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Reflective Practice Research in International Collaboration

Developing Teacher Education in Togetherness

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Chapter 2: The Dao of reflective Practice Research

Finn Thorbjørn Hansen[1]

Abstract

This chapter explores Apophatic Epistemology, a reflective research approach grounded in deep contemplative wonder, which challenges conventional epistemologies in social and human sciences. Drawing from phenomenology, negative theology, and Daoist philosophy, it argues that certain truths – particularly those related to existential, ethical, artistic, and spiritual dimensions – cannot be grasped through propositional knowledge alone but are instead encountered in moments of ineffability. Through an engagement with concepts such as *"die Sache"* and *"Gelassenheit"* (Heidegger) and *Wu Wei* (Daoism), the chapter proposes an epistemology that transcends mastery, moving towards mystery. Using examples from research on grief and existential health, it highlights how apophatic thinking facilitates a deeper resonance with phenomena, fostering a "Community of Wonder" within reflective practice research. Ultimately, it suggests that by embracing not-knowing, researchers can open new pathways for wisdom-seeking and transformative understanding.

Keywords:

Apophatic epistemology, reflective practice research, contemplative wonder, negative phenomenology, Gelassenheit, Wu Wei.

Prologue

There are deep experiences in life that are very quiet and fragile and yet so profound and meaningful that when touched by these experiences, you feel elevated by a strange, enigmatic sense of connectedness to the world, another person, or a part of yourself that might best be called your soul. These deep experiences are not to be seen as exotic or grand, extraordinary experiences; their depth is bound to the common everyday life, but we usually are not aware of them. And when we become aware of them – like when be-

ing in grief and sensing life from the shadows and yet in that very moment also experiencing a strange feeling of being carried or being enveloped by a peculiar light from within this darkness – we are overwhelmed by wonder. This kind of deep contemplative wonder makes us speechless. What we have experienced is ineffable. Even so, we need to find words that somehow point to the strange meaningfulness, resonance, or 'calling' that was at stake in that moment. Wanting to find words or names for the wordless and nameless is, of course, a paradox and an impossible achievement. It is – as both Kierkegaard and Wittgenstein express it – like running against the boundaries of language from within.

Let me briefly give you a personal experience that had this wondrous calling built into it. I was interviewing young couples who were grief-stricken over the loss of their child either during the delivery or shortly after birth. The purpose of the phenomenological-oriented Reflective Practice Research I was doing was to inquire into how the existential dimension of grief (Guldin & Leget, 2024) among young parents after the loss of a child might be approached not only from the standpoint of 'medical treatment' or 'psychotherapeutic' approaches but also through experiences with art and subsequent philosophising, meaningful dialogue, and communities of wonder.

When asked if they were sometimes relieved in their grief by art experiences or the intimate conversations upon the great existential questions that often follow such an unfathomable loss, many of them hesitated to answer. They became quiet and thoughtful, as if they were listening to their lived experiences when contemplating such questions of meaning and existence. Some of them went on to say that, yes, music at times helped them as a kind of strange medium where the grief was allowed to be itself and have its voice in a way that – when caught in the musical moment – made their grief into a friend. I found that description thought-provoking. How and why does grief become a friend through encounters with art?

Another parent said that yes, music helps her too, but when she needed to dwell upon existential questions, she felt most inspired when walking in nature. Nature, she said with a smile, somehow embraced her in her sorrow. In those moments, she said, she felt very 'present-in-the-world' and in resonance with nature, as if being with a good friend. This made me – after the interviews – indeed wonder at the relationship between art, philosophy, and nature and why there seems to be a strange, 'friendly', embracing dimension connected to the art and philosophising experience on the one hand and, on the other, the experience of nature-connectedness. Might there be a

metaphysical or spiritual dimension to grief that goes beyond the paradigms of medical science and psychological therapies? What would a health concept look like that originates from a deep encounter and 'dialogue' with art, philosophy, and nature? Might we here see the germ of a new concept of 'Existential Health', not to be confused with the medical-physical and therapeutic-mental health concepts? What kind of research is needed when wanting to approach such delicate and ineffable experiences and wonderments? (cf. Hansen, 2022b, 2023a&b, 2024a, b, c)

The need to start from deep wonder

I relate this example of actual experience and wonder at the outset of this essay because my focus will be on how to do Reflective Practice Research from within a deep sense of wonderment. What kind of epistemology (and ontology) will follow this kind of wonder-based practice research? My suggestion is what I term "Apophatic Epistemology"[2] or better, "The Dao of Reflective Practice Research".

The example is one of 'delicate matters' that are difficult (if at all) to grasp through the traditional scientific analysis and methods. These matters are ineffable and unmeasurable, and yet so important when wanting to do research on what matters in human lives, in health, education, and welfare. To connect or gain resonance with these matters, the researcher needs to be within a practice-near and practice-reflective approach and mindset that touches the researcher in an existential way. The matter in focus needs to somehow resonate with the researcher in a deeply phenomenological and heartfelt way. But it also needs to resonate with the practitioners (or other practice researchers from other countries or universities that study the same delicate matter), with whom the practice researcher is in ongoing collaboration and dialogue.

This form of what I term Apophatic Reflective Practice Research, no matter whether it is in the area of health, higher education or welfare (Hansen et al., 2023), is characterized by a special kind of listening openness and attentiveness towards that which *cannot* be knowable in the language of representation and propositions or through rigorous systematic use of scientific methods and epistemology. It is a hermeneutic universality of 'not-knowing' that indirectly points to a living ontological truth beyond scientific (theory- and method-driven) language and practices (Wittgenstein, 1988, 1998; Fiumara, 2006; Franke, 2018, 2020). It is not a universal truth

understood as *essence* – that would be too metaphysical in a rationalistic and systematic sense – but as an ontological event and experience (in German, *Wesenheit* or *Sachheit*).

This kind of truth understanding stays close to the German philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer when, in *Truth and Method* (2006/1960), he claims there is a truth experience, or rather a 'Truth Event', that natural science and social science cannot sense. What is special within the science of humanities, or "*Geist Wissenschaft*", he says, is another kind of openness and 'being-in-the-world' that finds its ultimate ideal in the experiences of art and philosophy. In these artistic and philosophical experiences, the living ontological universality is found – not in the *particularity* of a phenomenon (that would be to subject the uniqueness and truth of a phenomenon under an abstract generalization) – but in the *singularity* of a phenomenon. It is not the particularity of a specific human being (what and how she is) that constitutes a person's uniqueness and irreplaceability, but the wonder *that* she is and *who* she is.

Why is it that the traces of a phenomenon's singularity become visible in aesthetic and philosophical experiences? It is because these experiences are immersed in deep wonder. The sense of wonder gives you a kind of 'sixth sense' for that which transcends what our physical five senses can perceive and on which the natural and social sciences are grounded. When writing, reading, or thinking in deep wonder, the act of writing, reading, and thinking becomes an act of listening and silence (Fiumara, 2006). When being in an aesthetical (*passive receptive*) wonder and artistic creation on the one hand and in a philosophical (*active and responding*) wonder and Socratic reflection on the other hand, you find yourself placed (or displaced) in a position where you *do not* know where you are and where to go, and yet you also sense a strange resonance with 'something' that calls your attention. You are in that moment of deep wonder, standing in the Openness (Gadamer, 2006; Hansen, 2010), and from there you can sense the kind of universality and singularity that social and natural science cannot sense.

