willing anymore to risk our own vulnerability as a teacher, I was doing so because you finally decided that it was too risky to ask Tom and Sarah to share their story.

Risk and care

Filippa M.: In this specific case, at the end of the semester, I guess I was not too sure about the trust between us after all. They both finished their studies, and they were not coming back after the holidays, but if they would have done that, I would have had time to work on the trust if we had lost some of it. So, to sum up, the question of when I do not dare to risk my own vulnerability as a teacher is not only a question about myself but also about the participants' learning and experiences. Risking my vulnerability stands in relation to what they risk losing. Do you understand what I mean? Talking with Biesta, it also has to do with the teacher's view of humans (and their worldviews) (see e. g. Biesta, 2013: 4f). Seeing them as "subjects of action and responsibility" (ibid: 18), vulnerability is linked to what the teacher judges or assesses as reasonable actions and responsibilities based on the individual's ability. And here, the risk of the teacher is about a balance between challenging and protecting.

In other words, the term risk means, for me, that you can put another person into a situation where he or she could get hurt and where you are not in control to follow that up, on the one hand. For example, as I just mentioned, you are

not able to talk to that person about what happened to him or her after the school year ends. On the other hand, risk in this case also relates to my own view and my own story as a teacher. Am I ready to reflect and review my stance and my story, or do I try to avoid that risk because I am not ready to do that kind of self-reflection yet?

In a folk high school context, risk can also be related to the term *care*. And care is also at stake in this particular story I told because in folk high school, we want to *care about people*. Metaphorically speaking, we do not want them to fall too hard; we want to lift them up and "rebuild" them, so to speak. We want them to unleash their full human potential. That is, at least, the ideal.

Already with these few aspects that I just mentioned, you can see the complexity of risk and its different pedagogical implications that you are dealing with as a teacher. It is like finding the right balance between these different implications of risk. Finally – and this is a question that I am also posing to myself – isn't it worth it to take this beautiful risk of education anyway? What could be the worst thing to happen?

Michael N. W.: The worst thing that could happen would probably be chaos. That is, with reference to Biesta's idea of education as lighting a fire (see Biesta, 2013: blurb), you set all the pedagogical work that you have done as the teacher on fire. All that just goes up in smoke.

Phronesis and responsibility

Filippa M.: Yes, but on the other hand, if I had not been put into that chaos, I would not have experienced that there is a way through this. My actual insight from that experience, hence, is that there might be a fruitful way in other cases as well. In other words, it is worth taking the risk.

Since we try to see this story from more theoretical perspectives now, there is also something else that comes to my mind, which has to do with teacher education in gen-

eral. In teacher education, the student teachers are often told to find the right methods and the right theory-based strategies. Just take a look at behavioral or cognitivist learning theory and their central role in teaching books for teacher education in Scandinavia (see e. g. Imsen, 2020; Stray & Wittek, 2014). With that, however, the possibility of taking that risk becomes narrower, I think, because then the teachers are already equipped and "armed" with specific strategies and methods whose purpose is nothing but to shut out chaos and risk. In contrast to that, *phronesis* in terms of practical wisdom can be mentioned. Its relevance in teacher education has been pointed out by several (see e. g. Helskog, 2019: 40f; Hansen, 2011: 250). By the term *phronesis,* I mean to be able to be present in a situation and to act prudently in it by reflecting existentially on it (which, in a way, also involves embodied and experience-based knowledge) (see e. g. Biesta, 2015: 12f). Responding to a situation in this way might lead to something that you could not see in advance.

So, when we talk about applying methods and strategies, we do not really make room for either risk or phronesis, I think. On the contrary, by applying methods, we want to get rid of everything that appears to be risky and chaotic.

The potentiality and reality of the learning situation

Michael N. W.: That is a good point. It reminds me of the paradox of education as outlined by the Norwegian pedagogue and philosopher Hans Skjervheim. He said that when a teacher realizes that his or her methods won't work with a certain student, the teacher tends to switch completely and let this student develop freely (see Skjervheim, 2002: 117). However, this does not make the situation any better because what the teacher insinuates with this reaction is that this student is a hopeless case, and therefore, lets him do what he wants. Put in the words of the philosopher Anders Lindseth, Skjervheim assumed that "From this

paradox, there is only one way out: understanding the educational activity as a dialogue between educator and the one to be educated, a dialogue in which both are shaping and shaped at the same time." (Lindseth, 2015: 64) And actually, this is what you did with Tom and Sarah – you went into dialogue with them.

However, when I say that, I also remember what you mentioned at the beginning of our dialogue when you told the story about these two students. There, you said that at the end of the school year, you saw the opportunity to invite Tom and Sarah to share their story with the class. Finally, however, you decided against it, and you stated, "I still regret that I didn't do that." For some reason, it is this statement that gives me the impression that this story still has a certain impact on you. I imagine this impact like a certain 'itching' every time you come into a similar situation, telling you, "Now is the time to try it out!" Or, to put it in other words, my impression is that this story about the end of the school year had a cliffhanger ending for you, so to speak. You could also say that this situation created a certain imbalance in you. You already mentioned that finding the right balance – e. g. between protecting oneself and daring to risk the possibility of growth, between challenging and protecting – was quite central for you in this episode. And here I am wondering whether the risk of education we are talking about also relates to a certain felt and experienced imbalance with the teacher – with the emphasis put on *felt and experienced* because the imbalance is rather intuitively felt than disclosed by a rational analysis of the respective situation. Almost like an itching spot, this felt and experienced imbalance invites being rebalanced by the teacher. And if you cannot scratch this spot, it keeps on itching, to put it metaphorically.

For example, in the situation with Tom and Sarah, there was no balance in the beginning. You mentioned that it

was also a challenging situation for you as the teacher who then kind of balanced it out. So, in more general terms, we could assume that when there is imbalance in the classroom, be it of a social or emotional nature, then it does something to the teacher. It makes itself felt, so to speak. What the situation in December did to you was that you did something with that situation too. You acted upon this 'itching' imbalance by inviting the two students for a talk, and after a while, it worked really well between the two of them. Suddenly, they could cooperate. The imbalance was rebalanced; it was not itching anymore, so to speak.

At the end of the school year, however, it was you experiencing a kind of imbalance again. Not that there was a difficult situation with the students again; rather, you saw a learning potential in that situation that could be unleashed. So, the imbalance was created within you by you realizing a difference between potentiality and reality – between what could be and what in fact was. However, this time you finally decided not to act upon this feeling of imbalance and did not go into a further transformation and learning process. Instead, you chose to take this imbalance with you. And it is here that I assume this kind of "itching" springs from this felt imbalance. In other words, this imbalance created a certain force or drive in you that you still carry with you, which makes the chances higher that the next time you come into a similar situation, you act upon it – you "scratch the spot," so to speak. This is what I meant when I said that this story had a cliffhanger ending for you.

Being present wholeheartedly

Filippa M.: I think you are definitely right, and when you say it like that, I also think there is a further important aspect revealed here. In Swedish it is called "*nærvær*", and though in English it is translated with *being present*, it does not really fit the Swedish term. In German, it would probably be Heidegger's "*Dasein*" (see 1962: 27 or 68). Maybe

it is best translated as *being in a situation wholeheartedly* (on wholeheartedness and vulnerability, see e. g. Brown, 2021).

I think you have to be present wholeheartedly in such a chaotic situation in order to be aware of and be able to handle the imbalance. With that, the general question is, How can we as teachers be present wholeheartedly in terms of listening carefully, feeling and sensing the respective situation, being open towards different ways of handling it, and at the same time, trying to understand the students' worldviews in order to open up for a way for us all to go together? To me, this is not only about vulnerability but also about being present wholeheartedly in a given situation.

Now, being present wholeheartedly in terms of being open, listening and so on, is something that you can train as a teacher, I think. However, it is not the same as learning to apply methods. For when we talk about didactical methods and strategies, we often think that people are all the same and situations are the same. Therefore, you can treat them with the same methods. This, however, is not what I mean when I say that you can train such a wholehearted attitude. Rather, what I mean is the teacher taking a stance, a worldview that allows for people to be unique and for situations to be different. The attitude I am talking about does not only imply meeting others as different subjects, but rather being intersubjective. In more metaphorical terms, this means that we meet *in-between*. And when we meet in-between, we can take our different worldviews into this *in-between space*, so to speak. There, in this space, we can focus on what is important and valuable for us all in that situation. However, in order to be able to do that, we have to put ourselves "all-in", so to speak. That is, we have to put our different worldviews and feelings into this *in-between space*. We have to be authentic and live our own position and attitude. Hence, vulnerability in this re-

spect means to *dare* to go into this in-between space. Does this make sense to you?

Taking a step back

Michael N. W.: Oh yes, it does. To me, this intersubjectivity, this *in-between space,* as you called it, seems to be quite similar to what David Bohm talks about in his theory on dialogue (see e. g. Bohm, 1996). He assumes that in a dialogue, you create a common space, a space in-between people where you meet as a whole human being, where you are authentic (see e. g. ibid.; Bohm, Factor & Garrett, 1991; Banathy & Jenlik, 2005: ix). And if you want to be authentic, you have to be vulnerable. Therefore, this concept of inter-subjectivity, that you brought up, seems quite relevant here because it opens up for authenticity, and that also includes vulnerability.

This also appears to tell us something about the risk of education or, to be more precise, about the wholehearted teacher and when he or she is not willing to risk anymore. How do I mean that? To put it bluntly: You, at the end of the semester, did not want your heart – your whole heart – to get hurt. You said to yourself, "Now it is enough for me." With that, you reveal an important aspect with regards to being a teacher in general. For example, when it comes to this wholeheartedness, then I think of my student teachers: When they do their teaching practice in their first semester, they have little experience, but they mean well with their pupils. They do this practice wholeheartedly. However, as a matter of course, they soon come into situations that overchallenge them and feel too risky for them. What they do then, in metaphorical terms, is take a step back. By taking a step back, however, they are not in the situation anymore with their full presence because otherwise they would be afraid to get hurt. Not physically, but in their role as a teacher. What you described in your case says something essential about this risk of education from Biesta, I think.

It seems to explain why teachers, at a certain point, take a step back and why they do not dare anymore to stand in that situation wholeheartedly. For it is their 'whole heart' that is at stake then, and they do not want to risk that.

Choosing away methods

Filippa M.: When you put it like that, then it reminds me of this image of being a teacher, where you deliberately do not bring in yourself as a person and where you understand being a teacher as nothing more than a professional work. To me, it is like ignoring something about yourself, like you go into this professional role and after teaching, you go back to who you are. I think such a view of being a teacher is quite problematic because it does not recognize this wholeheartedness and the risk that comes with it as something positive.

In contrast to that, the role of the teacher, as we have discussed it here so far, is completely different from that image. Going into the teaching situation with your whole person, as who you are as a human being, was a central aspect of the teacher's role as we outlined it. That does not mean that you are unprofessional, but sometimes such a stance resembles not being a professional teacher in terms of not sticking to methods and strategies and not keeping your students at a distance. Therefore, I think we need ways to talk about such questions, like what it means to be professional and ethical. This is not a matter of didactics but of philosophy, I assume. We need philosophy in order to be able to talk about different teaching approaches.

Folk high school pedagogy as worldview interpretation

Michael N. W.: What comes to my mind when you say that is the approach from Ran Lahav. Lahav is a renowned philosophical practitioner, and he understands philosophical practice as *worldview interpretation* (see Lahav, 1995). In simple terms, the basic assumption of his approach is that we all have our own philosophy of life. Not in terms of a coherent theory, however, but expressed in our feelings,

values, beliefs and attitudes (see ibid.: 4f). Sometimes we do not realize the philosophy behind these feelings, values and so on; that is, we are not always fully aware of our worldview. By means of philosophical practice, as Lahav suggests, our worldviews can be challenged and by that, we can become aware of it. Once aware of our worldview, we can make changes to it.

In fact, what you did with Sarah and Tom could be understood as worldview interpretation. You challenged them in their worldview interpretation, that is, how they interpreted the world. Consequentially, they realized what it was in their worldviews that did not work any longer in that particular situation, and, after a while, they made changes accordingly.

When you now suggest creating philosophical spaces or arenas in order to talk about questions of professionalism, then that too seems to relate to worldview interpretation. Since what you are suggesting here is actually an arena where teachers can be challenged in their personal and professional worldviews, for example, by asking, How can we dare to stand in a situation wholeheartedly?

Filippa M.: In this respect, my impression of teachers in primary school is that they become easily afraid in their own arena since there are so many different people who have questions for them, who have a say on what they are doing, who criticize the teachers' professional work. Be it parents, politicians and so on. Folk high school, on the other hand, is a place where you are not questioned and doubted as much as a teacher. I talked to so many teachers from the regular school system who worry "Is everyone happy with my decisions, or will somebody call me later on?", and so on. In contrast to that, teaching at a folk high school has kind of its own framing.

Michael N. W.: Do you think it is easier in folk high school to open up a space for exploring the teacher's worries in terms of vulnerability and the risks that can be taken?

Being recognized as a human being

Filippa M.: Yes, I think so, due to the folk high school's tradition of *Bildung* (see e. g. Ohrem & Haddal, 2011). That is, examining who you are is already a recognized part of education there. For the folk high school teachers I have met, it was very important to let their students investigate who they are. These teachers would integrate questions like "Who are you? Can you tell me something about your life story?" into their teaching. And I agree with them that it is more important for the students to get to know who they are rather than learn something standardized from a syllabus. Learning to know who you are is essential in order to get to know something or someone in general. In that sense, these teachers risk something with their students. And that "something" that is risked is about *being recognized as a human being*. In this sense, it would – probably – be easier at a folk high school to create such an arena where you can further investigate your worldview and the kind of risk we were talking about.

Know thyself

Michael N. W.: What you were describing now dealt with the importance for the students to gain self-knowledge. However, what you also pointed out now – even though maybe more implicitly – was the relevance of the Socratic "Know thyself" for the teacher as well (see e. g. Gallagher, 1992: 198). The teacher, who has to engage in self-reflection and self-investigation in order to know who he or she actually is – not only as a teacher, but also as a person, as a human being. Only when you get going with that does it become easier to be a teacher in the sense that you dare to stand in a situation wholeheartedly.

Filippa M.: Very straight to the point. And maybe also a good point to finish up our dialogue?

Michael N. W.: I agree. Let us stop here. Thank you very much for the inspiring conversation!

3. Epilogue

In this final section of the present chapter, central aspects, perspectives and insights that came forward in the previous dialogue are summarized. The intention here is not to analyze what has been said but rather to give a condensed overview of essential elements that were developed during the conversation.

With this in mind, we can say that in the previous dialogue, Biesta's expression "the beautiful risk of education" (Biesta, 2013) was reflected and approached from different angles as well as illustrated by means of a conflict situation between two students. As this situation unfolded, however, the two students not only *learned to live together in dissonance*, so to speak, but they also *connected their worldviews* and became learning partners and friends. In order to make this happen, Filippa, as the teacher of this class, had to *take certain educational risks* without knowing in advance whether her interventions would play out well and resolve the conflict.

Hence, in the previous dialogue, *consciously taking risks* in pedagogical settings – or consciously refraining from taking them – was assumed to be an integral part of a folk high school teacher's responsibility and, consequentially, of good folk high school pedagogy. In the further course of the conversation, being able to take such risks or not, that is, responding to them in a responsible way, also appeared to depend on whether a teacher can *be present in the respective situations wholeheartedly*. This wholeheartedness is not a question of methods or pedagogical tools. On the contrary, it means *that one dares to be vulnerable*

as a teacher and takes the chances that the situation offers. When examining this aspect of wholeheartedness, the dialogue partners concluded that it presupposes two further aspects. On the one hand, that the vulnerability of the teacher in terms of taking risks requires *having trust into the respective situation* – which is not the same as having control. On the other hand, this vulnerability and wholeheartedness requires first and foremost that one *recognize those involved as human beings*. That is, to have a genuine interest in the Other – your students – where you encounter them with questions like "*Who are you? Can you tell me something about your life story?"* In this way, the humanness and uniqueness of students can come forward, which makes it easier to work with *Bildung*-related issues.

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The Crux of Being a Folk High School Teacher

Kjetil Hareide Hallre & Michael Noah Weiss

1. Prologue

Kjetil Hareide Hallre and Michael Noah Weiss met for the first time at a seminar for newly employed teachers at Ringerike folk high school, where they went on a philosophical walk together. Their paths crossed again at the University of South-Eastern Norway in the teacher program "Folk high school pedagogy." Since both of them had a certain interest – not to say admiration – for each other's work, it felt natural to invite Kjetil to the following dialogue, which took place on a snowy December morning in 2021. At that time, Kjetil was in his seventh year as a folk high school teacher. He teaches music and runs two different courses at his school, one for musical theatre and one for music performance, band and songwriting. He worked as a music teacher and musician for many years before he found his home at folk high school.

In the following dialogue, a situation is presented and investigated in which a folk high school teacher definitely does not end up on a daily basis. Nevertheless, similar situations can occur to anyone since they are part of life. During the conversation, the dialogue partners assumed that stepping out from one's conventional role as a teacher and

just being a human being is an essential dimension of folk high school pedagogy. At first, this might appear like a paradox because just being a human being seems to strip off the teacher's professionalism. And what should a teacher be if not professional? In the further course of the conversation, however, it turns out that this paradox – this *crux of the folk high school teacher*, as it will be called – seems to be necessary in order to support the students in their individual *Bildung*-processes.

2. Dialogue

Michael N. W.: Kjetil, you have several years of experience as a folk high school teacher. And that experience might also be a valuable resource for our dialogue now, in which we investigate the question, "What is good folk high school pedagogy?" In order to go into this investigation, I would like to invite you to share an experience that you think represents a good example of folk high school pedagogy.

2.1. Concrete reflection

Kjetil H. H.: That is a good question and when I ponder it, there is one situation that I would like to share. In order to keep the involved persons anonymous, I will change or not disclose certain details. However, I will do that in a way that does not alter the essence of the story.

Some years back, we had one of these entertainment evenings at our school. I was about to get dressed and go to the school when I got a phone call from a teacher colleague who informed me that one of my students just received a phone call that his father had a life-threatening seizure. So, my colleague asked me whether I could come and sit with

that boy for a while. So, I went to the school and sat down with him, and we talked. At that point, he did not know much about the situation, just that his father, to whom he was very close, had this severe seizure. We sat and talked for a long time, and I remember that I felt quite inadequate as a teacher. Because what should you talk about? What could you say, and how could you help someone in such a situation? How could you give consolation? Where is your authority in terms of your teacher's role when you find yourself in such a moment in which you feel so naked and inadequate?

While we were sitting there, the boy's mom called again and told him that his father did not make it. Being in that situation as the teacher, you first of all realize that you have all these hopes, plans and dreams about what it is to be a teacher and to be skilled and knowledgeable – to be steady and stable in your position and your role. But in the face of such a big life event, you are just stripped of all that and left with just being a good human being – hopefully – or at least "the next person around". In other words, this experience stripped away my preconceptions of what I would do in a situation like that. Instead, I was trying to just float, say the right thing and just be there.

Maybe it was a flash of inspiration, but I suggested going for a walk, bringing my dog with me. So, we took a walk while it was cold and raining, talking about everything and nothing, about life, about family and dogs, and so on. Now, looking back on that experience, to me, it is an example of folk high school pedagogy because it breaks down the barrier of "I am the teacher, and you are the student" and replaces it with two human beings who try to navigate through this complicated and, at times, cruel and hard world. Just sitting in a room talking or going for a walk with a dog, it was just two people trying to swim through this sea of life, so to speak. Later, I thought that this was

one of those moments where the hierarchical structures between the teacher and the student were truly disassembled. We were just two people talking about life.

You asked, 'What is good folk high school pedagogy?' and that question might give the impression that in order to answer, you need a pedagogue. And the pedagogue does pedagogy, and that is how it all happens. However, much of the pedagogy that happened in the situation I described was not something that was done or added by a pedagogue. Rather, it was the situation as such that brought it forward. It was the situation letting me simply be a human being instead of me panic-fueled trying to get hold of some sort of hierarchical position or teacher's role. The situation made me just someone there to comfort and to talk to. I also think that this was possible due to the good relationship that the student and I had built up during the semester. Before that situation, the student and I knew each other fairly well, as student and as teacher, and as you do in a folk high school. So, when it came to that moment I was describing, the student could also feel that he could trust me and trust that I wanted the best for him. That I would be a good conversational partner for that situation. Also, going for a walk and bringing a dog enriched the human experience in that situation.

2.2. Critical reflection

From being a teacher to being human

Michael N. W.: It is a very impressive story that you have chosen. Quite in the beginning, you said that you felt "naked" when you were in that situation. As you said yourself, you were kind of stripped of all these "instruments" one eventually would expect from a pedagogue, also because of all the pedagogical knowledge you had, you felt useless at that moment. You could not use your skills and your knowledge as a resource in that situation. For me,

it is interesting that you chose this example even though it seems that you stepped out of your teacher's role. You were just a human being meeting another human being at a very challenging moment. But still, you say this is part of folk high school pedagogy.

I think I have a quite clear picture of this situation. When we now move further on in the dialogue to the next step, where the question is, "What is at stake in this experience of yours?", then what do you think is at stake? Instead of "being at stake", you could also ask what was essential in that situation, and if you took that out, then it would not be the same experience.

Navigating loss

Kjetil H. H.: If I understand the question right, I think for me as the teacher, it was about dealing with the loss of the student. The student losing his father is obviously at the core of the situation. First, the fear and the worry, and then that loss that he was facing, what life threw at him. That is so horrible and so rough. And then also, trying to navigate that in the best way possible while knowing this is not something you can fix. This is not something that you can solve. Therefore, the question rather is, what can I offer in terms of comfort, what can I offer in terms of empathy, love and sort of meaning in that moment?

Michael N. W.: I think I understand what you mean. This is also the reason why I did not ask you how you felt afterwards and so on. It is obvious how that student felt. For a human being, it is probably one of the worst situations to receive the message that one of your close ones is struggling, fighting for his or her life – and then the next message you get is that he or she did not make it. In fact, this is one of the worst scenarios that can happen. Giving comfort, being there as a human being and stepping out of your formal teacher's role, and instead just being human in the actual sense of the word – would you say those are essential

attributes of the folk high school teacher? I also ask this because these are not necessarily essential attributes that you would expect from a teacher in a conventional school. A teacher in a conventional school has a contingency plan for such situations that he or she must follow, while you were stepping out of the teacher's role and just being human instead of following certain steps of an emergency plan. Still, you were dealing with one of the most existential issues a human being can be confronted with.

Learning-for-life pedagogy

Kjetil H. H.: Yes, I think that is true. As a folk high school teacher, you are put in different situations where you should and have to step down from your pedestal as a teacher and just be there with your students. This idea goes back to Grundtvig, and it relates to an ideal of pedagogy in terms of *Bildung* (see e. g. Ohrem, 2011). The overall intention of this pedagogy is learning for life. For in the grand scheme, it does not really matter whether my students know all the different scales or can perform on stage as long as they can develop some sort of life wisdom. I think that is the true value of a folk high school, something that you would not get at a conventional school in the same way.

Being, not doing

Michael N. W.: I think here you mention something very important because with respect to the situation you described previously, there is not a solution; there are no techniques with which you can fix such a situation. You cannot say "OK, the student is really sad because of what happened to his father, and now I have to do this and that, and then the problem is solved." It is obvious that this does not work. Instead, what you did in that situation was that you were with the student and that means *being there, being present* – and not *doing* so much in the sense of a clear plan and in terms of "This is the goal! And now we have to do this and then this and then the student will be OK again". This makes me wonder about what you just said about life

wisdom. The whole *Bildung*-idea of the folk high school is obviously to support the students to develop towards a certain practical wisdom, life wisdom, life experience. However, is it that there is in fact no real curriculum or teaching plan in order to achieve that? Instead, is it *being present*, *being there authentically* which is the actual key to this situation? There is something there in that experience you shared, which is not techniques nor a teaching plan – is it just *being there*? Is that enough?

