

*Jens Peter Brune, Horst Gronke,
Dieter Krohn (Eds.)*

The Challenge of Dialogue

Socratic Dialogue
and Other Forms of Dialogue
in Different Political Systems and Cultures

*Herausgegeben von:
Dieter Krohn
Barbara Neißer
Nora Walter†*

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The Challenge of Dialogue

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Dieter Krohn, Barbara Neißer, Nora Walter †

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Jens Peter Brune, Horst Gronke, Dieter Krohn

The Challenge of Dialogue – Introduction

The twelfth volume of the „Series on Socratic Philosophizing” reflects the international discussion on Socratic philosophizing which has broadened and become more searching since the first international conference held in Hillcroft College near London in 1996. Many of the contributions included in this volume were stimulated by the lively discussions during the Fifth International Conference held in Berlin in 2005, which up to now was the largest in this series with 120 participants from 20 countries.

The organizations responsible for content and finance of this conference, and the previous ones in this series, were the “Philosophisch-Politische Akademie e. V.” (PPA – Philosophical-Political Academy), the “Gesellschaft für Sokratisches Philosophieren e. V.” (GSP – Society of Socratic Facilitators) and the “Society for the Furtherance of the Critical Philosophy” (SFCP). The further development of Socratic Dialogue in the tradition of Leonard Nelson and Gustav Heckmann belong to the central commitments of these organizations. The large number of participants in 2005 was made possible by the generous financial support of the Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung (bpb, Federal Agency for Civic Education). As a result many practitioners of dialogue from East European countries were able to participate in that conference. We are grateful to the bpb and particularly to Thomas Weber, the person responsible, for his exceptionally active engagement. In addition, the preceding bpb meeting in Berlin in November 2004 on “Globalization and Socratic Dialogue” gave essential impulses for the preparation and planning of the Fifth International conference.

The 2005 conference in Berlin had the title “The Challenge of Dialogue”. Within a global perspective this conference threw light on the different forms of dialogue and, in particular, on philosophical dialogue. This was designed to do justice to the then current demands of different political systems and cultures. The following sub-topics were discussed: “The development of Socratic Dialogue”, “Examples of dialogue

practised in different political systems”, and “The role of dialogue in mutual understanding within and between different cultures and in the political and economic sectors”.

Given that the above topics are intertwined, the editors decided to group conference contributions and some papers received subsequently under two sections. The first section is entitled “Socratic Dialogue, philosophical dialogue and other forms of dialogue”. This includes papers which first and foremost deal with Socratic Dialogue and its comparison with other forms of dialogue exploring possibilities of cooperation. Other papers in this section address basic philosophical and dialogical practice rather than Socratic Dialogue per se.

The first four contributions by Paolo Dordoni, Andreas Böttger, Horst Gronke and Therese Self-van Wegen focus on central aspects of Socratic Dialogue: Dordoni concerns himself with the conception of the knowledge base of Socratic Dialogue; Böttger deals with the role of the example and Gronke with the differentiation between Socratic and therapeutic dialogue. Therese Self-van Wegen, in a highly personal contribution shows how fruitful Socratic Dialogue can be for “increasing peace of all kinds, from peace of mind to world peace”. Further contributions by Helge Svare, Sarah Davey Chesters and Hester Reeve establish links between Socratic Dialogue and other forms of dialogue. Svare explores narrative theory, Reeve the dialogue concept of David Bohm and that of the community of inquiry. Petra von Morstein’s contribution illuminates how her understanding of dialogue underlies her philosophical practice. Finally Lou Marinoff, in his debate with Irvin Yalom’s existential psychiatry, makes it explicit what practising “philosophical dialogue” means.

Turning now to the second section, the contributions here explore the different fields of practice in Socratic and philosophical dialogue. The first few contributions relate to the trans-cultural dialogue, one of the main themes of the conference. Whereas Thomas Meyer and Narahari Rao raise basic reflections, Aliaksei Ihnatovich, Ina Nasovich and Maria Solovyova present their concrete experiences with Socratic Dialogue in Belarus.

The contributions of Gisela Raupach-Strey, Dieter Birnbacher, Evelina Ivanova and Tobias Fink focus on the application of Socratic Dialogue in schools and universities. Gisela Raupach-Strey not only clarifies the role model of Socratic Dialogue for the didactics of ethics but also probes how a Socratic-centred didactic of ethics is to be understood. Dieter Birnbacher explains how elements of Socratic Dialogue

found their way into the school subject “Practical Philosophy” in North-Rhine-Westphalia, Germany’s largest federal state. Evelina Ivanova turns to the growing public recognition of philosophy with children and describes what Socratic Dialogue offers in this context. Lastly, Tobias Fink presents the concern and results of his empirical research regarding the potential of Socratic Dialogue for developing communication skills.

Beate Littig reports about the currently most substantial empirical studies on the effect of Socratic Dialogue. She presents her bio-ethical research projects undertaken at the IFAS, Vienna, in which researchers, doctors, politicians and other stakeholders participated in Socratic Dialogue on themes of medical ethics regarding xenotransplantation and genetic counselling. Naoki Homma and Tsuyoshi Horie, from medical ethical perspective, point to further development of Socratic Dialogue into a “Dialogue Complex”. Erik Boers, Jos Kessels and Pieter Mostert provide a view of how Socratic Dialogue and philosophical dialogue - in this respect most advanced in the Netherlands – can be used in reflection about basic economic and organizational questions. The last two papers, by Gundula Avenarius and Antje Lielich-Wolf as well as by Keith Hammond, introduce us to the possibilities of Socratic Dialogue in the appreciation of art and the experience of the beautiful and the sublime.

In order to meet the need for information about the possibilities to train as Socratic facilitator within the GSP, you will find reproduced at the end of this volume the organization’s constitution as well as the rules governing the training.

The SFCP also offers training in Socratic facilitation in Britain; details can be found on their website.

The PPA, the GSP and the SFCP gladly provide information about their Socratic community and political activities. We invite all who are interested to engage in dialogue with us about the theory and practice of Socratic Dialogue. Information and contact addresses can be found on our websites: www.sfc.org.uk; www.philosophisch-politische-akademie.de; www.sokratisches-gespraech.de.

And a closing remark to those who even suffer from slight violations of linguistic rules: The editors have not tried to eradicate every sign of basic global English, which – as you know – is sometimes more global than English. The ideas presented in this volume are important and very inspiring; and the language keeps the charm of the wonderful 5th International Conference on “The Challenge of Dialogue”.

I Socratic Dialogue, Philosophical Dialogue and Other Forms of Dialogue

Das sokratische „Wissen nicht zu wissen“ und seine Bedeutung für die Philosophie.

Eine erste Skizze anhand des radikalen Zweifels

Die Fragestellung

In diesem Beitrag möchte ich die Frage analysieren: Enthält die sokratische Einsicht¹ „ich weiß, dass ich nicht weiß“ etwas Wesentliches für das Philosophieren? Gilt sie noch heute? Inwiefern?

¹ Ich verwende absichtlich den Ausdruck „*Einsicht*“. *Einsicht* ist hier verstanden als eine besondere Art von *Kenntnis*. Sie hat die Stärke einer inneren *Evidenz* bzw. Offensichtlichkeit. Hier soll es genügen, ein Beispiel dafür zu geben, welche Bedeutung für mich dieser Ausdruck in diesem Kontext besitzt: Ich weiß, dass das Rauchen gefährlich ist, dennoch rauche ich. Diese Art von Kenntnis ist keine echte *Einsicht*. Nehmen wir an, ich hätte eine Krankheit, die mit meinem Rauchen verbunden wäre. Meine Kenntnis, dass Rauchen gefährlich ist, kann dann zu einer *Einsicht* werden. Ich weiß, dass das Rauchen gefährlich ist, ich habe das erlebt, und jetzt gehört dieses Wissen mir, sodass ich „wahrscheinlich“ nicht mehr rauchen werde. Natürlich kann ich daraus nicht absolut schließen, dass ich nicht mehr rauchen werde. Deswegen habe ich den Ausdruck „wahrscheinlich“ verwendet. Es gilt also: Wenn wir eine *Einsicht* haben, ist es höchst wahrscheinlich, dass unser Handeln durch sie bewirkt wird. Eine *Einsicht* hat eine besondere Stärke: die Stärke sowohl einer erlebten Erfahrung als auch des Glaubens, etwas Inneres gesehen zu haben. Dieser Unterschied könnte uns auch helfen, besser zu verstehen, welche Wahrheit im ethischen Intellektualismus von Sokrates implizit enthalten ist. Wenn wir an *Einsichten* denken, können wir uns vorstellen, warum ein intellektueller Ansatz eine so große Rolle gespielt hat. Wenn du das Gute kennst, ist es unmöglich, nicht das Gute zu tun. Diese Behauptung ist nur teilweise korrekt bzw. sie setzt zwei Bedingungen voraus: dass in einem solchen Fall unsere Kenntnis eine *Einsicht* ist und dass sich die Beziehung zwischen dem Kennen des Guten und dem Befolgen des Guten nur möglicherweise realisiert. In einer rein intellektualistischen Ethik wird die „mögliche“ Beziehung zwischen Wissen und Handeln so charakterisiert, als ob die Realisierung des Eingesehenen nicht nur „möglich“, sondern notwendig sei. Es wird der Fehler begangen, „möglich“ in „notwendig“ zu verwandeln. Ich werde hier das „Wissen

Ich diskutiere diese Fragen mittels der radikalen Zweifelmethode. Anhand der Ansätze von Sokrates, Augustinus, Descartes und Husserl möchte ich ein tieferes Verständnis des Charakters von Einsicht erreichen.

Sokrates lebte in einer Zeit, in der das Philosophieren grundsätzlich in Frage gestellt worden war. „Können wir überhaupt die Wahrheit finden?“, so hätte die Hauptfrage lauten können. Es gab nämlich zu dieser Zeit viele verschiedene und gegensätzliche Ansätze und Weltanschauungen. Einige dachten, dass man die Suche nach der Wahrheit aufgeben sollte und sich eher damit befassen sollte, wie man andere von den eigenen Meinungen überzeugen kann (etwa Gorgias und Protagoras)². Sokrates seinerseits konnte den philosophischen Kosmologien seiner Zeit wenig abgewinnen, er versuchte, die philosophische Forschung auf einen anderen Gegenstand zu konzentrieren, auf die Kenntnis des menschlichen Lebens.

Die Antwort von Sokrates auf die Prophezeiung des Delphischen Orakels kann als eine Antwort auf diese Krise betrachtet werden. Diese Antwort mag etwas enthalten, das im Bezug auf die Identität des Philosophierens selbst wichtig ist.

Es hat den Anschein, als ob Sokrates uns noch einmal zu einer Suche nach der Wahrheit nötigen möchte. Was mich immer sehr beeindruckt hat, ist der Umstand, dass Sokrates zu dieser Suche durch das „Wissen nicht zu wissen“ gekommen ist. Wenn wir diese *Einsicht* näher betrachten, merken wir nämlich, dass wir von ihr ausgehend auch schließen hätten können, dass es keine Wahrheit gibt. Ich weiß nur, dass ich nicht weiß. Das ist alles. Trotzdem ist Sokrates kein Skeptiker geworden. Im Gegenteil: er hat uns einen Ort gezeigt, in dem es noch möglich war, sich auf die Suche nach der Wahrheit zu begeben. Entscheidend hierbei ist, dass Sokrates die Einsicht zu wissen, dass er nicht wusste, ernst nahm.

nicht zu wissen“ als eine *Einsicht* und nicht nur als eine Kenntnis betrachten. Einsicht spielt eine große Rolle für die Analyse des Sokratischen Philosophierens und möglicherweise für das Philosophieren überhaupt. Das ist meine Hypothese.

² Mit dieser Betrachtung möchte ich keine Kritik an der Sophistik üben oder die Sophistik so darstellen, als ob sie nichts Bedeutsames zuwege gebracht hätte. Hier geht es mir nur um den Hinweis auf die Identitätskrise der Philosophie, also einer Krise von Sinn und Zweck der Philosophie.

Das Wissen nicht zu wissen im Leben von Sokrates

In der *Apologie des Sokrates* sagt uns Plato, dass Sokrates mit seinem „dialogischen Philosophieren“ begonnen hatte, nachdem er von dem Orakelspruch erfahren hatte, dass er „der Weiseste“ sei. Sokrates berichtet von Cherephon:

„Er fragte also, ob wohl jemand weiser wäre als ich. Da leugnete nun die Pythia, dass jemand weiser wäre. Und hierüber kann euch dieser sein Bruder hier Zeugnis ablegen, da jener bereits verstorben ist.“³

Wie wir schon wissen, stellte diese Prophezeiung für Sokrates sowohl eine echte Überraschung als auch eine existentielle Frage dar⁴:

„Was meint doch wohl der Gott? Und was will er etwa andeuten? Denn das bin ich mir doch bewusst, dass ich weder viel noch wenig weise bin. Was meint er also mit der Behauptung, ich sei der Weiseste?“⁵

Sokrates nämlich „wusste“, dass er nicht wusste. Deswegen fing er zu fragen an, welche Bedeutung diese Prophezeiung haben könnte. Wir kennen die Antwort von Sokrates ... oder besser gesagt, die Antwort, die Platon uns tradiert hat:

„Es scheint aber, ihr Athener, in der Tat der Gott weise zu sein und mit diesem Orakel dies zu sagen, dass die menschliche Weisheit sehr wenigens nur wert ist oder gar nichts. Und offenbar nicht dies vom Sokrates zu sagen, sondern nur mich zum Beispiel erwähnend sich meines Namens zu bedienen, wie wenn er sagte: Unter euch, ihr Menschen, ist der der Weiseste, der wie Sokrates einsieht, dass er in der Tat nichts wert ist, was die Weisheit angeht.“ (23 a-b)⁶

³ Platon. *Apologie des Sokrates*. 21 a.

⁴ Der Tempel des Apollon hatte über dem Eingang die Inschrift „Erkenne dich selbst!“

⁵ Platon. *Apologie des Sokrates*. 21 b. Hrsg. von Gunther Eigler. Deutsche Übersetzung von Friedrich Schleiermacher, S. 13. Bemerkenswert ist diese Interpretation von Sokrates. Das Orakel hatte lediglich gesagt, dass niemand weiser als Sokrates ist. Logisch betrachtet: Es kann sein, dass niemand weise ist; oder auch: dass alle so weise wie Sokrates sind.

⁶ Platon. *Apologie des Sokrates*. 23 a-b Hrsg. von Gunther Eigler. Deutsche Übersetzung von Friedrich Schleiermacher, S. 18-19.

Es gibt noch eine zweite Antwort von Sokrates. Wir könnten sie finden, wenn wir darauf acht geben, dass Sokrates zu diesem Ergebnis nicht solipsistisch, allein mit sich selbst denkend, sondern dialogisch gekommen ist.⁷ Er hat mit anderen Leuten Gespräche geführt, und es ist ihm Schritt für Schritt klarer geworden, dass die anderen nicht wussten, dass sie nicht wussten, worüber sie sprachen. Er aber „wusste“⁸ es. Aus diesem Grund konnte er als „der Weiseste“ unter ihnen gelten.

„Indem ich also fortging, gedachte ich bei mir selbst, als dieser Mann bin ich nun freilich weiser. Denn es mag wohl eben keiner von uns beiden etwas Tüchtiges oder Sonderliches wissen; allein dieser doch meint zu wissen, da er nicht weiß, ich aber, wie ich eben nicht weiß, so meine ich es auch nicht. Ich scheine also um dieses wenige doch weiser zu sein als er, dass ich, was ich nicht weiß, auch nicht glaube zu wissen.“⁹

Wichtig ist die Art und Weise, auf die Sokrates diese Einsicht gewonnen hatte. Sokrates stand vor einem Dilemma (existentiell betrachtet) oder vor einer Aporie (theoretisch betrachtet). Gott konnte nicht irren. Er sagt immer die Wahrheit. Aber auch er, Sokrates, konnte nicht irren. Er war sich sicher, dass er nicht weise war. Er war sich dessen bewusst. Konnte es überhaupt möglich sein, diesen Widerspruch, dieses Rätsel zu lösen? Ein Widerspruch konnte nicht hingenommen werden. Wenn Gott und Sokrates die Wahrheit sagen, dann ergibt sich: Sokrates soll der weiseste sein und zugleich nicht der weiseste sein. Statt darüber in Skepsis zu verfallen, hat Sokrates angefangen, Menschen zu suchen, die weiser als er selbst waren. Wir wissen, dass er keine weiseren Menschen gefunden hat.

⁷ Hier möchte ich zwei verschiedene Aspekte betonen. Sokrates antwortet auf eine Frage. Das Orakel hat die Initiative, es sagt ihm, wenn auch indirekt, ein erstes Wort, das Sokrates so auffasst: „Du bist der Weiseste“. Indem Sokrates auf diese Frage antwortet, kann er sich selbst erkennen. Hier bildet die Antwort die dialogische Komponente. Aber Sokrates antwortete nicht nur, er setzte sich im Dialog mit anderen auseinander, indem er sie fragt. Den dialogischen Aspekt bildet hier das Fragen und Antworten im Diskurs, wobei Sokrates die Initiative innehat.

⁸ Es ist interessant zu beobachten, dass bei Sokrates selbst zwei verschiedene Niveaus von Wissen zu unterscheiden sind. Das Wissen, mit dem er sich überraschen lässt, und das Wissen, dass er der Weiseste ist. Diese letzte Art von Wissen ist eine Einsicht. Das erste Wissen hingegen ist nur eine Fragestellung. Siehe oben Fn. 1.

⁹ Platon. *Apologie des Sokrates*, 21 d. Hrsg. von Gunther Eigler. Deutsche Übersetzung von Friedrich Schleiermacher, S. 15. Bemerkenswert ist, dass Sokrates nur dieses weiß: Was ich nicht weiß, glaube ich auch nicht zu wissen. Das könnte aber auch bedeuten, dass er gar nichts weiß.

Aber wir wissen auch, dass Sokrates mit dieser Handlungsweise den Versuch unternommen hatte, die höchste Wahrheit (eine Wahrheit Gottes: „Sokrates ist der Weiseste“) in Frage zu stellen. Warum? Weil der Geist der Philosophie in der Forschung liegt, darin, auch „das als allgemeingültig Akzeptierte in Frage zu stellen“; in der Suche nach dem Wahrheitskern, der in einer These enthalten ist, wenngleich noch nicht in expliziter Form. (Warum sagt der Gott mir, Sokrates, dass ich der Weiseste bin? Was für einen Sinn hat Gottes Behauptung?) In Bezug auf unsere Zeit bedeutet dies: Der Geist der Philosophie liegt stärker in dem Bemühen, eine These zu widerlegen als sie zu verifizieren. Sokrates hatte damit die kritische Methode entdeckt.¹⁰ Aber noch mehr. Wir wissen, dass die Sokratische Methode oft als Elenchos und Maieutik charakterisiert wird. Diese Verfahren sind mehr als zwei Komponenten einer technischen Methode. Sie sind Lebenserfahrungen, die Sokrates in sich selbst erlebt hat. Den Elenchos hat er zuerst gegenüber sich selbst praktiziert, indem er trotz seiner Frömmigkeit versucht hat, Gottes These zu widerlegen. Und Maieutik hat er erlebt, indem er auf das Orakel antwortend eine Wahrheit in sich selbst geboren hat – die Wahrheit darüber, wer er wirklich war: ein Mann, der allein weiß, dass er nicht weiß. D.h. er war ein Philosoph, ein Liebhaber der Sophia, ein Forscher. Kurz: In der *Apologie des Sokrates* wird sowohl die Geburt von Sokrates als Philosoph als auch die Geburt seiner Philosophie als sokratische Methode dargestellt.

Wir können uns jetzt fragen, ob das „Wissen nicht zu wissen“ nur ein literarisches Hilfsmittel ist, mit dem Plato uns andere Inhalte bzw. Botschaften mitteilen wollte. Diese Inhalte könnten z.B. sein: die Bewusstheit der Grenzen unseres Wissens in Bezug auf das Wissen der Gottheit; die Bewusstheit, dass die anderen oft nicht wissen, worüber sie sprechen. Mit anderen Worten: eine Annahme menschlicher intellektueller Bescheidenheit; ein Ruf zum Dialog und zum Argumentieren, um die eigenen Meinungen kritisch zu prüfen. Es wäre auch möglich, dass das „Wissen nicht zu wissen“, nur als ein Hilfsmittel zu verstehen ist, das Platon benützt hat, um Sokrates' Ironie darzustellen und den Ablauf der Maieutik anfänglich zu charakterisieren. Diese Auffassungen halte ich für plausibel, aber nicht für hinreichend.

¹⁰ Für den Vorrang der Widerlegung vor der Begründung siehe etwa Karl Popper: *Conjectures and Refutations*. London. Routledge and Keagan Paul. 1969. Siehe hier Platon. *Apologie*, 21 b-e.

Meine Hypothese ist, dass die Prophezeiungen des Orakels auch etwas anderes enthalten bzw. dass wir von ihnen auch heute noch dazu herausgefordert und eingeladen sind zu untersuchen, was für das Philosophieren das „Wissen nicht zu wissen“ bedeuten könnte. Das „Wissen nicht zu wissen“ scheint einen neuen Weg für die Philosophie eröffnet, auf eine neue Möglichkeit des Philosophierens hingewiesen zu haben. Plato hat zwar schon darauf aufmerksam gemacht, wie problematisch es sein könnte, das Philosophieren an dieser Voraussetzung zu orientieren. Es geht darum, wie es möglich ist, mit dem Philosophieren anzufangen, wenn man davor nichts anderes weiß als das Wissen nicht zu wissen. Das Philosophieren scheint dann unmöglich zu sein.

„*Menon*: Und auf welche Weise willst du denn dasjenige suchen, Sokrates, wovon du überall gar nichts weißt, was es ist? Denn als welches Besondere von allem, was du nicht weißt, willst du es dir denn vorlegen und so suchen? Oder wenn du es auch noch so gut träfest, wie willst du denn erkennen, dass es dieses ist, was du nicht wusstest?“

Sokrates: Ich verstehe, was du sagen willst, Menon! (...) Dass nämlich ein Mensch unmöglich suchen kann, weder was er weiß, kann er suchen, denn er weiß es ja, und es bedarf dafür keines Suchens weiter; noch was er nicht weiß, denn er weiß ja dann auch nicht, was er suchen soll“¹¹

Wir kennen Platons Theorie der *Anamnesis*, der Wiedererinnerung. Ich werde nicht an diese Theorie anknüpfen, jedoch an das Problem, auf das diese Theorie antworten möchte. Das Problem ist die Frage des Zusammenhangs zwischen dem „Wissen nicht zu wissen“ und dem Philosophieren.

Wie ich schon oben angedeutet habe, lebte Sokrates in einer Zeit, in der das Philosophieren in Frage gestellt worden war. Aus diesem Grund bin ich auf die Idee gekommen, das „Wissen nicht zu wissen“ als eine Antwort auf einen radikalen Zweifel zu betrachten.

Es sieht so aus, als ob Sokrates uns sagte, wir könnten an allem zweifeln, aber nicht an dem „Wissen nicht zu wissen“.¹² Es geht mir hier

¹¹ Platon. *Menon*. 80 d-e. Hrsg. von Gunther Eigler. Deutsche Übersetzung von Friedrich Schleiermacher, S. 537.

¹² Einige Dialogpassagen tendieren in diese Richtung: Plato. *Menon*: „O Sokrates, ich habe schon gehört, ehe ich noch mit dir zusammengekommen bin, dass du allemal so selbst in Verwirrung bist und auch andere in Verwirrung bringst.“ (80 a). *Sokrates*: „Denn keineswegs bin ich etwa selbst in Ordnung, wenn ich die anderen in

darum deutlich zu machen, dass dies keine philologische Forschung ist. Im Gegenteil: Ich möchte eine Perspektive skizzieren, die uns helfen könnte, an die Erfahrung des „Wissens nicht zu wissen“ in einem tieferen Sinne anzuknüpfen.

Unter den Autoren, die uns helfen könnten, die Bedeutung dieser Intuition zu präzisieren, werde ich Augustinus, Descartes, und Husserl heranziehen. Die drei haben nämlich versucht, gegen die Skepsis zu argumentieren, und sie lebten ebenfalls in einer Zeit, in der sich die Philosophie in einer Krise befand. Darüber hinaus haben sie an einer Letztbegründung der Philosophie gearbeitet, insbesondere Descartes und Husserl.¹³ Ich will nicht hier behaupten, dass Sokrates „der Philosoph“ gewesen sei, der den Boden für eine zukünftige Bewusstseinsphilosophie gelegt habe. Ich verwende den radikalen Zweifel nur als heuristisches Mittel, um das „Wissen nicht zu wissen“ zu analysieren.¹⁴ Ich weise explizit auch auf eine bestimmte Grenze dieser Studie hin. Was ich hier darstelle, umreißt nur die Skizze eines umfassenderen Projektes.

Im Folgenden versuche ich auszubuchstabieren, was im Ausgang vom Paradigma des radikalen Zweifels über das „Wissen nicht zu wissen“ zu sagen ist. Ich werde danach zeigen, warum diese Perspektive nicht als ultimativ zu sehen ist. Es bieten sich nämlich die Möglichkeiten einer hermeneutischen und einer pragmatischen Rekonstruktion an. Sokrates selbst hat uns diesen Weg gezeigt, weil er nicht einsam, im Denken

Verwirrung bringe; sondern auf alle Weise bin ich selbst auch in Verwirrung (aporein) und ziehe nur so die anderen mit hinein.“ (80 c-d).

¹³ Es ist zu betonen, dass die Probleme von Sokrates, Augustinus, Descartes und Husserl auch verschieden sind (im Hinblick auf die historischen, existentiellen und philosophischen Kontexte). Ihre Antworten sollten nicht so betrachtet werden, als ob man ignorieren könnte, dass ihre Argumente eine gewisse Stärke und Plausibilität innerhalb eines bestimmten Kontextes aufweisen. Hier interessiert mich allein die Frage nach dem Zusammenhang des „Wissens nicht zu wissen“ mit dem Philosophieren.

¹⁴ Meines Erachtens gibt es zwei Möglichkeiten, die Figur des radikalen Zweifels zu verwenden. A) Man könnte sich fragen, wie radikal Sokrates gezweifelt hat. Ausgehend von dieser Frage könnte man dann rekonstruieren, ob Augustinus, Descartes und Husserl radikaler als Sokrates gezweifelt haben. B) Es gibt aber auch die Möglichkeit, die genannten Autoren so zu verstehen, dass sie uns helfen können, den Sinn dieser Erfahrung tiefer auszubuchstabieren. Hier geht es um die Bemühung, den Sinn des Wissens des Nichtwissens in vertiefender Weise zu charakterisieren. Ich werde diese zweite Rekonstruktionslinie verfolgen.

mit sich selbst, sondern im Dialog mit den anderen das „Wissen nicht zu wissen“ entdeckt hat (entdeckt zu haben scheint).¹⁵

Das „Wissen nicht zu wissen“ im radikalen Zweifeln

„Woran kann ich nicht zweifeln?“, hätte Sokrates sich fragen können. „Dass ich weiß, dass ich nicht weiß“. Das ist seine Antwort. Aber was bedeutet diese Antwort?

Offenbar ging es Sokrates darum, die Tatsache einer Erfahrung zu behaupten. Es handelt sich um eine Erfahrung von Wahrheit (das „Wissen nicht zu wissen“), eine Erfahrung, die unbedingt und absolut zu gelten scheint. Das „Wissen nicht zu wissen“ hat eine Kraft, der gegenüber Sokrates keinen Zweifel mehr aufbieten kann. Es handelt sich hierbei um die Kraft einer Offensichtlichkeit bzw. einer Evidenz – zuvor hatte ich sie als *Einsicht* gekennzeichnet. Es ist aber zu betonen: Wenn die erfahrene Wahrheit ausschließlich darin bestünde, dass wir „wissen nicht zu wissen“, würde es sich nur um eine formale Wahrheit handeln.¹⁶ Sokrates hatte aber erlebt, dass es sinnvoll war, die Wahrheit zu suchen, nämlich weil er die Erfahrung „einer Wahrheit“ gehabt hatte. Daher schien Sokrates nur auf der Suche nach der Wahrheit leben zu können; anderenfalls hätte er einen existentiellen Widerspruch zu sich selbst, gewissermaßen einen performativen Selbstwiderspruch, erfahren. Das „Wissen nicht zu wissen“ kann als existentielle Antwort gegenüber einem

¹⁵ Plato. *Apologie des Sokrates*, 21 c: „Ich ging zu einem von den für Weise gehaltenen, um dort, wenn irgendwo, das Orakel zu überführen und den Spruch zu zeigen: Dieser ist doch wohl weiser als ich, du aber hast auf mich aufgesagt.“

¹⁶ Sollten wir diese formale Wahrheit als eine leere Wahrheit betrachten? Hier muss man unterscheiden zwischen zwei verschiedenen Begriffen von „formal“. „Formal“ kann bedeuten: ohne Inhalt – und wird dann materiell/inhaltlich gegenübergestellt (denken wir an die Gegenüberstellung von formaler und materieller Ethik). „Formal“ kann aber auch bedeuten: das Essentielle, das *formaliter*. Wenn wir ernsthaft behaupten, dass wir „wissen nicht zu wissen“, verfügen wir schon über einen Inhalt, auch wenn er so offen bleibt, dass wir ihn fast als leer bezeichnen können. Diese Betrachtungen sind hier nur eine erste Näherung in der Bemühung um die Bestimmung einer solchen Wahrheit. Eine formale Wahrheit könnte auch Ergebnis einer phänomenologischen Reduktion sein.

radikalen Zweifel, als die Erfahrung einer (wenn auch offenen) Wahrheit verstanden werden.

Augustinus bietet uns eine mögliche Präzisierung des Sokratischen Zweifels. Sie bereitet schon den Übergang zur Bewusstseinsphilosophie vor. Im *Liber Undecimus* des *De Civitate Dei* bietet Augustinus das folgende Argument gegen die Skeptiker auf:

„Doch ohne das Gaukelspiel von Phantasien und Einbildungen fürchten zu müssen, bin ich dessen ganz gewiss, dass ich bin, weiß und liebe. Bei diesen Wahrheiten machen mir die Argumente der Akademiker keinerlei Sorge. Mögen Sie sagen: Wie, wenn du dich täuschst? Wenn ich mich täusche, bin ich ja. Denn wer nicht ist, kann sich auch nicht täuschen; also bin ich, wenn ich mich täusche. Da ich demnach bin, wenn ich mich täusche, kann es keine Täuschung sein, dass ich bin; denn es steht fest, dass ich bin, wenn ich mich täusche. Da ich also, auch wenn ich mich täuschte, sein müsste, um mich täuschen zu können, täusche ich mich darin gewiss nicht, dass ich weiß, ich bin. Folglich täusche ich mich darin nicht, dass ich weiß: ich weiß es. Denn wie ich weiß, dass ich bin, weiß ich auch um eben dies mein Wissen. Und indem ich beides liebe, füge ich den Dingen, die ich weiß, als drittes von nicht geringerer Gewissheit die Liebe hinzu. Denn ich täusche mich nicht darin, dass ich liebe, wenn ich mich nicht in dem täusche, was ich liebe, obschon selbst, wenn dies auch falsch wäre, es doch wahr wäre, dass ich das Falsche liebte. Denn wie könnte man mit Recht tadeln und mit Recht von der Liebe zum Falschen zurückhalten, wenn es nicht wahr wäre, dass ich es liebte? Da aber in diesem Fall auch wahr und gewiss ist, was ich liebe, kann niemand bezweifeln, dass auch die Liebe zu dem, was ich liebe, wahr und gewiss ist. Denn ebenso wenig gibt es irgendwen, der nicht sein wollte, wie es irgendwen gibt, der nicht glücklich sein wollte. Denn wie kann einer glücklich sein, wenn er überhaupt nicht ist?“¹⁷

Augustinus hatte erkannt, dass sich beim Zweifeln zumindest eine Offensichtlichkeit zeigt, die Offensichtlichkeit unserer Existenz. Wenn man schon das „Wissen nicht zu wissen“ bezweifeln will, muss man zumindest die Wahrheit dieses Zweifels oder, so Augustinus, die Wahrheit unserer Existenz annehmen. Darin besteht auch der Kern der Argumentation von Descartes. Bei Descartes enthält das „Wissen nicht zu wissen“ die Wahrheit eines Bewusstseins.

¹⁷ Augustinus Aurelianus. *De Civitate Dei*. Artemis Verlag. Zürich 1955, S. 47f.

„Dennoch will ich mich herausarbeiten und von neuem eben den Weg versuchen, den ich gestern eingeschlagen hatte: nämlich alles von mir fernhalten, was auch nur den geringsten Zweifel zulässt, genau so, als hätte ich sicher in Erfahrung gebracht, dass es durchaus falsch sei. Und ich will so lange weiter vordringen, bis ich irgendetwas Gewisses, oder wenn nicht anderes, so doch wenigstens das für gewiss erkenne, dass es nichts Gewisses gibt.

Ich setze also voraus, dass alles, was ich sehe, falsch ist, ich glaube, dass nichts jemals existiert hat, was das trügerische Gedächtnis mir darstellt: ich habe überhaupt keine Sinne; Körper, Gestalt, Ausdehnung, Bewegung und Ort sind nichts als Chimären. Was also bleibt Wahres übrig? Vielleicht nur dies eine, dass nichts gewiss ist ... aber es gibt einen, ich weiß nicht welchen, allmächtigen und höchst verschlagenen Betrüger, der mich geflissentlich stets täuscht. *Nun wenn er mich täuscht, so ist es unzweifelhaft, dass ich bin.* Er täusche mich soviel er kann, niemals wird er doch fertigmachen, dass ich nichts bin, solange ich denke, dass ich etwas sei.“¹⁸

„Was aber bin ich demnach? Ein denkendes Wesen! Was heißt das? Nun, ein Wesen, das zweifelt, einsieht, bejaht, verneint, will, nicht will und das sich auch etwas bildlich vorstellt und empfindet.“¹⁹

Nach Descartes müssen wir zumindest als eine *res cogitans* existieren. Sollen wir dann sagen, dass die Wahrheit des „Wissens nicht zu wissen“ die Wahrheit einer *res cogitans* ist? Wäre es so, könnten wir uns jetzt fragen, ob Sokrates diese Wahrheit nur in sich selbst hätte finden können. Wir wissen aber, dass er im Gegenteil das „Wissens nicht zu wissen“ im Dialog mit anderen entdeckt hat.²⁰ Sollen wir dann sagen, dass das Ergebnis des Cartesischen Zweifels nicht dazu geeignet ist, unsere Erfahrung tiefer zu analysieren? Ich glaube, dass man aus der Auseinander-

¹⁸ Oeuvres de Descartes. Publiées par Charles Adam & Paul Tannery. Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin. Paris 1964 (vol. 9,1) (vol. 7), 18-19. Descartes. *Meditationes de prima philosophia*. (Auf Grund der Ausgaben von Arthur Buchenau neu herausgegeben von Lüder Gäbe) Felix Meiner Verlag. Hamburg 1959, S. 43.

¹⁹ Oeuvres de Descartes. Publiées par Charles Adam & Paul Tannery. Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin. Paris 1964 (vol. 9,1) (vol. 7) S. 24. Descartes. *Meditationes de prima philosophia*. (Auf Grund der Ausgaben von Arthur Buchenau neu herausgegeben von Lüder Gäbe) Felix Meiner Verlag. Hamburg 1959, S. 51.

²⁰ Um präziser zu sein, könnte man sagen, er habe diese Wahrheit in sich selbst gefunden – und zwar dank des Dialoges mit den anderen. Diese Wahrheit wäre dann individuell, aber nicht solipsistisch.

setzung mit Augustinus und Descartes etwas Bedeutsames gewinnen kann. Augustinus und Descartes haben das Moment der Gewissheit, besser gesagt, des Zusammenhangs zwischen Gewissheit und Wahrheit ans Licht gebracht. Wir sind sicher, dass das „Wissen nicht zu wissen“ eine Gewissheit darstellt. Wir wissen jedoch, dass sich unsere Gewissheit ändern könnte. Wie können wir an unserer Gewissheit festhalten? Die von Descartes genannten Kriterien der Evidenz und Klarheit scheinen allein nicht hinreichend zu sein. Was wir aber schon gewonnen haben, ist, dass das „Wissen nicht zu wissen“ schon ein Wissen enthält.

Husserl könnte uns helfen, eine weitere Komponente des „Wissens nicht zu wissen“ zu entdecken. Durch Augustinus und Descartes ist uns klar geworden, dass im „Nichtwissen“ bzw. im Zweifeln schon ein Wissen enthalten ist. Husserl weist darauf hin, dass im Wissen selbst schon ein Nichtwissen enthalten ist.

Husserl fing sein Philosophieren mit einer *Epoché* an. Dadurch gibt Husserl dem radikalen Zweifeln eine besondere Note. Das Problem liegt für Husserl nicht mehr darin, was die Welt, die anderen oder ich eigentlich sind. Descartes hat versucht, an allem zu zweifeln, und hierbei die Welt, das Ich und die Körper in den Zweifel mit einbezogen. Husserl sucht einen neuen Weg für das Philosophieren. Er klammert ein, was wir in der so genannten „natürlichen Einstellung“ (*Ideen*, Zweiter Abschnitt.) unhinterfragt für wahr halten, d.h. dass es eine Welt, andere Leute, ein „Ich“ gibt. Husserl klammert alle Theorien, die darauf aufbauen, ein, um ausschließlich zu beschreiben, was geschieht, wenn uns etwas als etwas erscheint.²¹ Anfangspunkt ist nicht das „Ich“, die „Welt“ und das Problem ihres Verhältnisses (ob es für ein „Ich“ überhaupt möglich sei, die Welt zu erkennen; ob es überhaupt möglich sei, etwas anders als uns selbst zu erkennen; ob es überhaupt notwendig sei, uns und die Welt wieder in Bezug zueinander zu setzen usw.). Was heißt es, etwas als etwas zu verstehen? Was sind die Bedingungen der Möglichkeit dafür?

Husserl widmet sich der Analyse der Intentionalität. Intentionalität gehört zum Wesen des Bewusstseins. Die Welt, aber auch ein beliebiges „Etwas“ erscheint uns, wenn wir uns deren bewusst sind. In der Tat ist Bewusstsein immer ein Bewusstsein „von“ etwas. Das klingt selbstverständlich. Husserl betont jedoch, dass das „Bewusstsein von etwas“ ein

²¹ Edmund Husserl. *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie*. Martinus Nijhoff. Haag 1975, § 27-32.

„sehr Selbstverständliches und doch zugleich höchst Unverständliches“ sei (*Ideen*, § 87).

Husserl spricht von einer Einheit zweier wesentlich korrelativer Momente des Bewusstseins: des noetischen und des noematischen Moments. Wenn wir das „Wissen nicht zu wissen“ als eine noetisch-noematische Einheit betrachten, erkennen wir, dass im Wissen selbst (in diesem Fall das „Wissen nicht zu wissen“ als noetisch-noematischer Einheit) schon ein Nichtwissen inkludiert ist.²² Inwiefern? Betrachten wir die zwei Momente: das noetische (das „Wissen“ des Nichtwissens) und das noematische (das Nichtwissen als „das von uns Gewusste“).

Anhand des folgenden Beispiels werden diese Aussagen vielleicht verständlicher. Wenn wir „etwas wahrnehmen“, z.B. einen Tisch, nehmen wir von diesem Gegenstand nur etwas Bestimmtes wahr, und dies auch nur aus einer bestimmten Richtung. Wir sehen die vordere Seite des Tisches. Wir sehen nie gleichzeitig den Gegenstand aus allen möglichen Perspektiven, aus denen wir ihn sehen könnten. In unserem Wissen des Tisches (noetisches Moment) finden wir eine Begrenztheit, die für unser Erlebnis konstitutiv ist. Wir finden eine Richtung, die andere Richtungen offen lässt.²³ In diesem noetischen Sinn enthält unser Wissen in sich ein Nichtwissen. Diese Überlegung lässt sich weiter vertiefen.

Noematisch betrachtet ist der von uns gesehene Gegenstand schon da und von uns verschieden. Wir könnten aber auch sagen, dass er in seiner Vollkommenheit nicht da ist (es steht noch nicht für uns komplett zur Verfügung). Andere Perspektiven unseres Bewusstseins könnten uns den Gegenstand anders darstellen. Der Gegenstand ist im Prinzip immer anders bestimmbar. Im Prinzip ist diese Offenheit unendlich. Der Tisch ist, was er ist, weil er immer neu und anders erscheinen kann. Auch von der noematischen Seite ist daher die Offenheit unseres Wissens zu sehen. In dem Wissen ist ein Nichtwissen schon inkludiert. In der Tat sind die zwei Momente (das noetische und das noematische) korrelativ.

Man kann noch weiter gehen. Bleiben wir bei der visuellen Wahrnehmung. Ich sehe eine Tasse. Wir haben gesagt, dass unsere Intentionalität einer bestimmten Richtung folgt. Die Tasse hat eine Farbe, sie ist vor mir, sie hat eine Form. Ich drehe sie um. Nun erst bemerke ich, dass

²² Edmund Husserl. *Logische Untersuchungen*, V, §§ 9-21. *Ideen I*, § 36, § 84, § 87.

²³ Das gilt für einen bestimmten Typ von Erlebnissen, etwa des Sehens, aber auch für andere Typen. Ich kann etwas genießen, wollen, lieben, träumen usw.

sie gar keine Tasse ist. Denn es gibt keine Rückseite. Es war also gar keine Tasse da! Was sagt uns diese Erfahrung? Wir wissen, dass es hier nicht darum geht, ob der gesehene Gegenstand wirklich eine Tasse war oder nicht, weil wir diese Frage eingeklammert haben, um die Analyse des Erlebnisses fortzuführen. Die Erkenntnis, dass es uns etwas fehlt, ist in diesem Zusammenhang ein wichtiger Hinweis. Wie ist diese Erkenntnis überhaupt möglich? Offenbar müssen wir annehmen, dass das Sehen der Tasse andere Bewusstseinsakte involviert, z.B. die Erwartungen, dass die Tasse eine Rückseite hat. Die Erwartung ist nicht explizit. Ihr Gegenstand ist nicht unmittelbar gegeben. Trotzdem ist der Gegenstand (die Rückseite) ko-intendiert, wenngleich anders als das, was vor unseren Augen liegt. Weiterhin: Um überhaupt eine Tasse sehen zu können, muss man sie von einem Hintergrund abheben. Der Hintergrund ist immer, bei jeder Wahrnehmung, mitgegeben, allerdings nicht unmittelbar.

Wir können also schlussfolgern: Es gibt verschiedene Sorten von Wissen: explizites und implizites, bewusstes und unbewusstes Wissen. Und schließlich: Das Wissen enthält auch ein Nichtwissen über sich selbst. Zusammenfassend lässt sich sagen:

Es ging mir darum zu klären, was das „Wissen nicht zu wissen“ für das Philosophieren bedeutet. Die Sokratische Einsicht, als formale Wahrheit verstanden, scheint Kraft genug zu haben, die Möglichkeit des Philosophierens zu erlauben. Sokrates hat damit begonnen, dieses Wissen im Dialog mit anderen zu prüfen und dadurch neue Aspekte dieses Wissens ans Licht zu bringen. Das Wissen des Nichtwissens, die Kraft, die in dieser Selbsterfahrung lag, hat ihn zum weiteren, im Prinzip unendlichen Forschen motiviert. Die Tatsache, dass wir immer unsere Ergebnisse kritisch überprüfen müssen, gibt ihnen einen besonderen Wert, auch wenn die erreichte „Wahrheit“ immer nur provisorisch und relativ bleibt.²⁴

Es war aber notwendig, einen weiteren Schritt zu tun. Diese Notwendigkeit ergab sich daraus, dass wir uns mit der Erfahrung des Nichtwissens irren könnten. Diese Erfahrung könnte in Zweifel gezogen werden, z.B. von jemandem, der sie nicht selbst gemacht hat. Wer sagt uns, dass du, Sokrates, dich nicht geirrt hast? Es ist also nicht hinreichend, sie als Bedingung der Möglichkeit des Philosophierens zu akzeptieren. Um weiter zu gehen, haben spätere Philosophen als Hilfsmittel die

²⁴ Man könnte sagen: Wir erreichen immer nur eine Wahrheit „bis auf weiteres“.

Methode des radikalen Zweifels eingesetzt. Die Frage ist: Wie können wir sicher sein, dass wir uns nicht irren? Das Einzige, dessen wir sicher sein können, ist, dass wir sind, wenn wir denken. Das war die Antwort von Descartes, die von Augustinus vorbereitet worden war. Diese Antworten waren aber ebenfalls noch nicht hinreichend, da sie noch auf unreflektierten Annahmen beruhten und nur eine begrenzte Reichweite aufwiesen. Ich habe daher das „Wissen nicht zu wissen“ nochmals mit Hilfe der *Epoché* von Husserl zu rekonstruieren versucht. Ich habe alle Fragen hinsichtlich der Existenz oder Nichtexistenz von Objekten und/oder Subjekten eingeklammert. Durch eine phänomenologische Beschreibung kann aufgewiesen werden, dass das menschliche Wissen immer auch ein Nichtwissen enthält.

Augustinus und Descartes haben uns gezeigt, das es unmöglich und inkonsistent ist, an jeglichem Wissen zu zweifeln. Im Zweifeln selbst ist schon ein unleugbares Wissen implizit gegeben. (Überwindung der Skepsis). Darüber hinaus kann man mit Husserl nachweisen, dass im Wissen selbst ein Nichtwissen mit eingeschlossen ist (Überwindung des Dogmatismus). Diese beiden Ergebnisse schließen sich nicht aus. Sie ergänzen sich und prägen in diesem gegenseitigen Ergänzungsverhältnis die Praxis des Philosophierens.

Es verhält sich wie in einem Dialog, wenn er authentisch geführt wird. Hier spielt einerseits das Moment des Wissens eine Rolle. Ich sage etwas und ich erhebe die Geltungsansprüche, die mit diesem Gesagten und mit diesem Sagen verbunden sind. Aber auch das Moment des Nichtwissens hat eine wesentliche Funktion. Wenn ich dem zuhöre, was andere sagen, ergibt sich der Anspruch, dass die anderen etwas Wahres beitragen können.

Diese dialogischen Komponenten sind offenbar konstitutiv für das Philosophieren. Ich bin bei der Suche nach dem, was das „Wissen nicht zu wissen“ in sich trägt, d.h. was Philosophieren bedeutet, auf dessen dialogische Struktur gestoßen. Wenn Philosophieren ein „Sich-im-Dialog-Verantworten“ erfordert, lässt sich die zu Anfang dieser Studie gestellte Frage nun auch umformulieren: Enthält die sokratische Einsicht „ich weiß, dass ich nicht weiß“ etwas Wesentliches für das „Sich-im-Dialog-Verantworten“? Bei der Beantwortung dieser Frage wären vor allem Hans-Georg Gadamer und Karl-Otto Apel unsere Gesprächspartner. Und wir würden zu klären haben, in welcher Weise die Ergebnisse dieser Rekonstruktion für das Sokratische Gespräch in der Tradition von Nelson, Specht und Heckmann und seine Praxis relevant sein könnten.

Erlebtes und Erzähltes

Zur Rolle selbst erlebter Beispiele im Sokratischen Gespräch

1. Selbst erlebte Beispiele als Ansatzpunkt der regressiven Abstraktion

Ein wesentliches Prinzip des Sokratischen Gesprächs ist die *regressive Methode der Abstraktion*, die beschrieben wird als „Weg von der Beurteilung konkreter Fälle zu der ihr zugrunde liegenden allgemeinen Wahrheit“.¹ Gustav Heckmann² nennt für diesen Weg in Anlehnung an Leonard Nelson³ zwei „Grundsätze des Sokratischen Gesprächs“: Der erste dieser Grundsätze besteht in dem *Ausgehen vom Konkreten*, der zweite darin, dass der Weg der Abstraktion von den Teilnehmern/innen des Gesprächs *selbstständig gegangen* werden muss. Der vorliegende Text wird sich auf den ersten dieser beiden Grundsätze konzentrieren, auf das Ausgehen vom Konkreten.

Was aber ist „das Konkrete“? Heckmann geht auf diesen Punkt unter anderem in seinen Ausführungen zu „sechs pädagogischen Maßnahmen“ im Sokratischen Gespräch ausführlicher ein, indem er zur zweiten dieser Maßnahmen schreibt:

„Der Gesprächsleiter muss die Teilnehmer dazu bringen, *im Konkreten Fuß zu fassen*, und dafür sorgen, dass beim Fortschreiten zu allgemeinen Einsichten der Zusammenhang mit dem Konkreten bewusst bleibt. Er wird etwa die Teilnehmer auffordern, einen in allgemeiner Formulierung geäußerten Gedanken durch ein Beispiel zu erläutern. Beispiele sind für den Zweck, den sie im sokratischen Gespräch haben, mehr oder weniger geeignet. Je näher ein Beispiel dem Erfahrungsbereich der Teilnehmer

¹ Heckmann (1981), S. 59.

² Heckmann (1981), S. 72 ff.

³ z. B. Nelson (1975) [1922].

ist, desto besser ist es. Am fruchtbarsten ist es, etwas vom Teilnehmer wirklich Erlebtes zu untersuchen“⁴.

Etwas „Konkretes“ als etwas, was der regressiven Methode der Abstraktion zunächst zu Grunde liegt, ist demnach etwas Singuläres, ein Beispiel, und zwar möglichst ein solches Beispiel, das von einem/einer der Teilnehmer/innen selbst erlebt worden ist. In sozialwissenschaftlicher Terminologie würde man dies eine „Fallrekonstruktion“ nennen.

Der Grund dafür, dass die Methode des Philosophierens im Sokratischen Gespräch von selbst erlebten Beispielen ausgeht, liegt in der Struktur der regressiven Abstraktion selbst. Ihr Ziel ist es (und dies wird zugleich als ein weit gestecktes Ziel des Sokratischen Gesprächs insgesamt gesehen), zu allgemeinen philosophischen Erkenntnissen, Einsichten, Prinzipien oder gar Wahrheiten zu gelangen (alle Begriffe finden in der Literatur Anwendung). Der Weg, der zur Erreichung dieses Ziels beschritten wird, setzt an Urteilen an, die in konkreten, selbst erlebten Situationen gefällt wurden, die also „Erfahrungsurteile“ sind, und geht zurück zu den diesen Urteilen zu Grunde liegenden „Prinzipien“⁵, die allein einer abstrakten Formulierung zugänglich sind, da sie nicht nur für den untersuchten Einzelfall gelten, sondern für vernunftbestimmtes Handeln generell. Die Abstraktion geht also *zurück* zu einem Prinzip, über das die Akteure bereits vor ihrem konkreten Urteilen und Handeln verfügt haben und das als solches ihr Urteilen und Handeln bestimmt oder mitbestimmt hat. Insofern ist sie *regressiv*.

Leonard Nelson hielt im Hinblick auf solche Prinzipien noch am Begriff der „Wahrheit“, sogar dem der „allgemeinen Wahrheit“ fest und beschreibt das Ziel der regressiven Abstraktion bzw. der Sokratischen Methode als *Einsicht* in jene allgemeinen Wahrheiten, die er ihrer bloßen Formulierung gegenüberstellt:

„Jene allgemeinen Wahrheiten lassen sich, sofern sie in Worten ausgesprochen werden, zu Gehör bringen. Einsehen kann sie nur derjenige, der von ihrer Anwendung ausgeht in Urteilen, die er selbst fällt, und der dann, indem er den Rückgang zu den Voraussetzungen dieser Erfah-

⁴ Heckmann (1981), S. 67; Herv. i. Orig.

⁵ Kessels (1997), S. 73.

rungsurteile vollzieht, in ihnen seine eigenen Voraussetzungen wieder-
erkennt.“⁶

Im Unterschied zu Nelson hält Heckmann (und viele nach ihm) nicht uneingeschränkt am Ziel der Einsicht in eine allgemeine Wahrheit im Sokratischen Gespräch fest. Mit Hinweis auf die Erkenntnis, dass menschliche Erfahrungen zu keinem Zeitpunkt als abgeschlossen bezeichnet werden können und daher Einsichten, die an solchen Erfahrungen ansetzen, immer durch neue Erfahrungen relativiert werden können, führt er an anderer Stelle stattdessen den Begriff des in einem Sokratischen Gespräch „intersubjektiv Gültigen“ ein⁷, das man durch einen im Gespräch erzielten „Konsensus“ aller Teilnehmer hinsichtlich des Verstehens einer Aussage oder des Beurteilens einer Handlung oder eines Sachverhaltes erreicht. Doch auch Heckmann gibt – wie oben bereits deutlich werden konnte – den Wahrheitsbegriff nicht vollständig auf. Trotz der zugestandenen Unmöglichkeit, eine „irrtumsfreie Wahrheit“ zu erkennen, betont er, dass zumindest die „Idee der Wahrheit“ eine wesentliche Motivation zu sokratischem Philosophieren sei⁸, und dies insbesondere deshalb, weil es zu einer bestimmten philosophischen Frage nur *eine* Wahrheit geben könne, der man sich im Sokratischen Gespräch *annähert*, auch wenn man sie in „irrtumsfreier“ Form nie einzusehen in der Lage sei.⁹

Aber zurück zum „Ausgehen vom Konkreten“: Dies soll durch Beispiele realisiert werden, die die Teilnehmer an einem Sokratischen Gespräch selbst wirklich erlebt haben und an denen die regressive Methode der Abstraktion ansetzt, da diese Beispiele Urteile der Akteure/innen beinhalten, die auf der Grundlage allgemeiner Prinzipien gefällt wurden, deren gemeinsame Erkenntnis im Sinne einer Einsicht das Ziel der Abstraktion ist. Genau genommen müsste man an dieser Stelle sogar sagen, dass das eigene Erleben dieser Beispiele zwar ein notwendiges, jedoch noch kein hinreichendes Kriterium für ihre Eignung im Sokratischen Gespräch ist, sondern dass auch hinzukommen muss, dass der Beispielgeber bzw. die Beispielgeberin eine aktive Rolle in diesem Beispiel eingenommen hat, die Rolle eines/einer aktiv Handelnden, nicht nur die ei-

⁶ Nelson (1975) [1922], S. 204.

⁷ Heckmann (1981), S. 68.

⁸ Heckmann (1981), S. 69.

⁹ Vgl. auch Littig (1999), S. 170.

nes/einer passiven Beobachters/Beobachterin. Denn ein Erleben im Sinne eines passiven Beobachtens kann zwar, muss aber nicht notwendigerweise zu einem Urteil führen, das auf der Grundlage eines dahinter liegenden Prinzips gefällt wird. Ein aktives Handeln dagegen – wenn Handeln hier im Unterschied zu Verhalten als bewusst geplantes Agieren verstanden wird – setzt dies voraus.

Hier ergibt sich nun aus erkenntnistheoretischer Sicht eine Schwierigkeit: Die Erzählung eines Beispiels nämlich bildet weder das ab, was zur Zeit der Ereignisse, die Bestandteile des Beispiels sind, „objektiv geschehen“ ist, noch das, was zur Zeit dieses Geschehens „wirklich erlebt“ worden ist. Es bildet vielmehr etwas ab, an das sich der/die Gesprächsteilnehmer/in zur Zeit des Sokratischen Gesprächs erinnert – oder noch exakter: zu erinnern glaubt.

Zur Verdeutlichung dieser Problematik ein kurzer Exkurs in die Erkenntnistheorie: Hinsichtlich der Analyse und Reflexion menschlicher Handlungen und (sozialer) Phänomene oder Tatbestände lassen sich bei nur grober Unterteilung drei verschiedene Erkenntnisebenen unterscheiden¹⁰:

1. Ereignisse oder Sachverhalte, wie sie „objektiv“, also unabhängig von der subjektiven Wahrnehmung und Interpretation der an ihnen beteiligten oder sie beobachtenden Personen ablaufen bzw. bestehen,
2. subjektive Wahrnehmungen solcher Ereignisse oder Sachverhalte durch die an ihnen beteiligten oder sie beobachtenden Individuen, die nie vollständig kongruent sind mit den „Ereignissen selbst“,
3. Erinnerungen an früher erlebte Ereignisse oder früher beobachtete Sachverhalte, die zu einem späteren Zeitpunkt aktualisiert werden, z. B. in einem Sokratischen Gespräch.

Der Unterschied zwischen der ersten und der zweiten dieser Erkenntnisebenen lässt sich anhand einfacher Experimente plastisch verdeutlichen: So wurde z. B. im Rahmen eines von der GSP in Alterode (2000) durchgeführten Sokratischen Seminars bewusst ein „Störereignis“ inszeniert, dessen Verlauf im Anschluss von drei erfahrenen Leitern Sokratischer Gespräche schriftlich fixiert wurde. Wir erhielten drei in wesentlichen inhaltlichen Punkten verschiedene Versionen dieser kleinen Geschichte, was verdeutlicht, dass ein und dasselbe Ereignis schon beim Erleben – oder doch wenigstens bei der Rekonstruktion unmittelbar da-

¹⁰ Vgl. Böttger (1999), S. 63.

nach – von verschiedenen beteiligten bzw. beobachtenden Personen unterschiedlich wahrgenommen und interpretiert wird.

Der Unterschied zwischen der zweiten und der dritten dieser Erkenntnisebenen ließe sich ähnlich anschaulich demonstrieren. Würden wir die Personen, die sich seinerzeit dankenswerterweise bereit erklärt hatten, das besagte Ereignis schriftlich festzuhalten, auffordern, dies nun in einer zeitlichen Distanz von einigen Jahren erneut zu tun, so würden wir mit Sicherheit Geschichten erhalten, die sich auch von den früheren Rekonstruktionen durch jeweils dieselben Personen erheblich unterscheiden würden.

Nun ist die Diskrepanz zwischen der ersten und zweiten Erkenntnisebene für die eingangs umrissenen Belange des Sokratischen Gesprächs unschädlich. Denn es soll ja nicht darum gehen, etwas „objektiv“ Geschehenes oder Bestehendes in das Gespräch einzubringen, sondern es geht um das eigene „Erlebt-Haben“ und die eigenen Urteile, die sich damit verbunden haben und die uns nun als „Erfahrungsurteile“ zur Verfügung stehen.

Die Diskrepanz zwischen der zweiten und dritten Erkenntnisebene ist demgegenüber von größerer Bedeutung für das Sokratische Gespräch. Denn jedes spätere Erzählen einer selbst erlebten Geschichte bzw. eines selbst erlebten Beispiels im Zusammenhang mit einer philosophischen Frage unterliegt einem Filter, der bewirkt, dass früher Erlebtes der aktuellen biographischen Situation gewissermaßen „angepasst“ wird. Aus den Sozialwissenschaften und der Psychologie wissen wir, dass jeder Mensch über ein „Konzept seiner selbst“ verfügt, das abhängig ist von seiner aktuellen biographischen Situation und das sich deshalb im Laufe seines Lebens ständig ändert. Und dies gilt auch für die Retrospektive auf den eigenen Lebenslauf, die eigene Biographie.¹¹ Das aber bedeutet, dass zu früherer Zeit Erlebtes, also für Belange des Sokratischen Gesprächs „selbst erlebte Beispiele“, in Abhängigkeit vom Zeitpunkt ihrer „Aktualisierung“ immer anders rekonstruiert werden, wodurch sich die Schwierigkeit ergibt, dass auch die Rekonstruktion von Erfahrungsurteilen und damit die Rekonstruktion der diesen Urteilen zugrunde liegenden Prinzipien solchen Entwicklungen unterliegen kann.

Damit wird klar, dass ein zeitlich weiter zurückliegendes in ein Sokratisches Gespräch eingebrachtes selbst erlebtes Beispiel nie die Form

¹¹ Vgl. Böttger (2001).

der früheren Erfahrungen bzw. Erfahrungsurteile selbst aufweisen kann, sondern es handelt sich grundsätzlich um Aktualisierungen dieser Erfahrungen zu einer späteren Zeit, die zusätzlich zu den Erfahrungen selbst Mechanismen des Vergessens, der Verdrängung, aber auch des Hinzufügens nicht selbst erlebter Inhalte unterliegen.

Es wurde im Rahmen der Unterschiede zwischen der oben diskutierten ersten und zweiten Erkenntnisebene betont, dass es in einem Sokratischen Gespräch nicht das frühere „objektive Geschehen“ ist, das bei einem selbst erlebten Beispiel zum Gesprächsgegenstand wird, sondern es ist das eigene Erleben dieses Geschehens, die eigene Erfahrung, und insbesondere das eigene Urteil im Rahmen dieses Erlebens und dieser Erfahrung, eben das „Erfahrungsurteil“, wie Nelson es nennt. Wann immer jedoch ein solches Erfahrungsurteil von dem/der Beispielgeber/in im Gespräch in sprachlicher Form präsentiert wird, liegt es zwangsläufig bereits in der Vergangenheit. Gleichzeitig gibt es jedoch keine andere Form, ein Erfahrungsurteil in ein Gespräch einzubringen, als die des Erzählens durch den/die Beispielgeber/in. Die Beobachtung einer solchen Erfahrung oder gar eines Erfahrungsurteils von außen ist nicht möglich.

Erfahrungen und Erfahrungsurteile, die im Rahmen selbst erlebter Beispiele in Sokratische Gespräche eingebracht werden, sind ihrem Wesen nach immer *innere Erfahrungen*. Heckmann¹² verdeutlicht dies anhand eines Sokratischen Gesprächs, das die „Untersuchung einer menschlichen Grunderfahrung“, nämlich des Erlebens von „Selbstbestätigung“, zum Gegenstand hatte. Bei einer solchen Erfahrung, die durch starke Emotionen geprägt ist, leuchtet dieser Umstand am ehesten ein, genau genommen jedoch handelt es sich bei allen Erfahrungen, die wir im Sokratischen Gespräch untersuchen, um „innere“ Phänomene, auch wenn ihnen eine „äußere“ Handlung bzw. ein „äußeres“ Geschehen zugrunde liegt. Erfahren werden kann ein Ereignis immer nur „innerlich“, jedenfalls im Verständnis des Erfahrungsbegriffs innerhalb der sokratischen Philosophie, und umso mehr muss dies für Urteile gelten, die im Rahmen oder auf der Grundlage dieser Ereignisse gefällt werden.