By deep wonder, I mean contemplative wonder, and not inquisitive wonder, which is the scientific knowledge-, explaining- and cause-seeking kind of wonder (Schinkel, 2021). By contemplative wonder, I mean wisdom-, love- and meaning-seeking wonder in the old, philosophical Greek sense. Plato and Aristotle named this kind of wonder "*thaumazein*", and they pointed to this wonder as the starting point for the philosophical practice, which in Greek was called *philo-sophia*. *Philo* means 'to love' or 'to be a friend of', and *Sophia* means 'wisdom'. Thus, *philo-sophia*

means 'the love of wisdom or to be a lover or friend of wisdom'. Hence, the philosopher does not possess wisdom; no, he or she is only searching and striving to be near it. But *what* wisdom is, is for the philosopher (and some would say for humankind as such) always to be seen as a kind of 'moving horizon'. It is this form of contemplative philosophising and a 'Community of Wonder' (Hansen, 2015a, b; Hansen & Dinkins, 2016) that you as a reflective practice researcher must learn in cooperation and dialogues with the practitioners ('the Insiders') in the field and with other practice researchers who are also inquiring into the same delicate matters as you are.

Living our way into the truth of our subjects

My point of departure is that we, humans, will never quite reach wisdom in a knowable scientific way and become God-like 'knowers of wisdom'. If we think the human mind and scientific language of representation and propositions can grasp it all in *A Theory of Everything* (cf. Wilber, 2000), then we show a radical lack of what the French philosopher of Being, Gabriel Marcel, coins as "ontological humility" (Marcel, 1950). This ontological humility is nurtured by deep wonder, where we stand in the openness of a radical not-knowing relation to ourselves and the world, in contrast to the scientific knowledge-searching and method-led natural science. Or as Wittgenstein writes: *"Man has to awaken to wonder – and so perhaps do people. Science* [natural science] *is a way of sending him to sleep again."* (Wittgenstein, 1998, p. 7).

Thus, this kind of ethical and existential wisdom cannot be grasped by scientists or be scientifically explained. This kind of contemplative wisdom may indeed inspire great natural scientists like Einstein or Bohr to get out of their current scientific paradigms for a short while to help them invent a new scientific paradigm. But then the 'jump' is made on the aesthetic or philosophical (or religious) ground, not on the scientific ground, if we are to follow Wittgenstein and Gadamer (Edwards, 1989; Lawn, 2006). In poetry, dance, music, painting, etc., or in deep philosophical wonderments and dialogues, in short, in the aesthetic and philosophical experiences, we will, as Gadamer indicates, have another language and way of thinking that *can* open us up to sense the ineffable.[3] You cannot know scientifically what a 'good life' is or what the meaning of life is. This will always stand as a philosophical question and a living mystery. Or, as Wittgenstein writes in *Tractatus*: "*Not* how *the world is the mystical, but* that *it is. We feel that*

even if all possible scientific questions have been answered, the problems of life remain completely untouched." (Wittgenstein, 1988, # 6.52).

Even so, we might, though, *live* our way to getting a deeper 'heartfelt' sense of wisdom, but when reflecting on these life experiences, the reflections need to be done 'in the dark' through deep wonder, as when the photographer in the old days stood in his photographic darkroom developing his photo 'negatives' into 'positive' completed photos.

Being a nurse or a teacher, or being a professional per se that works with humans and 'human-centred professions', you will be encountering experiences and questions of a philosophical, existential, and ethical kind, such as, 'What is human flourishing? What are the most meaningful ways of living? What are the phenomena of care, love, dignity, friendship, meaning, hope, or joy of life?' These life phenomena are experiences and virtues that 'problems of life' are made of if they are not tended to in a wise or wisdom-seeking way.

In this chapter, I will argue that Reflective Practice Research on themes, experiences, and phenomena related to the existential, ethical, philosophical, aesthetical, and maybe even spiritual dimensions of nursing, teaching, or human-centred professions requires a special kind of wisdom-seeking and '*apophatic*' research approach, with deep wonder at its centre.

Let me add one more thing. It is interesting that when *really* being in deep wonder, you also sense the *limitations* of a human-*centred* position. When being in deep wonder, you start noticing the wonders of the world, or rather, the wonders *in* ordinary, everyday life. The world around you becomes 're-enchanted', as if seeing it for the first time (Hansen, Eide & Leget, 2023). This also gives you an inner ear, or musicality, for hearing what is *not* only human life but 'more-than-human life' (Abram, 2017; Kotva, 2022).

Deep wonder can, in other words, give you a sense of the interconnectedness with nature and the planetary life and the whole we are just a tiny (but unfortunately too disturbing) part of. Or as the environmental ethicist Julia Moore writes: "I think that a sense of wonder is a virtue in at least this sense, finding what it means to be fully human in a celebration of our place in the more-than-human world." (Moore, 2005, p. 273).

In this wonder-event, phenomenologists of wonder describe (Keen, 1969; Heidegger, 1994; Arendt, 2019; Schinkel, 2021; Keltner, 2023) that you will become more attuned to the wholeness of Being or Nature as such. In that awe- and wonder-inducing moment, you are, as it were, strangely feeling at home in the world – as if welcomed or embraced – and at the

same time called upon by a phenomenon or event to give a personal response to this calling (Herholdt-Lomholdt, 2018; Hansen, 2008, 2023a). This is indeed a mysterious and wonder-provoking experience.

In the following, I will reflect on how one can understand this kind of contemplative wonder in education and teaching. I will also unfold why I think that "apophatic epistemology" may qualify the notion of "kaleidoscopic epistemology", which has now become a notion to be used in "Reflective Practice Research" (Weiss & Helskog, 2023). The kind of wonder-based epistemology I want to raise awareness of is a kind of 'negative epistemology' (pointing to what 'positive', even kaleidoscopic, epistemology cannot grasp and gain knowledge about). I prefer, at the end of the chapter, though, not to talk about 'apophatic epistemology'[4], which is a paradoxical term, but about the *Dao* of Reflective Practice Research. In the Daoist notion of *Wu Wei,* which means 'non-action' or 'effortless action' (Nelson, 2021), we can find a new apophatic way of understanding action and thereby also a new way of understanding action research and action in Reflective Practice Research.

The chapter has three sections. In the first section, I elaborate on why this kind of apophatic practice-near research is not to be confused with well-known theorists on practice epistemology and practice research, such as Lewis, Argyris, Schön, Wenger, Dreyfus & Dreyfus, and lately Eikeland. Hubert Dreyfus, though, in his latest thinking comes, as I will show, very near to what I term "Apophatic Epistemology" or the "Dao of Reflective Practice Research". I end the first section by presenting what I call 'The Four Voices in Reflective Practice Research'.