The crux of being a folk high school teacher

Kjetil H. H.: That is a very good question. I think being there authentically, as you mentioned, is a very important aspect here – being there as a whole human being and not just as someone with a teacher hat, and that is the only hat you get to see, so to speak. Sometimes in class, I put my teacher hat on, but then in the break, I take it off when I go together with my students and grab a cup of coffee and talk about the Christmas holidays or something. In these moments, you are there authentically, almost like a whole human being, apart, of course, from what you keep in your private sphere. I hope all the folk high school teachers have a working definition for themselves of what the idea of *Bildung* means to them and what we are striving towards. As a folk high school teacher, I have a clear idea of what I want: I want the best for my students in their lives and not just in music. I want them to have a thriving life and take the next step in the right direction. And I need to have an idea about the direction in which they are walking. I am aware that these are vague definitions and not square-shaped boxes in which they have to fit in. Choosing such an approach is not always easy because each student stands and starts at a different point. Nevertheless, the definition that I have is foggy enough so that the learning and development process can become a very individualized path for each student. And exactly this is the challenge and the

crux of being a folk high school teacher: that you must figure out where the students stand individually and then try to see how you can guide them towards that vague but still defined goal of *Bildung* (see e. g. Hattie & Larsen, 2020: 176).

Michael N. W.: Let us have a closer look at that goal in terms of lifelong learning. *Lifelong learning* is a term coined by Grundtvig and sometimes even related to the German term *Bildung* (see e. g. Hansen, 2007: 329f). Now, I don't want us to elaborate on a straightforward definition of *Bildung*. As you said, it is a rather fuzzy term. Nevertheless, lifelong learning in other contexts is almost used synonymously with the term *continuing education* in the sense of the acquisition of skills and knowledge over a lifespan, which also gives an idea of how learning is understood in these contexts (see e. g. Hansen, 2007: 332; Davies & Longworth, 2013: 21): There is something that you can acquire; there is something that you can get in terms of knowledge, so you become more informed, more skilled, and so on. What you were saying now stood in contrast to that specific idea of lifelong learning. Lifelong learning, according to what you said, rather resembles a *learning for life*. And that, as far as I understand it, is not necessarily about acquiring anything; rather, it is much more about developing an attitude towards life. What do you think about that?

Nuggets of wisdom

Kjetil H. H.: I think you are right, though I don't think that it is only about attitudes. Metaphorically speaking, it is about finding the nuggets everyone has on his or her way, the different nuggets of wisdom or learning to do. I don't think that you can sneak around those nuggets. And finding these nuggets, that's part of the goal, whether they are skills or doing your laundry at home or learning to deal with a conflict with a friend. Those little nuggets – in terms

of wisdom and also skills – you have to pick up, and that makes life easier. However, I think what you said about learning for life is maybe the most important aspect of picking up these nuggets, so to speak. In a sense, this is about *process vs. product – the process of life vs. the things that you have learned.*

In that respect, I think folk high school teachers differ on what they focus on. For myself, I think this learning for life is what has always driven me as a teacher. At our school, we have this definition of *Bildung:*

To become more conscious

1) about yourself, that is learning more about yourself;
2) about other people, in terms of your relationship to others;
3) about the world.

These three levels are, of course, intertwined, and we use this definition often in conversations between us teachers and the students. The students might not see themselves clearly in light of the community with the others. Some of them also have a narrow view of the world, as if it does not exist and only they themselves and what they are doing is important. In this case, we would try to help to open up a window to the world, so to speak, or help them navigate the relationships in the community at school. In short, we want them to become more cognizant of these three levels.

2.3. Theoretical reflection

I-Thou, not I-It

Michael N. W.: If we now take a look at what we just investigated concerning *Bildung* and lifelong learning and see it from a more theoretical perspective, then it is Martin Buber with his I-Thou relation who comes to mind (see Buber, 2010). An I-Thou relation is the opposite of an I-It relation. In very short terms, in an I-Thou relation you try to

see the other as a unique being, whereas in an I-It relation, you see the other just as an object. To me, Buber's concept of the I-Thou encounter seems particularly relevant for the situation you were in with this boy who just lost his father. There you stepped out of your teacher's role in order to simply be a human being – and exactly this stepping-out from your teacher's role is part of being a folk high school teacher. This appears to be a kind of paradox because it means that being a good folk high school teacher sometimes requires you to step out of this teacher's role and just be a human being. Therefore, I would like to ask you, what do you think in general of Martin Buber's I-Thou relation and its eventual relevance for folk high school pedagogy?

Meeting students differently

Kjetil H. H.: I think this concept is highly relevant. For example, when I refer to this concept as the three levels of *Bildung* that we use at our school, then I might meet one student where I know that I have to give him or her positive confirmation because I know from experience that he or she needs that. In other words, giving positive confirmation is something that helps this particular student on his or her path, while it would be something completely different that helps other students on their path. In this sense, you have to meet students very differently. However, in all these differences, there is also something common, and that is the need to be together with the students as human beings. And to just be with the students is something that we do when we have our evening shifts, for example, when the teaching time is over and the students just hang out, watching videos, playing darts or having a cup of coffee in the cafeteria. In those situations, our job is to walk around and talk to the students. In other words, there, it is about being another human being among and with them, a human being that is talking about Harry Potter or about a pet that a student just lost. In this respect, I think it is important not

to dominate such situations and talk over, like, "Here is the teacher coming in, and he will set the standards for the way we communicate with each other." Rather, as a teacher in such situations, you join such situations and conversations as an equal part, to some degree.

Michael N. W.: Have you heard about Lave and Wenger's concepts of Communities of Practice and what is called *Situated Learning* (see Lave & Wenger, 1991), which also are of relevance for folk high school pedagogy in terms of what Johan Lövgren called a "learning together" (Lövgren, 2020)? When you say that sometimes you just are together with the students in the evening, playing games and so on, then it appears that you are on the same level with the students, as you just said. However, is it really that the other students see you at that moment just as another student or still as a teacher? And if they still see you as a teacher – which I assume they do – then is there still some kind of hidden pedagogical task when you, as the teacher, go into such situations and pretend to be a student? I am aware that I formulated this question quite critically, but what do you think about it?

Eye-level relationships

Kjetil H. H.: I think it is a good question. And indeed, when I walk around and talk to the students, I want to spread positivity and be helpful, for example. This is not exactly the same at home, where I can allow myself to be more negative sometimes. At school, you are still at work, and that also means trying to be a good person and a good role model. I think as a teacher, you never get completely away from your position. Also, there are things that the students would not share with me but only with their fellow students. Whether these are things that have to do with breaking the school's rules or whether they have to do with other personal and private matters, there are certain issues they will not share with me. However, having said that, I

know that there are other teachers at the school who have in-depth conversations with their students about their love lives. In other words, there are different spheres of the students' private lives. Some of these spheres they will share with the teachers and others they won't. Based on several conversations that I have had on this issue with some students, I can say that they see you more like an uncle or an aunt or a family friend. So, you have the classroom situation where you are the teacher, but, in the evening, you are more like an older brother or a family friend, at least to a certain degree. We as teachers are grown-ups, and the students come to you with certain issues – issues they would not discuss in that way with their peers. But still, the relationship between a folk high school teacher and his or her students is more at eye level than the conventional teacher-student relation in a normal school or university.

Existential pedagogy

Michael N. W.: When you compare the folk high school teacher with an uncle or an aunt who is guiding the students, then we can ask, what is it in the relationship between an uncle and his nephew that is different than the relationship between this nephew and the nephew's cousin? For me, the difference is responsibility. And here, we can bring in what is called existential pedagogy. Responsibility is a key theme in the works of some representatives of existential pedagogy, like Viktor Frankl (see e. g. 2000: 29) or Tone Sævi (see 2015), who described it more in terms of response-ability. And with response-ability, generally speaking, they mean to respond to a given situation in the best way you can. Do you think that responsibility, understood in this way, can explain a bit more the difference between you as the teacher in that room playing dart with your students compared to the students playing dart only among themselves?

Being responsible in different ways

Kjetil H. H.: I think that is a very good point. And when you say responsibility, then I do not only think of the responsibility towards the students that I have. I also think of the responsibility that I have towards the school in terms of loyalty. For example, I have to make sure that the students are not doing things that would ruin the reputation of the school or that they burn down the house, to put it bluntly. There are certain responsibilities that rest on my shoulders in the same way as they do in my household, where I also have specific responsibilities. I have specific responsibilities towards my one-month-old son and other responsibilities towards my dog. To sum it up, I think responsibility is an important part of the puzzle.

Michael N. W.: I think this is a good closing word to our dialogue. Though we did not use so much time, we came pretty far nonetheless. Thank you very much for sharing and contributing, Kjetil.

3. Epilogue

In the beginning of the previous dialogue, Kjetil shared an experience about a situation that was beyond the normal duties of his profession, but still he felt responsible for the student that was concerned. Not knowing how to "navigate" the loss the student faced, he had the impression that he had been stripped of his professionalism. He felt that there was nothing left but to step out from his role as teacher and be in that situation just as a human being, together with another human being who had a hard time.

In the dialogue, the idea came up that sometimes you can only be a good teacher if you transcend your role as a teacher, which at the same time also was perceived as a paradox. In order to better understand this paradox, the difference between *being* and *doing* was examined closer:

While *doing* was associated with certain pedagogical techniques, exercises and methods – something that was out of place in that situation – *being,* on the other hand, was meant in the sense of engaging in the situation just as you are and with no clues or plans or quick fixes because the situation cannot be *fixed* anyway. In other words, responsibility in such a situation only can come to the fore by responding to the situation authentically, as a human being. Taking on a role, like the role of a teacher, would appear to be unauthentic. Hence, stepping out from your teacher role does not mean to put aside the responsibility that you have as a teacher.

In the further course of the dialogue, it was also explicated how the responsibility of the teacher relates to *Bildung* as the overall goal of a folk high school. In this respect, it was pointed out that good folk high school pedagogy deals with making the students more conscious of a) themselves in terms of self-knowledge, b) other people in terms of one's relationships to others, and c) the world in general.

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No fish pudding

Steinar Bryn & Michael Noah Weiss

1. Prologue

Steinar Bryn, the dialogue partner of the following dialogue, is without doubt a known and renowned folk high school pedagogue, as was his great-grandfather, Lasse Traedal, who established four folk high schools, while his grandfather, Olav Bryn, has given lectures in every municipality in Norway.

In 1973, Steinar was a student at the Nansen Academy after he had written his thesis in high school about Kristian Schjelderup, who, together with Anders Wyller, were the founders of this academy (see Mikkelsen, 2015: 2017f). In 1935, Kristian Schjelderup lived in Germany, and upon his return to Norway, he worked to establish an academy for peace and reconciliation. In 1976, Steinar came back to the academy as a teacher. Except for his time studying in the US, he has spent his entire working life there, with the last 25 years promoting peace and reconciliation.

Nansen Academy represents a somewhat special interpretation of the folk high school idea as well as of life at a folk high school. What is meant by that is exemplified in a somewhat out-of-the-ordinary project on peacebuilding, which Inge Eidsvaag initiated and Steinar led for several years. And it is this project, called Nansen Dialogue, that is examined more closely in the following dialogue.

Though the project is of individual character, it points out the unique pedagogical opportunities that folk high schools have in general and that are not available at other educational institutions. For the developmental process that happened with the participants of this project, the intimate life, which implies living together over a longer period of time, turned out to be of pedagogical significance.

Furthermore, in the course of this conversation, a dialogical room is outlined consisting of four "walls". How these four "walls" provide for a good dialogue is investigated closer in the following dialogue, which took place on Zoom on a grey November day in 2021.

2. Dialogue

Michael N. W.: Steinar, you have organized and run a peacebuilding project that we will take a closer look at now, in order to investigate the question, "What is good folk high school pedagogy?" To start our dialogue, can you first describe the project, its intentions, background and challenges?

2.1. Concrete reflection

Steinar B.: Yes. Norway hosted the Winter Olympics in 1994, with Lillehammer as the main site of these Olympic Games. That brought us into contact with Sarajevo. Sarajevo hosted the Winter Olympics in 1984, but in 1994, the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina was in full explosion. It was a brutal, brutal war. We at Nansen Academy asked ourselves whether there would be anything we could do. We had dormitories, we had dining facilities, we could free up rooms, and so on. With financial support from the Norwegian Church Aid, the Norwegian Red Cross, and the Nor-

wegian Foreign Ministry, we freed up 16 rooms, and, in the fall of 1995, we invited 16 potential leaders from the conflicting parties in Bosnia-Herzegovina. They came here for three months for what I call "a long conversation". When people have a conflict, they are often called to a "meeting", and the meeting can last for hours, but that is it. In contrast to that, three months is a long time. It is in fact such a long time that I, in 2021, have trouble even imagining what we actually did in these three months.

When we started, we thought it would be a one-year project, but it developed, it continued, and it improved. Finally, it went on for almost 25 years. Altogether, probably 3000 people from the former Yugoslavia have been on my veranda, here at my house.

Michael N. W.: I would say it is an amazing sign of success that 3000 people went to this "conversation", as you call it, in Lillehammer at the Nansen Academy. Can you say more about what you did because a conversation lasting for three months is pretty much out of the ordinary, isn't it?

Steinar B.: Before I say something about what I did together with them when they were here, I have to mention what I did before they came. As I interviewed and prepared them for their journey, I spent physical time with them. I organized and provided them all with visas so they could travel. During and after the war in the former Yugoslavia, cities were divided, communities were divided. Literally, in cities like Mostar, people wouldn't cross the bridge to the other side of town. It was hard for people from Kosovo, for people from Bosnia to leave their countries due to the visa regulations. The possibility of travel was obviously an incentive in these first years.

When they came here then, I created and offered them what I call a *dialogue room*. You can imagine this space consisting of four walls holding this space together, like the

four walls of a room. Metaphorically speaking, one wall was *educational*, and by that, I mean lectures on democracy, conflict resolution, and Human Rights. Another wall was what I call c*ultural.* That is, we would go to many concerts in town, we would go to museums, we would do cultural walks, that is, visit cultural sites. The third wall I call *social* in terms of social informal interactions like inviting them home to my veranda or going to a specific place in town that we frequently visited. The fourth wall then was *physical*, like teaching them how to do cross-country skiing. And there is something fantastic about cross-country skiing: It is so difficult when you do it for the first time, but it is nevertheless easy to learn. So, the first time you do a three-kilometer tour you fall 100 times. However, the second time you do it, you only fall ten times. The third time you do it, you fall three times. Hence, the idea behind the physical wall was that people could get the feeling of learning how to master something, like cross-country skiing. We in fact started skiing in circles around the school …

When these walls were in place – educational, cultural, social, and physical – they created a good dialogue space. Therefore, when you talk about folk high school pedagogy, you can say that this project could not have worked that well in a hotel or at a conference center. Rather, it is the folk high school itself that offers this unique opportunity for people to meet other human beings as a whole. For example, one man, who later became the head of the supreme court in Bosnia-Herzegovina, had kitchen duty at the Nansen Academy. It was probably the only regular kitchen duty in his life, but he had that kitchen duty together with his enemies from the war at home. Living together for 24 hours a day and 7 days a week is something completely different from negotiations where you can withdraw or where you can sit with your mobile phone talk-

ing to your own people and then go back into the negotiation room, etc., etc. Contrary to that, in our project, people would even fall in love with someone from the other side because of the space that folk high school provide.

There were many incidents that I could mention, but the development pattern was that people arrived with an ethnic identity. And that identity could be very strong, like "I am a Serb", "I am a Croat", "I am a Macedonian", and so on. Many would sit together with their own people, and they would hang out with their own people. After some time, we would hang up a basketball hoop on a wall outside the school since we knew that basketball was very popular in the former Yugoslavia. It didn't take long, and the people would start throwing the ball, trying to hit the basketball hoop. And they would admire each other's ability to hit the hoop, independently of their ethnic background. Hence, they discovered that people could have respect for each other, not because of their ethnic identity but because of their other capacities and other aspects of their personalities. There was a shift of attitude from "I hate you because you are a Serb" to "I hate you as a Serb, but I respect you as a great basketball player."

Also, we would go to jazz concerts, and course participants would discover, "Wow, we both like Jazz." Some people even played an instrument themselves. The first time they played, the other ethnic group might not listen. However, after a while, you realize that if somebody is playing Mozart, there is in fact not such a big difference between the Serbian or the Croatian way of playing Mozart. They would also discover that there is not such a big difference between the Serbian and Croatian ways of cross-country skiing. And there is not such a big difference between the Serbian and Croatian ways of throwing a basketball into the hoop. Therefore, I would confront them and ask, "What is the difference between the ethnic identities?"

And they would say, "Well, you know, it has nothing to do with this, and it has nothing to do with that." And so on. Finally, I would say, "Well, what does it have to do with then?" Actually, my personal answer to that question is that it has to do with loyalty towards your own group. To be Serbian means to be loyal to the Serbian cause when the Serbs are threatened. And to cherish when Serbs are recognized, for example, whether it is Novak Djokovic playing tennis or after a movie when you see the credits and there is a Serbian name among the credits.

However, there is hardly anything in terms of behavior or habits that is specifically ethnic. I can tell you many stories about that. Like one participant, who in the first five years of his life was a Serb. He lived in Belgrade with his mother, spoke Serbian because his mother was Serbian. And then, after five years, he was kidnapped by his grandmother and brought to Kosovo. There he became an Albanian. He got a new name, he got a new mother tongue, Albanian. Today, he is one of the recognized intellectuals in Kosovo.

I think the greatest success of our project in Lillehammer at the folk high school was that we broke down the ethnic principle as the only organizing principle of the world, so to speak. With this ethnic principle, I mean that people vote according to their ethnicity; they send their kids to day care according to their ethnicity; they marry according to their ethnicity, etc., etc. Even in Norway, we had these strange stories in villages that people on the other side of the mountain, in the other valley, would be more primitive. For example, that the people on the other side of the mountain would only have one eye, located on their forehead. These stories come from this troll mythology. However, when people literally meet, they realize this propaganda-type of enemy image that they have been taught at home, in schools and so on, is not correct. When the participants in our course arrived, they were so sure that their grand-

parents and parents, their politicians, their journalists and so on, were closer to the truth than those from the other side. They thought that growing up in Belgrade gave you a more truthful view of the conflict. However, the people in Zagreb believed the same. The people in Zagreb, too, believed that they would have a more proper understanding of the conflict situation. Again, people in Pristina would say the same. During their stay here at Nansen Academy, however, they would discover that their belief in holding the truth was something they all had in common and that they were all self-righteous. They all believed that they knew better than the other ethnic groups. During conflicts and wars, there is a dehumanization of the enemy. During their stay at Nansenskolen, they often experienced learning unknown parts of their own history from others. It was a process of humanizing the enemy.

Michael N. W.: If I understand you right, then these people came from different contexts – cultural and ethnic contexts – and what you did was to put them into a context that was new for them all. You put them into a school where they had to live together for three months. This living-together involved very practical and actually mundane activities, like washing the dishes, visiting concerts together, and so on. Would you say that these practical, mundane activities contributed essentially to the outcome of that project or to what they felt when they were going home again?

Steinar B.: Without doubt. I mentioned when people had kitchen duty together with the people they were in conflict with, then they had at least to cooperate with them when it was about cleaning the dishes.

Another example of such mundane but nevertheless existential cooperation is the following: Once, out of necessity, I had to put a Serb and an Albanian together in the same sleeping room because we simply did not have

enough rooms. The Albanian arrived early in the morning, while the Serb arrived quite late. The next morning, both came to me and told me that it was impossible to stay in the same room. I answered, "Yes, I understand that. We in fact had a problem last night. We were short of rooms, but I will work on that." I think this happened on a Monday. On Wednesday, they approached me again, asking, "How is it going with finding different rooms for us?" I repeated that I was still working on it but promised that I would fix this. Then Saturday comes and I go to them and ask, "How are things going?" And then they suddenly answered, "Well, we'll survive." In fact, the two of them became very good friends, and they are still very good friends twenty years later. Maybe it was the joint process of trying to get a new room that united them.

Michael N. W.: In other words, the practical things we do in life help us to see each other from a new perspective. However, would you also say that these things or activities are contributing to some kind of peace building?

Steinar B.: You can definitely say that. You know, this is the so-called *contact hypothesis*, which is pretty well known (see Allport, 1954). In general terms, this hypothesis says that under appropriate conditions, intergroup contact can significantly reduce prejudices with the group members (see ibidem). There is a lot of research documenting that when people have contact, they improve the quality of their contact (see Pettigrew & Troop, 2006). Of course, one could argue that such activities alone are not enough to make peace in the world. And surely, they are not enough, but they are definitely a helpful step along the way.

So, what did Nansen Academy do in this respect? We created a specific meeting space that was not just about coming to a lecture and listening together. You can go to the University of Oslo, the University of Bergen and lis-

ten to a lecture, and when you leave the lecture, you have not necessarily met any of the other listeners. In the folk high school environment, this is very different. After a lecture, for example, you would hang out in the school's living room or you would go to a common meal where you eat together, and then you clean up together after the meal. The environment of a folk high school also allows for taking walks. Like in Lillehammer, you have many nice walks, for example, along the river or along the lake. And even on the main street, there is quite a cozy and almost fairytale-like atmosphere.

I mentioned to you the use of the physical space, which I called the fourth wall of the dialogue space. One thing that I deliberately used in this respect was the sauna. For example, there was one Serbian woman and one Muslim woman from the same town. The Muslim one had escaped earlier to Norway, so she was actually recruited as a refugee in Norway, while the Serbian woman was still living in their hometown. I noticed that they did not talk at all with each other in the beginning, and in the first few weeks, there was no communication between them. As it turned out, both of them liked to go to the sauna. Once, I went to the basement of the school and turned on the sauna and left without knowing who would go there that night. It was the two of them. The ice between them broke in the sauna, and not in the lecture hall.

Another physical experience was walking down the 1000 steps of the ski jump together. This was challenging; the view expanded the horizon, but you also needed a narrow view of the next step. The process of shifting views and the steep walk obviously connected people.

Singing was also something important. Back in the old days in Yugoslavia under Tito, Tito wanted to create one nation out of the different people living there. And there were three important practices. First, to teach everyone the

Serbo-Croatian language. Second, sports were very important. The Yugoslavian people were supposed to become the best ball players in basketball, handball, in volleyball, etc. The third thing, then, was singing. They learned and knew a lot of songs. However, when I invited participants to my home, and if I turned on the music too soon, nobody would sing. It was very much about the right timing and finding the right moment. When I found the right timing, they would start to sing, and then they would start to dance. And these dance sessions were just fabulous. I think I have rebuilt the floor on my veranda three times since we started with that project. There was actually a woman who wanted to make a documentary about this project, and she made a big deal out of filming the floor. For her, it was the evidence of co-existence, so to speak.

2.2. Critical reflection

Social and existential pedagogy

Michael N.W.: That sounds amazing! And now, when you tell me all that, I think I have a good impression of what this project was about. I can even imagine some of its concrete situations quite vividly. When we go over to the question now, namely, "What is this project essentially about?", then there are two themes that come to my mind. The first one is *social pedagogy* and the second one is *existential pedagogy.* Obviously, all of these participants learned something during their stay at your school. However, what was it that they learned – not only in the sense of mere knowledge? What was it that was at stake in this project, on the one hand? On the other hand, what was it that the participants could develop and take with them?

The hidden curriculum

Steinar B.: First of all, I think that we had enough time. We had time enough to wait for respect to be built in other arenas of life than the ethnic aspect. It might sound stereotypical because there always are exceptions, but it is very

hard to make Serbs and Croats respect each other as Serbs and Croats. To explain what I mean, let me use myself as an example: What is Norwegian about me? How much do I have in common with a Norwegian fisherman? I don't even know how to kill a fish. How much do I have in common with a Norwegian farmer? I probably have more in common with Yugoslavian teachers than I have with a lot of people in Norway. To discover that your ethnicity is so much less of your personality than what you think when you live only among your own people was probably one of the things that were at stake in this project. Metaphorically speaking, when you only swim in your own swimming pool, you start to think that this is the only swimming pool there is. When the participants came to the Nansen Academy, they literally went into another swimming pool. As an ironic detail, the women who participated in this project have learned that in Norway, yes means yes and no means no. They came from a culture where no could mean maybe. So, during the project, we had to sit down and talk about gender interaction. That means respect for the opposite gender, for both men and women. This is a bit about what we could call *the hidden curriculum*. A curriculum that is not taught explicitly but nevertheless part of that living experience at the school. People in folk high schools are quite casual. Casual in the way they behave, casual in the way they dress, and so on. In contrast to that, the people from the former Yugoslavia would dress very formally, while the Norwegian students would sometimes come to breakfast in something undefinable. I exaggerate now, but you know what I mean. Nevertheless, that kind of informal, social interaction, also with teachers, was a discovery for many of these course participants. Then, on the other hand, they simply knew more than the Norwegian students. They knew more names of rivers in Europe; they knew more names of cities in Europe, and so on. When they ar-

rived in Lillehammer, they brought with them more factual knowledge, while the Norwegian students could talk about the focus of their education being more on personality development and critical thinking.