Heckmann thematisiert diesen Aspekt im Rahmen seiner Ausführungen über ein Sokratisches Gespräch zum „Sittengesetz“:

¹² Heckmann (1981), S. 46 ff.

„... an dieser Stelle der Untersuchung wurde der Gruppe bewusst, in welcher Erkenntnisweise wir feststellen, welche Situationsmerkmale für unser sittliches Urteil wesentlich sind, welche nicht: Wir erkennen dies durch Reflektieren darauf, wie wir uns unser Urteil über den konkreten Fall wirklich gebildet haben; welche Umstände der Situation wir dabei glaubten erwägen zu müssen, welche nicht. Die Erkenntnisweise, in der das Abstrahieren vor sich geht, ist also *ein Reflektieren auf eine innere Tätigkeit*.“¹³

Werden solche inneren Tätigkeiten, Erfahrungen und Erfahrungsurteile wiederum in sprachlicher Form geäußert, so liegt dies jedoch – wie gesagt – zeitlich immer hinter dem Geschehen und Erleben, das ihnen zugrunde liegt. Das aber bedeutet, dass wir es in Sokratischen Gesprächen grundsätzlich mit Aktualisierungen selbst erlebter Beispiele auf der oben beschriebenen dritten Erkenntnisebene zu tun haben. Diese Aktualisierungen sind neben dem Erleben selbst jedoch immer geprägt durch Verdrängungs- und Umdeutungsprozesse, die – meist ohne dass dies der entsprechenden Person bewusst ist – die Erinnerung an das früher Erlebte dem aktuellen Selbstkonzept anpassen (Handlungen etwa, die zu einem Misserfolg geführt haben, werden schneller vergessen bzw. verdrängt als solche, die als erfolgreich erlebt wurden), sowie durch situative Einflüsse in der Gesprächssituation und schließlich durch die verallgemeinernde Funktion des Mediums der Sprache generell.

Soll ein Sokratisches Gespräch also wirklich an dem Erleben und den Erfahrungsurteilen zur Zeit des untersuchten Beispiels ansetzen, so sollte die Gruppe jeweils bemüht sein, bei der Aktualisierung der selbst erlebten Beispiele die in den Rekonstruktionen zwangsläufig enthaltenen „Verzerrungen“, die durch Vergessen, Verdrängen, Umdeutung etc. entstanden sind, zu identifizieren und zu neutralisieren.

Man könnte freilich auch den Standpunkt vertreten, dass derartige Verzerrungen ja – wie das Erleben des Beispiels und das darin enthaltene Erfahrungsurteil selbst – zur „inneren Wirklichkeit“ des/der Beispielgebers/Beispielgeberin gehören und sie daher einiges über den/die entsprechende/n Teilnehmer/in und sein/ihr Erleben des Beispiels auszusagen vermögen. Das ist sicher richtig, aber dennoch erfordert die regressive Methode der Abstraktion – wie dargestellt – den Ansatz an der Erfahrung bzw. an dem Erfahrungsurteil selbst, das deshalb in der Prä-

¹³ Heckmann (1981), S. 60.

sensation möglichst frei sein sollte von nachträglichen Umdeutungen. Denn es soll ja im Sokratischen Gespräch nicht darum gehen, die psychischen Mechanismen der Beispielgeber/innen zu untersuchen, sondern darum, seine/ihre Erfahrungsurteile zu verstehen und zur Grundlage der regressiven Abstraktion zu machen. Wie also gelangen wir zur Präsentation von Beispielen, die möglichst frei sind von nach ihrem Erleben erfolgten Verzerrungen?

Diese Frage ist unterschiedlich zu beantworten im Hinblick auf die Art des Themas eines Sokratischen Gesprächs. Ich möchte mich dabei im Folgenden auf zwei Arten von Themen beziehen, nämlich auf erkenntnistheoretische und auf ethische Themen. Mathematische Themen (so interessant auch sie für die Erörterung der vorliegenden Frage sind) können in dem hier gegebenen Rahmen nicht behandelt werden.

2. Selbst erlebte Beispiele bei erkenntnistheoretischen Themen

In einem von Martin Hüne in Alterode (2000) geleiteten Sokratischen Gespräch zum Thema „Was ist Wirklichkeit?“ sollte die folgendermaßen formulierte Ausgangsfrage beantwortet werden: „Welches ist der größte Kreis, den Du bisher in Deinem Leben wirklich gesehen hast?“

Alle Teilnehmer/innen gaben zu dieser Ausgangsfrage eine Antwort, in der sie über ihre *Wahrnehmung*, ihr Sehen eines Kreises berichteten, den sie für den größten hielten, den sie bisher in ihrem Leben wirklich gesehen hatten. Da es bei diesen Wahrnehmungen nicht allein um physische bzw. physiologische Aspekte des Sehens ging (Abbild auf der Netzhaut) und insbesondere da diese Wahrnehmungen Identifikationsleistungen beinhalteten, nämlich erstens *einen Kreis* zu sehen und zweitens den bisher im Leben *größten* Kreis, handelte es sich bei diesen Beispielen um das Wiedergeben früherer innerer Erfahrungen (bzw. Erfahrungsurteile).

Bei vielen dieser Beispiele musste im Gespräch einige Zeit dafür verwendet werden, bis alle Teilnehmer/innen sie so verstanden hatten, wie sie der/die jeweilige Beispielgeber/in erlebt zu haben glaubte – ein in einem Sokratischen Gespräch ja durchaus üblicher Prozess. In diesen Phasen des Gesprächs fiel jedoch auch auf, dass die Beispielgeber/innen

selbst, angeregt durch die Rückfragen der anderen, sich allmählich immer weiter ihren früheren inneren Erfahrungen näherten, als zu dem Zeitpunkt, zu dem sie das Beispiel in seiner ersten Version präsentierten. Der Rekonstruktionsprozess gewann offensichtlich durch den Versuch des gemeinsamen Verstehens an Exaktheit und – wie ich meine – auch an „Validität“ (so erinnerte sich ein Teilnehmer, der als größten Kreis die auf einem Schiff wahrgenommene Horizontlinie schilderte, erst nach einigen Nachfragen anderer Teilnehmer, dass er sich bei dieser Beobachtung einmal um sich selbst gedreht hatte, um die Kreiswahrnehmung „herzustellen“). Bei einem anderen Beispiel schließlich hatten einige Teilnehmer bis zum Ende des Gesprächs Zweifel, ob eine Wahrnehmung, wie sie dort beschrieben wurde, überhaupt hätte stattfinden können bzw. ob eine solche innere Erfahrung überhaupt vorliegen kann.

Eine interessante Wende nahm das Gespräch dann in der letzten Sitzung, als es um die Frage ging, welcher Unterschied darin bestehe, ob etwas „ein Kreis ist“, ob etwas „kreisförmig ist“ oder ob man etwas „kreisförmig sieht“. Hierzu ein Auszug aus dem Protokoll dieses Gesprächs¹⁴, das mit einer auf dem Flip-Chart festgehaltenen Aussage zu diesem Aspekt beginnt:

A.: Ich sehe die Sonne als Kreis.

Dafür sagen B., C., D., E. und F. auch: Ich sehe die Sonne kreisförmig.

E. weist nun darauf hin, dass es sich bei dem von G. gesehenen Riesenrad (ein weiteres Beispiel in diesem Sokratischen Gespräch, Anm. d. Verf.) „eigentlich“ um ein regelmäßiges N-Eck handle, das man aber aus größerer Entfernung auch „als Kreis sehe“. H. stimmt dem zu: Ein Kreis selbst habe einen „gleichmäßigen Umfang“. „Kreisförmig“ könne jedoch auch ein regelmäßiges N-Eck sein, wie z. B. ein Riesenrad. Kreise „sind“ für sie dagegen die Corona um die Sonne ... (nennt weitere Beispiele aus dem Gespräch, Anm. d. Verf.).

Damit P's Unterteilung, um die es in dieser Phase des Gesprächs vorrangig geht, sichtbar bleibt, wird sie wie folgt festgehalten:

¹⁴ Vgl. Böttger (2000).

Teile des Protokolls, die auf die Identität einzelner Teilnehmer/innen schließen lassen, wurden in dem hier wiedergegebenen Auszug ausgelassen bzw. geändert. Dabei entsprechen die verwendeten Abkürzungen nicht den Anfangsbuchstaben der Vornamen der Teilnehmer/innen. Die während des Sokratischen Gesprächs schriftlich fixierten Aussagen sind jeweils im Kursivdruck wiedergegeben.

Was ist für I. der Unterschied zwischen Kreis und kreisförmig?

- I.: - etwas ist ein Kreis.
- etwas ist kreisförmig.
- etwas sehe ich kreisförmig.

Um die Unterscheidung noch deutlicher zu machen, zieht H. nun auf Anregung mehrerer Teilnehmer/innen eine auf dem Tisch stehende Tasse mit Untertasse heran. Sie sagt, diese Tasse selbst sei nicht kreisförmig, wohl aber „ihr oberer Rand“. Die Untertasse sei demgegenüber „als solche“ kreisförmig. Folgende Aussage wird daraufhin zum Ende des Sachgesprächs notiert:

I.: Die Untertasse ist kreisförmig, egal aus welchem Blickwinkel ich sie sehe. Für mich ist die Tasse nicht kreisförmig. Aber wenn die Tasse in einem bestimmten Blickwinkel für mich steht, sehe ich die Tasse kreisförmig.

Es wird deutlich, dass auf Anregung gleich mehrerer Teilnehmer/innen an diesem schwierigen Punkt des Gesprächs von berichteten, früher erlebten Beispielen abgegangen wird. Stattdessen wird im Gespräch selbst ein nach Meinung der Teilnehmerin I. kreisförmiger Gegenstand präsentiert sowie ein Gegenstand, der nicht kreisförmig sei, jedoch unter bestimmten Umständen als kreisförmig gesehen werden könne. Zu diesem Experiment mögen frühere Erfahrungen einiger Teilnehmer/innen beigetragen haben, die bei einem Gespräch zum selben Thema im Vorjahr bereits mit einem solchen Experiment konfrontiert wurden, als der Gesprächsleiter auf Papier gezeichnete Kreise als konkrete Beispiele unmittelbar in das Gespräch einbrachte.

Der Prozess des gegenseitigen und gemeinsamen Verstehens verlief in dieser Gesprächsphase vergleichsweise schnell. Verständnisfragen waren kaum notwendig, da alle Teilnehmer/innen in der Gesprächssituation selbst die innere Erfahrung der Beispielgeberin teilen konnten. Der mühsame Rekonstruktionsprozess, in dem man sich dem früherem Erleben und Urteilen oft nur langsam annähert, entfiel bei diesem Beispiel.

3. Selbst erlebte Beispiele bei ethischen Themen

Ein vom Autor des vorliegenden Textes geleitetes Sokratisches Gespräch in Alterode (2001) hatte ein ethisches Thema, das lautete: „In welchen

Situationen darf körperliche Gewalt gegen Menschen eingesetzt werden?“

Das von einem Teilnehmer eingebrachte Beispiel zu einer Situation, in der er seiner Überzeugung nach körperliche Gewalt gegen einen Menschen habe einsetzen dürfen, lautete in seiner ersten Version wie folgt:

Ein aggressiver Hausbewohner bedrohte mich auf dem Hof mit einer Schaufel, dann mit einem Beil. Ich drückte ihn zu Boden und entwand ihm das Beil mit Hilfe eines anderen Bewohners.

Das Geschehen, über das der Teilnehmer hier berichtete, habe etwa 25 Jahre vor dem Sokratischen Gespräch stattgefunden. Sehr viele Verständnisfragen waren notwendig, bis alle Teilnehmer/innen glaubten, das Beispiel hinreichend verstanden zu haben. In dieser Phase des Gesprächs fiel auf, dass der Beispielgeber seine Rekonstruktion des Geschehenen und seiner inneren Erfahrungen mehrfach modifizierte. So gab er zu Beginn an, dass er selbst dem aggressiven Hausbewohner körperlich überlegen gewesen sei und deshalb keine Angst davor gehabt habe, dass er hätte verletzt werden können. Später im Gespräch berichtigte er dies, indem er sagte, in der Situation selbst, in der er den Bewohner mit dem Beil auf sich zukommen sah, habe er diese Angst doch gehabt, nur „an sich“, im Rahmen alltäglicher Interaktion, habe er vor ihm aufgrund seiner körperlichen Überlegenheit keine Angst zu haben brauchen.

Hier wird deutlich, dass es bei ethischen Themen unverzichtbar ist, nicht nur für den Prozess des Verstehens selbst erlebter Beispiele durch andere Teilnehmer/innen viel Zeit und Mühe aufzuwenden, sondern auch für den Prozess der Rekonstruktion der inneren Erfahrungen durch die Beispielgeber/innen selbst. Bei den meisten ethischen Themen kann ein Beispiel nicht – wie bei manchen erkenntnistheoretischen Themen – direkt in das Gespräch eingebracht und dort von allen gemeinsam erlebt werden. Hier ist dialogische Kleinarbeit gefordert, die nicht nur den Teilnehmern/innen, die das Beispiel verstehen wollen, dieses Verständnis ermöglicht, sondern auch den Beispielgebern/innen selbst hilft, sich im Rekonstruktionsprozess möglichst weit dem früher Erlebten zu nähern und dabei, wo immer es möglich ist, nachträgliche Umdeutungen zu „neutralisieren“ oder inzwischen Vergessenes bzw. Verdrängtes wieder zu erinnern.

4. Resümee

Ausgangspunkt der regressiven Methode der Abstraktion in Sokratischen Gesprächen sind von den Teilnehmern/innen selbst erlebte Beispiele, die innere Erfahrungen sowie Erfahrungsurteile beinhalten. Die Untersuchung dieser Erfahrungen und Erfahrungsurteile dient der gemeinsam zu gewinnenden Einsicht in die ihnen zugrunde liegenden Prinzipien, was in der Tradition der kritischen Philosophie als Prozess begriffen wird, sich intersubjektiv „allgemeinen Wahrheiten“ anzunähern.

Sollen selbst erlebte Beispiele einen solchen Prozess ermöglichen, müssen sie so genau wie möglich das Erleben und Urteilen beschreiben, wie es zur Zeit des in dem Beispiel beschriebenen Geschehens erfolgte. Besonders wenn das in den Beispielen beschriebene Geschehen zeitlich weit vor dem Sokratischen Gespräch liegt, sind zwischenzeitlich erfolgte Umdeutungen, Verdrängungen etc. in Rechnung zu stellen, die das Beispiel verzerren. Kein Mensch ist frei von derartigen Prozessen. Aber auch wenn die Beispiele nur kurze Zeit vor dem Gespräch selbst erlebt wurden, gibt es situative, sprachliche und andere Faktoren, die ähnliche Verzerrungen bewirken.

Um solche Verzerrungen so weit wie möglich zu neutralisieren – was wir tun müssen, wenn wir wirklich die Erfahrungsurteile des Beispiels zum Ausgangspunkt der Abstraktion machen wollen – können dort, wo das Thema es gestattet, Beispiele in das Gespräch eingebracht werden, die von den Teilnehmern/innen gemeinsam erlebt werden können.

Ist dies nicht möglich, so muss beim Prozess der Beispielrekonstruktion darauf geachtet werden, dass er soweit wie möglich auf das frühere Erleben und Urteilen gerichtet ist. Im Vordergrund steht dann nicht mehr nur (wenngleich immer noch besonders) das Verstehen des Beispiels durch die nicht an ihm beteiligten Gesprächsteilnehmer/innen, sondern auch das Bemühen der Beispielgeber/innen selbst, zusammen mit der Gruppe das in der Vergangenheit liegende Geschehen und Urteilen so exakt wie möglich und so weit wie möglich frei von nachträglich erfolgten Umdeutungen oder anderen Verzerrungen zu rekonstruieren.

Man kann an dieser Stelle jedoch auch über Alternativen zum reinen Dialog nachdenken, die in einen solchen Prozess der Beispielrekonstruktion – besonders bei ethischen Themen – eingebracht werden könnten. Wäre es etwa denkbar, in der Form eines Plan- oder Rollen-

spiels selbst erlebte Beispiele „nachzuspielen“? Könnte dies die Sensibilität des/der Beispielgeber/in für vergangenes Erleben und Urteilen schärfen und zwischenzeitlich erfolgte Verzerrungen zu überwinden helfen? Könnte es darüber hinaus ein Maßstab dafür sein, inwieweit das Beispiel von anderen Teilnehmern/innen verstanden worden ist, die nicht an dem Geschehen des Beispiels beteiligt waren, am Plan- oder Rollenspiel jedoch mitwirken? Ist wiederum dies selbst ethisch zu verantworten, da ja bei solchen Experimenten von den Beispielgebern/innen verdrängte Inhalte aktualisiert werden können, mit denen sie in der Gesprächssituation (bzw. generell in ihrer aktuellen biographischen Situation) unter Umständen nur schwer umgehen können? Oder gehört solches „Spielen“ grundsätzlich überhaupt nicht in ein Sokratisches Gespräch?

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The Different Use of Socratic Method in Therapeutical and Philosophical Dialogue

What does a facilitator of a Socratic Dialogue or a consultant who uses Socratic method do? To my opinion it makes a difference whether a philosopher or a psychologist uses Socratic method in his or her dialogue practice.

In order to make this difference clearer, first I would like to present an overview on differences between Therapy, Advising, Training and Philosophical (self-)consulting Dialogue.

Therapy makes sense when a person suffers from *serious* difficulties controlling their actions. (“As soon as I enter the offices, I am no longer able to focus. I am not able to decide in a considered way or to act sensibly.”)

Advising makes sense, when a necessary know-how should be implemented in order to realize aims. (“I don’t know how I should behave to convince my superior of my plans.”)

Training makes sense for acquiring or improving skills and techniques. (“This task is asking too much of me. I know too little about this area.”)

In contrast to therapy Consulting, Training and Philosophical Dialogue presuppose that the dialogue partners are, in principle, personally, socially, technically and methodically capable of acting. Advising and Training (and especially solution-oriented coaching) make sense when persons are searching for optimal solutions to concrete challenges and want to take up the rational and emotional reflection competence of an expert or a trained dialogue partner. It means, for example, determining aims realistically and in a motivating way and using available behaviour effectively. (“The task of arranging a new project team is a great challenge for me. Therefore I want to think precisely about how to proceed and what I would like to achieve.”)

Illustration 1: Forms of 'consulting'

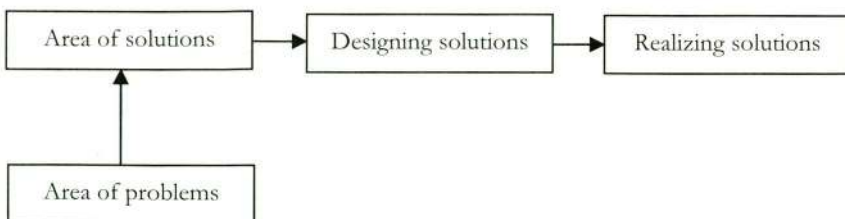
	Aim	Competence	Type of intervention
Therapy	Ability to act and master reality	Deep emotional competence	Dialogue enabling action competence
Advising	Implementation of know-how	Know-how, field competence	Giving solution and council
Training	Learning of new competencies	Teaching competence	Teaching and exercising
Coaching	Independent solution to concrete challenges	Cognitive <i>and</i> emotional <i>reflection</i> competence	Solution oriented; clarifying, fortifying, promoting

Coaching dialogue is, in a way, on the side of philosophical dialogue because it – as philosophical dialogue does – presupposes *cognitive and emotive reflection competence*. Thus it makes sense to develop the essentials of philosophical dialogue by comparing it with Coaching dialogue.

I suggest subdividing a Coaching process into three phases, which are evaluated differently depending on the requests and the challenges of the dialogue partner.

- The first phase is to *focus the attention* of the dialogue partner *on the area of solutions*.
- In the second phase the consultant supports his dialogue partner *to design and organize possible solutions*.
- The third phase finally aims at the *realization* of the chosen solutions.

Illustration 2: The three phases of the Coaching process



Socrates as a coach

After all we know about Socrates he developed his effect neither as an ‘adviser’ nor as a ‘therapist’ (healing spiritual illnesses).¹ He came out firmly against his adviser colleagues who claimed to be able to *equip* their clients with technical knowledge or emotional competence for the attainment of arbitrary aims. He disassociated himself from them by his restraint at the use of (fake) knowledge.

A characteristic of the Socratic dialogue is the acceptance of and demand for self-responsibility on the part of the dialogue partners. The Socratic dialogue expects *self-determined persons with a basic readiness for change*. If this is not the case, the Socratic dialogue, which increases the conviction potentials of the dialogue partners, is useless.

It happened (in Plato’s dialogues) now and then that people were looking for dialogue with Socrates because they wanted to be clear about their motives and reasons. In Plato’s dialogue “Laches” the two fathers Lysimachos and Melesias turn to Socrates to be advised by him on how to educate their sons. And it is not the army commanders Nikias and Laches that can convince them, although they are regarded as experts in the teaching of courage. Socrates proves the true expert, not because he knows more, but because he is leading the soul to practical cognition.² His specific art is the form of dialectical dialogue (*dialegesthai*).

The Old and the New Socratic

The application of this art described in the Platonic dialogues stands for what I refer to here as the “Old Socratic”.

On the one hand, it was easy to speak with Socrates because he spoke intelligibly and clearly. He did not give any long talks. On the other hand, it was exhausting and often frustrating because his form of dialectical dialogue used demanding argumentation patterns. As a rule, Socrates proceeded according to the “elenctic hypothesis” method (checking for contradictions). He proved to be a master of questioning. He did not ask

¹ Sometimes Socrates is seen in this respect. See D. Chessik (1982).

² See Plato, Laches, 184 c ff.

his interlocutors to explain their techniques for attaining their aims: How do you proceed to reach this or that? Socrates asked for the fundamental convictions, the “hypotheses” which stood *behind* the concrete decisions and aims and which they considered as the base for their future life and behaviour: “*What does your art consist of? What are your criteria in considering an aim as good? Which values determine your life?*” etc.

After his dialogue partners had developed their convictions, he compared them with their other basic convictions. If there was harmony between the disclosed convictions and between the consequences, which most likely would happen, they were proven to be fit. They then could be regarded as a safe base for acting for the time being. In the case of a contradiction it was necessary to further explore the convictions.³ The characteristic confusion that was caused by Socrates’ art of refutation reveals to interlocutors the space for new insights – for instance in Plato’s dialogue *Charmides* Socrates helps his dialogue partner Critias to discover his contradiction and to approach the correct definition of temperance as self-knowledge.⁴

Critias: I mean to say, that he who does evil, and not good, is not temperate; and that he is temperate who does good, and not evil: for temperance I define in plain words to be the doing of good actions.

Socrates: And you may be very likely right in what you are saying; but I am curious to know whether you imagine that temperate men are ignorant of their own temperance?

Critias: I do not think so.

Socrates: But must the physician necessarily know when his treatment is likely to prove beneficial, and when not? or must the craftsman necessarily know when he is likely to be benefited, and when not to be benefited, by the work which he is doing?

Critias: I suppose not.

Socrates: Then, I said, he (a physician) may sometimes do good or harm, and not know what he is himself doing, and yet, in doing good, as you say, he has done temperately or wisely. Was not that your statement?

Critias: Yes.

³ The Socratic and neo-socratic argumentation patterns are analysed in detail in: H. Gronke (2005).

⁴ Plato, *Charmides*, 163 e – 164 d.

Socrates: Then, as would seem, in doing good, he may act wisely or temperately, and be wise or temperate, but not know his own wisdom or temperance?

Critias: But that, Socrates, he said, is impossible; and therefore if this is, as you imply, the necessary consequence of any of my previous admissions, I will withdraw them, rather than admit that a man can be temperate or wise who does not know himself; and I am not ashamed to confess that I was in error. For self-knowledge would certainly be maintained by me to be the very essence of knowledge, and in this I agree with him who dedicated the inscription, 'Know thyself!' at Delphi."

For Athenian 'free' citizens, eager to learn, the dialogue with Socrates meant stimulus and risk at the same time. They confronted themselves with his special dialectical art of questioning and examination, firstly to be able to prove themselves in dialogue, secondly to be led the right way to self-knowledge through questions.

Admittedly the "Old Socratic" suffered from *three weaknesses*.

(1) The first and most basic is of a systematic nature. The Socrates of the Platonic dialogues exaggerated resistance to rhetoric, which, putatively, is not good for the investigation of truth but only suitable for influencing the masses. Therefore dialogue remains an external remedy for examining the orientations of his interlocutors. In principle everyone on one's own – and the philosopher above all – can carry out the examination. Plato's Socrates ignores the fact that dialogue with others can gain new perspectives one would not obtain alone.

(2) A second weakness of the Socratic dialogue practice is linked to this. Every reader of Plato's dialogues immediately notices that Socrates determines the content of the dialogue. The putative self-knowledge of his interlocutors is *produced* by him. They have comprehended Socrates' ideas step by step and they aren't simply confronted with the ready results of a cognition process, yet they haven't really worked it out independently. Therefore, their motivation to realize the gained insights suffers.

(3) The third weakness of the Socratic dialogue practice is connected to one of its special strengths. Socrates doesn't discuss matters at a purely abstract level. He connects all dialogue contributions and the insights worked out with the *concrete practical experience*. Therefore it is important to

him to state the relevance of the general principles of acting for the reality of life.

On the other hand he generalizes too strongly. For Socrates the world is the world of the Polis, the city-state. He has no highly-developed consciousness of the different orientations or mentalities of various milieus and cultures. Therefore some of his attempts to uncover generally valid norms and values for action (by comparing similar situations) do not succeed or seem rigorous. Although the norms and values are probably general, they are not *absolutely* general: they apply to a certain *kind* of situation.

Since the middle of the 20th century, rhetoric has experienced a renaissance through the development of the “New Rhetoric”.⁵ To renew itself, the “New Rhetoric” referred to the “Old Rhetoric”⁶ (primarily to that of Aristotle, Cicero and Quintilian) and supplemented it with the modern knowledge of linguistics, communication, philosophy and psychology. “New” does not mean here that the “Old Rhetoric” was thrown overboard. On the contrary: “new” primarily means “newly discovered” and “improved with new insights”. In an analogous way I bring in the distinction between “Old Socratic” and “New Socratic”.

What does the “New Socratic” adopt from the Old Socratic?

- Socrates’ orientation on dialogue and questioning to examine the basic convictions and attitudes presupposed more or less consciously in the concrete decisions and actions;
- his confidence in the competence of his interlocutors to develop and to investigate their orientation of action independently;
- the consistent and beneficial reference to the life and professional practice of the dialogue partners.

An unusual feature of the Socratic dialogue is that the interlocutors do not start at zero level. The Socratic dialogue proceeds from the findings and the potentials which they bring in at the beginning of the

⁵ Ch. Perelman (1979); Ch. Perelman/L. Olbrechts-Tytecka (1970).

⁶ R. Barthes (1970).

examination. Because life and work has always already succeeded and has proved it, a proper degree of knowledge and ability must be embodied in every life and professional experience. It is important to bring the mostly unconscious knowledge out into the open to use it systematically and expand it constructively.

Admittedly, one must follow the sometimes exhausting way to the light of practical cognition on one's own. Otherwise the insights would lack the power of persuasion.

What does the “New Socratic” add?⁷

- The idea of *independent* self-assurance is realized consistently. The restrained and sensitive support for an autonomous search for convincing orientations takes the place of Socrates' influencing dialogical control. It is not the first priority to lead the dialogue to the last principles of human living together. *It is more important to work out the basic convictions that guide the partners in their respective practical contexts.*
- *The revived and renewed rhetoric, as well as the new communication between philosophy and psychology,* offer a basis to unite the thematic level with the emotional and social dimensions. Through this the Socratic dialogue does not only win at persuasiveness and effectiveness but also looks at persons in their entirety.
- *The New Socratic fully exploits the possibilities of “dialogue”.* A “dialogue” gives way to a common examination between equal partners which is not about attack and defense or profit and loss. In a climate of dialogue the interlocutors are able to refer to the most fundamental and tricky questions objectively. If these topics remain hidden, they are an impenetrable blockade for the development of persons, teams and organizations.

⁷ L. Nelson (2004) and G. Heckmann (2004) took the first steps in the development of the “New Socratic”.

Socratic Dialogue in therapeutical and philosophical practice

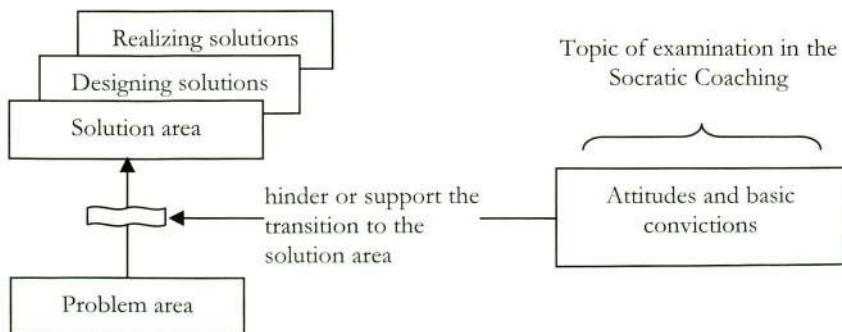
Socratic Dialogue is a specific form of dialogue practice in accordance with the New Socratic. It can always be used if persons, groups or teams want to clear basic questions to design their lives actively and to collaborate constructively.

Socratic Dialogue does not focus on solution. The main tasks of solution-focused consulting are to determine aims and tasks, clarifying steps for putting them into action and to practice necessary behaviour. It builds primarily on the momentum of processes initiated by purposeful interventions.

Socratic Dialogue starts if these forms of consulting or dialogue cannot ensure a lasting transition from the problem area to the solution area. The objective is to clarify the attitudes and basic convictions which hinder or promote the concrete attempt of an individual or a group of individuals to reach a solution. *“We have intensively discussed the project with each other, but we don’t manage to come to concrete decisions. Should we talk about the conditions under which we accept a decision in our team?”*

It has turned out that “successes” reached fast and taken euphorically can fade easily if the fundamental attitudes are unclear or really contradictory. Then a relapse to the problem area threatens with corresponding disillusionment. The Socratic Dialogue intends to *build a solid base of convictions for the time of transition.*

Illustration 3: Orientation in Socratic Coaching

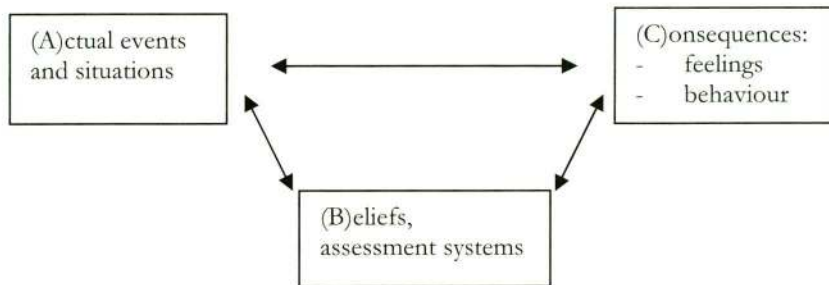


If in educational, therapeutical or consulting contexts people speak of Socratic dialogue practice they often see it as a concealed directive instruction (the teacher or therapist asks, the student or client answers). Until today, Socratic dialogue practice for the most part has not got beyond the standard of the Old Socratic.⁸ Moreover, the word “Socratic” becomes used diffusely and increasingly frequently – for “philosophical” or “questioning”.

The orientation of the Old Socratic and a diffuse understanding of ‘Socratic’ also indicate the progressive therapeutical approaches which work with these techniques: the *rational emotive therapy* developed by *Albert Ellis* and the *cognitive behaviour therapy* developed by *Aaron T. Beck*.⁹ The regulations of a Socratic dialogue practice remain somewhat unclear. The therapist “conducts” the client to the “discoveries” which he (the therapist) regards as helpful.

At least Ellis and Beck base their dialogue practice on philosophically-founded analysis models that show a *characteristic Socratic structure*, that means related to general conviction samples.

Illustration 4: The ABC model in the Rational Emotive Therapy



According to the *Ellis ABC model*, feelings and behaviour which adapt to particular situations are influenced by elementary personal belief and assessment systems. To change them in a life-supporting way, he asks for concrete or general convictions which underlie the problematic feelings

⁸ See: J O’Conner; J.Seymour (2001): Ratgeber für Trainer, Referenten und Dozenten, pp. 228 f.

⁹ A. Ellis, R. A. Harper (1975); A. Ellis, R. Grieger (1977); A. Beck (1997); H. H. Stavemann (2002).

and actions. Through this, rational, reality-balanced convictions will take the place of irrational convictions.

Example: dialogue situation

Situation: "He only has eyes for my business partner, and he hardly pays attention to me."

"Irrational" concrete belief: "He doesn't accept me."

"Irrational" general belief: "If one doesn't pay attention to somebody, one doesn't accept him."

Feeling/Behavior: I feel refused. I won't participate in the conversation and I will hold my information back.

→ *"Rational" belief:* "There can be different reasons that he doesn't look at me, e.g. ..."

→ *"Rational" behavior:* I participate in the conversation and so I can find out whether he pays my remarks any attention."

In a similar way the Socratic-oriented approaches of the *cognitive behaviour therapy* are oriented at the "backgrounds" of negatively felt moods and feelings, behaviour and physical symptoms. The question here is: *How can one change the manner of his thinking so that one feels spiritually and physically better and behave more adequately to reality?* To uncover the personal patterns of thought, Dennis Greenberger and Christine A. Padesky¹⁰ have developed the three steps of the "Downward Arrow" technique.

(I) At first something like an *automatic* verbalised thought appears. For example: An employee feels unsure about the praise of his superior. Perhaps he thinks: "Well, at least this time he is satisfied with me." Or: "Obviously, I very urgently need to be praised." Or: "He certainly doesn't mean this seriously."

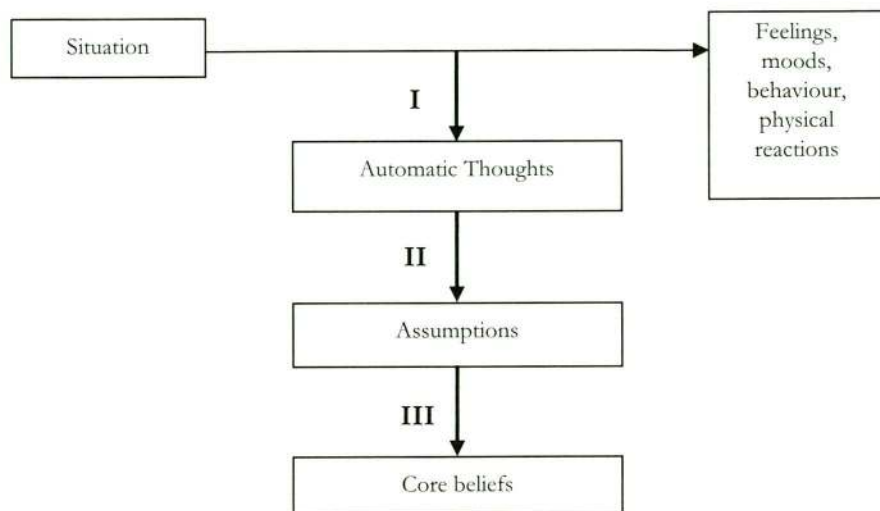
(II) Behind this *automatic thinking* there are basic assumptions which lie deeper and are not so easily accessible. They have an "If ... then ..." form, e.g.: What does the employee think about others? "Mostly, if somebody praises me, he hasn't meant it seriously"; or: "If somebody praises me, then he puts himself above me." Such acceptances stand for the interpretation rules which conduct our daily reference to reality. Greenberger and Padesky suggest examining them under three points of view: *ideas about me, about others, about the world.*

(III) Behind these automatic thoughts are *basic assumptions* which lie even deeper and are even less easily accessible. They have a generalizing

¹⁰ See D. Greenberger, Ch. Padesky (1996).

structure: “I am X.”, “People are X.”, “The world is X.”. They often contain generalizing words like “always”, “never”, “everyone” and “none”. They are held unconditionally. We have internalized such principles for the perception and mastering of reality. These serve to reduce the complexity of the world. By asking for the fundamental convictions it is possible to put down negative central convictions, or to relativise them, and to strengthen the positive ones.

Illustration 5: The “Downward Arrow” technique of Greenberger and Padesky



Example:

Situation: “I got a compliment from my boss.”

Feeling: “I am ashamed.”

Automatic thought: “I don’t deserve recognition.”

Assumption: “Only very hard work deserves recognition.”

Core belief: “I am not worthy of recognition.”

The *Philosophical Socratic Dialogue* integrates these models for revealing and correction of attitudes and principles and *connects them with the New Socratic*. Primarily, this means moving away from the therapeutic orientation (to enable the ability to act and to manage reality) and focusing on

protagonists who are *capable of acting*. The main line is not to uncover “irrational” convictions and to replace them by “realistic” ones.¹¹

It is important *to reveal and enrich the fundamental convictions* of the dialogue partner. The facilitator introduces the Socratic structure of the dialogue and keeps it going by his interventions *but the shaping of the dialogue spreads out among all dialogue partners*. The dialogue partners practise a dialogue behaviour through this and by the model behaviour of the facilitator, at which the co-operation outweighs the defending and asserting against others: listening, explaining, taking up contributions and putting oneself into the shoes of the other.¹²

The strong contribution of the dialogue partners to the dialogue process shows in the fact that they work out the “*Socratic question*” themselves (or at least choose a proposed question themselves). This is valid because it does not ask for short-term solutions. *The aim is to find questions to which the answers make possible a lasting basis for action.*

Philosophical Socratic Dialogue maintains the balance between emotion and reason.¹³ On the one hand, it is important to be emotionally involved, e.g. to win the motivation to act. Arising feelings are therefore tied into the process of dialogue. (“*How do you feel now with this judgment?*”) On the other hand, sensible investigation needs sufficient distance from emotional consternation to obtain a clear picture of possible orientations for action and life. This, for example, can be reached by examining the problem from different perspectives. It has proven to be elegant and effective to illustrate the communal examination with a situation that is in the past but shows similarities to the current problem. (“*Could you remember a situation during the last year in which an analogous problem arose?*”) So it is easier for the dialogue partners to understand the persons involved from a *reflective distance*. They are more likely to accept criticism of their assumptions and central convictions constructively.

A further sign of quality of Neo-Socratic Dialogue lies in its systematic argumentation structure.¹⁴ If the Socratic question derives from a current situation (1), then experienced reference situations are

¹¹ H. H. Stavemann, whose “Rules and Tips” for Socratic Dialogues refer to therapeutic situations. Stavemann, H. H. (2002), p. 238.

¹² For distinction of debate/discussion and dialogue, see: Yankelovich, D. (1999), p. 39 f., Walton, D. (1991), p. 43. Kessels, J. (2001), p. 24 ff.

¹³ See Gronke, H.; Sparnaay L. (2004).

¹⁴ See Kopferwerk Berlin (2004).

looked for which can serve as example situations for the further examination. (2) Then the behaviour and acting is determined (with all relevant feelings and physical reactions). (3) Such reactions frequently take place habitually or are simply part of the acquired behaviour repertoire. The opinions and motives from which the behaviours have arisen will be identified. *“What is your idea here that you think your behaviour in this situation is adequate?”* This is the way they are asked for their concrete judgments.(4)

The preconditions for the main phase in the process of Socratic Dialogue are created with that. Now the general assumptions are brought up on which the concrete judgments are based. *What are the characteristics of the situation? What has to be done in such cases? Which rules, values and norms are valid?* These questions lead to communication about the general orientations to act in characteristic contexts. *If situations of this and that kind are present, then I react to it in a foreseeable way.* (5) The reliability of these orientations is increased if they are founded on sensible and general principles which find their expression in a firm attitude and a stable conception of oneself. (6) Out of the check of these principles completion, expansion and precision can take place. They can help then for the mastering of the current situation and future challenges. (7)

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Therese Self-van Wegen

Coming Home to Socratic Dialogue

This paper is presented from a layperson's perspective, and from the perspective of a student of Philosophy and more recently a student of Socratic Dialogue. As may be obvious, I am also a considerable student of life.

Coming from a background of community and political activism, the Socratic Method for developing ideas and mutual understanding is what I describe as 'Coming home to Socratic Dialogue.' I liken it to discovering a place where you feel sufficiently at ease to want to make it a place for life. However, I want to emphasize that without putting the acquired experience into practice, this 'homecoming' is but a passing stay. I want to put down roots, roots that will spread and grow on the fertile ground of Socratic Dialogue. Just as soil needs the right combination of elements to be fertile and produce, so it is with the four elements, or main features, of the Socratic method:

- Starting with the real life example and remaining with it
- facilitating full understanding between the participants
- sticking with the question until it is answered and
- striving for consensus.¹

I discovered Socratic Dialogue around eighteen months ago, through the efforts of Stan van Hooft, from Australia's Deakin University. At the time Stan was my lecturer who practiced this method when teaching. It was most impressive, as he did not lecture *at* the students, but *included* all in the process. Feedback and written results from fellow scholars, showed this method achieved gratifying results. Stan offered extra curriculum Socratic Dialogue experience to students wishing to participate and possibly develop facilitation skills. I was one of those students. And this is the 'homecoming' of which I speak.

¹ See Dieter Krohn (2004), *Enquiring Minds*, p. 23.

I represent Peace Works Unlimited, a small Australian organization, and affiliate to the Victorian Peace Network. Peace works proposes peace of mind through to world peace, as a possible preferred strategy towards peace in the world. About two years ago, a monthly dinner discussion group for ten persons commenced in my home, on a somewhat ad hoc basis. Research and planning, with friend and colleague, Ian Sheehy, soon developed the dinners into more structured discussions. The dinners are well attended and a core group has developed. This is a clear indicator that ordinary people want an environment where they can safely discuss their values and fears, and learn from each other. Participants understand they do not need to be academics or philosophers to participate in these monthly discussions.

Then along came Stan and Socratic Dialogue, and ... well, you now know the rest.

Peace Works took up the challenge of introducing Socratic Dialogue to our region. It became evident that this method could produce consensual decision making in ways that most other methods could not. It also met the criteria stipulated by Peace Works Unlimited, which is a non-political, non-religious association, working to increase peace of all kinds; from peace of mind to world peace, using peaceful means throughout. Genuinely seeking to achieve consensus, while taking all participants' point of view into consideration, is surely better than invading another's physical or emotional space, or dropping bombs!

Peace Works Unlimited seeks a way to practical every-day-life application of ideas, and believes that Socratic Dialogue need not stop at a talkfest, but be the *means* to action. What I mean is, action that is supported and understood as a way towards a common goal. A 'Fun and Philosophy Weekend' was organized by Peace Works at a country venue and attended by nineteen people. Community singing, a day long Socratic Dialogue facilitated by Stan, a costumed Greek Feast, and guided nature walks in the beautiful bush surrounds, completed a cooperative, educative, fun weekend. The weekend's participants came from various backgrounds, ranging from skilled and unskilled workers, to a doctor and teachers, a physicist and scientist to students of philosophy. People went away feeling better for the experience, and better equipped to make life-changing decisions as a result. A number are still actively involved on a regular basis. A newsletter, Peace Works News, is produced each month

discussing philosophical and political topics; including reviews of past and present writing and other media productions.

An inaugural Socratic Dinner at a Geelong Hotel in February 2005 was facilitated by Stan van Hooft. The topic was 'What is Caring?' which twelve people attended. One of the concrete examples given was about caring for the terrorized people of East Timor who were seeking independence from Indonesia. On questioning, the person realized he had never asked why he cared for the East Timorese people, and he had never done anything other than protest at their predicament. It became apparent that an ideological position steered his thinking rather than his actual concern for the people. It took another's related experience to make him consciously question his understanding of caring.

Peace Works Unlimited is examining the possibility of forming a dispersed intentional community; a community of people with a shared vision for thinking and living differently in a money-orientated world system; a system that claims to create peace through the 'free market' and war; and supposedly for 'freedom and democracy'. This intentional community project is indeed challenging.

Research has shown that such a project requires clear vision and a means to bring that vision to fruition. Many such schemes have failed when it came to developing an on-going structure that works. Ideally, it must be a structure to which all project participants can ascribe, and which will inform future decisions and activities. Developing a structure requires a method. I believe that Socratic Dialogue may be that method. Time and practice will tell.

I understand human life as a continuous conversation, as is witnessed in Berlin at the Fifth International Conference. Individuals are sharing their views and experiences, and building on them to identify values, develop further ideas, and look to practical applications. I also see Socratic dialogue as an exercise to further understanding among participants about what is possible.

Careful listening and thoughtful reflection applied to all that is heard, and all that has been experienced, generally results in sympathetic agreement for those taking part. A minority can feel they are being listened to, and the majority cannot take command in this setting, where views can be expressed openly and without fear of ridicule or condemnation. The best idea can be agreed upon and the owner of the idea will be acknowledged. The resulting concept can then be put into

practice, as deemed appropriate, by again employing the same procedure. It becomes a never-ending process that keeps moving along, avoiding the inertia so often encountered when decisions for action are required. As the Socratic process starts with a dialogue, which may be thought of as an attentive conversation within given parameters, the ideas are documented for consideration and action. Theory in this way can become practice. Through practice, further theory is developed, and so on. However, the process essentially requires a skilled facilitator, who is able to recognize conscious moments of profound individual or collective thought. It is up to the facilitator to make the most of these moments, to enable development of the individuals, and the development of an idea.

I witnessed a political colleague work in this way some years ago, and now recognize the method was akin to the Socratic Method, of which he was quite unaware. I found the way he worked to be a rare exception and on reflection realize he had made a lasting impression.

In the past, I spent many years involved in community and political activism, and sometimes a measure of success was achieved. But all too often possibilities were undermined by those with fixed ideologies and set agendas. These agendas became the focus, rather than the task at hand, often resulting in disunity. I believe this is where the role of a Socratic facilitator is most important, and why appropriate training is vital.

For instance, take a person wishing to learn the art of music. An instrument cannot be played well until the study of music is undertaken. Then, when the rules of music are understood, the student can commence the process of creating music with confidence, knowing it will not offend the ears of listeners. So it is, I propose, for a student of Socratic Dialogue when learning the art of facilitation. A harmonious result can occur when in the hands of an accomplished conductor; a sensitive conductor who will ensure the musical company is inclusive of all the instruments. This conductor will see no instrument ignored, as each part played, large or small, is vital to creating a harmonious symphony. So it is with a properly facilitated dialogue.

Over time, I have come to realize that the earliest experience I had of conducting dialogue was whilst raising six children. Of course at that time I had no idea about *Socratic* dialogue. But when I was small I had a *very* good idea what it felt like when no one was listening, or worse still,

when I felt not worthy of being listened to, or had nothing to contribute. So I developed the idea that I was 'slow', you know ... a bit backward. I held back my own thoughts and allowed others to think for me.

However, when I had children, I was determined to never make them feel less than they could possibly be. If they were not as clever or as fast as another, I would ask them if *they* were satisfied with their performance. If not, we would talk about ways *they* felt they could contribute to a better outcome. I trusted *them* to work out what needed to be done, feeling they would ask for help if need be. We would go through this process, individually or collectively, as need determined.

Subsequently, well-meaning friends sometimes lamented that I spent too much time explaining life's expectations to the children. But I wanted the children to learn that while other people may behave in ways that made no sense, they must always aim to behave in ways that did no harm to others; and to respectfully care for each other and share what they had. Sometimes that led to problems, as they had to learn to defend themselves against injustice. However, the resultant self-learning experience obviously stood them in good stead. Over time, others assure me time and again, that they have grown up to be caring adults who freely share their personal and material resources. So in whatever way parents sometimes feel they failed their children, for this mother, a redeeming feature was that early time spent in dialogue.

I would like to say some more about Socratic Dialogue in the community, for the community and by the community. Sound familiar? I feel that by employing the Socratic Method, 'the voices of the people' *can* indeed be heard: Enlightened voices!

In recent times very un-enlightened Australian population accepted reports that sinking 'boat people' arriving in Australian waters, had allegedly 'thrown their children overboard'. This led to a government voted into power that has 'torn the electorate in two'. The disadvantaged are demeaned, the well-off are enriched. The prime minister scoffs at people's efforts to advocate for those less able. Many people have little access to the facts beyond the evening television news. They respond to situations with the very language used by unsympathetic politicians, such as 'we don't want those sort of people in Australia,' too often making this judgment without analyzing what has really taken place.

But getting back to Socratic Dialogue, I feel that through the process of self-examination and reflection, authentic persons can develop,

assuming the role of a thoughtfully peaceful person, able to set an example for and with others. Thus many enlightened voices may become apparent among us, and make a very real difference to how decisions are made; decisions that promote peace, and cause it to flourish.

It's what the world needs now, the promise of a more peaceful world.

To close I want to momentarily recap what I have been saying:

- *On 'Coming home' to Socratic Dialogue:*

The practice of the Socratic method may mean many people can come home to Socratic dialogue. To begin with they will come home to themselves and to others; to an understanding of what it is they truly value and why.

- *Why facilitators are important.*

Discussion conducted by a trained, astute facilitator is likely to have a harmonious outcome.

- *Why consensus among individuals?*

Ultimately, gaining consensus among individuals can lead to cooperation among many.

- *What to do with the outcome?*

The resultant outcome may form the basis for new ideas and the means to action.

- *On Dialogue for ordinary people in the community:*

Giving ordinary people an opportunity to participate in facilitated dialogue can acknowledge and develop their values and their self-worth.

- *On Peaceful minds leading to a more peaceful world.*

Peaceful minds are minds of those who have deeply reflected on, and resolved, what they truly value. They can take an active role in valuing a more peaceful world, developing a deep commitment to a whole new way of life.

To conclude: I believe Socratic Dialogue to be a means to peaceful action: from peaceful minds to peace in the world.

Socratic Dialogue and Narrative Theory

As Leonard Nelson and Gustav Heckman developed the Socratic dialogue in the first part of the last century, they both emphasized the importance of having the philosophical reflection of the dialogue grounded in the domain of real life experience.¹ One source of inspiration for this principle, we may safely assume, given the Neo-Kantian inspiration of Nelson, was Kant who in his *Critique of pure reason* presents his famous dictum that ‘concepts without content are empty’, the term ‘content’ here meaning empirical content.²

Another inspiration may have been Plato who in his dialogues depicts Socrates as a person who frequently starts the philosophical inquiry by examining examples brought forward by his dialogue partners based on their experience, and also checks the soundness of the propositions brought forward by testing them against such examples.

Plato’s dialogue *Laches* exemplifies both these strategies. When in the dialogue Socrates asks his fellow interlocutors to define courage, that is, to answer the question of “what courage is”, they answer by giving examples from their experience. So, for instance, Laches, one of the main characters of the dialogue, and a commanding officer in the Athenian army, suggests that courage is found in the person who, during a fight, remains at his post and defends himself, and is not running away.³

Embedded in his subsequent question Socrates points to other examples which, obviously, are brought forward to enhance the reflections of his interlocutors: He calls attention to the forms of courage found at sea, in sickness, in poverty, and when facing political difficulties.

¹ Cf. Nelson (1965) and also Birnbacher (1999).

² Cf. the *Critique of pure reason*, A 51/B 75. Kant also warns against what he perceives as a dangerous tendency of the human mind to throw itself into lofty speculations without bothering to examine whether the basis on which these speculations are constructed are well founded, cf., e.g. B 9.

³ *Laches*, 190 e.

For – as he rhetorically asks – is it not so that in such circumstances too people may show courage?⁴

Socrates' contribution to the dialogue is here, as usual, in the form of a question. However, as readers we notice that through this question he calls attention to well known fields of the Greek life-world, fields that his dialogue partners either know from their own experience, or by sharing in the common experience of their society. And he wants his dialogue partners to use this experience in the dialogue. "Is it not so that in such circumstances people may also show courage?", Socrates asks, referring to life at sea, in sickness, in poverty, and when facing political difficulties. In order to answer this question, his dialogue partners must necessarily consult examples known to them from the fields mentioned. Thus, the philosophical reflection is grounded in the empirical, i.e. in the life-world of the participants.

In a modern Socratic dialogue the empirical grounding of the philosophical reflection is achieved through the stories typically told at the beginning of the dialogue, after the question or topic of the dialogue has been chosen. If, for instance, the question of the dialogue is, as in *Laches*, "What is courage?", the next step for the participants of the dialogue is to tell stories, derived from their own lives, stories in which they themselves appear as the protagonist, and as carrier of the virtue which the dialogue focuses on, in this case courage.

Why these stories? One answer frequently given is that the function of the story is to prevent the subsequent reflection from becoming too abstract and lofty. Other measures pull in the same direction, such as the rule against name-dropping, and the rule against bringing into the dialogue theories from well known authors. These measures are also meant to secure that the dialogue partners really think for themselves, and not just pretend to do so by referring to ideas and theories developed by others. These are all sound and reasonable regulations. Still, if we want to understand how the stories contribute to the dialogical process, we need to see their function as being more than just to secure empirical grounding.

In the following I will try to say more about this, and in doing so, as in a Socratic dialogue, I shall start with a story from my own experience: Some time ago I led a philosophical discussion group consisting of

⁴ Ibid, 191 d-e.

fifteen adolescent boys and girls. In our first three meetings I organized the dialogue according to a method frequently used within the philosophy for children movement, inspired by, among others, Gareth B. Matthews.⁵ Roughly, the concept is that the group first read a story together, next they are invited to ask questions to the story, and one of these questions is then chosen as the starting point for a common reflection. I know that this way of working with children may often give amazing results, however, in this particular group I had little success. One of the reasons for my lack of success, I think, was a certain habit of thinking that the participants brought with them into the group, characterized, among other things, by extremely rapid movements from one thought to another, or one topic to another. Also, in spite of the rule I had set down, that they were not to bring things they had read or heard into the discussion, they frequently did. One of the participants was especially keen on doing this. With the appearance of a little professor, always carrying with him some heavy book in which he immersed himself in every intermission, he repeatedly referred to philosophical and scientific theories that he thought could have relevance to the problem being discussed, clearly assuming that this would somehow solve the problem and allow us to move on to new questions. To all this, finally, there came a strong competitive spirit, especially among the boys, leading to a kind of contest as to who could give the most impressive speech, for instance by producing propositions that would either provoke, amuse or shock the others. All in all, I felt that what was going on was as far from my ideal of a philosophical, reflective dialogue that it was possible to come. It was not that the participants were not intelligent, some of them were extremely gifted intellectually, but in spite of all my skills and all my experience as a dialogue leader, I was unable to create an atmosphere in which they were brought to really think for themselves. After our third meeting I felt close to giving up the group altogether, however, before I did so, I decided, as a last recourse, so to say, to lead the group through a Socratic dialogue. So I did at our fourth meeting. The result was amazing. The concept they chose to investigate was courage. The change that the dialogue created was evident from the moment I asked them to find stories in which they themselves appeared as courageous persons, and it persisted throughout the dialogue.

⁵ Cf. Matthews (1996).

A first attempt to qualify this effect could be to say that a great *tranquility* fell over the group and each of its individuals. Before, it had been as if each member of the group, especially the boys, had been involved in an almost desperate struggle to be visible to the others. Now, each and one of them calmed down. This does not mean that they withdrew from the group, losing themselves, so to say, in their own thoughts. On the contrary, for the first time it seemed that they were really paying attention to one another. For the first time, they were not just using their energy figuring out what to say next, planning some stunning move that could earn them the focus and admiration of the group. For the first time they were actually listening to each other, and in doing this, they were not just being polite. They showed a genuine interest in what the others had to say.

How may we describe what was going on here in more specific terms? And how to explain what was happening? In the following I will use narrative theory – widely understood – to try to account for the change taking place in the group.⁶

A basic principle reflected upon within narrative theory is how we use stories or narratives to give meaning and coherence to the manifold of the phenomena and events of our world. This principle is similar to the one found within Kantian philosophy, that we need more than just sense impressions in order to attain a coherent experience. We also need concepts. Or to express the point in Kant's own terms: In order to have experience, intuitions are not enough. Intuitions without concepts are blind until they are brought under concepts.⁷

In narrative theory, the narrative has taken over the function that the concept has in Kantian epistemology. If intuitions without concepts are blind, as they are according to Kant, then, using the same metaphor, we may say that, according to narrative theory, the narratives that we use to describe the phenomena and events of our world, rescue us from the chaos that the world would otherwise be to us. They are, to use another

⁶ My main inspiration in the field of narrative theory is Paul Ricoeur's seminal work *Time and Narrative* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984–1988), however, I have also gained from reading Charles Taylor's *Sources of the self. The making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989) and others.

⁷ *Critique of Pure Reason*, A 51/B 75.

Kantian expression, *necessary conditions for the possibility* of seeing the world as a coherent and ordered place.

Another basic principle reflected upon within narrative theory is that, given a certain event, more than one narrative may be constructed to describe this event, with the result that the same event may appear to us in rather different ways. For instance, Jack breaking up from his marriage with Jill may be described both as a coward, not having the courage to face the problems of his marriage, or, alternatively, as the courageous hero who is brave enough to draw the necessary consequences of their unsuccessful union, even if it involves an unpleasant conflict. This insight, i.e. that more than one narrative may be constructed to describe an event, has been taken up by narrative therapists working from the assumption that by helping people to modify their narratives, we may also help them lead happier or in other ways better lives. In a short while, I will argue that the point just stated is also relevant to understand what goes on in a Socratic dialogue.

However, before that, I will call attention to a third significant insight brought forward by narrative theory, namely that in constructing narratives it is not just our world that becomes coherent to us, or is brought under a certain perspective, we also become coherent for ourselves, as well as for our fellow human beings. And, as a number of theorists have pointed out, the two things are intimately connected. Our identities depend on those we have around us and their narratives about ourselves. Our selves are, to borrow a phrase from the American philosopher Charles Taylor, socially constructed.⁸

In returning to the case introduced above, I think this third insight is particularly relevant. Actually, I think the tranquility that fell over the group as they started to tell their stories about courage, has to do with this point. The nervous energy present in the group at our first meetings, the competitive spirit, and the general noise resulting from it, were all aiming at one thing: The members of the group wanted – each and every one of them – to become visible to the others. They wanted to be looked at, to be recognized, perhaps even admired, however, most significantly, they wanted to appear for the others as individuals. And the intense energy displayed was aimed at achieving this goal, but with little success. At least, this is how one may interpret their never-ending efforts of

⁸ Cf. e.g. Taylor (1989), p. 35 and also Ochenberg (1994).

earning the attention of the others. Now, however, in telling their own stories, they became visible. And, to judge from the effect it had on their behavior, it came as a huge relief.

I think it is three aspects of the stories told at the beginning of the dialogue that are particularly relevant if we want to understand this effect. The first relates to the fact that the stories told are stories based on the lives of those taking part in the dialogue. Through the narratives told we get access, not to a world of abstract reasoning, but the lives of those telling their stories. Thus, we gain knowledge of each individual story-teller that goes beyond the superficial knowledge to be derived by examining his appearance in the group; her clothes, her behavior, etc. In listening to her story we get insight into her background and her life outside the group. Or, to state this point from another perspective, i.e. that of the person telling his story: He is allowed now, through the story, to present to the group a piece of his life. He is allowed, through his story, to make himself visible to the others.

We do not have to seek recourse to narrative theory to realize how important this kind of telling and listening to stories is. Just think of the questions we typically ask a person the first time we meet him: "Where do you come from. What do you do for a living?" The person tells us about this, and suddenly he is no stranger anymore, but a person equipped with a history, and even if we know only a few aspects of this history, it is enough to initiate the process through which the other is transformed from a stranger, or from being an abstract member of a group, to become a person with an individuality. Everyday experiences like these also confirm, on a basic level, the truth of the idea promoted by Taylor and others, that our selves are narrative and social constructs. I tell my story, you listen, and through this common event of telling and listening my self is created.

The second aspect of the stories told in a Socratic dialogue that I want to stress is the fact that they are told in the first person. It is the 'I' of the story-teller who speaks through the story. I think the use of this word 'I' is highly significant. And here I would like to introduce Martin Buber to explain why. In his groundbreaking work *I and Thou*⁹ Buber maintains that the word 'I' represents one part of a duality of which 'thou' or 'you' is the other part. The two words belong together and

⁹ In Buber (1973).

depend on each other in the sense that they only get their full meaning relative to each other. And the same ascribes to the relation prevailing between two persons relating to each other as an 'I' and a 'Thou'. The two words represent, according to Buber, a relationship in which the other person is no longer an anonymous third person, or an object, but a subject existing in the world at the same level as oneself, or better; as a person who at some deep level actually shares the same being as yourself.

Now, Buber, of course, does not believe that the two words themselves have the power to bring about this specific I-Thou-relation. Actually, according to Buber, the attitude corresponding to these words cannot be commanded, or brought forward instrumentally. Still, even if I agree with Buber that the I-Thou-relation cannot be produced instrumentally, I do think that using the word 'I' when telling a story, instead of merely reciting the events as if they were the experiences of some general, anonymous being, enhances the probability that the storyteller will appear to his listeners as a subject in the Buberian sense.

The third and last aspect that I want to emphasize is the fact that the stories told at the beginning of a Socratic dialogue allow the participants to appear in the social space of the dialogue as good and resourceful persons. This, at least, is the case of most of the dialogues I lead. Following what I find to be a basic principle in Plato, I organize my dialogues so that the topic is either a classical virtue, such as courage, or the concept of some other skill or capacity that is generally regarded as having positive value, and may thus be conceived of as virtues in an extended sense. For instance, if the group consists of the managers of a business company, the topic may be "What is good leadership?" or perhaps "What is good communication?" This means that at the beginning of the dialogue people are encouraged to search for stories in which they appear as either courageous, if this is the topic, good leaders or good communicators, or something else that is equally good.