In the second section, I briefly unfold the three dimensions connected to Apophatic Epistemology, with a special emphasis on the Being- and Mystery-dimensions. Here, I describe four (two in the Knowledge-dimension and one in the Being- and Mystery-dimensions) different ways of looking at a teaching practice (or rather 'praxis') where we, especially in the Mystery-dimension, experience the peculiar feeling of 'being-seen' and 'acting in virtue of' the phenomenon we dwell upon and are in resonance with. It is when I turn to the Mystery-dimension that the notion of *Wu Wei* and the *Dao* of Reflective Practice Research becomes relevant.

In the concluding third section, I sum up the points of this essay and end by briefly describing how I work with the Knowledge-, Being-, and Mystery-dimensions of Reflective Practice Research from an apophatic and Daoist perspective.

Section I: Apophatic Epistemology in Today's Reflective Practice Research (RPR).

The kind of caring and wonder-fuelled thoughtfulness that may follow pedagogical tactfulness in a teaching situation is not to be confused with either the analytical, detached "reflection-on-action" (*scientific or theoretical knowledge*) or the pragmatic involved "reflection-in-action" and "knowing-in-action" (*practical-functional knowing*), now well-known terms from the American practice researcher Donald Schön and his idea of *The Reflective Practitioner* (Schön, 1983).

In the very beginning of the development of practice research and action research with Lewis and Argyris, practice-near research was still led by a *theory-led* approach (theoretical knowledge or *'a priori' epistemology*). Here, the scientists at the universities are led by their theoretical work, and afterwards, they inquire into how to apply these theories to practice and daily living. This kind of action research and practice research can be described as 'Applied Science".

However, when Schön describes the way materials in an engineer's or designer's hand speak back, or Schön describes the relation to the things and surroundings as "backtalk of the situation", this is understood from a much more radical practice-led approach. The kind of knowledge produced here cannot be produced in the universities' internal labs or only through theory. Knowing-in-action and reflection-in-action are knowing and reflection that can only be done, produced, and experienced in concrete practice, like teaching or craftsmanship.

Schön's practice *epistemology*, though, rests on a worldview and philosophical assumptions that can be found within a materialistic, functionalistic, and constructivist paradigm (Hansen, 2014; Jahnke, 2023). Here, practical knowing is connected to the repertoire of practical, situated, tacit, and intuitive experiences and 'know-how', which are embodied in concrete practice and professional communities. A way of thinking that later Wenger worked to further with his concept of "Situated Learning" and "Practice Communities" (Wenger, 1999).

In both cases, we stay on the functional level of problem-solving and in a contextualist and constructivist view of values and beliefs as a process of human-made 'meaning-making'. The work of American practice researchers on practical intuition, Stuart and Hubert Dreyfus from 1988 (Dreyfus & Dreyfus, 1988) up to the millennium, also operates within a primarily pragmatic and constructivist approach to intuitive knowing-in-

practice. Drawing on the philosophy of Martin Heidegger (2004), Hubert Dreyfus, for many years, believed that their approach to tacit and intuitive knowledge could be understood as existential. The Dreyfuses also talked against the theory- and technically led practitioner, but instead of Schön's ideal of the *Reflective Practitioner,* they suggested the ideal of the *Intuitive Expert.* This expert reflects from within practice but in an intuitive pattern, finding a way that may optimise the practitioner's ability to function and solve a problem within a concrete situation in ways that go beyond both theoretical reflection-on-action and practical reflection-in-action.

Stuart and Hubert Dreyfus later (Dreyfus & Dreyfus, 2004) added a new kind of expert to their model, which was connected partly to Aristotle's concept of "phronesis" (*practical wisdom*) (Aristotle, 2012) and to a new interpretation of Heidegger's *Being and Time* (Heidegger, 1962). Phronesis should, they emphasised, not be understood as a kind of practical reason in contrast to theoretical reasoning, as Aristotle scholars like MacIntyre (1981), Nussbaum (1985), Sherman (1989), and Dunne (1993) did, but as an 'intuition-in-the-moment'.

In 2004, Hubert Dreyfus discovered that in their former research, they had based their Intuitive Expert model on a too pragmatic interpretation of Heidegger's notion of "Being-in-the-World". As we shall see briefly elaborated in the next section, Heidegger fundamentally viewed practical knowing (and phronesis) in a radically different way than the Aristotelian rationalists (like MacIntyre, Nussbaum, and Dunne) or the way pragmatists and constructivists did (like Dewey and Rorty), although Heidegger's thinking is indeed connected to practice-near thinking.

The Dreyfuses now talk about a new kind of expert, which they call the "*Cultural Master*" (Dreyfus & Dreyfus, 2004). This cultural master does not only draw on the practical perception, information, and pattern recognition intuitively grasped in the concrete situation and concrete function of a specific practice (like the practice of a teacher or a woodworker), she also intuitively draws on the broader culture this practice is placed in (like the Norwegian culture, for example) and tacit cultural assumptions taken for granted in this broader cultural context. Being able to draw on this broader cultural source allows the practitioner to be more creative than the Intuitive Expert and to "think outside the box", that is, out of the functional, narrow context that the Intuitive Expert operates from.

Finally, in this period, Hubert and Stuart Dreyfus even added a third type of expert – the existentialistic "World-Discloser". This person goes further than drawing on the broader cultural sources. He or she can also

question the broader cultural assumptions and values embodied here in a deep philosophical (existentialistic) way so that this person becomes a creator of new values and new worldviews. You could say that this is the Nietzschean 'Übermensch' or Sartrean 'Existentialist' (Sartre, 2007/1946).

Later, as we will see, Hubert Dreyfus discovers in Heidegger's late philosophy (Heidegger, 1966, 2004) notions of *Gelassenheit* and "the shining of things", which indicate that you can also be-in-the-world in an even more profound and deeper way, which – Hubert Dreyfus does not give a specific name to this last expert position – I call *The Servant of the Moment* (Hansen, 2008, 2010). Here, we encounter a new paradigm in Hubert Dreyfus' late thinking, which could be described as the "Meaning-receiving-paradigm" (Dreyfus & Kelly, 2011; see also Hansen, 2010).

From practice-epistemology to praxis-ontology

I now want to turn to a contemporary practice and action researcher, the Norwegian philosopher Olav Eikeland. He is interesting because he has, for many years, been in the field of practice research and action research and developed a special kind of "Insider Praxis Research" (Eikeland, 2012, 2015) while drawing especially on the practice philosophy of Aristotle (Eikeland, 2008). He follows Aristotle when Aristotle makes his pivotal distinctions between theoretical knowledge (in Greek: *episteme*), technological knowing (in Greek: *techné*), practical wisdom (in Greek: *phronesis*), and contemplative wisdom (in Greek: *Sophia*). Especially when we work with practical and contemplative wisdom, Eikeland emphasizes another Aristotelian distinction, namely that between *practice* and *praxis*.

Practice is an activity that does not have an end or value in and of itself. Practice is a means for something else, as when I drink water, being very thirsty, I do not drink water because water in itself is a value or a pleasure to drink, but because water is a means to quench my thirst. Or when art is used as a means by an art therapist for psychological treatment, art is not seen as a value and practice with its telos, its intrinsic meaningfulness, like a true artist does when they are in an artistic creation.