The hidden curriculum I mentioned has to do with social interaction, self-image presentation but also with relaxing. I think the course participants from Yugoslavia were in a way shocked by how relaxed the Norwegian students were, for example, in the way they got up in the morning. The best word I have for that is the hidden curriculum. In order to make you understand better, I have to put it like this: From 1995 until 2012, I literally bought 16 beds at the beginning of the school year. So, I was responsible for filling 16 beds with students from the former Yugoslavia. We got permission from the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training to register these students as short-term course participants. Normally, according to the Folk High School Act (2003), you were required to offer short-term seminars as so-called open seminars, something we could not offer since we invited people directly. In the Folk High School Act, there was also a regulation that said only ten percent of the students who came from outside the European Economic Area were allowed. We got an exception from this regulation. Since we were granted these exceptions, it somehow meant that these course participants from the former Yugoslavia were regular folk high school students.

For about 7 years, we had these 3-months seminars. Then we became more well known. At the beginning of the project, we needed help recruiting enough people for each seminar. We needed help from the Norwegian Church Aid, the Helsinki Committee, and from the Red Cross in order to find people we could invite. And I would always travel down to the former Yugoslavia and meet them before they came to Lillehammer. That was very important. So,

when they came to Lillehammer, I was a kind of confidant, somebody they would recognize. When they arrived, some would say, "Oh, there is that guy that we met last month." After 7 years, we could invite, let's say, the mayor of a town or the director of a school. However, those people could not come for 3 months due to their duties at home. They could only come for a shorter period of time. The reason why we had this high number of participants over the years was because around 2003, we started with shorter seminars, like eight weeks, four weeks, and then three weeks. In the last five years, the seminars lasted for one week, but we could have 20 seminars within a year.

When we had these shorter seminars, they were more targeted. For example, it would be teachers from one high school because some of the high schools in the former Yugoslavia were divided. They would have a Bosnian shift in the morning and a Croat shift in the afternoon, with eight teachers in each shift. These 16 teachers would come together in Lillehammer at Nansen Academy, and the Croat teachers would not know the Bosnian teacher, and vice versa. The Croats, who had the morning shift, left and closed the building before the Bosnians came. I remember one specific question from when these teachers were in Lillehammer. The Croats asked the Bosnians, "Have these days at the Nansen Academy changed your perception of us?" And then a Bosnian teacher answered, "No, because I did not have any perception of you previously. I did not know you worked in the same building as me." Two of the teachers who worked in the same building had gone to school together as children, as it turned out. However, they did not know about each other – that they were teachers at the same school.

In Norway, we don't understand what a divided community is. A divided community means that I can today meet a 25-year-old Albanian from Pristina who has never

in his life spoken to a Serb. This is a little bit like in the South of the United States, where you had one toilet for white people and one toilet for black people. It is the same in Kosovo, where there are not many public toilets used by both Serbs and Albanians. Simply because they live so divided. However, this is voluntary. You can say that in Kosovo and in Bosnia-Herzegovina, you have areas with voluntary apartheid.

Michael N. W.: I see what you mean. Let us once again return to this term you used – the hidden curriculum. What you described about the seminars – even if it was just a one-week seminar – was that astonishing meetings between people happened. As you said, some of them were actually working at the same school but had never met before. And all of a sudden, at Nansen Academy, they could see each other. Seeing each other in the sense that they could not only meet but recognize the other, so to speak. And in this respect my question now is, when you use the term *hidden curriculum,* what do you mean by that? You already mentioned some aspects, like social interaction and so on. But is the hidden curriculum something that you have in the back of your mind like a blueprint that you can describe, or is it something more tacit that you rather can sense and feel than put into words?

Leading and learning by example

Steinar B.: The hidden curriculum is very tacit in the sense that we don't talk so much about it. In fact, we hardly talk about it at all. It is more something that the students observe and experience. In a way, you could say that the hidden curriculum is a form of situated learning in terms of leading and learning by example (see Lave & Wenger, 1991). In this respect, I can also say that it has become very important for me personally to have these seminars at the Nansen Academy. I had some groups stay in a hotel in Lillehammer, and that did not have the same effect. The

importance of being and staying in the building of Nansen Academy, to stay there with other students, made that hidden curriculum visible for the participants. Contrary to this, the participants missed that hidden curriculum when they stayed in a hotel. There, it was not visible to them.

2.3. Theoretical reflection

Strangification

Michael N. W.: What you are describing now somehow reminds me of a specific methodology in the philosophy of science. And here, I have to mention that a main question in philosophy of science is, "What is knowledge?" Now, this methodology I am thinking of was introduced by Fritz Wallner, a professor at the University of Vienna. Wallner said that in order to develop knowledge – knowledge, here, meant in terms of understanding and not in terms of mere information – you have to take an entity out of its familiar, original context and transfer and reframe it into an unfamiliar, strange context (see Wallner, 1992). By observing how this entity is behaving in the new context – and it probably does in different, maybe even unexpected ways – you get a better understanding of this entity. This methodology is called *strangification,* and it does not only work with certain objects but also with people (see e. g. Greiner, 2003). When traveling to a foreign culture, for example, one is leaving his or her familiar context and getting into a new one. In this way, he or she can become aware of his or her original attitudes, values, beliefs and so on. As an oversimplified example: Someone from Asia, who is used to eating food with chopsticks, comes to Europe and gets served vegetable soup (see Slunecko, 2008: 189). Soon this person will find out that trying to eat the soup with chopsticks makes no sense. In other words, this person is realizing that one of his or her implicit assumptions, namely that food is eaten with chopsticks, becomes obsolete. In this way, that

person gets a better understanding not only of the foreign culture but of his or her own.

With respect to this method of strangification, it seems that what you did in this project was to take people out of their familiar context and bring them into a new context, namely the Nansen Academy. In this new context, they would live for several months or weeks together with their enemies. Due to that change of context, you can become aware of who you are, you can understand better who the other actually is. You also become aware of the way in which you previously saw the other, in this case, your enemy. And by that, you may realize what is essential and not essential for you with regards to your own identity and the identity of the other.

The narcissism of small differences

Steinar B.: I think I have an example for that. And in this respect, I want to bring in Freud's *narcissism of small differences* (see Freud, 1991: 131 & 305). I don't know how it is for you, but I can definitely hear a difference between Swedish and Norwegian folk music. Someone from the Balkans, however, cannot. And I assume that if you hear music from Albania and Serbia, then it would sound very similar to you too. For them, however, it is very different.

There was one funny incident in this respect: Back in the 1990s, we would have a lot of that typical Norwegian food. One dish we would serve was fish pudding. It was at a closing ceremony before they went home again when one Albanian said, "Norway was a nice place to visit, but I am so glad that I am going home to a country where we have fish without pudding and pudding without fish." In Belgrade, they would use the Norwegian term for fish pudding, which is *fiskepudding*, as the password to get into their computer system … Sometimes we had this kind of food, and you could not really tell what it was. You could see the participants dissecting it on their plates, wondering

whether it was fish or meat. In fact, they made a lot of jokes about our food. And it was by means of such small, mundane incidents that the participants discovered what unites them and not only what is different between them. They had something in common different from Norwegians.

Another thing was noise because they were so used to noise. And when they came to Lillehammer and walked out in the street in the winter – the time when people mostly stay at home – the streets were empty, and there was almost no noise. It is a literally peaceful atmosphere. Experiences like this with the noise strengthened the unity between them. So, when they lived in their own bubble – when they swam in their own swimming pool, to refer to the metaphor I used previously – separation, difference and segregation were the norm. However, switching their context by coming here to Nansen Academy in Lillehammer, made them explore their commonalities as human beings when confronted with the Norwegian way of life, which was new for all of them.

These environments I am talking about here cannot only be found in Lillehammer. Almost all folk high schools are in a rural, almost isolated location, and I think that some other folk high schools do have the same potential in this respect. If we had done this project in Oslo, however, there would have been too much distraction. In contrast to that, when you are at the Nansen Academy in Lillehammer, it is a waste of money to buy a pedometer because you take so few steps. You just walk a hundred meters to the dining hall, you just walk a hundred meters to the lecture hall, and so on. Everything you need is in one place. And this is the same for most folk high schools. They are far from where the action is, to put it bluntly. I assume this also contributed to the successful outcome of the project because it made people stay more together.

I-Thou encounters

Michael N. W.: When you are telling all this, I think of what the philosopher Martin Buber defined as the *I-Thou encounter* (see Buber, 2010). By that, I mean that under such circumstances, it was suddenly possible to see the other not only in terms of an *I-It relation*. That is me and the enemy, and the enemy is something abstract. Rather, I and the other in terms of a unique meeting between human beings. This unique meeting, this I-Thou encounter, was possible because everything was reduced to essentials. By that, I mean the participants had this life at the school; they had their rooms and their beds; they were washing the dishes; they were singing together, listened to lectures together, and so on. Also, when you say that folk high schools are located in more remote areas, then this obviously contributes to a focus on the basics, on the essential. And it is this that makes an I-Thou encounter even between enemies possible. I don't know whether you agree, but this is what comes to mind when I see what you described by means of Martin Buber's philosophical approach.

Dialogical truth

Steinar B.: I think you are on to something. I-Thou is a meeting where you can say in a way that you are exploring a kind of dialogical truth. The problem with these groups that came was that whatever had happened at home, they had different stories and narratives about it. If the question was, who shot first, then one side would say to the other, "You shot first!", while the other side would say the opposite. Let me give you a concrete example: In 1991, there was a poisoning scandal in Pristina. If you were to fly to Pristina today and you step off the plane and ask the first person you meet, "Is it true there was a poison scandal in Pristina in 1991?" and that person answers, "Yes! The authorities were deliberately releasing poison into schools. Children got poisoned, and I experienced it myself," then you know you talk to an Albanian. However, if that person

answers, "Are you crazy? Do you believe in that rubbish that the authorities would poison children? It did not happen," then you know you talk to a Serb. The Serbs and Albanians have completely different interpretations in this respect. The Serbs assume that the Albanians know that they are playing a game. In other words, the Serbs assume that the Albanians know that they are lying, which is even a double loss of respect. "Not only are you lying", the Serbs would think, "but you are making up a story that is so sick that we can only despise you." The Albanians, on the other hand, think the Serbs were informed beforehand so that they could keep their children at home from school and away from the poison. For them, this was the explanation why no Serbian kid was hospitalized. In short, both sides believe they hold the truth, and both sides also believe that the other side also knows the same truth, but they are denying it.

After they had built up some mutual respect in other arenas here at Nansen Academy, the participants would talk about this incident, the poison scandal. So, one of the Albanians was telling how he experienced this incident. And at that moment, one Serb said quite shocked, "You really believe we poisoned you?!? Now I understand why you hate us!" Up to this moment, he was all his life convinced that the Albanians knew that the Serbs did not poison them. For this Serb, that moment was a revelation. By discovering that the Albanians really believed the Serbs had poisoned them, the whole conflict-laden situation between them and why the Albanians did not like the Serbs suddenly made sense to him. He also admitted that if he believed the Albanians had poisoned the Serbs, then he would have had the same impression of the Albanians as they had of the Serbs. This conversation was an eye-opener due to this trustful moment where they really listened to each other. If we had just come together to a meeting in Pristina to discuss this

poison scandal, it would just have been like playing table tennis, to put it like that. The arguments would have been thrown back and forth and back and forth.

Time and space

Michael N. W.: It appears that this was a moment of authentic dialogue in the sense of uncovering hidden prejudices. What I am still wondering about, though, are such "hard nuts" in terms of these very strong convictions and beliefs about the other, and how to open them up. You did not use a "nutcracker," to put it like that. Rather, what you used and offered was time and space. And by means of time and space, you were able to open these nuts. Or, in other words, by means of time and space, the participants suddenly were able to investigate universal aspects of the human condition together. Investigating universal aspects of the human condition, by the way, is a definition of the activity of philosophizing often used by philosophical practitioners (see Lahav, 2016: 20; Weiss, 2017). Examples of such universal aspects would be listening to music, eating food, but also love, responsibility, sorrow, courage, and so on – these are aspects we all can relate to, in one way or another. To discover that these aspects are something that connects and even unites us as human beings became possible for the course participants, not due to long theoretical lectures on the subject or intensive debates. No, discovering that became possible because of the actual living conditions the participants experienced at the Nansen Academy.

The role of caring

Steinar B.: I think that I can even add something here. Their idea of a professor was that they would probably sit in the auditorium, and then the professor arrives. He goes up to the podium, gives the lecture, then gives the option to ask questions. He would wait ten seconds, only to find out that there were no questions. Then he would thank everyone for attending and say, "See you next Monday in the lecture again." And then he would leave. A folk high school

teacher, however, is someone who literally eats with you. If you have a class before dinner time, then you would eat with the class after the lecture. A folk high school teacher has the duty to hang out at the school a couple of times during the week. There, you can just have informal talks with the students more or less about anything; you can have small talks, or you can talk about essential issues in life. A keyword here is *caring*; you do not only care about the content of your lecture, but you care about the students and their lives. For example, back in the 1990s, some students could be worried that they had gotten AIDS because it was such a big issue back then. And we would help them to go to a medical doctor and take a test. We would also show that this is not something shameful, but on the contrary, that it is important. My role as a facilitator in the conflict helped them to discover and see me as a person, as the human being that I am. I remember, in the first 3-month seminar, I was with the participants almost every minute. I did not leave them. That was, of course, very demanding. For example, when we invited an external lecturer, I joined the lecture with them, and I would be with them in the breaks too. It was sometimes even to the point where I was wondering what kind of breaks this program makes. Because the most important thing in this seminar was not the official program but the breaks in between. I recently asked a participant, What is your strongest memory from the Nansen Academy? And she said that you followed me to the washing machine and showed me how to use it.

If you have a 3-day conference in Norway, then people can come from quite far away because the country is so stretched geographically. Let us assume that the topic of this conference is "Integration of Refugees," and then you would have a very good discussion about the integration of refugees. The discussion is exactly why everybody came and why some traveled so far. And then the organiz-

ers come and say, "We are sorry, but we have to interrupt and stop this conversation now because the next lecture on the program will start soon. And the lecturer has travelled far in order to come here." The loyalty of the conference participants is then stronger towards the next lecturer than towards the discussion going on at that moment, and that is the actual reason they attended the conference in the first place.

I experienced several episodes in that seminar that were similar to what I just described with this fictional conference. My problem, however, always was that I never knew in advance when there would be a breakthrough in the dialogue process. I would have days where we did not have any plans, but we just had an open dialogue. Often, in the first half an hour, nothing really happens. And in that moment, it is easy to give up. You could then just suggest, "Let's take a walk", or "Let's see a movie", or just "Let's do something else." However, when I had the guts to hang in there a little longer, then often somebody would suddenly break the ice by simply sharing something that was important for that person.

As an example: One day we had scheduled a trip to a museum in Lillehammer. We had booked a guide for 1 p. m. Not long before we left, we were close to one of these breakthroughs in the dialogue. And all of a sudden, my colleague opened the door to the lecture hall and said, "Steinar, we have to hurry because we have to go to this museum." I replied, "Well, we cannot go there now. We are in the middle of an honest and serious conversation." And then my colleague says, "But the taxi is already here." So, I asked her, "Are you crazy? Is the taxi driver more important than this process here? Pay the taxi driver and the tour guide, but we cannot stop this conversation here." Making decisions like that was experienced as controver-

sial. Conflicting loyalties could cause irritation when we came too late to the meals.

We would also sometimes have conferences at the Nansen Academy where we would struggle with whether to progress according to the program or whether to progress according to the process in the room.

Learning about life cannot be squeezed into a curriculum

Michael N. W.: And here, to me, you mention something quite important with this example of the taxi driver and the tour guide. Today, in the conventional school system, it would be unthinkable to send away the taxi driver and cancel the tour. In a quite general sense, you stick not only to the rules but also to the schedule; that is, you stick to the official curriculum in the conventional education system. Whatever the official curriculum requires from you as the teacher, you stick to it. However, what you just suggested with your example is that actual learning as a human being in terms of learning about life cannot be squeezed into a curriculum. That is, into an official plan or schedule. Rather – if I understood you right – you say that things happen, and when they happen, you want to let them happen and unfold instead of just cutting them off. And such an attitude I read as a critique of the common pedagogy, which is so widespread today. In this pedagogy it is almost impossible that you don't stick to the curriculum because if you do that, you get a problem with your rector, with the parents, with the authorities.

The difference between the instrumental and the relational approach

Steinar B.: And it is not only the teacher. What you just described I call the *difference between the instrumental and the relational approach*. I am actually even lecturing about this at the police academy because the police are often forced to be instrumental. By instrumental, I mean following the handbook, like "Follow the 10 steps", and so on. If policemen make a mistake, as it, for example, happened in the terror attack in Kongsberg, someone will immediately

check whether these policemen followed the routines and whether they performed the right steps. If you, as a policeman, just use common sense and you make a mistake, you are in deep trouble.

My wife is a medical doctor, and she is facing the same challenge. Her common sense is sometimes telling her something because she has a very thorough experience with diagnostics. However, if she uses her common sense and she makes a mistake, then she gets a big problem too. That is exactly why we made all these rules and frameworks. We developed this instrumental approach so that common sense would not take over, and, in that way, we would avoid mistakes – that is the idea behind this instrumental approach. The point, however, is: A lot of people use their common sense, and they make the right decisions. In order to do so, you need to be trained in what Aristotle called practical wisdom (see e. g. Gadamer, 2004: 18f; Heidegger, 1997: 39; Biesta, 2015).

In general words, you could say we are all 'schedulized' – we follow the schedule. It is so hard for us to break free from it. It is so hard for us to just say, "Let's do something else today." In a folk high school, you still have this freedom – the freedom to follow the process and not only a predefined procedure. You don't need to follow the schedule.

Phronesis and pedagogical freedom

Michael N. W.: There was one thing that you just said that made me wonder. You brought up Aristotle's idea of practical wisdom, and you also mentioned the freedom to follow the process. With regards to that, I am wondering about the following question: Is it only to follow the process or, actually, the freedom to follow your practical wisdom (*phronesis*)? And with phronesis, which some also translate as prudence, I mean to know what to do in a given situation with regards to the good life overall (see Weiss, 2021: 248). In

other words, in the example you gave about the taxi driver and the tour guide, you realized what the situation required in which you found yourself in. You had an unexpected but important dialogue going on, and you were very close to a breakthrough. All of a sudden, your colleague comes in and tells you that you have to leave for the tour to the museum now, while your practical wisdom tells you, "No, don't do that!" The folk high school approach to education gives you the pedagogical freedom to say no and the pedagogical freedom to follow your phronesis. What do you think about that?

Phronesis and intuition

Steinar B.: I think what you said is pretty accurate. Instead of phronesis, you could maybe also use the word *intuition* (see e. g. Bajwa et al., 2015). And intuition is more than an educated guess because when you work with this process-oriented pedagogical approach all the time, you start to sense when you will have a breakthrough in the conversation. You start to know when you have succeeded with that, which is the main goal, that is, to create an open atmosphere in which people start to speak more freely and honestly about those powerful experiences. When those breakthroughs happen, it would be so stupid to let them slip away by saying, "OK, we'll continue this conversation later." The fact is, you cannot continue this conversation later because you cannot recreate that moment. Having this freedom to not stop the conversation is one of those aspects that made the whole thing a more successful project – because it took place at a folk high school. This is also why I think the folk high schools, more than others, need to fight to resist the instrumentalization going on in other educational institutions.

In this respect, I can tell you about another conflict that I had going on for quite some time. It had to do with the meals. We always had dinner at 2:30 p. m. If I came to the

dining hall with my group at 2:45 p. m., it was perceived as disrespectful towards the people working in the kitchen, not necessarily by the kitchen staff but by others. They need enough time to clean up and close in order to pick up their kids from kindergarten on time. It is easy for me to understand that their right to leave work on time is as important as whatever I am working on. But still, it was not a given that the kitchen schedule should overrule the conversation we had going on because these people had travelled all the way from the Balkans in order to have this conversation. If we invite them to dialogue and then we stop the dialogue because we are supposed to go and eat, then this does not seem right. I have to admit that this particular and concrete problem grew a little bit out of proportion. Probably for a while, I was perceived as someone who thought that my project and what I was working on were more important than other people's work at the school. I could have been better in using dialog in the conversation with my own colleagues.

Unpredictable pedagogical approaches

Michael N. W.: This leads us to the point where you either can say, "I, with my project, stick to the rules of the kitchen because I also understand those working there." Or you could ask, "How can we find a way that fits both of us?" With the latter, you would, of course, try to change institutionalized limitations. So, here we are talking about flexibility. Flexibility takes a lot of effort from all involved; it takes an effort from those working in the kitchen; it takes an effort from you. And again, it takes planning to make this work out. However, when it comes to such pedagogical processes, can we ever say something about these processes in advance – because obviously we cannot plan them?

When we apply a scientific method, then we expect a certain outcome because the method is standardized and

applied under similar circumstances; the method should lead to similar results. Otherwise, we would not acknowledge this method to be scientific. In contrast to that, the pedagogical approach you described now is not predictable. Therefore, the question is, how can we deal with an unpredictable approach? For some pedagogues, working with an unpredictable approach would sound almost a bit dangerous.

Dialogue is not cozy talk

Steinar B.: Some of those things that I found really worked became almost instrumental for me after a while. For example, in the beginning, it was very important for me to go to the airport and welcome the participants when they arrived. When we started to have these one-week seminars, that was too much for me. I could not go to the airport every time. However, I made a big effort to greet them when they arrived at the Nansen Academy. There would be a minibus bringing them from the airport to the school, and I would stand there and welcome them. Even if it was 2:30 a.m., I would be there. In one way, this was kind of an instrumental act from my side because I always made sure to greet them. Then you can say, in the dialogue itself, unpredictable things can happen. And if there is something we have learned – and this is a discussion I had with many international organizations working with peacebuilding – then it is this: Let's say I come in April to an organization and tell them, "Look, this is the situation. Here, we have a breakthrough. And if we do this and that, it will have this and that potential outcome, and the work is worthwhile." They would then reply, "Steinar, we agree with you. However, what you suggest would blow our budget. There is no way we can do it." I started to realize that these organizations are so focused on their annual financial plan as well as on their annual report. If they can report that they did what they had planned, then it has been a successful

year. In other words, they would stay within the limits of their budget, and they would just do the projects that had been planned in January. This is how they defined success. However, in April, May and June, it was something completely different. According to practical wisdom, they should have done the project I suggested, but that was not foreseen in January, for obvious reasons, nor was it criticized in December, for obvious reasons. Therefore, what was then presented as a success is not really a success due to a lot of missed opportunities during the year that did not find their way into the budget.

To be honest, what I am saying now is not something radical. The whole world learned at the beginning of 2020 what a waste the strategic planning was that was done in January of that year. When the pandemic arrived, everything had to be changed. One reason for our suffering is probably that as a society, we were too slow. We were too slow to make the necessary changes because our plans were pointing into another direction.

Another reason why the process-oriented approach is despised by some is the following: Once a diplomat said to me, "Steinar, you know the problem with dialogue is that it is too womanish." What he meant by that was that dialogue was not perceived as difficult talk. My experience, though, tells me something else because I have many memories of dialogues that were difficult talks. I know that there is this image that dialogue is cozy talk, like people coming together on a beach or in the mountains, and they have a good time together. To me, this image is completely wrong. Nevertheless, this wrong image also goes together with the assumption that some have, namely, that dialogue is something benefiting those in power. For example, they would assume that Israel has nothing to lose by getting into dialogue with Palestine, while the Palestinians might have something to lose because they will not gain anything but

a conversation, while what they actually need is change. However, my experience is the opposite. Let's take an example: We had a meeting in Lillehammer between the county of South Trøndelag and the South-Sami people. Before the meeting, the Sami people would say, "There is no point for us to attend this meeting because the other side will not listen to us anyway. They haven't listened to us for hundreds of years." So, I argued, "OK, but what can you lose?" So, finally, they came, and at that meeting, there is a municipality adviser from Rennebu municipality. And she says, "I did not know there were Sami people living in my municipality." So, through participating in this meeting, the Sami people made themselves visible.

I have had a similar experience with Palestinians and Israelis where the Palestinians said, "No, we will not come and talk to the Israelis because this means to honor and to respect them in a way we don't." In one case, I came down to Bethlehem, I sat down with the Palestinians for one day, and I asked them, "Do you think the other side knows the truth about your life? Do you think their teachers speak the truth? Do you think their politicians speak the truth, their grandparents and parents?" The answer was a clear "No." So I asked, "Well, shouldn't somebody tell them?" And here they replied, "Of course!" "Great" I replied, "because this is what I am inviting you to – dialogue!" They thought dialogue was what was going on in Camp David, in the sense of some kind of political talk where you defend your positions.