Above I referred to the idea that our selves are narrative constructs. They are narrative structures constituted by the stories we tell about ourselves, or the stories others impose on us. I also pointed at the idea that more than one narrative may be constructed to describe an event, with the result that the same event may appear under rather different perspectives. Now, if we combine these ideas, we realize that a self, conceived of as a social and narrative construct, may also be constructed in various ways, some more positive and some more negative for the

person in question. To return once more to the Jack and Jill example; is Jack a coward or a hero? Both descriptions are possible, but the latter is, obviously, preferable to Jack. I here assume that we all want, and to a certain extent, that we also need to be recognized by others as good persons in order to be able to live in the world as integral selves. This means that being invited in a Socratic dialogue to tell stories about themselves as virtuous persons, people are allowed to appear to themselves and to others in a way that is highly beneficent – in German we may perhaps use the word *aufbauend* to themselves.

In being part of such a dialogue you are up for a number of surprises. You may learn, for instance, that the rather shy-looking girl who has almost never raised her voice in the group, some time ago at her birthday, jumped from an aeroplane in a parachute. Or that the boy who has so far acted rather aggressively, having tried to dominate the group through persistent monologues, some time ago stood up for a friend who had, in his eyes, been subject to unjust behavior from a teacher. This, actually, was what I learned from the stories told by the teenagers in the group I was leading. In other groups I have had similar experiences. My experience is also that the story-tellers themselves are often surprised from what happens when they tell their stories. One aspect of this surprise derives from the fact that being allowed to tell stories of themselves as a virtuous person is not something they are used to, quite the contrary. In the ordinary social world, such stories have little room, or they may even be condemned as illicit bragging. Here, however, they are not only allowed to tell these stories, the stories are welcomed with gratitude by the group that needs it to go on with the dialogue. It is also analyzed and reflected upon by the group. Officially, the aim of this common reflection is to attain a better understanding of the concept that the story was meant to exemplify, for instance courage. However, through the fact that this reflection is also connected to the story, what most often happens is that the story-teller ends up realizing, through the analyzing of the group, that he was in fact even *more* skilled than he first thought. Instead of being held back by the group, he is lifted up.

By pointing at the narrative aspects of the Socratic dialogue, as I have done in this paper, I do not intend to de-emphasize the other aspects of the dialogue, such as, for instance, the fact that the dialogue makes possible a common reflection about concepts, and by this also the clarification of concepts. Perhaps after all, this is the most significant

function of the dialogue. Those who are interested in the Platonic or Socratic origin of today's Socratic dialogue might perhaps add that conceptual clarification was after all what these dialogues were originally about.

Whether this holds to be true or not, I believe that we today should not step back from acknowledging also other aspects or functions of the dialogue. Modern theories in philosophy allow us to conceptualize aspects of the dialogical process which were perhaps unknown to the ancients. Just as important, however, it is that the social and political situation of our world makes it imperative to have an eye for these aspects. One of the greatest challenges of contemporary modern societies, I think, is to prevent society from disintegrating into groups based on income, class, age, gender, ethnicity and religion. The existence of subcultures is, of course, not a problem as such. The increasing distance, skepticism or even hostility that we see growing between these subcultures today, however, are.

An aspect of the development that I am speaking of, is that people stop perceiving members of other groups as individuals, or if they do, not as individuals with the same status or with the same value as themselves. Socratic dialogue can serve as a remedy for this, because, apart from whatever else is taking place in the dialogue, the sense of individuality of those taking part is strengthened. Not only are they allowed to, so to say, see behind the facade of the others, and recognize that they are individuals with unique stories to tell, they are also themselves strengthened in their own individuality. And this enhancing of individuality is not, as one might perhaps believe, one leading to further social disintegration. It is the opposite of disintegration. For only people who are safe within themselves, and confident that they are recognized by others, are able to acknowledge others as individuals on the same level and with the same value as themselves, *even if they are different*. And this is what we need.

This also Socrates knew, or at least so I will argue. When we read the Platonic dialogues, we soon realize that they have to do with more than only the clarification of concepts. Equally significant is their emphasis on individuality and society. The individual needs to learn to know himself, so is the implied message of the dialogues, in order to be able to live in a society with others. Socrates himself is also portrayed as a person who

deeply cared about those he met with in the dialogues, such as in the *Apology* where he states:

*"I was always concerned with you, approaching each one of you like a father or an elder brother ..."*¹⁰

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¹⁰ *Apology*, 31 b.

Sarah Davey Chesters

Engagement through Dialogue

An Exploration of Collaborative Inquiry and Dimensions of Thinking

Introduction¹

This paper is, in short, for the enhancement of thinking. With an emphasis on the need for education practices that promote higher order thinking, and with buzz words such as meta-cognition creeping into the curriculum it seems that what is needed is an approach to pedagogy that is underpinned with ‘good thinking’. In order to create an environment that is conducive to the cultivation of thinking, I contend that philosophy as pedagogy in the tradition of a Socratic method may go some way to satisfying the broadest requirement of education; to create thoughtful, reflective, active citizens.² When students are engaged in collaborative classroom inquiry through the medium of philosophy, they are practicing thinking that is both creative, through an emphasis on the generation of ideas and innovation, and thinking that is critical, requiring students to exercise judgment and engage in self-reflection. As we shall see in this paper, caring thinking is also an important inclusion for approaches to thinking and is commonly overlooked in discussions on philosophical inquiry.³ Proponents of inquiry may have different approaches to collaborative philosophical inquiry and so the aim of this paper will be to evaluate each model on how they aim to engage students in different dimensions of thinking. There are of course other

¹ Please note that some aspects of this paper draw on ideas that appear in Davey (2004).

² For more information on philosophy as pedagogy and Socratic pedagogy, please see Davey Chesters (forthcoming).

³ For example, it was only recently that Lipman (1991) gave an equal focus to caring thinking in an updated version of *Thinking in Education* that focused mainly on creative and critical thinking.

approaches to philosophical inquiry that cannot be addressed in the scope of this paper but should be recognized for their contributions to the development of philosophy as pedagogy.

This paper will compare dialogue methods used in philosophical inquiry. It will help to identify how each dialogue uses different methods of engagement. By focusing on how each proponent aims to engage their participants will go some way for us to view how they may be used in the classroom. It is hoped that this may also begin a dialogue between each of the proponents of dialogue so that they may be used in conjunction to enhance different dimensions of thinking. In short, these methods of engagement are as follows; for Socratic Dialogue, the aim of consensus is what colours the inquiry. In the Community of Inquiry the idea of 'letting the argument lead' is significant to engagement. For Bohmian Dialogue, listening, thinking and community are particularly important. Through these three areas of engagement, this paper will evaluate how the different levels of rigor involved in the dialogue methods lead the participants to a deep critical, creative and caring engagement. While this paper identifies the type of engagement in each model of dialogue, it does not assume that they can be simply reduced to one type of engagement, but that by identifying how the dialogue engages its participants that they may benefit from the central purpose of engaging either critically, creatively or caringly. While different dimensions of thinking may be enhanced in other ways, I contend that thinking through inquiry is valuable for the cultivation of thinking in general through philosophy.

But first, what do we mean by engagement?

So how does engagement occur through the process of dialogue? We are not trying to identify what engagement is in this paper, moreover, we will identify how it occurs through the process of critical, creative and caring thinking. Undertaking a conceptual analysis to find a conclusive definition of the term 'engagement' will bring us no closer to understanding how children and adults engage through philosophical dialogue. However, perhaps Gardner offers some definition by way of

claiming that the progress towards truth makes the dialogue substantive when she says that there is,

“an obvious, although relatively superficial sense in which progress toward truth is vital to the practice of inquiry and that if such progress is not made, the term (*community of inquiry*) becomes a misnomer. Properly speaking, in order to “inquire”, one must not only inquire about *something* ... one must also make some progress – at least if such progress is possible.”⁴

Gardner notes that if a dialogue is to be productive, then the participants must in fact produce something of substance, which in turn, would make that dialogue substantive.

Because the dialogue has a particular purpose rather than being unstructured talk, the substantive nature of dialogue and its meaningfulness leads to engagement. Perhaps the ‘substantiveness’ of inquiry is what we mean when we refer to engagement; connecting with substantive ideas. Perhaps if we look towards the commonsense use of the word engagement this may also give us a better idea. To engage is an ‘interlocking’ of two or more entities. Typically, when we think of engagement as a betrothal of marriage between one person and another, this is the bringing together of two individuals to one union (or marriage). This is important to our working definition of the term engagement. Interlocking occurs between participants in an inquiry, between a participant and a creative idea, a critical idea or a caring idea, and the interlocking of all of these elements. In other words, this interlocking may occur between people or between a person and an idea, and the interaction of all of these things. Bringing together is what we hope to do when we aim for engagement in a dialogue. The nature of ‘intersubjectivity’ is perhaps what we mean here as a certain interlocking between the individual idea and the community thought.⁵ Engagement can occur because participants must engage with each other rather than being directed by a teacher or facilitator (at least, that is the aim of most dialogue models). We will not continue the search for a definition of engagement but perhaps through further exploration we may move closer to understanding how engagement occurs. We will instead turn to our models of dialogue to find where engagement occurs in Socratic

⁴ Gardner (1995), p. 38.

⁵ See also Allen (1998).

Dialogue, Bohmian Dialogue, and Community of Inquiry. Our models of dialogue can be classified under the term Socratic method with the exception of Bohmian Dialogue as I will explain further on in this paper.

Socratic Dialogue and Community of Inquiry as Socratic method. How Bohm fits in!

For the purposes of this paper I will retain the traditional term *Socratic Method* to refer to the method used by Socrates in Plato's dialogues. Under this heading I have included: Community of Inquiry and Philosophy for Children, Bohmian Dialogue, Socratic Dialogue (see Diagram 1). Note that the arrows pointing towards the categories are those theorists or theories that have influenced the forms. Note also that I have included models of Lipman's Philosophy for Children under the category of Community of Inquiry. We can, of course, add more categories to the diagram, or extend on some of the categories, but I am not claiming that the diagram is an exhaustive list of approaches to the Socratic Method. For example, Nancy Letts uses a philosophical approach to teaching and learning called Socratic Discourse. Rather, what the categories are intended to do is represent what I think are some of the more commonly referred to approaches to teaching and learning that emphasize different aspects of the Socratic method. Methods used by Letts and others are likely to be variations of one or more of these categories.

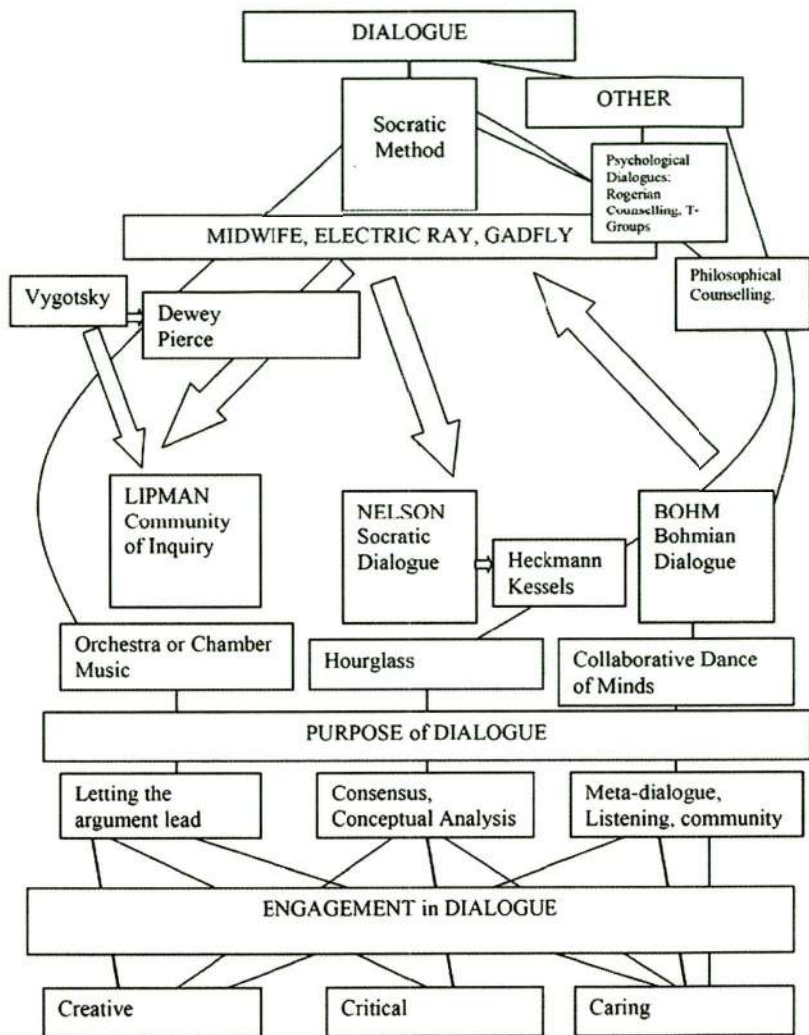


Figure 1: Models of Dialogue

These contemporary forms of dialogue are not the only processes of dialogue that claim to do ‘what Socrates did’. They are, however, an example of how different theorists represent the Socratic method. Metaphorically, Socrates has been referred to in many ways. Dana Villa describes the view of Socrates as ‘electric ray’ as follows:

“Through his own questioning, Socrates infects his listeners with his own perplexities, interrupting their everyday activities and paralyzing them with thought. Once drawn into the dissolvent current of thought, his conversational partners can no longer mechanically apply the general rules of conduct to particular cases, as they typically do in normal life. To ask not whether something is an instance of *x*, but what *x* itself is, is to dissolve the taken-for-granted ground of action.”⁶

While this is arguably one aspect of the Socratic method, another is that of Socrates as midwife, who could “help others give birth to what they themselves thought anyhow, to find the truth in their *doxa*”⁷. While these metaphors emphasize different aspects of the Socratic method, they are helpful to practitioners of this approach. While it is the aim of most practitioners to implement the Socratic method for its qualities of a midwife, sometimes it is helpful to implement a Socratic method that reflects a ‘gadfly’ when thought needs to be critical and participants in an inquiry do need to be somewhat ‘stung’ by critical questioning to focus dialogue. These metaphors show the different applications of the method.

The gadfly, the midwife and the electric ray are metaphorical representations of the Socratic method. Leonard Nelson and Matthew Lipman also represent the Socratic method through their own interpretations of what Socrates did. They too have their own metaphors pertaining to their methods (these will be explored later on but for the moment they can be recognized as an orchestra and an hourglass). Nelson’s Socratic Dialogue and Lipman’s Community of Inquiry are methods that can be reduced to the Socratic method but they cannot claim to *be* Socratic method. They emphasize different aspects of the Socratic method and both have a different purpose. David Bohm also has a model of dialogue. Bohm, originally a physicist, formulated a dialogical method whereby large groups of people inquire together. He

⁶ Dana Villa (1999), p. 206.

⁷ Ibid, p. 206.

identified the problems that people have with dialoguing together although, he asserted, they have no trouble dancing or playing. His model attempted to create a forum where people could dialogue freely together. The ‘meta-dialogue’ is central in Bohm’s approach (and is represented in his dialogue as a collaborative dance) where the actual process of dialogue and thought is as important, if not more important than the content. It is for this reason that the dialogue is not specifically ‘Socratic’, but I assert that it does have implications for philosophical inquiry.

Let us now turn to the first of our models of dialogue, the Socratic Dialogue.

Engagement in Socratic Dialogue

In short, Socratic Dialogue involves seven stages with an overall view to coming to consensus throughout the inquiry. This consensus represents the finding of truth and while proponents of SD recognize that this is more of a loose aim than a presupposed conclusion, this is what we journey towards in an SD.

While we do not have the scope in this paper to show a full background of the SD, in short, in Europe, Leonard Nelson was responsible for integrating philosophy into teaching and learning. Nelson set up experimental schools that strived to “encourage children to value truth and to build high self esteem amongst its students”⁸. Fisher notes that the explicit objective of Nelson’s inquiry is,

“to help students find an answer to their questions but the implicit aim is to force participants, through dialogue to express their thoughts clearly, to systematize judgment and to test their own beliefs against the arguments and views of others.”⁹

A major aim of Nelson’s method is to achieve consensus through close examination of arguments, e.g., clarification and conceptual analysis. Nelson’s theories impacted on education in Europe, and after his early

⁸ Murriss & Haynes (2001), p. 160.

⁹ Fisher (1995a), p. 26.

death, his student Gustav Heckmann continued to develop the model of Socratic Dialogue.

Nelson and his student Heckmann developed the method of dialogue that uses personal experience as the primary building block for understanding issues. Achieving consensus through dialogue has become its defining feature; it is this element that deepens inquiry. By being forced to examine every argument in order to reach consensus, this process requires members to be self-reflective so that they are able to gain a deeper understanding of the topic.

There are seven steps in the Socratic Dialogue method; (1) choose an appropriate question, (2) choose a personal experience to apply to the question, (3) find a core statement, (4) identify the experience in the core statement, (5) formulate a definition, (6) test the validity of the core statement, and (7) find counter-examples. These steps must be followed rigorously in order to finish the dialogue. However, if there is not enough time to complete all of the steps then no conclusion can be reached. It must be acknowledged at this point that there are various interpretations of Nelson's Socratic Dialogue. Suffice it to say that the Socratic Dialogue is a rigorous method involved with coming to understanding through constantly striving for consensus. This paper identifies that the engagement occurs through aiming for consensus.

Socratic Dialogue as Critical Engagement

Perhaps by looking at how the Socratic Dialogue form is represented by proponents of the dialogue we can see how and where engagement actually occurs. The hourglass is an image that resides with the Socratic Dialogue. It pertains to the process of coming to consensus about a definition or conclusion and the application of that definition or conclusion to the wider context.

“The graphic representation of an hourglass is often used to represent the structure of these [Socratic] dialogues: through various stages of consent and dissent, as many individual stories as there are participants are condensed and funneled down to a core statement, the

comprehension of which is expanded so as to yield as close to a universal definition as it is possible to reach.”¹⁰

The various steps in the dialogue form bring participants through this process of narrowing down and applying criteria. This conceptual analysis is the critical aspect of philosophical dialogue. Although it may be argued that Nelson’s dialogue method enlists thinking other than just critical thinking, it is this aspect that leads to engagement in the dialogue. Dries Boele argues that the rigour required by the process of narrowing down to consensus is where the dialogue gains its depth. Boele argues that if members find conclusive definitions, then they will all have come to agreement based on a common understanding.¹¹

Engagement can occur through critical thinking if it is not simply approached as a skill or activity. When we think of critical thinking we often think of the outcomes; being conclusive definitions or universal definitions. Lipman rather presents critical thinking as a process. While we are not looking towards Lipman’s model of dialogue yet, his view of critical thinking is helpful. He says that it is not simply engaging in an activity that will give us a solution or make a decision. It is “*thinking that (1) facilitates judgment because it (2) relies on criteria, (3) is self-correcting, and is (4) sensitive to context.*”¹². To Lipman, being a critical thinker is much more important than the simple activity of, let’s say, conceptual analysis. While this activity does enlist critical thinking, *being* critical involves such processes as being self-correcting in the creative process. It does involve, however, the narrowing down of certain concepts and the making of criteria. This forces participants to be concise in their thinking. These characteristics of critical thinking are at the very base of Socratic Dialogue. The hourglass is representative of this process of being critical and epitomizes how participants are critical in the dialogue, through a process of narrowing down to concise statements. While it should and could also be argued that Nelson’s dialogue enlists creative and caring thinking, the most engaging aspect of the dialogue is the critical element.

¹⁰ Roy (2001), p. 232.

¹¹ Boele (1998).

¹² Lipman (1991), p. 116.

Community of Inquiry

Let us now turn from Socratic Dialogue and critical engagement to a more creative thinking focused dialogue method; the Community of Inquiry. Historically, the Community of Inquiry began with Matthew Lipman and the Philosophy for Children program that he founded. Frustrated with the level of ability that university students had with engaging in collaborative inquiry, he decided that philosophical dialogue should start at an early age and hence he set about writing a method of inquiry and accompanying teachers' materials. Lipman was largely influenced by John Dewey and democratic education and his approach is based on these ideas.

In the next section I will explain the background of Philosophy for Children for those who may be unfamiliar with Lipman and his origins. Lipman was largely influenced by Dewey and his work on community and learning. Dewey came from the American pragmatist tradition; an approach to philosophy that rejected the Platonic notion of objective and absolute truth. To Dewey knowledge is not something to be discovered 'out there' in the world, but rather it emerges from within a community. Although philosophy provided a basis for Dewey's ideas, including his ideas on pedagogy, it was education that held the focus of most of his work. He was convinced that children needed to work together in collaboration in order to learn more effectively. He subsequently pioneered a progressive school, the renowned "Laboratory School".¹³ Recognizing the importance of dialogue and interaction, he valued the classroom not only as a place to prepare students for a democratic society, but also as a place for them to reflect upon the democratic practices of the wider community, and to question the values of the community of which they are a part. Schooling, he argued, should resemble and be integrated into the larger society. Dewey tapped into the idea that children had a propensity for curiosity, and thus saw problem-solving as a natural way for children to make sense of the world around them. He believed that if students engage together in classroom dialogue on issues that are significant to them, then this would have an impact on the way they make decisions in the wider community. Put another way,

¹³ For more on Dewey's Laboratory School, see Tanner (1997).

Dewey shaped his pedagogy around problem-solving and inquiry that dealt with real world issues.

Dewey's theories influenced Matthew Lipman who saw the social constructivist approach as central to learning and applied this to a philosophy curriculum for children. His program, Philosophy for Children is a pedagogical approach whereby children learn through engaging in philosophical inquiry. The Community of Inquiry is the process of dialogue that Lipman implemented in his curriculum. According to Lipman, children have a natural propensity for wonder, whereas many adults have ceased to question or search for meaning in their experiences, and as a result they "eventually become examples of passive acceptance that children take to be models for their own conduct".¹⁴ Contrary to Plato¹⁵, Lipman was certain that children could engage in genuine philosophical inquiry, provided that it was offered in a way that suited their own interests and abilities, and that they were given assistance and encouragement. Thus, in the late 1960's Lipman commenced development on a series of curriculum materials for children, consisting of novels and accompanying teachers' manuals, aimed at improving children's thinking skills, which he argued "would improve the relationship between deliberative judgments and democratic decision-making"¹⁶.

Lipman argues that philosophical inquiry and ethics go hand in hand, and should not be devoid of one another.¹⁷ Philip Cam also notes that ethics comes under the umbrella of philosophy.¹⁸ However, it must also have its own application. Children must be concerned with moral issues throughout their inquiry. Engaging students in dialogue in what Lipman calls a *philosophical community of inquiry* offers them the opportunity to explore ethical issues collaboratively. Dialogue is important in nurturing imagination in students, helping them gain a sense of community, as well as an understanding that trust and respect are integral to being a part of such a community. Understood in this way, Lipman's approach to integrating curriculum, teaching and learning offers more than a thinking skills program. Splitter and Sharp recognize that by reducing the

¹⁴ Lipman, Sharp & Oscanyan (1980), p. 31.

¹⁵ Plato thought that philosophy made younger people excessively contentious.

¹⁶ Freakley & Burgh (2000), p. 4.

¹⁷ Lipman (1988).

¹⁸ Cam (1994), p. 19-21.

Community of Inquiry to thinking skills only, it immediately marginalises the social, ethical, aesthetic, affective and political components that are as integral to the teaching of thinking as the skills themselves”¹⁹.

Dewey was not the first to develop the notion of a community of inquirers. In fact, it originated with Charles Peirce. Peirce made a connection between monologue and dialogue, and the construction of knowledge. His focus on dialogue as an intersubjective process is central to Philosophy for Children. Peirce’s initial concern was with the relationship between philosophical inquiry and scientific inquiry. He ascertained that scientific knowledge claims are vulnerable, and that unmediated knowledge is unattainable. Philosophical inquiry can make progress toward truth, but progress is reliant on the collaborative abilities and self-correction of the inquirers themselves. We cannot reasonably hope to attain individually,

“the ultimate philosophy which we pursue: we can only seek it; [in] the *community* of philosophers. Hence, if disciplined and candid minds carefully examine a theory and refuse to accept it, this ought to create doubts in the mind of the author of the theory himself.”²⁰

In sum, it is because there are no assurances regarding the certainty of scientific knowledge, through collaborating together in communities of inquiry we can engage with our own ideas collaboratively with others.

Another important figure in the history of inquiry-based learning is Lev Vygotsky. A proponent of social constructivism, Vygotsky’s theories align with those of Dewey’s and Peirce’s. His *zone of proximal development* is a space in which children’s natural capabilities can be furthered through their interaction with others. In what Vygotsky termed *scaffolding*, through both interaction with members of the wider community and with classroom peers, children’s individual achievements can be enhanced.²¹ Sprod argues that this “conceptual and reasoning space [is a space in which] children can operate with help from a group, but are not capable of operating in on their own”²². This is reflective of Peirce’s view on collaborative inquiry mentioned earlier. Vygotsky coined the term “Community of Learners”, which describes how different members of the

¹⁹ Splitter and Sharp (1995), p. 3.

²⁰ Peirce (2000).

²¹ Berk (2000), p. 259-69.

²² Sprod (2001), p. 148.

wider community can contribute to student-learning.²³ If the contributions are from a diverse range of people, then learning can be broadened, in much the same way as the Community of Inquiry uses different ideas and views to shape the dialogue in order to achieve better outcomes than inquiring alone would produce.

Vygotsky, like Dewey, also supported the view that learning can be enhanced through problem-solving. He argued that the process of finding solutions to problems in groups allowed children to learn more effectively than if they were to go through the thought processing independently. Such a view, as I have already noted, goes hand-in-hand with Lipman's notion of the Community of Inquiry. If learning together produces better results than individual endeavours or direct teaching, then we can identify philosophical inquiry as an appropriate model for education in a democracy.

In short, the process of Community of Inquiry is defined by a number of steps. There is no requirement for the number of participants, but ideally about 15 – 20 people should partake. Firstly, a stimulus material is presented to the group by the facilitator. This stimulus (generally a story) then elicits questions from the group. These questions are narrowed to focus on one central question. The inquiry continues on from this question with careful facilitation. As mentioned previously, Lipman promoted 'letting the dialogue lead', so facilitation is merely procedural. This means that the topic may stray from the initial prediction of the facilitator.

Engagement in the Community of Inquiry – Community of Inquiry as a creative process

Taking his lead from Socrates, Lipman discovered that engagement occurs through letting the argument determine the direction of the dialogue. Although there are steps involved in the dialogue in the lead up to inquiry, the inquiry itself needs little facilitation so that the participants can explore their own arguments. This paper will explore how engagement occurs through such a process. It is important to note that

²³ Berk (2000), p. 259-269.

in this paper, creative thinking and creativity are not the same thing. Lipman shows us that while creativity is also important in thinking, creative thinking is central to philosophical inquiry. Creative thinking according to Lipman is involved with making meaning through claims.

Let us first look at what we mean when we say 'letting the argument lead'. Lipman took this to be the guiding principle of his process of inquiry. He took this direction from Socrates who believed that by following the dialogue where it naturally follows will lead us to a greater exploration of the argument (and perhaps the arrival at truth). It is with this principle in mind that Lipman formulated the process of inquiry. The role of the facilitator in the inquiry is particularly important in letting the natural process of argument unfold with very little and merely procedural influence. The facilitator merely asks clarification questions so that the whole of the discussion is guided by the children's own contributions of their thoughts. While there is more thinking to be done by the children themselves, there is also a deeper level of engagement in the thinking than can be expected from formal non-participatory classroom routine. Children not only have to think, but they have to think for themselves. As we will explore later on in this paper, thinking for oneself is an intrinsically creative process. The argument that leads the discussion has come from the children and their own abilities to invent arguments, but this is also coupled with a critical process of thinking. Engaging in classroom inquiry and engaging with arguments of others requires critical consideration of the arguments that they present as well as looking critically at the arguments of others to identify any falsities or fallacies.

We have already stipulated that Lipman sees letting the argument lead as engaging participants in his inquiry. This approach means that the participants themselves, and not the facilitator, shape the dialogue. This is intrinsically creative, as Lipman suggests when he says, "I suspect it is, that thinking for ourselves is the most appropriate paradigm of creative thought..."²⁴. Perhaps Lipman describes it best when he points to 'invention' as being at the heart of creative thinking.²⁵ The dialogue is based on the ideas of the children and the argument that leads from it. Generating those ideas does require inventiveness on the children's part

²⁴ Lipman (1991), p. 204.

²⁵ Lipman (1991), p. 193.

and also such other elements as “originality, novelty, generativity, uniqueness, breakthrough, capacity, surprisingness, liberating quality, productivity, freshness, imaginativeness, inspiredness, capacity to synthesize”²⁶. Engagement of a creative kind occurs when we let the argument lead because the ideas must be developed by the participants themselves and cannot be predetermined. Lipman’s own analogy possibly best illustrates how he thinks engagement occurs when he points to the Community of Inquiry as chamber music where all involved must play at the same time judging whether to embellish on the music of the composer.²⁷ This is intrinsic to letting the argument lead; the idea of each musician capable of contributing to the music set out in front of them (like the stimulus material presented at the start of the Community of Inquiry). They must work together, but it is in essence the music (or in Lipman’s case the argument) that must be manipulated by the musicians (or dialogue participants).

We can see from this rather short analysis that the Community of Inquiry is exemplar of creative thinking and that engagement for Lipman occurs through a creative process of inquiry. While Lipman himself advocates critical and caring thinking as well as creative thinking, it is to creative engagement that he points to with his various explanations of how children are engaged and through the metaphors such as chamber music that he uses to illustrate his model of dialogue.

It is to caring thinking and engagement and Bohmian Dialogue that we shall now turn.

Bohmian Dialogue

Bohmian Dialogue, or ‘Dialogue’ as Bohm terms his method (we will continue to call it Bohmian Dialogue to avoid confusion), began out of a conversation that Bohm had with colleagues about the lack of dialogue in society. He argued that while people can easily dance and play with one another, there is no constructive talking happening where people can examine their thinking.

²⁶ Lipman (1991), p. 205.

²⁷ Lipman (1991), p. 95.

At the beginning of the dialogue no real agenda is set. This is to avoid any inculcation of ideas and to allow for the creative process to unfold (in the same vein as 'taking the dialogue where it leads' for Lipman). Ideally, the dialogue consists of 20-40 people to enable a large cross-section of ideas and opinions. Anything less than 20 would not give the cross-section and numbers over 60 make the session unruly. The group acts as a 'microcosm' of larger culture and hence the exchanges that happen in the session help participants to examine their own interactions in the wider community. Generally the session lasts 2 hours and participants should meet regularly for a short period of time, then members should interchange so that the group has a new dynamic to provide richer dialogue.

There is no facilitator per se in a Bohmian Dialogue. Although an organizer may be present, it is important that no one is in charge of the direction of the dialogue. This allows for participants to assume the role of leader and the creative process to continue unhampered.

Please note that Bohmian Dialogue has been included in this paper but does not actually claim to be philosophical or Socratic in origin. While Bohm may not acknowledge any links to the Socratic tradition, his approach to dialogue is aligned with methods that are truly Socratic. It is a questioning dialogue. Because there is no set agenda, participants are required to find a topic to inquire into. There is a certain sense of trying to find a truth about the topic or what Bohm terms collective understanding and this is at the heart of this inquiry.

Engagement in Bohmian Dialogue

Bohm wanted his dialogue to be a slow and careful process. His focus on listening as a way to engage participants makes his dialogue method less *rigorous* than the other dialogues but, nonetheless, still a way for participants to reflect critically. His model of dialogue he refers to as a collaborative 'dance of minds'. The idea of the dance as representing the point of engagement in the dialogue is telling for this paper. Because Bohm sees this analogy as important to his dialogue it can give us a better idea of the purpose of the dialogue if we look at it in terms of a dance. It shows to some extent that the focus of the dialogue is primarily

on the interaction between the participants in the dialogue and not so much on the content of the actual dialogue itself. As we have acknowledged earlier, Bohm does point to this as being central to the dialogue model – but this representation further solidifies where it is that engagement is at its most deep in Bohmian Dialogue. Perhaps we can simplify this to being a focus of ‘community’ in the dialogue. Although we will look at care and caring engagement more thoroughly in the following section, the link must be made here between community and caring. While there is not room to discuss this in great detail here, suffice it to say that caring thinking is central to the building of community. If participants in a group have care for each other and for the reason that they are brought together, then we may say that this is a community. This is what Bohm was trying to build with his dialogue model; a community that inquires together and reflects upon their interactions with each other (that I would say is caring as outlined below). It is for this reason that we will now look to caring engagement as a focus of the Bohmian model of dialogue.

Bohmian Dialogue as a caring engagement

Bohm himself does not discuss the notion of caring in great detail, so we will look towards our own definition of caring as it relates to dialogue for our own purposes. This definition will be informed by one of the proponents of Community of Inquiry, Ann Sharp as her view of caring thinking in the Community of Inquiry pertains to what I outline as care in Bohmian Dialogue. Sharp devotes an article entitled *The Other Dimension of Caring Thinking* to give care its due attention. Sharp relates her theory of caring thinking as a pedagogical process. She says that “as we become more conscious of the social and aesthetic dimension of the inquiry process, we find that it takes on more and more meaning if we truly care about its process and its outcomes.”²⁸

Sharp reflects Nel Noddings’ approach to caring explained below, in that it is more of a ‘pedagogical care’ than an emotional, popular view of

²⁸ Ann Sharp (2004), p. 10.

care²⁹. She argues that “knowledge is the growth in our capacity to care”, and that “(w)hat we care about reveals to others and to ourselves what really matters to us” (p. 10). However, from this particular view about caring being our capacity to care about outcomes and processes which is particularly helpful in this paper, Sharp precariously moves her definition of care in the pedagogical sense to a more emotional, popular view of care that has its basis in friendship and love. We are not concerned about this view of care in this paper. It is important to define care as a pedagogical caring rather than emotional insofar as we can see its benefits to the inquiry process rather than its personal and emotional value. We do not discount the importance of an emotional caring to children and adults, but the focus is on building a caring community rather than the cultivation of friendships. From this point onwards, when I refer to ‘caring thinking’ particularly in relation to Bohmian Dialogue, I am referring to the pedagogical form of caring rather than the emotional view.

Noddings describes caring as having a regard for the views and interests of others.³⁰ Moreover, it also requires reciprocity. For caring to be fulfilled, the “one-caring” must receive some sort of validation from the “cared-for”, in order for the act of caring to be complete. Caring, argues Noddings, “must somehow be completed in the other if the relationship is to be described as caring”³¹. Bohm’s dialogue also requires reciprocity, as well as a regard for the views and interests of others, which entails trust, tolerance, and fairmindedness.³² Opinions or points of view can be truly received only when others engage with those opinions or points of view. Because there is little or in most cases no facilitation in the Bohmian Dialogue, this caring approach becomes essential to the success of dialogue. When Bohm says that it is the communal process that is the most important part of the dialogue, even more than the content itself, it is obvious that caring in the pedagogical sense is intrinsic to the dialogue. It allows for participants to want to listen to each other and commit to the dialogue. It also helps participants accept differences. Regardless of disagreement, if the relationship is a

²⁹ For more on ‘pedagogical care’, see Hutt (1979).

³⁰ Noddings (1984), p. 9.

³¹ Noddings (1984), p. 4.

³² See Lipman (1988); Cam (1995).

caring one, then a commitment to the process of inquiry becomes paramount. Caring is, as Noddings says, integral to the success of the dialogue, as it is this element that helps participants to accept different views.

“Through such a dialectic, we are led beyond the intense, and particular feelings accompanying our deeply held values and beyond the particular beliefs to which these feelings are attached *to a realization that the other who feels intensely about that which I do not believe is still to be received.*”³³

In sum, caring helps participants value and accept different points of view.³⁴ Instead of placing importance on common interests, caring accommodates for differences. In an inquiry where participants may not share the same beliefs or values, they can still follow the dialogue from their own perspective and from the perspectives of others. In such cases, while participants acknowledge disagreement, they also are learning that the beliefs and values of the participants must be given equal respect and attention. Being accepted for having different beliefs or values is integral to Noddings’ notion of caring.

In philosophical dialogue and Bohmian Dialogue, caring thinking is both an act and a disposition. Noddings looks at the meta-dialogue and the processes of caring as being such things as listening, turn-taking, respecting, accommodating difference and so on, whereas Sharp recognizes caring as an attitude of caring for the process; what Gardner talks about when she identifies a dialogue as being particularly philosophical. Because Bohmian Dialogue relies on the contributions of the participants and has a focus on meta-dialogue, the care for the process is paramount in an inquiry. It is hence my assertion that in order for participants in the dialogue to engage fully, then they must care for the outcome of the dialogue and most importantly they must care for the process of philosophical inquiry that is collaborative; this process is a process of critical and creative thinking.

³³ Noddings (1985), p. 186, *emphasis* my own.

³⁴ See also Thomas (1997).

Conclusions

In this paper we have assessed the three different methods of engagement (simply put; consensus, letting the argument lead and listening) in terms of how they lead the participants to a deep level of critical, caring and creative engagement. We also need to ask if the methods should remain separate, or if some aspects of all of the dialogue methods would be beneficial to philosophical inquiry in general.

While we have simplified the three different approaches of dialogue down to critical, creative and caring thinking, it is through identifying what type of thinking that the dialogue engages its participants in, we can benefit from its focus. For example, a creative Community of Inquiry that rests on a perpetual openness to follow the argument where it leads can enlist elements of the Socratic Dialogue that is critical in nature when thought needs to become more critical. Similarly, a Socratic Dialogue can benefit from an understanding of Bohmian Dialogue with its focus of meta-dialogue and listening and caring thinking. It is important, however, that when we do begin to take the main focus of one dialogue model and use it to assist in another, that we do not lose the original purpose of the model that is set out by the author of the model. The structures put in place by theorists such as Nelson, Lipman and Bohm outlined in this paper help to avoid such pitfalls and keep the dialogue focused on a particular outcome. However, the conflation of terms has repercussions. We must ask, for example, when is a Socratic Dialogue a Socratic Dialogue if it does not follow the approach set out in the model of dialogue by Nelson and his students? Similarly, if a practitioner who claims to use Lipman's Community of Inquiry changes the procedure significantly, is it a genuine Community of Inquiry? While we must be careful not to conflate the terms and risk turning each into an unstructured dialogue that resembles a mere conversation, valuing where engagement occurs in each dialogue will benefit that particular disposition (critical, creative or caring) in the other dialogue methods.

I also recommend a further focus on caring thinking in philosophical inquiry. If we are to promote reflective thinking, as we have looked at briefly in this paper, then caring thinking is paramount. In education there is a focus on creative and critical thinking, but I contend that if inquiry is to have any impact on students then it is through their care for

inquiry, care for others and care for topics that they see as being meaningful to them that will be the basis for a lasting adoption of thinking dispositions.³⁵ Without a caring approach to thinking, then I contend that there will be no commitment to either inquiry or collaboration.

It is the assertion in this paper that if we recognize the creative engagement of the Community of Inquiry, the critical engagement of the Socratic Dialogue and the caring engagement in Bohmian Dialogue, then all models of philosophical dialogue (not just those mentioned in this paper) can use these dimensions of engagement to inform their own philosophical inquiry. The role of education is to find the usefulness of these different approaches to inquiry and it is my hope that by highlighting where different models of philosophical inquiry enhance dimensions of thinking that they may operate in concert together and spark discussion on how best to promote thinking through philosophy. What is unquestionable is the need in education to find a way to promote the development of thoughtfulness of which collaborative inquiry through philosophy is one possibility.

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³⁵ See Davey (2004) for more information on caring thinking.

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Hester Reeve

No Agenda

Preface

In the spirit of Dialogue, I have maintained the informal conversational tone of the original conference presentation. I speak from the point of view of one who has been engaged in David Bohm's Dialogue for ten years (I participate from time to time in the Lancaster Dialogue group, I have been trained as a facilitator of Prison Dialogue by Peter Garrett and attended sessions with him at HMP Blakenhurst (indeed that experience fully convinced me of the radical and effective nature of Dialogue), I ran mini Dialogue groups at HMP Lancaster Castle within a communications study program, and recently set up a Dialogue group within an art school context.¹ In the following account, I will draw upon my own experience of Dialogue, David Bohm's book "On Dialogue" (1996) and the key paper he co-authored with Don Factor and Peter Garrett 'Dialogue - A Proposal' (1991) which activated the philosophy into a concrete practice. Indeed, I rely heavily on quotation since the voices of 'others' are relevant in such a study and, in this subject, more experienced and knowledgeable than I. I do not claim to be any authority on Dialogue nor do I set up an academic comparison with other dialogic methodologies and practices²; my intention at "The Challenge of Dialogue" was to give voice to the radical nature of Bohm's Dialogue – particularly in its call for 'No Agenda'– within a conference that I knew would largely focus on Socratic Dialogue. Lastly, I will not go into biographical details about American born David Bohm (1917-92) suffice to say that he is regarded as one of the foremost theoretical physicists of his generation.

¹ I would like to acknowledge Sally Jeffery (Lancaster Dialogue – the longest existing Dialogue Group in the UK), Peter Garrett (Prison Dialogue) and Helen Blejerman (Sheffield Hallam University Fine Art Dialogue) for their inspirational input into my experience of Dialogue groups.

² It should be noted that both the above texts carry more authority on the subject than my own paper, and I provide a full reference for them in my bibliography.

Speaking silence

So first: no voice, no voices. Silence. A ‘blank page’, no words. A not-knowing that is not empty and so cannot be ignored. No place to go, not even inside myself (as in away from you) because something in this silence is fundamentally public. Yet here I am unfolding in all my subjectivity before ... what? Yes, before and with you but also within something else; a not-knowing that is not empty, not abstract even. More a type of place. And so we sit in a place-silence that feels admittedly uncomfortable but excitedly dimensional. I start to feel my larynx in that place, the tiny bones in my ears climb over your words. No, not your words, they are not simply your words anymore. And slowly – and only sometimes – I feel my voice take shape in the centre of this place, carved but not complete, a strenuous sensing of freedom, of feeling out beyond ‘me’ and into the sound of what needs to be said. Something seemingly impossible allows for the power of the possible and thinking touches its matter.

This may seem a strange way to open my introduction to Dialogue but my hope is to have stirred you, the reader, into realizing that Bohm’s Dialogue is not strictly centred upon what other practices take to be dialogue’s central tenet, communication:

“Communication has been ailing in the human race for a long time and Dialogue is concerned with that. But the primary purpose of Dialogue is not to communicate. It is much deeper. It addresses the blocks in communication, not merely to understand them, but to meet them directly. It is aimed at seeing resistances to communication. In Dialogue we are ready to raise topics serious enough to cause trouble. But while we are talking we are interested in being aware of what’s going on inside us and between us.”³

Most of us would say that we understand and respect silence and yet rarely is it an active ingredient of any of our discussions. Meetings, whether they be at conferences, in universities, cafes or conducted on our TV screens, never actively accommodate silence. Indeed it is not

³ David Bohm ‘On Meaning, Purpose and Exploration in Dialogue,’ taped conversation August 1990.
www.david-bohm.net/dialogue/dialogue_exploration.html.

tolerated and causes discomfort when arising. However, I am not suggesting silence as a practice. Somehow there's a negation in that but it is perhaps an appropriate place to start this exposition on David Bohm's 'Dialogue.' Its central and radical tenet of 'No Agenda' means anything can be a content at its meetings:

"In the dialogue group we are not going to decide what to do about anything. This is crucial. Otherwise we are not free. We must have an empty space where we are not obliged to do anything, nor to come to any conclusions, nor to say anything or not say anything."⁴

But with the freedom of no agenda comes the strange anxiousness of not knowing where to start, or how to start. This extraordinary sensation overcomes me at the start of every Dialogue I attend, no amount of experience can wear it thin, so to speak. So, inevitably, Dialogue groups usually start in silence, a far more strenuous and discomforting silence than can be related by an empty page or a minute's silence before a conference presentation. It is a silence issued by those gathered together acknowledging that in there being 'no agenda' each of us must attend to the potential of 'what needs to be said?' There is no explicit methodology for arriving at this, the group has to attempt to discover it together each time they meet and create a shared conversation.

For all the potential pretension of what has been said so far, Dialogue is not, as some of its critics have insinuated, a mere navel gazing practice. No agenda means that whilst Dialogue's aim is not to solve any problems, problem solving is often the result of its process. No agenda means that there is no onus on the participants to come to any resolution on a topic or to reach a full understanding of things and yet a deep sense of understanding is often a consequence. Whilst Bohm was strictly clear that Dialogue does not aim at therapy, often participants leave a meeting with a clear sense of deep self-examination. So no agenda is not equivalent to *laissez faire*, a point I will return to in my ending section.

⁴ David Bohm, *On Dialogue* (1996), p. 19.

Are we really meeting when we meet?

“You may ask, if we have such pressing problems why we should waste our time just talking. But I say that our problems originate because we can’t engage in this activity of just talking together, and when we try to deal with our serious problems, we find that we are not meeting.”⁵

Before I explain Bohm’s outline of Dialogue and describe its ‘principles,’ I would like to bring attention to the assumption that when we meet together in our various groups we are in fact *meeting*. The intention to truly meet and share meaning together is of prime importance to Dialogue’s success, it is an energy which must not dissipate after the first word of the meeting is – eventually - struck. There seems much at stake to me in this *intention* to meet. So whilst there may be no agenda, there is a premeditated agenda to truly meet, a sense that something is at stake.

For Bohm, Dialogue (etymologically dia-logos) means the process of using words together as a movement of meaning made possible through a shared conversation: “The image it gives is of a river of meaning flowing around and through the participants.”⁶

This ‘movement,’ the process of the dialogue, is more important than the topics which arise for the group in session. Although such fluidity may threaten a newcomer, it allows for both a conversation around any particular content emerging and also an opportunity for the group to examine the usually ‘not visible to consciousness’ basis of the ways in which we use and mis-use words and facts in conversation. Ultimately such an ‘attentiveness’ has the potential to bring about *new* ideas and understandings together. In this way, it is thinking as an active principle rather than thought.

Garret has stated that it is this difference between thinking and thought that is so crucial to Dialogue meetings as he sets out below with Bohm and Factor:

“As we proceeded it became increasingly clear to us that this process of Dialogue is a powerful means of understanding how thought functions. We became aware that we live in a world produced almost entirely by human enterprise and thus, by human thought. The room in which we

⁵ David Bohm quoted in a Lancaster Dialogue Group leaflet.

⁶ Dialogue: A Proposal, by David Bohm, Donald Factor and Peter Garrett, p. 3.

sit, the language in which these words are written, our national boundaries, our systems of value, and even that which we take to be our direct perceptions of reality are essentially manifestations of the way human beings think and have thought. We realize that without a willingness to explore this situation and to gain an insight into it, the real crises of our time cannot be confronted.”⁷

Thought here is taken holistically – including emotion, desires, as well as intellectual products of the mind. Bohm outlines in “On Dialogue” how thought has become the ‘boss reality’ in our contemporary culture, knowing many sophisticated contents and experiences and yet, “*it doesn’t know what it is doing.*”⁸ Dialogue’s aim is to allow for a true attempt at meeting/sharing meaning together so that we can observe thought at work. In order to do this the process encourages what can be termed a ‘meta-dialogue’ within the Dialogue, which explores and sometimes confronts the attitudes and opinions exhibited through the words spoken and exposes the inevitable points where the participants are failing to really meet. ‘No agenda’ means that there is no question of success or failure. This enables an unpressurised situation, an attending to the task in hand and an emphasis upon consciously attempting to meet together during every minute of the meeting.

So it is part of the many paradoxes that Dialogue intends to face, that in its call for no agenda, it does indeed have a prior agenda to truly meet. In order to get across the crucial difference such an intention makes to ‘reality’ or ‘human experience’ or ‘potential new cultural meanings’ I’d like to use an example from a German friend who I met for a drink in Berlin city centre at the start of the conference ‘The Challenge of Dialogue’. Her story, although about two people whereas Dialogue is about a group, really struck me as an appropriate indication of the significance of the space that Dialogue seeks to open up in its *intention* to meet:⁹

My friend’s relationship is 7 years old and somewhat stale, both people leading busy lives spread between London and Berlin. She had been feeling for some time that her partner was in denial that their relationship was facing problems and avoiding making any effort towards

⁷ Ibid, p. 2.

⁸ David Bohm, On Dialogue (1996), p. 52.

⁹ I, of course, relate this story with my friend’s permission.

their resolution let alone signaling that he wished to discuss the subject. Eventually my friend suggested the idea that they should set 'appointments' with a fixed duration where they would meet specifically to discuss the problems of the relationship and nothing else. These were to be explicitly frank along with a specific intention to meet outside of all other concerns. The first meeting – held only a week before our get together – seemed at first to go 'really wrong.' My friend's partner sat silent for what seemed an eternity, my friend edged a few small questions, but nothing came in response. So she too sat in silence obeying their remit not to speak about anything other the relationship problem. Finally, her partner began to shake a little and spluttered out that he was really frightened of all the things she was going to tell him off about. My friend was astonished; she had never really told him off about anything before. She assured him that she only had one axe to grind – and that was that he never talked to her about what was troubling him but now that he had finally done so, she felt quite positive about their situation. Realizing that she was not going to tell him off about anything, he also felt relieved. The appointment's time was up. They had decided nothing, there was no strategy on the table, there had been no real concrete 'content' of conversation but they had truly met and now it seems the relationship is moving forward in strength. My friend seemed quite shocked by what it was that affected the change: the decision to meet, the ability, in this instance, to really meet. A freedom had been opened up.

Dialogue – An outline of the practice

A Dialogue group initially seems not very different to any other discussion group. A group of 20-40 people is considered optimum, but groups can be smaller and some have been larger, sitting in a circle talking together. It is open to anybody and needs no special type of room. Typically a meeting lasts a day with 2 hourly breaks. The Lancaster Dialogue group meets once a month like this and has been running for almost 20 years. Prison Dialogue has some regularly running day groups but also runs self contained 2-day sessions in distribution jails where the inmate population is always changing. The Sheffield Hallam University

Fine Art Dialogue group is to run monthly for a 4-hour session. This is a somewhat short length of time but students face a busy curriculum and our experimental run showed that art students take to Dialogue with a very direct openness.

Attendance at all these groups is voluntary although with Prison Dialogue it is required that members of staff from Governors to officers also be present so that the whole culture of a prison shares a conversation outside the hierarchical constraints of the regime. These groups also make use of facilitators but the expectation is that once Dialogue is underway, the role becomes unnecessary.

As I have already maintained, the group meets with no agenda. Although there is usually no facilitator and certainly no leader, someone will remind participants at the start of the meeting of this and also that everything said is to stay within the room and need not lead to any action or outcome afterwards. Aside from the above, there are no hard and fast rules or methodologies that a Dialogue group must follow:

“Because the nature of Dialogue is exploratory, its meaning and its methods continue to unfold. No firm rules can be laid down for conducting a Dialogue because its essence is learning - not as the result of consuming a body of information or doctrine imparted by an authority, nor as a means of examining or criticizing a particular theory or programme, but rather as part of an unfolding process of creative participation between peers.”¹⁰

With new groups the principles of Dialogue are shared before the meeting starts. Peter Garrett, who formulated the principles I outline below, often uses small exercises with participants to illustrate experientially how we usually fail to meet or make meaning together coherently. Within a prison context, the principles also enable facilitation. At points where Dialogue breaks down one member of the group can refer back to the principles in order to show where the group or an individual is failing to meet.

¹⁰ Dialogue – A Proposal, David Bohm, Donald Factor and Peter Garrett, p. 1.

Bohm's Dialogue – principles of the practice

Listening/Attentiveness

Formulated within Bohm's Dialogue, listening does not simply mean 'hearing the voice of others who are speaking'. Hearing what others have to say necessitates that we stand apart from what Bohm termed our 'internal observer' which governs and blocks us from seeing our assumptions. In effect, when we are normally listening we are more often filtering what we are hearing through such internal assumptions. Bohm saw this as a key factor blocking effective understanding and communication. The issue here is that we mistakenly think we are seeing the world in a truthful, objective or dependable way:

"What makes this situation so serious is that thought generally conceals this problem from our immediate awareness and succeeds in generating a sense that the way each of us interprets the world is the only sensible way in which it can be interpreted. What is needed is a means by which we can slow down the process of thought in order to be able to observe it while it is actually occurring."¹¹

Assumptions are of course inevitable but they lie often invisibly as the root cause of many conflicts because we refuse deep down to acknowledge anything that does not comply with our view of 'reality out there'. For Bohm, even rational thinking was an assumption, often revealing conditioning rather than thinking. In a Dialogue group, as a result of truly listening, attention is placed upon assumptions inherent in something that has just been said. Although the flavour of such an interjection is usually an unpicking of what was said rather than an admonition of the individual who said it, this can be a very tricky experience for a newcomer. Some participants have walked out of the group on such occasions, unable to give their words up to the group and suspend their responsibility for them. Such conflict is not avoided during meetings; it is part of what Dialogue seeks to face up to.

¹¹ Ibid, p. 3.

Speaking/Authoring

It is vital that people voluntarily belong and contribute to the Dialogue and for all the importance of active listening, active authoring is just as essential to the process. In 'Dialogue – A Proposal,' Bohm, Factor and Garrett make it quite clear that the only way to tackle the roots of the crisis facing humanity today – i.e. the processes which interfere with communication between nations and within organizations – is to create a space within which individuals can author and examine communicative process itself. The suggestion that authoring in this context is more a responding to 'what needs to be said' and not a 'what I want to say' is really instructive and enabling to a newcomer. I personally find it very powerful in a meeting when a participant is speaking and it is clear that they are saying something that they have never said before, that perhaps they did not know they even thought until that point. In this way, authoring in Dialogue is tantamount to taking a risk – saying what needs to be said can mean saying things that might be contested or taken as non-negotiable in a non-Dialogue situation. It can also lead to enlightening ideas and sometimes a relieving laughter. What is important to note is that once one commits to the Dialogue process, authoring is really more like contributing to a group shape between all those present, a collective learning, something cultural in essence rather than personal:

“As a microcosm of the large culture, Dialogue allows a wide spectrum of possible relationships to be revealed. It can disclose the impact of society on the individual and the individual's impact on society. It can display how power is assumed or given away and how pervasive are the generally unnoticed rules of the system that constitutes our culture. But it is most deeply concerned with understanding the dynamics of how thought conceives such connections.

It is not concerned with deliberately trying to alter or change behavior or to get the participants to move toward a predetermined goal. Any such attempt would distort and obscure the processes that the Dialogue has set out to explore. Nevertheless, changes do occur because observed thought behaves differently from unobserved thought. Dialogue can thus become an opportunity for thought and feeling to play freely in a continuity of deeper or more general meaning. Any subject can be

included and no content is excluded. Such an activity is very rare in our culture”.¹²

My experience of Dialogue is that the above makes for a real sense of freedom in meeting together – a freedom that frees the voice.

Suspension/Disassociation from ego and identity

Bohm, Factor and Garret have declared that suspension is one of Dialogue’s most radically new contributions to already existing forms of group discussion and lies at Dialogue’s very heart. It is also hard to grasp and even harder to practice; it is *the* challenge of Dialogue.

As mentioned earlier, Bohm described how our culture encourages us to view the world from an internal observer. Hence we tend to get a strong emotion and sense of ‘do or die’ around our ideas and beliefs, failing to recognize that they are representations that we can choose to stand aside from. We tend to allow our ideas to become our identity, mistaking them for a factual reality. Hence we argue against or seek to avoid anything that might contradict what we mistakenly see to be objectively true. If we do manage to acknowledge some turbulence in our assumptions of reality, then we usually try to change things in the so called external reality, failing to realize that the ‘wrong’ thing we are searching for is also hidden somewhere in the back of ourselves and needs addressing.

We should not, of course, feel guilty for our opinions nor should we try and suppress any responses to those of others; suspension is all about trying to disassociate our sense of identity with any one opinion or belief in order that any number of opinions and experience can attempt coherence together. Another way of putting this is to say that, in Dialogue, when you hear another’s thought, it becomes your own thought. In such a way the discussion can unfold in an impersonal and non-judgmental curiosity:

“A key assumption that we have to question is that our thought is our own individual thought. Now, to some extent it is. We have some independence. But we must look at it more carefully ... I’m trying to say

¹² Ibid, p. 4.

that most of our thought in its general form is not individual. It originates in the whole culture and it pervades us. ... This deep structure of thought is what is common, and this is what we have to get at.”¹³

Again, following no agenda, the point in Dialogue is not to agree upon some objective reality – that is to follow a literal rather than a participatory thought process.

It is through suspension that another of Dialogue’s radical tenets is made possible – the confrontation of paradox. Bohm maintained that another of our problems in truly meeting and sharing meaning was that we too readily see difficult situations as problems when often they are paradoxes. Paradoxes require a different type of attention:

“... if the mind treats a paradox as if it were a real problem, then since the paradox has no ‘solution’, the mind is caught in the paradox forever ... the distinction is important, not only psychologically for the individual, but also for human relationships, and ultimately for establishing a proper order of society.”¹⁴

Bohm gives the example of nationalism. Clearly within a nation people agree to certain principles and as individuals would never, for example, harm their own children. And yet when a belief or part of their land is under threat from another nation, the same people are willing to forgo such trenchant values killing many innocent men, women and children in order to ‘protect’ their sense of nationhood. If we treat this as a problem we will never resolve the situation. Instead a ‘safe’ opportunity needs to be given for people to examine the paradoxical pattern of their behaviour:

“Thus, it is now more urgent than ever that we give attention not only to this outward state of affairs, but also to the inward dullness and non-perceptiveness which allows us to go on failing to notice the paradox in thinking and feeling in which the outward confusion has its origin. ... A mind caught in such a paradox will inevitably fall into self-deception, aimed at the creation of illusions that appear to relieve the pain resulting from the attempt to go on with self-contradiction. Such a mind cannot possibly see the relationships of the individual and society as they really are.”¹⁵

¹³ David Bohm, *On Dialogue* (1996), p. 51.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 64.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 67.

Respect for each other and the process

Respect allows for fellowship and needs little explanation. But it should be pointed out that this means even in our desire for coherence we must not impose coherence upon one another – coherence needs to be discovered together. From my experience, this sense of respect is a very active force facilitating Dialogue in the prison context. Indeed it leads to a sense of confidence and a sense of participation in value making since it breaks through institutional frames of thinking. The following feedback from two of my fellow art school dialoguers testifies to this also:

“Dialogue should be a compulsive part of the course, as there are very few supportive/safe platforms within academia/the institution where you can hold a discussion – free from judgment. ... Dialogue can use its platform – this gap to actively research and educate by creating the spaces to do so – a collaborative space which *doesn't* exist anywhere else.”¹⁶

“This radical method of formal discussion with no agenda oils the brain and no doubt produces creativity in a mysterious way – perfect! For me, the importance of the element of compassion shared with fellow human beings can never be underestimated. I am glad to say there was a good amount of it in the stickiness of the setting.”¹⁷

¹⁶ Sarah Smizz, L6 student Sheffield Hallam University Fine Art Department, email with feedback to the first series of Dialogues, 2009.

¹⁷ Johny Drury, L5 student Sheffield Hallam University Fine Art Department, email with feedback to the first series of Dialogues, 2009.

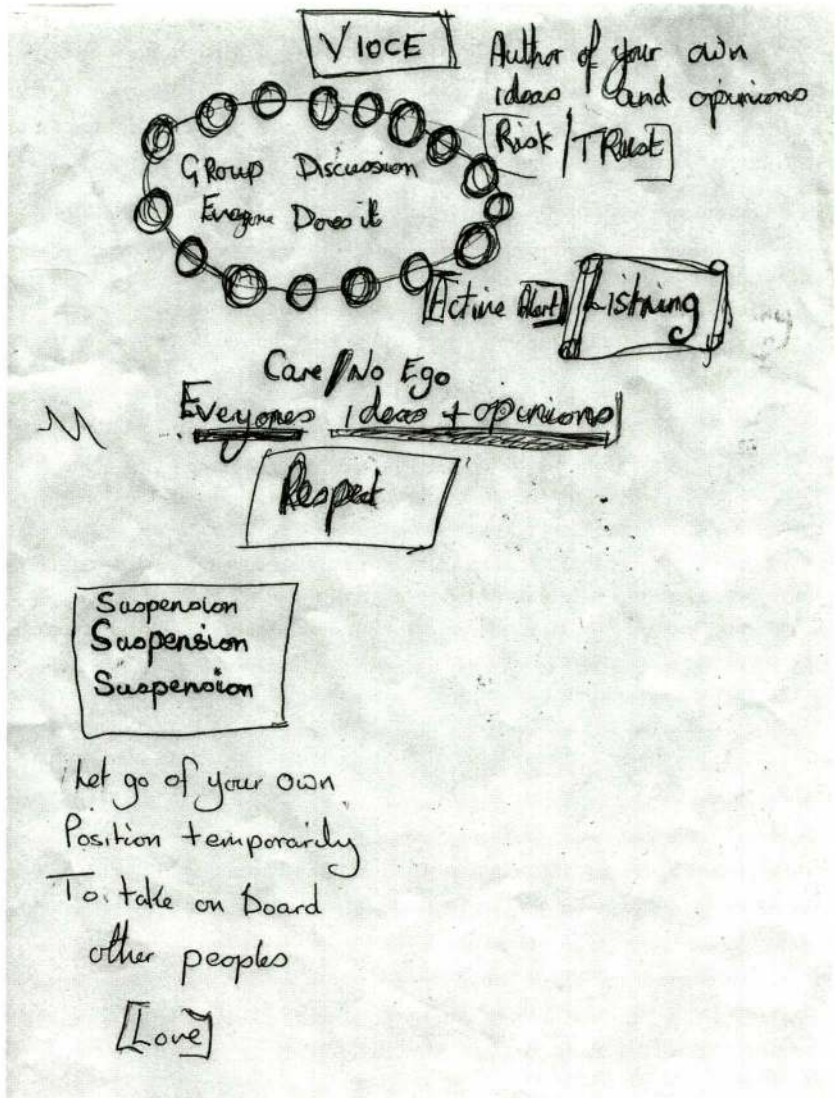


Figure 1. Prison inmate's notation of the 4 principles of Dialogue

It must be pointed out that for all the worth of these principles, there is no set methodology for how they are applied in practice. They cannot act as a guarantee; indeed they may more likely guarantee frustration. Often the unexpected dynamics that arise due to the free flow of Dialogue lead to situations that rule out even remembering the principles exist:

“This makes me think of a conversation I once had with David Bohm during the dialogue that took place in Denmark several years ago. ... The dialogue lasted several days. The inevitable frustration was steadily building up and, towards the end, reaching boiling point. ... I was also getting somewhat upset because David had introduced the dialogue with his theories about proprioception and suspension but nobody seemed to be doing it. However, David himself didn't seem to mind the chaos that was developing. On the contrary, he looked very pleased and did nothing (or very little) in the sense of intervention to reduce the tension. This puzzled me, so during the coffee break I went up to him and asked him if this is the sort of dialogue he had in mind. To my surprise he said, 'Yes, it's going very well.' He explained to me that this place (the remote holiday camp) was ideal because nobody could walk out or stay away. ... The presence of so many different people guarantees that nobody can get his way. Whatever 'solution' is being suggested by anybody (to reduce the tension and frustration) is immediately rejected by the others. That means, all exits are closed. David's theory was that people will first try everything else and only when there is absolutely no other possibility, they may remember what he said about proprioception and suspension.”¹⁸

In the same piece, Heuvel expounds the relevance of sitting with frustration when it arises within Dialogue:

“In fact, I would put it a bit stronger and say that frustration is the potential that will drive us deeper into unknown territory if only we would be willing to take it not as something to get rid of but as something that is trying to tell us something.”¹⁹

Such an attentive attitude reflects what Bohm referred to as the “proprioception of thought” where everyone has disassociated from their assumptions and inner position and is actively listening to the words

¹⁸ William van den Heuvel, 'Frustration and Subversion'
http://www.davidbohms.net/dialogue/frustration_subversion.html

¹⁹ Ibid.

being authored and participating in a free movement of reflection and meaning generation:

“Everything can move between us. ... Truth does not emerge from opinions; it must emerge from something else – perhaps from a more free movement of the tacit mind.”²⁰

My experience at Lancaster Dialogue is that at certain points we manage to really all move beyond ‘where we are at’ and make what seems like a ‘breakthrough’ in understanding or relating to the world. Of course, often we find ourselves merely ‘chatting’ and sometimes in frustration we get angry or explode into laughter. This sensation feels fundamentally creative and yet not individualistic. For me, it is culture-in-formation.