Praxis, on the other hand, is exactly when what we do is a value in and of itself. Praxis is action and activities done without external goals or purposes. Like when being deeply engaged in a subject matter in a teaching or learning situation, and the teacher and students are absorbed in the subject (like in a community of wonder about this subject). In these situa-

tions, they listen and do their thing because they find it deeply meaningful and enriching in itself. Hence, you can talk about practice-led teaching (or practice-led student learning) and praxis-led teaching (or praxis-led student learning). The latter will often be described as a process of Bildung (in Norwegian: Danning), which is a self-transformative kind of learning (Hagtvet & Ognjenovic, 2011).

Eikeland connects praxis to practical and contemplative wisdom (phronesis and Sophia), whereas practice is connected to theoretical and technical knowledge (episteme and techné). Praxis is also described as an exercise of Skholê, which is Greek for 'free space' for reflection and dialogue, based on praxis experiences.

Now, where does he differ from Schön and the early works of Stuart and Hubert Dreyfus' practice epistemologies? He acknowledges Schön's practice epistemology. He describes Schön's notion of 'knowing-in-practice' as a good example of what reflective practice researchers should pay attention to and have respect for and take their departure from within, namely, what Eikeland terms "the grammar of practice" (Eikeland, 2007, 2012). However, he finds Schön's practice epistemology and his concepts of 'reflection-on-action' and 'reflection-in-action' to be too unvarnished, only staying on the level of technical and pragmatic forms of practical knowledge.

Eikeland, too, like later Dreyfus & Dreyfus, points to practical wisdom as something that Schön's and similar practice epistemologies (like Wenger's) do not have a sufficient understanding of. Eikeland emphasizes that phronesis is not just "practical cleverness" used to solve practical problems smartly. It is neither "prudence" nor "... an ability to discriminate, understand and assess the particular situation correctly in purely descriptive terms." (Eikeland, 2001, p. 149). The concept of phronesis must be understood in a much more philosophical way, he thinks, as a part of the philosophia, that is, as the love of wisdom. Phronesis is therefore connected to the ethical reflection of the 'why' of doing a specific activity. How can I do this activity ethically and wisely, not just for the benefit of myself or the company or just for optimizing this activity, but why is this (or is it not?) activity or action good in an ethical sense? How do I and the persons involved in this activity become better ethical (virtuous) persons by doing this activity, and why and how can this activity, in the bigger picture, create a better (a more ethically grounded) world? These are, Eikeland claims, the deliberations and choices one needs to do to act with practical wisdom (phronesis). As he writes:

"Phronesis is especially an ability to deliberate about and choose means for achieving ethically and politically good objectives. It presupposes knowledge of ethical and political 'virtue"'. (Eikeland, 2001, p. 148).

To be trained in phronesis, practical wisdom, and judgement, demands, Eikeland says, primarily two things: praxis and dialogue. We need a free space, and we need dialogue between people to strengthen the sense of communion (polis) and a sense of what is ethical.

Eikeland only very briefly comments on the Dreyfus brothers' notion of the intuitive expert. In a footnote (Eikeland, 2001, p. 154), he critiques them for saying that intuitive expertise is beyond articulation and deliberation, stating that they nevertheless tacitly presuppose the existence of formulated rules in every field for beginners to follow. By doing so, Eikeland argues, they also overlook inchoate activities in fields where no rules or expertise exist.

Now, it can be argued, as has been done already by others (Hansen, 2008, 2010) and indicated previously in this essay, that Dreyfus & Dreyfus's notion of intuition and the ideal of the intuitive expert is based on tacit, unconscious pattern recognition. And these patterns are what Eikeland rightly calls "the grammar of practice". But what Eikeland would see if he follows the thinking of Hubert Dreyfus is that Dreyfus later searched for a new way of understanding intuition that indeed allowed the practical expert to live and thrive out in the open as a spontaneous, pattern-free being-with-the-phenomenon, that is, in a creative and existential Openness that has no firm rules or grammar. Out there, you may add, it no longer makes sense to use the word *expert* – meaning the person who really 'knows' – because in this situation of deep openness and listening towards that which does not yet exist but calls to existing, you are driven by the unknown and yet calling (Hansen, 2022a, 2023a).

A person in deep contemplative wonder is not an expert. He or she is rather a sort of 'artist' or a 'philosopher' by heart, or maybe even a 'spiritual seeker' in his or her profession, say nursing or teaching. The French apophatic philosopher Jacques Derrida points to this position of being in Nowhere and yet feeling at home in this non-knowing wonder: "I am trying, precisely, to put myself at a point so that I do not know any longer where I am going." (Derrida – cited from Rubenstein, 2011, p. 133)

Now, my criticism of Eikeland's Praxis Insider Research is briefly stated (see more in Hansen, 2022b): Eikeland's concept of phronesis and praxis continues to rest on the idea of pattern recognition, which is inherent in his key notion of "the grammar of practice." Eikeland stays on an epis-

temological level when investigating practice as an insider. He even calls his action research philosophy, Praxis Research, a "Gnoseology of praxis" (Eikeland, 2007).

However, the kind of praxis-epistemology Eikeland is a representative of is not what we normally call 'epistemology' in modern social and human science, defined as how to gain scientific knowledge and develop theories to explain a practice. In one article, he refers to phenomenological and hermeneutic key expressions like "shines through" and "die Sache" when he talks about what kind of tacit and embodied "pattern of common standard" he connects to the grammar of a practice.

Apprentices approximate and train themselves into the same form or pattern by imitation, experimentation, dialogue, and supervision, not striving to become identical to a particular master but to what "shines through" the masterly practice. The form or pattern of a common standard, "die Sache", "saken", or the "what-it-means-to-do-or-be-something", is separable as reflectively reified in thinking and, as such, separate from any individual master (Eikeland, 2012, p. 38).

Eikeland also alludes briefly to the concept of "Tao" or "Dao" from the Chinese practical philosophy of Daoism, where Dao means 'The Way'. "Dialogue was the Way (hê hodôs/Tao)." (Eikeland, 2015, p. 386). This Dao, or Way of contemplative praxis research, could, he says, also be described as a Theoria-based way of reflection and having dialogues to come to "die Sache" in Praxis Research.

Like Aristotle, Eikeland also makes a distinction between theory and Theoria[5]. Where the modern concept of theory is connected to episteme and technê to explain and master practice, theoria, on the other hand, is connected to phronesis and Sophia as contemplative ways of thinking to better 'get into' or deeply understand praxis from within. This kind of contemplative thinking is not a detached or intellectual or abstract-academic reflection like scientific, explaining-seeking reflections and wonderments would be. Contemplative thinking (theoria) is embodied in the lived experience (Erlebnis, as Eikeland calls it) of the person who thinks. The contemplative thinking and dialogue around these lived experiences transform the lived experiences into thoughtful experiences that are "... accumulated practical experiences exercised/habituated into us" (Eikeland, 2012, pp. 24–25), which he then calls 'Erfahrung'. Theoria is insider-thinking, which is praxis-knowing led by so-called "epistemological impulses" (Eikeland, 2006). By epistemological impulses, he refers to the sense one can have in a dialogue and community of inquiry around a shared experience that

leads to the emergence of certain standards or common patterns or principles (a grammar) that become visible to reflective or better contemplative practitioners (see also Eikeland, 2015, p. 386).