Michael N. W.: To round up our dialogue: What you are saying now is that there is a certain value in dialogue, even if the dialogue does not yield a solution to a conflict.

The moral compass

Steinar B.: Yes, absolutely. The value of a dialogue is that you better understand the logic of the other, which previously was not logical to you. Sometimes I use the word

moral compass because what is dividing people is not an ethnic difference, like Norwegians and Swedes, but we as people have different moral compasses. To divide between *us* and *them* is a common phenomenon of being human; you find this phenomenon all over the world. And this is not a problem in itself. The problem first occurs when *we* have a conflict with *them*. For when we have a conflict with them, we are sure we are right, and they are wrong. Sometimes I argue with my wife; however, I never argue with her if I think I am wrong. I only argue with my wife when I think I am right. This self-righteousness is often based on our own moral compass. For example, a very common moral compass in Norway is the "Law of Cardamom Town," which in simple terms reads: *Care for others and don't bother them.* Then there is another moral compass: Oppression for liberation. But when you fight oppression, you have to bother the oppressors. You have to do harm to people. These are two moral compasses in conflict. Nevertheless, whether you have the one compass or the other, you want to go North. That is, you want to do the right thing. Therefore, when we judge other people based on our moral compass, we kind of misjudge them because we put our own compass inside them instead of trying to understand what compass they have. A compass can be about loyalty and betrayal – a compass that is very widespread in the Balkans. As I said previously, to be a Serb means to be loyal to the Serbs. It means to cheer for them when they play soccer against Portugal, for example. To be a traitor is the worst for them. If you crossed a bridge in the former Yugoslavia to the other side where the enemy lived, you were watched by bridge watchers, and you could eventually get beaten up when you came back. For what did you do on the other side? And why is it so dangerous to go to the other side? Probably because you could discover that they don't only have one eye on their forehead, to use

this old Norwegian myth, but they actually have two eyes; they are normal. A few times in Lillehammer, I said to the course participants ironically, "We are like a Quisling school; we make you traitors. And when you come back home, you have a different perception of the enemy. People will confront you." That was the reason why we built up Nansen Dialogue Centers in the Western Balkans. It was previous seminar participants from Lillehammer who established these dialogue centers, and at one point, we even had ten of these centers there. Around 50 people who worked for twenty years. Altogether, that is 1000 years of peace work coming out of one folk high school.

Michael N. W.: That is amazing indeed! Steinar, I think this is a good point to stop the dialogue here. Thank you very much for the conversation.

3. Epilogue

In the course of the previous dialogue, different aspects and examples of a peacebuilding project carried out at Nansen Academy were presented and reflected upon. In this project, people from conflicting parties in the former Yugoslavia were invited to stay at the academy for a longer period of time. As it turned out, the rather remote location of this folk high school and the everyday life there, which was rather reduced to the essentials, contributed centrally to the success of the project. The participants could learn to meet each other on a personal level, seeing beyond their conflicting differences and rather encountering each other as human beings. In order to facilitate this sort of encounter, in terms of Martin Buber's I-Thou relation (Buber, 2010), Steinar opened what he called a dialogical room. This room emerged – metaphorically speaking – by establishing four walls: an educational, a cultural, a social and

a physical one. The educational wall consisted of lectures and seminars on democracy, conflict resolution, etc.; the cultural wall was about visiting concerts, exhibitions and the like; the social wall meant going out for a coffee together, meeting on Steinar's veranda and having a dance evening, and so on; and finally, the physical wall was about physical activities like cross-country skiing. The dialogical space that arose due to and in between these various activities was of a rather informal character. However, due to its nature, this dialogical space gave the participants the chance to meet on a personal and existential level. On that level, they could learn about each other's moral compasses in terms of the logic behind their values and beliefs, something that fostered mutual understanding – and sometimes even friendships – in the further course of the project. In the course of the dialogue, it was pointed out that the developmental process the participants went through would not have been possible if one had used an instrumental pedagogical approach, that is, just applied certain methods and techniques. Learning about life cannot be squeezed into a curriculum, as it was mentioned in the dialogue. Instead, the success of this project was due to a relational approach, where the relational situations that occurred spontaneously between the participants formed the "playground" for pedagogical interventions by the pedagogue. These interventions could not be planned for since the relational situations in which they were practiced came up unexpectedly. Hence, good folk high school pedagogy in this case essentially depended on the pedagogue's intuition, that is, on the way one responds to these unexpected situations, that is, an ability to act and react to what one is confronted with in a prudent and mindful manner.

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The Human Landscape

Benedicte Hambro & Michael Noah Weiss

1. Prologue

In the fall of 2019, Benedicte Hambro and Michael Noah Weiss met at a folk high school teachers' seminar on sustainable development in Oslo, where Michael was particularly struck by her storytelling-based approach to learning and teaching. Benedicte spent most of her working life at a folk high school and in various positions. In 1988, she began her career at Seljord Folkhøyskole in international and social studies as well as in theatre play. Then she founded a major in stand-up comedy at Ringerike Folkehøyskole. This major was not only the first of its kind but several now famous comedians in Norway attended it.

Over the years, she also continually contributed to improve the theoretical concepts that inform the pedagogical work of the folk high schools, like *Bildung,* and how to make them visible in the subjects of a school. For that, she held introductory courses for new teachers, and, for a year, she also worked at the main office in Oslo. At the time of the following dialogue she was employed at Arbeiderbevegelsens Folkehøyskole (TN: the labor movement folk high school), focusing on *Bildung* and how to educate students to engage in the social activities of the folk high school. According to Benedicte, engaging in such activities is essential for the *Bildung*-process of the students.

Why she thinks like that, how personality development can be fostered with folk high school students in general and how this development relates to becoming an active citizen is investigated in the following dialogue. In this respect, a fascinating story about the search for meaning in life is shared and how one can learn to live together with others, even though one might have different opinions and attitudes towards certain life issues.

2. Dialogue

Michael N. W.: Benedicte, you are known for having in-depth knowledge and experience with the concept of *Bildung* at a folk high school. A concept that I think is highly relevant with regards to the question, "What is good folk high school pedagogy?" Hence, I would like to invite you to share an experience of yours that you think represents an example of good folk high school pedagogy.

2.1. Concrete reflection

The Tree of Life

Benedicte H.: When you asked me to take part in this research project, the first thing that came to my mind was Grundtvig's historical-poetical aspect of education. To me, it is essential that the students realize that they are part of something much bigger than themselves; that they, with the cultural backgrounds they have, are, so to speak, a result of people who lived before them; and that the students have the possibility to change their lives, if they are active participants in their own lives.

When it comes to this aspect of folk high school, I use storytelling as a pedagogical approach. The first story that the students hear when they come to the school is from Grundtvig's huge collection called "Nordens mythologi"

(1808) (TN: *Mythology of the North*). It is a story from the old Nordic mythology, and it goes like this:

In the old days, when the people believed in completely different Gods than we do today, they believed that all life came from the big Tree of Life, in Norse called *Yggdrasil.* They also believed that at the roots of Yggdrasil, the three Goddesses of Faith sat named Urðr (fate), Verðandi (present), and Skuld (debt or future). They lit the light of life for each child being born. In the beginning, the little child cannot take care of this light; rather, it depends on all the people around it. When the child comes of age and says, "I want to take care of my own life. Now I am a grown-up," the three Goddesses of Faith give the grown-up child three gifts, namely hope, vision and the belief in a good world. Then the young person gets the light in order to take care of it by him- or herself. Sooner or later, the young person realizes that you need more than these three gifts in order to live a full life. And when the child realizes this, the three Goddesses come with three new gifts. Those three gifts are disappointment, defeat and misfortune, because you need that as well for living a full life. Regardless of how the person lives his or her life, the light of life will slowly burn down, and the person will grow old. When the person has grown old, he or she gets the three last gifts of the Goddesses and that is wisdom, knowledge and the ability to tell stories.

When I tell this story – which is more poetical than when I do it in English, I have to admit – then I have also lit a candle for each student that started in that year, and I put the candles on the stage of the main lecture hall where we would have this session. I then tell the students that I lit a candle for each one of them for this school year and that this story is not only an example of how the old Nordic Gods thought that life should be lived but also a story about a year at folk high school. I tell them, "You all come here,

and you are full of dreams, visions and hope for the future, and you think that this will be the best year of your life so far. However, you will come to realize that life takes its toll. You will face disappointments and downturns and life won't always be easy. However, this is part of living. It is part of becoming a person. And when the school year is over, we hope that you have gained wisdom and knowledge, and that you have lots of stories to tell." And then I would say, "Unfortunately, I have to blow out these lights because they won't burn for a whole year, but if you want, you can come up to the stage after this opening event and take the candle with you to your room, where you can have it as a little memory of your first school day."

Later in that school year, I would have a session with all the students called *The human landscape,* which is somehow connected to the opening event. In *The human landscape,* we explore what it means to be a person. The students are challenged with thoughts, ideas, role play, discussions and several other exercises. In one of these exercises, I ask them to bring something from their room, which is of importance for them; an item that means something to them personally. It could be anything, but the nice part here – and that touches my teacher's heart – is that many students bring along the candle from the first school day. Because, as they say, to them, this candle said something essential about life; something that was understandable, that was easy to grasp for them. And that, to me, is what all our teaching at folk high schools should be about. That is, to teach the students to see life and to learn from their experiences, and not to be crushed by them but to see that they are part of something bigger. I think it is just fascinating that the old Nordic Gods understand disappointment, defeat and misfortune as gifts that you should cherish because they form you as a person. So many of our students have not learned to see it that way before they come to the folk

high school. They are not capable of surviving the disappointment that life gives them, so to speak.

Michael N. W.: May I pose some follow-up questions? When you do this session about *The human landscape* and the students bring their candles, what do they say as to why they brought them? How do they explain why they have chosen their candle?

Benedicte H.: They got the candle on their first school day, so they remember it and they remember the story around it, which was of importance to them. And also, for many, it was the first time that a grown-up told them a story. They experienced the story-telling situation as so special that they wanted to bring that candle to this session.

Michael N. W.: My next question is about the way you are working with the students. You said that the session about *The human landscape* is about becoming a person. For me, when you described it, it almost sounded like an initiation ritual. The students bring their candles to this session because the candles kind of symbolize this initiation. What is the next step then, after they brought their candles?

The Bone Game

Benedicte H.: When I ask them to bring something important from their room, then because this is part of a bigger game called the *Bone Game,* which is an Indian problem-solving ritual. The Indians did this ritual when two rival groups had a dispute over something like some piece of land or buffalo hordes. And instead of going to war against each other, they performed this ritual, which can be compared to a win-and-lose game. So, if you lose the game, you have to do something for the winning party. By doing this ritual, greater damage could be avoided because if both parties had gone to war, it would have meant death and destruction for both. Therefore, if the losing party managed to come up with a gift that they could live with, it would

still have cost them something, but the dispute could also be settled. In that way, war could be avoided.

In the session *The human landscape*, the *Bone Game* is played in the following way: The students are divided into two groups; they sit in a circle, and each group has to decide which symbol they want to have for their group. Therefore, each student has to bring something of personal value and present it to the group. Then the group would have a vote over which symbol should be chosen in order to represent the group. Each one in the group has a say in this decision, and the symbol also serves as a talking stick. That is, only the one holding the symbol is allowed to speak. This is part of teaching how to come to an agreement without arguing and instead listening to each other; presenting to each other and listening to the ideas that are presented. As an example, one student could bring her teddy bear and say, "This teddy bear was given to me by my grandfather who was a very important person in my life." Then everyone in the circle would hold the teddy bear and give reasons why this teddy bear could be a symbol for the group or why it could not. For example, one group member would say, "I feel that this teddy bear is very important to you, but for me, it is not of so high value. Therefore, I don't think it represents the group in a proper way." However, when one of them presents his or her candle, then many accept this as a proper symbol. Not because I suggested that to them, but because all can relate to the meaning of this candle. They would say, "We all know the story behind the candle, so let's choose it as our symbol." After choosing their symbol, they go on to the next step of this exercise, which is to find out what could be the gift that they want to give to the other party if the other group wins. By doing that, they figure out what is essential to their group that they are willing to give to the other group. Here, one would, for example, suggest, "Let's give them some money," while another one would object

and counter, "Isn't that too easy? What if we give them a good meal instead?" So, by using the chosen symbol as a talking stick, each one in the group can come with suggestions and objections until they agree on a gift. The other group has, of course, done the same. Then, two representatives – one from each group – will discuss whether they will accept the gift from the other group or not, in case their group wins. Let's say that one group offers to buy goodies for the other, and this other group says, "No, we want something that is dear to you and that costs you something. Buying goodies is too easy." Then the representative of the rejected group has to go back to his or her group and tell them, "The other group did not accept our gift. They want us to work harder." So, this group has to decide on a new gift. After both groups have accepted the suggested gift from the other group, they play the *Bone Game*, which is a very simple game. It is basically about tossing sticks and depending on how the sticks fall, you get a certain amount of points. The group with the most points wins. The losing party will then present their gift, for example, making a meal, and invite the others in and say sincerely, "We lost the game; this is our gift. And let's get on with our lives." This is also what the Indians did because though they did not want war, they wanted something in return. For example, the losing party would say to the other, "You can get a part of our fishing river," and the other party could say, "Yes, we accept that," or they could say "Hm, that part is too short", and so on. The point in the end is that by means of that *Bone Game,* they could find a non-violent solution to the dispute.

Michael N. W.: If I understand you right then, the idea of the Indians was that the losing party gives something away that is of value for both sides. What do you think is it that

the students learn by means of this exercise? Or, what is it that you intend that they learn?

Conflict management

Benedicte H.: My intention is that they learn how to solve a problem without arguing but by talking and listening and by doing something good for an opposing party. And also, to work together on a consensus, which is something that they are normally not used to. They are so used to arguing and that the stronger party or the party with the loudest voice wins. But here in this exercise, everyone has to talk. Every voice is important. Many students say that this is extremely frustrating because it is so new to them, because they are not used to it, and because it takes time. And in fact, it can take hours and even several evenings before they come to an agreement – but they have to come to an agreement.

2.2. Critical reflection

Learning to listen

Michael N. W.: When I see all that you have described so far and ask, "What is it that is at stake in this pedagogical approach or set-up?", then it seems to be *learning to listen.* But not only that, because when I am listening to you, like now, then I am learning a lot about storytelling, about Nordic mythology and so on. However, the kind of *learning to listen* I mean here is not only about that. There is more to it. It has to do with giving and taking: In the *Bone Game* you just described, I am listening to you as my opponent – and what you say, I am taking in, so to speak. At the same time, I am also forced to give something to you; I have to present something to you in order to negotiate. We can only negotiate if we both listen and speak; when we take and when we give. What do you think about that?

Benedicte H.: I think you are right. Some students, in fact, say that this is the first time that their voice has been

listened to because they all sit in the same circle and their voice has the same weight as the others when making a decision. For example, if one says "I don't agree with this symbol" then this symbol will not represent this group. So, they learn to raise their voice. And for many students, that is a novelty. And interestingly, those students who are used to raising their voice, they are suddenly forced to listen, too, since their voice does not count any more than any other voice in the circle. That is also a novelty for many.

Active citizenship

Michael N. W.: When you say that this is a novelty, then I am starting to wonder because all these students went to school before they came to folk high school. And a major, overarching theme of schooling is to become an active citizen, that is, a responsible member of society. When you now mention that most of the students could not raise their voice prior to their time at folk high school and that they did not feel heard, my question simply is: What is going on here? Is your impression that the students you have in this course are quite blank, so to speak, when it comes to *Bildung?* I know that this sounds provocative, but what do you think about that and also with regards to democracy and active citizenship, which are central mandates of education in general?

Being incapable of living a grown-up life

Benedicte H.: To put it bluntly, I would say that the conventional school system has failed one hundred percent. Many of my students say that they feel that they don't have any say in their own life, in changing their life and making decisions for themselves. To me, to be honest, many of my students are totally incapable of living a grown-up life. And if we, through games, through role-play and storytelling, can raise their voices and strengthen their belief to be able to make a difference, then this is what is important, that is, to support them to be active participants in their own life.

I grew up with Astrid Lindgren's TV series, "*Vi på Saltkråkan"* (TN: "We on Salt-Crow Island"). One of the main characters in this series is the girl Tjorven. At one point, she was dressed up in a white dress because there was this big celebration on the island. Not even half an hour after the celebration began, the dress was not white anymore. Her mother asked her, "Tjorven, how could this happen?", and Tjorven answered, "The dress just became like that," as if she had no involvement in the matter. It just happened. Tjorven's attitude is very similar to the attitude of our students. "It just happened," they would say about whatever. And here I would counter, "No, it did not just happen. It happened because you made a decision, unaware perhaps, but you made a decision. For example, you made the decision not to show up in class. You made the decision not to finish your homework. You made the decision not to show up for kitchen duty. It did not just happen." Becoming aware of that is also something that is new to them.

Michael N. W.: When you describe all this, then it is the term *response-ability* that comes to my mind. With that I mean the ability to respond to a situation in a responsible way. The story of Astrid Lindgren that you just told is about this attitude in terms of "I am not responsible for the dress being dirty. It just happened." However, that being said, giving a response also means making yourself heard. And according to your description, the students themselves said that it was the first time that their voice was being heard. How can you relate all that to *Bildung,* that is, responsibility and being heard? *Bildung* often is defined in a different way than by these terms. Klafki, for example, points out that there are two traditions of how to define *Bildung* (see e. g. Klafki, 2007: 15f; 2001: 39). One of them clearly asserts that in order to have *Bildung,* you have to have read

certain books; you have to be familiar with the traditions of your culture; you have to know what the scriptures say, so to speak. Therefore, my question, how do you define *Bildung* in light of the pedagogical exercise you previously described?

Benedicte H.: I agree to a certain extent with the one tradition that is pointed out by Klafki. You have to have read certain books in order to have some sort of general and fundamental knowledge. With that knowledge, I also mean that you have to know how to eat with a knife and a fork. That is also part of *Bildung*. However, to me, *Bildung* in the folk high school context means to be a responsible person in charge of your own life. You have to be aware of that things don't just happen; but you have to make active decisions in your life in order to become a person in the actual sense of the word.

Michael N. W.: When you take a look at your students' development, then what is your impression – do they become more responsible during the school year, and if so, why? There are probably different reasons, which differ from individual to individual, but what is your general impression?

Benedicte H.: When we ask the students at the end of this school year, "What have you learned this year?" very few say anything about the subject they have chosen, like theatre play, design, music and so on. Rather, they say that they have learned that they are members of society and that whatever they choose to do, it will have an impact on that society. For example, "If I don't show up, it does not only affect me, but it also affects everybody around me." At the end of the school year, they see themselves as members of a society where they make a difference. One student once said, "I have become more self-aware and more self-assured, and I know that I can play an important part in

Bildung

society after this school year." For me, that is *Bildung*. If only one student in each school year can go out with that attitude towards life, we can make a difference in our society. And you know, there are many students who feel that way. They have the impression that this is their most important year of their lives because suddenly they can see themselves as individuals who can make a difference.

Michael N. W.: We are already in the second phase of the dialogue where we investigate what it is that is at stake in the story you told. In that respect, we brought up several themes, like being heard and being able to raise your voice; responsibility was also mentioned. However, my impression is that there is still much more at stake here. When you compare what the students learn in such a school year with what they learned in their school life prior to folk high school, then it is in fact no less than the lives of the students that are at stake. To me, it is not simply *Bildung* being at stake here, in terms of the question, "Do the students receive *Bildung* at folk high school?" Rather, it is the students being at stake in terms of the question, "Will they succeed as human beings, or will they fail – will they live a failed life or not?" I know this sounds quite harsh, but this is the impression that I get when I listen to your story and your thoughts. What do you think about that?

Poverty of words

Benedicte H.: First of all, I should not be the one to judge whether they live a successful life or not. Nevertheless, I think if we give them some tools they can use in order to deal with life after the folk high school year, when they go out into society, then we are helping them to become successful as a person. I am not talking about choosing the right job or so. Rather, what I mean is that they can live a life that is workable for them. I wish we could teach the students also the *Bildung* you mentioned, which is more about general knowledge in terms of fundamental works

of literature and so on. Because it breaks my heart every year when I see how little the students know. I think there is some kind of general knowledge about literature, politics, philosophy that is just essential to know. There, they would find vocabulary in order to express themselves. There is such a poverty in that respect. For example, I have stopped playing Trivial Pursuit with my students because I find it so disappointing to see how little they know compared to what I knew when I was their age. Of course, this is an old woman talking now, but I really wish they had better general knowledge. And my main goal of being a teacher at a folk high school is not to have them gain more knowledge but to become active participants in their own lives.

In this respect, I also have to mention one more thing, and that is the so-called cancel culture (see e. g. Valesco, 2020). This culture, if you want to call it like that, also affects our students. They are afraid to raise their voice because they think that there are so many right and wrong answers. For example, it is very hard to get our students involved in discussions because they think for every question raised in such a discussion, there is a right and a wrong answer. I try to teach them to believe in their own answer and not be afraid of being judged by others. That is important, but it is much harder to learn today due to this cancel culture, where only some students define what is right and wrong.

Constructive alignment vs. Bildung

Michael N. W.: What you just said about intellectual poverty in terms of the students not being familiar with essential general knowledge, with skills and also with a deeper understanding of what life should be about; how you can contribute; how you can raise your voice and be active in order to make a change, then to me this intellectual poverty appears to be quite decisive for several social phenomena we experience today. For example, that the

students don't participate in discussions anymore, as you just said. Interestingly, I have the same experience with my students. It is very hard to get them involved in dialogue, and it is very challenging to make them formulate their own thoughts. Just last week, I talked to a teacher from another folk high school who experienced exactly the same with the students from recent years. This teacher and I have not seen each other for some years, and I asked, "How is the class this year?" The teacher replied, "They are very nice, but they are also very shy, and they don't engage in discussions." Then I said, "You know, my experience is that the students who are coming now to higher education are the first generations who grew up – since their first class in school – with the teaching principle of so-called *constructive alignment* (see e. g. Biggs & Tang, 2011)." That is, they get a pre-defined set of learning outcomes, and the only purpose of schooling is to reach these outcomes as quickly and effectively as possible. In other words, they are given a task, they reach the task, and then they are called good students. The teacher I was talking to answered, "It is interesting that you mention that because it was exactly what one of the students said when I asked them quite frankly why they would not dare to get into discussion. He said, 'We always had these learning outcomes, and we were expected to fulfill the tasks, and that was it. It was not expected from us to come up with our own thoughts.'" So, there you have this schooling system guided by this constructive alignment approach, on the one hand. On the other hand, you have this idea of *Bildung,* and what the folk high schools are doing is oriented towards *Bildung*.

With that in mind, I suggest that we go over now to the last part of the dialogue, which is about bringing in some theoretical perspectives on what we have investigated so far. In order to start with this part, I think we can both

agree that what you do as a folk high school teacher and pedagogue is quite different from what the conventional school system is doing. My first question now is, how do you justify that – how do you back up your approach in terms of theories, concepts etc.?

2.3. Theoretical reflection

Having substance

Benedicte H.: I was hoping you would not ask me that question simply because I cannot back it up. I think I just back it up with my own experience and with the ability to gain the knowledge that I need from stories, literature, philosophy etc. I think you need some sort of substance in terms of personality, and if you don't have that substance, you cannot absorb what is given to you. To me, the important thing is to give the students the feeling of belonging, of being part of something that is bigger than yourself. This somehow relates to what Gadamer called *historical consciousness* (1975), that is, the historical *horizon* in which we see and understand ourselves (see Malpas, 2018). Opening up and widening this horizon, so to speak, is among my key intentions as a folk high school pedagogue. For some students have quite a limited horizon when they come to us. I can give you two examples.

From time to time, we sing Leonard Cohen's song "Hallelujah" with the students. I would ask them, "Do you know what the song is about?", and they don't. So I tell them the story from the Old Testament of King David and Bathsheba, who took a bath on the roof, and David saw her, because this is what this song is based on. I think, it is important to know such things; to know about their background because then you can understand their deeper meaning. And the Bible has influenced people since thousands and thousands of years. The point is not whether you

are religious or not, but rather that this book is part of our cultural backbone.