What is at stake?

It feels apt to close this paper about Bohm’s Dialogue with the words and experience from one of its most long-standing practitioners:

“As a member of a dialogue group in Lancaster that has been meeting consistently for 16 years, I think that possibly the most remarkable fact about the group is that it has survived for this length of time. It is an open group, and the membership has changed over time, with a few of the original participants still attending, and three new members in recent months.

My view is that what we attempt – a group conversation without facilitator, set agenda or overarching theoretical or philosophical viewpoint – is distinctive and counter-cultural. Although we started as a large group, and with Dialogue – A Proposal (Bohm, Factor and Garrett) as a guiding text, we now average 8 or 9 members at each monthly meeting, and have no reference point other than our shared experience.

The difficulties encountered sometimes appear insurmountable. The original intentions of Bohm and others may not have envisaged such a long running group, and may also have been idealistic in the face of these difficulties. But the practice of continuing to stay with them, uncomfortable as this can often be, is very unusual. The psychological and cultural norm would be to encourage an avoidance of discomfort,

²⁰ David Bohm, *On Dialogue* (1996), p. 27, p. 35.

and a tendency to find a group where assumptions can be agreed upon and shared rather than revealed.

The experience of the individuals within the group, and their reasons for attending vary considerably. The fact that they continue to attend suggests to me a consideration beyond the meeting of personal needs is at play.”²¹

There is a suggestion here of the process being counter-cultural, in other words radical. For me, the aspect of ‘no agenda’ plays a large role in this. Heuvel goes further and suggests that Dialogue is healthily subversive and anarchistic. He explains how the original meaning of the word anarchy is not chaos but ‘the absence of an arch’ and Dialogue satisfies this with its absence of hierarchy, rules and its ‘spaciousness’ to allow ‘everything’ to be considered equally, including ‘nothing’. Chaos, however, does emerge within Dialogue, but if the group is committed attention-wise and time-wise to ‘meeting’, then a sense of order amazingly somehow emerges of its own accord. This is an allowing for rather than a controlling. It is no doubt due to his dialogic learning that Heuvel can make the following radical, insightful claim:

“Based on this surprising discovery I now tend to think of anarchy as a necessary condition for the emergence of coherence. I.e. there appears to be a natural tendency towards coherence but this is a phenomenon that happens spontaneously in the process of free-flowing dialogue.

If we are honest we have to admit that the subversive character of dialogue is also a threat to us personally. What are we to do with this? To what extent, are we willing to apply our own insights? I think, this is leading to the question of identity or the self. Or rather to the ending of the self, which I believe requires passion.”²²

In answer to the question what is at stake with Dialogue, with ‘no agenda’? Fundamentally, WE are at stake.

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²¹ Sally Jeffery, Lancaster Dialogue (original member), email 2009.

²² William van den Heuvel, Dialogue and Anarchy, p. 3.

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Petra von Morstein

On Dialogue: Moral Freedom and Necessity

Dialogue puts the most singular word “I” in the plural. An ‘I’ and another ‘I’ are connected in a common space of perception, thought, feeling, experience. Necessarily each interlocutor has a different and unique perspective within that space. The difference may be very slight, or it may be immense. Regardless, the interlocutors are in one space of human experience. There is no human experience without its articulation.

To speak with each other is a basic way of manifesting our humanity. Human community and human individuality require that we speak authentically and hear properly. If, for whatever reason, we retreat from the word, we retreat from the world and ourselves in the world. For my experience I need your hearing, your response, our common humanness to live with it and understand it. Thus my experience is also always ours.

MY-NESS

“My parents, my husband, my brother, my sister.”

I am listening in a cafeteria at breakfast.

The women’s voices rustle, fulfill themselves

In a ritual no doubt necessary.

I glance sidelong at their moving lips

And I delight in being here on earth

For one more moment, with them, here on earth,

To celebrate our tiny, tiny myness.

Czeslaw Milosz

Language, says Heidegger, is the house of Being. It is impossible to be human without communication. The sense of being-with is essential for being human.

Yet, as any of our perceptual senses this sense can be deadened, neglected, negated.

The basic role of dialogue in learning and understanding, in moral and political decision making, in scientific and other intellectual research is woven through the history of philosophy from the ancient Greeks to

the present. The word ‘dialogue’ has remained vivid with its original meaning. ‘Δια’ means through, across, apart, twofold; it comes from the word ‘δύο’, two. ‘Λεγειν’ means to speak, to gather; it is tied to the word ‘λογος’, word. ‘Διαλεγασται’ is to speak with each other. Dialectics is the name of a variety of similar philosophical methods based on the view that human consciousness is dialectical by nature.

Two of the greatest Greek philosophers, to whose work all subsequent philosophy may indeed but be a variety of footnotes, Socrates and Plato, did philosophical work through dialogue, through the art of conversation, ‘διαλεκτικη τεχνη’, in which every assumption, statement, belief is met with by enquiry. Curiosity as to what an utterance articulates is unceasing. Thus vivid continual attention to the subject matter has to keep the dialogue going. This in turn is tied to the insight that, however much we know at any stage of our exploration, there is always more to understand, there are always questions left to be asked. Attention is thus tied to humility regarding the limits of what we can know about anything. Attention is a cognitive ability which lets us know our questions. Plato described philosophy as enquiry for which the attitudes of curiosity and wonderment are of the essence.

There have been more or less appealing varieties of διαλεκτικη τεχνη. In the 5th century BC, notably with Aristotle, it was most poignantly manifested by drawing absurd conclusions from an interlocutor’s hypothesis. Suppose, someone assumes that every action is fully determined. An absurd conclusion from this would be that we have no moral responsibility. Therefore the assumption stands in need of questioning and revision. The Sophists cheapened this method by using it as an instrument for winning arguments. The art of dialogue degenerated into the art of the winning and losing game of debate. Such misuse was far from Socrates, the – perhaps still – greatest dialectician of all. His “I know that I know nothing” (Socratic irony, so-called) is an inevitable consequence of the art of dialogue, the dialectic art of conversation. It consists in an interminable search for truth by question and answer which must transcend any interlocutor’s egotistical purposes. There is no conclusion in any endeavour of investigation and learning which is hermetic to questions, there is no theory which precludes refutation – even if no refutation has been found yet or is in sight. You recognize Karl Popper’s philosophy of ‘Conjectures and Refutations’ – a major and consequential footnote to Plato in the 20th century. Even

private thought must be dialectical.¹ Inner monologue then is inner dialogue – which is amply confirmed by famous literary inner monologues and soliloquies. Plato again:

“Thought and speech are the same thing; but the silently occurring internal dialogue of the soul with itself has been specially given the name of thought.”

Dialectic, dialogue, is movement toward synthesis, of gathering (λεγειν) and integrating all available relevant views into the most truthful possible (re)presentation of the real. The Greek word for this aim is συναγωγή. It is poignant that Jews refer to the synagogue as school, a place of learning and seeking understanding.

In dialogue and dialectic, speaker and utterance, what is meant and what is said, are not to be severed. Or if they are, they will have to be synthesized again. For the best known of the Stoics, Seneca, dialectic consisted of two major aspects: things said and meant, and expressions by which they are said and meant. These were aspects, not parts, of one and the same. Wittgenstein’s following remark can be read as a footnote to Seneca:

“[] every word has a different character in different contexts, at the same time there is one character it always has: a single physiognomy.”²

In ‘Passengers with Heavy Loads’³ Joseph Roth speaks of poor people who “speak in half sentences and stunted sounds. They keep silent not from wisdom but from poverty.”

“But in the scraps these people do say is expressed the sorrow of an entire world. They have only to say “butter” and right away you understand that butter is something very remote and inaccessible, not something you spread with a knife on a piece of bread, but a gift from heaven, where the good things of this world pile up as inaccessibly as in a shop window.”

In the Middle Ages dialectic got confined to disputation governed by scholastic and scholarly circles in adherence to the laws of formal logic. The syllogism reigned supreme.

¹ Sophist 263 e, Theaetetus 189 e.

² PI p. 181.

³ First published 1923, recently in NYRB 5 Dec 2002.

In the 18th century Fichte introduced the triad thesis, antithesis, synthesis. Kant worked with this in such an intricate way that any appearance of rigidity was removed from this triad and its three terms emerged as aspects of an interminable process of searching truth. Kant showed in some basic philosophical contexts that thesis and antithesis need not contradict each other. Hegel makes this thought more patently evident and also more accessible for with Hegel we can know trace it in our everyday lives and conversations. Hegel reconnected us with the pre-Socratic Heraclitus and with Plato's Parmenides and accounted for dialectic as a world process – so that the dialectic method of learning and philosophy turned out to be the only realistic one. Marxist dialectical materialism became a controversial variant of this. This is not for us to consider tonight.

So far I have made plausible the notion of dialogue as enquiry, as necessarily dialectical. The sentence "Dialogue is dialectical" sounds almost as vacuous as the sentence "Dialogue is dialogue". But then, Gertrude Stein was not the first one to show us that "A rose is a rose is a rose" may bring us closer to the being of a rose than a description or definition. It is an attempt, both blatant and subtle, to be in immediate connection with the reality of a thing, rather than at a mediated distance from it by talking about it. We are compelled to suspend what we know about roses and purely attend to its immediate presence. "Don't think; look".

Praise this world to the angel, not the unsayable one,

[. . .]

Tell him the things. He will stand astonished; as you stood
by the rope-maker in Rome or the potter along the Nile.

Show him how happy a Thing can be, how innocent and ours,

[. . .]

Rilke, *Duino Elegies*, The Ninth Elegy (tr. Mitchell)

Let us then attend to the who and what of dialogue.

Even if we share cultural and linguistic affiliations interlocutors are differently placed in the world; each walks necessarily a different path; our paths may criss-cross and interweave, we may find each other differently placed in the same life world, for a longer or shorter while. If and when dialogue ensues, our words' characters will be constituted by the context of our encounter, and each of us will bring a different

character to them in the context of this moment of his/her life story which itself is characterized by its context of culture and other surrounding circumstances. The context which we each and all have in common at any moment is all of the world. If two (or more) interlocutors live in the same culture, let alone the same neighborhood or the same house, and if their life stories have been continually interwoven for some time to a more or less intimate extent (shared past, common memories) – communication would appear to be less of an “initiation into a private mystery” (Mallarmé) than it might if interlocutors encounter each other out of the blue for a moment and if each’s life story is informed by different cultures, locations, social circumstances etc. yet every encounter necessarily has an element of surprise, and I shall try to show why. I’ll start with an early poem of mine (tr. Rosemarie Waldrop):

JUSTICE
I’m always
most surprised
when
after a trip
a plane trip especially
I meet
in a station
for example
at a movie
while windowshopping
someone I know

Now I’ve decided
to be just as
surprised
at the just as
fortuitous
encounters with strangers

even
if I only
pass them

In both kinds of situations , the familiar expected ones, and the surprising ones ‘out of the blue’, communication may be immediate,

intimate, full, – or it may fail. Failures to communicate tend to be more painful, nay devastating, in habitual closeness than in chance encounters of strangers. Familiarity breeds expectations, if not contempt; and it breeds negligence of the fact that no person, however familiar, including ourselves, can ever be fully known to any of us. By contrast – perhaps – with inanimate objects, a person cannot be fully described, explained, comprehended, grasped. [Notice the metaphors – of the hand grasping, comprehending]. Why is this so?

A person is never only object, but also always subject. If you and I are truly present to each other then we encounter each other as subjects. Buber (I-Thou) distinguishes between experiencing and encountering another. You may be an object of experience for me. I encounter you as subject. The notion of ‘encounter’ then is a key notion for human interaction, notably dialogue.

According to Buber, the Thou, the other I, is immediately given in self-awareness. Self, ‘I’, entails Thou. The ‘I’ is given as ‘We’; the ‘We’ is given as ‘I’. It is given prior to any objective determination of you or me. Rather, it is in-itself, immediate; not constituted by objective identification, classification, categorization. In an encounter you and I are undefined, intimate but not familiar. Whereas familiarity is tied to habituation (induction) and expectation, the encounter precludes conceptual determination and offers undefined potential/possibilities. Therefore, familiarity is basically irrelevant to true intimacy which consists in subject-subject connection.

The I-Thou connection is ontologically given in the ‘I’. I and Thou are one, but not identical. For this given connection is conjoined with difference. You and I are also entities (objects) with distinctly different identities, informed by different historical settings, cultures, religions, political contexts etc. It is in the nature of self (human consciousness) that both oneness and distinct difference are given. In ontology logic has no jurisdiction. [Samuel Butler: “No mistake is more common and more fatuous than appealing to logic in cases which are beyond her jurisdiction.”] Recently Britain’s chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks said: “Difference is not a problem to be managed but an ‘essential’ part of creation itself.”

I have sketched a phenomenological account of the nature of self, as independent of presuppositions as possible. It is an account of what remains when we suspend theories of the self and beliefs we have about

human persons in general and in particular, and get as close to what is given in self-awareness as we can. Then we approach what Hegel calls spirit and what Husserl shows as the subject in all of us (the concrete transcendental Ego).

“A self-consciousness exists *for a self-consciousness*. Only so is it in fact self-consciousness; for only in this way does the unity of itself in its otherness become explicit for it. The ‘I’ which is the object of its Notion is in fact not ‘object’. [] A self-consciousness, in being an object, is as much ‘I’ as ‘object’. With this, we already have before us the Notion of Spirit.”⁴

In dialogue spirituality would be manifest through integration, by both speaker and hearer, of the unique ‘character’ in a particular utterance with the general ‘physiognomy’ of a word. This concurs with Buber’s view of spirituality. Rule-bound analysis and dissection, the goal to discern right and wrong by ‘objective’ criteria, may be appropriate and resourceful – but spiritual they are not, as the object is in focus and the ‘I’ is ignored.

In attending to what is given in self-awareness we behold the concrete, indivisible, and irreducible basis underlying human experience. Because we are rational, and have the ability to negate, we can choose between affirming or denying this. It is a kind of wager, not unlike Pascal’s. If we affirm it we have much to gain for human life and liveliness, and nothing to lose. If we deny it we stand the chance of losing our very humanness.

Let us affirm for the time being that true identities of individual persons; of cultural, religious, political groups; are unified on given, irreducible human ground: call it I-Thou; call it spirit; call it the concrete transcendental subject; call it the I that is We, the We that is I. On this human ground, then, otherness does not mean separateness or isolation. Yet through history and nowadays, more than ever it seems, we observe the ‘bloodlust of identity’ and its horrific dehumanizing consequences.⁵

“Identity is a bloody business. Religion, nationality, or race, may not be the primary causes of war and mass murder. These are more likely to be tyranny, or greed for territory, wealth, and power. But ‘identity’ is what gets the blood boiling, what makes people do unspeakable things to their

⁴ Hegel, PhS, tr. Miller, p. 110.

⁵ Cp. Ian Buruma, NYRB XIX, 6, April 11, 2002, ‘The Bloodlust of Identity’, pp. 12-14.

neighbors. It is the fuel used by agitators to set whole countries on fire. When the world is reduced to a battle between 'us and them', Germans and Jews, Hindus and Muslims, Catholics and Protestants, Hutus and Tutsis, only mass murder will do, for 'we' can only survive if 'they' are slaughtered. Before we kill them, 'they' must be stripped of our common humanity, by humiliating them, degrading them, and giving them numbers instead of names."

Rigorous, nay rigid, concepts of identity then are a source of the greatest immoralities – without guilt. Consider the extreme of genocide: its perpetrators espouse an aspect of their identity as absolute and in its name assume a collective responsibility to eliminate those who do not fulfill their absolute standards. Such standards may be tied to race, religion, the 'American way of life', etc. and used to distinguish between worthy and worthless humans. People may be attacked not for anything they do and profess as persons but merely for a category they instantiate. Categorization then attaches to the illusion that it generates a complete understanding. Thus the degradation or elimination of those subsumed under certain categories is considered justified, as the human connection between the perpetrator and the victim is broken. Brutality then becomes easy and apparently guilt-free when victims are no longer considered as human. Instead of I-Thou there is I-It. Consequently the 'I', the perpetrator as well as the victim, can no longer be a self, for the ground of being self is lost. There is no interaction; there is not even a possibility of dialogue. But this is not likely to enter the perpetrator's consciousness.

I have just been invoking extreme and horrific situations, very real ones, for that matter. In the face of these we feel and are helpless. It is not just in these horrific contexts that the "I don't know" which is tied to the essential attitude of enquiry is missing. This is salient also, for instance, for current developments of globalization. I quote from George Soros' recent book *On Globalization*.⁶

"Open society is based on the recognition that we act on the basis of imperfect understanding. Perfection is beyond our reach; we must content ourselves with an imperfect society that holds itself open to improvement. The acceptance of imperfection coupled with a constant

⁶ Public Affairs, 2002. As quoted by Joseph E. Stiglitz, in 'A Fair Deal for the World', NYRB, XLIX, no. 9, May 23, 2002, p. 24.

search for improvement and a willingness to submit to critical examination are the guiding principle of an open society.”

The acceptance of the necessary incompleteness of understanding each other is essential if globalization is to be something other than sheer imperialism.

Let us return to our smaller worlds. Let us recall that the given unity of oneness/intimate connectedness and difference precludes complete comprehension of any one individual, any one action. The given I-Thou requires an interminable practice of understanding, a process of vision and revision which has to be begun again and again. The illusion of complete knowledge and understanding locks the boundaries of individuals, groups, societies. The I-Thou, by contrast, entails open boundaries and thus incomplete knowledge and understanding of self and other. Human interaction then, specifically the basic interaction of dialogue, presupposes the recognition of the necessary incompleteness of knowing and understanding self and others. The “I don’t know” is a condition of being present to each other. For the sake of cognitive and moral clarity we have to acknowledge what the American poet Charles Simic calls the “mystery of presence”.

Any claim completely to understand you or your action defies the possibility of justice towards you. Just and moral interaction must be born from a continuous “I don’t know”. Dialogue grounded in I-Thou is therefore mutual and continual enquiry. Descriptions, judgments, explanations of each other and ourselves are but moments in this dialectical process, to be suspended again and again for visions and revisions and ceaseless exploration. We have to suspend thought and look again. This is the place where the word ‘respect’ is at home: *respicere*, to look again, and think again and look again, and so on. We have to attend and exercise our imagination – in trust.

Trust is an elemental component of self as I-Thou. We are each aware of the necessity of trust in friendships, love relationships, between parents and children, in professional connections, in society. Basically, we need trust and we need to be trusted. The loss of trust in a close relationship can be devastating, like a loss of self.

In intimacy we relate to each other through feelings, thoughts, beliefs, intentions, experiences. By speaking to you I invite you to join in the testimony. We can do so only by articulating them. Through articulation

I give testimony of my feelings, thoughts, etc. and entrust them to you. My trust is first and foremost in your presence to me on common human ground, in your attentive listening, in joining me in the endeavour of letting truth shine forth in the space of I-Thou. I would trust that you hear not just the physiognomy of my words, but their character here and now, unique to my utterance. This in turn would prevent you from making analysis, dissection and judgment your primary concern. Rather your primary concern would be to listen attentively and curiously, to let experience appear as fully and immediately as possible, to find sense within it, rather than by extraneous pre-established standards. You would acknowledge my otherness without “othering” me. You would encounter me self to self, rather than relate to me as an object to be objectively known, understood, and judged.

Trust, we may say, is a condition of the possibility of fully lived experience. This trust is tied to the urgent need, we so often feel, to find words which really seem to convey how we find ourselves. We look for words to be present in, for language to be housed in. If we do so and are properly heard then whatever we convey is more intense, clearer, more memorable, more liveable. Encounter means maximal precision in attention and awareness. Every detail is interconnected with every other detail to hold the tension of the I-Thou bridge.

I need to be trusted that my story is not primarily bound to an ulterior purpose but an invitation to you into a field on common human ground in which my actual experience (including my suffering, my moral misdeeds and omissions) meets with your potential. The articulation of my experience and your hearing it, in mutual basic trust, is then a process of self-recognition for each of us. Every truthful story shows the listener or reader a possibility of their own. We step out of the boundaries of our objective individual identities in to the open field of I-Thou, “into the spiritual daylight of the present”.

We know from our own close and not so close relationships, their continuations and their losses, that moments of full presence in I-Thou are rare. Indeed they must be rare. For in such moments our individual boundaries, our self-interested purposes and intentions, our objective knowledge of self and other are suspended and transcended. However, these boundaries do not and must not disappear lest we disappear as individuals. We are always also subjects; we are never only subjects, nor are we only objects. Kant’s finely tuned ‘always also’ must be

emphasized. We are both subjects and objects which accounts for the inevitable dialectic of human oneness and human difference. This dialectic transpires in dialogue as in all human interaction, unless one aspect or the other, oneness or difference, being subject or being object, is negated.

Many of us long for the I-Thou nature of self to take form in our relationships. Yet full presence to each other is at best a gift of the moment, and unsustainable on a continuum. The longing is the life of the relationship if alive it is; were the longing consciousness would dead as it was in paradise before the expulsion. To trust each other in that basic way which I sketched means to trust this genuine longing in each other. The longing and the trust are necessary for a living relationship, community, society. This means continual attention, precision in speaking and hearing, suspension of judgment, curiosity and wonderment, suspension of expectations and ulterior purposes, imagination, – in short, hard work. We cannot be perfect at this work, as we cannot be perfect at anything. But we can be good enough.

And yet, in the “spiderwebs of intricate relationships”⁷ communication breaks down again and again, dialogue becomes seemingly impossible. The commitment to being present to each other often does not bear fruit – perhaps because a breach of trust has not healed, cannot heal. Even though issues of right and wrong may then have become irrelevant, separation may yet be the most appropriate and properly humble solution. There would be humility in accepting unsustainable longing, longing no longer to be felt hopefully in regard of each other.

I spoke of the character of a word as uniquely different in every situation of utterance. This is intricate enough. What makes the spiderweb yet more intricate is that both speaker and hearer bring characters to the word as uttered and as heard. To hear the speaker properly the hearer has to attend to the character surrounding the word in the speaker’s voice and suspend his projection onto it. This is not something that can be intended and intentionally done. It requires the openness of love. And it is just love which may have ceased in such a relationship. “It is not the voice that commands the story; it is the ear.”⁸

⁷ Calvino, IC, p. 62.

⁸ Calvino, p. 106.

Rilke's phrase "temples inside our hearing"⁹ condenses this succinctly. If my voice does not arrive inside your hearing it goes mute. We all know that our liveliness in speaking depends on being heard, on one's trust in being heard. If we sever a relationship in awareness of the longing for the temple of each other's hearing as well as the recognition of its collapse, we shall be able to let each other go and be without danger of hostility. The practice of understanding has got us nowhere. Yet we need not demolish each other. We need not negate each other's, and everyone's, right to be understood.

It doesn't always work like this, not in relationships of two, let alone in relationships between politically/religiously defined groups. Most of us have lost hope that the mutual killings of Israelis and Palestinians will stop. They have lost their footing on common human ground.

As subjects I am, you are, we are free – locked in neither by objective conditions for identity, class – or category membership. Nor are we bound by objective normative principles. Given that the I is I-Thou, my freedom as subject is not that of egocentric licence. If I assume the freedom to pursue my own interests separately from yours, separately from our human interests, I would undermine the common human ground beneath both of us – and fall from humanity, as totalitarian oppressors do, or as Don Giovanni did in following every of his desirous impulses. My freedom as a subject entails the acknowledgment of the necessity of I-Thou, of I as We and We as I. Then it is freedom in reality, real freedom. The freedom of egotistical licence turns out to be but an illusion. In I-Thou every action necessarily is interaction.

I-Thou is the place of moral freedom conjoined with the necessity of human interconnectedness. Morality then cannot rest only on principles, but also always requires attention to what is present in any given situation, and thus vision and revision, creativity. Moral dogmatism is therefore impossible in I-Thou, as is moral relativism. For both would be generated by egocentricity, the former through oppression, the latter through that kind of tolerance which liberally allows each of us their own truth. Kant, falsely described as a rigid moralist, made this clear by conjoining his categorical imperative "Always act in such a way that the maxim of your action can universally apply to human kind" with the injunction that we never treat persons only as means to an end but also

⁹ Orpheus I,i.

always as ends in themselves. The latter marks the space of necessary attention and creativity.

Kant struggled throughout his *Critique of Pure Reason* to bring psychology onto the sure path of science. In vain. He recognized the impossibility of such an endeavour. To the extent that science is (meant to be) objective, it can be applied to persons only as objects, not as subjects. Understanding a person requires that objective knowledge about her be suspended and transcended. Adequate understanding of a person is necessarily hermeneutic, and phenomenologically based. Adequate understanding of a person includes the “I don’t know”. And this is essential to dialogue. A person can, and often does, say No to being made a mere object of science.

Inanimate objects, Sartre’s early existentialist writings notwithstanding, cannot say No. Thus, we might infer, they can be completely known and understood scientifically. Yet, this cannot be so, if objects cannot be perceived or known independently of human experience, as they are in-themselves. This is why, for instance, Kant distinguishes between the noumenal and phenomenal aspects of reality, why Nietzsche’s epistemology is one of perspectivism, and why Popper and others think of science as enquiry rather than systems of conclusions. Epistemologically, then, the difference between persons (I don’t exclude the possibility of non-human persons) and inanimate objects is in the ability, disability, to say No to being known and understood merely objectively.

In Buber’s terms, we *experience* a person as an object, and we *encounter* a person as a subject. It seems, then, that we cannot *encounter* pebbles and rocks and other inanimate things. A statement to the contrary would seem incoherent. Yet the matter is not quite so hard and fast.

THE PEBBLE

The pebble
is a perfect creature
equal to itself
mindful of its limits

filled exactly
with a pebbly meaning

with a secret which does not remind one of anything
does not frighten anything away does not arouse desire

its ardour and coldness
are just and full of dignity

I feel a heavy remorse
when I hold it in my hand

and its noble body
is permeated by false warmth

Pebbles cannot be tamed
to the end they will look at us
with a calm and very clear eye

Zbigniew Herbert¹⁰

Aesthetic experience, in accordance with Kant's notion, consists in encountering rather than experiencing a thing. Indeed, in the moment of aesthetic experience, any purpose, including any epistemic purpose, the beholder may have, drops out as irrelevant. I encounter it as being in-itself. Strictly, in encountering it even its pebbliness becomes irrelevant, for conceptualization/description is incompatible with beholding it in-itself. Holding it in my mind under a concept should cause as much remorse as holding it in my hand.

If objective science claims complete understanding it negates its objects as a being-in-themselves. An object being-in-itself cannot be generalized over or abstracted from.

"The particular object is a very remarkable phenomenon.

Instead of "all objects" we might say: *All particular objects*".

Wittgenstein, Notebooks¹¹

Objective science can but address things as they appear to us by virtue of our limited (and limiting) perceptual and intellectual constitution. The affirmation of things being as they are in-themselves entails the incompleteness of scientific understanding. Thus we have to concede that science, like philosophy is interminable enquiry. If it claims, or aims at, the establishment of ultimate truths and complete understanding it is

¹⁰ As quoted in Milosz, *The Witness of Poetry*, p. 91.

¹¹ Wittgenstein, *Notebooks 1914-1916*, p. 75.

untruthful to reality. Enquiry is the stuff of dialogue. It follows that neither interlocutor can arrogate truth. Any conversation which is dialogue is orientated toward showing things as they are in-themselves. Thus dialogues are to be contrasted with debates which are competitions in argument, as well as mere exchanges of opinions aimed at persuasion or the dubious comfort of agreement. I am not, in the present context, concerned to establish a hierarchy of dialogue, debate, and exchange of opinion insist, however on the importance distinguishing between them and propose the primacy of dialogue for our lives as individuals in community, and moral agents.

We are of course not able to speak about things as they are in-themselves. Our orientation toward them may at best culminate in 'saying the things' where saying is showing, uncovering,

Praise this world to the angel, not the unsayable one,
you can't impress him with glorious emotion; in the universe
where he feels more powerfully, you are a novice. So show him
something simple which, formed over generations,
lives as our own, near our hand and within our gaze.
Say to him the things. He will stand astonished; as you stood
by the rope-maker in Rome or the potter along the Nile.

Rilke, First Duino Elegy¹²

We are in-ourselves as subjects. As subjects we are free. We cannot therefore perceive or conceptualize the quality of freedom, yet we can behold its manifestations, and develop our sense of morality, of good and evil, of responsibility from there.

From our wager in favour of I as I-Thou, as well as from Kant we can infer that it is exclusive categorization/conceptualization of self and others which is bound to lead to immorality, violence, and dehumanization. However, if categorization is coupled with attention to, and thus immediate awareness of the other on common human ground, it may enable us through vision and revision to further humanness in self and other. If I respond to you merely as an Arab, or a Jew, or a Catholic, or a Protestant, or ... I do not respond to You, but rather, I react to an instantiation of a concept under which I objectively subsume you. The subsumption may be correct, but it alone cannot possibly re-present you as you. Your presence to me is thus merely mediated and consequently

¹² Rilke, First Duino Elegy, tr. Mitchell, p. 201.

stunted if not negated. I know and understand you merely as an object and react accordingly. To the extent that knowledge is power I may use it to take control over you. I hear your words as they fit my principles and purposes. I judge and treat you accordingly. We may speak to each other, but we can no longer be in dialogue. Words then become my instrument of manipulation and power in pursuit of my self-interest. Words severed from lived experience may be weapons of destruction.

Kant's injunction means more plainly that we must never treat a person merely as object, but also always as subject. It follows that moral action cannot be determined through abstractions but is to be generated in concrete encounters. The universal 'humankind' emerges as a concrete not an abstract universal. It means "all particular human beings existing in past, present, and future". A maxim for any action then is open to enquiry and revision in the face of any particular human situation. Otherwise it could not be universally valid for human beings as they are both subject and object.

The question whether human life is possible without violence is on my mind – its urgency intensified in present times. I spoke of a wager in affirming the notion of self as I-Thou. I hope to have made clear that this notion most plausibly meets with what is basically and irreducibly given in self-awareness. Violence comes easily enough to the perpetrator if the victim is regarded an object, sub-human or non-human, worthless, and thus expelled from the human circle. This enables the perpetrator to eliminate compassion, remorse, and a sense of guilt. Encountering each other always also as subjects may not eliminate violence among human beings, but it will certainly stymie impulses to violent action, indeed any act of negation of the other. For in I-Thou negating the other is negating self. As soon as we get locked into unilateral or mutual objectification of each other we make room for violence. Perhaps I should reformulate my question: Is it humanly possible not to get stuck with objectifications of each other. (Hegel said that falsehood does not attach to judgments *per se* but to fixity of judgments.) With the wager in favour of the I-Thou notion of self the answer is easy, and it is Yes. The answer is easy, but it is not easy to avoid getting stuck. For one lives more comfortably with well-forged belief systems and the predictions and inferences they seem to allow, – as long as they aren't shaken by experiences which don't fit. Especially if such experiences are catastrophic we will be compelled to

abolish or revise our previously held beliefs by continual attention and enquiry. The “I don’t know” then urges itself upon us.

Barring catastrophes, how in our everyday lives can we avoid getting stuck in judgments of ourselves and each other and thus contribute to the decrease of violence among human beings?

During a CBC radio interview on Remembrance Day the mother of one of the four Canadian soldiers killed ‘by mistake’ in Afghanistan said: “The most important thing is now that we educate our children so that they really understand people. Then we can avoid war.” We have seen that real understanding is incomplete understanding. It includes the “I don’t know” engendered by encountering each other always also as subjects, by dialogue in which the meaning of the words used is not constituted only by their ‘physiognomy’ but also always by the their character as it differs in every utterance, informed by the speaker who inhabits the word as she utters it. If she is present in what she says the experience she articulates and the words she uses have a certain felt quality which shows, but cannot be explicit. It constitutes what Wittgenstein calls the ‘atmosphere’ of a word. To be alive in her words the speaker has to choose them carefully. The need to be really understood goes with the necessity of utmost precision, precision which is as much sensual and imaginative as semantic.

“How do I choose among words? Without doubt it is sometimes as if I were comparing them by fine differences of smell ...”¹³

The most important sense, however, is the ‘sense of taking part’ which is intrinsic to self as I-Thou. Kundera says in *The Art of the Novel* that every character in a novel is the actualization of potential in the novelist. Thus the novelist enacts his sense of taking part – by understanding his characters from within and not judging them from without. The same holds of the reader who ‘really understands’ a novel. We ‘read’ ways of being human and thus increase awareness of ourselves and each other as possibilities. Literary art works are therefore excellent teachers of dialogue, of reading experience in listening, of embodying words with humanness, of ‘real understanding’.

Every word whenever lived in is also always new. Then when I hear your words properly I witness a moment in the fullness of your life with

¹³ Wittgenstein PI, p. 218.

my 'sense of taking part'¹⁴. I am an invited guest in your life while you speak with me in dialogue. The sense of taking part is the sense of justice.

We see why our responsibility for language is an essential human responsibility. True dialogue presupposes not knowing, curiosity, attention, creativity, a *ποίησις*. Dialogue is therefore on the threshold of poetry and instructed by it. For goodness' sake we have to care for our words. Caring for our words is an aspect of caring for each other. Great poets who are "gourmands of words" (this is how George Steiner describes Shakespeare, Burton and Joyce) are moral teachers also because of their gourmandise. We have seen the importance of the sensuous and felt character of words spoken and heard in dialogue, as well as in poetry, for the increase of justice and the decrease of violence in our interactions.

I am not forgetting that we in our world are face to face with horrible injustice, and that we need to be in dialogue about it as much as about anything of concern to us. The felt and sensuous aspects of words in dialogue and in poetry are by no means always savoury.

Young reader, you won't live inside a rose.
That country has its planets, its river,
But it is as frail as the edge of the morning.
It's we who create it every day anew,
By respecting as real many more things than are frozen between a noun
and its sound.
We wrest them into the world by force.
If got too easily, they don't exist at all.
So, farewell, things gone. Your echo calls us,
But we need to speak gracelessly and roughly.
Czeslaw Milosz¹⁵

"Dialogue [. . .] requires an intense faith in humankind, faith in their power to make and remake, to create and recreate, faith in their vocation to be more fully human." (Paolo Freire). Without this faith partners in marriage may live by the tacit pact not to know each other any more, not to enter the other's innermost. Many people are not even willing to enter their own innermost. They then forego their being in themselves and end

¹⁴ Wislawa Szymborska, 'Conversation with a Stone'.

¹⁵ Czeslaw Milosz, *A Treatise on Poetry*, p. 24.

up being by themselves with part of their soul deadened. This can be a useful survival practice – as long as we strive to revive what we deadened.

The Israeli author David Grossman said recently in his acceptance speech of the Austrian Manes-Sperber-Prize that ordinary Palestinian and Israeli people in their current catastrophic circumstances can perhaps survive only if they erase their feelings and their emotional vocabulary, if they lock themselves into their skins and make them as thick as the Chinese Wall. Yet we need people who keep innermost feelings alive, who do not protect themselves of the Other but rather long to explore their innermost. This is the task of the writer from whom we can learn to keep the Thou alive in our own selves and interact in true dialogue. In the I-Thou we can see ourselves with the eyes of the other, and hear ourselves within “the temple deep inside their hearing”. Whenever we speak and hear in true dialogue, even in the smallest everyday situation, we do infinitely more than nothing toward preventing violence and stopping the course of dehumanisation. This is why “the responsibility for language is, in essence, human responsibility” (Th. Mann). Otherwise we will not be saved from the bombardment through buzzwords which have become instruments of power for governments and media. In speaking with each other and in writing we shall have to strive to come as close as possible to things and people as they are in themselves. This requires continual attention and creativity for the sake of truth to reality and for the sake of human liveliness. We cannot sustain such attention and creativity without a deep longing for peace and love whether such peace and love is likely to occur or not.

Lou Marinoff

Synchronicities, Serpents, and Something Else-ness

A Meta-Dialogue on Philosophy and Psychotherapy¹

Synchronicity I

In the summer of 2006, I read several books by well-known existential psychiatrist and insightful novelist Irvin Yalom.² They were all thought-provoking and mightily entertaining. Dr. Yalom sustains lively interests in philosophical aspects of psychiatry, as well as in psychiatric aspects of philosophy. Among other works, he has written two profoundly philosophical novels, namely *The Schopenhauer Cure* and *When Nietzsche Wept*, in which he has delved deeply and creatively into the psyches of these two outstanding thinkers via the refracting media of literary and historical fiction, and through lenses of eclectic existential psychiatry.

Yalom's fictive excursions are not confined to philosophical realms – far from it. In a delightfully ironic novel entitled *Lying on the Couch* (he is an inveterate punster in love with *double-entendre*) Yalom takes to task some perennially unfinished business of psychoanalysis, namely analysts' perpetual struggles with counter-transference issues. Even the most seasoned psychoanalysts, so Yalom artfully reveals, have not yet had their own egos sufficiently shrunk. In consequence, they are apt to experience

¹ This paper first appeared in *Philosophical Practice*, Volume 4.3, November 2009, pp. 519-34. Reprinted with permission of the APPA. I would like to thank the Editors, especially Horst Gronke, for inviting this article, and for their interest in distinguishing philosophical from therapeutic dialogue. I would also like to thank the Spinalis Foundation (Stockholm, Sweden) and Prof. Dr. Claes Hulting for sponsoring a philosophical retreat at Landsort, at which this paper was first presented.

² I would like to thank my friend and colleague Prof. Dr. J. Michael Russell for bringing Irvin Yalom's works (1989, 1993, 1997, 2003, 2006) to my attention, and thank Prof. Dr. Yalom for dialoguing with me.

all kinds of problems with patients, and not always of the patients' making. To be sure, patients are wont to deceive their analysts at times, whether subconsciously, diffidently, or maliciously. And analysts themselves are prone to all the vanities catalogued by Ecclesiastes in antiquity,³ egoisms and egotisms alike that appear innately rooted in the human psyche, and which inevitably contribute to self-deception. If an analyst's vanities, self-deceptions, and unresolved counter-transferences were skillfully exploited by a professional con-artist posing as a patient, personal and professional mayhem would result. This is one of the conspicuous threads in the rich tapestry of untruths, vanities and self-deceptions that Yalom weaves in *Lying on The Couch*.

One particular episode in Yalom's novel rather jarred me when I encountered it in August 2006, because it coincided with an uncannily similar episode that was unfolding in my own life at precisely the same time. In *Lying on the Couch*, senior psychoanalyst and training supervisor Marshal Streider is cheated out of a substantial sum by an experienced fraud artist aptly named Peter Macondo. Posing as a grateful and wealthy patient, Macondo skillfully plays on Streider's vanities and ambitions, en route to separating Streider from tens of thousands of hard-earned dollars via an elaborate and well-crafted ruse. One stepping stone on this primrose path involved Macondo's supposed endowment of a lecture series, in Streider's name, at a prominent Mexican university, with an invitation to Streider to deliver the inaugural address. This had titillated Streider's ambition for international renown, and had endeared Macondo to him – choice morsels of bait for the trap.

While reading this in Yalom's novel, I discovered via email that parallel promises to me, made by a Mexican entrepreneur in that very spring of 2006, had similarly turned out to be entirely bogus. In my case the con-artist – call him Pedro Mentiroso – had promised to utilize both his wealth and his political connections to establish a graduate program for philosophical practice at a prominent Mexican university – which would serve as a focal point and hub for branching operations throughout Latin America – and to install me as its figurehead or titular director. There is no question that Mentiroso played skillfully, if falsely,

³ E.g. "I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and, behold, all is vanity, and a striving after wind. That which is crooked cannot be made straight; and that which is wanting cannot be numbered." Ecclesiastes I: 14-15.

on my ambition to see this happen, but in my case such ambition is grounded in empirical feasibility, as contrasted with Streider's self-deceptive vanity.

In the real as opposed to the fraudulently conjured Latin world, Yalom's books and mine have been well-received abroad, not only in Spain and South America⁴, but also around the Mediterranean. With respect to philosophical counseling, this has resulted in a substantial demand on the part of readers for sessions with indigenous philosophical counselors, who are relatively thin on the ground at this time – except in Italy, where they have proliferated.

Because too many Latin universities (and far too many philosophers) are impenitently blind to philosophical practice, the Latin academy lags in consciousness of the extent of popular demand for philosophical services, and so (with the exception of the University of Sevilla⁵) has undertaken no widespread initiative to train and graduate a supply of philosophical counselors. I deplore wasted opportunity, and moreover (in conjunction with APPA) have evolved a blueprint for satisfying the demand. This is the ambition upon which Pedro Mentiroso played so skillfully, leading me to believe he would facilitate the decisive steps toward implementing the blueprint and constructing the edifice in question. While Pedro did not con me out of any money (this apparently was not his aspiration), he certainly cost me some time, as well as my professional support for some of his initiatives, none of which ever came to fruition.

So the bottom fell out of my ambition to inaugurate a graduate program for philosophical practice at a prominent Mexican university, just as the bottom fell out of Marshal Streider's ambition to inaugurate a lecture series for existential psychiatry at a prominent Mexican university. For me, these events coincided during one and the same week of August 2006. Along my timeline, Peter Macondo and Pedro Mentiroso both vanished into thin air that week, never to be heard from again. While Macondo left Streider to rue the price of unresolved counter-

⁴ E.g. *Más Platon y menos Prozac* (the Spanish-language edition of *Plato Not Prozac*) and *Preguntale a Platon* (Spanish-language edition of *Therapy for the Sane*) have enjoyed tremendous popularity and have stimulated an ongoing demand for philosophical services.

⁵ Prof. Jose Barrientos Rostrojo has succeeded in founding an M.A. program for philosophical counselors, under the aegis of Education, at the University of Sevilla.

transference, Mentiroso left me to contemplate the phenomenon of Jungian synchronicity. For that was my immediate interpretation of the acausal linkage between these two events.

Synchronicity II

About two months later, one day in October of 2006, I was flying back to New York from Lisbon, re-reading Jung's *Synchronicity* on the airplane. It was a longish flight, into the teeth of seasonal headwinds. After a few rounds of reading, thinking and dozing, I decided to watch the in-flight movie – something I almost never do. The feature presentation was *X-Men*. In the opening scene, a US Presidential advisor enters the oval office and alerts the President that “mutant events” have just occurred in Geneva, Montreal and Lisbon. That certainly got my attention. My three most recent trips, in chronological order, had been to Geneva, Montreal and Lisbon. This struck me as yet more synchronicity. And in case I needed a reminder, Jung's monograph on the subject still lay half-read in my lap.

Just a shade over two months later, early in 2007, I was contacted by Claire, a clinical psychologist. Claire said she wanted to discuss a case with me, and elicit my philosophical views in two different dimensions. One dimension pertained to the content of the case, which she was in the process of writing up for a keynote presentation at a conference. Claire wanted me to validate her interpretation of – guess what? – nothing other than a ostensible occurrence of Jungian synchronicity in her practice. Another dimension of discussion, said Claire, pertained to her management of the case itself. I agreed to work with Claire, and did not disclose to her my recent sequence of synchronistic encounters, of which this was the third in six months.

Serpents I

Claire told me she had a client – call him Jason – whose problem was ophidiophobia, or fear of snakes. Like arachnophobia (fear of spiders),

ophidiophobia is widespread. Jason was unusual because, according to Claire, he was not only terrified of snakes, but also claimed to encounter them on a regular basis – “manifesting” them, as he put it. Since Jason lived and worked in Manhattan, and frequented neither exotic pet stores nor zoos, it seemed unlikely in the extreme that he would find regular opportunities to cross the paths of meandering serpents (at least of the footless variety). So Claire told me that she took Jason’s ophidiophobia seriously, but remained quietly skeptical of his ability to “manifest” snakes on a regular basis. She didn’t challenge him on this point, and tried instead to treat his phobia.

One afternoon, during their fourteenth session, Jason was telling Claire that he had recently “manifested” another snake, which had terrified him. Claire told me that she was about to challenge him on this issue of “manifestation,” when suddenly she noticed – to her shock and disbelief – a six-foot python stretched out on her bookshelf, behind Jason and out of his line of sight. Claire had been counseling clients in this Manhattan office for eighteen years, and had never seen a snake appear. She was also quite certain that Jason had not brought it in with him. Claire told me that she swiftly regained her composure, and almost as swiftly decided to usher Jason out of her office before he noticed the python. Claire explained that she was deeply worried that Jason might experience a panic attack – or even a heart attack – if he suddenly confronted a six-foot python at such close quarters.

So Claire invented (or decanted) a pretext to terminate their session prematurely, and she escorted Jason out of her office, making sure to steer him toward the door without allowing him to glimpse the snake stretched out on her bookshelf. She breathed a deep sigh of relief when, without further incident, he took his leave.

Claire then phoned 911. The emergency service dispatcher summoned the New York Fire Department, which handles these kinds of situations in Manhattan, retaining herpetologists (and assorted snake-handlers) on call. In fact, many New Yorkers keep pet snakes (among other reptiles) in their high-rises, and some reptiles are also excellent escape artists. Serpents on the lam typically crawl into ventilation ducts among other tempting apertures, and re-emerge via the ductwork into neighboring apartments or offices, startling the residents or other inhabitants. While such occurrences are not unusual from the perspective of the NYFD, the odds of any particular New Yorker encountering a

snake in this way are very long indeed. Most New Yorkers have never had this happen to them, including Claire – during her eighteen years in that office.

At their next session, Claire began by telling Jason the truth about the python. She had terminated their previous session out of concern for his well-being – she hadn't wanted him to confront the snake, whether he had “manifested” it or not. Jason responded by terminating Claire as his therapist, then and there.

That is the sum and substance of Claire's narrative to me, which certainly afforded food for thought. In light of Jason's case, her two questions seemed quite appropriate. Recall, Claire wanted first to elicit my view as to whether this was (as she supposed) an instance of synchronicity; and second, she wanted to solicit my professional opinion on her handling of Jason's case itself.

Synchronicity III

On the first question: Having had the benefit of recent encounters with synchronicity myself, as well as contemplations ensuing therefrom, I believe both that Jung's concept bears weight, and that the appearance of the python in Claire's office was indeed synchronistic with Jason's claims of regularly manifesting the object of his phobia.

To make what philosophers of science (e.g. Lipton 1991) call “the inference to the best explanation”, let us briefly review the plausibility of alternative explanations as to the python's appearance. The two standard modalities of explication are causal, and probabilistic. Did Jason “cause” serpents to manifest, as he asserted repeatedly to Claire? According to our current understanding of the laws of physics, chemistry, biology and (to the extent that it is lawful) psychology, I know of no causal mechanism that withstands rational scrutiny in this case. Any claim that Jason *caused* serpents to appear – whether by his fear or by some other means – but which remains mute on the mechanism of causation itself, belongs to the realm of parapsychology, which is more conjectural than scientific. For example, one might conjecture that Jason's phobia radiated into the noosphere, or permeated the psychic space in his surroundings, and that the python was attracted to his “phobic aura” – but such

putative causal attraction, for example in terms of a “phobic field theory,” lacks all the standard empirical supports: Such an erstwhile field cannot be observed, generated, replicated, simulated or measured by any known scientific means. Causation as we understand it is simply implausible in this case, or is at least incommensurable with the data.⁶

What about probability? I will eschew all attempts to fabricate rigorous computations, whether based on classical or frequentist interpretations. Consider instead this heuristic estimate. What are the odds, on a given day, of encountering an escaped snake in a Manhattan office? Millions of people work daily in Manhattan, in millions of offices. Perhaps a few tens of snakes per year escape and are encountered. Thirty six such snakes per year would mean one every ten days, on average. Given ten million people working in ten million Manhattan offices every day, and given one encounter with an escaped snake every ten days, and given that an escaped snake is equally likely to appear in any of the offices, then Claire’s odds of encountering an escaped snake on any given are one in one hundred million.

She had been working in that office for eighteen years – roughly 4,500 working days – and prior to the day in question she had never seen an escaped snake. Hardly surprising, since her odds of encountering one during that period were only about $4,500/100,000,000$, or 1 in 22,000. To put that in perspective, she’d have to work 396,000 years to attain probabilistic certainty of encountering a snake.

Next, what are the odds of one person telling another person, on a given day in a Manhattan office, that he makes snakes manifest? I would be surprised if more than one person per year ever made such a claim – even in New York – and we could conduct a survey to find out. On the assumption that this claim is made on average once per year in a Manhattan office, and given ten million offices, then the odds of a

⁶ Prof. Dr. Yvonne Freund Levi, a psychiatrist, suggested that “mirror neurons” might have caused Claire to have imagined the python in her office. Mirror neurons putatively cause some animals unconsciously to mimic the facial expressions and/or body language and/or linguistic functions of others (especially conspecifics) in their proximity, and thus have explanatory power vis-a-vis social evolution. (E.g. see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mirror_neuron#Notes) That said, it seems less plausible that mirror neurons could also engender hallucinations in one party as a social response to phenomena repeatedly described by another party.

person hearing it in her office on a given day are about one in 3.65 billion, 1/3,650,000,000.

Absent a causal connection, the absence of which we have already argued for, then the chances of a person encountering an escaped snake in her Manhattan office on precisely the same day as another person tells her he makes snakes manifest, is just the product of the odds of the two events: $1/100,000,000 \times 1/3,650,000,000$, or one in 365 quadrillion. That is an improbably small chance, rendering the probabilistic hypothesis untenable.

So what's the inference to the best explanation? If Jason did not cause the snake to appear, and if the snake did not appear by chance while Jason was claiming to Claire that he made snakes manifest, then how can we explain what happened? Jung's acausal (and also aprobabilistic) synchronistic hypothesis – that related events can achieve resonance in space-time – is the most rational explanation available to us.⁷ Or so it seemed to Claire upon reflection, and so too it seemed to me. Thus I was able to answer Claire's first question with an affirmative, validating her Jungian interpretation of these events. This by no means proves anything. But having disqualified causality and chance alike as un-explanatory, then the prudent inference is to seek acausal and aprobabilistic explanations. I know of no better candidate than synchronicity.

However germane, I still did not disclose to Claire my (then) recent and antecedent encounters with synchronicity, which may well have predisposed me to viewing her invocation of it in a favorably biased light. As well, I did not disclose to Claire a parallel hypothesis that had crystallized in my mind much earlier, and of which she now provided unwitting but clear corroboration. I have as yet no name for this particular phenomenon, a species of counselor-client resonance, but it may be related to synchronicity. The characterization is as follows.

⁷ "Synchronicity is the experience of two or more events which are causally unrelated occurring together in a supposedly meaningful manner. In order to count as synchronicity, the events should be unlikely to occur together by chance." <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Synchronicity>

Synchronicity IV

Have you noticed the sometimes uncanny physical resemblance between dogs and their owners? This resemblance can be temperamental or behavioral as well as facial or corporeal, but first and foremost one often observes striking features of congruent appearance. I am not positing any “lawful” relation that mandates any such resemblance; far from it. To the contrary, there are manifestly many more instances in which dogs and their owners do not resemble one another at all. Yet the relatively fewer number of remarkable resemblances cannot be denied.

Similarly, I have noticed a sometimes uncanny resemblance between clients and their philosophical counselors – not a physical resemblance, rather a noetic resonance. Time and again, I have been working to resolve some issue in my own life, when suddenly I encounter a client struggling with virtually the same kind of issue, who seeks my advice in resolving it. As with dogs and their owners, I am not positing any lawful relation. My colleagues and I have handled any number of cases in which there is no noetic resonance at all. At the same time, one cannot deny the cases in which such resonance obtains; they make vivid impressions, and stand out starkly in memory.

Whenever this occurs in my practice, and I hear a client reciting out of the blue – as it were – a set of circumstances that resonate closely with my own at the time, I cannot but feel that some unexplained but significant phenomenon is unfolding. At such times I have even come close to formulating a variant of Jason’s hypothesis: that I am somehow manifesting these clients, the better to help them and myself alike to resolve our respective yet resonant situations. Seeking at the same time to avoid lapsing into solipsism, I can imagine that – were I to disclose these resonances to my clients – they could just as well imagine, equally solipsistically, that they are manifesting me. At any rate, this was the larger significance to me of Claire’s manifestation, and her questions to me regarding synchronicity. She played precisely the role to which I am here alluding: that of the client who comes to a counselor to discuss an issue that he himself is grappling with.

Except that in Claire’s case the phenomenon is recursive: Our particular client-counselor resonance was focused on Jungian synchronicity, while at the same time the more general explanation I am

advancing for all such client-counselor resonances is nothing other than Jungian synchronicity. Beyond affirming and validating Claire's interpretation of synchronicity in Jason's case, I disclosed none of these other considerations to her. Instead, we moved on to Claire's second question, which pertained to her handling of Jason's case.

Serpents II

Recall that Jason terminated Claire in the session following the one during which the python appeared. He terminated her as soon as she told him that she had seen a python, had feared for his well-being, and so had ushered him out of her office on a pretext.

There is a substantial philosophical literature on the generic ethics of truth-telling and deceit, as well as a corpus of more specialized case-studies in biomedical ethics that address this thorny problem.⁸ Deceits can be generally justified when they benefit patients, as with the placebo effect. Untruths tend to be less justifiable, both intrinsically on Kantian grounds, and consequentially as well, because they tend to be less demonstrably beneficial. Be that as it may, with respect to Claire's handling of Jason's case, the crux of the matter as I see it does not lie in her professional ethics at all; rather, is centered in her treatment of Jason himself.

Phobias are, by nature, irrational. A phobic knows this full-well in his rational mind, yet is powerless to dispel a phobia by the exercise of unaided reason alone. Some forms of irrationality remain immune to rationality, and phobias are prime examples. Thus philosophical counselors do not and should not attempt to treat phobias. Two recommended ways of dispelling phobias are hypnotherapy, and behavior modification therapy (i.e. desensitization). Both are empirically efficacious in treating a wide range of phobic disorders. Hypnotherapy bypasses rational mind and accesses the subconscious, where hypnotic suggestion has purchase in reprogramming associative affective processes that trigger irrational fears. Desensitization gradually displaces irrational

⁸ Among legion treatments of this issue, see e.g. Mappes & DeGrazia 2006, Chapter 2.

fears with neutral or functional if not pleasant encounters with things formerly feared.

During my misspent youth, I inadvertently acquired considerable experience as an amateur “desensitizer,” coincidentally (or not) helping many people overcome irrational fears of snakes. I kept pet snakes on and off for years; grass and garter snakes as a boy, boas and pythons as a young man. One boa in particular, named Larry, was a beloved pet who had the run (so to speak) of my apartment. I placed him in his cage mostly when entertaining ophidiophobic guests, but not always for long. I quickly discovered that most ophidiophobes had rational curiosities about snakes as well as irrational fears of them, and that most proved willing – albeit after a little coaxing – to take a look at Larry provided he remained in his maximum security lockdown. Observing Larry in his cage (from a safe distance), they asked questions about him. After a time they voluntarily moved closer to the cage, within a foot or two of him. This led by easy stages to most of these ophidiophobes being willing to stand within arm’s length of me while I handled Larry, to being willing to touch him, then to pet him, and – for those who were fully desensitized – to handle him themselves, and moreover to enjoy the experience.

Beyond this, once Larry had grown to a sizeable length and weight – 8 feet and 35 pounds – he became a sufficiently impressive specimen to be paraded around schools and similar venues. Ecce applied herpetology 101: I gave the standard snake talk, encouraged the audience to handle the standard snake (Larry was a common boa, *Constrictor constrictor*), and invariably desensitized some of the inevitable ophidiophobes lurking at the rear.

Common boas make this process easy. They are gentle by nature (except of course when feeding), and rather enjoy being handled. Larry instinctively mirrored the temperaments of those who handled him: He was nervous with nervous types; active with active ones; docile with docile ones.⁹ As I was a private music teacher, and my wife a private tutor, all kinds of visitors and their children traipsed in and ended up handling Larry.

The most memorable handler was an autistic boy about nine years old, fascinated by Larry and – unlike his petrified mother – fearless of him. Larry himself became so relaxed in the grasp of this child that he

⁹ Perhaps this is explicable in terms of mirror-neurons (see note 6 above).

permitted the boy to hold him by the tail and swing him in great loops at full length. I have never seen anything like it, neither before nor since.

Bearing all this in mind, I asked myself a hypothetical question: What would I have done had Jason been *my* client? Answer: I would have referred him to a hypnotherapist or a behavior modification therapist. I would not have referred him to a clinical psychologist, or for that matter to an existential psychiatrist – even to a great one like Yalom. Moreover, I would have disclosed to Jason that I had personally helped many people overcome their fear of snakes, by the process of desensitization, and so I could vouch strongly for the efficacy of behavior modification.

Then I asked myself a more searching question: What would I have done had a six-foot python manifested in *my* Manhattan office during a session with Jason? Answer: I would have seized this perfect opportunity to initiate Jason's desensitization. If anything, our session might have run a little longer than usual. So my hypothetical handling of Jason's case was a polar opposite of Claire's actual handling of it.

Even so, Claire's second question to me was not concerned with my hypothetical handling; rather, with my evaluation of her actual handling. And so I reframed her narrative in the following way.

Serpents III

Jason came to Claire because he sought a cure for his ophidiophobia. This in itself is a very positive sign, because many phobics succumb to their fears and never surmount them. It takes courage, effort, will power, and self-preservative desire for wellness to seek a cure for one's phobia, and those are the very virtues, faculties and instincts that catalyze the therapist's cure itself. At the same time, Jason's claim that he repeatedly "manifests" snakes is highly significant. To me, it signifies that he avidly persists in his courage and willingness to summon and confront the object of his fears, the better to overcome them. Another very positive sign. Jason was practically inducing his own desensitization.

So he comes to Claire, a clinical psychologist, for help. She does not refer him (as I would have); but instead subjects him to thirteen sessions of psychotherapy. With what result? Thirteen sessions of psychotherapy have no result on Jason, except perhaps to intensify his desire to

summon and confront the object of his fear. His ophidiophobia is not alleviated, and is probably not even diminished.

Claire, by contrast, has been noticeably affected by these thirteen sessions. In the process of failing to cure Jason's phobia, she has successfully contracted her own fear – not of snakes, but of her patient's ophidiophobia. When she sees the snake on her bookshelf, she becomes terrified of Jason's possible reactions should he see it too. She fears the worst. He may have a panic attack. He may have a heart-attack. So after thirteen sessions with Claire, ostensibly devoted to treating Jason's fear of snakes, she now fears that he will drop dead if he encounters one in her office. In a word, she now suffers from *ophidiophobiaphobia* – fear of her patient's fear of snakes. This looks to me like the antithesis of effective treatment.

Of course Claire's narrative spins this differently. She claims to be acting out of deep concern for the well-being of her client. But had this been her primary motive at the outset, then she should have referred him for appropriate help. It certainly did not abet Jason's sense of well-being when, at the beginning of their fifteenth session, she informed him of what had transpired in their foreshortened fourteenth. Again, the opposite reaction ensued: Jason became so upset that he foreshortened their fifteenth session even more radically, terminating Claire there and then.

So my honest if uncharitable appraisal was that Claire should not have handed this case at all – as her mishandling of it soon enough revealed, at least to her patient. The mitigating circumstance is that Claire was willing to subject her conduct of Jason's case to philosophical scrutiny, and (hopefully as a result) to reconsider her position on treating future patients who present with phobias.