Eikeland has not elaborated further on what he shortly alluded to as "Tao" and "die Sache", which, as I said, are concepts to be found in the tradition of Daoism and the existential phenomenology of Heidegger and the philosophical hermeneutics of Gadamer.

In another inquiry (Hansen, 2022b) into the way Eikeland thinks about what I term 'Praxis-epistemology' as opposed to 'Practice-epistemology', I ask critically where the "ontological impulses" might be in reflective practice research. And by ontological impulses, I refer to Heidegger's understanding of ontology as a 'living ontology, that is, the real-phenomenological sense (Stimmung) of presence or just the Being-dimension of a praxis, which cannot be described or understood only through certain human-made standards or common patterns or principles of how to cope with or master a situation, a profession, or a society (polis).

The later Heidegger would talk about the 'Voice or Call of Being', which may happen if you suddenly experience an openness to the mysteries in life. Where epistemology in all its forms tries to master the world, this Being-dimension opens an opportunity to go from mastery to mystery (Marcel, 1950; Bannon, 2014), from a problem-solution perspective to a mystery-embracing perspective, or from a 'positive epistemology' to what I call an apophatic and 'negative epistemology'.

But before I go deeper into what apophatic epistemology is, let me now sum up the positions of practice and action research I have touched on in section I. In the figure I call 'The Four Voices in Reflective Practice Research' (see the figure below), I work with four orientations or two axes: 1) the Practice-Praxis axis and 2) the Theory-Theoria axis.

These four orientations also exhibit four different voices in professional practice, such as in the teaching profession or higher education. In teaching and teacher-student education, these four orientations or voices will always be at play: 1) The Voice of the System, which is connected to the prevailing rules, standards, structures, culture, and grammar of a profession; 2) the Voice of Knowledge, which is the scientific and professional voice of a profession; 3) the Voice of Personal Being, which, in this case, is the being of the person (her existential self) who works in this profession, experiencing it from a one-person perspective. Finally, 4) the Voice of Ethical Callings, or the Thou of the phenomenon, which Gadamer and Heidegger call "die

Sache", Buber calls "the Thou" in the I-Thou relation (Buber, 2013/1923)[6], and the Daoist calls "The Dao" (Chai, 2020, 2022, Nelson, 2021).

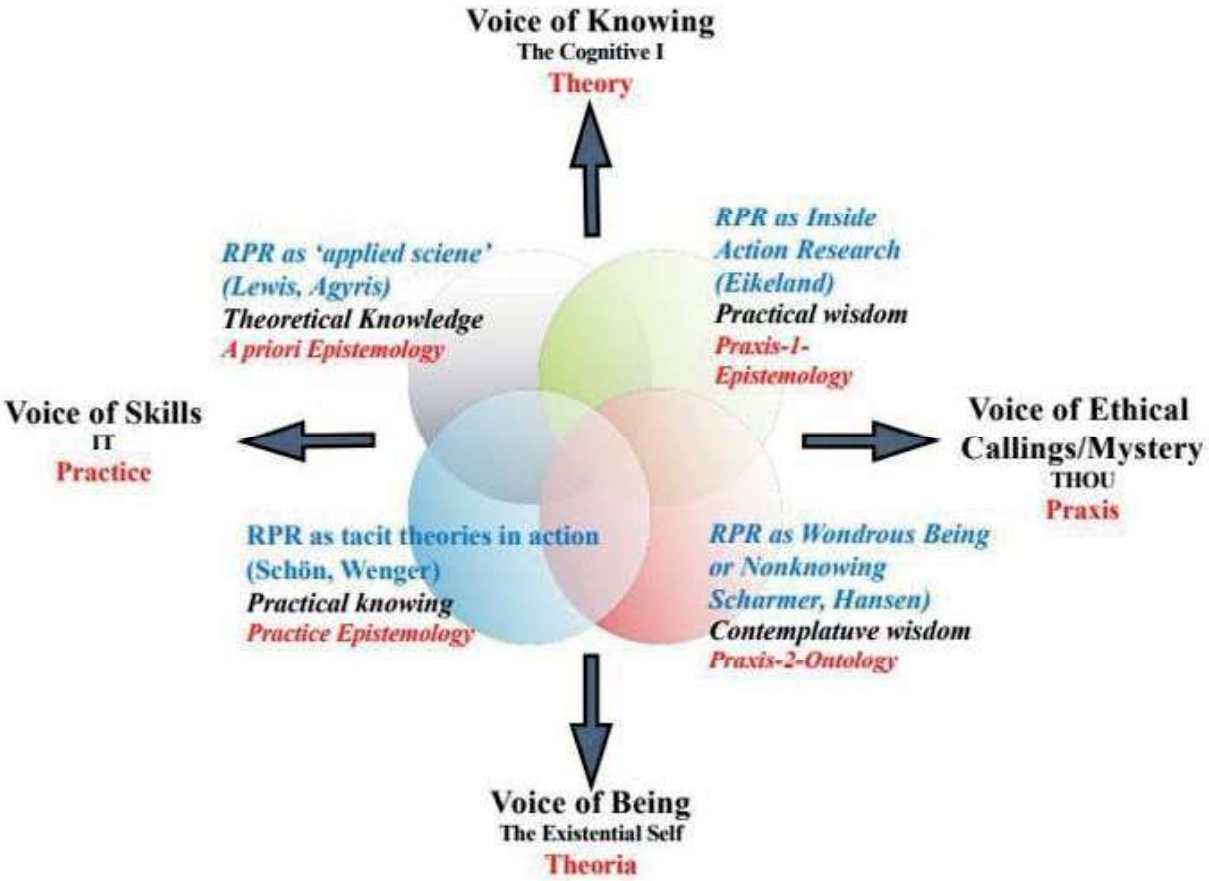
As you will see from the horizontal axis, with Buber's concepts, I connect the I-It relation to the Voice of the System, or practice-led research, and the I-Thou relation to the Voice of Ethical Callings, or praxis-led research. The second vertical axis in the model, I connect the Voice of Knowing to the cognitive I, or consciousness, and theory-led research. Whereas the Voice of Being is connected to the existential self ('Dasein' in Heideggerian terms) and theoria-led research.

The circles in the middle show and indicate that Reflective Practice Research is a multidimensional activity where all kinds of epistemologies need to be considered, but in contemporary reflective practice research, there is an imbalance because of the lack of awareness of both the Voice of personal Being and the Voice of the Ethical Callings. The fourth space in the right corner, which I call the space for Wondrous Being, is not concerned with displaying theoretical, practical, or praxis knowledge. In this space, we leave the theory-led and practice-led epistemological approaches, and through the apophatic 'liminal' epistemology as a transitory passage, we indirectly point to a living and existential ontology (and even trans-ontology), which cannot be defined, said, or known in scientific (epistemological and methodological) terms or paradigms. It works with what the German-American practice researcher C. O. Scharmer terms "not-yet-embodied knowledge" (Scharmer, 2007).