Another example is the song "Die Gedanken sind frei," which is a German folksong from the time of the Enlightenment. The song can be related to people's enlightenment, a key issue in folk high school ever since Grundtvig (see Ohrem & Haddal, 2011) and enshrined in The Folk High School Act as one of the schools' main goals (The Folk High School Act, 2003: § 1). When we sing it, I tell the students that this song has been sung in freedom fights and that it has roots back to the 13th century. This background gives the song a much greater impact compared to a song just heard on the radio – it is widening the students' *horizon*, their *historical consciousness*, to put it in the terms of Gadamer (1975). Trying to give them this kind of background information gives them an idea that they belong to a much greater history than the one they see right around them. And sometimes, they don't even see the one right around them; they just see themselves and their little navel, to put it metaphorically. In other words, my intention is to open up the world for them.

Concepts need life experience

Michael N. W.: I think I understand what you mean. And I really liked your answer that you gave to my question when you said that you don't have any back-up for your teaching in terms of theories, concepts and so on. Rather, you back it up with experience because in order to understand concepts and theories, you have to have substance, which, by the way, reminds me of Immanuel Kant's dictum that "Thoughts without intuitions are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind." (Kant, 1998: A51=B75) In general language, this dictum is sometimes recited as *concepts without percepts are empty, percepts without concepts are blind*. If we replace the term *percepts* with *life experience,* then what you say means that if you don't have a cer-

tain degree of life experience, theories, concepts and factual knowledge are worth nothing. You would know about them, but you don't understand them, that is, you cannot relate them to yourself. The two songs you mentioned exemplify that quite well. This in fact brings us to the important difference between knowledge and understanding, a difference that was pointed out and investigated thoroughly by Ludwig Wittgenstein, for example, in his post-hum published book, *On Certainty* (1969). My impression of your work as you described it now is that you want to make the students understand. You do not only want them to know. And this is what you described as *having substance*.

Meaning of life

Benedicte H.: Yes, that is true. In this respect, I remember a big argument I once had with a headmaster of a folk high school. I gave a lecture at his school, which was about what folk high school should be. And as always, I used a story in order to explain that. The story goes like this: Once upon a time, there was a young man in a village who decided that he wanted to become the wisest man of all men. So, he started to study. And he read, and he read, and he read. Slowly, the rumor about him and what he intended to become spread to the village. It did not take long until it dawned on the people of the village that if he really became that wise, then they could say, "Ohh, we come from the same village as the wisest man of the world." So, they could enjoy themselves in the awareness that they were somehow acquainted with him. Therefore, the villagers brought him food, they brought him firewood, and they helped him in all possible ways. Some even brought books to him, so he continued to read and read and read. One day, however, he jumped up from his desk so that the chair fell with a big bang on the ground, and the young man ran to the center of the village where he shouted, "I won't open a book again until someone can tell me what

the meaning of life is!" This made the whole village come running to him, and each one of them gave an account of what they thought the meaning of life was. As it turned out, there were, of course, as many meanings of life as people living in the village. And none of the answers he got was good enough for this young man. Therefore, someone said that there was an old rabbi in the neighboring village, and maybe he could tell what the meaning of life is. So, the young man walked to the other village, and with him, all the other fellow villagers. When they arrived there, he asked for an audience with the rabbi. The request was accepted, and the young man was brought to the rabbi. The young man told his story and finished with the question, "What is the meaning of life?" The old rabbi stood up from his chair, went to the young man, and slapped him in the face. Bewildered, the young man asked, "Why do you hit me? I only asked you a question!" The old rabbi replied, "Oh, you young fool! Don't you know that this is one of the best questions in the world? And you want to fob it off with one answer? Don't you know that it is the answer that divides us and the question that unites us?"

In the lecture where I told this story, I told the audience that this is our main objective at folk high school – to share all those existential questions with the students and not to give them answers. The best would, of course, be if we could find the answers together, which goes into the direction of inquiry-based learning, as for example Mathew Lipman has outlined (Lipman, 2003: 20f). However, the answers are not really important actually. It is the questions the students ask about life, about the meaning of life, about who they are and who they want to become and why they should care. Those are the main issues and objectives of folk high school. We should be the type of school that asks all the questions and give none of the answers. The headmaster of this school was very upset with me because

according to him, it was the school's main objective to give the students answers. To me, this is not the answer to the question of what good folk high school pedagogy is. To me, the answer is to investigate the questions with the students together and see if there is anything that we agree on. As a human being, you have to ask questions in order to grow and not simply accept the answers. If you do the latter, you stop developing.

Man's search for meaning

Michael N. W.: What you just said reminds me of Viktor Frankl. He became famous with his book, *Man's Search for Meaning* (Frankl, 1992). In this book he also points out what you just said, namely, that there is no general answer on this quest for meaning. Rather, the answers differ from human being to human being. What I am wondering about in this respect is whether you think that the students at folk high school not only get the chance to raise their voice and be heard for the first time but that they also, for the first time, get the chance to ponder the question, "What is meaningful to me?" In short, do you think that this search for meaning is of pedagogical relevance, that is, of relevance for the students' growth?

What is truth?

Benedicte H.: Oh, definitely. Sometimes I initiate a walk&talk where the students are given the question, "What is truth?" in order to discuss it in groups of two. It is very interesting when they come back and share what they have talked about. Of course, there is no general answer to this big question, but we break it down into simpler questions like, "Is it always right to tell the truth?" and ask for examples from the students' lives. In this way, we related this huge question to them personally, and then they come up with important ethical and existential issues. My job in this exercise – even if I agree with what they say – is to come up with further follow-up questions and kind of disagree with them, so that they feel challenged.

Michael N. W.: Benedicte, I think we have come pretty far now and in our talk there were many interesting perspectives that shed light on what good folk high school pedagogy can be about. Since there is no need for arriving at a common conclusion in such a dialogue, I suggest that we finish the conversation here. Thank you very much for this inspiring dialogue.

3. Epilogue

In the course of this dialogue, a game was presented – the *Bone Game* – which shall students support to develop conflict management skills. An important part of this game is learning to listen. The reason why this game is introduced and played at Benedicte's folk high school is because the ability to resolve conflicts is assumed to be central for active citizenship. Fostering such abilities helps the students to develop response-ability in terms of learning to be in charge of their own lives and making their own self-responsible decisions.

In the further conversation, developing responsibility also turned out to be an important dimension of *Bildung.* In this respect, it was asserted that concepts, like *Bildung,* need life experience. For concepts without experience are empty, and experience without concepts is blind (see Kant, 1998: A51=B75). For Benedicte, it is therefore essential to challenge folk high school students to reflect on their life experience in an existential manner. Her way of doing this is by means of storytelling, since stories are not only easy to understand but also relate to one's own life. But they are also concrete, so that everyone can imagine them. Furthermore, they engage the students not only cognitively but also emotionally, which makes it easier to remember these stories.

Summarizing this dialogue, it can be stated that telling stories – as Benedicte did in this dialogue with the story on the search for meaning – and philosophizing over them and relating them to one's own life can be seen as an inspiring form of good folk high school pedagogy.

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Golden moments

Sigurd Ohrem & Michael Noah Weiss

1. Prologue

Sigurd Ohrem and Michael Noah Weiss got to know each other through a teach-the-teachers program called "Philosophical Dialogue and Active Citizenship" (see Ohrem & Weiss, 2019). Sigurd was initiating and organizing this program, inviting Michael and several other philosophical practitioners to train folk high school teachers in different philosophical dialogue formats. In 2013, Sigurd and Michael travelled to Athens for the World Congress of Philosophy, where the two had many informal talks about the relevance of dialogue at folk high school. Visiting this congress together marks the starting point for several projects that the two did together over the following years.

Sigurd was a university teacher and cultural researcher at what today is the University of South-Eastern Norway before he started at Skiringssal folkehøyskole where he worked as a teacher and lecturer for three decades. As an author, he wrote several articles and book chapters on pedagogy, philosophy and cultural studies. Over the years, he contributed with many projects and initiatives to the development work of folk high school pedagogy.

The following dialogue was the first carried out for the present anthology. It took place in 2020, a week before Christmas. In the beginning of this conversation, Sigurd

shares an experience that at first does not appear to be pedagogical in nature. However, as the dialogue unfolds, a pedagogical attitude is examined that can be compared with the Taoist concept of *Wu Wei,* which is doing by not doing. In the further course of the investigation, the dialogue partners examine how far this concept can foster self-formation in terms of *Bildung* with the folk high school students. In this respect, the term *Golden Moments* is introduced as something that the teachers cannot plan for. Rather, these moments happen incidentally. Nevertheless, they can play a vital role in the students' *Bildung*-process.

2. Dialogue

2.1. Concrete reflection

Michael Noah Weiss: Sigurd, our guiding question for this dialogue now is "What is good folk high school pedagogy?" You are an experienced teacher at folk high school, and you also have extensive theoretical knowledge about this type of school. What I would like to ask you for now is an example, a personal story that illustrates good folk high school pedagogy.

The jam session

Sigurd Ohrem: Since I have been working in these schools for thirty years now, there would be countless suitable stories. However, the best story I can think of right now is from my teaching in a music class called "Rock Band". When I had the class about five years ago, we once had visitors from the folk high schools' main office in Oslo. They were going to make a new brochure that they would use to market the schools the next year. The reason why they came was because they needed some pictures that would illustrate the life at a folk high school, something like students engaged in different activities and

classes. What was special with this photo session was that these people did not want to stage the situations they were photographing as if they were real. No, they rather wanted to take pictures of real situations as they happened to keep it as authentic as possible.

Before these visitors came into my class, I told the students – they were about seven – that today we would not practice a specific song, but we would just improvise. Since we had never done this before, I was quite curious what would happen. In fact, I did not even know whether they were able to improvise. So, I picked up the bass guitar and started to play a simple theme. Suddenly, the piano player began to groove around the same line. He was quite a good player. Then the drums set in, and after three minutes, everyone was playing. There was also a saxophone, two guitars and a vocalist. It is of course challenging to improvise with nothing but your voice, but the respective student was brilliant, and she managed to put her voice on top of it all.

We were all into the music, really feeling it, when the door opened, and these photographers came in and they started photographing the action.

There were so many motives because our improvised piece of music never stopped. One theme merged into another. It went on and on. With all these people playing, you can imagine how many good motives there were for taking pictures. And it turned out that these students were not shy when being photographed. When you know that you are going to be photographed, then some people tend to take a certain pose, and then it sometimes gets a bit unnatural. These students, however, they did not even seem to think about that, because they were so into the music. Everything felt just natural.

The photographers stayed for maybe fifteen minutes, and shortly before we finished, they walked out silently

again, almost as if they would never have been there. When this fulminant jam session then came to an end, the students and me looked astonished at each other, and I remember one student asking, "What really happened now?" The others shook their heads in bewilderment without being able to give an answer. It was like everybody had the same thought, the same feeling, the same experience. But we had no words. And I did not want to try to make them talk about it immediately. It was an experience – a strong experience – that you never could have foreseen or forced.

Michael N. W.: When you are saying that this experience was not foreseen nor foreseeable, do I understand you right that this was a unique moment in the sense that it never happened before or after again with that class?

Sigurd O.: Most of these students were clever musicians, but they had never experienced such a moment before because they had been too occupied with rehearsing. For example, when you play the piano, you may learn how to play all the various scales; you know how to play by notes, etc. But if you're only rehearsing playing techniques, you never learn how to improvise. This you may observe with many other young musicians today. So, after this experience, it was the phenomenon of musical improvisation that these students all of a sudden became aware of. The previously described session happened at the end of the school year, so there were not many sessions left, but I remember that after this experience, it was very easy to work with this group of students. They appeared liberated, to call it like that.

2.2. Critical reflection

Logopedagogy

Michael N. W.: After what you described now, I think I have a pretty good picture of what happened in this situation, but I also understand why you said that you did

not have words to explain what happened. Nevertheless, when it comes to the question, "What is good folk high school pedagogy?", then listening to your story is somehow an *experience of discrepancy* to me (see Lindseth, 2017: 247). In terms of the story or case, I would have expected something completely different compared to what you were telling now. And this is also what makes your narrative so interesting to me, because in what you were describing, pedagogy appears to be absent, at first sight, at least. However, when I reflect further on your story, then there is one aspect that astonishes me. And that is that all the students in this situation unexpectedly experienced some sort of meaning. There was something that they experienced as highly meaningful. And the term *meaningful* I use, in this case, more in the sense of Viktor Frankl's Logotherapy, which here turns into a Logopedagogy, so to speak – that is, a meaning-oriented pedagogy (see e. g. Frankl, 2000). Among other things, Frankl claims that meaning can never be given; it can only be found, and in this story, the students all of a sudden stumble upon it. What the students came upon was not simply something that made sense to them. It was more. And that *more* was *meaning*. However, there is also something else. There is also some kind of *togetherness* that comes to the fore in this narrative. An improvised, unexpected togetherness, if you will.

Didactics of "showing, not telling"

Sigurd O.: I think it is almost a compliment when you say that there is no obvious pedagogy in place here. I am sure you are familiar with the story of Meno's slave as described in one of Plato's dialogues. In that story, a slave boy who never received any teaching in mathematics could learn to solve a complex geometric problem, with Socrates only posing questions and not teaching him anything. You could call this the Socratic method of not-teaching. It is al-

most like the Taoist *Wu Wei*, that is *doing by not doing*. You can compare it with writing a film script, where it is often about *showing, not telling*. Showing is kind of doing what you want to say. You also find this in logic with the distinction between *use* and *mention*; that is, again, you can talk about it or you can use/do it. And folk high school pedagogy, to summarize this, is mostly about *using*, so to speak, also called *praxis*, or performing – in action. What we did in this session was use the tools of music in a proper way to obtain an experience that we had not been able to obtain until then. After eight weeks, we suddenly were ready to do that. It was also provoked by these visitors, who had all this camera equipment with them. The moment they came in, the students felt like rock stars.

Key aspects of the narrative

Michael N. W.: What we identified now were certain key aspects, so to speak. You brought up the term *showing, not telling*. I mentioned the topic of *meaning*, that is, the search for meaning or the experience of meaning. And then we also had the aspect of *togetherness*, where you spoke of a special kind of togetherness.

Now, let me suggest assuming that these three aspects – *showing, not telling*; *meaning* and *togetherness* – are essential in this narrative of yours for it to represent an example of good folk high school pedagogy.

Sigurd O.: Yes, let us assume that.

2.3. Theoretical reflection

3 categories of existential values

Michael N. W.: If we now go a step further in our dialogue, then let's try to relate these three key aspects with theoretical approaches that might be of relevance.

Let us start with the aspect of meaning. Viktor Frankl came up with what he called the search for and the experience of meaning as an essential aspect of human existence

(see ibid.). In this respect, he suggested three categories of existential values (see ibid., 1986: 43f). In the first category, we find *experiential values*. For example, in the situation that you described, meaning was experienced without planning it, without expecting it. All of a sudden, the students experienced meaning together. Another example for experiential values would be to climb a mountain top where you enjoy the sunrise, and you experience this as deeply meaningful because it is so beautiful. The second category is about *creative values*. Something that also plays into the situation you described, as it seems, because the students were creating something together. They were creating an atmosphere; they were creating music. The third category, then, is about *attitudinal values*. And here we can ask, how might attitudinal values eventually play into the situation you described? In this respect, I see some kind of connection between *meaning*, *attitudinal values* and what you called *showing, not telling*, which means, you, as the teacher, went into this situation; you picked an instrument, started playing and the students tuned in. Hence, you were showing them by your attitude how to play music together. You did that without many words; rather, your attitude was enough to show them.

Sigurd O.: I could actually have said, "Now we are going to improvise." For example, I could have told the pianist, "You have to play this and that tune, in this open or loose manner". However, it is very hard to tell someone to do something, which that person has never done before. Instead, it is much better to do what you expect them to do. Often, when you work with education, you tell your students a lot. You tell and tell because the teaching situation does not allow you to show, does not give room for using what you are telling, and that may be a challenge.

Praxis vs. poiesis

Michael N. W.: What you point out here appears to be quite essential to me in order to understand why your narrative is an example of good folk high school pedagogy. For what you just said seems to be closely related to the meaning of the term *praxis*. According to Aristotle, *praxis* is a certain form of activity that is opposed to another form of activity, namely *poiesis* (Biesta, 2015: 14f). Praxis is any kind of activity that has the goal within itself, for example, to listen to or play music. Poises is any kind of activity that has its goal beyond itself, for example, building a house, where the building process is not the goal but to live in that house.

You said that you were doing something, and that doing did not have any further purpose or goal beyond that doing, beyond that action. The goal in your described situation was to play together. The purpose was not to practice and rehearse together because of an upcoming concert or so.

Sigurd O.: I agree, but there is an important distinction here, which maybe even represents the core of that story. It has to do with the photographers that were coming. We wanted to show them something, give them motives for their pictures. In fact, I never thought about it like that, but this was what was really new for the students. The presence of the photographers changed the attitude of the students. All of a sudden, they felt like rock stars.

Michael N. W.: I think by saying that you just uncovered another important aspect in that narrative. And that aspect is about *to be seen*. While they were playing together, the students wanted to be seen.

Definitional ceremonies

Sigurd O.: Yes, that is indeed an important aspect. The students felt seen by somebody from outside. They were provided with a bystander's interested eye. And that eye, so to speak, had not been visible there before. They were seen in a totally new way.

Michael N. W.: Do you think that this can be connected with what Myerhoff called *definitional ceremonies* (Myerhoff 1982: 100), where people are telling personal stories, telling who they are, to outsiders? In this approach, the outsider witnesses are then encouraged to retell the parts of the story, which kind of struck them, or which were essential to them. In short, definitional ceremonies, as you know, are about generating and communicating identity. In the case of your story, it was the students telling the photographers as the outsiders who they are, or at least who they can be, namely amazing rock musicians. And the photographers retold this story, so to speak, by making pictures of this situation.

Sigurd O.: I think definitional ceremonies is a great concept in this respect. You and I have written about the relevance of that concept in the context of folk high schools before (see Ohrem & Weiss, 2019: 17f). In general, however, I think that it is challenging to create arenas that allow for definitional ceremonies. It is not something that you just do, like some kind of easy play, because it is something more personal, more serious. The concept originates from Myerhoff's research on Jews in New York after the Second World War. She investigated the situations, settings and arenas where survivors of the Holocaust could tell each other their stories of that time. The main point of this form of storytelling was not the content of these stories, because they all had similar experiences. Rather, the main point of this storytelling, or narration, which often happened spontaneously, was to be seen and heard when you tell your story. The act of telling and being heard helped the listeners to understand who they were. It was an act of defining you – an act of defining your identity. That is what definitional ceremonies are essentially about.

Also, Nietzsche's idea of *life as an artwork* comes to my mind with respect to the previous story (see e. g. Nietzsche, 1993). In other words, the only thing that matters, according to Nietzsche, is to be the artist of one's life.

What happened in the previous story was the spontaneous creation of an arena for performing in a new way. The students unexpectedly found themselves inside this arena, and the eye of the photographers was what made them seen. It was not my eye, so to speak. It was not me who made them seen. It was this dynamic, this dialectic between the eye of the photographers and what the students were doing together. This is in a way similar to the groups of Jews that Myerhoff investigated that started to tell each other stories. However, a difference may be that the stories of the students, the performing of their narrative, had not been told before, and that it was more immediate and interactive.

Michael N. W.: If I understand you right, then your conclusion is that what happened in that session in terms of a definitional ceremony was nothing else then the creation of an identity-defining or identity-giving arena. Would you agree to that?

Sigurd O.: That sounds quite ostentatious, but I agree; that is what happened.

Authenticity and identity

Michael N. W.: Maybe we could even extend this thought and say that this situation was about authentic identity. What do I mean with that? We are creating and defining our identities all the time, but sometimes we create it according to false assumptions. As an example, I might decide to study medicine in order to become a physician because then I will earn good money. That decision, which indeed is identity-giving ("I am a doctor"), might not be based on the authentic wish to become a physician, however, that is, to help and heal others. In other words, when it comes to

our identity, we are sometimes running around with masks, metaphorically speaking.

In your described case, however, the students obviously experienced meaning, and to experience real meaning, you have to act authentic. You cannot experience meaning if what you are experiencing does not *feel meaningful* to you, that is, it does not work only to pretend. Hence, meaning varies from individual to individual, and it is strongly related to authenticity, that is, to who and how we truly are and want to be (see Frankl, 2000: 14f).

Flow state theory

Sigurd O.: I agree, you cannot pretend to experience meaning. You can only pretend to confirm expectations from others, but then you are wearing a mask, you are playing a role. And that does not necessarily give you meaning, of course.

However, what appears to be some kind of contradition in the described case in this regard is that the students actually were playing a role in relation to the photographers. Therefore, my conclusion is that it must be possible to play a role in an authentic way. When you would take a look at one of the photos that were taken in that session, you would see that they were into something. You can see it in their eyes. They don't look like children, even though they were young. No, they looked like jazz or rock musicians who are *in the zone* or *in the flow*, as Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi called it in his flow state theory (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).

Michael N. W.: I see what you mean, but that makes me wonder whether it really was roles that these students were living authentically, or was it rather that *in* that moment they realized a possibility to live up to an ideal self-image *for* that moment?

The pedagogical concept of Golden Moments

Sigurd O.: You are right. The concept of roles does not fit properly in this case. The students were not playing roles.

They did something new that resembled rock stars who are improvising.

But there is something else, and I think this happened simultaneously. The whole thing was not individual anymore. Normally, I would tell the students which song we would play, like a piece from The Talking Heads, for example. I would also tell and show each student how to play his or her instrument in that song, and so we would practice. In the case of this story, however, I did not tell them which piece of music to play. Also, we did not practice in advance, but still, the students were playing better than normally. That is maybe the strange thing here, that they did it better than all the other things we had done before. So, what happened? What happened was what I define as the Golden Moment; to me a central concept in order to understand folk high school pedagogy (see Ohrem & Haddal, 2011: 17 or Ohrem & Weiss, 2019: 59). A central aspect of such a Golden Moment is that the situation where it happens, does not only consist of individuals doing something, but that they are doing something together. Hence, it is not only about individuality anymore, but there is some kind of communion that comes to the fore, which might eventually best be described with the Aristotelian proverb, "The whole is greater than the sum of its parts." (Aristotle, 1991: 1045a.8–10). This communion arises from individual capabilities, but it also transcends them and eclipses into some kind of "ritual", which manifests something that is magical and almost sacred. Though not in a religious sense, of course.

Communities of practice

Michael N. W.: What you are describing here also seems to relate to what is called *communities of practice* as described by Wenger (1998), which is also a key concept for some authors who wrote about folk high school pedagogy (see e. g. Lövgren, 2020). However, if I understood you

right, then even though the concept of communities of practice and togetherness are central aspects of your narrative, it is not only about being with others and doing something together. There is still more to it. For me, in the way you described this situation, it is also about *presenting oneself to others*. And here my question is: If presenting yourself or something you created together with others, is it a central aspect of folk high school pedagogy in general? For example, one class or group is creating something, and then it is presented to the whole school.

Sigurd O.: The answer is yes, because we do that all the time, for example, in the form of project weeks where the students produce something within their main class. The film class would make a film, the music class would write a song and rehearse it, and so on. And then there is a presentation at the end of such a week.

However, in the previously described case, it was not like that. The students of this session did not work on something in order to present it then. I only told them in advance that some photographers would come to take pictures of them while playing, but we did not prepare for that in any way. And of course, all of these students had seen pictures in music magazines before, with rock stars performing, improvising and so on. Hence, the students had an idea of what the photos could ideally look like. Nevertheless, the performance that they then gave, was not planned, it was not choreographed beforehand, not studied or rehearsed. It just happened spontaneously, and that is what made it unique. If I would have told them that the photographers would come again in one week and the students should do more or less the same thing again, I am sure it would not have worked out in the same way, that is, with the same spirit and magic. And maybe that is actually the point with the previously mentioned *definitional ceremonies* (Myer-

hoff 1982: 100). If you repeatedly do something, it is easier to do it, but the first time is always the best, so to speak.

Michael N. W.: Let me summarize at this point what we have examined so far. In the beginning, you brought up the term *showing, not telling*. We mentioned the term *to be seen*. Also, *togetherness* was a central aspect we focused on, which in this case is more than what Wenger described as *communities of practice* (see Wenger, 1998) because this kind of togetherness was somehow unique and spontaneous. We also had a closer look at the term *meaning* where Frankl's three categories of values have been mentioned, namely existential values, creative values and attitudinal values (see Frankl, 1986: 43f).

My question now is whether folk high school pedagogy – seen from a more general, universal perspective – is about learning to deal with attitudes or, to use Viktor Frankl's expression, *attitudinal values* (see ibid.).