I believe that Claire's handling – or mishandling – of Jason's case is indicative of larger patterns in America's lucrative industry of psychotherapy. Since the medical and psychological professions have been effectively colonized by insurance and pharmaceutical companies, emphasis is increasingly on paint-by-numbers DSM diagnoses and mood-enhancing prescription drugs. Talk-therapy is suspiciously regarded – by insurers and drug companies – as a waste of time and money. "Old school" psychiatrists like Irvin Yalom, who was rigorously educated and meticulously supervised while training as a psychoanalyst and existential psychotherapist, rightly bemoans the new generation of

“molecular psychiatrists” who are reared on the “magic bullet,” and who thus have no conception of the therapeutic value of dialogue. Yet at the same time, legions of psychologists among others licensed by states to offer counseling suffer from the hubris of a deconstructed education, bereft of philosophical foundations, and blithely assume that perpetual psychotherapy is a panacea for all possible patients. The result is that some people need psychotherapy but don’t receive it; while others (such as Jason) receive psychotherapy but don’t need it. Why doesn’t the system train gatekeepers to disentangle this inefficient web, and to direct patients or clients to the most appropriate service provider? And in some cases – not Jason’s, but evidently Claire’s – the appropriate service provider just might be a philosopher.

“Something Else-ness”

By late August 2007, this twelve-month cycle of synchronicities had, in one significant respect, come full-circle. Recall that it had begun with my reading of Irvin Yalom’s *Lying on the Couch*, and the synchronistic episodes involving his Peter Macondo and my Pedro Mentiroso. Now, a year later, I found myself sharing this story with Yalom himself, over double espresso in a North Beach coffeehouse. I was in San Francisco for a few days, and Irv had graciously agreed to meet me for coffee. Although we each had at least one bone to pick with the other, we also saw eye-to-eye on various issues, and beyond that each of us had reasons to solicit the other’s opinion. At least Irv’s opinions mattered enough to me for me to seek him out, and by the end of our meeting I believed that some of my opinions mattered to him as well.

In both *The Schopenhauer Cure* and *When Nietzsche Wept*, Yalom evidences three talents above all: First, he is a gifted creative writer, utilizing the medium of historical literary fiction to exercise his fertile imagination and extrapolate his psychotherapeutic perspective. Second, he has done his philosophical homework, demonstrating familiarity with if not mastery of both Schopenhauer’s and Nietzsche’s respective world-views and ethos. Third, he has continued a practice established (as far as I know) by Erik Erikson, namely posthumous psychoanalyses of historical figures, with the mission of extending so-called “laws” of

psychology into the past, the better to instantiate or “retrodict” their universality.

Erikson (1958, 1969) had the temerity and acumen to subject both Martin Luther and Mahatma Gandhi to posthumous psychoanalyses. He was determined to show that Freudian analysis was not just a product of Freud’s particular and peculiar ethos – late Victorian Vienna – rather an instrument that can accurately gauge any psyche of any historical period. To some philosophers of science, this mission appears to be motivated by a deep but unwarrantable commitment to positivism, which seeks relentlessly to establish “universal laws” of social science in order to imbue the notoriously value-laden social sciences – psychology, sociology, economics and the like – with the more value-neutral epistemic status of nomothetic natural sciences – physics, chemistry, biology. Psychology has long-sought recognition as the foundational social science, just as physics is justly regarded as the foundational natural one. Physicists like Newton, Maxwell, Bohr and Einstein won physics its objective spurs, by deriving from first principles well-formed laws that operate universally in given domains, and moreover which are understood to have been operative since the inception of space-time as we know it. Pace the remarkable contributions of Freud, Jung, Erikson, Yalom and psychologists of similar stature, psychotherapy’s “first principles” are not a settled matter, and their psychological models do not appear to possess the universality of physical ones. In many salient respects, Indian and East Asian philosophical models of mind (and the Buddhist threads that connect them) make more credible candidates for the mantle of universality. Thus proponents of positivism such as Erikson, whose posthumous psychoanalyses of Luther and Gandhi are transparent if brazen attempts to illustrate the universality of Freud’s model in psychological space-time, also attract ironic “diagnoses” of “physics envy” from philosophers who straddle the unbridgeable chasm between the natural and social sciences.¹⁰

Yalom is partly in Erikson’s camp. In *The Schopenhauer Cure*, his patient Philip conceals unresolved emotional problems behind a mask of Schopenhauerian clarity, poignancy, misanthropy and misogyny, only to be “cured” by existential group therapy (of which Yalom is a pioneer).

¹⁰ E.g. see:

http://tenser.typepad.com/tenser_said_the_tensor/2006/02/physics_envy.html

Philip becomes so strongly “converted” to this psychotherapeutic model that he ends up running the group following the death of the group’s leader, an existential psychotherapist and conscientious healer named Julius, Yalom’s avatar in the novel. (Most of Yalom’s works are conspicuously pre-occupied with death, which radiates throughout them like veins through a leaf.) In the process of writing *The Schopenhauer Cure*, Yalom read (and cited) much of the popular literature on philosophical counseling, and so perhaps this novel can be construed as his reply to, or even rebuttal of our nascent field. Yalom, in effect, is asserting that Schopenhauer was “mentally ill”, but might have been “saved” by existential psychotherapy. My hunch is that we shall never know. Although Schopenhauer’s avatar Philip eventually takes to Yalom’s cure for “SPD” (Schopenhauerian personality disorder), it is by no means given that Schopenhauer himself would ever have consented to participate in existential group therapy. Yet he stands posthumously diagnosed by Yalom, and his avatar Philip is cured/converted/healed/saved/reprogrammed (choose one or more) by Yalom’s dying avatar Julius.

When Nietzsche Wept is another exposition of this theme, a marvelously creative enactment of a hypothetical counseling relationship between Drs. Breuer and Freud on the one hand, and their patient Nietzsche on the other. In order to submit to psychotherapy, Nietzsche has to be deceived into believing that he is actually giving philosophical counseling to Breuer, and later to Freud himself. To perpetrate such a monumental deceit, via false appeal to Nietzsche’s monstrous ego, Yalom sagely enlists a woman, fictionalizing Nietzsche’s Salome for just this purpose. Of course Yalom is historically and psychologically correct in portraying Nietzsche as an incurably mad genius. Dr. Breuer (Yalom’s avatar in this work) is once again a conscientious but wounded healer, suffering existential crises of meaning in his marriage and his life, and is (for a change) pre-occupied with death. His encounter with Nietzsche is also – if ironically – curative, since Nietzsche’s impenetrable isolation and incurable madness give Breuer good cause, in the end, to celebrate his own banal, boring, predictable but also comfortable upper middle class bourgeois existence.

Yalom’s first remarks to me, over coffee, pertained to my critiques of psychology’s and psychiatry’s excessive medicalization of the human being and the human condition. Certain members of psychotherapy’s

trade union, so Irv informed me, had taken exception to some of my criticisms. In reply, I mouthed the homily about breaking eggs to make omelets. (It gained empirical force in the café, as people all around us were having brunch.)

So we shifted to common ground. As I mentioned, Yalom himself is unapologetically critical of the new generation of psychotherapists and molecular psychiatrists, a technocracy that dispenses paint-by-numbers diagnoses and mood-enhancing formulations, and that dispenses with psychotherapeutic dialogue as a primary vehicle of healing. Irv and I both deplore postmodernism's deconstructions of humanity and the affronts of technocracy to it, and we share a healthy skepticism of the DSM (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders).

At the same time, I jested with Irv that – according to his own published disclosures – some of his patients are healed not by his insightful interpretations of their dreams, rather by his resolution of his own counter-transference issues with them.¹¹ They feel better when he stops loathing them, and starts accepting if not loving them. I think he acknowledged this with a wry smile.

When I probed him about *The Schopenhauer Cure*, and suggested that Philip had merely relinquished one worldview (Schopenhauer's) for another (Julius's), Irv became more ardent in his defense of existential psychotherapy as a healing modality. I do not think Irv fancied my further suggestion, that some psychotherapeutic models resemble religions as much as they do sciences, and thus that “healing” under such conditions bears ponderable resemblance to religious conversion.¹² Irv's resistance could have been evidence of Erikson's syndrome, and in any case one can readily imagine the following snippets of hypothetical dialogue:

Erikson (to Martin Luther): “Would you care to be psychoanalyzed?”

Luther: “To what end? Aren't you just another kind of priest, seeking to obtrude dogma and hijack dialogue between man and God?”

Or imagine Freud psychoanalyzing Schopenhauer:

Freud (to Schopenhauer): “Tell me about your mother.”

Schopenhauer: “Read my essay *On Women*.”

¹¹ E.g. see Yalom 1989.

¹² Indeed, vituperative if secretive quarrels between fanatical adherents of incompatible psychotherapeutic schools bear strong resemblances to clashes between intolerant religious fanatics from competing denominations.

When Irv appealed to me, as a “fellow healer,” to be more charitable in my assessments, he rang the very bells of *When Nietzsche Wept*. I had to wonder whether Irv was now humoring me, just as Freud had humored Nietzsche in Irv’s fertile imagination. (I even glanced around the café, to see if I could spot the requisite *femme fatale*.) That wonderment was reinforced by Irv’s genuine delight at my gift to him of *Philosophy and Psychiatry* (Schramme & Thome 2004), which contains among things my essay *Thus Spake Settembrini*, inspired by Nietzsche and Thomas Mann alike. Has anyone yet dared to psychoanalyze Mann? A Freudian would have a proverbial field-day with the Eros and Thanatos that jointly ooze from every pore of *Death in Venice* (Mann 1912). I would like to read another Yalom novel about group therapy – the group being Nietzsche, Mann, Wagner and Spengler. These “four horsemen of the apocalypse” all prophesied, or “diagnosed,” the demise of Western civilization. In their wake, Irv and I among others have become Nietzsche’s “physicians to culture”. Perhaps we are all humoring each other, in a daisy-chain of incarnations, while our civilization somnambulates toward what Mann (1924) called “the foul humors of the grave”.

Irv and I are both descended from Russian Jews, are both creatures of the Enlightenment, and are both appalled by the postmodern West’s precipitous decline, driven by the USA’s neo-Roman version of “bread and circuses”, namely junk-food and trash-culture. Thus we discovered authorial common ground: His books, like mine, have more readers in foreign editions than they do in the US. That, we agreed, is because so many countries lag the US in cultural decline. The rich matrix of intellectual history, scientific literacy and philosophical tradition that Irv and I both presuppose – and draw upon – in our respective works has all but vanished from the American mindscape, which has been transformed into more of a moonscape: airless, lifeless, and inhospitable to contemplative beings.

The wounded healer – whose prototype is the satyr Chiron – surfaces time and again in Yalom’s works, and traces its origins to Jung (1989), the prototypical wounded healer of psychotherapeutic orientation. Jung also saw his patients as creatures whom life had wounded spiritually, and (thanks to his religious upbringing) he conceived of healing as a spiritual activity. This conceit permitted him to transcend (or to imagine he had transcended) corporeal as well as ethical boundaries, to the point of having sex with some of his female patients. Therapist-client sexual

relations – like generic doctor-patient or cleric-choirboy relations – are taboo in professional, vocational, legal and ethical spheres alike, but precisely because they are taboo they also occur with alarming frequency. Yalom's *Lying on the Couch*, which for me precipitated among other things this article, spins webs of cautionary tales on psychiatrist-patient sexual relations, which counselors of every kind – philosophers included – should also take to heart. Jung included sex in his repertoire of healing practices; whereas legions of reputable psychotherapists exclude it rigorously.¹³ Why? Primarily because it always ends up harming, and never helping, the patient. Just as there is no conceivable context in which parent-child sex is ever beneficial to the child, as Freud reminds us with nomenclature borrowed from Oedipus, so there is no conceivable context in which therapist-patient sex is ever beneficial to the patient.

Yalom is refreshingly eclectic, and so he draws from Freud, Jung and existentialism as he lists, and however they conduce to enhancing his healing arts (however packaged as sciences). He signed for me a copy of his textbook on existential psychiatry, and expressed interest in my philosophical views on it that would be a challenging and worthwhile project. Any therapeutic position that weaves together such downright conflicting strands of metaphysical presupposition must be deeply incoherent, however demonstrably effective. I say this because my own philosophical position is just as deeply incoherent, even if demonstrably effective in its own way. My noetic “toolbox” contains plenty of conflicting metaphysical presuppositions, any one of which may be helpful to a given client on a given day. This is the Groucho Marx school of metaphysics. Groucho minted its very motto: “If you don’t like my principles, I’ve got others.” I generally endorse eclecticism wherever I encounter it. It may be inconsistent at times, and at bottom even incoherent, but it’s a sure-fire antidote to ideological and dogmatic and neurotic inclinations that haunt human mentation, whether in political, religious, psychotherapeutic or philosophical dimensions.

All of Yalom’s “fictitious” psychiatrists – clearly not fictions at all, rather thinly-veiled depictions of himself and colleagues – are wounded healers. That’s precisely why they continue with their own interminable analyses, and analyses of analyses, in supervision with senior analysts who themselves are in supervision with more senior ones, and on up the

¹³ E.g. see Peck 1980.

Freudian food chain, until we arrive at the apex and encounter Chief Executive Egos like Marshal Streider. They are so senior that they have no one to analyze their analyses of analyses of all the other analyses, in other words they have no one to heal them – or to pretend to heal them by temporarily salving their neural/spiritual/existential wounds with insightful interpretations or dissolved counter-transferences. They are so senior that their untreated egoistic inflammations make them prey to top predators on vanity ungratified and ambition unfulfilled – i.e. to the Peter Macondos of this world. “Physician, heal thyself!”

Beyond these wounded healers, who doubtless help many but who remain immune to their own medicine – if they are not poisoned by it – are the persecuted, ostracized and isolated healers. Freud and Jung experienced persecutions of various kinds, as did Luther and Gandhi, among other historical figures who attract posthumous psychoanalyses by analysts manifesting Erikson syndrome. Schopenhauer’s bitterness was undoubtedly a byproduct not only of his penetrating intellect, but also of his isolation and ostracization. Nietzsche was even more insightful and more profoundly isolated, but utilized his unenviable circumstances as a scaffold from which to construct his Übermensch. The persecuted healer is also an archetype. We encounter him in every century and culture and religion. I told Irv about Martin Prechtel, the Mayan shaman with a price on his head in Guatemala, who found refuge in the USA and became a new-age healer-author (Prechtel 2002). Between the lines I asserted, and I believe Irv acknowledged, that persecuted healers – whether psychotherapists, philosophers, physicians or priests – are in the last analysis shamans.

Irv and I had time to exchange views on past cases and pending projects alike. He is writing another work of historical-philosophical fiction, this time on Spinoza – a worthy candidate, great philosopher and persecuted thinker if not healer, via whom Yalom can project his Erikson syndrome ever further into the past.

And of course I summarized for Irv the case of Claire and Jason, and solicited his professional opinion. Yalom’s eclecticism prevented him from rejecting synchronicity out-of-hand, while his professionalism prompted him to concur that desensitization – not psychotherapy – is a preferred approach to curing ophidiophobia. I then mentioned to him, *en passant*, that although Claire had ostensibly approached me with two issues in mind – namely Jason’s synchronistic serpents and her

questionable case management – I had the fleeting notion that there was something else, a third issue, probably something more personal, that Claire really wanted to discuss but which she never got around to broaching with me.

“Good instinct, Lou,” replied Irv approvingly. “There is always something else.”

And on that apocryphal utterance hinges a definitive distinction between psychotherapy and philosophical counseling. If indeed “there is always something else,” then the patient is never really cured, and neither for that matter is the wounded healer. If indeed “there is always something else” then there is always a pretext for another session, another invoice, another supervision, another meta-analysis, another inflamed ego, another insatiable ambition, another con-artist posing as a patient, another unresolved counter-transference, another violation of taboo. This is at root a Hobbesian view (and Freud was unwittingly an ardent Hobbesist): “Thus I put it for a general inclination of mankind, to seek power after power, that ceaseth only in death.” (Hobbes 1651).

That there may well have been “something else” in Claire’s case did not present, at least to me, a philosophical occasion for universalizing the particular. On the contrary, I have earned a reputation for short-term work, based on the mission of helping my clients to become more philosophically self-sufficient in the least possible time. When there is philosophical self-sufficiency, or better yet serenity, then there is also “nothing else”.

The presupposition of “something else-ness” is hardly existential, if conceivably eclectic. In its more notorious forms, it manifests as Augustinian original sin (necessitating weekly confession), Freudian original neurosis (necessitating as many weekly sessions as the patient can afford), or Marxist original oppression (necessitating universal agitation and revolution). As long as there is a belief that “there is always something else”, there will always be “something else” to guarantee that psychic suffering persists. As long as the self-contradictory notion of a “healthy ego” rules psychology, along with the self-serving premise that psychotherapy is the royal road to its maintenance, there will always be “something else”. As long as there are analyses of analyses, there will always be “something else”. As long as there are wounded healers, there will always be “something else”. And as long as there are persecuted

healers, and expressions of Erikson's syndrome to psychoanalyze them posthumously, there will always be "something else".

I declare differently: It is not always the case that "there is always something else". Sometimes, there is nothing else. When the ego dissolves, one confronts nothing else. When the oxymoronic premise of a "healthy ego" is rejected, along with the expedient presumption that psychotherapy makes the ego healthy, one confronts nothing else. When the assumption that sufficient supervision makes the wounded healer well is likewise repudiated, one confronts precisely nothing else. When one experiences that "oceanic feeling" which Freud (1930) could not discover in himself, one confronts exactly nothing else.¹⁴

Ancient Indian philosophy conceived of divine "self" (atman) as part of Godhead (Brahman).¹⁵ There is nothing else. Ancient Greek philosophy construed mundane "self" (soul, psyche) as separate from the Gods, and so in need of "something else". Abrahamic faiths likewise conceive of soul as separate from God, requiring redemption or salvation to rejoin the Godhead – thus in constant need of "something else". As Western civilization began to reject God and replace religion with science, its secularized and increasingly isolated "self" became the solitary and illusory locus of consciousness, identity and purpose – a chimera condemned to pull the twin trains of existence and mortality alike. Deprived of contact with the mystical, the sacred, and the divine, the isolated and inflamed illusory self twists in existential winds. The defunct (and sometimes defrocked) priest is displaced by the psychiatrist, the psychologist, the psychoanalyst, who attempt to heal the illusory self by transmuting it into a "healthy ego" – at the corollary cost of condemning it to Sisyphean "something else-ness". In our current age, poor Sisyphus now rolls his massively unhealthy ego up the hill, enduring endless talk-therapy and/or refills of prescriptions for Prozac. But week after week he is prevented from attaining the summit of wellness by the "first law" of psychoanalysis: "There is always something else."

Yet in ancient East Asian ontologies – Taoism, Confucianism, and (later) Buddhism –there is neither soul nor God. In consequence there is no illusory self to be subjected to "something-elseness" on the pretext of

¹⁴ Freud 1930: "I cannot discover this 'oceanic' feeling in myself."

¹⁵ E.g. see the *Bhagavad-Gita* and the *Upanishads*.

being healed. In lieu of self, soul and Godhead, there is *sunyata*¹⁶, *samadhi*¹⁷ and serenity. There is also nothing else. As soon as one jettisons “something else-ness”, lo and behold there is nothing else. And when there is nothing else, then and only then does there emerge the certainty that there is absolutely everything else, with the possible exception of something else. Would you like an example of a case in which there is nothing else? Very well, here it is.

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¹⁶ *Sunyata* is often translated as “emptiness,” which fails to do it justice. The term is a corollary of the Buddhist doctrine of dependent origination. All phenomena arise and dissipate, and the spatio-temporal manifestations that we perceive, conceive and capture with language have no perduring “essence” – that is, they are “empty” of essential or independent being. This also applies to ego, self, and identity. E.g. see Mitchell 2008.

¹⁷ *Samadhi* means “Right Concentration” in meditative practice, which conduces to experiencing *sunyata*, and gives rise to serenity. E.g. see Mitchell 2008.

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II Dialogue in Different Contexts and Political Systems

Globalization, Basic Rights and Trans-Cultural Dialogue

1. Global democratization

The political community of fate in many respects is regional and global, but our patterns of civil deliberation and governance are mainly still national and only in some parts of the world – and only in some respects, in some issue respects, as was rightly stressed several times – they are regional and even to a much lesser degree global.

The modern idea that political problems need to be tackled through legitimate procedures, based on democracy and human rights, thus requires new trans-boundary forms of governance, citizenship and deliberation. They are emerging already. They need to be developed, enhanced, extended and intensified without much delay. Otherwise, we will not be able to maintain, or to regain democratic legitimacy.

The model of global governance proposes of a four-pronged approach to global democratization. There are four columns, which in their combination form this approach of global governance. Namely, a) to extend, to democratize and to make more inclusive trans-national institutions, such as the United Nations. There should be added an Economic Security Council, there should be a People's Assembly, and an assembly for Civil Society Associations, and there should be more equality and more inclusiveness in all these institutions. b) The issue-related functional political regimes need to be democratized, made more inclusive and more equal in their procedures of deliberation and decision-making – such as the WTO, the ILO or the World Bank. c) The active worldwide civil society: Recent research in trans-boundary civil society says that there are already 40.000 civil society agencies in place worldwide – most of them issue related. d) There need to be systems of regional political cooperation which in their turn network and cooperate with each other.

2. Post-liberal basic rights

The overarching orientation for global democratization must be a worldwide consensus about equal basic rights for all citizens in all parts of the world. Both the material juridical state and the notion of social civic rights form connecting links between fundamental rights understood in a civic and political sense, and the historically more recent set of social and economic rights. The U.N. Human Rights Covenant of 1966 was the first binding international law document to recognize their connection. The United Nations approved two equivalent drafts of international conventions: the International (or Civil) Covenant on Civic and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (the Social Covenant). Both became effective in 1976. The social pact relies upon a highly sophisticated material understanding of freedom. It describes concretely, comprehensively and exhaustively the social and economic criteria that every social order has to fulfil in order to guarantee universal human and civic rights. Taken as a whole, these rights imply a broad set of policy commitments in a social democracy. Its guiding principle, to which all the individual norms are subordinated, is the “ideal of the free human being, liberated from fear and need”.

These UN human rights accords are the most important source of norms for global democracy because they can plausibly claim universal validity. They can furnish justifications for much that is undertaken in practice to resolve difficult issues of domestic policy, and they imply a social democratic commitment to work for the expansion of human rights everywhere in the world.

The space in which basic rights may be exercised may be drastically curtailed as a result of the manifold social and economic risks to which citizens are nowadays exposed. Such restrictions are intensified in cases where public declarations and legal enshrinement of rights are not matched by corresponding efforts to reduce the risks that so often accompany their actual enjoyment. The latter, of course, often arise from empirical circumstances, frequently in the social and economic system itself, over which citizens individually have little control (e.g., outsourcing, structural unemployment, poor education, ageing).

The discrepancy between the formal validity and real-world enjoyment of basic rights, to the extent that it is precipitated by factors in

the structure of negative globalization To say that a person has a right to something implies that others – most notably public authorities – have a duty to help him or her attain and keep it. For example, a right to a decent education implies the duty of some level of government to establish schools, pay teachers, etc. If nothing is done to secure a right, then it becomes a fiction or at best a mere recommendation, which contradicts its essential character as a right. More broadly, liberal guarantees of such basic liberties as press freedom, religious freedom, etc., have always presupposed a conception of a human being as a rational, autonomous actor endowed with dignity. Obviously, the practices of slavery and tyranny contradicted that image of a human being, and eventually they were swept away in many parts of the world. But it has been the experience of our age that other, less obviously oppressive factors, such as a poor education, unemployment, racism, poverty, and unsupported old age can all vitiate a person's claim to act in fully autonomous, rational, and dignified ways.

We need to approach a world wide consensus that post-liberal universal basic values intermediate norms of justice and thus a common obligation and a moral and political duty for all who have the capacity to contribute to their implementation.

3. Civil society and consensus-building

The creation of global political structures, in which the required deliberations and dialogues can be conducted is in itself moral and political obligation. It is foremost transnational civil society that can play a key role in both approaches to positive globalization: governance and common value-building through dialogue. It is simultaneously one of the tools of democratic regulation and the only available social space in which that kind of free and open citizens' dialogues can take place and are able to generate ethical norms and political values. At the same time those direct dialogue initiatives that are conducted in civil society have the potential to create not only consensus about norms and ethical values for shared forms of life, but also the energies of solidarity and social capital that are necessary for their implementation in everyday life and in the field of political action.

Action-oriented face-to-face dialogues in civil society, contrary to talk mediated by mass media or strategic communication in the political arena, have a high potential for engendering strong bonds of solidarity and obligation, together with the norms and values that emerge from them. Thus, both the orientation for shaping modernization in the globalization age, and the energies for its successful pursuit can best be generated in the public space of civil society. All responsibly-minded forces in the world of today that can help to bring about the timely renewal of democracy, including the national democratic state itself, can contribute to the building of appropriate structures of opportunity for social dialogues in national civil societies and their transnational interconnection.

Among the many forms of face-to-face dialogues and forms of deliberation that need to play the crucial role in this process, Socratic Dialogue is prominent because it is paradigmatic for free and reasonable communication between equals. Socratic Dialogue, together with many other forms of face-to-face dialogue, must “go public” and take on a political responsibility. It should again, as in the days of one of its modern founding fathers, Leonard Nelson, become connected with the overarching project of the struggle for a humane and just society. What makes a form of life humane is exactly the role of good reason in its shaping. Dialogue as a way of co-operative striving for ethical truth through the exchange of good reason is under threat in the media societies and media democracies of today. Media discourses that are based on pictures, theatricality and entertainment values are increasingly crowding out dialogue-like discourses from the realms of public life and even social interaction.

Civil society is not just the public space between state, market and family, it is also marked by an ethical qualification. For only those activities in the public space of voluntary action can be called civil society actions that are – in addition to all the other purposes they may serve – directed towards common well-being. Thus civil society cannot meaningfully be defined without some reference to ethical norms and motives.

There are many other forms of citizens’ dialogue which are much more directly linked to political action in civil society such as: the open space method, the search conference, mediation, negotiated rule-making, deliberative opinion polls, community advisory panels, citizens’ juries,

national issue forums and the like. A civil society that is marked by such forms of citizens' dialogue can increasingly serve as both the place where values and solidarity are generated, and as one of the channels through which their democratic implementation in the national and global political arenas is effected.

4. Trans-cultural understanding

In a time when the new ideology of the “clash of civilizations” is so successfully propagated everywhere in the world and when the fact of cultural pluralism within almost every society and in the global arena as such world wide civil society dialogues need to be intercultural dialogues in the first instance. They should aim at creating a growing global awareness that the post-liberal basic values can designate a consensus for common action of all governments, civil society initiatives and citizens world wide.

There is nothing in any of the cultures and religions of the world of today that could prevent such a trans-cultural dialogue from achieving its objectives. Research data show a picture of a high degree differentiation as much within different cultures as between them. All cultures today are a far cry away from being homogeneous entities.

The cultures of this world are by no means distinguished from each other by sharp or even well-demarcated differences in the validity of core fundamental values which are at the basis of ways of living together. It is indeed true that the individual cultures to a limited degree are characterized by special regard for particular basic political values such as individualism, equality, desire for more or less dense or regulations of social life a.s.o.

But at the same time there is also a considerable overlap regarding the full profile of relevant basic values between all present day cultures. The historical experiences of the individual countries and the level of their socio-economic development on the whole obviously have a greater impact on their respective value profile than religious-cultural roots. Cultural differences do not serve as a barrier to similarities and overlaps in the value profile. Cultural commonalities, on the other hand, are no guarantee for similarities or overlaps in the value profile.

To give just two examples: with respect to the political values of individualism, equality and uncertainty avoidance Portugal and Britain, belonging to the same civilization, find themselves at the opposite extremes of a scale measuring equality and individualism, whereas Portugal and Turkey, belonging to very different cultural traditions share the same value profile in this respect.

Thus the empirical data do not validate the ideology of a clash of civilizations on the grounds of irreconcilable differences among their basic social and political values. Rather, overarching similarities and overlaps may be identified among all the cultures that were surveyed. The actual lines of conflict instead run within the civilizations between those who value all basic rights – liberal and post-liberal (social), those who value only liberal basic rights and those who deny them all.

This complies with the outcome of attempts to arrive at a common understanding for values of living together recently made by representatives of practically all relevant religions of today as laid down in the “Declaration on the World Ethos”: the right of every individual to humane treatment, the principle of freedom from violence and respect for life, solidarity between people all over the world and advocacy of a just world economic order, tolerance for other religions, opinions, cultures, equal rights for all men and partnership based on equality between men and women. There is a common basis for understanding and coexistence in all of the world’s civilizations.

5. Conclusion

Though the role of civil society in implementing democratic control over the processes of modernization and globalization is limited, its contribution to building the consensus about post-liberal basic rights and creating the solidarity necessary for making the values powerful is crucial. The social form in which domination of the free public space of civil society can be made use of to meet these ends is direct dialogue between citizens. As Socratic Dialogue is a paradigmatic form of the co-operative searching for truth, it needs both to play a prominent role in civil society and to adopt its ethical-political obligation vis-a-vis the challenges of our time – within every society and trans-nationally.

Inter-Cultural Dialogue as a Form of Liberal Education

Socrates can be taken to symbolize whatever the European intellectual tradition has come to associate with the heritage from ancient Greeks. Of them I would like to pick out two things: First, a notion of enquiry rooted in dialogue, and second, the question, what constitutes good life. Recently, the word 'culture' has come to be associated with the second element and it is often said that different cultures embody different notions of what good life consists of. These two taken together yield a notion of inter-cultural dialogue, i.e. the notion of a co-operative enquiry into the different alternatives available of leading a good life. Socrates, in this reading, embodies the very notion of inter-cultural dialogue.

This reading, of course, immediately evokes both a historical question and an immediate practical question: The question regarding the accuracy of attributing such a notion to the historical figure as represented by Plato, and the question of whether and what bearing this conception has on the problems of living in what has come to be termed as 'multicultural' society, i.e. a social milieu generated by communities (immigrant or otherwise) from many different backgrounds living in the same city or state.

The historical question I will ignore: I will make allusions to Plato's delineation of dialogue in order to evoke associations with the ancient Greece but what I sketch below and call 'Socratic dialogue' can stand on its own without requiring to pass the test of historical lineage. But the practical question cannot be ignored so easily, especially in the current atmosphere, since, on the one hand, multi-culturalism as an ideal has come to disrepute due to terrorism and such developments, and on the other hand, very often in the public domain, *intercultural dialogue* is recommended as a strategy of conflict resolution. I want to claim, in contrast, that the value of intercultural dialogue lies elsewhere than that of an instrument of resolving conflicts in a multicultural society. But,

obviously, this second proposition requires both a defense and an elaboration.

I will give such a defense, but first, let me outline what I take to be Socratic dialogue.

1. Socratic dialogue: *discourse in polis versus dialectic in academy.*

I take the cue from a remark by Gilbert Ryle, the philosopher who taught in Oxford in the mid twentieth century. He traces the beginning of the notion of university to Plato's attempt (in *Parmenides*) to identify a particular function, and a corresponding form, of discourse.¹ The function, of course, is that of gaining knowledge and the form of discourse Plato devised for it he called 'dialectic'.

To appreciate Ryle's remark we need to differentiate various functions served by speech in daily life and different institutions in society meant to enhance one or the other of them. We talk to each other

- (1) for the sheer pleasure of being with each other; or to overcome fear, anxiety, boredom, and such things;
- (2) in order to be able to perform an action together – to arrive at a decision with regard to a particular practical course of action either to be jointly carried out or to be carried out by different individuals as part of living together;
- (3) in order to co-operatively *articulate* and communicate knowledge.

Let me call the first the *conviviality* function, the second the *practical deliberative* function, and the third, the function of *gaining knowledge*. We can think of society as constituted by institutions embodying these functions in various measures. The family eating time and living room, the cafes and the clubs, and in an extended sense perhaps also theatre,

¹ "The impersonality of Plato's late dialogues, like that of Aristotle's lectures, reflects the emergence of philosophy as an enquiry with an impetus, ... As the disputing for the sake of victory gives way to discussion for the sake of discovery, so the literature of the elenctic duel gives way to the literature of cooperative philosophical investigation. The university has come into being". See p. 333 of Ryle, G.: Plato, in: *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Vol. 6. Ed. by P. Edwards, New York, London, 314-333.

opera and cinema are institutions where convivial function predominates. Legislative organs such as parliaments, on the other hand, are meant to embody practical deliberative function.

What Ryle perceives as the speciality of Plato's attempt would become clear if we contrast what the founding of *academy* by Plato was meant to establish as contrasted to something ancient Greeks already had and were very proud of. They were proud of the form of their city, the *polis*, especially the institution for deliberation regarding the affairs of the community. That institution, possibly the forerunner of the present day institution of Parliament, was a place, on the one hand, for *negotiation* and, on the other, for *persuasion* and *debate*. That is, it was a place both for the type of interaction between individuals or groups having antithetical interests, the kind of interaction now paradigmatically exemplified in the talk between unions and the management in contexts of resolving their disputes, and for the type involving what is today identified as speech geared to 'public relation', i.e., that involving in addition to antithetical parties, also a third party, the on-looking fellow citizens, and the manner of speech is devised also in order to gain attention and approval of them.

All these are *reflective* as contrasted to *routine* actions, i.e. they call for at least a minimum of taking another's perspective. They are exercises of putting oneself in another's place and therefore involve a shift back and forth from the perspective one is accustomed to.

Taking another's perspective has to be counted as the function of gaining knowledge. But in practical deliberation the overriding aim of speech is that of arriving at decisions one considers desirable regarding the affairs of the community. The knowledge aspect is present in articulating the interests, particular as well as those considered as in the interest of all. Also, since it is the social action which is the focus, speech has to apply conviviality function – conveying and evoking the feeling for the bonds of the community. However, both these are instruments towards arriving at decisions, and thus knowledge-aspect occupies a subordinate place to what can be called 'the person' or 'communicative-aspect' of speech.²

² The knowledge and person aspects obtain only as logically distinguishable but not as empirically separable aspects of speech. The distinction under different heads was made by Kuno Lorenz and I have elucidated them in: Rao, Narahari (1999): Begriff der Universität. In: Kai Buchholz, Shahid Rahman, Ingrid Weber (eds.), *Wege zur*

In contrast, the invention of *dialectic* and its institutionalisation in Plato's *academy* can be understood as attempts to exemplify a form of speech which is geared to knowledge-gain itself. In such a speech convivial public relation aspects as also the pressure to arrive at socially acceptable decisions can be a hindrance. Under some circumstances convivial function *may* facilitate speech geared to knowledge-gain by opening up for smooth interaction. Nevertheless, one has to distinguish it as *facilitator* from it as *aim* of dialogue. Attempt to conceive Socratic dialogue is an attempt to devise a form of speech interaction with some procedures in place to delimit such things as passion to win or the desire to please or the craving for sympathy.

2. What is the knowledge aimed at?

But formulating those procedures depend on what we understand by 'knowledge' that we aim at, since our model of dialogue is determined by the kind of aims we entertain.

Under knowledge we may understand

- simple skills such as cycling and complex skills such as academic disciplines like physics or pedagogy;
- information, or more generally, true propositions (this term, for the purpose of this essay, may be extended to encompass also linguistically articulated principles to guide actions).
- In addition to both the above, we can also identify the *attitudes* or, what I will call '*ethos*'.

I use the word 'ethos' as a contrast notion to an accidentally acquired habit: It refers to deliberately and reflectively cultivated habits with an ability, among other things, to reflectively judge and control those very habits by devising some standards. The domain of ethics is, or at least ought to be, *ethos* understood in this way rather than the linguistically articulated principles or commands ('imperatives') for action. Of course,

Vernunft. Frankfurt a. M.: Campus Verlag, especially pp. 43-44. For more nuanced and detailed discussion see Rao, Narahari (2009): Artikulation und Prädikation In: Kuno Lorenz, *Dialogischer Konstruktivismus*. Walter de Gruyter, especially pp. 35-36.

one of the convenient ways of reflecting on ethos is by articulating it in such linguistic representations; nevertheless the former is distinct from the latter. Recognizing this, as we will see, has implications to our conception of dialogue.

Which of the above is the knowledge aimed at in Socratic dialogue – skill, information or ethos?

2.1 Criticism of opinions: ‘tradition and example’ versus ‘clear and distinct ideas’

There is a reading of Plato’s conception of enquiry, and consequently, his delineation of Socratic dialogue, as criticism of the opinions passed on from the past in order to free them from error and confusions. The lead words here are ‘opinion’, ‘confusion’, and, perhaps additionally, a word hovering around in the background, the ‘dogma’. This reading may appeal to us, especially when we find in our midst political turmoil arising out of fanaticism. I will call this a ‘Cartesian reading’, for it makes Socratic dialogue a forerunner of what Descartes conceived as the enquiry into scientific principles: He counter-posed ‘clear and distinct ideas’ against ‘tradition and example’. The former, he says, is what is required for scientific knowledge; the latter is what our day-to-day practice mostly relies upon.³

In such a reading, knowledge to be sought is of the form of propositions, and dialogue meant for that would turn out to be either exchange of information or arguing for or against the propositions put forward as true. Consequently, delineating Socratic dialogue is a task of articulating some rules for proposing and opposing some *theses* concerning some domain.

Dialogue in such a conception can begin only when a proposition is at hand. In actual practice, however, cognitively interesting speech

³ Rene Descartes, says in the part II of his *Discourse on Method* (first published 1637) “... the ground of our opinion is far more custom and opinion than any certain knowledge” and then says a little further that he decides to become skeptical of anything “of the truth of which I had been persuaded merely by example and custom”. In his *Meditations*, this skepticism is elevated into a method of finding the *scientific principles*. See the *First Meditation*.

interaction often begins where we have no proposition to put forward at all. For example, we may start wondering about our routine responses to some issue, and what these responses represent. It is only because our model of dialogue requires us to have a proposition, we start talking about 'implicit' propositions underlying an ethos of a person or a community. The ethos is put under suspicion of being the result of a confused state of mind or confused state of affairs until one can bring it under some identified belief. Since ethos is the result of experience and deliberations of past generations, i.e. it is *tradition*, and so long as this tradition is not captured into a system of beliefs, it is taken to be a bundle of confusions and errors.

Descartes' equation of *tradition* and *example* with *confusions* and *error* is rooted in this notion of knowledge as propositions.

2.2. Dialogue as reflection on *ethos*

I want to suggest an alternative reading of Plato's conception which will give us a much richer notion of what Plato was after: The knowledge aimed at and gained by Socratic dialogue is of the sort of refining the ethos, and not that of arriving at specific propositions.

This reading would appear more appropriate if we place Plato's notion of enquiry and knowledge in the context of ancient Greece. In contrast to Descartes, the ancient Greeks viewed tradition as valuable fund of experiential heritage. That fund is available primarily not as articulated opinions but as the prevailing ethos of a community. In contrast to *opinions*, the *ethos*, whether of a person or a community, both *precedes* and *transcends* the linguistic articulation of it: It *precedes*, in the sense that whereas it can prevail without a linguistic articulation of it, the reverse cannot be the case, i.e. an articulation is parasitic on an available ethos. It *transcends* in a double sense: First, an ethos is not exhausted by any given articulation of it, and second, it is not derivable from any factual and other assumptions that may contribute to the shaping of it.

How would an enquiry concerning ethos look like? It has to be distinguished, I want to suggest, on the one hand, from the above discussed Cartesian method of criticism of opinions, and on the other,

from 'practical deliberative dialogues' as instantiated in the institution of legislative bodies.

Obviously, an ethos can be judged as deficient or wrong, but not in the manner of identifying an opinion to be false. An ethos, of course, *is* rational but not in the sense that underlying it there is a unique linguistic rule or imperative secured by argumentation. It is rational in the sense that deliberation and thinking has gone into its formation. Consequently, an important task envisaged in the Platonic notion of enquiry is that of recapturing those reasons; enquiry is conceived more in the nature of reflection seeking to reconstruct the current ethos of a community in order to preserve and perfect it, rather than to dismiss and discard it seeing there only errors and confusion.

Consequently, the linguistic articulations do not have the character of being true or false, i.e. denoting something underlying an ethos waiting to be discovered by enquiry. They are the means in the process of reflection directed at refining and perfecting an ethos, i.e. *articulations* literally, in linguistic or in other signs. As such, though not every articulation is right, yet there can be many of them.

2.3. 'Situations of decision' versus 'situations of reflection'

The intellectual significance of the founding of the academy by Plato is that it recognizes an important distinction between two types of reflection concerning actions: There are deliberations meant to enable taking appropriate decisions concerning specific actions. And there are situations where we ponder over the nature of the actions we are accustomed to perform, and the standards we use to pass judgments on them. In practice, perhaps, these two types of reflections intermingle to different degrees, nevertheless, it is worthwhile to recognize both their logical distinctness and the need for divergent types of procedures and institutions for their optimal practice.

To elucidate, let me begin by noticing the obvious: Actions, among other things, express the available social ethos. This, in turn, is the inheritance of the struggles and reflections of past generations congealed into certain standards of judgment and behaviour. While taking decisions in situations when an action is called for, those standards come to

operate; deliberations consist of those to identify the situation properly, to choose the strategies and the appropriate standards to apply. For instance, if I see a child being beaten by the parents, and that act is to be judged as cruel on the basis of an ethos which formed me, it is my obligation to intervene. There may be questions of strategy involved as how best to intervene: whether to call police or to attempt persuasion to stop beating – but independent of the questions of strategy, my obligation is clear, even though, often, how to go about to fulfil this obligation may not be clear.

In contrast, we have situations of reflection on those very standards of judgment and behaviour, where the pressure of the moment to decide on one or other course of action is suspended. In fact, it is the achievement of civilization that such situations are made available both through social rituals and institutions. Conferences such as this and institutions enabling them provide an example. Their primary aim is not that of arriving at consensus on some issue, but rather that of building the ethos or character of the communities embedded within which these institutions have their existence. In other words, they are occasions and institutions for liberal education in the classical Humboldtian sense.⁴

Formulating *principles* for concerted action is only one of the many ways of conceptualizing ethos. In fact, one and the same ethos is amenable to be conceived as embodiment of many different principles. Though in arriving at decisions it may be sometimes necessary to formulate principles concerning an action, it is hardly sufficient. First, because taking decisions has more to it than merely fixing the principle to be followed; many aspects of the situation in which an action is performed have to be taken into account. Second, even if one is agreed on what principle to follow, there can be disputes as to how to apply it to the situation at hand.

When it comes to situations of reflection, formulating principles is not merely inadequate but also inappropriate. The task here is that getting an overview of the very many actions and the diverse varieties of

⁴ For an elaboration of the Humboldtian idea of Liberal education or *Bildung* see my essay: (2001): Der Bildungsbegriff in Humboldts Konzept der Universität und Wege zu seiner Erneuerung. In: Karl-Otto Apel, Holger Bruckhardt (eds.), *Prinzip Verantwortung, Grundlage für Ethik und Pädagogik*. Würzburg: Königshausen und Neumann, pp. 227-236.

judgments that accompany them, that flow from an ethos. The appropriate form of representation for this purpose is not principle but what Clifford Geertz calls ‘thick description’ – i.e. the detailed narration of the varieties of actions and responses flowing from as well as exemplifying an ethos.⁵ Perhaps, stories are the exemplary vehicles for representing ethos.

3. Articulating cultural difference as a means of enriching the inherited *ethos*

This brings me to two of the consequences of the conception of ethos as knowledge: First, it directs attention to the *articulative* in contradistinction to the *argumentative* aspect in dialogues seeking knowledge; and second, it makes cultural difference cognitively valuable.

First, to the articulative aspect of speech:

Most of us have some experience of the dialogue situation where one feels that one has some important thing to say, but is unable at the moment to articulate it satisfactorily. The same can happen with regard to the dialogue companion whose articulation we may be dissatisfied with, but nevertheless think that he or she has hit on something important. Even though practically everyone has encountered such situations, yet our models of dialogue do not capture them as significant: Dialogue rules handle them as if they belong to the pre-dialogue phase.

In fact putting heads together to articulate the ethos one is acquainted with is both important and fruitful and they need to be recognized as cognitive processes by themselves. Articulation process enriches the ethos acquired from the past of a community and makes for self-controlled and self-directed habits. Such processes are important especially when we conceptualise cultures. In what sense is a culture an embodiment of ‘good life’? Certainly not as an articulated idea but only as *ethos* which can be reflected upon. Consequently, the task of dialogue is that of articulating *important, fruitful* and *relevant distinctions* to capture the considerations that have gone into the formation of an ethos.

⁵ Cf. Thick description: Toward an Interpretative Theory. In: Clifford Geertz (1973);, *The Interpretation of Cultures*. London: Fontana Press , pp. 3-29.

Now to the cognitive value of cultural difference:

It has to be noticed that the Cartesian conception of an opposition between scientific ideas on the one hand, and tradition and example on the other, devalues the very idea of *cultures*: Culture *is* what is passed on from the past through examples, and difference in culture is rooted in different traditions resulting from different pasts of communities. If these are considered as repositories of error and confusion, then there is no value in entering into inter-cultural dialogue. For a Cartesian, knowledge is by definition only of the form of true propositions, there cannot be therefore different knowledge systems embodied by different communities. Consequently, inter-cultural dialogue as an endeavour of seeking knowledge *from* each other (note, not *of* each other) is superfluous. Only way cultural difference and knowledge have bearing on each other is when a particular group is enlightened and another not: In such a situation dialogue is pedagogy by the enlightened to the not yet enlightened.

If Cartesian conception *does* make room for inter-cultural 'dialogue', it can only be by highlighting the convivial function of speech: One may see speech as a way of purveying to different groups (the 'minorities', for example) a sense of community, thereby reducing the irritations and conflicts arising out of different habits. Inter-cultural dialogue is thus a *conflict management strategy*. Later I will show how this strategy is ill-suited for the presumed purpose, and often aggravates rather than resolves cultural conflicts. But my main objection is that it invalidates the cognitive value of cultural difference.

If, on the other hand, we look at knowledge in a community to be also available in the form of ethos, and not merely in the form of propositions, then *cultural difference* would be located where it properly belongs, namely in the ethos formed through different pasts of communities. Consequently, the scope and meaning of the inter-cultural dialogue is also perceived differently: In place of a device for managing conflicts it becomes a way of enriching by means of reflection on the varieties of ethos available as human heritage on this globe.

In fact, an inter-cultural context offers an optimal situation for a Socratic dialogue as I have depicted: One of the reasons why a dialogue between persons having different pasts is interesting is that it provides a possibility of encounters between different ethos, thereby making the varied considerations that have gone into the formation of the character

of one person or community available as experience to others who do not have those pasts. The more the difference in the formative pasts the more marked would be the difference in the ethos. Cultural difference is the sum of the differences in formative pasts. Especially, with regard to the way one perceives what a good life consists of, the confrontation in reflection of markedly different ethos should prove fruitful. Therefore inter-cultural dialogue recommends itself as an effective form of self-reflection, and thereby of liberal education.

What prevents its effective practice then? I want to focus now on one important obstacle, on one strain of culture talk predominant in Europe and America.

4. 'Culture' and anguish about 'identity'

In Europe there are many contexts in which the word 'culture' has currency. One harmless use is that found in Sunday supplement of newspapers to refer to theatre, music, painting exhibitions etc. But there is another use that colours all discussion of 'cultures' in the plural and the corresponding notions of 'multicultural' and 'inter-cultural'. That use can be gleaned from one strand of argument in the ongoing political debate regarding the membership of the European Union. The move is to say that there is a need to preserve the *identity* of European culture while drawing new members to European Union. One distinguishes the European cultures as having some very important traits that distinguish them from the non-European ones, and then ask whether Turkey or Russia belong to Europe or not.⁶

Underlying this anxiety is a model of understanding that is rooted in the sociological tradition of distinguishing 'modern' societies from 'traditional' ones and this usually comes along with a worry, whether these others have undergone 'reformation', 'enlightenment', and finally 'Women's emancipation', which Europeans are supposed to have undergone. It is noteworthy that corresponding to this anxiety in Europe,

⁶ I want to stress what should be obvious from the context: My concern is only to examine the culture talk in the argument, and not that of judging whether the policy of inclusion or exclusion of Turkey or Russia within EU is right or wrong.

there is a mirror image sort of anguish in the elite of societies identified as 'Non-Western'. They see a problem of 'encroachment by Western culture' into their *Lebenswelt* thereby endangering their 'identity'. Underlying both is what I have elsewhere called 'the modernity paradigm'⁷.

Use of the word 'dialogue' in such contexts either comes with a moral appeal to show 'understanding' in the sense of sympathy ('we have to show understanding to others', 'we should not be arrogant' – the conviviality function as we have identified above) or an implied appeal to the moral duty to uphold the flag. ("We have to defend 'our' hard won freedoms, norms, and value". They are hard won after the reformation, enlightenment, and two world wars, and of course the Women's emancipation due to the developments after the 68 revolution.)

Thus the contexts in which the term 'intercultural dialogue' gets used, is some kind of conflict between groups (or, sometimes on an international plane, 'nations') and an expectation is raised in saying that the problem arises because of the 'cultural differences' – the use of this term is different from my use earlier, it is used here more as a euphemism for 'culturally backward' or 'culturally degenerate'. The intercultural communication then is a sort of conflict management strategy or technique.

However, the way 'intercultural dialogue' is understood – surrounded as it is with associations of 'enlightenment', 'emancipation' or 'backwardness', can rather aggravate the conflict potential instead of being a means of managing it: If I am entering into dialogue in order to obviate the imminent dangers to my life style, then I am likely to see the utmost task to be that of minimising the danger, and the source from which the danger is coming can hardly be approached with any kind of intellectual distance. This is equally true of the opposite attitude, the desire to enter into dialogue in order to alleviate the fears of the dialogue partner that his or her life style is facing from my life style; again my focus would not be on the knowledge involved in his inheritance, but rather a charitable attitude towards him. Situation of charity is problematic: it may ennoble the giver but hardly the receiver. Appeal to dialogue thus degenerates into

⁷ Cf. Rao; Narahri (1999): Culture as Learnables, An Outline for Research on the Inherited Traditions: Fachrichtung Philosophie, Lehrstuhl Prof. K. Lorenz, Universität des Saarlandes, Saarbrücken, Ch. 2, pp. 11-20.

appeals for ‘understanding’ – in the sense of sympathy and craving for sympathy.⁸

6. The global political ideologies and their institutional roots

How to free the theme of inter-cultural dialogue from the anguish about identity and the underlying framework of the contrast between ‘Western’ and ‘Non-Western’ cultures? One useful move, perhaps, is to point out that the very division of cultures into ‘Western’ and ‘Non-Western’ ones depends on some historical myth building, more meant to edify oneself than to identify situations empirically.

Consider the following paradox. Infosys, Wipro, and Tata Consultancy, the three of the software firms from India, founded, owned, and until recently even wholly staffed by Indians, is hardly identified as the manifestation of ‘Indian culture’. But the institutions in UK founded by Indian or Pakistani families to organize their rituals or to press their community interests like temples or mosques or denomination councils bearing in their titles the adjectives ‘Muslim’ or ‘Hindu’ are often identified as the manifestation of South Asian culture. Why? One can press this question further, and ask, in what sense the Indian State and the problems and structures found in India are to be considered as the manifestation of the ‘age old’ South Asian traditions? Take the example of the state of Bihar – which by common consent embodies the worst of institutional malaise in India, but it is almost the first area to come under the British Raj. Most of the work carried recently by historians show that the institutional structures and the mentalities found in this region are very much the combined effects of various administrative measures, impact of developments in trade and other events in 18th to 19th century.⁹ The point of this example is not meant to indulge in a blame game – whether the blame or praise for the

⁸ This is an appeal for observing *convivial function* of talking rather than the function of seeking knowledge.

⁹ Cf. Bayly, C. A. (1999): *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars: North Indian society in the Age of British Expansion*, Cambridge.

state of Bihar is to be apportioned to British or Indians. Rather it is meant to illustrate how untenable our conceptual tools and habits are – that of tracing the institutional structures that exist in this world as the products of isolated cultures. An anthropologist, Eric Wolf, already in the late 70s made the point that the prevalent way of looking at the history of the modern period places the phenomena of the formation of the Non-European societies, especially that in Asia and Africa, outside the common history of the Globe in the last four to five centuries.¹⁰ However, the consequences of this point to our conceptual tools with regard to cultures are yet to be drawn.

Globalization is not a recent phenomenon. The rise of European powers from 17th century onwards, beginning in the even earlier expeditions to find easy trade routes, resulted in many levels of transformation of the ways of living all around the earth: It brought and spread the plant and animal species, as also the germs causing plant, animal and human diseases, from one corner of the globe to another, causing change in dietary habits and the food crops available; it changed the agrarian relations by converting vast swaths of land for planting crops for the purpose of selling in the markets in remote continents, far from the place of cultivation; this was part of an even larger change of where and how goods are produced, transported, and exchanged; it transformed civil and military administrations, ways of travel, industry and war, also the notions of medicine, law and education, and ways and means of health care and entertainment, in short, everything that we can think of has been restructured long before the word ‘globalization’ has come into fashion. Trade routes are not external connecting lines of otherwise isolated societies, but rather the very constitutive fabric of the societies, States and Nations that came into being in the last few centuries. The best way to make this clear to oneself is to look into the history of everyday commodities like sugar, spices, tea, coffee, and the natural yarns from which our clothes are made. The way they came into being to their present mode as mass-consumption articles meant a lot of tumultuous social and political changes in far away places to Europe.¹¹

¹⁰ See Wolf, Eric R. (1982): *Europe and People without History*, University of California Press.

¹¹ The paradigm for such studies was initiated by the investigation into history of sugar in: Mintz, Sidney W. (1985): *Sweetness and Power*. New York: Viking books. The

Already in 1848 *The Communist Manifesto* speaks of capital remaking the world in its image by smashing all the Chinese walls built up by previous civilizations. That was not only before the two world wars but even before the age of ‘industrial revolution’ so identified, and long before disciplines to study Non-European cultures such as Cultural Anthropology came into being. The assumption of there being isolated cultures leading the life of ‘the same old traditions for hundred of years’ that the clichés in European Journalism with regard to Asia and Africa flaunt are in the realm of their imagination than the empirical world they are supposed to report about.

One of the recurring themes with regard to the culture talk is that Europe had Reformation, Enlightenment and Women’s emancipation etc. but the Non-European cultures did not have it: After the terrorist attack in New York in 2001, and then in London and Madrid in 2005, this line of talk took the form of saying that the Koran has not been subjected to the type of critical studies analogously to that of old and new testament Bible. Let us leave it for the scholars of the respective domains to decide the veracity of these claims. Let us assume, for the sake of argument, this is the case. Is this relevant for understanding the mentalities of the youth, and the masterminds behind them, involved in the London and Madrid attacks?

From the press reports it emerges that the youth who bombed in London are second or third generation descendants of immigrants, and the members belong to elite middle class rather than to poorer, less educated sections, they had a fairly good if not the best secular education that the upwardly mobile South Asian communities could aspire for.¹² If they entertained the Muslim faith, it is in the fashion of ‘the born again Muslims’ something like born again Christians in USA¹³ rather than the

following two more recent books provide excellent integrated summaries of the recent historical Research: Bayly, C. A. (2004): *The Birth of the Modern World 1780 – 1914*. Oxford: Blackwells and. Marks, Robert B. (2006): *The Origins of the Modern World: A Global and Ecological Narrative from the Fifteenth to the Twenty-First Century*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers; 2nd edition.

¹² See the report, “Mentor to the young and vulnerable”, by Sandra Laville and Bilpazier Aslam, *The Guardian*, 14 July 2005.

¹³ Many high level political and administrative elite in USA, including President Bush, are said to claim themselves ‘born again Christians’. Such born again faiths, therefore, cannot be claimed to be the products of ‘traditional societies’.

faith inherited from the family upbringing.¹⁴ If they were fanatics, it is in the nature of having multitude of exaggerated political grievances coupled with the doctrinaire politics - more the variety of ideological fanaticism familiar in the history of political movements in Europe rather than 'religious fanaticism' in the sense of unalterable conviction in literal understanding of some texts. Their looking for the 'pure religion, free from the corruption of the West' is the result of their espousing Muslim causes rather than it is the initiator of the espousal of Muslim causes. In fact, the biography of Omar Sheikh, the mastermind behind the kidnapping and killing in Pakistan in 2003 of Daniel Pearl, the Journalist of Wall Street Journal, is illustrative and quite revealing: A student of unexceptional achievement, he turned to politics of militancy and Muslim faith while studying in the prestigious LSE in the wake of Serb-Bosnian conflict in the Balkans.¹⁵ In fact some years ago a remark by an Indian government official was in the eye of a controversy in Britain: He said that the terror cells in Kashmir are manned and organized by political activists nurtured by the prestigious academic institutions of London.

In other words, even though subjecting Koran to critical investigation may be needed on independent academic grounds, for the rage and the actions of these militants the remote texts in Koran calling for the destruction of 'the heathen customs' and temples are irrelevant. Culture

¹⁴ The following from *J7: The July 7th Truth Campaign* is quite revealing: "Two of Khan's friends from school were interviewed for a BBC radio documentary, "Biography of a Bomber" (MP3 audio, 3.5MB), part of Radio 4's Koran and Country series. The documentary revealed that Khan's friends were mainly white, that he considered himself Western, that he had returned from a trip to America besotted with all things American, and that he was more commonly known by an anglicised version of his name, 'Sid'. Ian Barrett remembered that Khan had no interest in religion and rarely went to a mosque: "The other Pakistani lads would have to go to mosque because their families would say 'You're going to mosque'. But Sid didn't go," says Ian. "He didn't seem interested in Islam and I don't ever remember him mentioning religion." Another school friend, Rob Cardiss, recalled: "He was very English. Some of the other Pakistani guys used to talk about Muslim suffering around the world but with Sidique you'd never really know what religion he was from."

¹⁵ See the report titled, 'The English Islamic terrorist', by Stephen McGinty, Published Date: 16 July 2002 In NEWS.scotsman.com, and "The toughest boy in school", by Alex Hannaford in: The Guardian, Wednesday 23 February 2005.

talk of this variety is harbinger of confusion rather than of any cognitive value.

Constructing different traditions due to different pasts in different regions of this world is certainly useful, and even necessary, for reflecting on the multiple human heritages. But it should be freed from the myth that there are unaltered 'traditional' societies in contrast to the dynamic 'Western' ones. If there is one thing that researches on socio-economic history of Asia have shown, it is that the type of the world we are living – the institutions and mentalities not only of Europe but also in other parts of the Globe – are products of the 'modern era', in the sense of an era beginning roughly in the 16th century. The 'dynamism' of this era has remade the economic, social and State institutions of this world – both in desirable and undesirable ways. Separating what one considers as the good elements as 'Western' and reserve the unacceptable elements as 'Non-Western', or vice-versa, may serve the needs of edification, but not that of education.

If elite in some parts of the Globe talk by contrasting 'Western' with 'Non-Western', and a self-assurance that 'Non-Western' to be the source of all that is good, they are using the same categories inherited from the Sociological Research tradition of Europe, speaking the same language belonging to the same culture as those in Europe talking of 'European' or 'Western' in edifying and recommendatory tones. To get out of this unified but sterile conceptual framework in order to conceptualise the difference in ethos left behind by different traditions is a necessary and fruitful, but at the same time a very challenging, undertaking.

Practising Socratic Dialogue in Belarus

The first part of this report deals with the historical prerequisites for today's possible implementation of the Socratic Dialogue in Belarus. It describes the richness of the Belarusian academic tradition. A rather disputable point of the historical part of the report is the idea that the Great Duchy of Litva, a Belarusian state in its core, was a prototype of the European Union.

The Great Duchy existed from the 13th to the 18th century AD. It was a multinational state with a great degree of social, religious, and national tolerance. It had developed a unique legislative document in Belarusian – the Statute of the Great Duchy of Litva, which had an elaborate and logically adjusted structure that took into account the ethnic and confessional variety of the Duchy's subjects.

The very existence of such a state was possible, first of all, owing to its people's enormous capability for an intercultural and interpersonal dialogue. Belarusian Orthodox Christians, Catholics, Muslims, and Protestants lived together in relative peace and their interrelations were regulated by the official law documents.

The word "relative" springs up because the Duchy went through diverse periods and knew its degradation and final ruin. The economy of the Duchy was undermined by wars. The country was drained of blood in constant defence from its Eastern neighbour, Russia. The blow from which Belarus hardly recovered was a war between Russia and Sweden, taking place on the territory of Belarus at the beginning of the 18th century. As a result, the Duchy was assimilated by Poland. As feudal institutions were leaking in from Poland, only the nobility and partially townsfolk could enjoy democratic freedoms. The country's peasantry was enslaved.

Higher education in Belarus was spreading in the early 19th century and, though Russian occupational czarist authorities closed down educational institutions because of revolutionary, democratic, pro-independence views of the students and a part of the teaching staff, the

tradition of national higher education did not die. In 1918 a Pedagogical Institute was opened in Minsk, and the government of the Belarusian People's Republic made a resolve to start the Belarusian National University. And finally, in 1921 the BSU (Belarusian State University) was opened that started the training of national scientific and pedagogical manpower. Prague University played a significant part in education of the people of West Belarus, which was under the Polish Rule at that time. The most gifted representatives of Belarusian youth had an opportunity of studying there. In the late twenties and early thirties of the 20th century, teachers and scientists showed an unprecedented interest in the Belarusian language and created Belarusian textbooks and manuals in all subjects. However, in the bloody years of Stalinism the overwhelming majority of patriotic Belarusian teachers were repressed. The eradication of Belarusian national higher education was concluded by the WWII: nearly all the Belarusians with higher education were taken to the Soviet army and perished in the War. As for West Belarus, their Polish authorities did not recognize them as a separate nation and consequently they did not have a chance to establish a national University. In the fifties and seventies of the 20th century, the percentage of ethnic Belarusians among the teachers of higher educational institutions was less than 50. That is why Belarusian was banned from active usage in higher education, and those who still insisted on speaking it were persecuted. So Belarusian was forcibly blocked out of usage for more than 50-years.

All the Universities we have now in Belarus teach students in the Russian language, except the Belarusian philological departments of BSU (Belarusian State University) and BSPU (Belarusian State Pedagogical University).