Later, when we discuss the three dimensions of apophatic epistemology – the Knowledge-, Being-, and Mystery-dimensions – the first three spaces are all spaces describing the Knowledge-dimensions in different forms, whereas the last fourth space is where we find the Being- and Mystery-dimensions that are otherwise and go beyond the epistemological Knowledge-dimension. It is also in this fourth space that we find a way to better understand on an ontological-phenomenological level what practical and contemplative wisdom (phronesis and Sophia) is in a practical profession as well as what 'the ethical Call' is in a concrete situation or relation that calls a teacher to act in a 'tactful' or wise way (Van Manen, 2015). The tactfulness of the reflective practice researcher would be, carefully, to go to the limit of the established knowledge, led by the call of that which cannot be grasped or expressed by the Voice of the System, the Voice of (theoretical) Knowing, nor by the Voice of (embodied) Being (the existential self). At these borders, the researcher might get into a deep contemplative wonder. If so, then the reflective (or rather wondrous) practice researcher can

hear the Voice of Die Sache, or the Ethical Calling of the inquired phenomenon.

In my case, when researching parents in grief described in the prologue, I needed to radically question my cultural assumptions and scientific knowledge as well as personal (embodied) preferences of what grief is to open myself to a new insight that some more existential or spiritual dimensions of grief might only be understood through experiences of nature, art, and philosophy and not through medical science and psychological therapeutic approaches. The grieving parents' answers in the interviews brought me to these borders and into a deep wonder.



Section II: From Mastery to Mystery

To hear the voice of 'die Sache' or Dao in Reflective Practice Research

The German philosopher and art theorist Walter Benjamin provides a good metaphor for the enigmatic dynamic between the ineffable *impressions*,

what I here have termed the ethical sayings or callings (*die Sache*) on the one hand, and the concrete human-made *expressions* of these impressions in language and artefacts on the other hand. When these expressions manage to point to *Die Sache*[7] indirectly, they become artwork with a high aura[8].

Benjamin claims that especially the artist (and the philosopher and spiritual practitioner) has a 'threshold existence' between *die Sache* and human-made manifestations of *die Sache*, knowing intuitively that what has been expressed in an artwork can only be understood as the 'ashes of the fire'. The fire here is *die Sache,* and the impressions are the sparks coming from this fire. When the artist is in the artistic creation (or the philosopher in deep wonder), the artist (or philosopher) is listening to and in resonance with this enigmatic and ineffable impression and tries to articulate or give a material form to it. As Benjamin writes, "The work is the death mask of its conception" (Benjamin, 2002, p. 459). What he means here is that with the artwork, the truth or the resonance with the sacred and 'sparks of transcendence'[9] have coagulated. We now see in the artwork only the death mask of the once living and mysterious light or impression from the sacred that inspired the artist to create. Benjamin also describes the moment when the artist senses this mysterious light or 'pure experience' from the phenomenon and impression that has inspired the artist to create the artwork. He says that in that very moment, the thing or phenomenon suddenly looks back on you! (see Conty, 2013). Or as the Swiss painter Paul Klee writes in his notebook *The Thinking Eye*, "Now objects perceive me" (Klee, 1969). This is indeed a mysterious and strange experience, but an event that modern eco-phenomenologists (Abram, 2017; Kotva, 2022) touch upon nowadays. The world then becomes suddenly, strangely animated and enchanted for the human spectator of the world.

Now, let me briefly make the connection between the later Heidegger, whom Hubert Dreyfus, in his last writings, is inspired by, and the dimensions I connect to apophatic epistemology.

To talk about 'apophatic epistemology' is, as should now be clear, close to being a contradiction in terms. How can one write and talk about an apophatic *epistemology* – a logic and method of knowing – when apophatic thinking is all about what transcends human knowledge and even goes beyond human language? If you cannot write or talk about it, how can you then describe apophatic thinking?

Well, these are difficult and almost insurmountable questions – at least if you only arrived at them using the form of a logical discursive reflection. However, as apophatic thinkers from Pseudo-Dionysius to Cusanus to

Kierkegaard, Heidegger, and Derrida show (Rhodes, 2012; Franke, 2014), there are ways of thinking – through paradoxes, deconstructions, negative dialectics, aesthetic intimations, meditation, art, playfulness, humour, irony, and by living in ecstatic and caring ways (Kotva, 2022) and, indeed, when immersed in deep contemplative awe and wonder and silence – that allow thought, or rather the soul, to be ignited by something, or rather 'No-thing'.

Why? Because if we look upon a person or a phenomenon as a thing, as an object (as in an I-It relation, cf. Buber, 2019), we fall out of a resonant and dialogical I-Thou relation with that phenomenon.

Therefore, apophatic thinking works with 'No-things' in the I-Thou relation as a precondition for deep thinking and insight on an aesthetic, ethical, existential, and spiritual level. The apophatic epistemology is a preparation or 'cleaning process' to stand in the openness in deep wonder, listening, and non-knowing. The practice of apophatic epistemology is to dissolve itself to reach another non-epistemological level, which has to do with the Being- (the existential-ontological level) and Mystery-dimensions (the ethical-trans-ontological level). Going from epistemological to ontological and trans-ontological dimensions requires a personal (and spiritual[10]) transformation of the reflective practice researcher.

The apophatic, or 'negative', epistemological practice is a kind of Socratic deconstruction or de-freezing of currently used concepts, standards, grammar, assumptions, and meanings inherent both in the theory of a profession as well as in the practice epistemology (the knowing-in-practice) of this profession. The kind of capability that is needed is therefore a "*Negative Capability*" that was first coined by the British poet John Keats. He became aware of especially one capability that Shakespeare possessed so enormously, which was to accept and thrive in "uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason." (Keats, 2002, p. 312)

Negative Capability is described by Keats as a capability to stay out in the open, seeing and hearing the wonders and mysteries around him in a patient, receptive, and passive way. It is a wondrous 'non-knowing' way of being-in-the-phenomenon and being-with-the-phenomenon that gives rise to a caring attitude, a strong imagination, and a special kind of 'effortless action' where it is life through the phenomenon or the situation that acts on you (is the centre of agency) rather than you being the agent of actions. This is what Hubert Dreyfus and Sean Kelly in *All Things Shining* (Dreyfus & Kelly, 2011, p. 194) describe as "... the moment when the sacred shines (...) during which something overpowering happens that wells up before

you as a palpable presence and carries you along as on a powerful way." In the case I narrated in the beginning of my essay, I was inspired to ask whether grief also can be understood as a spiritual (or 'sacred' – in Dreyfus' sense) event.

In Daoism, this kind of event that happens to the person is described with the Chinese word *Wu Wei* (Nelson, 2021). These moments are also described as "beautiful moments" in nursing (Herholdt-Lomholdt, 2018), "magic moments" (Kotva, 2022) in sports, or spiritual moments in therapy or spiritual practices.

In my article "How would an Apophatic Action Research look like?" (Hansen, 2022b) I give an in-depth description of the three dimensions of such apophatic and action-oriented practice research or 'Wu Wei research', as it were. Here it suffices to briefly describe the kind of attentiveness that comes into play when we work with the three dimensions in apophatic epistemology and reflective practice research, namely the Knowledge-, Being-, and Mystery-dimension[11].

Knowledge Dimension: There are two levels of seeing connected to the Knowledge dimension in apophatic epistemology: to look *at* the field of practice and to look *with* field of practice.