Educational inertia

Sigurd O.: In fact, this is what I wanted to come back to. For what is characteristic in this narrative is the attitude of the students. This attitude, for me, is about non-resistance. Though here I don't use the word resistance in a political sense but rather in the sense of inertia, and metaphorically speaking, one can also find some kind of inertia in education – let's call it *educational inertia* – routines, which is not the same as rituals. In folk high school, you have the times for meals, you have the teaching schedules, you have many different structures and rules, and that provokes educational inertia in this school system. Being aware of that, the teachers for example do not have a strict time schedule anymore for when to take breaks. Rather, they ask the students when they want to take a break. If the students are into something, they can continue with that activity. If they need a break, they can have it. A good part of what is going on in the pedagogical everyday life of the teach-

ers at a folk high school is about removing and eliminating the resistance and inertia from the students, that is, all the barriers towards learning. A concrete example for that would be a teacher who chooses not to do the class in a traditional classroom but in a more casual surrounding like the fireplace room, something which often happens, by the way. But still, you can meet the resistance of single individuals. You face their inertia. Especially young people at the age of around 19 years have so many expectations about themselves and expectations about others' expectations, which generates inertia towards letting go and being free in a pedagogical situation. In other words, many students face challenges when invited to engage in an educational activity due to their fundamental ideas and beliefs of what school and education is. What happened in the described jam session was that all of a sudden, all this inertia disappeared.

Pedagogical relevance of attitudinal transformation

Michael N. W.: In other words, all of a sudden, the students could change their attitude. With their new attitude in this situation, they could experience meaning. In this respect, it appears to me that experiencing meaning through one's attitude or through one's change of attitude towards the given situation is a signifying aspect of what you called the Golden Moment, as a pedagogically transformative moment. However, would you say that by getting the chance to get rid of all this inertia in that moment, the students could learn a new way of how to deal with their attitude towards life and towards education in general?

Sigurd O.: At least concerning their attitude towards education, because there is usually a great amount of inertia in this kind of group. They have their experiences from traditional high school, and implicitly, they assume and expect such music classes to be traditional teaching. Of course, I don't want them to have such expectations, but they still

do. What I figured out, though, in this respect is that for some students, it is easier to let go of this inertia if they drop into the music room in a break and just start to jam with me. While they are doing that, they don't even think about it as a jam; they just play. All of a sudden, they can change their attitude and engage in this activity without educational inertia. However, the next time when they come to music class, this kind of free play, this relieved attitude, is not possible again. Then they are back into their old attitude and see the class as traditional teaching.

The students at folk high schools have many expectations, and hence attitudes, that have been created during and due to their former socialization and their experiences with education. And that is understandable. They have been in this system for 12 years, and even longer if you include their time in kindergarten. Therefore, these expectations and attitudes are deeply grounded in them, and it is not realistic nor fair to expect that they will remove these expectations and change their attitudes in a twinkling.

To stand in the open

Michael N. W.: What you are saying here reminds me of Finn Thorbjørn Hansen's description of *the existential* (see Hansen, 2007: 398). That is, "the experience that the world (and one's life in it) is a mystery. It poses questions (like What is the good life? What is meaning? What is love? etc.) which cannot find final answers, but still it exists, and we are experiencing it. The existential is then, by nature, an open place."[1] (Weiss, 2017: 20) What I am wondering about in this respect is whether folk high school pedagogy is essentially about removing or dissolving existential expectations so that the students can learn to experience *the existential*, that is, to learn *to stand in the open* (*"At stå i det åbne,"* as Finn Thorbjørn Hansen called it in Danish (2008))? And with learning *to stand in the open* (ibidem), I

mean an attitudinal development towards an authentic and hence wondering being-in-the-world.

The call of conscience

Sigurd O.: Yes, I would say so. When you remove those expectations, you go from inauthentic, even worldly expectations that you acquired due to your socialization, towards a more authentic way of life. You are transforming your attitude towards life from one that *makes sense*, towards one that makes you *find meaning*, to say it with Frankl. However, when you "stand in the open," then you are confronted with existential questions and attitudinal challenges. And if you answer to them, then this is the answer of your conscience. And with conscience, in accordance with Frankl, I mean an inner voice that calls for you (see Frankl, 2000: 59). And in the existential, in the open, what you are responding to is your inner voice, your conscience. Frankl defined the term *responsibility* in this way, that is, when you are responding to your conscience in terms of your actions, you act responsibly (see e. g. ibid.: 29 & 41), not very different from Heidegger's "call of conscience" (Heidegger, 2008: 317). In this respect also, your research project "Daimonic Dialogues" can be mentioned, which sheds an interesting light on learning to listen to one's conscience as a central educational goal of folk high school pedagogy (see Weiss, 2021).

However, when I say all this now about expectations and attitudes that are fostered in the conventional school system, then I, in fact, realize that the folk high schools are already facing a quite challenging situation. And I am afraid it will get worse. In our school, for example, we get more and more used to simply applying teaching techniques. We are establishing structured and planned-through didactical systems, so to speak. For the students, this seems to be fine because they are not used to anything else. In a way, we are feeding their expectations and supporting their inauthen-

tic attitudes. However, these expectations and attitudes are incommensurable with what folk high school pedagogy is about, at least for me. Many students think that when they have learned certain techniques, might it be in guitar playing, in filmmaking, in the gym class, and so on, then they have learned all what was there to learn. When they come to this point, the school year is unfortunately often finished. Then there is no more time left to raise the curtain, so to speak. It is too late to tap into the existential and make them aware that a different attitude towards education and towards life in general is possible.

Educational instrumentalism

Michael N. W.: What you are describing here sounds like educational instrumentalism and you find it everywhere in the school system today. It implies that a student can perform outstandingly according to this system, but still he or she fails the essence of education, or better, of *Bildung* (in Norwegian, "*danning*"). In this way, education today seems to be endangered because if we reduce education, or *Bildung,* to the transference of techniques, you never get to the point that you mentioned previously (see also Helskog & Weiss, 2021). Namely, to stand in the open, and then – and only then – you can start to be confronted by your inner voice, your conscience. Here, the difference between learning a profession and following your calling comes to the fore. A difference that appears to be of utmost importance when it comes to *Bildung* (see Hellesnes, 1992). I think that we all have this intrinsic wish to hear and follow our calling, but at the same time, we are easily fooled by the idea that we can find and follow our calling by merely acquiring techniques and instrumentalistic skills.

Sigurd O.: Yes, therefore it seems to be natural that many students think like that. Many are looking for confirmations for what they have reached. It is a bit like role play

games on the internet, where the goal always is to reach the next level.

Michael N. W.: Maybe we could even conclude that several students do everything perfectly right according to the education system, but they fail to live up to their human potential?

Sigurd O.: Absolutely. I perfectly agree.

Michael N. W.: I think we came quite far now in this dialogue, and, in fact, I think that we can round it up. We investigated your described case from quite illuminating angles and perspectives. Thank you very much for the conversation.

3. Epilogue

The previous dialogue started with an experience about a jam session in a music class where something unexpected happened. Sigurd did not plan anything in advance for this session. He just started with a line, and the other students tuned in. Then, suddenly, a group of journalists and photographers came into the room, taking pictures of that session. For some reason, the students played so well together as never before. After the session was over, none of the musicians had words for what has just happened. But they were overwhelmed by this experience because they realized that they had just done something that they did not think they were capable of.

In the course of this dialogue, that kind of experience was called the Golden Moment. In simple terms, such moments are about having a fundamental insight or revelation about oneself. In that sense, they are enlightening as well as *trans*-formative in nature, and hence formative pedagogically.

As it turned out during the conversation, Golden Moments cannot be planned in advance or arranged for. Rather, they happen spontaneously and are unforeseen – something that can be challenging for a teacher, since he or she never knows when and if such moments will occur. The only thing one can do is to be open for them and prepare the students to be receptive for them too. Hence, though a teacher cannot organize and plan for Golden Moments, he or she can "provide for" them in terms of his or her attitude. In this respect, the Taoist *Wu Wei* was mentioned, which can be defined as an attitude of doing by not doing, so to speak. Such an attitude must not be mixed up with just doing nothing; rather, it is about embracing the given situation and trying to get all involved into a kind of *flow*. In reference to Csikszentmihalyi's flow theory (1990), getting into a flow-state has not so much to do with doing or making something as with having the right attitude. In this respect, the investigation performed in the course of this dialogue gives the impression that Golden Moments form a vital aspect of good folk high school pedagogy, and the teacher's responsibility is to open up a space for them to happen without any guarantee that they will.

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So That Life Becomes Bigger

Johan Lövgren and Michael Noah Weiss

1. Prologue

Johan Lövgren, the dialogue partner of the next dialogue, has worked for over 20 years as a teacher at Grenland Folk High School. He was involved in many pedagogical development projects, and, as one of the few, he also has a PhD in folk high school pedagogy (Lövgren, 2017). In 2020, he became an associate professor at the University of South-Eastern Norway (USN) where folk high school is an educational field. He is the main editor of the extensive anthology, *The Nordic Folk High School Teacher* (Lövgren, Hallqvist, Rahbek, & Lysgaard, 2023) and author of several research publications on the subject. He designed and runs an academic education program for folk high school pedagogy at his university, and last but not least, he is also a member of the core committee of the Global Network for Folk High School Research. In other words, Johan not only has a broad overview of the pedagogical landscape of this type of school, but he is also a leading figure in research on the matter.

Johan and Michael are colleagues at USN. They frequently work together on both studies and research on folk high school, and the following dialogue represents just one of their collaborations. The question of how students can learn to deal with difficult feelings like grief and sorrow is

examined closer in this dialogue where a respective course is presented and reflected upon. Getting prepared for life was a central goal of the school where this course was carried out. How this goal is related to questions of ethical and existential values and how a folk high school can deal with and work with such heavy feelings like grief and sorrow is further investigated in this conversation. Finally, throughout the course of this dialogue, it is also examined how learning activities, such as the previously mentioned course, relate to the question of good folk high school pedagogy and which role responsibility plays in such a case.

2. Dialogue

Michael Noah Weiss: Johan, my question to you now is whether you can recall a concrete experience or a pedagogical practice of which you would say that this is a proper example of good folk high school pedagogy.

Johan Lövgren: My problem is that I have several examples. I have experiences on more existential themes like death and sorrow, more analytic and theoretical subjects such as Jungian psychology and philosophy, but also more fun classes on topics like falling in love. So, you can choose whether you want a "heavy" one or one that is more easy-going.

Michael N. W.: We can try a heavy one. But just one, so that we can investigate it more in depth.

2.1. Concrete reflection

A course about grieve

Johan L.: If I were to pick one that I would see as a "heavy" one, then maybe the theme of sorrow would be suitable. It is a theme that I have worked on at folk high

school for over 20 years. I did so in quite different pedagogical formats, but finally I landed on something – a thematic half day seminar – that I thought was good folk high school practice. I put a lot of work and energy into developing this course, and I always felt apprehensive as I prepared it for new students. I did this because I see this as a central theme for all of us – we all have to handle grief at some time in our life.

To describe this course further, I first have to give you some of my own background in working with death and grief. I have a background as a pastor and counselor and have been a member of different crisis teams. As a parish minister, the theme was a central part of my everyday practice.

In my later work as a folk high school teacher, my main responsibility was to develop courses on philosophical, existential and religious themes. The overall objective for all these classes was to prepare the students for the challenges they would meet in life and to help develop tools to handle these challenges. From my experiences with grief counseling, I saw the possibility of developing a course on grief, but I also saw it as a great responsibility to bring up such a theme. To give room for this kind of heavy, existential theme, I also had days when the main object of the class was to just have fun together. In a class about "falling in love," we could, for instance, have a competition announcing a prize for the group who could write a text for a love song with the most clichés in it. A somewhat more serious class would include ethical themes where we could both laugh at and discuss different attitudes towards such things as driving too fast or making moonshine vodka, depending on where you come from in Norway.

The classes on grief were the ones I prepared myself the most thoroughly for. A part of my job was to have one afternoon a week set aside for counselling. Many of the stu-

dents used this opportunity to share areas in their lives they needed help with. From these counselling sessions, I knew that there were students who had been through very serious grieving, maybe losing a parent or a sibling. This made me feel even more responsible, knowing that I entered a very private and hurtful area in these students' lives.

One way to work with grief is to invite participants into the experience of grieving through sharing the experiences of others. The format I ended up using connected to this by mixing the stories of my own experiences as a grief counsellor with songs, texts and scenes from movies. Examples of such films I used would be "The Brothers Lionheart," which deals with the borders of death (Lindgren, 1973), or "My Sister's Keeper" (Cassavetes, 2009). One student asked if we could also include the grief of losing your dog and use the end of the movie "Marly and Me: Life and Love of the World's Worst Dog" (Frankel, 2008). Songs like "Tears in Heaven" (Clapton, 1991), where Clapton sings about losing his son, or Björn Eidsvåg's "Eg ser" (1983), which connects grief to a religious perspective were included. Between the songs, the films and the texts, I would present examples of cases (anonymous) from my own experiences as a grief counsellor. My idea here was to lead the students into an experience by inviting them to engage in these stories, films and songs. In crisis therapy, one way you can become stronger and face a certain challenge is to experience a "light version" of the trauma through entering into someone else's experience. The controlled experience of grief in you then goes through your imagination and is essential in order to be able to process the possibility of experiencing such a situation in real life.

So, what I did in this course was to take them through different steps, from the experience of grieving to the handling of sorrow. The aim would be to start a process of handling some of the vital questions grieving poses to us.

Not that I have the answers – that is very important to mention. I would never say that I have a ready-made answer for them, but rather that I can start a dialogue with them about different religions' ways of talking about life after death or about a God that is present in darkness and suffering. The dialogue was central here – most of my students had no religious background. For me, it was important that in the written course evaluation, there were only positive responses to these classes on grief.

Michael N. W.: Could you give one example from one specific class or one student who was taking that class?

Johan L.: One student had a father who was very sick with cancer at the time the student took the course. His father did not die during that school year but shortly afterwards. For many students, if they had been in such a situation, they would have said, "Johan, this course is just too heavy for me right now". But this student attended the class. He sat a bit to the side and by himself (I always try to find rooms where you can have some private space). From time to time, he would weep when listening to the stories and watching the films. In the counselling session after the class, we would use examples from the texts and films in order for him to express his own thoughts and feelings. The students were always offered the possibility of such follow-up talks as a part of the course.

Michael N. W.: What would you say – what kind of processes did the student you referred to go through due to that course? You said that experiencing sorrow through other people's eyes is central to this course. You make that happen by using stories, songs, films and so on, so that the students can get into the feeling of sorrow without having to relate to a situation from their own personal lives. However, the feeling would still be evoked. Now my question

is, what are you doing further on after you have provoked this feeling of sorrow?

To open-up human potential

Johan L.: *Provoking* is a word that I wouldn't use in this case. It is interesting that you use it because, in a certain sense, I maybe do exactly that. But for me, it is more like an opening-up. My pedagogical ideal is not to put anything into the students that is not already there from before. Rather, I try to create a resonance to humanity. And here, I refer to Grundtvig's idea of humanity – his anthropology where we are all very closely interrelated and interwoven in the same "fabric". A "fabric" that is good, so to speak, and that thrives for wholeness (Korsgaard, 2011; Wingren, 1983). So, when I use the term resonance here, I mean it as part of a process of healing, a process of thriving for wholeness as individual human beings, but also as humanity as such. Therefore, the goal with this course is not to provoke but, in some way, to make healing possible and to open up human potential.

To resonate with humanity

Michael N. W.: I think I understand. So, *to resonate with humanity* or *to resonate to sorrow* is what is happening in this course. You also said that a process of healing sets in. In this respect, I would assume that if you experience sorrow, what you wish for is healing. Therefore, my question is, what is happening with the students along this way towards healing, how do they express that?

Johan L.: At the end of the course, I put all the texts, films and songs that we worked with on display. Then the students choose those that touched them most and that were most meaningful to them. After they have chosen a text, they work with three questions:

1) Why did you choose this text?
2) How have you experienced sorrow?
3) What do you think happens after we die?

It is important to note that the students do not have to answer at all, or just answer one or two of the questions. I try to make this a time of reflection by playing music that can help as a background for answering these questions. The freedom to use or not to use this time is very important. Some students leave after just a short time, while those who stay the longest would sit there for 20 minutes or half an hour. In that reflection process, I also offer them support by telling them, "Please let me know if this is too much for you" and "We, the teachers, are here for you if you need someone to talk to." To me, this is a necessary safety net. It would be irresponsible to do something like this without such a safety net. The folk high schools are very safe places for this kind of personal development classes. As folk high school teachers, we are together with our students not only in classes. The framework of a boarding school requires that a staff person is always available for the students, not only during classes but also in the evenings and weekends.

Michael N. W.: Which "place" do the students arrive at emotionally after they have finished the course? You just mentioned some of the answers that the students would give on these three questions at the end of the course, but where do they stand emotionally?

Johan L.: Emotionally, especially with the ones who stayed after I posed the three questions after the course, they would feel good. When I talked to them, even those who cried would say, "It is good". Even though they felt quite different feelings at that point – one would grieve for her grandmother, another one would miss his dog, others would just be puzzled about the complexity of life – their emotional tenor, so to speak, was a good one.

Michael N. W.: What you describe here is quite fascinating because what you do with this course is that you bring the students into a process. A process where they get in

touch with a fundamental feeling of being human. And that feeling is sorrow. I think, in one way or another, we can all relate to that feeling. Now, in this course, in this process, you are using different pedagogical ways of bringing them into this feeling. You described it as *experiencing sorrow through the eyes of others*. But still, the feeling is there; they start to resonate towards that feeling. And then throughout the course, if I understood it right, the students arrive at an emotional place where they say, "It's good." In this regard, you also mentioned that through this course as well as through the whole school year, the students perceive their lives as "becoming bigger", in the sense of being enriched. In other words, for me, this is a good description of hope. In short, the students gain hope in life. For me, this just sounds beautiful – that young people are getting hope (again) towards life. They probably experience that life is bigger than what they thought it would be when they came to the school.

The Grundtvigian idea of a common humanity

Johan L.: In this respect, there is one essential aspect that really amazes me and that verifies the Grundtvigian idea of our common humanity and wisdom that we carry, and that is that this feeling of hope is not linked to any religious conversion at all. The idea of the course or the school in general was not that you become religious or a believer. No, what was central was that the students experienced that life has become bigger. Maybe as a student, I got a deeper understanding of religion; maybe I got a deeper understanding of life or of humanity throughout the school year. And here, it is vital to note that the school absolutely abstained from luring and locking the students into a common set of values or a common belief. For precisely this is what you can call the litmus test, whether such a school is a folk high school or not. Because if a school forces you to share a certain set of values in order to be a part of the fellowship, then

you are not a folk high school. A folk high school should be in dialogue with all viewpoints and open to the diversity of life.

There are some basic values that are common at a folk high school, but these values are rooted in democracy. These are the values our society is based on, and these values we often forget because we take them for granted.

2.2. Critical reflection

Life becomes bigger

Michael N. W.: If we now go over to the next step in the dialogue, which is about figuring out some more universal and general themes inherent in the practice of that course you described, could we then say that hope in terms of "life becomes bigger" – as one of these universal themes – is a transcendent value transcending religious beliefs? Here, I mean that even though the students would be from different denominations or even from none, they can relate to that.

Enlightenment

Johan L.: Absolutely, because this is the ingenuity of Grundtvig's anthropology. In this anthropology, there are some keys to a good or better life in terms of the development towards an enlightened humanity (Korsgaard, 2011). Examples for what I call "keys" are dialogue, experience-sharing or developing common human values (Rahbek, 2019).

To become whole again

Michael N. W.: When it comes to the question of what it is that is at stake in what you said, then there might be also another general theme or dimension, which I would call "To become whole again." Because the students were going through this experience of sorrow, they also could relate to sorrow from their own lives, like the student whose father had cancer. I do not say that they were "whole again" after the course. Rather, I mean the prospect of developing towards becoming whole again. And here, the question is

whether healing means to become whole again. Furthermore, to put it bluntly, would you say that becoming whole again or going through a process of healing should be one of the pedagogical core themes of folk high school?

Resonating with others

Johan L.: Here, we need to be careful with the terminology that we are using because it can easily be misunderstood. And in that respect, I have to say that the word "healing" becomes very problematic to me. It is a beautiful picture, but if we are about to explain folk high school pedagogy, I would rather talk about expanding your relationship to a common humanity, finding the resonance of the Other in yourself, enlarging your heart, even though these sound like clichés too.

Michael N. W.: You are suggesting that we should replace what I called becoming whole again or healing with something else. And what you were describing now has more to do with opening up towards and resonating with the world.

Learning to know others and oneself

Johan L.: Yes, or resonating with the Other. One of the findings in my research on folk high school is that by finding yourself, you develop a deeper relationship towards the Other and a deeper understanding of the Other (see Lövgren, 2019). There is some kind of reciprocity or double resonance. You resonate with the Other and that resonates within yourself. Both processes are happening in a folk high school. In my interviews with folk high school students, many of them would say that what they valued the most in the folk high school were these meetings with the Other. And connected to this would be the second biggest thing, "finding myself" (Lövgren, 2017). This is what I mean with double resonance.

2.3. Theoretical reflection

Intuitive resonance

Michael N. W.: What you are telling now reminds me, metaphorically speaking, of this phenomenon with two guitars. If you put two guitars next to each other and you pull the A-string on one guitar, then the A-string of the other guitar would automatically start to vibrate too. So, if we go over now to some more theoretical reflections, Joachim Bauer can be mentioned, who used this phenomenon in order to explain his research findings on mirror neurons (Bauer, 2005). To describe what he found out, imagine a dentist's waiting room. You sit there in this room, and all of a sudden you get a stomachache. You have no idea why you get that now, but it could be that there is someone sitting next to you having what is called "dental anxiety." You kind of resonate with that person, without consciously knowing it, by having a stomachache because it is your mirror neurons being activated by this other person in the room. Since this comes from research on intuition, maybe it does not have so much to do with what you were describing. Nevertheless, the metaphor with the two guitars could eventually explicate what you are saying about the term "to resonate"?

Learning from others about oneself

Johan L.: Well, I think it does. Just as an example, one female student would tell me, "I am a girl from the countryside. I've lived a very safe life, and so have my friends. Our moms and dads were around; we had a safe surrounding, and I know very little about the real complications of life. I came to folk high school, and in my class we all got pretty close. In that class, there is a girl, and in her family, there has been incest. Her father had a drug habit, and she ended up taking drugs herself. Now, at the school, when we talk together and when we sit together, on a bus, in an airplane, we might hold each other. And I understand why some people struggle much more than I've done. In

some way, her life experiences become mine". For me, this is about resonance, and I can surely imagine that this resonance is physical too, in terms of what you just said about the mirror neurons. I truly believe that by resounding, resonating with another, you are deepening yourself. As with the girl I quoted, saying that "her life experience becomes a part of me too". And then, when you go through life with such a mindset, you become a more democratic person (Gustavsson, 2013). My way of being in society will not be the same again, as it would have been if I had not come so close to another.

The closeness between students at folk high schools is hard to find in other educational situations because students seldom get that kind of quality time. In folk high school, you get another context, and it creates another kind of learning, growth and understanding (Mikkelsen, 2014).

Narrative imagination, emotional and spiritual intelligence

Michael N. W.: What you described now about the specific kind of learning and developing at folk high school, especially what you said about becoming a more democratic person by learning to resonate, reminds me of three theoretical approaches:

1. In her article, "Education for Citizenship in an Era of Global Connection", Martha Nussbaum suggests three abilities that need to be fostered in order to promote global citizenship:

> The Socratic ability to criticize one's own traditions and to carry on an argument on terms of mutual respect for reason; (2) the ability to think as a citizen of the whole world, not just some local region or group; and (3) the "narrative imagination," the ability to imagine what it would be like to be in the position of someone very different from oneself. (Nussbaum, 2002: 289)

In what you said, "narrative imagination" appears to be promoted throughout the whole school year but particularly

in the course you described, which is about seeing sorrow through the eyes of others.

2. Daniel Goleman's theory of emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1995). What you described has to do with developing emotional intelligence, in my view. That is, it has to do with how you relate to others, how you respond to others, how you resonate with others. In other words, there seems to be quite some emotional learning going on.