At present, the Republic of Belarus has a very large proportion of people with higher education, which is a positive tendency kept from the Soviet times. However, with a wide range of humanities taught at every university (including Philosophy, Political Science, Sociology), graduates are often just highly qualified non-critically minded professionals. The situation is determined by the influence of the state mass media and a stable economic situation in the country. A general inclination to total relativism, followed by the state, leads to accepting any abstract populist ideas, which cannot be applied to particular events or tendencies observed in the country. In this case, Socratic Dialogue provides an

excellent method of truth seeking by questioning “obvious”, generally accepted and approved truisms.

A lot of work has been carried out in this direction with a great support from the German Society of Socratic Facilitators and the Philosophical-Political Academy. Conversations with students and lecturers proved to be fruitful in the evaluation of the present situation in Belarus and in the field of personal development. The following questions, discussed at the Socratic Dialogues, show the scope of interest of today’s youth: “What is freedom?”, “Can one create motivation?”, “Is self-realization possible?”, “Is private initiative important?”, and “Are we responsible for the old?”, “What is important for a good life?”

The conversations took place at the English language faculty of Minsk State Linguistic University during the period of 2003 – 2005. Those were mostly 3-hour discussions (two university periods). They were facilitated by Maria Solovyova, and one of them by Kirsten Malmquist. Ute Siebert followed the majority of the discussions. The duration of the Socratic Dialogues was determined by a large amount of work our students have to do for their academic studies (40 hours a week of classes).

The conversations were generally carried out as extra-curriculum activities. Only one dialogue (“Are we responsible for the old?”) was undertaken in class with correspondence-course students while studying the topic “Ageism”. It should be mentioned that the first two conversations were performed in Russian and all the rest in English. So Socratic Dialogue was used as a foreign language teaching and learning means.

The number of the participants ranged from four to twelve. Third-year and fourth-year students of the English faculty, correspondence-course students, graduates and lecturers of various universities represented the partakers. All the students in Maria Solovyova’s academic groups were introduced to the essence of the Socratic Method during Grammar and Oral Practice classes. The young people were asked to contribute some questions they were eager to answer or problems they wanted to solve. Some time later, the collected lists were processed and a topic for discussion was formulated (in most of the cases with the help of GSP representatives). Then only volunteers appeared at the discussions. As regards the correspondence-course students, they were obliged to attend the classes, although some of them just played truant.

Therefore, it can be said that only motivated people joined in the Socratic Dialogues.

The issues our students desired to consider referred to self-determination, freedom, absence of manipulation, real friendship, a motivation to study, choosing a career, staying in Belarus or going abroad. All of these points were anyway tackled during the discussions. The last two problems, namely what career to follow and whether one should emigrate or remain in the country, seemed to be the most acute ones. The correspondence-course students were confined by the topic "Ageism". Actually, the task was to prepare them for the exam and to give them an opportunity to practice their English. So the participators described the situation with the old in Britain, enumerated the problems observed, compared them with those of Belarusian elderly people. After that, several general problems were agreed upon and one was chosen for discussion.

During the dialogues, the participants managed to share and choose proper examples, work them over and decide, regarding the example, what the answer to the problem was. In some of the conversations, the partakers proceeded to quite abstract generalizations. For example, when dealing with the question "What is important for a good life?" the students for the first time expressed a wish to continue with the discussion and met a week later to carry on. As a result, they could work on the level of abstraction, although some of the points were consciously put aside due to a lack of time.

The participants demonstrated a great capacity for independent and co-operative reasoning, manifested a high degree of responsibility. They managed to observe the rules of Socratic Dialogue, to think logically and structurally, to listen to each other and arrive at a consensus. They also gained existential revelations. For example, some of the people said they got an idea how to live their own lives, to avoid manipulation, to distinguish between their own intentions and those imposed by other people. Sometimes students who were poor at languages proved to be very efficient contributors to the discussions, and brilliant academic achievers did not show any interest in the Socratic Method at all. However, a general tendency was that only the most active young people, talented in many aspects and having a clear, creative attitude to life, took part in the Socratic Dialogues.

As regards lecturers, quite few of them expressed a wish to practice the Socratic Method. The counter-arguments were that the method was time-consuming and unrealistic. The latter suggested that young people were unable of finding the truth. Actually, this can be deciphered as “finding unauthorized truth”. Moreover, one of the lecturers of the English faculty, though rather successful at the Socratic Dialogue about generating motivation, believed she was unfit for such methods of discussion. She meant she had always been on the edge of giving ready-made explanations for every issue and had taken pains over being equal in reasoning with the students. However, there are enthusiasts of the Socratic Method among the lecturers of the English and the German Language Faculties of Minsk State Linguistic University and those of the Pedagogical University.

Overall, practising Socratic Dialogue in Belarus can be considered a positive and fruitful experience. It proved to be effective not only as a foreign language teaching and learning technique but also as a method of critical thinking. The latter will appear productive both in the establishment of democracy and building fulfilled lives by our young people. New personalities will certainly be engaged in Socratic Dialogue as we are planning to organize a Socratic club at MSLU. We hope that Socratic Dialogue in Belarus will not be limited to academic use only. It can be practiced with the youth from NGOs, representatives of youth parties, at summer youth camps, cultural institutions, and so on.

Let us now present an overview of NGOs in Belarus, and youth NGOs in particular, because their members can be viewed as potential participants of Socratic Dialogue.

According to the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Belarus in 2004, there were 2214 NGOs on the territory of the Republic working in the following sectors:

- Human Rights Protection 5,72 %
- Consumer Rights Protection 2,13 %
- Education 17,44 %
- Charity 17,19 %
- Organizations for Youth and Children 7,78 %
- Social Protection, Rehabilitation 22,94 %
- Art and Culture 12,04 %
- Sport and Tourism 19,35 %

- Science 8,38 %
- Healthcare and Medicine 6,39 %
- Professional 13,07 %
- Ecology 4,26 %
- Others 9,48 %
- Organizations for Disabled 7,03 %
- Government and Law 5,72 %
- Chernobyl 4,51 %
- Hobby 7,1 %
- Women Organizations 3,37 %
- National Minorities 4,44 %
- Economics and Private Enterprise 3,16 %
- Organizations of Soldiers and Veterans 4,44 %
- Resource Centres 0,5 %.

Around 5,000 people work for NGOs now, which is e.g. more than the number of people involved in *information technologies*. An interesting fact is that people under 30 hold 20% of the managing positions in NGOs, which makes NGOs attractive for young people as there are more perspectives for them than in industry or agriculture.

The percentage of well-educated NGO staff is high, with 53 % holding a University degree in pedagogy, law, economy and management, information technologies, art, ecology and medicine. More women than men are involved in NGOs, and consequently there are a great number of women in managing positions.

Youth NGOs comprise 7,78 % of all NGOs in Belarus. According to their legal status, they can be divided into international and national ones. Now, there are 13 international NGOs and 62 national ones. The headquarters of most organizations are situated in Minsk, and one of the most active regions in terms of youth initiatives is Vitebsk region. The number of youth NGOs in one region varies from 10 to 20, with the largest organizations in Minsk, Vitebsk and Gomel.

To illustrate this general information about youth NGOs let us look at three examples:

1. *Belarusian Association of UNESCO clubs* is probably the most popular organization among schoolchildren. It was registered in 1989 and has partner organizations in Russia, Latvia, Germany, Romania, Moldova, France, the USA, and Sweden.

Now, there are 65 UNESCO clubs in Belarus. Most of them are attached to secondary schools. The average number of people in one club is 20; the average age of the participants is 16-18 while teachers and University students act as leaders and facilitators. “UNESCO clubs” realize the following programs:

- Leadership school
- World culture
- Environment
- Information and communication
- Healthy lifestyle
- Human rights
- Cultural heritage
- Art.

The main activities are educational seminars, workshops, panel discussions, summer camps and volunteer camps. Socratic Dialogue can perfectly fit into this pattern.¹

2. *Public association “Educational Centre POST”* realizes educational programs based on democratic and human values.

Target groups are schoolchildren, students, teachers and members of other NGOs. Methods include:

- Discussions and work in small groups
- Club meetings
- Simulations and role-plays
- Workshops and interactive seminars
- Youth exchange programs.

Their largest programs include “Problems of Youth in Poland and in Belarus”, a project “Indiana Jones” (for children who run away from home), a project “We Choose Future” (a campaign against alcohol, cigarettes and drugs)

Besides, POST organizes interactive seminars for schoolteachers on the topics of:

- Intercultural competence
- Civil courage
- Developing new educational programs.

¹ http://www.belau.info/index_rus.html

POST has many partners abroad. For example, the program “Civil Courage: Without Violence” is realized in partnership with Sozialer Friedensdienst in Bremen, Germany.²

3. *Public Association “New Faces”* was founded in 1997 and since that, its members have taken part in educational workshops, festivals and youth camps in Germany, France, Sweden, Portugal, Italy, Belgium, Ukraine, etc.

Most of their activities take place on the territory of Belarus, though. Among their recent projects we find the project “Boomerang”. The main aim was to attract the attention of a broad public to the problems of socially isolated and vulnerable youth groups. As a result, a database on corresponding NGOs was created, four issues of the journal “Boomerang” compiled by the participants and initiators of the project came out and four trainings were conducted for members of corresponding NGOs.

“Theatre against human trafficking” gave eight performances free of charge in different cities of Belarus. This project was realized in cooperation with the Centre of Arts “Coliseum” (The Republic of Moldova) and “Belarusian Association of Young Christian Women”.³

We think that there is a great chance for a successful promotion of the Socratic Dialogue among youth NGOs, because NGO members can be characterized as a very receptive and well-motivated audience, and they can especially be interested in Socratic Dialogue when it covers the topics connected with their activities.

² <http://center-post.iatp.by/index.htm>

³ <http://www.newfaces-belarus.org/>

Socratic-Centered Didactics of Ethics

Fifteen years ago Alfred Tremml distinguished four concepts for the didactics of ethics-teaching. My main objection to this work was that it presents only a distorted form of a scientifically tenable concept of philosophy which would serve the needs of the didactics of ethics. Therefore I have suggested the following divisions:

1. Education concepts: These assign to ethics-teaching the task of inducing moral behaviour, instilling virtues and conveying values. Such concepts tend to place the school's general mandate to educate firmly on the shoulders of this subject alone (ethics). They postulate the school's right and ability to influence directly the behaviour of the pupils. Behind concepts of this sort there is generally to be found some doctrine, which is proclaimed as the norm and used in a dogmatic manner, be it a particular moral code or the "universal moral law".

2. Life-help concepts: These take as their point of departure the concrete experiences, questions and difficulties of the pupils and endeavour to help them towards finding pragmatic solutions, establishing their identity and achieving social integration. Teachers see themselves as advisors without normative claims.

3. Discovery concepts: These, while placing different emphases, orientate themselves towards historico-empirical sciences: towards the science of culture, the science of religion and the social sciences such as history and psychology. Instruction here aims above all at gathering and processing knowledge from these areas and perhaps at translating it into strategies of action.

4. Philosophy concepts: The central activity is the intellectual confrontation with fundamental questions in ethics, anthropology and metaphysics and involves constructing answers, suggesting solutions and examining these critically. The relevant science here is philosophy as the science of reflection, which can provide a repertoire of argumentation and patterns of thought from past and present. Its innate form is to be

found in the practice of Socratic Dialogue and is thus committed both to scientific-rational discussion and to enlightenment and (self-)formation.

These four concepts have been presented here as ideal types in order to make their differing intentions clear. Their further possibilities and limitations cannot be discussed here. In the guidelines issued by the German regions they are dealt with in different combinations and receive different emphasis.

In assessing these different concepts the following basic points can be made:

1.) The problematical aspects of education concepts are revealed in the (doubtful) legitimacy of the underlying normative basis in a pluralistic society; the expectation that unsuccessful education attempts in the past will be compensated for; the lack of respect for the self-determination of the pupils. Conversely, a system of pedagogics which is orientated towards specific situations cannot maintain the necessary distance for a consideration of fundamental issues.

2.) Life-help concepts run the risk of normative arbitrariness; they may also be a form of concealed indoctrination. Furthermore the role of the teacher is overtaxed.

3.) Discovery concepts introduce the problems surrounding any canon of knowledge; and even if relevant knowledge from such areas is indeed a precondition of reasoned judgments as they are aimed for in philosophy, there is no transparent route leading from discovery to the formation of ethical judgments and the development of fundamental convictions.

4.) The fourth concept involving philosophy (“Nachdenklichkeitsmodell”) is most in harmony with the intentions of ethics-teaching if it is seen from the central perspective of the Socratic Paradigm. Most importantly this means proceeding in such a way as to demonstrate again and again the reciprocal relationship between thoughts, theories and models on the one hand, and concrete examples and experiences on the other. Naturally positive elements taken from the other concepts can be integrated into the process. For philosophy is the unprejudiced, intellectual and discursive treatment of the fundamental elements of human thought, action and being; it draws its “material” from the experience of the world about us as well as from the problems of the scientific-technical world. From its very beginnings it has been in harmony with mankind’s innate interest in coming to terms with itself

and the world. The practice of philosophy in the Socratic manner makes “communication” possible, constructing a shared horizon of thought in matters of orientation, not pinning the individual down ideologically.

The concept of “conveying values” which is quite frequently employed in the relevant discussions, is problematic from a philosophical point of view, firstly because it assumes an objectivism of values (perhaps, a monism, too) which is difficult to justify and secondly, it assumes the fact that value-attitudes are teachable. Furthermore it disregards the aim of enabling the pupils to form mature decisions. Nevertheless it has found its place in the politics of education. The problems concerning the teachability of ethical values and/or judgments can be resolved to a great extent in the Socratic perspective.

The *Socratic Paradigm*, where aims, conceptual outlines and methods converge and take shape, gets to the heart of the philosophical-pedagogical intention of ethics-teaching; its *specific* medium is dialogue (without implying thereby a methodical monism). In the following I shall demonstrate the specific relationship between ethics-teaching and the Socratic Paradigm not only in terms of their aims but also, beyond that, in terms of the essential elements of the Socratic Paradigm.

1. The “Market Place”: No previous knowledge required; the claim to universality

The practice of non-specialized philosophy in public “in the market place” is a *sine qua non* of the Socratic Paradigm. Concepts of philosophy which are elitist or in a general or didactic sense esoteric are thus excluded from the start. In order to participate, no previous theoretical knowledge of the subject is necessary. In particular, there is no obligation to belong or not to belong to a religious or secular ideological community. In this sense it fully meets the requirements for universality which must be set for the teaching of ethics in state schools, which are open for all. Any individual may take part, since the common factor and basis for the joint effort is human reason itself, to which all have access. In the same way, as a matter of principle, no subject of discourse is taboo. (Minor concessions which may have to be made in view of the students’ stage of development or the level of their knowledge acquired

in lessons do not alter the truth of the principle itself.) The only prerequisite is an open-minded attitude to people, opinions and circumstances as well as a readiness to submit all statements to examination in the form of dialogue. This openness is absolutely essential both as a formal condition and as an intellectual stance if instruction in ethics in state schools is going to support the pupils effectively in their search for orientation. If this openness is restricted in any way, there is an immediate and serious loss of intellectual drive. It may be that at the beginning freedom in the exchange of ideas may cause some insecurity. This makes it all the more important to begin in schools with children and younger pupils. Pupils know intuitively what a “good conversation” is; teachers can help to realize this aim by giving appropriate verbal guidance, although this task will, as the learning-process continues and skills develop, increasingly be taken over and carried out by the pupils themselves. In the last instance, the spirit of enquiry as well as an interest in the opinions of other people are to be found in each individual and these qualities can be developed if they are recognized and mutually tolerated. Naturally, a patient, step-by-step method will be necessary as well as the creation of an open atmosphere of discussion.

2. Foundation upon experience: three-fold pupil-orientation

That philosophy is closely related to a person’s biographical context and everyday situation is particularly well illustrated by the Socratic Method. The Socratic Dialogue starts out from the concrete experience of the participants and takes its examples from this area. Philosophy is thus firmly rooted in the daily lives of the pupils and no methodological steps have to be taken to guarantee the connection – “we know what we are talking about”; the necessity of secondary motivation – often a problem in school instruction – does not arise. Only gradually and always keeping in close touch with the process of common reflection will we examine more abstract statements. This “inductive” procedure demands of philosophy that at every level of abstraction it must be able to stay in touch with reality (a relationship, however, which will tend to become more conceptual as the level of abstraction rises), and not withdraw to a

position of false remoteness. The philosophy which accepts responsibility for instruction in ethics is no intellectual construct nor a work of art; it is “philosophy in its cosmopolitan sense”, as Kant describes it, i.e. one which deals with the fundamental questions of existence. The didactic postulate of pupil-orientation is thus met in three-fold manner:

a) From the start the pupils’ standpoint and position are taken seriously, since the examples dealt with are drawn from their experience. The Socratic Method, however, does not leave them in the same situation as they were before the dialogue. Prerequisite of a Socratic Dialogue is a theme – usually set in the form of a question; and the examples chosen are already orientated towards this theme. The theme itself determines the perspective in which real-life experiences are viewed. The question forming the point of departure may be formulated by the pupils themselves, – provided that it is more than merely the expression of a mental or emotional state, and marks out some particular area for examination. The example put forward is now subjected to a joint examination and tested for fundamental implications; the result is that in the course of the dialogue definite progress in knowledge is made. As a result of the examination itself, the original experience is raised to a new level of reflection.

Precisely this is what is meant by pupil-orientated teaching, when it is correctly understood: starting from his present state of awareness the pupil is enabled to take the next step and perhaps to reach the next level in insight. Matters of importance to the pupils are taken seriously but they are nonetheless led to consider more than the familiar range of opinions or the bare situation in which they find themselves. In contrast to this, life-help concepts which do not use joint intellectual effort to get beyond the original levels of insight may be in danger of staying chained to the original situation. In the Socratic Paradigm the situations (certain conflicts, perhaps, or dilemmas) are viewed and examined as *instances*, in order to find out the principles, values and/or open questions which lie behind them. This intellectual activity, free of any obligation to produce action, provides the pupils in advance with a flexible repertoire of criteria of reflection, judgment and decision.

b) With reference to language levels, here, too, we begin with the pupils themselves. The use of everyday language is (with slight restrictions) quite admissible. Discussion will naturally tend to promote an increase in the relevant language skills but a special terminology is not

a prerequisite nor will it be introduced. Natural language is the instrument to which all have access. The problem that philosophical processes of thoughts are either difficult or incomprehensible is not one which besets the task of Socratic debate, because here one has to deal with and work at *one's own* formulations. But even the statements of a written text will, provided they are decoded and examined with the same care and in the same spirit of togetherness, tend to lose their incomprehensibility.

c) Statements on a higher level of abstraction remain in contact with the pupils' thought processes: statements taken from a text will, after being duly subjected to the Socratic tests, begin to communicate themselves, and statements which have been formulated by the participants themselves will be present as the results of joint intellectual effort without further ado; in both cases the more abstract statements will certainly possess a definite content. Now it may be that the results of such thought processes, clothed in the words of one's own formulation, may seem, as an objectivized product, nothing special to the cool-headed bystander. But then, he knows nothing of the process nor of the hindrances which have been removed. Naturally, from a scientific point of view, these results, which are at heart always provisional and part of a continuing process, will have their weak spots. Nevertheless, the honestly attained results of independent thinking are of greater value to the participants than any "grey-beard pronouncements", no matter how eloquent, elaborate and one hundred percent watertight they may be. The only exception to this would be if the previously existent philosophical statements were subjected to careful personal scrutiny and, after being checked out in terms of suitable examples, were taken over and adopted. This, too, would count as an example teaching inspired by the Socratic tradition. In both cases the close connection of the practice of philosophy to the world of experience ensures that the concepts do not remain "empty", but are, to use Kant's expression, filled with intuition; it ensures, too, that the theoretical statements do not "lead to nothing".

3. Non-dogmatism: the implied “moral character” of Socratic instruction in ethics

Socratic Dialogue does not require previous commitment to any doctrine, dogma or ideology just as university philosophy would rapidly become obsolete, if it were committed exclusively to one school of thought. This would mean loss of scientific character and degeneration into some ideological world view. The practice of philosophy does not mean taking up some particular position but a continuous process of reflection and reasonable examination. Anyone who, as a result of his training, thinks philosophy means supporting one particular point of view will have some trouble at first in tolerating this unfinished character of reflection. True to the Kantian dictum that one cannot teach philosophy but only the practice of philosophizing, Socratic Dialogue does not strive after a system. To appeal to unquestioned dogma, systems and schools of thought is not admissible. Quoting outside authorities, “aligning oneself” alongside them, unless it is the result of personal examination, contradicts an individual’s own power of judgment. Non-Dogmatism fulfils the claims made upon instruction in ethics on three different levels:

a) It fulfils the fundamental legal requirement for ethics-teaching that it should not be based on any religious, ideological or philosophical doctrine and it should not have as its aim the profession of loyalty (“confession”) to any such. Ideological neutrality (not value neutrality) is the distinguishing mark of ethics-teaching (however we name it) as the alternative to religious instruction. In the teaching of ethics there must be room for a plurality of basic convictions (provided they do not rule out a minimal ethical consensus) and these must be open to discussion, depending on the themes in question. Where “ultimate questions” are involved, a group doesn’t have to produce a uniform result; it is more important that it does not abandon the way of persuasion for the way of force. To put it paradoxically, the earnest abandonment of a uniform view of world is often the most difficult “lesson” to be learned. In order to ensure that this is practised enough Nelson in the neosocratic tradition demands with all firmness from all participants but in particular from the facilitators a complete abstention from overbearing comment.

b) Abstention from doctrine is also in keeping with the intended *attitude* which allows open discussion of different opinions, convictions and “doctrines”. Elements of knowledge gained through Socratic Dialogue are not written documents, they express themselves above all in the spoken language of the moment. Within the dialogue process the undogmatic attitude must also be seen as a discussion *virtue*. Previously-held opinions, not to mention prejudices, must be isolated before one can take up the opinions of others which oppose or contradict one’s own and examine them as impartially as possible.

c) The teaching of ethics has a *non-inculcatory intention* and the Socratic Method as a *non-inculcatory method* of teaching is in line with this. Pupils are not handed out ready-made viewpoints together with the necessary justifications or objections; they are not given ready-made judgments together with the necessary explanations or criticisms; these must be worked out in class afresh on each occasion. Values, possible meanings and convictions are not things which can be handed over, as it were, in a neat parcel; the parcel must be opened and the contents tested with reference to examples – in this way only can their persuasive power be properly experienced and fixed in the individual’s mind.

On account of the dogmatism involved, the concept of “moral education” should also be rejected; general didactic agreement on this point has been reached. In theory, moral education implies a deductive relation to normative didactics and is in practice unlikely to have any lasting success. The danger here is that the process may end in ideological spying. A scientific foundation for such a concept of ethics teaching is out of the question, since the propositions in question would unavoidably be dogma of one sort or another, which renders itself immune to criticism and questioning. In contrast to this, teacher training in its first phase must be accomplished in a university discipline which is committed to public discourse.

As one might expect, the advocates of the concept of moral education are to be encountered not so much among subject-teachers or specialists in didactics (perhaps with some regional differences) as among other interested third parties as, for example, teachers of other subjects, parents, official administrators and politicians. Concepts of moral education are usually favoured by people who are unable or unwilling to call in question their beliefs in what they take to be perfectly obvious fundamental values; who on account of their personal educational

biography have never had any cause to review these fundamental values openly or critically and for whom security in matters of orientation is the all-important point. Most frequently this goes hand in hand with notions about *uniform* orientation. A discussion of the ideas of moral education is not therefore superfluous; yet, from the point of view of didactics, it is more an external than an internal discourse which nonetheless beside the actual task of ethics teaching must be carried on within the context of society, as long as dogmatic notions and ideas about moral education enjoy some currency. Here, too, the Socratic Paradigm will prove serviceable.

4. Maieutics: Help in orientation via help in thinking

The “art of midwifery”, by which thoughts are brought into existence, lies at the heart of the Socratic Method. This art accompanies and supports the “birth” of a person’s independent thoughts and judgments. There are three stages to this:

In the *first* stage the task is to clothe in language and concepts the statements which are “about to be born”. Here propositions, opinions and personal standpoints have to be clarified with respect to language and thought or, in other words, they have to become aware of their own implications.

The *second* stage demands that these thoughts are made accessible to the *other* participants in the dialogue and that through a process of give and take preliminary agreement is reached.

Thirdly all participants must take up these now formulated and clarified thoughts and examine them and account for them in the course of argument.

The pupils’ *own* opinions, thoughts and explanations are essential here, all the more so if they are not directly expressed or not quite perfectly formulated. All participants must exercise care, respect and tolerance with regard to the external and internal problems of the individual and as far as possible make some helpful contribution towards further insights. Such insights must be achieved by the pupils themselves and not read out of a text book or simply presented ready-made. In traditional schools it is still unfortunately seldom the case that an

individual's own thoughts are examined with the same seriousness and care as those found in books or offered by the tradition; if, however, one is prepared to attempt precisely this, one will discover the importance of these thoughts and their significance for the conduct of life.

Insofar as the Socratic Method helps pupils to find and formulate their own thoughts and opinions and gain new insights, it not only fulfils the didactic postulate of pupil-orientation but also opens up the way to self-articulation, the development of self-esteem and reasonable self-definition. This is a very important aspect of ethics instruction since many pupils, on account of their biographical situation, do not have any other forum where they can discuss their own questions and problems: the context of subject-teaching, possibly also the social milieu, may for many different reasons be unsuitable or even out of the question. It is therefore all the more important that instruction in ethics should provide a training ground for "thinking for oneself" and "becoming aware" the teacher accompanying the process with empathy and awareness of his or her own limits. A teacher-pupil relationship on an equal level ("eye to eye", as it were) is itself hardly cultivated at all in traditional schools. The maieutic element encourages the pupils to become mature in their thinking and so also in their practical lives.

Life-help concepts often miss the point when they aim at action. Concrete action must be for ethics-teaching no more than the vanishing point. To set a valuation on pupils' action would be incompatible with the spirit of teaching and with the respect due to the pupils' personality. Action must also in no way be reduced to a matter of pragmatic decision. It is the task of ethics-teaching to establish the *criteria* for judgment and decision and to enquire into their credentials and the breadth of their justification.

Maieutics means help towards authentic speaking and thinking and thus indirectly (but only indirectly) helps towards an independent orientation in life: it develops *dispositions* which favour rational penetration and independent judgment not only in concrete life-situations but also in potential ones, i.e. situations which might occur in future and in which an individual's understanding of the world and of mankind must prove its worth. The result of dealing with fundamental questions of thought, action and being is that convictions are developed which help to establish personality-stability. Such a "web of convictions", in which many centres, formed through reflection and discussion, can

easily be linked together, cannot offer absolute security as some might wish; but it can provide an “operational basis” for further orientation in thought and action.

5. The self-reliance of reason: challenge for students and teachers

In the *topos* concerning the “Self-Reliance of Reason” we have an expression of the Socratic Method’s claim to be a power of enlightenment. Reason is the only legitimate court of appeal; only those thoughts which have been arrived at as a result of one’s own reflection may be presented as an argument in the course of discussion – there must be no citations, no appeals to what others have said. Nothing and no-one has any claim to authority except the Logos. A revealing relic of authority-orientated thinking is the question: “*Who* says so?” – one which all too often replaces the philosophical enquiry into reasons which my partner or I myself can initiate. In Socratic practice the intention of independent thinking finds its expression in the *rule of authenticity*: each person should present only such thoughts as he or she really means (at the time of the statement) and which he or she is ready to defend in argument. Nevertheless, in addition to this *trust in* reason we must not forget *the challenges to* reason: we must take upon ourselves the “struggle for concept” as well as the critical examination of statements in a spirit of absolute integrity – and this can lead to “a desperate struggle for honesty of thought and word” (Nelson). The self-reliance of reason is also self-critical.

Developing the self-reliance of reason does not mean that the teaching of ethics orientates itself (in hasty reaction) towards the immediate interests of the pupils. In this case they would be deprived of the important experience of striving for an adequate and honest answer; in other words, of the critical and sometimes existential dialogue between different voices, even within themselves. They would also be deprived of the discovery of the laborious production of an independent answer, if the ethics instruction were to provide them with the “correct” answer – a tendency which, as is well-known, is shared by many teachers and which produces – similar to a self-fulfilling prophecy – in pupils the

corresponding expectation. Socrates, the representative of enlightenment in the ancient world, philosopher and pedagogue in one person, here shows ethics teaching the way, inasmuch as he insistently points to a person's ability to judge for himself and to set about forming his own judgment. Reason can only play its proper role in a context of self-determination. This holds true for the beginning when thinking first turns up in individual experience, for the process of shared thought, enquiry, and critical examination in the group and also for the conclusion. If we are serious about the pupils' authentic and shared *process* of thinking we will not be in danger of degrading the *fruit* of their independent thinking by the introduction at the end of the lesson of some formula which is extraneous to the discussion they have had. A teacher who is used to dictating the results of his lesson into the notebooks of the students has got to learn (even if this means effort) to become aware of the psychological effect this has, i.e. an effect completely at odds with the formation of independent judgment as aimed for in the teaching of ethics. The practice of Socratic philosophy also demands that we respect the imperfect and that, as a group, we can bear (if necessary) to leave the lesson open-ended.

6. The search for truth and binding character rather than the imparting of knowledge

The openness of dialogue does not imply arbitrariness. In Socratic Discussion participants do not chat at will; on the contrary they search together earnestly for the true and the right, i.e. the valid. The conduct of philosophy through the medium of discussion is frequently misunderstood as a mere exchange of opinion or empty talk, with the consequence that teachers have the tendency sometimes to give priority to the "imparting of knowledge" as a "supposed" counterbalance. However, philosophical "knowledge", if it can be termed such, is not available as a ready-made object. What is valid must become apparent in the course of the argumentative dialogue and for this reason truth-finding by consensus, the regulative idea of Socratic Discussion, is an absolute essential. It would be wrong to introduce at this point the arguments concerning relativism – why else should we go in for

intellectual discussion, if not with the aim of reaching common insights? The teacher does not have to force the issue here and can stay very much in the background as far as the thoughts themselves are concerned. It is amazing to observe how, even in the sensitive issues of ethics, a consensus is reached which really is based on authentic insights and not on a majority vote, group pressure or on some inner compulsion to fulfil expectations. After the close of discussion one will often find concurrences with elements of traditional thought. In the same way society's minimal consensus on moral issues will, so to speak, be discovered anew and so this minimal consensus is not endangered by Socratic philosophizing but rather strengthened: for as to *which* of the values and positions have a claim to binding character – this will *become clear*, provided the reflection is without prejudice and the examination critical. For this purpose neither normative delimitations of subject nor any other prescriptions nor a theory of truth which is held by all are necessary. The *very cultivation* of Socratic Dialogue offers all groups of pupils in every new generation the chance of comprehending and accepting through individual effort the reasonable elements from the normative framework which a democratic and pluralistic society sets for itself. A better immunization against ideologies and false “-isms” of every kind is nowhere to be found.

7. Thinking in groups: “Emergence of a life-form”

Besides the experience of one's own thinking, the experience of fruitful reflection *as a group* is also of importance. Here tendencies towards domination, competition and self-glorification have no part to play. There are not so many niches in our society in which the approach to the ideal form of discourse can be tried out, in which only reasonable arguments count.

Engagement in discussion leads not only to an increase in the autonomy of the power of judgment but also to the perception of the opinions, convictions and difficulties of the other participants and thus to an increase in sensitivity and problem-awareness, indeed to a feeling of respect for one's fellow-thinkers. In addition there is the pupils' experience of mutual aid and interdependence including the possibility to

complement one another's thinking. Inasmuch as the participants in the course of their intellectual effort draw one another's attention to errors, as yet unconsidered points of view or problematical figures of thought, the group succeeds finally in making greater progress than the individual. In this way the cooperative skills within a group as well as its hidden problem-solving capacities will be activated and strengthened. Concrete experiences of this sort can be a counterweight to a group's otherwise prevailing experience of reality, and so may clear the way for the "emergence of a life-form" (Habermas 1971).

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Socratic Elements in “Practical Philosophy”, a New Subject in North-Rhine-Westphalia

1. The “Socratic model” of doing philosophy

The time in which the historical Socrates lived was in many respects an analogue of our time. The fifth century a. n. was for Athens a time of transition in which many traditional orientations had dissolved. Increasing commerce with other Mediterranean states and a number of wars had made for a better knowledge of foreign cultures and had fostered insights into the relativity of laws, moral norms and customs. The “old values” had lost much of their authority, without new values appearing to taking their place. Furthermore, the stability of institutions was threatened by an unfettered individualism and greed for money and material goods. This “vacuum of meaningfulness” was the ideal hunting-ground for the Sophists and their philosophical and rhetorical services, an analogue to the market in esoteric literature today, which caters to the needs of people who do not feel any longer bound by the dogmas of their churches, even if they hesitate to quit their confessions completely.

The philosophy of Socrates reacts to this spiritual vacuum. The central aim of his philosophizing is to provide a conception of the good life that is not vulnerable to relativism because based on reason. A rational philosophy is intended to take the place of conventional religion in regulating and orientating concrete life. Rationality, for Socrates, does not, however, mean to construct a philosophical theory or system, but to engage his interlocutors in an “unended quest” for the good life in the medium of dialogue.

The characteristic features of Socrates’ method can be summarized in four points:

- (1) Philosophy is not a closed doctrine or system but a practice of questions and answers.

- (2) Philosophy is a dialogue among partners who respect each other's dignity and autonomy.
- (3) The starting-point and the end-point of philosophy is the individual and his or her concrete experience and action.
- (4) Philosophy proceeds by rational criticism. It critically examines the claims of conventions, traditions and authorities and tests how far they can be rationally upheld.

A few comments on these points:

The first feature highlights the anti-systematic character of Socrates' style of philosophizing: Philosophy is a practice and not a doctrine. Because it is a practice, philosophizing, for Socrates, is inherently educational. Theoretical insights are only stepping-stones on the way to insights into how to lead a good life. The ultimate aim of philosophy is not strictly theoretical, but ethical or, in an extended sense, *therapeutic*: philosophical rationality is instrumental to self-knowledge, which in turn is instrumental to the good life.

Second, according to the Socratic programme (which does not in all respects correspond to what we find in the Platonic dialogues) the partners of the dialogue respect each other as equal. There is, on the part of Socrates, no claim to authority or superior knowledge inaccessible to the dialogue partner. Furthermore, both partners are keenly conscious of the inherent limits of what dialogue can achieve.

Third, philosophy is concrete. It addresses philosophical problems, but these problems are not defined by academic traditions but by dilemmas encountered in concrete private and social life. In this respect, Socrates' philosophy is literally a philosophy of the market place. It deals with questions that arise in everyday situations and everyday conflicts. These questions are transformed into philosophical problems by being generalized. Though it cannot be denied that the methods employed by the Socrates of the Platonic Dialogues are sometimes "sophistic", this philosophy does not aim at monetary gain, but at truth. Though perhaps ultimately unattainable, truth is at least a regulative idea of Socratic dialogue, and it is a feature that gives these dialogues its characteristic earnestness and responsibility. Though often conducted in a playful spirit, dialogue, for Socrates, is not only intellectual play and rhetorical competition but primarily a way to truth.

Fourth, Socrates trusts in reason because reason is, as it were, the *lingua franca* of dialogue. It is the only universal medium that allows for a critical evaluation of norms and values and their claims to universal validity. For Socrates, there is no alternative way of establishing authority once the credentials of traditional authorities have been eroded by doubts and uncertainties.

2. Socratic elements in the curriculum of the new subject “Practical philosophy”

In a multicultural society like that of North-Rhine-Westphalia, a highly industrialized and densely populated Land of the German Federal Republic, the Socratic model of teaching philosophy is the most attractive model for teaching philosophy wherever this is offered as an alternative to religious instruction. One reason is that in an open and democratic society value education and reflection about fundamental questions must be free of indoctrination. Morality cannot be taught directly, but only indirectly, by stimulating moral judgment and moral reflection. Wherever moral norms are no longer self-evident, whoever appeals to moral norms has to give reasons for them. In this way, morality becomes inseparable from ethics.

Another reason is that “Practical Philosophy”, the new subject in North-Rhine-Westphalia, is intended to be taught in age groups in which acquaintance with philosophical theories and philosophical literature cannot be presupposed. Ethics has to be taught “from scratch”. A Socrates-like philosophy “on the market-place” meets these requirements better than any alternative model. Its central objective is to stimulate his or her own philosophical and moral potentials and to develop his or her autonomous judgment.

The curriculum of the new subject follows the Socratic model rather closely. The didactic methodology consists of three successive steps: understanding, analysis and critical reflection.

The first step consists in making available the subject matter on which the pupils are expected to philosophize. There can be no meaningful discussion of values, life orientations, world views and religious commitments unless these are adequately described, partly by

narratives coming from the members of the group, partly by external inputs like interviews, texts, films and other media.

The second step consists in clarifying the descriptive and normative assumptions underlying the views, values and practices under consideration, as well as their functions, effects and conditions of application.

The third and final step is the critical examination of these (explicit or tacit) assumptions and their confrontation with alternatives.

Each of these steps provides opportunities to develop important capacities and motivations: the capacity and motivation to learn about others' values and conceptions of life in an unprejudiced, tolerant and open spirit; the capacity and motivation to find out about one's own values and conceptions and to articulate them coherently and understandably; the capacity and motivation to evaluate one's own and others' values and conceptions of life from a meta-level and to gain a clearer view of their pros and cons and their strengths and weaknesses.

Again, a few comments on these points. An integral element of understanding others' values and life-conceptions is empathy. Most of our convictions do not only have an emotional component but are essentially anchored in emotions and emotional needs such as the longing for security, belonging and recognition. An important didactic aim is to approach the values and life-conceptions of others with a certain open-mindedness and objectivity and, at least initially, to suspend judgment on them. It must not be forgotten, however, that there are limits to understanding. Complete understanding is an unattainable ideal. Worldviews, moral norms and practices can be too unfamiliar or too unacceptable to invite understanding, e. g. "fundamentalist" convictions, which often are the more powerful and irresistible the more "irrational" they appear to non-believers.

No less important is the capacity to articulate one's own values and orientations. Values and orientations are often vague, indeterminate, or confused, and external assistance may be necessary to give them adequate expression. In many cases, this assistance will come from the discussion group but also from the teacher/facilitator.

Putting one's experiences, judgments and values into words (but also into gestures, pictures etc.) is an important step on the way to a more distanced, open-minded and critical reflection on attitudes and values, one's own and others'. Once the spell of immediacy is broken, it

becomes possible to think about reasons and justifications. Though the long-term objective is to develop an autonomous life-perspective, nobody should be pressured into being (or appearing) more autonomous than he really is, however. Uncertainties, irresolution and “irrational” loyalties should be respected even when no good reasons can be given for them. The characteristically Socratic philosophical virtue is not self-certainty, but tolerance against ambiguity. In addition, we should keep in mind Wittgenstein’s aphorism that philosophers should greet each other with the words “Take your time!”.

So much for the first aspect of the Socratic model of philosophy, philosophy as practice. The second aspect, the understanding of philosophy as a dialogue among partners, can also be found in the curriculum of the new subject. There is no subject in which pupils and teachers are more on a par and in which teaching proceeds in a more “democratic” style. That dialogue has a more important role to play in philosophy teaching than in any other subject is easily explained by the democratic element inherent in philosophy. Since the medium in which philosophizing takes place is reason and nothing else, any privileged access to “higher knowledge” is excluded. On the contrary, each member has an equal right to have his views respected. (This is an important overlap with discourse ethics.) Though truth and objective validity are regulative ideas in Socratic philosophy, there is no guarantee that discussion will always lead to consensus. There is a temptation, in these situations, for the teacher to make his or her own views authoritative. But this temptation must be resisted. Though teachers are encouraged to express their own views, they should not attempt to impose these views on pupils against their insights. In many cases, there will be no other way than to accept a certain pluralism of views and the necessity of compromises. It is part of the conception of “practical philosophy” that pupils are not only encouraged to work for consensus (even if that takes some time and effort), but also to recognize situations in which clashes of opinions cannot be mitigated by rational means, and some kind of compromise is called for in order to maintain reliable and fair social co-operation.

A third feature of the curriculum of the new subject that must be classified as typically “Socratic” is that teachers are encouraged to make the discussion start from concrete life experiences of the members of the discussion group. The essential input of philosophizing comes from the

members of the group themselves, from their experiences, questions, conflicts and uncertainties. Questions and problems are not imposed on pupils, but derive from their own experience and environment. Apart from providing the discussion with a firm footing in reality, this strategy has important didactic advantages. It activates the members of the group and motivates them to contribute their own views. I personally think that it is essentially this feature that explains the predominantly positive reactions found in a comprehensive questionnaire study of teachers and pupils undertaken within the four-year “probationary period” of the new subject.¹

Of course, personal experience is only the starting point of this kind of teaching. The “*personal perspective*” from which the curriculum starts is only one of three perspectives, the other two being the *social perspective* and a more exclusively *cognitive perspective* which has been called “*history of ideas perspective*”. As far as the personal perspective is concerned, the curriculum largely follows the value clarification approach developed by R. T. Hall in the 1970ies.² This approach encourages the pupil to explore the meaning, function and consequences of values, principles, worldviews and conceptions of life with a view of informing him about his realistic options and enabling him to make considered choices. Asking for the *meaning* of values, principles and norms means to spell out what these values imply for concrete life; asking for their *function* means to consider the personal gains and losses resulting from them; considering their *consequences* means to find out about the chances, but also the burdens and conflicts going with them and about which dimensions of experience are opened up or closed by adopting certain values.

Since the consequences of individual attitudes, values and conceptions of life do not only concern the individual but also others, especially those with whom he shares the social contexts in which he lives, the “*personal perspective*” quite naturally leads to the social perspective in which the relations between individual and social value

¹ See the report on the four-year test of the new subject in Ministerium für Schule, Wissenschaft und Forschung des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen: *Praktische Philosophie in Nordrhein-Westfalen. Erfahrungen mit einem neuen Schulfach.* Frechen 2002.

² Hall, Robert T. (1979): *Moral education: A handbook for teachers,* Minneapolis.

orientations are explored. Individual values and conceptions are socially conditioned, fulfil social functions (e. g. integration and trust) and have an impact on the form and quality of social co-operation. They make society differentiate into groups and build up conflicts, but are, at the same time, at the root of ideas of social harmony and of procedures of conflict resolution. One big question that can be addressed within the social perspective is how far values and conceptions of life are compatible and how much conflict is desirable or tolerable. Are there norms that have to be strictly binding to everyone in order to maintain a stable and fruitful co-operation? How far should the individual be prepared to follow social norms against his or her convictions, preferences or ideals?

The third perspective, the “history of ideas perspective”, allows and encourages pupils to put their own values and ideas into the wider context of the history of thought. Pupils are given an opportunity to discover that their own ideas about value and meaning are not born with them but have a long history, are mostly part of long-standing Western and Eastern traditions and have been discussed by the great thinkers in terms not so very different from their own.

3. Critical voices

The new subject “Practical Philosophy” is not only welcomed. There are also critical voices, e.g. in the churches (for which the subject is not religious enough), in militant atheist circles (for which the subject is not anti-religious enough) and with parents who want their children to have a more rigidly fixed world-view than the openness of the curriculum of the new subject seems to allow.

One argument put forward by critics of the new subject is the new subject’s lack of individual profile. Not only the topics, the argument goes, but also the didactic principles show a great deal of overlap with neighbouring subjects. It cannot be denied that there is a certain overlap with other subjects such as German, politics and religious instruction. However, the range of topics the subject “practical philosophy” deals with extends far further than the topics covered by other subjects. Metaphysical questions such as the beginning and end of the universe,

the existence of god, or anthropological questions like freedom of the will and the mind-body-problem are not covered by any other kind of teaching. Naturally, there is a great deal of overlap with the topics of religious instruction. It should be kept in mind, however, that the *differentia specifica* with respect to religious instruction is not the choice of topics but its independence of any particular religious creed. Neutrality with respect to religion and world-view is among the essentials of the new subject. (This neutrality must not be confused with a specifically anti-religious tendency.) Many criticisms coming from churches and parents presuppose that questions of orientation and values cannot be meaningfully discussed outside a religious context. This presupposition, however, is incorrect. As nearly the whole of the history of philosophy shows, religion cannot claim any monopoly in questions of ethics or of making sense of one's life.

A criticism put forward mainly by the established Christian churches is that "Practical Philosophy", in contrast to traditional religious instruction, does not allow pupils to build up an established religious identity. This line of criticism is, again, unconvincing. Even on the presupposition that a religious identity is desirable, it must be doubted that establishing it is one of the legitimate tasks of state-organized education. On the other hand, it is precisely its non-commitment to any specific creed that enables the new subject to develop an integrative potential urgently called for in a multicultural society. In a multicultural society in which the great majority of young people are no longer brought up in a specifically Christian spirit and in which even the members of non-Christian religious creeds are increasingly estranged from the religious commitments of their families, an integrative value education on a philosophical basis is clearly more appropriate than separating classes in smaller confessional groups.

It is true, an ethics teaching on Socratic lines is unable to provide the pupil the same kind of concrete moral direction religious instruction on the basis of the teaching of a particular confession might be able to do. "Practical Philosophy" cannot be expected to issue strictly binding moral directives for central areas of life such as love, sex, marriage, family, work and friendship. Such an expectation would run directly counter the central objectives of the new subject. This must not blind us, however, to the fact, that "Practical Philosophy", though neutral in relation to world-views, is not completely neutral with respect to values. Though pupils are

encouraged to make up their own minds about values, there are certain limits defined by the ethical minimum of the North-Rhine-Westphalian constitution. These values, among them humaneness, democracy, freedom, tolerance, and responsibility for the long-term conservation of the biosphere, however, are rather uncontroversial. They are central to Western culture and to the modern pluralistic state, but not only to them. As basic values which restrict freedom only to the extent necessary to maintain the conditions of peaceful social co-operation, these values allow for a great variety of interpretations and developments, both on the level of cultures and of individuals.

Socratic Dialogue and Philosophy with Children

A Possible Comparison on the Basis of a Personal Experience

1. The Socratic Dialogue in Bulgaria

In April 2007 an international Socratic conference *Democratic Education and Citizenship. The role of Socratic Dialogue* was organized in Sofia. This was a significant step in the promotion of the Socratic Method in Bulgaria.

Some small steps in the previous years made this conference possible. Some university and high school teachers and also students had become acquainted with this method by participating in international Socratic conferences and Socratic weeks. Some short Socratic dialogues with high school pupils and teachers were facilitated by Rene Saran, Dieter Krohn and Jens-Peter Brune. Two workshops for philosophy teachers, including a two-day Socratic dialogue and one-day methodological instructions and reflections about how to apply some elements of the Socratic Method at school were offered by me in cooperation with the Association of the philosophy teachers in Bulgaria.

The major aim of the Conference was to introduce Bulgarian teachers to the Socratic Method as an exciting way to forward and develop democratic education in our country.

This Conference gave all participants the opportunity not only to learn about the theoretical and philosophical underpinnings of the Socratic method but also to gain first-hand experience by participation in a Socratic Dialogue with qualified Socratic facilitators.

The topic of the conference was in accordance with the Bulgarian school problems of the day. Bulgarian teachers have not been trained and equipped very well to engage their students in inter-active learning to enhance the development of an open, enquiring mind through critical thinking and discussion.

To develop future citizens in the domestic and wider context, at a moment when Bulgaria is entering the European Community, it is essential to nurture the democratic attitudes in our education. Teachers need to develop new approaches in their everyday classroom practice to achieve this.

The conference program consisted of three components:

- *lectures* and paper presentations,
- two-day *Socratic Dialogues* on topics like:
 - What is a good citizen? (Facilitator: Rene Saran)
 - What is a good teacher? (Facilitator: Kirsten Malmquist)
 - Is bullying a fact of life? (Facilitator: Dieter Krohn)
- Workshops on topics like “Socratic dialogue and Philosophy with children”, “Socratic dialogue as an empirical investigation”, “Socratic dialogue and conflict resolution”, “A project week at school”, “Classroom and higher education: ideas for interaction”.

Together these have enabled participants to learn about the theory, to experience a Socratic Dialogue and to reflect on possible ways to apply the Socratic approach in their work.

This article is reporting about “Socratic Dialogue and Philosophy with Children”, one of the workshops offered during this conference.

2. What is Philosophy with children? – a very short “announcement”

Philosophy with Children is a worldwide presented philosophical and pedagogical approach endeavouring to empower children to think about important problems and questions they have using the patterns and the possibilities of philosophical thinking and reflection.

On the institutional level this approach was developed and established thanks to the efforts of the American professor in Logic Mathew Lipman. He founded The Institute for the Advancement of Philosophy for Children (IAPC) at Montclair State University, USA.¹ He

¹ <http://www.montclair.edu/iapc/> – webpage of the Institute for the Advancement of Philosophy for Children at Montclair State University, USA.

has developed a complete curriculum for p4c (Philosophy for Children) for the elementary, secondary and high school by writing special stories for children and developing manuals to these texts for teachers.

The ideas that children are naturally able to do philosophy and that it is beneficial to do this also with the very young children up to 5 years have their philosophical origins in the Socratic Method (Plato) and in the philosophy of the American pragmatism. They are also based on the Reform pedagogy from the beginning of the XX. century in Europe and on the concept of Children's rights, especially the right of education.

In this approach philosophy does not mean an academic subject or "high" abstract theory but an action which is accessible and possible to be done by everybody and which could have practical consequences for everybody's life.

The main idea of philosophy with children is that doing philosophy helps children to improve their thinking skills and to develop their personalities.

Very essential is the way of doing philosophy. A democratic *community of inquiry* is built up where children and adults try to explore some difficult and existentially important problems by thinking together. The community of inquiry sets some rules about communication and some standards for the process of investigation and its results. All participants are equal although they can have different roles in the process of inquiry. Everybody's ideas and contributions are valuable and are taken into account. There is no pressure to develop one position or to give one answer to the question. Furthermore, the plurality and variety of ideas and arguments are valuable. Then, by comparing these different ideas, approaches and arguments children get fruitful possibilities to develop their skills of thinking qualitatively and independently.

Mathew Lipman and his successors have pointed out three qualities of good thinking, which could be developed in a very successful way through doing philosophy: *critical, creative and caring thinking*.

Critical thinking is the capability to work with criteria and is sensitive to the context, self-evaluating and self-correcting. It makes assessments and decisions possible.

Creative thinking is the capability to develop new criteria and rules, to set a new context through self-recognition and self-reflection.

Caring thinking is the orientation to values in order not to evaluate but to describe some phenomena on the basis of empathy. It leads to certain actions based on certain norms and values.

3. Design and structure of the workshop “Socratic dialogue and philosophy with children”

The main idea of the workshop

In a short session the group got the chance to acquire personal experience in philosophizing on a Bulgarian fairy tale in the “Philosophy with Children” manner.

In small groups the two types of personal experience (from the previous Socratic dialogues and from the philosophy with children session) should be compared under certain categories in order to explore their similarities and differences.

At the end, the participants were asked to draw some conclusions for the practice of teaching philosophy in Bulgarian schools.

Opening

At the beginning of the workshop the most important thing was “to break the ice” among participants and to set and clarify the aim and the methods of working together.

Some of the participants had already worked together in the two-day Socratic dialogues, but some of them in different groups. So it was necessary to create an atmosphere of common understanding and motivation for inquiring on the basis of personal experience.

After some welcoming words I tried to clarify the aim of the workshop – our *common inquiry* of the two approaches, Socratic Dialogue and Philosophy with Children, based on personal first-hand experience of the participants who were supposed to work in small groups and present the results to the whole group.

In a funny way we checked the participants' expectations. Everybody wrote on a card one word, expressing her or his expectations. From all these words the group combined the "group sentence".²

Theoretical background

The participants were already familiar with the Socratic Dialogue because of the papers presented and their personal experience by participating at least in one two-day dialog during the conference. So they were just asked to actualize their pre-knowledge about the Socratic Dialogue and their experience of it.

The main emphasis was put on the methodology of Philosophy with Children. In a short presentation, the participants were introduced to the origins of Philosophy with Children, the main concepts like *community of inquiry*, *critical*, *creative* and *caring thinking* and some different approaches in the methodology (see Part 2 of this article).

General procedure for Philosophizing with Children

- (1) To create *common experience* in the "community of inquiry"
 - by reading a text:
 - specially constructed texts³
 - classical literature for children – like "Winnie the Pooh" or "The little Prince" and many others
 - fairy tales – like Bulgarian fairy tales⁴
 - fables⁵
 - picture books⁶

² In our case it read: It is sunny and we expect to learn something unexpected with a smile.

³ See M. Lipman's stories like "Pixie", "Harry Stottlemeier's Discovery" and others or Gareth Matthews' books like "Philosophische Gespräche mit Kindern", Berlin 1989 or "Denkproben. Philosophische Ideen jüngerer Kinder". Berlin 1991.

⁴ This approach was developed as part of the project "Eco-Philosophy with Children" and published in Karageorgieva, A. Vardzhiyska, E. Veleva, D. (2001): Eco-Philosophy with Children. Sofia.

⁵ Calvert, Kr. (2001): Philosophieren mit Fabeln. Dieck: Heinsberg.

- by experiencing art⁷:
 - music
 - paintings
 - caricatures or cartoons⁸
 - theatre, cinema
 - by playing games⁹
- (2) To collect and review *questions* for the inquiry raised by this experience
- visualizing all questions by writing them on the board
 - writing down the name of the “author” of every question
 - grouping the questions – for example by similarities or contrast, in order to mark some problem areas for the inquiry
 - choosing one question in order to begin the discussion/the philosophical inquiry
- (3) *Discussion* – in the whole group or in subgroups
- (4) *Exercises*¹⁰ and/or games
- (5) *Review* of the discussion – This does not mean (necessarily) a general conclusion but rather a kind of review of the problems that were discussed and a typology of the positions and arguments children have brought up into the discussion.

It should be pointed out that this “procedure” is just a description of how most sessions in Philosophizing with Children are carried out. This is a kind of methodological orientation but no guarantee that you necessarily do philosophize if you follow all these “steps”.

⁶ See, for example, Petermann, Hans-Bernhard (2007): *Kann ein Hering ertrinken? Philosophieren mit Bilderbüchern*. Beltz, or Murriss, K.; Haynes, J. (2000): *Storywise: thinking through picture books*. Somerset: Dialogue Works.

⁷ For example a CD “Ecodialogo” as a part of the EU Project “Ecodialogo”, developed by Grup IREF – Espana, Centro Menon -Portugal and Austrian Center for Philosophy for Children, 2002.

⁸ See also the very inspiring book: Lemieux, Michele (1997): *Gewitternacht*. Weinheim: Beltz & Gelberg.

⁹ For example Wenzel, M. (1995): *Philosophische Spiele für groß und klein*. München: Don Bosco Verlag, or Zoller-Morf, Eva (1998): *Philosophische Reise*. Zürich: Verlag pro juventute.

¹⁰ See for example annex 2 of this article – exercises on the theme “The Nature and The Man” in the Manual “Eco-Philosophy with Children”, Sofia, 2001.

Personal experience in philosophizing (in the p4c-manner)

The participants were given the chance to experience the “classical” way to create common experience in the community of inquiry by reading a text. The group had the possibility to choose one text from two alternatives: one Bulgarian fairy tale named “The granted years” and “Spring”, a story about a friendship between the Frog and the Toad written by Arnold Lobel¹¹. In order to increase the motivation of the group and to point out the possibilities of non-discursive techniques in philosophizing especially with children I had brought two objects symbolically representing the two stories – one flower and one sandglass. The group chose the sandglass – the symbol of the Bulgarian fairy tale.

Text: *The granted years* (Bulgarian fairy tale)

It was a cold winter day. The horse, the ox and the dog went to the man and knocked on his door.

“Who’s there?”, the man asked.

“Just us – the horse, the ox and the dog.”

“What do you want?”

“We want to come in and get warm. If you don’t let us in, we will die.”

The man opened the door and the three animals came in. They went to the fireplace and got warmer. The man was very hospitable. He brought some food for his guests and invited them to dinner. He also sat near the fireplace and put his two hands to his head.

The guests finished their meal and asked him why he looked so worried.

“Because my life has come to its end and I have to die. You know, everyone is allowed to live for a fixed time and humans live as long as the ant, the camel and the other beings.”

The horse, the ox and the dog cast a glance at each other and had a short quiet talk.

“Listen”, said the horse after a little while, “if you don’t mind, we could give you some years of our lives. We’ll keep only ten. We don’t need more.”

“Of course I don’t mind! Let’s make a deal.”

They signed a contract and the man got the rest of the horse’s, the ox’s and the dog’s life.

¹¹ Lobel, A. (1996): Frosch und Kröte. Der Liebesbrief. München: dtv.

The years he took from the horse he added to his youth and that's why young people are wild and nimble like horses. The years of the ox he added to his mature years and that's why adults work like oxen, and the years of the dog he added to his old age. That's why old men are a little bit short-tempered and like to stay at home. Just like dogs.

Having read the text, we collected some questions like these:

- (1) *Donka*: What is it like to die?
- (2) *Zlatka*: How does the man decide how many years to dedicate for each age?
- (3) *Wassilena*: Why is there a difference and even aggression between generations?
- (4) *Ginka*: Why does the man want additional years?
- (5) *Donka*: What does it mean to be hospitable?
- (6) *Tzveti*: Why doesn't the man want to die?
- (7) *Galja*: Why do they say that everybody is allotted the same number of years?
- (8) *Divna*: Why aren't animals afraid to die?
- (9) *Tamsyne*: Shall we expect to receive a prize for our courtesy?
- (10) *Toni*: Why does the man sign a contract?

Some questions were grouped in a way like "life and death" – 1, 6, 8; "hospitality and prize" – 9, 5; "mistrust" – 3, 10.

We briefly discussed the question: Why does the man want additional years?

Because the discussion was not recorded, it is no longer possible to report reliably about the content of this discussion. In this case it was much more important for me that everybody got, for a limited time, authentic experience in philosophizing in the p4c-manner.

Comparing Socratic Dialogue with Philosophy for Children

This task was meant to be completed in small groups. The participants were divided in three subgroups. Everybody chose a card with either the name of:

- a great philosopher (like for example Socrates, Plato, Descartes, Bacon, Sartre...) or
- a famous writer of children books (like for example Astrid Lindgren, Hans Christian Andersen, Erich Kästner, Gianni Rodari, Donald Bisset, Michael Ende...), or
- a hero from a famous story for children (like Carlson, Pippi, Alice, The little Prince, Matilda, Dorothy ...)

The participants had to find their “family”, which was a funny and jolly experience.

The subgroups had to investigate the differences and the similarities between Socratic Dialogue and Philosophy with Children on the basis of their personal experience by comparing the two approaches on some categories like

Type of category for comparison	Categories to be investigated	Subgroup
Theoretical and epistemological categories	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Concept/notion of philosophy - Concept of truth - The role of personal experience 	The Philosophers
Methodological categories	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Facilitator’s role - Concept of Common understanding - Meta-dialogue 	The Writers
Practical application	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - For personal development - For development of the community - In the Philosophy lessons 	The Heroes

There were no limits set for the format of the presentation of the group results, just the assignment to be creative, metaphorical but also analytical.

Because of the short time available and of the limited personal experience the results of the group work were not so precise in substance

but very impressive in their format: a poster with a table, a “classical” verbal presentation and even two self-invented “fairy tales” which represented in a symbolic and narrative way the methodological differences in the two approaches to be compared.

Conclusion

At the end of that workshop I did not want to comment on the quality of the results achieved in substance but to emphasize in a simple game the meaning of our *common* effort to investigate, which had made us a real community of inquiry.

Everybody stood in a circle and had to touch her or his hands in front of her or him. Thus were created a kind of small circles, symbolizing the possibilities of one person.

The second step was to hold the neighbor’s hands. In this way a big common circle was created, symbolizing the possibilities of the group. This game was a simple visualization of something very important the two approaches have in common – the power of the group “synergy”, the pleasure and the satisfaction of working and thinking *together*.

4. Socratic Dialogue and Philosophy with Children – Two approaches for developing basic personal skills in a more democratic school

During the workshop it was not possible to explore in depth the categories for comparison of the two approaches because of the time limits and insufficient pre-knowledge and experience of the participants. But in accordance with the specifics of these approaches it was very valuable that the inquiry was based on personal experience: Socratic Dialogue and Philosophy with Children have something in common – the fact that you have to experience them personally in order to understand the impact of these methods. It is not possible and not reliable to develop an opinion about them without having been involved

in a philosophical investigation in a Socratic or in the Philosophy with Children manner.

There are some attempts in the literature to compare the two approaches on the theoretical level. The Socratic Method was recognized as one of the origins of Philosophy with Children by Ekkehard Martens.¹² The similarities and the differences but also the opportunities for fruitful mutual inspiration of the two methods were explored by Gisela Raupach-Strey with some preference for the stronger rationality of the Socratic Method.¹³ Another comparison with some national specifics offers Aneta Karageorgieva.¹⁴

According to their scientific “biography” and their personal experience and attitudes these authors tend rather to point out some advantages of Socratic Dialogue (Raupach-Strey) or of Philosophy with Children (Karageorgieva). There is a tinge of competitive argumentation in these investigations which is, in my opinion, rather a matter of academic interest than a matter of the practice of teaching philosophy in school.

The current situation in European schools is so dynamic that the teacher has to be very flexible in order to act and react according to the various needs of the students. So it could be very luxurious if the teacher sticks too much to one method or attitude just in order to point out her/his “professional” identity, especially when two so closely related attitudes and methods like Socratic Dialogue and Philosophy with Children are discussed. For that reason I would like to explore rather the advantages of both methods, relying upon previous investigations, workshop results and personal experience.

¹² Martens, Ekkehard (1990, 1998): *Sich im Denken orientieren. Philosophische Anfangsschritte mit Kindern*, Hannover, Stuttgart.