To look at the field is the Outsider-spectator doing reflections-on-action and collecting theoretical and empirical knowledge as a Theoretical (and technical) Practitioner. The phenomenon is looked upon as an object to be inquired into. *A priori* epistemology leads this kind of looking, which is what typically also leads scientific inquiries. In *Being and Time* (1962), Heidegger calls this kind of attitude towards the world 'present-at-hand' (*Vorhandenheit*).

To look at the field is the Insider-approach, doing reflections-in-action and gathering insights embodied in the practice as tacit, embodied, situated, and intuitive knowledge. This kind of looking is led by Practice and Praxis Epistemologies and applied by the reflective practitioner and intuitive expert. In *Being and Time*, Heidegger calls this kind of attitude towards the world 'ready-to-hand' (*Zuhandenheit*).

What is important to know here is that Heidegger understands both levels of knowing as a knowing on the ontic level. When being on the ontic level, it is the pragmatic and cognitive self (the will to master the world), the pragmatic problem-solving and scientific explaining seeking ways of being that dominate. This was the discovery that Hubert Dreyfus made in his later works.

Being-Dimension: When Heidegger talks about Being (*Dasein* and *Sein*), and how humans also can be-in-the-world in a non-pragmatic and non-scientific but existential, reflective, and understanding way, he fundamentally places the self in a new position, which differs from the pragmatic and cognitive self. Now Heidegger talks about *Dasein* as a special kind of 'being-there'-presence and attentiveness. *Being* (*Sein*) becomes the tacit horizon with which *Dasein* is in resonance. This relation could also be described as the emergence of the existential self in resonance with the world as a whole, and how the world appears, seen through this kind of Being-attentiveness. Now the person no longer looks *at* the field of, say, teaching, with a theoretical eye or looks *at* the field through the practice knowledge that the teachers gain through years of lived experiences of teaching. Now, the teacher is very present in an existential way of how life and concrete situations become or are experienced as deeply meaningful. The kind of gaze that follows *The Existential Practitioner* is, you could say, to gaze *into and from within* the living phenomenon. Note that when we are in an existential relation with the phenomenon-in-practice, we are now not only working with or sensing through the 'ashes' of the phenomenon, which the scientist (*The Theoretical Practitioner*) and pragmatist (*The Reflective Practitioner*) do. They only stay, as Heidegger would say, on the 'ontic level'. *The Existential Practitioner,* on the other hand, is attentive to the 'sparks' flying up from the living phenomenon before it coagulates into what Benjamin called the 'death mask' of the phenomenon. So, at this phenomenological and existential-ontological level the person is in an 'existential resonance' (Rosa, 2019) with the phenomenon.

Mystery-Dimension: Finally, there is also a third level, the Mystery-Dimension, which is especially described in the Late Heidegger's work (Capobianco, 2011, 2015, 2022) and followed up by apophatic thinkers like Levinas, Derrida, Marion, and Kotva. We could call this practitioner *The Contemplative Practitioner*, if we, by contemplation, think of a kind of thinking that is both aesthetical, philosophical, and spiritual, that is, a kind of sensing and philosophizing that opens for the ineffable wonders and living mysteries in daily life.

This is indeed also in the area where the Daoist eco-philosophers and eco-phenomenologists belong (Nelson, 2021). The kind of seeing or gaze that is happening here is trans-ontological (it goes beyond the kind of ontological horizon that *Dasein* or *The Existential Practitioner* can experience). It is a way of openness and receptiveness and 'letting-be'– what Heidegger calls *Gelassenheit*. It is exactly here that we can find the similarities be-

tween Heidegger and Daoism when comparing the praxis of *Gelassenheit* with the Daoist notion of '*Wu Wei*' as an active passivity or effortless action (Nelson, 2021, 2024). The kind of gaze that emerges in the practitioner when being taken by the phenomenon or life itself is, as we saw, described by Walter Benjamin. It is the experience of being *seen by and to see in virtue of* the life phenomenon – of gazing at the world through the eyes of the life phenomenon itself (Marion, 2002). And the mood (*Grundstimmung*) that fills the person in these moments is deep wonder and awe (Han, 2024).

Contemplative wonder as a gateway to die Sache selbst

Gadamer (2006) talked about the universality in philosophical hermeneutics that consequently breaks with today's widespread social constructionism, contextualism, and perspectivism. However, his notion of 'universality' cannot be understood only within the horizon of epistemology and methodology. He, too, like Heidegger, thinks beyond the ontic horizon. Thus, when Gadamer talks about universality and the experience and event of Truth (Gadamer, 2006, p 20–22), this must be understood within an existential-ontological horizon and from within an apophatic thinking and 'negative epistemology'. There *is* a Truth in the moment, a contact to *die Sache selbst*, but you will only be able to get in tune or resonance with that Truth if you approach this living truth from within the Being- and Mystery-dimension. Truth as an event that happens to you on an existential and ontological level (rather than seeking the truth through systematic reflections and rigorous methods on an epistemological and technical level) is *Gelassenheit* as a praxis (Harvey, 2009; Capobianco, 2014) or a praxis of *Wu Wei* (Nelson, 2021; Chai, 2022). The moment when you are closest to *die Sache selbst* (or the phenomenon in and by itself, cf. Marion, 2002) is when you are caught by a deep contemplative wonder and awe. This is the key signal telling you that you *are* on track for something real and truly mysterious and wondrous, that speaks back to you and maybe even, as Walter Benjamin would say, looks back on you.

In the introduction to this essay, I said that Apophatic Epistemology could be read as an important supplement to the kind of "Kaleidoscopic epistemology" that is described by Weiss and Helskog (2023) as an important metaphor for the epistemology behind their understanding of Reflective Practice Research. When talking about Kaleidoscopic epistemology, they

refer, as a pedagogical means, to the well-known parable of the *Blind Men and the Elephant*. One blind man is certain that the truth of the elephant is what he concretely feels in his hand (which is only the tail of the elephant). Another blind man insists that he has the truth, standing with one of the elephant's feet. And so on. This parable illustrates, as Kleineberg (2013) elaborates thoroughly on, the plurality of epistemic contexts and their related problem of relativism regarding human knowledge. I, too have met this parable many times, often in research environments or professional work (like in textbooks for systemic consultation) and often pushed forward by social constructivists, contextualists, or postmodernists who all want in different and heterogeneous ways to emphasize the contextuality and locality of 'a' truth being defended.

However, the story of *The Blind Men and the Elephant* can, as Kleineberg (2013) shows, also be used as a description of how modern science and neo-positivists today search for the Truth with a capital T (the Elephant), and of course acknowledging that the scientist must always as a rigor scientific principle be *on the way* to a new even deeper understanding of this Truth – as long as the scientist makes sure to stick to the 'correct' (objective) epistemology and methodology.