3. Especially in the course you described, there still seems to be more to it than emotional intelligence. And that "more" appears to be what Zohar and Marshall called spiritual intelligence (Zohar & Marshall, 2000). Spiritual intelligence has little to do with being religious but rather with the ability to become aware of what could be called ultimate meaning, as Viktor Frankl put it (2000), or a meaning that is bigger than yourself. Not in a mere religious sense but more in the sense of becoming aware that life is bigger than you and what you actually think of it (see Zohar & Marshall, 2000). So, it appears that, among other things, it is also spiritual intelligence that is fostered in your course. For example, when you ask, "What do you think about life after death?", then this is clearly a spiritual question but not necessarily a religious one. For some, it might be, but not for everyone. Now, to sensitize oneself and to open up to that question, to me, seems to be about spiritual intelligence or developing spiritual intelligence.

Furthermore, after all they have been through during this course and due to the school year as a whole, the students can say that life has become bigger to them. And for me, this indicates a fundamentally existential learning process, on the one hand. On the other, with Martha Nussbaum's suggested "narrative imagination" as one of three abilities to foster global citizenship, it seems that it is also a democratic learning process that is triggered (see Nussbaum, 2002). However, last but not least, there is also spiri-

tual learning taking place, in terms of Zohar and Marshall's spiritual intelligence (see 2000). That young people learn within the spiritual domain cannot be taken for granted. In fact, not many schools go in that direction.

Using personal stories

Johan L.: And not many folk high schools do either. And that is not a criticism. With my experience as a pastor, my advantage is that I have a language for that domain. Of course, it is a certain religious language, but – and this I have worked on for the last 20 years now – if I can be true to my heritage and at the same time opening it up, it can become a *resource* for everyone. A resource not in the sense of a teaching but in the sense of a source of inspiration.

An example here can be a special kind of open service, a mass, that I developed in the school chapel, called "Thomasmesse". When it comes to religious backgrounds, my students mirrored their cohort of Norwegian youths. Normally, 90% of these young adults would not go to a church or take part in religious services. At these gatherings in the chapel, as many as 90 percent of the students would come and take an active part. One year, we actually had to move the service from the chapel to the gym to make room for all the students that turned up. Again, I would say that what made the students want to come to these gatherings has to do with resonance. The whole program for the service, the texts that were read and the stories I shared, were chosen because they are open to everybody; they can make life bigger for everybody, no matter whether you are religious or not. An example could be when we talked about the problem of evil and suffering. To show that we all share this pain, I would tell them about my experience of being a young pastor and having to bury a six-month-old baby. I knew the family, having baptized the little girl just three months earlier. Now the parents asked for me again, after having found her dead one morning with-

out any warning. They asked me to help them by holding the cold little body so that they could put on her baptismal dress. After having dressed her in the robe, we had to put the baby in a specially made little white coffin. It was such a brutal experience of how meaningless suffering and death can be. Later at the funeral, the parents cried in their helplessness, and I have to say, I cried with them. I remember leaving the church after this funeral saying, "God, this is not possible – I can't do this. I can't talk about an almighty God when life is like this." This is not something I like to share, but my honesty, my doubt, and my tears can create a resonance to the truth that we can never understand suffering, whatever we believe. In the pain and doubt that this story holds, the students can resonate with me, as a human being. I create resonance by being honest and by being personal, very personal. If this is done with wisdom and integrity, it opens up for a resonance with the teacher.

Pedagogy of hope

Michael N. W.: I think this perspective that life is bigger and that it also becomes bigger for the students is one of the most valuable gifts that you can get from education. In this respect, though with a strong focus on social injustice, Paulo Freire spoke of a "Pedagogy of Hope" (1994). In a broader sense, a pedagogy of hope means that you become aware that there are many potentials in life that can be further developed, and this gives you hope. It gives you a healthy attitude towards life. As the teacher in this case, you are not trying to pass on your own opinions, but rather you try to inspire others so that they can find their own attitudes and ways in and towards life. I also think it is in this respect that something is happening with regards to becoming a democratic person. That is, you know your own standpoint, and the best you can do is not to convince others of your standpoint but to inspire them. That is probably a very central and fundamental dimension of democracy.

Only if such an inspirational attitude is in place can true democracy happen, I guess. Furthermore, as you said, this also relates to authenticity. How can I become an authentic person? How can I support others, like as a folk high school teacher, to become authentic persons too? For only as an authentic person can you truly contribute to democracy, I would think.

The relevance of a teacher's value base

Johan L.: Yes, I agree. I think authenticity and autonomy are really essential – both with regards to being true to myself as well as with regards to having my own right to choose. Furthermore, it seems to be especially the current generation that needs autonomy. Autonomy appears to be their basic platform.

Folk high schools are free to choose their value base, and this allows us to be in different places when it comes to areas such as politics or religion. For me, it is good that there are schools which do not have the same value base as my school, we are covering different areas or needs in the prospect students. As long as the schools operate dialogically, that is, as long as they are open-minded, it is good. For it is in line with the Grundtvigian idea of these schools (Grundtvig, 2011).

The whole idea of the possibility of standing on a value base or belief system and opening up in a way that gives others a totally free choice is very hard for us in our society to understand. However, I believe that in order to be a person who can resonate with young people, you have to have a belief system or value base. And as a system, it can be seen as limiting because you stand for something, you have something that you believe in. And you honestly have to say that to the students. I am a pastor, and I stand for this. I believe in the basic beliefs of the Christian Church. Saying that is not a problem to me, even though I am also very aware of the dark sides of Christian history.

I understand that one view would be that you can open up and give total freedom for students to find their own way through life by representing no standpoint at all. But to me, this is both naïve (we all stand for something), and I don't think it is what gives the most resonance. I think you have to stand somewhere, and from that standpoint, you can open up. This is also a thought that I find in Bakhtin's discourse analysis (Bakhtin, 1981; Lövgren 2017, 2019).

You cannot teach anything, you can only inspire

Michael N. W.: What you just said I interpret in terms of Biesta who assumes that as a teacher, you cannot teach your students anything, but you only can inspire them (Biesta, 2013). However, in order to inspire them, you have to stand for something. For with what would you inspire your students if you don't have anything and if you don't stand for anything?

Maybe this is a good question to wrap up this dialogue now. Thank you very much for your valuable contributions and your insights!

3. Epilogue

In the beginning of the previous dialogue, a course about grief and sorrow was presented. The idea behind this course was to create a space in which the students could learn to approach such heavy feelings in a safe way. For example, by using respective texts or films that were read or shown and then reflected upon together. Though the course let several students go through a sometimes challenging process, at the end they had the impression that their 'horizon' was somehow broadened and that their lives became bigger, so to speak.

Since preparing for life was a key goal of the school in general, supporting the students to learn to approach such feelings was assumed as a vital aspect of this preparation.

Furthermore, as it came forth in the dialogue, by learning to respond to these feelings, the students also learned to resonate with and respond to each other. They got to know and understand each other better. Learning to resonate with each other is also a way of learning to "resonate with humanity" – something that relates to the Grundtvigian idea of a common humanity in the sense that we all, throughout our lifetime, have to experience such feelings and that this can help us to better understand each other. In a way, this common understanding also represents a central aspect of enlightenment, as it was discussed in the dialogue.

Furthermore, the dialogue partners assumed that in the long run, learning to resonate and respond to each other also essentially contributes to the formation process of becoming a democratic citizen. How a teacher responds to and resonates with his or her students was seen as a key aspect in this regard. The way of responding – e. g. through sharing personal stories and experiences – turns into the response-ability of the teacher in terms of a learning by example (see also Lövgren, 2020: 20f).

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Pedagogy for the Rich

Brita Phuthi & Michael Noah Weiss

1. Prologue

The dialogue partner of the last dialogue in this anthology is Brita Phuthi, who has in-depth experience with the field of international cooperation, global citizenship education and education for sustainable development. It was when she attended Sogndal Folk High School that her interest in the subject was evoked. Hence, after this school year, she applied for a program called Communication for Change by the Norwegian Church Aid and YMCA, in cooperation with NOREC[1] and Oslo Metropolitan University (OsloMet), with boarding at Rønningen Folk High School in Oslo. A stay abroad was part of the program, and for 3 months, she was in Eritrea with the Norwegian Church Aid's partner in order to learn about solidarity and aid work. In addition, she studied Global Understanding at OsloMet. After her studies, Brita had a position at Åsane Folk High School where she taught the subject "solidarity work". Since 2011, she has worked at the Norwegian Folk High School Council as an international advisor before beginning her PhD studies at OsloMet in October 2022.

Meeting Brita at a workshop on sustainable development for folk high school teachers in Oslo, Michael invited her to the following dialogue that took place in January 2022. In the beginning of this conversation, a learning pro-

gram called *Pedagogy for the rich* is presented. This program was developed around 2005, directed at the folk high schools, and was followed up by the International Committee for folk high schools (IU). The program is inspired by Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970), focusing on how we can liberate ourselves from systems and ways of living that oppress us and others (see Mokhtari & Sødal, 2005). The program has been carried out by teachers at several schools as well as by the international advisors at the Folk High School Council, who on average, visited around 25 schools per annum for several years.

2. Dialogue

Michael Noah Weiss: Brita, you are quite familiar with different fields and with different aspects of folk high school. And I assume your diverse experience as a vital resource for our dialogue now, in which we investigate the question, "What is good folk high school pedagogy?" In order to go into that question, I would like to invite you to pick a story and to share an experience from your work at the folk high schools that you think represents a good example of folk high school pedagogy.

2.1. Concrete reflection

Brita Phuthi: I have chosen an experience that is based on multiple learning experiences. It is about a program, which I have facilitated several times at different folk high schools. This program is called *Pedagogy for the rich,* and I have facilitated it at schools with a hundred students as well as in small classes of just ten students. When I think of the program now and how I want to present it, I have a class with about 15 students in mind – a class that focuses

on solidarity work. This might be relevant for the reader when imagining the different activities. As a first step, I would like to describe the program.

When starting, I introduce myself and the participants. After a brief round of introductions, we start with a first exercise – the world map: We write the name of the world's continents on posters, one on each, and put them on the floor. Then, I ask the students to think of a place in the world that has meaning to them, for example, a place where something special happened (in a positive sense) or a place that made an impression on them. This place could be in Norway or anywhere else in the world. The students get some time to think, but usually quickly choose a place. Of course, participating and sharing is voluntary in this exercise, and I also mention that if it is a very personal story that is connected to the chosen place, the students may only say a few words about it without telling the whole story. As it most often turns out, some have very typical stories, like having a nice holiday trip to the chosen country. Others would pick a place in Norway because, for example, their mom lives there and they feel at home there. For most folk high school students, it is the first time in their life that they live away from home when they stay at a folk high school. Others would choose a place in the world where they experienced something quite special, something that really made an impression on them, like a cultural experience or something that challenged their world view. I would also share a story to show the students that I am "with them." This exercise functions as an icebreaker, and since the program's focus is on the world, it is also a good way to tune into that topic and see how places can connect us.

The program is practice-oriented, and we would continue with an exercise on prejudices. Here, the students get a list of people with different identities, like a mother with a baby, a businessman, a youngster, an asylum seeker

and so on. Then the students should imagine that they sit on a train from Moscow to Rome, which takes a couple of days. The question they get is, with whom would they like to share their train compartment with and why – and why not with the others on the list? During the exercise, the students realize some of the prejudices they have. It is different how the students respond to this exercise, since some have a more solitary-oriented attitude, like choosing a blind woman from Iceland. Such students would say, "This woman should stay with me because she needs help, and I am willing to help her." Then you have a girl with a mini skirt on the list, and some male students would choose her for obvious reasons. Others would show resistance to having the woman with the baby in their compartment; their explanation is that the baby could cry all night, making it impossible to get some sleep. It is interesting to listen to the students' arguments on which they base their decisions. Some decisions would have been made for practical reasons, like with the mother and the baby. Others point towards more stereotypical pre-assumptions, for example, when students would be scared to share the compartment with an asylum seeker because they perceive such a situation as potentially dangerous. What is quite giving with this exercise is the act of visualizing and imagining the different situations with the different people and reflecting on your choices. The aim of this exercise is not only to become aware of your prejudices but also to investigate where they actually come from.

The next exercise is a newspaper game, where the class is divided into groups of five. I give a big newspaper, like a double-page, to each group and put it on the floor. The rule is that the students must be touching the newspaper without touching the floor, at least for a small second, and everyone in the group must do this simultaneously. The first round is easy because they stand on one foot on the

newspaper and hold each other in order to keep the balance. In the next step, I fold the newspaper to half the size, and the students try to do the same again, and so it continues. The newspaper gets smaller and smaller, and the students are not allowed to use any other equipment. Pretty soon, they would carry each other on their backs and try out other creative options. Finally, the newspaper is folded into the size of a postcard. In order to manage the task, the group really has to think outside the box. Because there is a solution: While the group members hold the newspaper with their hands, they jump up together. This exercise is a good energizer, also because the students don't think it is a part of the learning program, rather that they are simply doing a game. However, after the exercise, I connect it to the topic. I point out that the world's population is growing, but the world is not getting any bigger: the natural resources are not increasing; rather, they are being exhausted. I would point out that creativity is an important competence to seek ways in which the world can be more sustainable and equal. Then I would give some examples: In Norway, we are known for our oil resources, but we also have plenty of seaweed, which was used much more in previous times. You can make flour out of seaweed, which can be used as animal feed, for example. Where I come from, there was a factory making seaweed flour, which closed a long time ago, as seaweed was used for farming and agriculture. Today, we know seaweed from sushi, but it is not used as much and as versatile as it could. You can even make building material from it. One folk high school in Lofoten, which I visited, used seaweed as an ingredient in soup. Telling about these examples in this exercise should give the students ideas of how we can do things differently.

Another exercise I do in this program is musical chairs, but with a twist. You probably know this game where you put some chairs in the middle of the room, then you put

music on, and when you stop the music, the participants of the game must quickly sit down on one of the chairs – however, there is always one chair too little. The exercise I will describe now is a bit different. I tell the students that we are now playing the musical chairs game, but we will have two teams. I would form two groups with, let's say, 7 people in each group, and each group gets 6 chairs. After the first round, one in each group would not get a chair. However, instead of them leaving the game, the person from group A will be told to go to group B, and then I take a chair from group B and bring it to group A. So, I am changing the rules of the game, and I say that the goal is that each participant is included and that everyone gets a space to sit, even if that means that some people are sharing a chair. Because they just played the newspaper game, they are still tuned into how to cooperate. The game goes on like this for several rounds, where a person from group A goes to group B and a chair from group B is moved to group A. In the end, you have many people in group B with few chairs, while in group A, you have few people but many chairs. I don't tell the group that gets the chairs what to do with them, that is, how to arrange them and so on. They have to figure that out on their own.

After the game, the first question I ask is, "How was the game?" Here, the group with the many people would say something like, "Oh, it was real fun! We laughed a lot," and so on. The other group with many chairs and few people would not be that thrilled; they would often just say, "Well, we had enough space." What I try to observe in this group is whether they are sitting closely together and if they are using their chairs in a creative way. For example, they could build a sofa, or they could just leave the chairs randomly where I put them during the game. After hearing about their experience of the game, I ask, "Do you know what I am trying to show with this game?" And here, some

would have understood that it is a metaphor for the distribution of resources in the world. There are many different aspects that this game brings with regards to the overall theme of pedagogics for the rich. For example, if you are short of resources, you have to rely on your community, but – as in the context of this game – how long can three people sit on the same chair? For some minutes, it works, but for two hours or a whole day? They might have had a good time during the game, but being poor is not easy, even if the community supports each other.

The group with the many chairs and few people shows that it is in fact not much fun to sit on all the resources; the game gets boring for them pretty quickly. Some in this group would even look over to the other group with the many people, getting jealous and saying, "Look, they have so much fun, and we don't." This brings us to the question of what we need to have a good life. Material resources are important to meet our physical needs, but our mental health and social lives are also central to a good life. Another important question concerning the group with the many chairs and the few people is whether this group utilizes their resources. Do they make and build anything out of these chairs, for example? Or are the chairs just standing there? And how do these material resources affect us and our daily life? Do they create distance between us, or do they bring us together?

Another question is whether the rich take from the poor – because the group with the many chairs gets more and more chairs while the other group has fewer and fewer chairs. Here, we would talk about development issues, such as how for each dollar that a rich country gives to a developing country through aid, rich countries take about two dollars back through tax havens or debt payments, and so on. Another question I ask is whether there are more and more poor people on the planet, because this is what happens in

this game. At the time when I was facilitating the game, the number of people living in extreme poverty was decreasing, which showed (at that time) that there were positive developments as well.

The final exercise I would like to share is called "Take a stand". I would put posters on the floor where one would say "agree", another one "disagree" and the third and last one "don't know". Then I would pose some statements, and the students must physically move to the poster with the answer that they think fits best. I encourage them to discuss a bit before they choose. However, quite often the students just follow their gut feelings and quickly go to a poster. The first statement is, "I hardly ever buy things I don't really need", which brings us to issues of consumerism. The second one is, "My way of living contributes to the world being a better place." After positioning themselves, we would discuss the topic further by the students sharing their standpoints and some follow-up questions by me. But first, I would remind them that they can change their opinion and go to another poster that appears to fit better while we discuss. With regards to the statement about consumerism, it is interesting to talk about happiness with the students and pose questions like, "Is consumerism making us happy?" or "How long are you happy due to something that you just bought?" or "Which comments do you get when you wear something new?" When we arrive at the second statement about one's way of living, it often turns out that the students are very critical towards their way of living. The danger here is that they become a bit down, and that their impression is that we have screwed up the world in every respect. Therefore, when they share their issues and views, I try to point out positive developments too, including systemic changes, for example, at the palm oil campaign in 2012, which was very successful. We also talk about small changes each can make, like re-

ducing meat consumption and contributing to an inclusive school environment. More importantly, I try to leave the individual focus and give examples of what we can do on the school level as well as on a political level in order to make change happen. As much as I hope to bring in some perspectives through my questions, an important part of the exercise is for the students to listen to each other's views and practice expressing their opinions.

The program goes on like that, depending on whether we have a half day or a full day, with more exercises and reflections. I don't use that much theory when doing this program; rather, I try to give many examples in order to make it easier for the students to understand the issues that I want to bring attention to.

2.2. Critical reflection

Emotional and personal involvement

Michael N. W.: I think I have a good idea and picture of the program you described now. What I was wondering a bit about while you were describing the different exercises was the following: Normally, when we hear about solidarity work and global solidarity, then we are presented with a lot of knowledge. You said that you did not use that much theory in this program; rather, what you wanted was to break down these big topics into personal experiences. For me, seen from a pedagogical point of view, there is something in all the exercises that you described that you could call *emotional* or *personal involvement*. Like in the first exercise, where they pick a country that has a certain meaning for the students. If something has meaning for you, it also has a value for you. In the case of the first exercise, it would be an experience-based value that comes to the fore – because the students have experience with the country they have chosen, for whatever reason, whether it is because their mom is living there or you had the best holi-

days ever in that country, and so on. So, it is an experience-based value that is in the focus here. Something similar happens in the game with the chairs. As you yourself mentioned, this exercise is about provoking personal emotions and feelings, like being jealous of someone else because that person got hold of a chair. Or those who have more than enough chairs without realizing what they could actually do with these chairs. Instead, they just sit around, bored. In this respect, we could ask, are we making something out of our concrete living situation?

When we now go over to the next step in the dialogue called *critical reflection,* then it is the question, "What is at stake here?" that is central. What is at stake in the program that you described now, especially in terms of pedagogy? I don't know what you think, but for me, it would be this emotional and personal involvement that I just mentioned in order to succeed with this *pedagogy for the rich,* as you called it. What do you think about that?

Unlearning the "We are the best in the world" attitude

Brita P.: Well, I have to reflect while I speak now. I think global understanding is one thing, but that you care about other people in the world – this kind of interest is quite hard to call up if you are not already involved. To get a concrete, emotional experience might help in that respect. The program *Pedagogy for the rich* is about our attitudes as well as politics in the North and what impact these attitudes and politics have outside but also inside our borders. There are many aid organizations and projects that focus on what we can do somewhere else in the world. However, the *Pedagogy for the rich* is about what we can change here, in our society, and in our politics in order to create a sustainable future globally. In order to evoke involvement and to investigate these questions together, it can be good to start with the individual level, for example, by doing a project at your school, signing a petition or buying fair trade prod-

ucts. One of the questions that I pose during the exercise "Take a stand" is, "Is it better to give aid or to buy Fair-trade products?" Here, you would always have someone in the group saying, "Oh, I like this aid project," and another one stating, "Yes, but I think fair trade is better." Here, I try to point out that many well-intentioned projects are like putting a band-aid on a wound, but the real question is, "Why is there this wound in the first place?", metaphorically speaking. In other words, I try to challenge them on an even deeper level, looking at the systems that are making these wounds. The students, just like me at their age, through the Norwegian culture, schooling, media etc. are used to the idea that if you want to help people in the global south, you give money. Many have this understanding when they come to the folk high school. Therefore, my aim is to start a process of unlearning and awareness. To start that process, I would have a very short presentation at the beginning of the program where I come with a bit more critical perspective on how we learn about the global South in Norway and how we view ourselves in Norway.

This reminds me of our prime minister when he held his New Year's speech a few weeks ago. I think he had many good points, but when he talked about the Norwegian youth, he said something like, "We have the best youth in the world!" However, his next sentence was, "But they need some help" (the focus being on mental health issues). This idea that we are the best country in the whole wide world and that we know best, I think this is an attitude that we subconsciously have in Norway. On the one hand, an integral part of our culture is what in Norwegian is called The Law of Jante, saying, for example, "Don't think that you are better than anybody else." On a national, collective level, however, we have this "We are the best" attitude. I found evidence for that in the schoolbook of my son, who is in the second grade (Phuthi, 2021). In this book, there

was a page about water where Norway was compared with Africa, a whole continent, and all the stereotypes about Africa, as well as Norway, were reinforced[2]. I complained to the teacher about this book, who followed up, but for me, this is one of the signs for this "We are the best" attitude. With the *Pedagogy for the rich* program, I want to challenge this attitude because I think it is important to rethink how we view ourselves, how we view the world and how such attitudes can also be negative for us. Because in a way, such a collective attitude is connected to institutional racism. In that sense, the program is also intended to be a changemaker.

Michael N. W.: When you put it like that, then for me, the program is about awareness-raising, on the one hand. On the other, I was wondering – when you mentioned unlearning certain attitudes or behavioral patterns – whether you sometimes get the impression that you are dealing with a quite ideological issue here.

Brita P.: Definitely!

How to deal with ideology?

Michael N. W.: How do you respond to this ideological aspect, which is obviously an inherent part of this program, and, in a certain sense, it has to be? In that respect, I can also mention that I just took a look on the world map that is hanging behind you on the wall. What is funny with those maps is that each continent and country gets a different color. Hence, in a way, we are already dividing when making such maps: the idea that the world can be divided into different countries, and then all of a sudden – as you just mentioned – it happens that someone sees his or her country as the best country in the world or at least better than other countries. And this is the point where certain ideologies come in. So, I ask again, how are you dealing with this ideological aspect in terms of an ethical attitude towards it?

Posing questions that are thought-provoking

Brita P.: I have to say that in most of my experiences from this program, I did not go too deep into the different topics that we dealt with so that it would become a challenge. The focus is to raise some questions that invite the students to think for themselves. They would then have reflections like, "Is it really so?"

I would use Peter's World Map, where you can see the globe unfolded. In Peter's World Map, you see the correct size of each country, however, the shape is not right. Here, Europe looks very small, and Africa is much larger than in the maps that are commonly used. When studying maps, you may also reflect on which countries have been put into the center of the map. Another map I use in the program is one that has the Norwegian flag on the country of Norway, and the size of Norway is much bigger than the other countries. Due to its size and being the only country with a flag on it – Norway dominates the whole image. Norway is a small country in the global context, but we tend to think of ourselves as very important. On the other hand, Norway is a country with a small population, but our carbon footprint is very large.

Another example of learning about Norway and the world is from the Montessori schools, which, when learning about geography, start with the universe and the planets. Then they would slowly zoom in more and more until they "arrive" in Norway – after you already learned about the solar system, the continents and so on. In the Norwegian public school, they would start with Norway and then gradually zoom out. I believe that how you learn about the geography of the world impacts on how you view the world and us who live in it.

Back to your question, I cannot say that I went deep enough into discussions regarding ideologies, so that tensions arose. As mentioned, I rather try to pose questions that are thought-provoking. One possible reason why I

didn't experience great tensions might be that in a class focusing on solidarity work, you tend to get students who have a certain political orientation, so to speak. On the other hand, I try to provoke the students a bit because I think it is "healthy" to be challenged. I don't know whether I answered your question, though.