¹³ Raupach-Strey, G. (2002): *Sokratische Didaktik*. Bd. 10 der Schriftenreihe “Sokratisches Philosophieren” der Philosophisch-Politischen Akademie, Münster: Lit Verlag, p. 434 – 444.

¹⁴ Karageorgieva, A. (2005): *Philosophy with Children and Socratic dialogue – a comparative study*. In: *Philosophy 6, Sofia*. (Карагеоргиева, А. “Философия с деца и сократически диалог – сравнително изследване”, сп. “Философия”, кн. 6, София, 2005).

Concept/notion of philosophy

Both approaches understand philosophy not just as a theory but as a *dialogical activity*. Philosophy has a concrete meaning for human life as a way of clarifying thinking and of arguing for convictions and decisions/actions.

Philosophy is a common investigation in depth of our personal and cultural beliefs and presuppositions in a “phenomenological” (Nelson) or “analytical” (Wittgenstein and Philosophy with Children) manner.¹⁵ It is a chance to share experiences and meanings in the community.

Concept of truth

Both approaches share a kind of “enlightening” belief that truth is a legitimate, motivating and valuable aim of the philosophical investigation. Nevertheless, the truth has “just” an *interpersonal validity*, but this could be examined in a very *concrete* way by checking the relevance of hypotheses or interpretations through referring to experience (the example in Socratic Dialogues) or to the text and its interpretations on the basis of children’s experience (in Philosophy with Children).

The role of personal experience

Although truth has an interpersonal validity in the understanding of both approaches they have additional advantages, a kind of “last instance”, because of their embedment in concrete experience.

Philosophy with children differs from Socratic Dialogue in regard to a kind of “*decentralization*” of the experience, because, on the one hand, there is the experience of the community created through a common activity (for example through reading a text) as a starting point of the inquiry and, on the other hand, every child interprets this common experience through his or her own personal experience and is able and allowed to bring up

¹⁵ See Karageorgieva, A. (2005).

this personal experience also directly into the discussion as part of the argumentation.

Socratic Dialogue strongly works with one's experience, with an example, but there is also the tendency to "modify" this experience at the stage of writing the example down in order to make it "our - the group's - example". Because of the importance of the common experience as a very motivating starting point for philosophical inquiry there are some attempts to create common experience also at the beginning of a Socratic Dialogue through a shared common phase of experiencing art or other phenomena.¹⁶

The facilitator's role

Both approaches have in common the neutral role of the facilitator in regard to the content of the dialogue. This characteristic of the two methods is very important for our attempt to develop the school to a more democratic community. It is a great temptation for the teacher to stay in the role of a "natural" authority and therefore it is a great achievement to escape from it and to let students think independently and open-mindedly. Teachers experienced in Socratic Dialogue or Philosophy with Children have the best opportunities to develop this attitude as part of their professional ethics and values. It is risky, exhausting but interesting and beneficial for the personality of the teacher to dare to realize this philosophical adventure.

It should also be investigated *how* the facilitator guides the discussion. Preliminary observations indicated that the Socratic facilitator should be much more prepared on the content of the dialogue in order to foresee how the dialogue could go on and to direct it into a more philosophically fruitful dimension. The facilitator who is doing philosophy with children has to be more open even for completely unexpected dimensions of the philosophical investigation in order to support properly especially the creative aspects of the thinking of children.

¹⁶ For example the Socratic Dialogue on the question "Wie kann ich sicher sein, dass meine sinnliche Wahrnehmung richtig ist?", facilitated by *Ulrike Gromadecki*, 30.03.-05.04.2007 in Würzburg, Germany. It began with an observation of an object.

The concept of mutual understanding

Both approaches are very suitable for developing a team spirit because the aims of the investigations are the mutual understanding and shared opinions about some existentially important questions. In the Socratic methodology the *consensus* is very important as a horizon of the investigation but also as a practical tool for measuring the progress of the dialogue and improving the quality of the group work. The consensus is also a central category in the theory of the American pragmatism, one of the origins of Philosophy with Children. But in the practice of doing philosophy with children it is very rare to reach the consensus (not only) because of the short time for the discussion and/or not sufficient concentration of the pupils. Furthermore, the variety of opinions and arguments is a common result, a kind of review of different approaches to the problem, eventually with reflection of their advantages and disadvantages.

I have never experienced a Socratic dialogue which reached a consensus at the end of the investigation and there are many practical reasons for that. But if it should be necessary, for any social or political reason, to reach consensus the Socratic Dialogue has the right attitude and tools to prove in a very strong way if it is a real consensus, which could be a base for a common decision or action.

Meta-dialogue

The meta-dialogue in the Socratic Method is a special opportunity for giving and receiving feedback about rules, methodological issues, group dynamics and performance of the facilitator. There are no special rules except the recommendation that one experienced participant should facilitate this part of the dialogue.

For the Philosophy with Children approach it is also very important to create the opportunity for giving and receiving feedback, but beyond the dialogue it is possible to use also some more structured formats or non-discursive tools; a nice way how every child could express feelings, emotions or remarks is playing a game.

Personal development/Development of the personality

Both approaches take the person (the child and the adult) seriously as a thinking subject. The way of doing philosophy in the community makes possible the development of important qualities of thinking like:

- the so-called “Socratic virtues” like patience, endurance, ability to listen to the others, readiness to change one’s mind, trust in one’s doubts and intuitions
- the ability to reflect on the personal experience
- self-recognition
- critical thinking – the self-evaluation of one’s point of view in comparison with the others
- thinking together – Both approaches offer discussions which are not just (almost indifferent) exchanges of opinions or debates (where everybody wants to win). Thinking together means that the participants have the opportunity to change their minds without losing their personal dignity.

Therefore those dialogical methods contribute considerably to the development of the basic communicative, thinking and social skills of the participants.¹⁷ And this means significant personal growth.

Teacher training

The very fruitful role of Socratic Dialogue for the education and training of teachers should be specially pointed out, because it is one of the best ways to develop the teacher *as a person*. Thinking together in the community encourages the teacher and straightens his/her self-esteem. The Socratic Dialogue is a very proper way to reflect on one’s

¹⁷ For some practical results in this field see also Ivanova, Evelina (1999): Philosophieren als Hilfe zur Selbsthilfe. In: Rostocker Manuskripte, Universität Rostock. and Ivanova, Evelina (2004): Philosophieren als Mittel zur Persönlichkeitsstärkung. In: Mitteilungen des Fachverbandes Philosophie, Deutschland.

pedagogical reasons and insights¹⁸, on issues of pedagogical ethics, on shared values of the pedagogical community.

The Socratic Dialogue encourages and trains the *self-reflection* of the teacher as the best tool to prevent mistakes and unintentional manipulations in the process of education.

Development of the community

The personality of the participants can grow because there are favorable conditions in the community of inquiry.

There are some common *rules* both in Socratic Dialogue and in Philosophy with Children how to investigate and how to communicate with each other. The rules of the Socratic dialogue are strongly presumed as part of the methodology of the dialogue, but they could be discussed and argued during the meta-dialogue. The community of inquiry doing philosophy with Children is much more open. Rules could be created, discussed and revised until every participant agrees upon them.

Despite some differences in the mechanism for establishing the rules and on the level of content both approaches have in common that they make possible the existence of one democratic community of inquiry which works in a structured way on an important philosophical problem or question on the basis of willingness to understand the other's point of view and on the basis of mutual support. For that reason thinking together contributes to a better recognition of the others and leads to better relationships in the school community.

In the Philosophy lessons

For organizational reasons it is not possible to incorporate the Socratic Dialogue in its "classic form" in the philosophy lessons at school, but some elements and the general Socratic approach in teaching philosophy could be very useful when we want to teach the students to think

¹⁸ Hüne, Martin (1997): Das Sokratische Gespräch in der Lehrerbildung. In: Neuere Aspekte des Sokratischen Gesprächs, Frankfurt a. M.: dipa Verlag, pp. 81-88.

independently and self-reflectingly.¹⁹ In many European countries Philosophy with Children has become more and more the status of an independent subject. But even if this is not the case (like in Bulgaria) this methodology should be involved as a general approach in the teaching of philosophy at schools because of all the “benefits” mentioned above.

Outlook

The main idea of the workshop “Socratic Dialogue and Philosophy with Children”, to compare both approaches on the basis of personal first-hand experience, could be deepened in another format: as an expert meeting or longer workshop in order to explore deeply similar categories for comparison and to draw some practical conclusions for the teaching of philosophy by using the advantages of both approaches without losing their specific characteristics.

The workshop reported about here was just a small step in this investigation.

5. Working materials and handouts

Annex 1:

Philosophy with Children (p4c) – basic concepts

5.1. Origins

Based on:

- the Reform pedagogy of the beginning of the 20th century in Europe
- the philosophy of American pragmatism
- the Socratic method (Plato)
- the concept of children’s rights, especially the right of education.

¹⁹ Neißer, Barbara (1997): Das Sokratische Gespräch im Philosophieunterricht der Sekundarstufe II. In: Neuere Aspekte des Sokratischen Gesprächs. Frankfurt a. M., pp. 88-101.

P4c reaches a wide public, worldwide, thanks to the efforts of the American professor in Logic Mathew Lipman²⁰.

Philosophy begins with:

- being amazed by the world – that it is the way it is
- an endeavour to know and doubt
- perplexity

5.2 Basic concepts

Community of inquiry – main characteristics:

- Group of people which is constructed because of common life practices.
- Purpose – to explore problems of common interest for all of the members.
- Shared experiences – In the process of investigation the community experienced together certain common mental situations like: *construction of a common experience* (by reading a text or playing a game) or *disputation*– through comparison of problems from a (literary) text with the personal experience of the participants.
- This is a relaxed friendly place, where the participants trust each other, where they have some experiences in common, where there is a lot of laughter, where there are no taboos.
- Equality of the participants – there are no mechanism of race, gender or power pressure.
- The community develops internal rules for communication and investigation.
- Teacher's role – one of the investigators, not the person who knows the truth, but the person who knows more about methods and who has more experience in investigating a problem.

Critical thinking

- applies criteria
- self-evaluation and self-correction
- sensibility to the context
- assessment and decision-making

²⁰ <http://www.montclair.edu/iapc/> - webpage of the Institute for the Advancement of Philosophy for Children at Montclair State University, USA.

Creative thinking

- creates criteria and rules
- self-recognition and self-reflection
- building a new context

Caring thinking

- value-oriented – in order not to evaluate but to describe
- empathy – relationship to others
- active – forced certain activities
- normative

5.3. Structure of the educational situation

- Organization of space – sitting in a circle, speaking– using certain rituals (like passing a ball, for example)
- Purpose – in traditional education – to master the same educational content; in p4c – to have orientation in the variety of thinking strategies and approaches
- Sources to learn – in traditional education – teacher, textbook; in p4c – variable: the teacher as a resource person, not as a person who knows everything
- Discipline – not as obligation or compulsion from outside but based on the personal interest in the problem to be investigated
- Evaluation – self-evaluation based on criteria which could be discussed freely, openly and conscientiously
- Atmosphere – a relaxed friendly place, a lot of spontaneous laugh

5.4. Practical instructions for guiding a discussion

- Time limit – from maximum 20 minutes for 1st-2nd grade to maximum 1,5 hours for 3rd-4th grade and above
- Reading with understanding/“Reading comprehension” – to clarify unknown words, to retell the story, to dramatize
- Visualization:
 - Every question has to be written down with the name of the child who asked it
 - Grouping the questions

- Choosing one question to begin the discussion – At the beginning it is possible that the teacher chooses that question in order to teach the children to make the difference between a question “just asked” and one with potential for a philosophical investigation.
- Discussion
- Exercises and/or games
- Review of the discussion – This does not (necessarily) mean a common conclusion but rather a kind of review of the problems that were discussed and a typology of the positions and arguments children have brought up into the discussion.

Annex 2:

Manual “Eco-Philosophy with Children”, Karageorgieva, A., Vardzhiyska, Ev., Veleva, D.

Chapter 2: *The nature and The man*

Discussion plan for the text “*The granted years*”: Mutual Aid

- (1) Why does the man help the tree animals?
- (2) Why do the three animals help the man?
- (3) Do you help people? Why?
- (4) Do you help animals?
- (5) Does it make any difference if you help an animal or a human?
- (6) Has an animal ever helped you?
- (7) Do you like to help?
- (8) Do you like to be helped?
- (9) Do we always help when someone needs help?
- (10) What can we grant? What can't we grant? Give some examples.
- (11) How does the man spend the granted years?

Discussion plan: *What does “understanding” mean?*

- (1) Do you think you understand your pet?
- (2) If your pig is hungry, does it sound the same way as if it has had enough?

- (3) How do you understand if the chickens are hungry?
- (4) What do you mean when you say that you understand an animal?
- (5) What do you mean when you say you understand biology or maths?
- (6) What is the difference between understanding an animal and understanding biology or maths?
- (7) When you say that you understand the trees does that mean you understand how they grow, how they eat, how they live or something else?
- (8) When you say you understand your mother do you mean that you just know what she is worried about or something more than this?
- (9) What is the difference between understanding something like trees or animals and understanding people?
- (10) Do you understand better what “understand” means?
- (11) Can people live without understanding each other?
- (12) Do natural things exist without understanding each other or without being understood by humans?

Exercises: *Comparisons*

Purpose: The exercise develops skills to recognize things and make an analogy between them.

I. Colors

Fill in the missing name of a plant. Think of more than one possibility. If you can't think of a plant, name an animal.

White like _____

Green like _____

Blue like _____

Yellow like _____

Red like _____

Orange like _____

Purple like _____

Grey like _____

II. Personal qualities

Fill in the missing name of an animal. Think of more than one possibility.

Shy like _____

Strong like _____

Quick like _____

Remembers like _____

Cowardly like _____

Brave like _____

Sly like _____

Stupid like _____

Big like _____

Nimble like _____

Tough like _____

Hungry like _____

Exercise: *What do humans mean to nature?*

Purpose: This exercise stimulates the children's ability to put themselves in someone else's place (a human being, an animal, a plant or the nature in general). Looking at ourselves from outside, or in other words – the self-reflection is the thing that makes it possible for us to change our lifestyle.

Task: Which of the following about humans is true from nature's point of view? Do you like or dislike these statements? Add something similar.

Annoying person	Destroyer	_____
Naughty kid	Owner	_____
Gardener	King	_____
Master	User	_____
Cormorant	Inventor	_____

Exercise: *People and animals*

Purpose: This exercise examines differences and similarities between humans and animals.

Task: Find out and explain in which way the following things are like or unlike each other.

- A dog is wagging its tale - A child is smiling at a friend
- A squirrel is collecting nuts - A kid is saving up money to go to the seaside
- Birds are flying to the south - A kid is going to the Greek seaside
- Bees in a hive - People in a block of flats
- School for dogs - School for kids
- An otter is washing the fish that it has caught - A kid is washing apples
- A dog is barking at a guest - A kid is picking up the phone

Exercise: *If I were...*

Purpose: This exercise develops the ability of understanding what is it like to be in someone else's place.

Task: Finish the following sentences.

If I were a tree, I would like to be _____ because _____
If I were an animal, I would like to be _____ because _____
If I were a bird, I would like to be _____ because _____
If I were a stone, I would like to be _____ because _____
If I were water, I would like to be _____ because _____
If I were a cloud, I would like to be _____ because _____

Einsicht in ein Allgemeines durch Analyse des konkret Erfahrenen¹

Eine empirische Untersuchung über das Potenzial Sokratischer Gespräche zur Förderung kommunikativer Fähigkeiten

Dieser Artikel ist die Zusammenfassung der Ergebnisse einer qualitativen Studie, die ich 2006 zu einem mit Studierenden geführten Sokratischen Gespräch konzipiert habe.² Ziel dieser Studie war ein Doppeltes: nämlich einerseits aus empirischen Material heraus zu fundieren, was unter „kommunikativen Schlüsselkompetenzen“ verstanden werden kann, und zweitens zu überprüfen, ob Sokratische Gespräche dazu geeignet sind, diese Kompetenzen zu fördern.

Die Studie will damit gleich mehrere Forschungsdesiderate beheben: Zum ersten soll der gern benutzte, aber inhaltlich nicht präzise und konsistent gefüllte Begriff der „Schlüsselqualifikationen“ für den Teilbereich der kommunikativen Kompetenzen empirisch gesättigt untermauert werden.

Zum zweiten soll der Perspektive der Teilnehmer eines Sokratischen Gesprächs die Aufmerksamkeit zuteil werden, die ihr bis jetzt versagt wurde. Die Literatur zum Sokratischen Gespräch ist zu großen Teilen aus der Perspektive der Gesprächsleiter geschrieben, die Frage nach dem

¹ Heckmann 1981, S. 10, schreibt: „Indem ich so mit Berichten über wirklich stattgefundene sokratische Gespräche beginne, genüge ich dem Sokratischen Prinzip, *das Einsicht in ein Allgemeines nur durch Anschauen und Analysieren des unter das Allgemeine fallenden konkreten Erfahrenen* (Kursivsetzung T.F.) gewonnen werden kann.“ Genau dieses Analysieren des konkret Erfahrenen – in diesem Fall der Erfahrungen während eines Sokratischen Gesprächs – ist Anliegen dieses Artikels und der zugrunde liegenden Studie.

² Die vollständige Untersuchung ist als Magisterarbeit im Fach Pädagogik an der Universität Hannover unter dem Titel „Das Sokratische Gespräch als Methode zur Förderung von Schlüsselqualifikationen an der Hochschule“ eingereicht worden.

Förderpotenzial Sokratischer Gespräche lässt sich aber nur unter Einbeziehung der Teilnehmerperspektive angemessen bearbeiten.

Zum dritten will sie den Mangel an auswertbarem empirischem Untersuchungsmaterial beheben, der bisher zu Sokratischen Gesprächen festzustellen ist. Es fehlt an Transkripten tatsächlich stattgefundenener Gespräche, da nur diese eine genaue und detaillierte Analyse ermöglichen.

Obwohl die materialgestützte Untersuchung eines Sokratischen Gesprächs mit großen Schwierigkeiten verbunden ist,³ gelang es durch die eingehende Analyse des erhobenen Materials, zu neuen Erkenntnissen zu kommen.

Die Analyse des Gesprächs ermöglicht die Formulierung von vier kommunikativen Kompetenzen, die durch Sokratische Gespräche gefördert werden können: Das Sokratische Gespräch fördert (1.) die Fähigkeit, Äußerungen situationsangemessen einzusetzen, es fördert (2.) strukturiertes Denken und (3.) die Fähigkeit, Gespräche zu gestalten. Zudem fördert es (4.) die Moderationsfähigkeit der Teilnehmerinnen und Teilnehmer.

Diese Kompetenzbereiche sind dabei nicht zufällig gewählt, sondern formulieren die Ergebnisse intensiver und detaillierter Auswertungen des erhobenen Materials: Sie sind das Allgemeine, das durch das Anschauen und Analysieren des konkret Erfahrenen gewonnen wurde.

Der folgende Artikel wird in einem ersten Teil die Ausgangslage und die Forschungsfragen präzisieren, die meiner Arbeit zu Grunde liegen. In einem zweiten Teil werde ich die Methoden vorstellen, die ich zur Untersuchung des Materials verwendet habe. Der dritte Teil stellt eine kurze Zusammenfassung des Sokratischen Gesprächs über Vorurteile und Urteile, das Grundlage der Arbeit ist, dar. Der vierte Teil stellt die Ergebnisse vor und der fünfte gibt einen Ausblick auf weitere Forschungsvorhaben und mögliche Konsequenzen für die weitere Arbeit mit Sokratischen Gesprächen an Hochschulen.

³ Durch die Länge des Gesprächs, die Komplexität der diskutierten Inhalte und die große Sprecherzahl gehört das Sokratische Gespräch zu den komplexesten Gesprächsformen, die es überhaupt gibt. Vgl. hierzu: Becker-Mrotzek 2004.

I. Forschungsinteresse

Das Sokratische Gespräch wird in vielen Artikeln und Aufsätzen in seiner besonderen dialogischen Form beschrieben. Stary und Gronke beschäftigen sich in ihrem Aufsatz „Sapere aude! Das Neosokratische Gespräch als Chance für die universitäre Kommunikationskultur“⁴ dezidiert mit den Möglichkeiten, die ein Sokratisches Gespräch zur Förderung kommunikativer Kompetenzen bietet. Sie nennen dabei drei „kommunikative Lernkompetenzen“⁵,

- „erstens die Kompetenz, als Teilnehmerin bzw. Teilnehmer einer Gruppe zu lernen. Das bedeutet, die Fähigkeit einzuüben, miteinander zu denken, gemeinsam nach Einsichten zu suchen, intersubjektives Wissen aufzudecken und zu begründen.
- Zweitens geht es darum, sich eine Methode anzueignen, mittels derer mentale Modelle und grundlegende Konzepte in verständigungsorientierter Argumentation untersucht werden können.
- Drittens sollen die Seminarteilnehmerinnen und -teilnehmer Selbstvertrauen in die eigene Vernunft gewinnen, ohne welches ein aktives und fruchtbares Mitwirken am gemeinsamen Denkprozess nicht möglich ist. Das heißt z.B. lernen, eigene Einsichten zu formulieren und zu erläutern, die Einsichten anderer zu verstehen und zu prüfen.“⁶

Bei genauer Lektüre lassen sich einige Fragen an diese „Lernkompetenzen“ stellen:

Woran sollen sich die beschriebenen Kompetenzen erkennen lassen?

Findet die behauptete Förderung dieser Kompetenzen in einem Sokratischen Gespräch wirklich statt?

Wie findet diese Förderung (wenn sie geschieht) statt?

Da diese Fragen eine Untersuchung empirischen Materials nahe legen, suchte ich in der Literatur zum Sokratischen Gespräch nach empirischen Untersuchungen, die das kommunikationsfördernde Potenzial Sokratischer Gespräche zu ihrem Gegenstand haben. Das erstaunliche Ergebnis dieser Recherche war, dass es diese Untersuchungen nicht gibt.

⁴ Stary 1998.

⁵ Stary 1998, S. 19.

⁶ Stary 1998, S. 12.

In Gustav Heckmanns *Das Sokratische Gespräch. Erfahrungen in philosophischen Hochschulseminaren*⁷ finden sich zwar Berichte über von Heckmann durchgeführte Gespräche, die Analyse dieser Gespräche geschieht aber unter der Fragestellung des richtigen Leiterverhaltens, die Perspektive der Teilnehmer wird wenig beleuchtet. Zudem arbeitet Heckmann mit seinen eigenen Protokollen und verwendet keine Transkriptionen der Gespräche.

In Detlef Horsters *Das Sokratische Gespräch in Theorie und Praxis* finden sich zwar ebenfalls Schilderungen von stattgefundenen Sokratischen Gesprächen, diese Schilderungen bleiben aber ausschnitthaft und werden nicht systematisch analysiert. Sie dienen „nur“ der zweifellos gelungenen Veranschaulichung des Ablaufs der notwendigen Phasen eines Sokratischen Gesprächs.⁸ Gisela Raupach-Strey bietet in ihrem Buch *Sokratische Didaktik*⁹ zwar ausführlichere Ausschnitte aus konkreten Gesprächen, aber sie untersucht diese Ausschnitte, wie Heckmann, unter der Perspektive des Leiterverhaltens und nicht aus einer Perspektive der Kompetenzförderung.

Wie Horst Siebert in seinem Aufsatz „konstruktivistische Aspekte“¹⁰ richtig feststellt, ist die Literatur zum Sokratischen Gespräch überwiegend aus der Leiterperspektive geschrieben, Siebert fordert daher eine „pädagogische Tatsachenforschung“, er schreibt:

„Wünschenswert erscheint mir eine ‚pädagogische‘ Tatsachenforschung über Sokratische Gespräche, z.B. die Dokumentation von Diskussions-szenen unterschiedlicher Zielgruppen oder auch ‚rekonstruktive Interviews‘, die eine Ahnung vermitteln, was Teilnehmer/innen ‚wirklich‘ gedacht und gefühlt haben, als sie sich auf die Regeln des Sokratischen Gesprächs eingelassen haben.“¹¹

Ziel der hier vorgestellten Arbeit ist es, genau so eine „pädagogische Tatsachenforschung“ zu unternehmen. Angesichts der Fülle des Materials und der vielen möglichen Fragestellungen galt es, sich vor Beginn der Untersuchung auf bestimmte Fragestellungen festzulegen. In Auseinan-

⁷ Heckmann 1981.

⁸ Vgl. Horster 1994, S. 55ff.

⁹ Raupach-Strey 2002.

¹⁰ Siebert 1999.

¹¹ Siebert 1999, S. 79.

dersetzung mit dem schon erwähnten Artikel von Stary und Gronke wurden die folgenden Hypothesen und Fragestellungen entwickelt:

Wie können die von Stary und Gronke genannten Kompetenzbereiche („Gemeinsames Denken“, „Die Sokratische Methode“, „Selbstvertrauen in die eigene Vernunft“) sichtbar gemacht werden?

Um zu überprüfen, ob diese Kompetenzbereiche im Sokratischen Gespräch „tatsächlich“ eine Rolle spielen, muss eine Antwort auf die Frage gefunden werden, woran diese Kompetenzen „sichtbar“ werden können. Da in den Transkripten der Gespräche zunächst nur Äußerungen der einzelnen Teilnehmer enthalten sind, stellt sich die Frage, welche Äußerungstypen als Indizien für die jeweilige Kompetenz gewertet werden könnten. Um die Untersuchung des Materials möglich zu machen, wurde im Vorfeld eine Zuordnung bestimmter Äußerungstypen zu den einzelnen Kompetenzbereichen entwickelt (ein vierter Bereich „Metagesprächskompetenz“ entstand unabhängig von Gronke und Stary):

Gemeinsam denken

Das wesentliche Element des „Gruppenlernens“ im Sokratischen Gespräch scheint das „gemeinsame Denken“ auf der Basis eines argumentativen Austauschs zu sein. Gespräche, in denen gemeinsam gedacht wird, verlaufen anders als klassische Diskussionen. In einem Gespräch, in dem gemeinsam gedacht und argumentiert wird, so lautet die Hypothese, kommen viele Äußerungen vor, die sich wie folgt beschreiben lassen:

- Äußerungen, die auf das soeben Gesagte *Bezug nehmen*.
- *Nachfragen*, die gewährleisten sollen, dass das Gesagte richtig verstanden wurde.
- *Rückbezüge* auf schon erwähnte Positionen.
- *Pro- und Contra- Argumente* für eine bestimmte Position.
- Äußerungen, die den eigenen *Irrtum* eingestehen.
- Artikulationen des „*Nichtverstehens*“.
- Begründete *Einsprüche* gegen bestimmte Positionen.
- Artikulationen der *Zustimmung*.

Die Sokratische Methode

Bei dieser Kompetenz geht es darum, sich die Methode des Sokratischen Gesprächs anzueignen, d. h., das Verfahren zu kennen und es in anderen Zusammenhängen und mit anderen Gruppen anwenden zu können. Folgende Äußerungen könnten Indizien dafür zu sein, dass gerade die „Methode“ erlernt wird:

- Erkannte und thematisierte *Regelverstöße* (bei sich, bei anderen Teilnehmern, beim Leiter).
- *Verfahrenshinweise* und *Verfahrensvorschläge*.

Selbstvertrauen in die eigene Vernunft/Konkretes und rationales Denken

Diese Kompetenz scheint am schwierigsten beobachtbar. Deshalb wird dieser Bereich durch den Zusatz des konkreten und rationalen Denkens ergänzt. Folgende Äußerungen sind Indizien, dass sich auf konkretes und rationales Denken eingelassen wird:

- Versuche der Neu- oder *Umformulierung* von Gesagtem.
- *Beispielgebung* oder Beispieleinforderung.
- *Argumentative* Sprechakte.

Metagesprächskompetenz

Diese vierte Kompetenz zielt auf die Fähigkeiten der Verständigung über das momentane Vorgehen. Es gibt im Sokratischen Gespräch nicht nur das Sachgespräch, sondern auch die wiederholte Verständigung darüber, was gerade warum besprochen wird. Dieses „Metagespräch“ findet dabei „mitlaufend“ statt, und nicht nur in den „offiziellen“ Begleitgesprächen. An folgenden Äußerungen lassen sich diese „Metagesprächsanteile“ identifizieren:

- *Verfahrenshinweise* und Verfahrensvorschläge.
- *Eingriffe* in „abschweifende“ Diskussionen.
- Äußerungen, die das bisherige Vorgehen betreffen (*Analysegespräche*).

Ist die gerade vorgenommene Zuordnung bestimmter Äußerungstypen zu den vier Kompetenzbereichen sinnvoll und aussagekräftig?

Diese Frage wird durch die folgenden Unterfragen weiter präzisiert und auch in diesem Artikel ausführlich und am Material beantwortet:

- (1) Kommen die gerade beschriebenen Äußerungstypen (Beispielgebung, Rückbezüge ...) in einem konkreten Gespräch vor? Und sind sie auch als Indizien für die jeweilige Kompetenz zu werten?
- (2) Ist das Zusammenfassen der Äußerungstypen in genau diese vier Kompetenzbereiche aussagekräftig und sinnvoll?
- (3) Gibt es Äußerungen, die zu keinem der vorgeschlagenen Äußerungstypen passen und die so auf andere, noch nicht thematisierte Kompetenzen hinweisen?

Gibt es Indizien dafür, dass das Sokratische Gespräch die beschriebenen Kompetenzen (und/oder) andere fördert?

Wenn das Sokratische Gespräch die beschriebenen (und/oder) andere Kompetenzen fördert, dann müssten Indizien dafür im Verlauf des Gesprächs zu finden sein. Dies bedeutet, dass es möglich sein muss, inadäquate von adäquaten Äußerungen zu unterscheiden und sichtbar zu machen, inwiefern das Sokratische Gespräch die adäquaten fördert.

Gibt es Veränderungen während des Gesprächs?

Lässt sich anhand der genauen Rekonstruktion eines Gesprächs eine Veränderung zeigen? Nehmen die adäquaten Äußerungen insgesamt zu? Verändert sich das Verhalten einzelner Teilnehmer?

Erleben die Teilnehmer eine Veränderung/Förderung ihrer Kompetenzen?

Neben der Perspektive einer Auswertung von außen interessierte mich die Frage, ob die Teilnehmer selbst eine Veränderung/Förderung ihrer Kompetenzen erleben. Nehmen sie das Sokratische Gespräch in diesem „Förderaspekt“ wahr, oder stehen ganz andere Elemente des Sokratischen Gesprächs für die Teilnehmer im Vordergrund?

II. Untersuchung am Material – Methoden dieser Fallstudie

Da, wie schon erwähnt, keine ähnlichen Untersuchungen Sokratischer Gespräch in der Literatur zu finden sind, ist die Studie auch ein methodisches Experiment. Zur Konzeption des Untersuchungsdesigns beigetragen haben zunächst Schriften zur pädagogischen Kasuistik. Mit Reinhard Fatke lässt sich ziemlich genau die Zielsetzung der Arbeit beschreiben:

„Eine Fallstudie setzt den Einzelfall mit vorhandenen allgemeinen Wissensbeständen in Beziehung, um zu prüfen, was am Fall aus diesen Wissensbeständen heraus erklärbar ist und was an den Wissensbeständen aus diesem Fall heraus zu differenzieren und gegebenenfalls zu korrigieren ist. Die Fallstudie zielt also auf Prüfung oder Erweiterung bestehender oder auf Gewinnung neuer wissenschaftlicher Erkenntnis.“¹²

Mein Vorgehen ist ebenfalls der Sokratischen Methode verpflichtet: Es sollen nicht Theorien entwickelt werden, an denen dann die „Wirklichkeit“ gemessen wird, sondern es sollen aus dem Material des konkreten Gesprächs heraus tragfähige und aussagekräftige Theorien entwickelt werden. Die vorangegangene Hypothesenbildung dient dabei der Entwicklung von Fragestellungen und erhebt noch keinen Anspruch auf Gültigkeit.

¹² Fatke 1997, S. 59.

Eine wichtige Unterscheidung, die in der Literatur zu Fallstudien immer wieder erwähnt wird,¹³ ist die Trennung verschiedener Stufen der Untersuchung:

- (1) Fallbeobachtung
- (2) Falldarstellung
- (3) Fallanalyse

Diese Unterscheidung soll vor allem vor theoretischen „Schnellschüssen“ schützen. Gerade die Unterscheidung der Stufen 1 und 2 soll es möglich machen, dass das Material zu „sprechen“ beginnt und etwas mitteilt, das davor noch nicht gesehen wurde. Um diesen unterschiedlichen Untersuchungsphasen gerecht zu werden, ist es sinnvoll, sich für jede Phase die geeigneten Untersuchungs- und Darstellungsmethoden auszuwählen. Folgende Methoden kamen zum Einsatz:

Methoden der Fallbeobachtung

Neben die direkte Beobachtung des Geschehens, die durch meine Anwesenheit möglich war, musste eine weitere Methode der Fallbeobachtung treten. Da ich die Rolle des Gesprächsmoderators innehatte, war es mir kaum möglich, dem Geschehen „distanziert“ zu folgen. „Bloße“ Erinnerungsprotokolle der Gespräche wären daher sehr verzerrt gewesen. Zudem sind die einzelnen Gespräche so lang, dass man sich niemals an alles Wichtige erinnern kann. Um die eigene Fallbeobachtung zu unterstützen, wählte ich daher die Methode der *Videoaufzeichnung*.¹⁴ Um das entstehende Material (über 17 Stunden) von Anfang an handhabbar zu machen, nahm zudem eine Protokollantin am Gespräch teil, deren Protokolle die Videolaufzeiten enthalten.

Der Arbeit liegt ein Materialband bei, in dem sechs ausgewählte *Transkriptausschnitte* aus dem Gespräch vollständig abgedruckt sind. Diese

¹³ Siehe zum Beispiel Binneberg 1993, S. 95.

¹⁴ Da die Aufnahmen auf Video gemacht wurden, verwende ich die Bezeichnung „Videoaufzeichnung“; wenngleich die Auswertung fast nur das Gesprochene als Datenbasis benutzte. Eine „echte“ Videoanalyse war in diesem Kontext nicht möglich, aber auch nicht notwendig.

Ausschnitte ermöglichen dem Leser eine eigene „Fallbeobachtung“ und sind Grundlage der vorgenommenen Analysen.

Methoden der Falldarstellung

Nach der Fallbeobachtung gilt es, das Beobachtete in eine Falldarstellung zu überführen. Diese Falldarstellung muss selektiv sein, sie konzentriert sich auf einzelne Aspekte und blendet andere aus. Gleichzeitig soll sie aber noch keine Fallanalyse sein, sondern eher eine Beschreibung des Geschehenen. Um aber trotzdem nicht nur eine (meine) Perspektive zur Auswertung zur Verfügung zu haben, entschloss ich mich dazu, auch die Teilnehmer um eine Stellungnahme zu bitten. Neben den von mir verfassten *Kurzbericht* traten gleichberechtigt die *Erfahrungsberichte* der Teilnehmer. Diese Erfahrungsberichte wurden von den Teilnehmern in der Woche nach dem Gespräch verfasst und sind wichtiger Bestandteil der versuchten „mehrperspektivischen“ pädagogischen Tatsachenforschung.

Methoden der Fallanalyse

Die erste Methode der Fallanalyse stellten *Transkriptanalysen* dar. Diese Transkriptanalysen orientieren sich an Arbeiten aus dem Bereich der *angewandten Diskursforschung*. Diese Disziplin widmet sich der Erforschung konkret stattgefundenen Gespräche und steht, wie auch die Ethnographie, in einer Tradition empirisch-qualitativer Forschung.¹⁵ Vor allem die Forschungsfragen nach der Zuordnung bestimmter Äußerungstypen zu bestimmten Kompetenzbereichen ließen sich mit der Methode der Transkriptanalyse gut bearbeiten.

Eine weitere Methode der Fallanalyse stellt die *Gruppendiskussion* dar, die genau zehn Tage nach Abschluss des Gesprächs mit den Teilnehmern geführt wurde. Sie sollte vor allem ein Forum sein, in dem es mir möglich sein sollte, Nachfragen zu den Erfahrungsberichten der

¹⁵ Als Einführung in die Gesprächsforschung siehe Deppermann 1999.

Teilnehmer zu stellen und noch einmal direkt auf den Bereich der Gesprächskompetenz zu sprechen zu kommen. Zudem schien es mir für die Analyse eines Sokratischen Gesprächs sehr passend, eine dialogische Form zu wählen. Die Gruppendiskussion besitzt dabei natürlich einen Doppelcharakter, da sie wiederum zunächst transkribiert¹⁶ und dann ausgewertet werden muss. Diese Auswertung erfolgte zusammen mit der Auswertung der Erfahrungsberichte der Teilnehmer.

Die vorgestellte Kombination verschiedener Methoden verfolgt dabei mehrere Ziele: Zum einen soll gewährleistet werden, dass Aspekte, die für mein Erleben und meine Analyse des Geschehenes keine Rolle gespielt haben, durch die Erfahrungsberichte der Teilnehmer thematisiert werden. So erhöht sich die Wahrscheinlichkeit, Neues in den Blick zu bekommen und nicht nur das zu sehen, was man davor schon wusste. Zudem ermöglicht die vorgenommene Methodentriangulation, einen differenzierten Wahrheitsanspruch der gefundenen Ergebnisse zu vertreten. Dieser Wahrheitsanspruch ist dabei weniger an Kriterien der Objektivität als vielmehr an den Kriterien der Intersubjektivität orientiert. Aspekte, Sichtweisen und Erfahrungen, die in mehreren Berichten und im Material sichtbar gemacht werden können, können so einen „intersubjektiven Wahrheitsanspruch“ vertreten, ihre Plausibilität wird von mehreren Seiten gestützt.

III. Ein Sokratisches Gespräch über den Unterschied zwischen einem Vorurteil und einem Urteil

Der folgende, sehr kurze Bericht über das Gespräch, das der Studie zu Grunde liegt, soll es dem Leser ermöglichen, die folgenden Transkriptausschnitte zu verstehen und einordnen zu können.

Das Gespräch fand mit zehn Teilnehmern eines Bachelorstudiengangs Philosophie an drei Tagen statt. In zwei Vorbereitungssitzungen hatten wir die Frage „Was unterscheidet ein Vorurteil von einem Urteil?“ ausgewählt. Wir begannen mit der Frage, was ein Vorurteil auszeichnet

¹⁶ Das vollständige Transkript der Gruppendiskussion befindet sich ebenfalls im erwähnten Materialband.

und die Teilnehmer erzählten sechs Beispiele, aus denen wir das Beispiel von Lars¹⁷ zur Analyse auswählten:

Lars erzählte, dass er, als er die Zusage für einen Studienplatz für den Bachelor-Studiengang Philosophie (den Studiengang, den die Teilnehmer des Gesprächs studieren) bekommen hatte, sich unsicher war, ob er diesen Platz annehmen sollte, da er das Vorurteil hatte, dass nur langweilige Leute Philosophie studieren.

Er berichtet, dass er in seiner Schulzeit einen Philosophiekurs besucht habe, an dem nur die „Schreibtischhocker“ teilgenommen hatten. Diese Erfahrung und seine Einschätzung von sich selbst als „praktischen Menschen“ haben ihn dazu gebracht, dass er sich die Frage stellte, ob er wirklich diesen Philosophiestudiengang studieren wollte, wenn da vielleicht (wahrscheinlich?) nur öde Schreibtischhocker studieren. Als er in der Einführungswoche dann seine Kommilitonen zum ersten Mal sah, war er ganz beruhigt, da sie ganz und gar nicht wie Langweiler aussahen. In diesem Moment wurde ihm bewusst, dass er ein Vorurteil gehabt hatte.

Im Anschluss an Lars' Beispiel kam es zu einem Streit zwischen Lena und Sonja auf der einen Seite und Lars auf der anderen Seite. Es stellte sich heraus, dass Lars schon mit einigen seiner zukünftigen Kommilitonen E-Mail-Kontakt gehabt hatte, unter anderem mit Lena und Sonja, die von Lars nun wissen wollten, ob er auch von ihnen dachte, dass sie spießige Langweilerinnen seien. Lars versuchte sich zu rechtfertigen.¹⁸

Durch die Analyse dieses Beispiels gelangten wir im Laufe der Gespräche zu einer Liste mit 14 „Eigenschaften“, die Vorurteile kennzeichnen. Diese Eigenschaften hielten wir in den Kategorien „Herkunft/Entstehung“, „Wesen“, „Funktion“ und „Auswirkung“ als Tafelanschrieb fest.¹⁹

¹⁷ Alle Namen sind geändert.

¹⁸ Dieser Streit wird hier deshalb erwähnt, weil er in den späteren Transkripten eine Rolle spielt.

¹⁹ *Herkunft/Entstehung*: „Erfahrung/Eindrücke (einseitig)“, „Erziehung/Sozialisation“, „(entstehen/manifestieren sich) durch von außen abverlangte Positionierung“, „Werden erst zum Zeitpunkt des Erkennens als solche empfunden/benannt“. *Wesen*: „Subjektivität“, „Verallgemeinerung“, „Richten sich auf wenig/unzureichend Bekanntes“, „Intuitiv“, „Artikulieren Befürchtungen“, „Können von Außenstehenden erkannt werden“.

Durch die Analyse weiterer Beispiele wurde uns im Laufe des Gesprächs deutlich, dass unsere Frage auf den Unterschied von Vorurteilen und Fehltritten abzielt. Insbesondere Paulas Beispiel machte uns das klar:

Paula erzählte, dass sie eine gute Freundin gehabt habe, die sie sehr mochte und die sie auch glaubte, gut zu kennen. Irgendwann fing diese Freundin ein Verhältnis mit Paulas Freund an und so ging die Freundschaft zu dieser Freundin kaputt. In der Rückschau hatte Paula das Gefühl, dass sie viele Details, die ihr schon früher hätten zeigen können, dass diese Freundin doch „anders“ sei, nicht gesehen habe, weil sie eben ein positives Bild von ihr hatte.

Wir arbeiteten heraus, dass wir in diesem Fall eigentlich nicht von einem Vorurteil sprechen, das Paula gegenüber ihrer Freundin gehabt habe, sondern eher von einem Fehltritt, oder einem falschen Urteil. Wir beschlossen daher, unsere Frage so zu verändern, dass wir nach dem Unterschied zwischen einem Vorurteil und einem Fehltritt fragten.

Nach intensiver Analyse gelangten wir zu folgender Unterscheidung: Bei Vorurteilen führt der „intuitive Zugriff auf Eindrücke zur Verallgemeinerung“, bei Urteilen findet eine „Verallgemeinerung nach Reflexion“ statt. Dies trifft auch im Falle der Fehltritte zu, die wir nach Revision genau aus diesem Grund „Fehltritt“ und nicht „Vorurteil“ nennen, weil die Verallgemeinerungen einzelner Erfahrungen (Eindrücke), die zum Urteil (zum falschen, wie sich später herausstellt) geführt haben, nicht intuitiv abließ, sondern reflektiert.²⁰

Funktion: „Schutzfunktion mittels Selektion“, „Orientierungshilfe mittels Selektion“.
Auswirkung: „Erleichterung/Emotion ist Folge der Erkenntnis“, „Beeinflussen das Handeln/die Wahrnehmung“.

²⁰ Wer Erfahrungen mit Sokratischen Gesprächen hat, weiß, dass solche Zusammenfassungen (insbesondere so kurze wie diese hier) die Komplexität und Fülle der Gespräche nicht einholen können. Eine ausführlichere Darstellung findet sich in der Studie, die diesem Artikel zugrunde liegt.

IV. Ergebnisse

Da dieser Artikel das Ziel verfolgt, dem Leser die genaue Analyse des Materials, die in der Arbeit stattgefunden hat, zumindest zum Teil zugänglich zu machen, werde ich im Folgenden eine eingehende Transkriptanalyse an einem Beispiel vorstellen. Es geht dabei um die unter I. genannte Frage, ob die genannten Äußerungstypen in den Gesprächen vorkommen und ob sie als Indizien für die jeweiligen Kompetenzen zu werten sind. In einem zweiten Teil dieses Kapitels werde ich die anderen Ergebnisse zusammenfassend vorstellen.

Äußerungstypen und Kategorien

Während der genauen Durchsicht des Materials zeigte sich, dass die Frage nach dem „Vorkommen“ der unterschiedlichen Äußerungstypen zunächst sehr leicht zu beantworten ist: Äußerungen, die den genannten verschiedenen Typen zuzuordnen sind, kommen im gesamten Gespräch sehr oft vor. Die genaue Durchsicht hat aber gezeigt, dass dieses „Vorkommen“ allein noch *keinen* Hinweis auf die vermuteten Kompetenzen liefert. Der folgende Abschnitt wird am Material deutlich machen, dass es Äußerungen gibt, die z.B. als „argumentativ“ oder „beispielgebend“ eingeordnet werden können, aber trotzdem inadäquat sind und *nicht* als Indiz für das Vorkommen der Kompetenz zu interpretieren sind. Um diese Art von Äußerungen (im Folgenden „Verfehlte Äußerungen“ genannt) klar herauszuarbeiten, sollen sie zum einen mit Äußerungen verglichen werden, die „grundsätzlich“ inadäquat sind (Nicht-konstruktive Äußerungen genannt) und zum anderen mit adäquaten Äußerungen („Gelungene Äußerungen“ genannt), die sowohl z.B. argumentativ als auch adäquat sind.

Nicht-konstruktive Äußerungen

Es gibt Äußerungen, die „offensichtlich“ inadäquat sind.²¹ In Gespräch 2 kommt es zu einem kurzen Aufflackern des Streits zwischen Sonja und Lars:

„*Sonja*: Also meinst Du [zu Regina] jetzt wenn er jetzt in seinem Philosophiekurs schon einen dabei gehabt hätte der eher so ähnlich gewesen wäre wie du [unklar auf wen es sich bezieht] also eben nicht der typische
Lars: Also ich will, ich möchte jetzt nicht also es gab ein oder zwei könnte schon sein ich red wenn ich davon red immer von dem Gesamteindruck

Paula: Es war ja auch nicht nur der Kurs.

Sonja: Ne aber

Lars: Ja genau

Paula: Tendenziell war's mehr

Lars: Ja weitaus mehr

Sonja: Mehr Hornbrillenträger als

Lars: Jaaa

Moderator: Also wie gesagt Sonja, es geht wiederum nicht um die Bewertung sondern um die Analyse

Sonja: Ja ja²²

Die Bemerkung „Mehr Hornbrillenträger als“ von Sonja hat offensichtlich keinerlei argumentativen Charakter und dient „nur“ dem Zweck, eine „Spitze“ gegen Lars zu schicken: In der Erzählung von Lars war das Hornbrillenträger das „Zeichen“ für die typischen Vorurteile gegenüber Geisteswissenschaftlern. Diese Spitze kommt bei Lars auch an, wie sein genervtes „Jaaa“ zeigt. Die Äußerung von Sonja ist keinem der genannten Äußerungstypen zuzuordnen. Sie ist, im Sinne der Frage nach Beiträgen zu einem rationalen Diskurs, inadäquat und nicht-konstruktiv.

²¹ Die Auswertung des Sokratischen Gesprächs erfolgte unter der Fragestellung nach gelungenen Beiträgen zu einem rationalen Diskurs, unter anderen Fragestellungen (etwa gruppendynamischen oder sozialpsychologischen) müsste die folgende Situation eventuell anders interpretiert werden.

²² Aus Materialband: Transkript 2 (T2), 102-105. Zu den Transkriptionsregeln siehe ebenfalls im Materialband.

Verfehlte Äußerungen

Es gibt allerdings Stellen, an denen die Einschätzung des Gesagten schwieriger, aber auch interessanter wird. Dies sind solche Stellen, an denen eine Äußerung durchaus argumentativen Charakter hat oder einen Verfahrenshinweis enthält, aber an der falschen Stelle eingesetzt wird. Norbert versucht im folgenden Gesprächsauszug einen neuen Punkt, der auf unserer bisherigen Liste fehlte, ins Gespräch einzubringen. Wir befinden uns in der Phase des Zusammenfassens der Eigenschaften von Vorurteilen²³ und denken über die Kategorien nach, in die wir die Eigenschaften einordnen könnten. Als Norbert sich zu Wort meldet, diskutieren wir gerade darüber, in welchem Zusammenhang die Punkte „Erfahrungen/Eindrücke“ und „unbewusst/nicht besonders reflektiert“ stehen und unter welcher Formulierung wir sie in die Kategorie „Herkunft/Entstehung“ aufnehmen sollten.

„Norbert: Also ich hab jetzt versucht also wir müssen ja jetzt um den Ursprung festzumachen denk ich mal so weit zurück denken wie möglich also bis zum Anfang des Vorurteils gehen und deshalb habe ich überlegt dass die Entstehung eines Vorurteils vielleicht also ich denk ein Vorurteil entsteht immer dann wenn ein Mensch aus seinen also wie mans ganz genau griffig macht weiß ich noch nicht ganz genau weil so hab ichs mir jetzt gedacht wenn der Mensch aus seinen gewohnten Lebensbereich aus seiner ich würds jetzt als aus seiner inneren Welt wenn etwas aus ner äußeren Welt in seine innere Welt eindringt und er sich dazu positionieren muss“²⁴

Die Äußerung an sich hat durchaus argumentativen Charakter. Norbert versucht deutlich zu machen, dass er es für die Diskussion über den Ursprung von Vorurteilen für wichtig hält, sich klar zu machen, dass es eines Anlasses der Positionierung bedarf. Trotzdem ist diese Äußerung nicht als Indiz für „Gemeinsames Denken“ zu werten (Pro- und Contra-Argumente), da die aktuelle Diskussion über den Zusammenhang der Eigenschaften „Erfahrungen“ und „Unbewusst/Nicht besonders reflektiert“ noch nicht abgeschlossen war. Dieser neue Punkt wurde daher vom Moderator, auch mit dem Hinweis auf die Abstraktheit des Gedan-

²³ Ich beziehe mich hier und im Folgenden auf die von Horster 1994, S. 55 ff. genannten Phasen eines Sokratischen Gesprächs.

²⁴ T2, 1-8.

kens, zurückgestellt. Er trug nämlich *nicht* zur Lösung des *aktuellen* Problems bei.

Etwas später setzt Norbert zum zweiten Mal an, um das, was er vorher gesagt hatte, an Lars' Beispiel zurückzubinden:

„Norbert: Also ich wollte noch mal mir ist gerade eingefallen wie man das was ich eben gesagt habe auf Lars' Beispiel beziehen kann“²⁵

Er hatte die „Ermahnung“ des Moderators „im Konkreten Fuß zu fassen“²⁶ aufgenommen und er will ein Beispiel geben. Die Bemerkung ist aber trotzdem problematisch, weil die Diskussion um „Erfahrungen/Eindrücke“ noch immer nicht abgeschlossen war. Aus diesem Grund wird sie vom Moderator wiederum zurückgestellt.

Ein weiterer ähnlicher Fall findet sich im selben Gesprächsausschnitt, wir diskutieren über eine konkrete Formulierung:

„Moderator: Reginas Vorschlag war einseitige verallgemeinerte Erfahrungen

Regina: Ne mein zweiter Vorschlag war einseitige deshalb verallgemeinerte Erfahrungen

Moderator: Oh ok

Regina: weil sie werden ja verallgemeinert weil sie offensichtlich zumindest eher einseitig sind

Anna: Ich find dass das Wesen ist

[4] [Gelächter, weil niemand wusste, was er auf den Einwand von Anna sagen sollte]

?: Danke “²⁷

Diese Äußerung von Anna kann als Verfahrenshinweis verstanden werden. Sie schlägt vor, dass dieser Punkt nicht unter der Kategorie „Herkunft/Entstehung“ zu verbuchen ist, sondern unter „Wesen“. Das Problem an dieser Äußerung ist aber, dass sie an einer Stelle kommt, in der die konkrete Formulierung des Aspekts in Frage steht und nicht die Kategorie, in die er einzuordnen ist. Die Gruppe antwortet auf Annas Äußerung mit Schweigen, Gelächter und der Bemerkung „Danke“, weil die Äußerung Annas eben nicht zur Präzisierung der Formulierung beiträgt. Als im Anschluss an diese Stelle der oben schon erwähnte zweite

²⁵ T2, 123-124.

²⁶ T2, 20-22.

²⁷ T2, 109-121.

Versuch von Norbert stattfindet, der vom Moderator wieder zurückgewiesen wird, ist der diskussionswürdige Vorschlag von Regina „vom Tisch“ und wird nicht mehr aufgegriffen (auch der Moderator versäumt es, diesen interessanten Formulierungsvorschlag wieder aufzugreifen).

Gelungene Äußerungen

Es gibt aber auch Äußerungen, die sowohl einem bestimmten Äußerungstyp zuzuordnen sind, als auch an der richtigen Stelle stehen. Ein Transkriptausschnitt aus Gespräch 5 veranschaulicht dies, da hier die Äußerungen an den richtigen Stellen fallen. Das Transkript stammt aus dem letzten Gespräch, wir diskutieren über die notwendigen Eigenschaften von Vorurteilen, d.h. die Eigenschaften, die in allen Beispielen für ein Vorurteil gegeben sein müssen. Die Gruppe diskutiert den Punkt „Erleichterung/Emotion ist Folge der Erkenntnis“. Nach der Einigung „Erleichterung“ zu streichen, da „Emotion“ der passende Oberbegriff ist, folgt folgende Sequenz:

„Moderator: Also der Vorschlag wäre Emotion ist Folge der Erkenntnis und dann müssten wir jetzt die Frage beantworten gibt es Vorurteile oder Beispiele in denen wir Vorurteile erkennen und emotional nicht tangiert sind

Lena: Also was für eine Emotion hatte Regina (.) es hat sich in dem Sinn nichts verändert sie hatte weiterhin Angst auch wenn sie erkannt hat das ist ein Vorurteil das ist schon ne Emotion aber nicht anders als vorher

Regina: Ja gut aber vielleicht war die Emotion schon ein bisschen schlechtes Gewissen so nach dem Motto oh Mist“²⁸

Nach der Frage des Moderators, ob es Beispiele gebe, in denen wir Vorurteile erkennen und keine Emotionen haben, stellt Lena die Frage, wie es denn im Beispiel von Regina²⁹ gewesen sei, sie hatte doch vor der Erkenntnis des Vorurteils Angst und danach. Diese Äußerung Lenas ist jetzt nicht nur ein Beispielbezug, sondern sie trifft auch die Ausgangsfrage und steht insofern an der richtigen Stelle. Sie sucht nach einem

²⁸ Transkript 6 (T6), 22-29.

²⁹ Lena bezieht sich hier auf ein Beispiel, das Regina im ersten Gespräch erzählt hatte: Regina hatte berichtet, dass sie kurz nach den Terroranschlägen des 11. September mit dem Flugzeug aus den USA nach Deutschland flog und ihr alle arabisch aussehenden Menschen „ziemlich unheimlich“ waren. Ihr war schon im Flugzeug bewusst, dass dies ein Vorurteil war, aber sie hatte trotzdem Angst.

Beispiel, in dem die Emotion nicht Folge der Erkenntnis ist und fragt nach, ob es im Fall von Regina vielleicht so gewesen sei, dass die Emotion nicht Folge der Erkenntnis war. Regina versucht darauf eine Antwort zu geben, indem sie erklärt, dass sie aber schon ein schlechtes Gewissen gehabt hätte, als sie merkte, dass sie ein Vorurteil hatte. Auch diese Äußerung ist nicht nur ein Argument für die Berechtigung unserer Formulierung, sondern sie steht ebenfalls an der richtigen Stelle, da sie die Frage Lenas aufgreift und zu beantworten versucht. Den beiden Äußerungen von Lena und Regina können also nicht nur Äußerungstypen zugeordnet werden (Rückbezug, Nachfrage bzw. Contraargument), sondern sie stehen auch an Stellen, die zum produktiven Fortgang des Gesprächs beitragen. Sie sind „Gelungene Äußerungen“.

Folgende Bemerkung von Sonja ist ebenfalls interessant:

„*Sonja*: Ob das jetzt was ändert an der Angst da wären wir schon wieder bei Angst und Vorurteil [verweist auf den Eintrag in der Schatzkiste]“³⁰

Sonja „beantwortet“ das inhaltliche Problem, warum die Erkenntnis von Regina ihre Angst nicht aufgelöst hat, durch den Verweis auf die Schatzkiste³¹, in der wir dieses Problem als interessant, aber im Moment nicht zu diskutieren, aufgenommen hatten. Sonjas Bemerkung greift also nicht nur die Frage von Lena auf, sondern verweist auch darauf, dass wir dieses Problem schon als wichtig erkannt, aber in die Schatzkiste verschoben hatten. Dieser Verfahrenshinweis steht also auch an der richtigen Stelle, er macht noch einmal deutlich, dass die Frage nach dem Zusammenhang von Angst und Vorurteil gerade nicht zur Diskussion steht. Auch diese Äußerung ist eine „Gelungene Äußerung“.

Die hier vorgeschlagene Unterscheidung von „Nicht-konstruktiven“, „Verfehlten“ und „Gelungenen“ Äußerungen soll deutlich machen, dass das bloße Vorkommen bestimmter Äußerungstypen noch nicht ausreicht, um einen Sprecher als kompetent einstufen zu können. Der Kontext entscheidet darüber, ob eine Äußerung als Hinweis auf bestimmte Kompetenzen zu verstehen ist.

³⁰ T6, 34-36.

³¹ Die „Schatzkiste“ dient dazu, interessante Fragen, die im Moment nicht beantwortet werden können, auf einem Zettel, eben der „Schatzkiste“, festzuhalten. So werden dieses Fragen und Aspekte nicht vergessen und können später wieder aufgegriffen werden.

Wie oben schon erwähnt, verändert dieses Ergebnis die Überlegungen zur Sichtbarwerdung von Kompetenzen. Das bloße Vorkommen allein ist noch kein Indiz für die jeweilige Kompetenz, die Analyse muss vielmehr kleinteilig und im Kontext des Zusammenhangs vorgenommen werden.

Zusammenfassung der weiteren Ergebnisse

Der Versuch, Belege für die von Gronke und Stry formulierten Kompetenzbereiche durch das Auffinden bestimmter Äußerungstypen im Gespräch zu finden, hatte sich, wie oben dargestellt, als wenig ertragreich erwiesen. Da das bloße Vorkommen der Äußerungstypen noch keinen Hinweis auf eine zugrunde liegende Kompetenz lieferte und die Zuordnung der verschiedenen Äußerungstypen zu den Kompetenzbereichen zu uneindeutig war, musste der Versuch aufgegeben werden, die Kompetenzbereiche von Gronke und Stry „direkt“ sichtbar machen zu wollen.

Ich entschied mich daher dafür, zunächst einmal zu fragen, was denn in einem Sokratischen Gespräch „Gesprächskompetenz“ bedeuten könnte. Um diese Frage zu beantworten, versuchte ich durch genaue Transkriptanalysen zu verstehen, wie ein Sokratisches Gespräch „funktioniert“ und welche Äußerungen beigetragen werden müssen, damit man von einem gelungenen Gespräch sprechen kann.

Es hat sich gezeigt, dass das Sokratische Gespräch sich dadurch auszeichnet, dass es zum einen *klare Regeln* und *Phasen* des Gesprächsverlaufs gibt und zum anderen die Möglichkeit, sich über eben diesen Gesprächsverlauf auszutauschen. Diese „anpassungsfähige“ Struktur erlaubt es, hochkomplexe inhaltliche Themen zu besprechen. Damit sowohl das „Sachgespräch“ (das „inhaltliche Gespräch“), als auch das „Metagespräch“ (das Gespräch über den Gesprächsverlauf) stattfinden können, bedarf es verschiedener Äußerungstypen:

- *Sachäußerungen* („inhaltliche Äußerungen“)
- *Inhaltsbezogene Metaäußerungen*
- *Formale Metaäußerungen*

Die inhaltsbezogenen Metaäußerungen dienen vor allem dazu, immer wieder die Sachäußerungen einzuordnen und einen roten Faden zu verfolgen. Der Moderator eines Sokratischen Gesprächs, dem das Gebot der inhaltlichen Zurückhaltung verbietet, Sachäußerungen beizutragen, übernimmt die Aufgabe, durch inhaltsbezogene Metaäußerungen (die oft auch die Form von Fragen haben) das Gespräch zu strukturieren. In den Metagesprächen, die auch während des Sachgesprächs stattfinden können, verständigt sich die Gruppe mittels formaler Metaäußerungen über den Gesprächsverlauf und überlegt gemeinsam, ob die Regeln angemessen und ausreichend sind. Zudem bespricht sie den bisherigen Gesprächsverlauf und plant das weitere Vorgehen. Für die Adäquatheit aller Äußerungstypen entscheidend ist allerdings der situationsangemessene Einsatz der jeweiligen Äußerungen. Keine Äußerung „an sich“ trägt zu einem gelingenden Gesprächsverlauf bei, erst durch den „richtigen“, d. h. situationsangemessenen Einsatz kann sie zu einem gelingenden Gesprächsverlauf beitragen.

Aus diesen Überlegungen heraus lässt sich folgende Hypothese formulieren:

Eine Person ist in einem Sokratischen Gespräch dann gesprächs-kompetent, wenn sie in der Lage ist, Sachäußerungen sowie inhaltsbezogene und formale Metaäußerungen situationsadäquat beizutragen.

In einem zweiten Schritt stellte sich die Frage, ob und wie das Sokratische Gespräch zu einem Kompetenzerwerb der Teilnehmer beiträgt. Das Förderpotenzial in Bezug auf Sachäußerungen konnte in diesem Gespräch nicht sichtbar gemacht werden, da die Teilnehmer von Anfang an in der Lage waren, gelungene Sachäußerungen beizutragen.