But neither Gadamer nor Heidegger (or Buber or Benjamin), can be located within this modern scientific or postmodern constructivist position. They go beyond this kind of thinking. Hence, the story of *The Blind Men and the Elephant* does not help us to understand what Kaleidoscopic epistemology is *if* it does not make clear how it differs from modern and postmodern use of this parable. With the apophatic epistemology, the Elephant itself is understood as *die Sache selbst* – or as the Dao of reflective practice research. The sense (or musicality or 'tactfulness') to experience this invisible (when seen from within an ontic and cataphatic horizon) living truth, is, as I already said, *the sense of wonder*. This kind of deep wonderment can be encountered in different shapes and forms of receptiveness in respectively the Being- and Mystery-dimension of a practice. Having done that in this chapter, I hope to have shown through an apophatic interpretation of the metaphor of 'The Elephant and the Blind Men' why the 'Kaleidoscopic epistemology' of Reflective Practice Research understood by Weiss & Helskog (2023), can be qualified further through the notion of 'Apophatic Epistemology' or the 'Dao of Reflective Practice Research'.

Let me now end on a more practical note[12] by connecting the practice of teaching to the relevance of the sense of wonder. The Canadian phenomenologist Max Van Manen has spent a lifetime in wonder at what good

teaching and pedagogical tactfulness really are. He too, points to the sense of wonder as a gateway to getting into resonance with the concrete learning situation, and what is calling in that moment. He notes that deep wonder follows silence. And reversely, through deep silence, deep wonder may emerge too.

> True wonderment does not ask a thousand questions. I truly wonder, when the question I ask is returned to me somehow, or when it lingers and envelops itself with stillness, the stillness of wonder. (Van Manen, 2006, p. 19)

In addition to this description of the phenomenon of wonder, Van Manen wonders: "Can we bring children to wonder? Can one even 'will' oneself to wonder? Or is wonder more like a grace that visits us when we are open to it?" (ibid.) When reading Max Van Manen's intriguing books and insights on what a good, tactful teacher is (Van Manen, 1991, 2006, 2015), the answer to the last question seems to be 'yes, I think so'. Or rather, there seems to be a delicate balance or dynamic (dance) between effort and grace, because the teacher needs to cultivate and nurture an atmosphere of openness and wonder in her or himself and the classroom.

Thus, something *can* be done with some effort and will, but if the teacher (or students or reflective practice researcher) wills too much or falls back into a know-what, -know-why**,** and know-how-attitude, the magic or enchantment of wonder immediately evaporates. When deep wonder happens as a grace, it comes to the participants unexpectedly and in a way that surprises them or, even better, touches and grasps them, so they suddenly become humble and vulnerable. Then the tone of teaching and the dialogue between teacher and students, and students-to-students, change as when the sunlight in a dark room suddenly lights up and changes the atmosphere in a room. Now the room has miraculously become much more colourful, and trust and joy in life seem also now to appear among the people in this room. When this happens, people may become silent and very present as if they were listening to something very important that is on its way, but not quite there yet. If one senses it and finds words for it, it is typically described as a 'magic moment' or a feeling of wonder or awe (Keltner, 2023). Apophatic epistemology wants to be a thres- and placeholder for contemplation and awareness of these kinds of wonderful experiences and 'truth events'.

Notes

[1] Finn Thorbjørn Hansen is a Professor of Applied Philosophy, with a PhD in Educational Philosophy, at Aalborg University (Denmark). He has developed a phenomenological and wonder-based approach to action and reflective practice research through so-called Wonder Labs: https://vbn.aau.dk/en/persons/finnth

[2] The term 'Apophatic' derives in the West from the tradition of Negative Theology, in philosophy from Negative Ontology or Negative Phenomenology, and in the East from Daoism and Zen Buddhism, when saying that one should not give name to the nameless. To say, for example, in human language *what* God is, or *what* Being as such is, is to show a deeper lack of understanding of *that*, which cannot be '*said*' directly – but only indirectly and in negative ways by a '*saying*', which can only be a pointing act (Franke, 2014, 2020).

[3] In the tradition of negative theology, they talk about two ways to the ineffable: 1) the *Via Negativa,* which is the radical not-knowing and apophatic approach, and 2) the *Via Positiva,* which is a confirming '*kataphatic*' way of 'pointing' to that which cannot be said directly in scientific or representative language and proportional statements, formulas or dogmas but only indirectly communicated through poetry, wondering-contemplative meditation, humor, metaphors and allegories. The philosophy of Gadamer can therefore be understood as a 'kataphatic ontology', whereas the more radical thinking of Kierkegaard, Heidegger, Wittgenstein, and Derrida is better understood as 'apophatic ontology'.

[4] An iconic masterpiece of 'apophatic epistemology' is Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*. Here he uses the rigorous and logical language of logical positivism to show from within their epistemology the fundamental limitations of exactly the thinking of logical positivism. In Wittgenstein's apophatic epistemology, he, through negation, indirectly points to that (namely the ethical, aesthetical, and religious/spiritual experiences) which cannot be said and grasped from within the positivistic and logical paradigm (Edward, 1989).

[5] Which indeed Gadamer and Heidegger also do, but their interpretations of Aristotle's concepts of *praxis* and *theoria* are of a whole other kind than Eikeland's. To say it briefly, where Eikeland reads Aristotle's concepts in an 'ontic' (epistemological) way, Heidegger and Gadamer read Aristotle in an 'ontological' (existential-phenomenological) way.

[6] For a description of Martin Buber's ontology and how one can relate his I-Thou and I-It philosophy to reflective practice research and to human- and phenomenon-centred professions and educations, see Hansen (2017, 2023a).

[7] Inspired by later Heidegger, Hubert Dreyfus calls *die Sache* what "shines through", or 'the sacred', in 2011 (Dreyfus and Kelly, 2011). *Die Sache* is here understood as an experience of transcendence, of something deeply meaningful but ineffable, that shines from the phenomenon in and by itself (*die Sache Selbst*). See also Marion (2002).

[8] This is not the place to do a philosophical elaboration of what Benjamin means with 'the aura' as a shining from what Benjamin (in a non-religious but spiritual way) called 'the sacred' and the later Heidegger calls "the divine" ("*Das Heillige*"). See Jørgensen (2014) and Benjamin & Vardoulakis (2015).

[9] Note that the French existential phenomenologist, Merleau-Ponty, also points to this wondrous experience of transcendence that casts us into deep philosophical wonder when he writes, "The best formulation of the [phenomenological] reduction is probably that given by Eugen Fink, Husserl's assistant, when he spoke of 'wonder' in the face of the world. Reflection does not withdraw from the world towards the unity of con-

sciousness as the world's basis; it steps back to watch the forms of transcendence fly up like sparks from a fire… " (Merleau-Ponty, 2007/1945, p. xv).

[10] The kind of 'spirituality' and 'spiritual transformation' I am talking about here is a specific kind of *philosophical-spiritual* transformation and way of opening towards and getting into resonance with the living wonders and mysteries in daily life that we are surrounded by (Hadot, 1995; Kotva, 2022; Hansen, 2023a&b; Hansen, 2024a, c).

[11] For an in-depth description of these three dimensions in the practice of phenomenology, see Thorsted & Hansen (2022).

[12] For a more practical-pedagogical approach to how to facilitate wonder-based thinking and dialogues in reflective practice research and educational, innovative, and professional settings, see Hansen (2014, 2015, 2017, 2019, 2024a, c). A new dialogical model for creating 'Communities of Wonder', termed "*The Wonder Compass*", is described in Hansen (2022a, 2023b, 2024c).

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