Michael N. W.: In fact, you did. My follow-up question now is whether challenging the students is part of good pedagogy.

Echo chambers

Brita P.: I think so. If you agree too much with what has been said, I don't know whether it moves you. I see it with myself. I think I have too many in my network who think alike. I am not happy about that because in a democracy, it is through diversity that you understand other people and other views better. If we agree too much, I don't think it is healthy, just like these typical political debates are not healthy either, where you just present your opinion and stick with it, no matter what. That does not lead to any change of thinking either.

Benedicte Hambro is a folk high school teacher and an expert on storytelling. In one of the stories that she tells, there is this person who wants to know the answer to the question, "What is the meaning of life?" (see Hambro's chapter in this anthology & Hambro, 2021) This person goes around the whole town and seeks counsel from those who are known for their smartness. Finally, the person ends up with the wisest of them all. This wise old man gets really upset and asks the person, "You have the best question in the world, and you are willing to exchange that for one answer! Don't you know it is the answers that divides us, and the questions that unites us?" For me, asking questions rather than providing answers is such an important part of the program.

Michael N. W.: When you describe it in that way – that is, by means of this story – then there seem to be some fundamental and existential aspects coming to the fore. Previously, we investigated e*motional involvement* as an essential aspect of this program, and also *challenging the students*. Furthermore, you mentioned that *being moved* is another important aspect. When I put that all together, then for me, all this is basically about *daring to discover* – daring to discover the world, but also daring to discover the world in a new way. What do I mean with daring to discover the world in a new way? In order to explain that I would like to take the world map behind you on the wall as the starting point again: When looking at this map as an adult or even as a youngster, there does not seem to be so much new because we are so used to that sight. We are so used to dividing the world into continents and countries. And you are challenging this view that we are so used to. And here, the question is: Do the students dare to take a new look? What I am wondering about, in this respect, is whether this is part of human nature.

Improvement – the meaning of life?

Brita P.: I was discussing this in relation to the question, "What is the meaning of life?" One of my brothers was listening to a podcast where they investigated the meaning of life. One of the conclusions was *improvement* – improvement as an essential part of human nature and, therefore, a possible answer to the meaning of life. When I discussed this with my brother, I said that this is perhaps a western perspective – that we always have to improve. For me, that seemed quite capitalistic, while he replied that it can also mean fixing your house or that you master something new. And, of course, when you take a look at human development without improvement, we would not be where we are today. On the other hand, we would not have the climate crisis that we have today either. In our discussion, I also

pointed out that the meaning of life can mean to be loved or to experience love. With regards to your point about daring to discover and whether this is part of human nature, I don't think I have a general answer to that. Personally, I think, yes it is, but it also depends on what we understand by this discovering.

One thing that we experience when I teach this program is *community.* We experience a community in the learning situation, where we share experiences and values, choose standpoints and share views. That is, you don't only go into your own emotional experience; but you also investigate and share your own thoughts and values. Typical statements for that are, "No, I don't buy new things because I don't think it's right" or "I don't need to look fancy because I am proud of who I am". Sharing something like that in a community with others moves you in a way because you also take in what the others share.

Michael N. W.: In what you just said, there are two forms of learning that come to the fore here. On the one hand, you mentioned improvement as the meaning of life, or at least as the meaning in several concrete situations. Whether it is in our work or in our private life, very often these situations are indeed about improvement – improving our personal living situation, improving a procedure at work, a product etc. All this, as I see it, could give us the impression that life is about nothing more than improvement. And here, I mean improvement also in terms of development. On the other hand, however, you said that you are trying to provoke your students so that they begin to dare to discover. And for me, to discover is a different form of learning than to improve.

Let me give you some concrete examples for that. *To improve* is something that I try to do when I work on an academic paper or a lecture, for example. That is, I try to make them better. *To discover*, however, is something that I do

in a completely different context, and that is when I take a walk in nature, for example. In fact, I live quite close to nature, and sometimes it happens that I discover a new path. In such moments, I always ask myself whether I should try out this new path because I have never walked it before, and in one hour, I have to pick up my kids from school. So, will I be back in time, or will the path lead me astray? Sometimes I choose to walk along the new path, and what happens while I walk on this unknown territory, to call it like that, is that I have a completely different experience of time compared to a walk on a path I already know. Furthermore, I would also discover and see new places, and there is always a certain uncertainty concerning what I would see and where I would end up. The reason why I mention all this is because improving an article and walking on a new path are two very different forms of experience. Without doubt, in both of them I would learn something, but what I experience as learning when improving an article is something completely different compared to what I learn when walking a newly discovered path in the forest.

My question to you now is: Do you think that learning at folk high school is more about discovering than about improving?

Reflection and experience

Brita P.: When I look at this question from a more general perspective, I think that we have more potential in folk high schools to reflect deeper and more often compared to a conventional school. Of course, at a folk high school, one can also get trapped in an everyday hassle with all the things that one must do for the school to operate as it should. Furthermore, it also depends on the respective teacher. Some focus more on the reflective part of their learning program, while others are more occupied with *doing*. Some years back, I was co-teaching on a folk high school study trip to Kenya and Tanzania. One of the things I observed was that

after an experience – that is, after discovering and visiting a new place – they did not reflect on that experience. Rather, they just went on to the next experience. What I suggested then was to have an evening gathering, where each student could share what made an impression that day, what each of them could take with them from the experience, and so on. For me it was important to see how they analyzed the situation from their own perspective. Also, it was important to make the students aware why they thought about an experience in that way, why they saw it in this way, and so on. It is in situations like this that you have the opportunity and the time to go into reflection.

Critical reflection represents an important aspect in my own pedagogical agenda, so to speak. For example, in this one year at a folk high school, I don't want students to reproduce this image of the global south that so many of us have. That is my nightmare. I want them to get a new and different view of the world. We are talking about the ability to be open. At the same time, I also want to show them certain tools regarding how to act. You cannot just sit and reflect; but to act is also important. In terms of study trips to the global south, I like to challenge the students to not focus on what money can fix but try to get in contact with the local youth who are interested in the same things as you are – and learn from each other. There are some schools that focus entirely on making connections between the folk high school youths and local youths through common interests during the study trip. I believe this type of cooperation, which may last a week or two, can contribute to better understanding as well as unlearning.

Since we talked about the meaning of life earlier, I would like to refer to Frederik Christensen, who wrote "To be a folk high school teacher", which I read recently (in Danish: *"At være folkehøjskolelærer*" (1978: 54f)). Here, he discusses different approaches to the world. One approach

is: first you change the world, and then you will love it. Or you can first learn to love the world; then you can see whether there is anything you want to change, which was Grundtvig's life philosophy (ibid.: 59). These are two very different perspectives about the world and on life, and it brings us back to the topic of improvement. Many of the global issues that we have today are about improvement – because the world is not a good-enough place yet, to put it simply. It is unsustainable, unjust and so on. However, maybe by loving it first, you are better equipped to create something good. If you don't love it first, you can be very critical towards what you meet.

2.3. Theoretical reflection

Experiential vs. discovery learning

Michael N. W.: Let us go over now to the next step of the dialogue, the so-called theoretical reflection. In this step, we can shed a bit more theoretical light on what we have been talking about so far, like life as improvement or life as discovering. In this respect, there are two pedagogues that come to my mind: first, John Dewey with his famous approach of experiential learning (see e. g. Dewey, 1938); and second, Jerome Bruner with his approach of discovery learning (see Bruner, 1961). While I can see Dewey as a representative of an understanding of learning in terms of improvement, I can obviously see Bruner as a representative of an approach to learning in terms of discovering. You just brought up this approach to life in the sense of *first, you have to love it, and then you can see whether you want to change it*. For me, this also means that you first have to discover something that you are curious about. This curiosity implies that you feel a kind of attraction towards something, and you go after this feeling of attraction, and by that, you discover what you are curious about more and more. The other approach towards life that you men-

tioned, however, could be summarized by saying, "Here is the world. And the world is not a good place; we have to make it better," so to speak. What do you think about these two approaches with regards to the program you presented earlier? Is it your impression that the students who are participating are embracing the world in terms of, "Yes, it's great to live and to be here! And of course, we have to become aware of certain aspects that we can change."? Or are these students generally saying, "The world is not a good place, and we have to do something about it"? What I want to point out is that with these questions, in the second approach to learning, the starting point is assumed not to be perfect, whereas in the first approach, it is assumed that there is something interesting, attractive. Do you see what I mean?

Transformative learning

Brita P.: Well, I think so, but I am still thinking. I like to think of myself as someone who is employing *transformative learning* (see e. g. Elias, 1997; Brookfield, 2000). In simple terms, I want to challenge the knowledge and insights about the world that these students gained through their 19 years of life (on average, they are 19 years old). In my experience, many have stereotypical images of certain global issues. Like when you ask, what do you know about Africa, they would answer "Well, Africa is about poverty and safari", and so on. Unless the students have already traveled to a country in a way where one really gets to know the culture, the country and the people, the majority of the students have their center of life, and therefore also their main focus, in Norway. Their life is in Norway, and everything outside the country is more peripheral.

Many folk high schools have a rather homogenous group of students and do not necessarily represent society at large. Democratic *Bildung* is an important learning target at the folk high schools, but in a democracy, we need to under-

stand different people's perspectives, and I think that the folk high schools have a potential to expand the perspectives that are represented among both students and staff. I mention this because it makes it harder to discuss different, unfamiliar views if you are not exposed to such views through conversations and discussions. Someone might jokingly pose the question, "Well, do they actually have internet in Africa?" And even though it is meant as a joke, there is an underlying idea of how people live in Africa, like in straw huts in the bush. This is also exactly what was implicitly communicated in the teaching book from my son that I was mentioning – the hidden curriculum. Therefore, I think it is important to challenge established worldviews.

Choosing a transformative approach to learning, in one way or another, in order to discover something new, as you said, is crucial. It is crucial in order to break up outdated patterns of ideas and worldviews. One music video I show to the students during the *Pedagogy for the rich* program is "Radi-Aid" (SAIH Norway, 2012, 06.11.), a campaign by SAIH. The video is about Africans collecting radiators for the Norwegian people, since it is so cold there and the people must be really freezing. It is a lot of fun to watch this video because it has these vintage images of people in Norway in the snow and people in Africa putting radiators on a truck and then waving the truck good-bye. When I show this video to the students, some ask, "Yes, but why do they collect radiators for us?" Some don't even understand that this video is meant ironically. We would then have a discussion around that. What if this is the only video that Africans saw about people in Norway and took it for real? Then they would probably ask themselves, "How can the people live their lives under such harsh conditions? We have to help them, 'cause this really looks bad!" The reason why SAIH made this music video was because most students in Norway have only seen these kinds of aid cam-

paigns for Africa. The video is intended to make us aware of our view of Africa. And, of course, if you only see these kinds of aid campaign videos, then you think that this is the only reality in Africa. My concern is that folk high schools could eventually contribute to reproducing such views and images simply by solely focusing on aid. That is the reason why I think this program, *Pedagogy for the rich,* is so important, because it can challenge and change the idea of improvement, and where it needs to happen and by whom.

Seeing other countries through a 'value-lens'

Michael N. W.: What you just said in terms of transformative learning, also with regards to the program *pedagogy for the rich*, seems to be about becoming aware of the values inherent in your worldview. And worldview literally appears to be the proper term here, because sitting here in Norway and looking down to Africa already implies a certain cultural hierarchy in terms of 'looking down', a top-down model, as it were. Transformative learning, in this case then, makes us not only aware of other countries but of the view by which we see other countries. And maybe that this is the actual problem that we have in rich countries: that we often look at other countries through what I would call a "value-lens," which makes us think that the people from Africa, for example, are much poorer than we are. However, through such a "value-lens," we also go blind, and we do not see the things these other countries have that we don't have. Though I put it more metaphorically, but taking off this "value-lens," is that what you mean by transformative learning?

Ubuntu philosophy

Brita P.: Yes, I think so. I mean, the ultimate goal is that the world is a good place for everyone. However, I don't think that this is going to happen as long as we look at each other in such a top-down way. Rather, I think that we should live more according to what is called Ubuntu philosophy (see e. g. Gade, 2012), which means "I am be-

cause we are", and is sometimes translated as "humanity." One of the basic ideas behind this philosophy, as I understand it, is that I have my talents and you have yours, and together we can create something that is bigger than us, so to speak. We are connected through communities. To make this kind of connection between people possible is a potential that the folk high schools have. Living in a community where you contribute with what you have and who you are is something that the folk high school students can experience. They might have their ups and downs while living and learning at the school, but through that experience, they also learn how much they have in common. To discover that you have so much in common with other people is also vital for the global perspective I am talking about. It does not matter if you are a Muslim, a Christian or an atheist; but we have many things in common that we care about.

Michael N. W.: I think this is a good closing remark: that folk high schools have great potential when it comes to getting young people out of their bubbles. Thank you very much for the conversation!

3. Epilogue

In the previous dialogue, a program called "Pedagogy for the rich" was presented and reflected upon. Instead of just lecturing facts and figures, the program takes its point of departure in practical exercises, making complex global challenges experienceable on a personal level. In the common reflection that follows each exercise, the students cannot solely express their theoretical thoughts on issues like global fairness, poverty, racism etc., but they can speak from their emotional, experience-based perspective, induced by the respective exercise.

In more general terms, the previous dialogue dealt with the responsibility that one has as an individual and as a community towards the world. The movement between concrete exercises and general worldviews that this program triggers reveals that this responsibility often starts in small things, in concrete attitudes, mindsets and actions, and that it eventually leads to a better understanding of the systems and structures that we find ourselves living within.

In the course of the dialogue, *becoming aware* was pointed out as a first step towards what could be called global citizenship. This form of awareness-raising also implies unlearning certain fundamental attitudes, like the "We are the best in the world" attitude that one often finds in Western culture. As brought forth in the dialogue, the program *"*Pedagogy for the rich" is based on the pedagogical approach of *transformative learning*, which deals with the growth and maturation of the whole human being on the one hand. On the other, it addresses one of our fundamental human potentials, namely, to change and evolve – to transform – something that often starts by enacting our ability to *think differently*.

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The Aftermath: So, what now is Good Folk High School Pedagogy?

Michael Noah Weiss

1. A short recap

When reading the previous seven dialogues, it quickly becomes apparent that they are diverse and rich in content. What good folk high school pedagogy can be was illustrated by quite unique and different examples – but what do they have in common? What is the essence of good folk high school pedagogy? Questions like these tempt us to analyze these dialogues in a conventional way, for example, by means of a thematic analysis (see e. g. Guest, MacQueen & Namey, 2012). Carrying out such an analysis, however, would not be in line with *phronetic research* as outlined in the introduction chapter of this anthology.

As it was pointed out in this introduction, good folk high school pedagogy is a question of good practice – *eupraxia* in Greek – and good practice is a question of phronesis. Phronesis, furthermore, represents one of the three forms of knowledge as suggested by Aristotle (see Biesta, 2015: 14). In contrast to the other two knowledge forms – epistemé (theoretical knowledge) and techné (know-how knowledge) – phronesis (practical knowledge) is not teachable but only learnable, since it rather is a question of the

right attitude towards a given situation than a question of knowledge that simply is applied. For this reason, Aristotle "does not provide abstract definitions of what practical wisdom [phronesis] looks like but tries to make this clear through examples" in his works (ibid.: 19). For example, one can show what phronesis implies instead of telling what it is.

When outlining a research approach that takes this central aspect of phronesis into account, Bjørnsrud (2005: 138) – in reference to Flyvbjerg's *phronetic research* (1991) – addresses the necessary context-relatedness of practical knowledge. That is, this form of knowledge can only be understood and investigated if the context in which it occurs is safeguarded and not *analyzed* (which etymologically means *to be untied*).

In the present anthology, it was argued that phronesis does not simply represent a form of practical knowledge but – more concretely – some sort of *response-ability*. To investigate how this form of response-ability comes to expression in pedagogical situations at a folk high school, each dialogue was conducted according to the three steps of reflection of so-called Reflective Practice Research (Lindseth, 2020). This research approach can be associated with phronetic research since it takes the mentioned context-relatedness into account by including concrete experiences as a central part of the investigation.

It is particularly this context-relatedness that brings up the pressing question: Why do I present a concluding essay at the end of this anthology? For isn't this just another form of analysis? And, understood as analysis, isn't this essay jeopardizing the whole endeavor in terms of a phronetic research project?

The answer is negative if one sees this essay as some sort of continuation of the previous philosophical investigations. For, as far as I understand it, the ideal outcome

of philosophical investigations is not any conclusion that one arrives at. Rather, an ideal outcome would be if the respective investigation triggers further reflection with the reader. Hence, the idea behind this concluding essay is to foster after-thoughts with the reader about good folk high school pedagogy and how it can be practiced by giving expression to my own as the author of this essay. It is as if one goes into an inner dialogue with oneself about what has been said in the dialogues presented here. It appears to be in this way of inner dialoguing – that is, by reflecting on the experiences of others and how they responded to the respective situations – that we can learn and further develop our own *response-ability*.

2. Allow the text to speak to us

A first step to start with this inner dialogue might be what Lindseth and Norberg have called "naive reading" in their phenomenological hermeneutical method for researching lived experience (Lindseth & Norberg, 2004: 149):

> The text is read several times in order to grasp its meaning as a whole. To do this it is necessary for us to be open enough to allow the text to speak to us. We become touched and moved by it. (ibid.)

When reading the dialogues, what was it that moved me (or you, the reader)? What touched me (or you, the reader) in these narratives and their subsequent examinations?

There is one particular feature that somehow makes me wonder when reading these seven dialogues: When asked to share an experience about good folk high school pedagogy, all pedagogues, in one way or another, have chosen an example that first and foremost dealt with human

growth and flourishing of the students. Specific teaching content, like the Tree of Life, which Benedicte Hambro describes, lectures on democracy and European history as mentioned by Steinar Bryn, or facts and figures about international inequalities as brought forward by Brita Phuthi, was rather a means to a higher end than a means in itself. Furthermore, several of the experiences shared and examined in this anthology do not refer to any teaching content at all. Rather, what these pedagogues understand by good folk high school pedagogy comes to expression in terms of their response to a concrete situation, which is often of more interpersonal and relational character than related to any school subject at all. As corny as it might sound, but some sort of *learning for life* was central in all the described situations.

Interestingly, most of these situations occurred spontaneously. Though a few of the pedagogues mentioned that they had some kind of teaching plan, they could not foresee or provide for the situation that they were then facing. Explicit examples in this respect are the situations described in the dialogues with Filippa Millenberg, Sigurd Ohrem, Kjetil Hareide Hallre and Steinar Bryn. The situations and their responses to them, which finally led to an edifying outcome, to put it like that, were centrally based on spontaneity and intuition. However, in order to avoid misunderstandings, it is important to note – as Steinar Bryn did in the dialogue with him – that intuition in this context "is more than an educated guess because when you work with this process-oriented pedagogical approach all the time, you start to sense when you will have a breakthrough."

With this quote, two further features find expression that seem to be characteristic of good folk high school pedagogy as described in the previous dialogues. The first one is the process-oriented character of this form of pedagogy in terms of the personal development processes of the

students – previously also called *human flourishing*. The other is the *sensibility* or *awareness* of the folk high school teacher to sense when the given situation has the potential to lead to what Sigurd Ohrem called a *golden moment* – and that this *sensibility* comes with experience.

3. The hidden curriculum

That all seven dialogues deal – in one way or another – with human flourishing might not come as a surprise. With *Bildung* and public enlightenment as the main goals enshrined in the Folk High School Act (2003), these folk high school teachers are almost expected to have such a focus. However, what indeed is surprising when reading the dialogues is that human flourishing is fostered and facilitated not so much by means of an explicit course plan (as would be normal in a conventional school) but rather through unforeseeable situations, reactions and interactions with the students and an intuitive but nevertheless reflected response to them. In this respect, Steinar Bryn also mentioned the term *hidden curriculum*. In the dialogue with him, he did not explicate this term in depth but noted that folk high school teachers "hardly talk about it at all. It is more something that the students observe." In other words, the hidden curriculum represents some sort of existential and ethical value base represented in the attitudinal values, which the teachers do not lecture about but rather *live* and *practice*. In one of his research publications called "Learning together," Johan Lövgren calls these values *embodied values* (2020: 19). In the respective dialogue, Sigurd Ohrem also spoke of a pedagogy of *showing, not telling,* in this regard.

To make such a pedagogy of *showing, not telling* work demands a high degree of authenticity and "uprightness"

from the pedagogue. In simple terms, it is the contrary of the phrase "preaching water while drinking wine." Furthermore, in terms of *attitudinal* and *embodied values,* one can wonder whether good folk high school pedagogy is a "teaching subject-independent enterprise"? That is, could this form of pedagogy be practiced as an *eupraxia* (that is, good practice), even if all the school subjects are replaced by others or even completely taken away? For me, the answer tends towards a yes. For this form of pedagogy rather seems to depend on how a teacher responds with his or her attitude to the concrete situation with the students than on specific teachings.

Nevertheless, though much of this pedagogy is obviously tacit and, hence, not much mentioned, it does not mean that it is absent. On the contrary, it is embodied. If we assume that good folk high school pedagogy is a form of embodied pedagogy, then this actually confirms why it can be attributed to practical knowledge in terms of phronesis rather than theoretical knowledge in terms of epistemé. As embodied pedagogy, it is something that can be shown, e. g. in terms of the responses of the teacher to the given situation. But, and this is the crux of it, it cannot be taught in terms of models and methods. Especially this feature bears a resemblance to phronesis, as it was outlined in the introduction chapter.

As a consequence, it would not make much sense to try to further define what good folk high school pedagogy *is*. Based on what has been said so far, this would be counterproductive. Instead, it seems to be wise to just see the experiences shared in the dialogues as examples – to open oneself to them and use them as a springboard in order to move into dialogue with oneself. Questions investigated in such a dialogue with oneself could be, e. g.: *How would I have responded to the situations that were described in these dialogues? Have I been in similar situations, and*

how did I react there? What can I learn through these examples if I mirror myself in them – what can I learn about myself as a pedagogue, my pedagogical practices, and my professional as well as personal attitude? Which insights do I want to take further and incorporate and have embodied in my attitude as a practitioner? Which values underlie these insights?

If one takes these questions seriously after having read these seven dialogues, one might realize why there is and cannot be a final, general answer to the question of good folk high school pedagogy. For the question of good folk high school pedagogy is a question of *eupraxia* – of good practice. As such, it cannot be answered *in* theoretical terms but only *with* practical examples. And as examples, that is, as *possible answers in practice*, they can only unfold their full potential if someone – like you, the reader – relates them to one's own pedagogical practice. Only by means of such self-reflection can the knowledge these examples embody begin to reveal itself. With that, it becomes clear why Gallagher stated that "Self-knowledge, […] is intimately linked with phronesis and thinking for oneself." (1992: 198f)

In other words, the true value of this publication can only evolve when the reader takes a look at it, like taking a look into a mirror. It is through the self-reflection that emerges in this mirror, to put it metaphorically, that pedagogical practice can be informed, reflected on and further developed. In this sense, I hope that this book can serve as a source of inspiration for those who keep up the good work at folk high school, namely: its staff – may it be pedagogues, kitchen workers, administrators, housecleaners, sanitors, etc.

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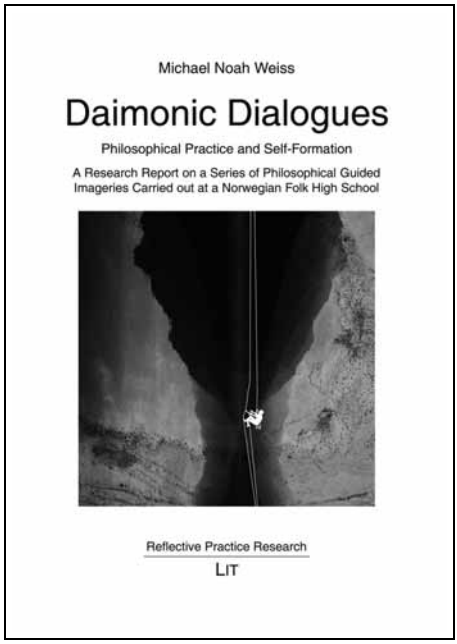

Michael Noah Weiss
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The Nordic Folk High Schools are known for their unique pedagogical approaches. These schools have little in common with the conventional education system. In this anthology, experienced folk high school teachers share and examine concrete examples from their own pedagogical practice. In the course of these dialogues, various perspectives and ideas come to the fore on what it might be that constitutes *good* folk high school pedagogy.

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