Gezeigt werden konnte aber, dass das stattgefundene Sokratische Gespräch *die Fähigkeit, inhaltsbezogene und formale Metaäußerungen* beizutragen, gefördert hat. Daraus lassen sich folgende Hypothesen ableiten: Am Anfang eines Gesprächs ist es der Moderator, der die inhaltsbezogenen Metaäußerungen beiträgt (ihm ist ja durch das Gebot der inhaltlichen Zurückhaltung verboten, Sachäußerungen beizutragen). Die Teilnehmer beginnen im Laufe des Gesprächs, durch mimetische Prozesse³²

³² Der Begriff der Mimesis ist für den Kontext des Sokratischen Gesprächs interessant, da die Transkriptanalysen nahe gelegt haben, dass sich die Teilnehmer den Sprachstil in Sokratischen Gesprächen durch mimetische Prozesse aneignen und so – quasi unbemerkt – auch ihr eigenes Sprechen und Denken verändern. Zur Bedeutung der

angeregt, selbst strukturgebende, inhaltsbezogene Metaäußerungen beizutragen, und entwickeln so eine Praxis strukturierender Diskussionsbeiträge. Dieses „Gefühl“ für den Gesprächsverlauf führt zu einem situationsadäquateren Einsatz von Äußerungen. Die Teilnehmer lernen, ihre Äußerungen besser zu „timen“. Durch die Elemente der Reflexion in den Metagesprächen machen sich die Teilnehmer zudem die Bedeutung der strukturschaffenden Äußerungen bewusst. Dies führt dazu, dass sie diese strukturschaffenden Äußerungen auch bewusst einsetzen können.

Durch die Prozesse der Mimesis und der Reflexion üben die Teilnehmer ihre Fähigkeit, inhaltsbezogene Metaäußerungen beizutragen. Die Fähigkeit, sich über das eigene Handeln auszutauschen (formale Metaäußerungen), wird durch die Institution des Metagesprächs gefördert. Gerade in der Kombination von mimetischen und reflexiven Prozessen liegt das große Potenzial des Sokratischen Gesprächs. Eine Mimesis ohne Reflexion bliebe „blind“, die Fähigkeiten ließen sich nicht auf andere Kontexte übertragen. Eine Reflexion ohne konkrete Praxis bzw. konkreten Erfolg aber bliebe „blutleer“ und „hilflos“, da der Betreffende kein „Handlungswissen“ entwickelt hätte.

Nachdem diese neuen Hypothesen über die Gesprächskompetenzen in Sokratischen Gesprächen und die Prozesse der Förderung dieser Kompetenzen durch Mimesis und Reflexion entwickelt wurden, stellte sich die Frage, ob diese Kompetenzen auch in anderen Kontexten fruchtbar gemacht werden können. Die Frage ist, ob die Kompetenz „Sach- und Metaäußerungen situationsadäquat beizutragen“, eine Bedeutung über das Sokratische Gespräch hinaus besitzt oder ob sie nur wichtig ist, um Sokratische Gespräche zu führen.

Wie die Erfahrungsberichte der Teilnehmer zeigen, lernten die Teilnehmer nicht nur, an Sokratischen Gesprächen kompetent teilzunehmen.

„Mimesis“ in pädagogischen Kontexten siehe die Arbeiten von Christoph Wulf. Im Kontext der von ihm mitbegründeten *historisch-pädagogischen Anthropologie* nimmt die Mimesis eine wichtige Rolle zur Erklärung von Bildungsprozessen ein. Wulf schreibt über die Mimesis: „Mimesis bedeutet nicht die lediglich kopierende Imitation eines Vorbildes. Mimesis bedeutet etwas *zur Darstellung bringen*, etwas *ausdrücken*, sich einer Sache oder einem Menschen *ähnlich machen*, ihr oder ihm *nacheifern*. Mimesis bezeichnet die Bezugnahme auf einen anderen Menschen oder auf eine andere ‚Welt‘, in der Absicht, ihm oder ihr ähnlich zu werden.“ Zitat aus: Wulf, Christoph 1999, S. 256.

Die Teilnehmer berichteten davon, dass ihnen das Verständnis für das Zusammenspiel von inhaltlichen und metasprachlichen Elementen auch in anderen Kontexten hilfreich sei. Zum einen seien sie nach dem Sokratischen Gespräch in der Lage, ihr Unbehagen an anderen Diskussionen zu benennen: Es fehlt ihnen dort an Struktur: Der Moderator und die Gruppe verständigen sich normalerweise weder über den konkreten inhaltlichen Gesprächsverlauf, noch über die Regeln, die dem gemeinsamen Gespräch zu Grunde liegen.

Zum anderen erleben die Teilnehmer aber auch eine Förderung ihres „Denkens“. Sie berichteten davon, dass sie sich auch beim Verfassen schriftlicher Arbeiten vermehrt um eine gute Strukturierung der Texte bemühen und sich Fragen stellen, die man sich auch in einem Sokratischen Gespräch stellt (z.B. die Frage: Brauche ich das jetzt wirklich für meine Argumentation?).

Die beschriebene Gesprächskompetenz in einem Sokratischen Gespräch ist den Teilnehmern also auch in anderen Situationen hilfreich.

Bevor ich im Folgenden den Versuch unternehmen werde, neue Kompetenzen zu formulieren, die in und durch ein Sokratisches Gespräch entwickelt werden können, ist es mir wichtig, darauf hinzuweisen, dass die genannten Ergebnisse und auch die folgenden, nur erste Annäherungen an komplexe Phänomene sind. Die vorgeschlagenen Unterscheidungen und Begrifflichkeiten sind Versuche, erste „Verständnis-schnitten“ zu eröffnen. Sie haben nicht den Anspruch, die einzig möglichen zu sein, und sollten in weiteren Untersuchungen auf ihre Tragfähigkeit hin überprüft werden.

Die *folgenden Kompetenzen*, die über die Fähigkeit, Sokratische Gespräche zu führen, hinausweisen, werden in einem Sokratischen Gespräch gefördert:

- *Situationsangemessener Einsatz von Äußerungen (Timing)*

Die Teilnehmer erleben den Unterschied zwischen situationsadäquatem und nicht situationsadäquatem Einsatz von Äußerungen, da ein Austausch über den Gesprächsverlauf stattfindet und sie dadurch und durch die Orientierung an den Regeln auf „falschen“ Einsatz hingewiesen werden. Wie in den Erfahrungsberichten zum Ausdruck kommt, wenden die Teilnehmer (manche zumindest) diese Fähigkeit auch in anderen Kontexten an und überlegen sich „mehr“, wann sie was zu einem Gespräch beitragen wollen bzw. sollten.

- *Strukturiertes Denken*

Die Teilnehmerinnen und Teilnehmer berichten davon, dass sie die Strukturierung des Gesprächs nicht nur für Gespräche hilfreich und bedeutsam finden, sondern auch für das eigene Denken. Die Teilnehmer lernen, Probleme in Teilfragen zu zergliedern und verschiedene Positionen argumentativ gegeneinander abzuwägen.

- *Gesprächsgestaltungskompetenz*

Die Teilnehmer berichten davon, dass sie das Wissen um die Bedeutung von strukturschaffenden Elementen auch in anderen Diskussionszusammenhängen einsetzen können. Sie können dort nun benennen, was sie am Gesprächsverlauf stört und Vorschläge machen, wie die Gespräche besser ablaufen könnten. Unter dem berechtigten Vorbehalt, dass Gesprächssituationen sehr unterschiedlich sind, ließe sich die Hypothese formulieren, dass die Teilnehmer an einem Sokratischen Gespräch eine „Gesprächsgestaltungskompetenz“ aufbauen, die sie in die Lage versetzt, Gesprächssituationen einzuschätzen, eventuelle Schwierigkeiten zu thematisieren und die impliziten und expliziten Regeln, die in diesem Gesprächskontext gelten, auf den Prüfstand zu stellen. Die oben vorgenommene Einschränkung bezieht sich vor allem auf die Frage, ob so eine „Gesprächsgestaltungskompetenz“ in allen möglichen Gesprächssituationen die gleiche ist oder ob es nicht geboten ist, die Gesprächsgestaltungskompetenz, die man in einem Sokratischen Gespräch erlernen kann, auf den Bereich rationaler Diskussionen zu beschränken. Aber selbst mit dieser Einschränkung scheint es für Studenten keine ganz unwesentliche Kompetenz, rationale Diskussionen gestalten zu können.

- *Moderationsfähigkeit*

Eine weitere Hypothese, die sich an die Analyse des Materials anschließen lässt, ist die, dass die genannte „Gesprächsgestaltungskompetenz“ darauf hinweist, dass das Sokratische Gespräch auch eine Methode sein könnte, um die „Moderationsfähigkeit“ der Teilnehmer zu trainieren. Eine der wichtigsten Aufgaben von Moderatoren ist das Strukturieren der inhaltlichen Beiträge der Teilnehmer. In einem Sokratischen Gespräch beginnen die Teilnehmer irgendwann selbst, die Beiträge der anderen, aber auch ihre eigenen, einzuordnen. Die Teilnehmer eines Sokratischen Gesprächs übernehmen so mehr und mehr Moderatortaufgaben mit und „wachsen“ so in eine Moderatorenrolle hinein.

V. Konsequenzen für die weitere Forschung und Praxis

Die folgenden kurzen Überlegungen zur Relevanz der Ergebnisse lassen sich in zwei Bereiche einteilen: Zunächst werde ich auf die Konsequenzen für die weitere Forschung zum Sokratischen Gespräch eingehen und dann auf die Konsequenzen für den weiteren Einsatz des Sokratischen Gesprächs an Hochschulen.

Konsequenzen für die weitere Forschung

1. Die Menge und Komplexität des untersuchten Materials war im Rahmen einer Magisterarbeit kaum zu „bändigen“. Da es wenige Orientierungspunkte gab, die bei der Gestaltung des Untersuchungsdesigns helfen konnten, ist die hier vorgestellte Arbeit auch als ein „methodologisches Experiment“ anzusehen. Erstes Ergebnis dieses Experiments ist es, dass viele weitere, detailliertere Untersuchungen möglich sind, in denen es eine Beschränkung auf bestimmte Fragestellungen gibt. Ein großer Bereich, der in dieser Arbeit nur in ersten Zügen angegangen werden konnte, ist dabei die genaue Transkriptanalyse von bestimmten Gesprächsabschnitten. Wie sich gezeigt hat, sind direkte Transkriptanalysen für das Verständnis dessen, wie in einem Sokratischen Gespräch gesprochen wird, unerlässlich. Die Unterschiedlichkeit der verschiedenen Gesprächsphasen und die Komplexität der Phänomene konnte in dieser Arbeit zunächst nur festgestellt werden.

Gleichzeitig ermöglicht diese Arbeit aber auch genauere Untersuchungen: Durch die vorgenommenen Analysen und die ersten Bezeichnungen interessanter Phänomene ist es jetzt möglich, sehr präzise Fragen zu stellen. Diese präzisen Fragestellungen wurden aus den Materialstudien heraus entwickelt und haben so einen besonderen Wert: Sie sind keine leeren Abstraktionen. Zur Bearbeitung dieser Fragen mittels sprachanalytischer Methoden wäre es allerdings hilfreich und notwendig, den Sachverstand von Gesprächsforschern in Anspruch zu nehmen. Mögliche Fragestellungen wären dabei:

- Überprüfung der Klassifikation von Äußerungstypen:
Ist die Unterscheidung in Sachäußerungen und in inhaltsbezogene

und formale Metaäußerungen tatsächlich die Unterscheidung, die dem Material am besten gerecht wird? Oder gibt es noch mehr Differenzierungen, die dem Material zu entnehmen sind?

- Spezifikation von Situationsadäquatheit:
Was genau ist „Timing“ (situationsadäquater Einsatz)? Wer oder was entscheidet über die Adäquatheit? Gibt es nicht vermeintlich „falsch getimte“ Beiträge, die sich später als sehr wichtig herausstellen?
- Untersuchung der Lernprozesse während des Gesprächs:
- Lassen sich die angedeuteten Prozesse der Mimesis und der Reflexion noch detaillierter nachzeichnen? Welche Faktoren sind dafür ausschlaggebend, dass diese Prozesse in Gang kommen?
- Analyse der Moderation:
Welche Aufgaben übernimmt der Moderator eines Sokratischen Gesprächs? Hat er tatsächlich „nur“ die Aufgabe, inhaltsbezogene Metaäußerungen beizutragen? Und wie, wann und warum übernehmen die Teilnehmer Moderatortaufgaben mit?

2. Die Erhebung der Erfahrungsberichte der Teilnehmer und die abschließende Gruppendiskussion erwiesen sich als produktive Methoden. Die interessanten Ergebnisse zeigen zum einen, dass die Teilnehmer selbst eine Förderung derjenigen Kompetenzen erleben, die auch in den Materialstudien im Fokus der Forschung gewesen waren („Timing“, „Gesprächsgestaltungskompetenz“), und zum anderen geben sie eine Antwort auf die wichtige Frage, in welchen Bereichen die Teilnehmer ein Anwendungsfeld für das Gelernte sehen. Diese Antworten wären durch bloße Materialstudien so nicht möglich gewesen. Gerade in der Kombination materialgestützter Verfahren mit der Erhebung der Teilnehmerperspektive entstand ein differenziertes Bild dieses Gesprächs.

Im Zusammenhang mit der Teilnehmerperspektive ließe sich auch über eine „Anschlussuntersuchung“ nachdenken: Gibt es eine Art von „Langzeitwirkung“ der Erfahrungen oder fallen die Teilnehmer wieder in alte Gesprächs-, Erlebnis- und Handlungsmuster zurück?

3. Die Prozesse der Mimesis und der Reflexion, die in einem Sokratischen Gespräch wirksam zu sein scheinen, sind eine mögliche Antwort auf die Frage, wie sich Lernen in einem Sokratischen Gespräch vollzieht. In diesem Zusammenhang scheint ein weiteres interessantes Forschungsvorhaben möglich: Wie funktionieren Lernprozesse in „normalen“ Seminaren? Im Zuge meiner Recherchen habe ich keine materialge-

stützten Untersuchungen gefunden, die sich dieser Frage annehmen. Es wäre daher sicherlich interessant, ein normales Seminar mit einer ähnlichen Methodenkombination (Materialaufnahmen und -analysen, sowie Erhebung der Teilnehmerperspektive) zu begleiten, wie ich es in dieser Arbeit mit dem Sokratischen Gespräch versucht habe.

Konsequenzen für die weitere Praxis

Neben den möglichen neuen Fragestellungen für weitere Forschungsvorhaben, ergeben sich aus den Ergebnissen dieser Untersuchung aber auch Konsequenzen für den weiteren Einsatz Sokratischer Gespräche an den Hochschulen.

1. Die Untersuchungen legen nahe, dass die mimetischen Prozesse, die während eines Sokratischen Gesprächs stattfinden, für das Erlernen der beschriebenen Kompetenzen sehr wichtig sind. Um diese Prozesse in Gang zu setzen, bedarf es allerdings einer gewissen Dauer und Regelmäßigkeit. Daher gilt es zu überlegen, ob es nicht sinnvoll wäre, Sokratische Gespräche auch, wie es Heckmann getan hat, semesterbegleitend anzubieten. Möglich scheint zum Beispiel (ähnliche Vorschläge wurden in einigen „informellen“ Gesprächen mit den Teilnehmern entwickelt) ein „initiiertes“ Wochenende zu Beginn eines Semesters, das dann als vierstündige Veranstaltung einmal in der Woche fortgesetzt wird. Diese Kombination aus einer anfänglichen Blockveranstaltung, die mir wichtig zu sein scheint, um die besondere „Sprachpraxis“ des Sokratischen Gesprächs zu etablieren, und den anschließenden regelmäßigen Veranstaltungen verspricht eine große Wirkung auf die beschriebenen Kompetenzen der Teilnehmer. Die Bedeutung der Regelmäßigkeit wird auch von Martin Hartung in seinem Aufsatz „Wie lässt sich Gesprächskompetenz wirksam vermitteln“ angesprochen:

„Zwar können mit einer einzelnen Veranstaltung einzelne Aspekte oder einzelne Handlungsformen erfolgreich bearbeitet werden. Bedenkt man jedoch, wie komplex Gesprächskompetenz ist, hat nur ein umfassendes Konzept mit regelmäßigen Veranstaltungen Aussicht auf Erfolg.“³³

³³ Hartung 2004, S. 59.

2. Die anderen beschriebenen Prozesse, die für die Ausbildung der Kompetenzen in einem Sokratischen Gespräch wichtig zu sein scheinen, sind die Prozesse der Reflexion. Durch die vorgenommenen Transkriptanalysen wird deutlich, dass wir während des Gesprächs oft nur sehr oberflächlich über den bisherigen Gesprächsverlauf sprachen. Selbst wenn wir uns vorgenommen hatten, unser eigenes Vorgehen zu reflektieren, gelang uns das nicht sonderlich gut. Ich selbst aber war durch die anschließende Arbeit am Transkriptmaterial in der Lage, viele Reflexionen über die Gründe für eher gelungene oder eher nicht gelungene Gesprächspassagen anzustellen. Wie ein Zitat aus Luis Abschlussbericht deutlich macht³⁴, ist es während des Gesprächs selbst meist nicht möglich „mitzubekommen“, warum die Gespräche plötzlich „verworren“ werden. Erst nachträgliche Transkriptanalysen ermöglichen dies. Es könnte also gewinnbringend sein, mit ausgewählten Transkripten zu arbeiten und mit einer gemeinsamen Analyse dieser Transkripte zu beginnen. Dies, so die Vermutung, würde neuerliche reflexive Prozesse anstoßen, die dem Kompetenzerwerb förderlich sein dürften. Interessanterweise gibt es in der Gesprächsforschung viele Verweise darauf, dass die besten Kommunikationstrainings die sind, in denen mit authentischen Transkripten aus Gesprächssituationen der Beteiligten gearbeitet wird.³⁵ Durch den Einsatz von gemeinsamen Transkriptanalysen setzt man sich allerdings der Gefahr aus, das Sokratische Gespräch zu einem „Kommunikationstraining“ zu machen, das in seinen inhaltlichen Ansprüchen dadurch vielleicht (wahrscheinlich?) verlieren würde.

3. Eine weitere Möglichkeit, Sokratische Gespräche zu verändern, um sie noch gezielter zur Förderung bestimmter Kompetenzen einzusetzen, bietet sich für den Bereich der „Moderationsfähigkeit“ an. Wie in diesem Sokratischen Gespräch schon einmal kurz ausprobiert, könnte man den Versuch unternehmen, die Moderation zeitweise von den Teilnehmern übernehmen zu lassen. Da sich Moderieren nur durch Übung erlernen

³⁴ „Besonders interessant während der Gespräche war für mich, darauf zu achten, wann ein Gespräch verworren wird/lange dauert/man das Gefühl hat, man kommt nicht zu Wort. Leider ist mir das überhaupt nicht gelungen, denn ich merkte immer nur, wenn wir uns in einer solchen Situation befanden. Jedoch niemals, welche Faktoren dazu beigetragen hatten, dass wir überhaupt in eine solche Situation geraten waren!“ Erfahrungsbericht Luis, 30-34.

³⁵ Siehe z.B. Becker-Mrotzek 2004.

lässt, stellt das Sokratische Gespräch, dank der klaren Regeln und Phasen, ein ideales Übungsfeld dar.

Die vorgenommene multiperspektivische Untersuchung empirischen Materials hat sich als sehr fruchtbar erwiesen, wenngleich die Untersuchung nur als erster Schritt in der empirischen Auswertung und Analyse Sokratischer Gespräche gelten kann. Wie oben dargelegt, schließen sich viele Fragen an die vorgestellte Arbeit an, wünschenswert erscheint es daher, dass die empirische Erforschung Sokratischer Gespräch von vielen vorangetrieben wird, um so den Nachweis zu führen, dass das Sokratische Gespräch, gerade im Bereiche der Hochschulbildung, große Lernpotenziale birgt und sehr zu Unrecht ein Schattendasein fristet.

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Mit Sokrates auf dem bioethischen Markt.

Reflexionen über zwei sozialwissenschaftliche Forschungsprojekte

1. Einleitung

„Genmanipulierter Mais – unkalkulierbares Risiko“ so titelte die ZEIT im Frühjahr des Jahres 2009.¹ „Stammzellforschung. Ethischer Spießrutenlauf“ hieß es in der FAZ Anfang 2008.² Diese beiden Schlagzeilen stehen für viele andere, die sich mit den Debatten um gentechnologische Innovationen beschäftigen. Als ZeitungsleserIn sind sie einem schon vertraut, und es fällt einem vielleicht auch nichts besonderes mehr daran auf. Vergleicht man jedoch gegenwärtige technologiepolitische und wissenschaftliche Kontroversen eingehender, so wird man feststellen, dass sie unterschiedlich gerahmt werden³: die Debatten um die friedliche Nutzung der Kernenergie etwa oder die grüne Gentechnik werden in erster Linie unter der Perspektive der damit verbundenen Risiken und Unsicherheiten geführt. Die Auseinandersetzungen um diese Technologien drehen sich um Fragen der grundsätzlichen Unberechenbarkeit ihres Gefahrenpotenzials, der mangelnden technischen Sicherheit oder der katastrophalen Folgen von Unfällen.

Anders sind die Schwerpunkte bei den medizinischen Anwendungen genetischer Forschung, dem Einsatz medizinischer Biotechnologien. Hier dominieren ethische Überlegungen die öffentlichen Diskussionen über Stammzellforschung, Klonen, neue genetische Tests und dgl. mehr. Neue medizinische Biotechnologien werden nicht nur mit Standortvorteilen, Forschungsexzellenz oder Gesundheit assoziiert, sondern auch mit

¹ <http://www.zeit.de/online/2009/10/kekule-genmais> (Download am 26.6.2009).

² <http://www.faz.net/s/Rub268AB64801534CF288DF93BB89F2D797/Doc~E41DA99DC632E4D02B7C752909AE564AC~ATPl~Ecommon~Scontent.html> (Download: 26.6.2009).

³ Kastenhofer (2009).

komplexen philosophischen Fragen, etwa nach dem Beginn des Lebens, der Würde des Menschen, nach gerechter Ressourcenverteilung in der Gesundheitspolitik, und der Verantwortung oder gar den Grenzen der Wissenschaft.⁴

Für die akademische Philosophie bringt diese Entwicklung der bioethischen Diskussion einen enormen Aufschwung ihrer öffentlichen Relevanz mit sich. (Bio-)EthikerInnen sind gefragt bei öffentlichen Stellungnahmen, in ethischen Expertenkommissionen und nicht zuletzt auf dem Markt für Publikationen.⁵ Die zunehmende Relevanz der Bioethik in der Öffentlichkeit und die Einrichtung entsprechender Institutionen sind aus einer soziologischen Perspektive interessant, zeugen sie doch von einem sich wandelnden gesellschaftlichen Umgang mit ethischen Fragestellungen. Diese Wandlungsprozesse waren der Ausgangspunkt für zwei internationale sozialwissenschaftliche Forschungsprojekte. Im Zentrum stand dabei der neosokratische Dialog (NSD) als Methode zur Bearbeitung bioethischer Fragestellungen. Der NSD wurde in ausgewählten Gruppen von ExpertInnen und Laien eingesetzt, um die Möglichkeiten und Grenzen dialogischer Verfahren zu untersuchen. In dem Projekt „XENO“⁶ ging es um ethische Fragestellungen, die mit der Forschung über die sog. Xenotransplantation – der Transplantation von Zellen, Geweben oder Organen von einer Spezies in eine andere – zur Diskussion stehen. Über diesen medizinischen Eingriff wird derzeit weltweit geforscht; sowohl in der Grundlagenforschung als auch hinsichtlich der praktischen Anwendbarkeit am Menschen.⁷ Xenotransplantation wirft eine Vielzahl grundlegender tierethischer, humanethischer und medizinethischer Fragestellungen auf.⁸

In dem zweiten Projekt standen die humangenetische Diagnostik und die damit einhergehende genetische Beratung im Mittelpunkt des Forschungsinteresses. Letztere wird im Kontext medizinischer Einrichtungen vor und nach der Durchführung eines genetischen Tests von entsprechend qualifiziertem Personal praktiziert. Auch die genetische Beratung wirft eine Vielzahl ethischer Probleme auf, die nicht nur das Arzt-

⁴ Jorde et al (2000).

⁵ Bogner/Menz (2005a, 2005b), Ach/Runtenberg (2002).

⁶ Vgl. die Projekthomepage: <http://www.ihs.ac.at/steps/gendialog/> (Download: 26.6.2009).

⁷ Council of Europe (2003).

⁸ Jorde et al (2000)

Patientenverhältnis, die Datensicherheit, die ärztliche Verschwiegenheitspflicht betreffen, sondern die genetische Forschung insgesamt.⁹ Ging es im Projekt „XENO“¹⁰ um den Einsatz des NSD in einem Feld, das in einer Frühphase der Entwicklung, der politischen Auseinandersetzung darüber und vor der gesetzlichen Regulierung ist¹¹, so konzentrierte sich das Projekt „Gen-Dialog“ auf die Analyse und Reflexion einer gängigen medizinischen Praxis¹². Ist das erste Projekt in das Forschungsfeld partizipativer Technikfolgenforschung (PTA) einzuordnen, so handelt es sich beim Projekt zur genetischen Beratung um ein transdisziplinäres Projekt zur Verbesserung einer spezifischen professionellen Praxis. Beide Projekte sind im Zusammenhang mit der gegenwärtig stattfindenden Institutionalisierung der Bioethik zu sehen: bei XENO auf der Ebene der Initiierung eines öffentlichen Diskurses über Xenotransplantation, im Fall von Gen-Dialog auf der Ebene der professionellen Praxis von Humangenetikern, ihrer Aus- und Weiterbildung sowie der Sensibilisierung professioneller Netzwerke für ethische Fragestellungen.

Generell gesprochen ging es bei beiden Projekten um die Frage, inwieweit der NSD ein geeignetes Instrument ist, um mit Stakeholdern, also Personen, die in irgendeiner Weise in ein spezifisches Feld involviert sind, einen ethischen Diskurs zu moralischen Fragen von Wissenschaft und Technik zu führen?

2. Zur gesellschaftlichen Institutionalisierung der Bioethik – oder: Warum neosokratische Gespräche?

Nicht zuletzt die neuen Biotechnologien und die damit verbundenen ethischen Fragen, haben dazu geführt, dass bioethische Expertise gefragt ist, insbesondere dort wo es um medizinische Anwendungen geht. Bioethik hat zwar alle menschlichen Eingriffe in tierisches, pflanzliches und

⁹ Hirschberg et al (2009).

¹⁰ Vgl. die Projekthomepage: <http://www.ihs.ac.at/departments/soc/xeno-pta/> (Download: 26.6.2009).

¹¹ Griebler/Littig (2006).

¹² Hadolt/Lengauer (2009).

menschliches Leben sowie ihre begründete moralische Beurteilung zum Gegenstand. Deshalb zählen zu ihr auch die Tierethik und die ökologische Ethik, sowie die die Forschung in diesen Gebieten.¹³ Doch dürfte der medizinische Bereich derzeit das prominenteste Anwendungsfeld der Bioethik sein. Dabei scheint die biomedizinische Ethik die traditionelle ärztliche Ethik abzulösen: „Von dieser traditionellen ärztlichen Ethik unterscheidet sich die Bioethik in mehreren wichtigen Hinsichten: Erstens werden Handlungen weiterer Akteure, etwa der Pflegenden, der medizinischen Forscherinnen und Forscher, aber auch der Kostenträger und Verteilungsinstanzen im Gesundheitswesen in die ethische Reflexion stärker mit einbezogen. Zweitens hat sich das Themenspektrum erheblich erweitert. Gegenstand der bioethischen Reflexion sind alle aus dem Fortschritt der Biowissenschaften und aus den neue Technologien erwachsenden Fragestellungen. ... Drittens wird die biomedizinische Ethik, im Unterschied zur traditionellen Arztethik, als öffentliche Reflexion über medizinisches Handeln verstanden.“¹⁴ Medizinische Bioethik rückt also moralische Fragen des medizinisches Handelns (auch der biomedizinischen Forschung) stärker in den Blick der Öffentlichkeit und fördert die Patientenautonomie gegenüber einem traditionellen paternalistischen Arzt-PatientInnen-Verhältnis (Stichwort: informed consent).

Diese Entwicklung manifestiert sich in einer zunehmenden Institutionalisierung der Bioethik.¹⁵ Davon zeugen die Einrichtung von Forschungseinrichtungen und Gremien sowie Kommissionen zur Politikberatung, Ethikkommissionen in Krankenhäusern zur Selbstreflexion sowie Ethikzentren oder Ethikinstitute als Aus- und Weiterbildungseinrichtungen.¹⁶

Besonders prominent sind dabei die parlamentarischen oder staatlichen Ethikkommissionen zur Verhandlung bioethischer Probleme, die in

¹³ Ach/Runtenberg (2002), S. 14.

¹⁴ Ach/Runtenberg (2002), S. 16.

¹⁵ Zum Teil wurde dieser Prozess direkt von einflussreichen Lebenswissenschaftlern - am berühmtesten ist wohl James Watson - vorangetrieben, die die Förderung von Forschung über die ethischen, legalistischen und sozialen Folgen genetischer Forschung (ELSI: ethical, legal and social issues) schon in den 1990er Jahren empfohlen haben (Biller-Andorno 2001). In vielen Ländern werden seither Mittel für die sog. ELSI-Forschung bereitgestellt, die mit einem Budget von 3-5% der staatlich geförderten Genomforschung vergleichsweise üppig ausgestattet ist.

¹⁶ Vgl. Ach/Runtenberg (2002), S. 139ff.

vielen Ländern eingerichtet worden sind.¹⁷ Trotz einiger Differenzen in der Bestellung, der disziplinären Zusammensetzung, Legitimierung und den konkreten Aufgaben dieser Kommissionen handelt es sich dabei durchwegs um multidisziplinäre ExpertInnen Gremien, in denen akademisch ausgebildete Ethiker in der Regel eine Minderheit sind. Diskutiert werden soll in diesen Gremien Sachstandswissen über die neuen Biotechnologien in Verbindung mit ethischen Fragestellungen, um daraus Politikempfehlungen zu entwickeln.

Die Kritik an den expertenorientierten Ethikkommissionen hat alternativ und ergänzend dazu partizipative Diskussionsverfahren auf den Plan gerufen.¹⁸ Während die Expertise der ExpertInnenkommissionen bei Sachwissen prinzipiell weniger in Frage gestellt wird, so wird ihre „ethische Expertise“ vielfach bezweifelt: Wieso sollte ein Mediziner, Biotechnologe, ein Sozialwissenschaftler oder Ökonom, der sich nicht dessen ausweisen kann, über mehr ethische Kenntnisse verfügen als der berühmte Mann oder die Frau von der Straße? Worin besteht dann aber die Legitimation der in den Kommissionen erarbeiteten ethischen Empfehlungen? Kritisiert wurde außerdem, dass die Empfehlungen der Ethikkommissionen eher Ergebnis von Aushandlungsprozessen, Abstimmungsverfahren und Koalitionsbildungen sind. Statt systematischer ethischer Argumentation stehe das „bargaining“, das Aushandeln von Positionen im Vordergrund.¹⁹ Diese Kritik – nämlich die weitgehende Abwesenheit von systematischer ethischer Argumentation – lässt sich nun auch gegenüber den partizipativen Verfahren (z.B. Konsensuskonferenzen) vorbringen, an denen vor allem wissenschaftliche Laien teilnehmen. Begleitforschungen wiesen nach, dass ethische Fragen zumeist implizit und unsystematisch behandelt werden. In der Regel mangelt es an Zeit, Geld und an diskursiven Instrumenten, für die Bearbeitung ethischer Fragestellungen.²⁰ Der konstatierte Mangel an Methoden war der Ansatzpunkt des Forschungsprojekts „XENO“: Es sollte das neosokratische Gespräch (NSD) auf dem Marktplatz für partizipative und diskursive Verfahren zur Bearbeitung ethischer Probleme der neuen Bio-

¹⁷ Bogner et al (2008).

¹⁸ Hennen (1999a, b).

¹⁹ Moreno (1996), van den Daele (2001), Bogner et al (2008).

²⁰ Griebler/Littig (2006), Felt/Fochler/Müller (2006), Bogner et al (2008), Felt et al (2009).

technologien erprobt werden. Beim NSD handelt es sich um ein Gesprächsverfahren, in dem explizit auch mit philosophischen Laien philosophische, also auch ethische, Fragen besprochen werden können. Ursprünglich in der Philosophiedidaktik entwickelt, wird er inzwischen in verschiedenen Kontexten (vor allem in der Schule, Universität und der Organisationsentwicklung) eingesetzt.²¹ Mit dem NSD soll vor allem das Philosophieren geübt werden, d. h. in erster Linie selbstkritisches und reflexives Denken bei gleichzeitiger Achtung der anderen als gleichberechtigte Gesprächspartner und dem Bemühen um einen argumentativen Konsens.²²

Auch im Falle des oben genannten Forschungsprojektes zur genetischen Beratung („Gen-Dialog“) ging es um die Bearbeitung bioethischer Fragestellungen mit ethischen Laien. Der Anwendungskontext war allerdings ein anderer als im Projekt „Xeno“: Bioethik wird ja nicht nur auf der Ebene der öffentlichen Diskussion oder der Gesetzgebung abgehandelt, sondern kommt auch in der Alltagspraxis von Medizinerinnen etwa im Krankenhaus oder in Arztpraxen zum Tragen. Entsprechend sollte es in dem Forschungsprojekt um die ethische Reflexion professionellen Handelns (in erster Linie) von Ärztinnen gehen, die genetische Beratungen durchführen. Wie aus empirischen Studien bekannt ist, spielt die Auseinandersetzung mit (bio-)ethischen Fragestellungen und mit Handlungs begründungen, d.h. letztendlich das Abwägen von ethischen Gründen auch in der professionellen Praxis von Medizinerinnen eine zunehmend größere Rolle.²³ Dies mag auch damit zu tun haben, dass die Bewältigung von Unsicherheiten und Nichtwissen im Bereich der Humangenetik mit den Mitteln traditionellen medizinischen Handelns allein nicht möglich ist.²⁴ Häufig geht es bei genetischen Erkrankungen nicht mehr eindeutig um Gesundheit oder Krankheit, sondern um mehr oder weniger vage Wahrscheinlichkeiten und Dispositionen, selten um 100-prozentige Eintrittssicherheiten. A. Bogner hat festgestellt, dass in dem Fall der Pränataldiagnostik für die handelnden Medizinerinnen rein medizinische Gründe nicht die alleinige Entscheidungsgrundlage sind, sondern auf individuelle mo-

²¹ Im Überblick: D. Birnbacher/D. Krohn (2002), Saran/Neißer (2004), Gronke/Häußner (2006).

²² Gronke (1996), S. 35.

²³ Vgl. Ach/Runttenberg, (2002).

²⁴ Hadolt/Lengauer (2009).

ralische Überlegungen zurückgegriffen wird.²⁵ Auch die weit verbreitete Einrichtung von Ethikkommissionen oder ethischen Fallbesprechungen im Krankenhaus verweisen auf die Überschreitung rein medizinischer Kompetenzen in der medizinischen Praxis.²⁶ Hinter diesen Einrichtungen verbirgt sich die Idee, dass bei bestimmten Problemlagen „gute Gründe“ die Grundlage für professionelle Handlungen sein sollen. Zu fragen ist dann allerdings, was gute Gründe sind und wie gute Gründe überhaupt entwickelt werden können.

Im Projekt „Gen-Dialog“ sollten mittels neosokratischer Dialoge die „guten Gründe“ für das Handeln genetischer BeraterInnen untersucht werden.

3. Neosokratische Gespräche über ethische Probleme der Xenotransplantation und der genetischen Beratung

Was ist ein neosokratischer Dialog?

Der NSD ist eine Form der angeleiteten, systematischen Kommunikation über moralische Grundfragen in einer Gruppe von 8-12 Teilnehmerinnen und in diesem Sinn eine gemeinsame ethische Reflexion.²⁷ Diese rekurriert auf eine diskursethische Tradition, in der kein moralisches Theoriegebäude deduziert wird, sondern mittels regressiver Abstraktion vom konkreten lebensweltlichen Fall nach den moralischen Implikationen von Handlungen gefragt wird. Durch das gemeinsame Abwägen von Gründen soll eine ethisch reflektierte Begründung von Handlungen erreicht werden. Dieses Verständnis des neosokratischen Dialogs steht in der Tradition der deutschen Philosophen Leonard Nelson und Gustav

²⁵ Bogner (2005).

²⁶ Saake/Kunz (2006).

²⁷ Der NSD wird von einem/r entsprechend geschulten Leiter/in moderiert. Ausbildungen bietet u.a. die Gesellschaft für Sokratisches Philosophieren an: <http://www.philosophisch-politische-akademie.de/> (Download: 26.6.2009).

Heckmann, die die antiken sokratischen Dialoge zu einem Gruppenverfahren weiterentwickelt haben.²⁸

Der NSD soll zweierlei leisten: Erstens soll er eine handlungsentlastete Kommunikation über ethische Maßstäbe und das heißt die argumentative Beurteilung und Begründung des Handelns ermöglichen. Zweitens zielt er auf die kommunikative Konstruktion eines argumentativen Konsenses innerhalb der argumentierenden Gruppe. Ein argumentativer Konsens ist im Verständnis des neosokratischen Dialogs dann erreicht, wenn alle Teilnehmenden einer Aussage nach deren umfassenden dialogischen Untersuchung ohne Zweifel zustimmen können. Er stellt „dem Anspruch nach eine Erkenntnisleistung dar und ist als solche rein diskursiv-kommunikativ erzielt, das heißt im Rahmen der Gruppe der Gesprächsteilnehmer gemeinsam, sozusagen *nach bestem Wissen*, erarbeitet.“²⁹ Die Konsensbildung ist eine Leitidee des NSD, auch wenn diese unter den gegenwärtigen Bedingungen widerstreitender, pluralistischer Moralen schwer zu erreichen ist. Sie setzt voraus, dass sich die Teilnehmenden wechselseitig bestmöglich verstehen. Die Teilnehmenden sind aufgefordert sich möglichst kurz zu fassen, sich verständlich auszudrücken und nur Dinge zu äußern, die ihnen wirklich ein Anliegen sind (d.h. darauf zu verzichten, *advocatus diaboli* zu spielen). Um den Verständigungsprozess zu fördern, kann die moderierende Person den Kommunikationsverlauf so steuern, dass das gemeinsame Verständnis einzelner Aussagen überprüft wird; z.B. indem einzelne Statements von anderen SprecherInnen wiederholt werden. Derartige Interventionen verlangsamen den Gesprächsprozess, was den Teilnehmenden oftmals viel Geduld abverlangt.

Ausgangspunkt eines NSD ist eine grundlegende ethische oder philosophische Frage, die nicht empirisch, sondern durch Reflexion zu beantworten ist. Die Frage muss für die TeilnehmerInnen persönlich relevant sein und so formuliert werden, dass sie Beispiele aus ihrer alltäglichen Lebenswelt oder professionellen Praxis finden können, in der die Fragestellung des NSD eine zentrale Rolle spielt. Der Dialog selbst bezieht sich in der Anfangsphase auf eine (oder einige wenige) konkrete Erfahrung(en) der Teilnehmenden, die für alle anderen nachvollziehbar und verständlich ist. Die systematische Reflexion dieser Erfahrung wird

²⁸ Nelson (1965), Heckmann (1981); im Überblick Raupach-Strey (2002).

²⁹ Rähme (1996), S. 156; kursiv im Original.

begleitet von einer Suche nach gemeinsamen Urteilen und den Begründungen dieser Urteile. Die Beteiligten benötigen kein spezielles Expertenwissen über die Frage des Dialogs, denn das empirische Material der sokratischen Untersuchung - die Beispiele und Urteile der TeilnehmerInnen - formt die Basis der gemeinsamen Reflexion über implizite Regeln, Werturteile, Prinzipien und Vorbedingungen konkreten Handelns.³⁰ Für die Zwecke der beiden Forschungsprojekte wurde der NSD um zwei Schritte erweitert, nämlich um die Analyse der konkreten Problemsituation, zu deren Lösung der NSD beitragen soll, und um den Schritt des Transfers der Ergebnisse des NSD auf das Ausgangsproblem.

Die folgende Abbildung stellt den Ablauf eines NSD schematisch dar:³¹

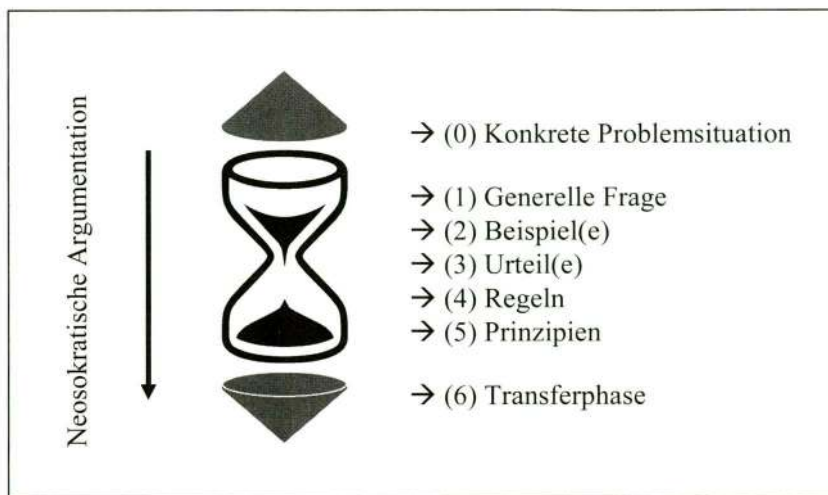


Abb. 1: Das erweiterte Sanduhrmodell des neosokratischen Gesprächs: Regressive Abstraktion und neosokratische Argumentation.

Die Schritte (1) – (5) umfassen das neosokratische Gespräch im engeren Sinn, die systematische philosophische Argumentation. Die Phase (0) ist eine dem NSD vorgelagerte Phase, in der Recherchen und Vorgespräche über die konkrete Problemsituation durchgeführt werden. Diese Phase dient auch der (vorläufigen) Formulierung der Fragestellung des NSD. In der Transferphase (6) geht es darum, die gewonnenen, grundlegenden

³⁰ Vgl. ausführlich dazu Kessels (1997/2001), Raupach-Strey (2002).

³¹ Abgebildet in: Griebler/Littig/Pichelsdorfer 2009, S. 281.

Erkenntnisse, Reflexionen und Einsichten auf den konkreten Problemfall anzuwenden.

Im Zentrum des neosokratischen Dialogs steht die vernunftorientierte, wechselseitige Verständigung der TeilnehmerInnen bei der schrittweisen Analyse einer grundlegenden Frage. Dies beinhaltet das Explizieren und Konkretisieren eigener Wertvorstellungen und deren Überprüfung an den Wertvorstellungen anderer. Die Untersuchung der Geltung der vorgebrachten Werte beinhaltet auch eine Untersuchung des Ausmaßes der Übereinstimmung innerhalb der Gruppe.

Diese Art der reflexiv-argumentativen Auseinandersetzung ist in vielen (professionellen) Praxisfeldern gefragt, in Unternehmen, Verwaltungen, bei politischen Entscheidungsprozessen und nicht zuletzt auch in der Medizin.

3. 2. Das Beispiel Xenotransplantation: Das Projekt „XENO“³²

XTP bezeichnet die Transplantation von Zellen, Gewebe und Organen von einer Spezies in eine andere.³³ Sollte XTP trotz derzeit bestehender immunologischer und physiologischer Hindernisse als Therapie zur Verfügung stehen, könnte sie den in vielen Ländern konstatierten Mangel an implantierbaren Organen reduzieren und damit dazu beitragen, Leben zu retten. Andererseits besteht das – zumeist als Sicherheits- und nicht ethisches Problem diskutierte – Risiko, dass in den „source animals“³⁴ vorhandene, bekannte oder unbekannt Viren, die EmpfängerInnen infizieren und sich eventuell in der Bevölkerung ausbreiten. International werden daneben grundsätzliche ethische Fragen der XTP diskutiert. Beispiele dafür sind: Ist es aufgrund religiöser Überzeugungen und/oder ethischer Überlegungen vertretbar, Tiere als Organ-, Zell- und Gewebe-„Lieferanten“ für Menschen zu nutzen? Unter welchen Bedingungen?

³² Für die detaillierte Darstellung des Ablaufs und der Ergebnisse der einzelnen Projektschritte vgl. die mehrsprachige Homepage des Projekts (Download: 26.6.09): http://www.ihs.ac.at/departments/soc/xeno-ptd/dt/projekt_besch.html.

³³ Council of Europe (2003), S. 5.

³⁴ So werden die Tiere bezeichnet, denen Organe für die Transplantation entnommen werden.

Welche Rolle spielen tierethische Einwände z. B. für die genetische Modifikation, das Klonen sowie die Zucht und Haltung der „source animals“? Bedeutet XTP ein „Überschreiten“ der Speziesgrenzen und wie wäre dies zu bewerten? Was würde XTP für die Identität von PatientInnen bedeuten? Ist es vertretbar, individuelle Freiheiten von PatientInnen und Angehörigen – etwa durch Quarantäne, Monitoring – einzuschränken, um ein Infektionsrisiko einzugrenzen?

Das von der EU Kommission geförderte Pilotprojekt „XENO“ wurde unter österreichischer Koordination in Österreich, Deutschland und Spanien durchgeführt. Es nutzte eine Reihe von sozialwissenschaftlichen Instrumenten um den Stand der internationalen Debatte sowie der Forschung zu Xenotransplantation zu eruieren (Medienanalyse, Umfragedaten, Experteninterview, Literaturreview). Die Analysen dienten auch dazu, geeignete Fragestellungen für die sechs NSDs zu entwickeln.³⁵ Als geeignet und besonders interessant erwies sich schließlich in Abstimmung mit den TeilnehmerInnen die Frage: Inwieweit ist es gerechtfertigt, zum Nutzen weniger ein hohes Risiko für viele einzugehen? Oder kurz: „Welches Risiko eingehen?“ Diese Fragestellung zielt auf eine zentrale Problematik der Xenotransplantation, dass durch die Verbindung Mensch-Tier mittels Transplantation Pandemien ausgelöst werden könnten. Der Dialog drehte sich also nicht um eine Risikoabschätzung, sondern um die Möglichkeit der ethischen Legitimation riskanten Handelns, i.e. die Förderung von Forschung oder gesetzliche Regulierung von Xenotransplantation am Menschen. Die sechs anderthalbtägigen Dialoge waren Gegenstand einer ausführlichen sozialwissenschaftlichen Begleitforschung.³⁶

Die NSD wurden von den TeilnehmerInnen – Stakeholdern aus der Wissenschaft, Medizin, Politik, dem Versicherungswesen, PatientenvertreterInnen, NGOs, (Tierschutz) – in den drei beteiligten Ländern mehrheitlich sehr positiv beurteilt.³⁷ Insbesondere die Förderung sozialer

³⁵ Um Vergleichbarkeit zu gewährleisten und dem hohen finanziellen und zeitlichen Aufwand für die Organisation und Durchführung der NSD zu berücksichtigen, wurden jedenfalls zwei NSD pro beteiligtes Land veranstaltet.

³⁶ Dabei kamen eine standardisierte Ex-Ante und Ex-Post Befragung der TeilnehmerInnen, telefonische offene Interviews 2-4 Wochen nach den NSD, Interviews mit den ModeratorInnen und die Analyse der Protokolle der Dialoge und der Transkripte der Gespräche zum Ansatz.

³⁷ Vgl. dazu ausführlich Griebler/Littig (2006).

und kommunikativer Kompetenzen, das heißt: genaues Zuhören, Respekt, sich kurz fassen, Rededisziplin, wurde hervorgehoben. Darüber hinaus lässt sich anhand des Gesprächsverlaufs eine ethische Sensibilisierung der durchwegs ethischen Laien (gemeint ist damit: ohne akademische Ethikausbildung) feststellen. In den Dialogen war es möglich, jedenfalls zu einzelnen Themen argumentativ Konsens zu erreichen, trotz anfänglich stark divergierender Standpunkte. Dies trifft insbesondere auf das Verständnis des Begriffs Risiko und des Umgangs mit Risiko zu. In allen Dialogen wurde die Akzeptabilität von Risiko im Verhältnis von möglichem Schaden auf der einen Seite gegenüber Nutzen/Vorteile auf der anderen Seite konzeptualisiert. Eine besondere Herausforderung bestand für die TeilnehmerInnen darin, das gängige mathematische Risikoverständnis, das sich auf die Formel bringen lässt: möglicher Schaden/Kosten versus Nutzen mal der Eintrittswahrscheinlichkeit, unter ethischen Gesichtspunkten zu diskutieren. Trotz dieser Schwierigkeiten und unterschiedlicher Gesprächsschwerpunkte zeichnete sich in allen Dialogen die Tendenz ab, die Nutzenseite stärker zu gewichten: Gravierende Nachteile sollten nur dann in Kauf genommen werden, wenn der Nutzen eindeutig hoch ist. Sehr divers wurden die Einschätzungen dann allerdings wieder in der Transferphase. In der konkreten Anwendung der Überlegungen auf das sehr komplexe Thema Xenotransplantation, der Fragen der Risikowahrscheinlichkeiten, der Verteilung von knappen Mitteln im Gesundheitswesen und in der Forschungsförderung, der Instrumentalisierung von Tieren/Natur gingen die Meinungen weit auseinander. In der Transferphase (knapp eine Stunde) mangelt es nicht nur an Zeit für eine weiterführende Diskussion, sondern auch an generellem Sachwissen (z.B. über die Finanzierung des Gesundheitssystems).

Auch wenn in dem Forschungsprojekt deutlich wurde, dass die ethischen Fragestellungen, die sich um Xenotransplantation ranken, mit einzelnen NSD allenfalls ansatzweise behandelt werden konnten und es eines viel komplexeren und zeitaufwendigeren Designs bedarf, um diese Probleme vertieft diskutieren zu können, lassen sich durchaus wichtige und positive Erfahrungen für den Einsatz von NSD in der Bioethik konstatieren: Was mit dem NSD vor allem geübt wird, sind Reflexionsfähigkeit und eine ethische Diskursperformanz, in erster Linie Offenheit, das heißt: Verständigungs- und Lernbereitschaft, Toleranz gegenüber anderen Positionen und das Erkennen und Benennen von Differenzen. Für einige TeilnehmerInnen war es eine positive Erfahrung festzustellen,

dass sie sich mit KontrahentInnen, die sie aus anderen Gesprächskontexten zu Xenotransplantation kannten, überhaupt (noch) verständigen und sich in Teilen sogar auf gemeinsame Positionen einigen konnten.

Eine gewisse methodische Offenheit, im Sinne einer Bereitschaft sich auf Neues einzulassen sowie das grundlegende Interesse für eine tiefgehende Auseinandersetzung mit ethischen Fragestellungen ist allerdings schon vorauszusetzen. Eine hohe Voraussetzung, die selbstverständlich eine prinzipiell freiwillige Teilnahme inkludiert. Offenkundig wurde auch, dass der sog. Transfer der im NSD im engeren Sinn erzielten Erkenntnisse sehr voraussetzungsreich ist und einer sorgfältigen Planung bedarf.

3. 3. Das Beispiel genetische Beratung: Das Projekt „Gen-Dialog“³⁸

Eine Folge des wachsenden Wissens um das menschliche Genom ist die Entwicklung und Anwendung von genetischen Tests. Diese Tests werden u.a. in der Pränatal- und Präimplantationsdiagnostik und der prädiktiven oder präsymptomatischen genetischen Diagnostik genutzt. Zentrale ethische, rechtliche und soziale Problem sind die informierte Zustimmung der Ratsuchenden (informed consent), das Recht, den eigenen genetischen Status zu kennen oder des Recht auf Nichtwissen, der Schutz des Embryos bzw. Fetus, sowie Datenschutz und genetische Diskriminierung.³⁹ Das Projekt „Gen-Dialog“ konzentrierte sich auf die Erforschung der Regulierung und Praxis der prädiktiven oder präsymptomatischen Diagnostik und damit verbundenen genetischen Beratung. Die genetische Diagnostik zielt darauf ab, erstens erbliche Krankheiten zu diagnostizieren, die noch nicht klinisch manifest sind, und/oder zweitens den genetischen Status einer Person als mögliche/n Träger/in einer erblich klassifizierten Krankheit abzuklären. Für die klinische Praxis sind aufgrund verbindlicher professioneller humangenetischer Leitlinien (und in manchen Ländern wie in Österreich auch aufgrund gesetzlicher

³⁸ Zu diesem Projekt gibt es eine ausführliche Homepage, die den gesamten Prozess des Projekts sowie die zentralen Ergebnisse und Publikationen dokumentiert: <http://www.ihs.ac.at/steps/genialog/index.html> (Download am 26.6.09).

³⁹ Hirschberg et al (2009).

Regulierung) vor und nach einem genetischen Test von dazu qualifiziertem Personal genetische Beratungen durchzuführen. Diese Beratung soll gemäß der Leitlinien ein nicht-direktiver kommunikativer Prozess sein, der die Betroffenen und ihre Angehörigen in die Lage versetzen soll, selbstbestimmte Entscheidungen zu treffen.⁴⁰ Genetische Beratung soll sowohl eine verständliche Aufklärung über die medizinischen Implikationen (Prognose und Therapiemöglichkeiten) der Krankheit sowie den Erbgang der Krankheit (– auch die mögliche Betroffenheit Angehöriger oder potenzieller Nachkommen) leisten. Darüber hinaus soll thematisiert werden, welche Hilfsmöglichkeiten und Optionen es zum Umgang mit der Krankheit gibt (z.B. psycho-soziale Beratung). Die Beratung wird aufgrund der behandelten Komplexität und hohen Unbestimmtheit möglicher Ergebnisse (Wahrscheinlichkeiten) oftmals als problematisch beschrieben.⁴¹

Im Projekt „Gen-Dialog“ ging es von 2006-2008 darum, international die rechtlichen Rahmenbedingungen und die Regulierung genetischer Beratung zu untersuchen sowie konkrete Beratungspraktiken in der klinischen Praxis zu erforschen. Diese Forschungsarbeiten dienten auch dazu, relevante Fragestellungen für die geplanten NSD zu finden. Mit dem NSD sollte ein diskursives Verfahren erprobt werden, das möglicherweise zur Verbesserung der Beratungssituation beitragen kann.

In der Forschung zeigte sich, dass genetische Beratung, die non-direktiv den Betroffenen informiert, selbstbestimmte Entscheidungen ermöglichen soll, eine äußerst voraussetzungsvolle kommunikative Praxis ist. Gelingende Verständigung ist eine zentrale Voraussetzung für die erfolgreiche Umsetzung dieses Beratungskonzepts.⁴² Als besonders erklärenswert erschien es dem Forschungsteam, was denn mit Selbstbestimmung eigentlich gemeint sein kann, und was gelingende Verständigung praktisch bedeutet.

Entsprechende Vorschläge für Ausgangsfragen für die NSD wurden den potenziellen TeilnehmerInnen in einem Einladungsschreiben vorgestellt. Die vier in Österreich und Deutschland durchgeführten NSD trugen schließlich den gemeinsamen Titel „Ethische Fragen genetischer Beratung“. Die detaillierten Fragestellungen lauteten in den ersten beiden

⁴⁰ Vgl. im Überblick Hadolt/Lengauer (2009).

⁴¹ Bogner (2009).

⁴² Hadolt/Lengauer (2009).

Dialogen „Was heißt es, in der genetischen Beratung ‚Selbstbestimmung‘ zu berücksichtigen?“, in NSD III und IV „Wie gelingt Verständigung in der genetischen Beratungssituation?“. Die Gespräche dauerten von Freitagabend bis Sonntagmittag und hatten jeweils zwischen 8-12 TeilnehmerInnen.

Die eingeladenen TeilnehmerInnen waren allesamt ExpertInnen und Stakeholder genetischer Beratung: Die meisten von ihnen waren MedizinerInnen, die selbst genetische Beratungen durchführen, und zu einem geringeren Anteil PatientInnen, die genetische Beratungen in Anspruch genommen hatten oder Angehörige von PatientInnen, die eher indirekt mit genetischer Beratung konfrontiert waren. Darüber hinaus nahmen an den Gesprächen MedizinethikerInnen oder SozialwissenschaftlerInnen, die zur genetischen Beratung Forschungsarbeiten durchführen, teil. Leitendes Prinzip der Auswahl von TeilnehmerInnen war es, eine möglichst große Vielfalt von Perspektiven auf die Praxis genetischer Beratung zu erreichen. Diese Bandbreite von Perspektiven sollte den Stakeholdern eine umfassende und tiefgehende Analyse und Reflexion der professionellen Praxis genetischer Beratung ermöglichen. Der Gesprächsverlauf folgte dem im erweiterten Sanduhrmodell (s. Abb. 1) veranschaulichten Verfahren. Bezug nehmend auf die nach den Präferenzen der Teilnehmenden ausgewählten grundlegenden Fragestellungen des NSD berichteten die TeilnehmerInnen über selbst erlebte Situationen in genetischen Beratungen, in denen Fragen von Selbstbestimmung oder gelingender Verständigung bedeutsam waren. An die Auswahl geeigneter Beispiele schloss sich die längere Argumentationsphase an. Durch eine Pause von der neosokratischen Argumentation im engeren Sinn getrennt fand die so genannte Transferphase des Gesprächs statt. In dieser Phase ging es darum, die grundlegenden Erkenntnisse, die anhand ausgewählter Beispiele gewonnen wurden, allgemeiner auf die genetische Beratung, ihre Voraussetzungen und ihre Kontextbedingungen zu beziehen. Zusammenfassend lässt sich über die Gespräche festhalten, dass die international vorherrschenden Leitgedanken der genetischen Beratung, Non-Direktivität und Selbstbestimmung, allen TeilnehmerInnen bekannt sind und als Leitideen auch akzeptiert werden. In den Reflexionen über die berichtete Praxis der genetischen Beratung wurde aber auch deutlich, dass diese normativen Konzepte immer wieder an Grenzen stoßen und sich in der Umsetzung als facettenreich und problematisch erweisen: „Diese Probleme von Non-Direktivität und Selbstbestimmung ergeben

sich, so die Gespräche, durch medizinisch-technische, rechtliche, kognitive, sprachliche, interkulturelle und gesellschaftliche Grenzen und Herausforderungen, aber auch durch die Betroffenheit Dritter, die persönlichen Werthaltungen sowie Fürsorgeorientierung von ÄrztInnen. Dies erfordert von BeraterInnen spezifische Fertigkeiten, um Selbstbestimmung und Non-Direktivität aktiv zu verwirklichen: Diese umfassen Zuhören, Offenheit, Verständlichkeit, Empathie, klare Darstellung von Fakten und auch von Unsicherheiten, Flexibilität, Zeit und günstige räumliche Gegebenheit. Darüber hinaus sind Weiterbildung und Supervision erforderlich.⁴³ Auch im Projekt „Gen-Dialog“ (wie bei „Xeno“) fielen die Beurteilungen der TeilnehmerInnen des NSD als Gesprächsmethode, der Gruppenzusammenarbeit, den Ergebnissen und den ModeratorInnen ausgesprochen positiv aus. Einige Teilnehmerinnen empfahlen ausdrücklich, den NSD in die ärztliche Aus- und Weiterbildung zu integrieren, da derartige Reflexionen über die eigene professionelle Praxis nicht üblich sind. Auch die Perspektivenvielfalt des Gesprächs durch die Gruppenzusammensetzung von ExpertInnen verschiedener Disziplinen und von wissenschaftlichen und medizinischen Laien, wurde von einigen als sehr positiv herausgestrichen.

4. Dialogische Verfahren zur gesellschaftlichen Bewältigung (bio-) ethischer Probleme. Möglichkeiten und Grenzen

Sozialwissenschaftliche Auseinandersetzungen mit den ethischen Herausforderungen der neuen Biotechnologien sind hoch brisant, sowohl für die Sozialwissenschaft als auch für die Gesellschaft. Aus der Perspektive einer Soziologie der Ethik ist die dargestellte Thematik ein wichtiges, aber vernachlässigtes Thema.

Die Frage nach der gegenwärtigen Institutionalisierung von Ethik, insbesondere der Bioethik in sog. Ethik-Kommissionen oder anderen,

⁴³ Griebler/Littig/Pichelsdorfer 2009, S. 298. Für eine ausführliche Beschreibung des inhaltlichen Gesprächsverlauf und der Ergebnisse der Begleitforschung vgl. Griebler/ Littig/Pichelsdorfer 2009. Die eingesetzten Instrumente für die Begleitforschung waren dieselben wie im Projekt „XENO“.

eher lokalen Einrichtungen wirft eine Reihe von soziologischen Fragen auf: Was bedeutet diese Institutionalisierung von Ethik die ja nicht nur im Bereich der Bioethik stattfindet, sondern auch im Bereich der Wirtschaft (Lehrstühle und Institute für ethisches Wirtschaften, Einrichtung staatlicher Kommissionen z.B. zur Globalisierung)? Und unter welchen Bedingungen und in welchen Formen findet die neue Institutionalisierung von Ethik statt? Ist sie mehr als eine Scheindebatte, die auch partizipative Experimente zulässt, weil sie ohnehin politisch kaum wirksam werden? Dienen diese partizipativen Diskurse dann lediglich dem Legitimationsgewinn und einer erhöhten Akzeptanz von riskanten Entscheidungen, weil sie das Gefühl vermitteln, es sei alles Mögliche getan worden? So etwa lauten die Fragen derer, die die Möglichkeiten partizipativer Diskurse kritisch bis pessimistisch einschätzen. Die Einwände betreffen in erster Linie ihren politischen Kontext, und verweisen zu Recht auf die mangelhafte politisch-institutionelle Integration, Legitimation und politische Wirksamkeit der partizipativ-deliberativen Verfahren.⁴⁴ Diese grundlegende Kritik hat ihre Berechtigung, sie fokussiert aber auf die Kontextbedingungen derartiger Methoden und nicht auf Wirkungen, Möglichkeiten und Grenzen der diskursiven Gesprächsverfahren selbst.

Diese zu untersuchen, waren die zentralen Anliegen der hier vorgestellten Forschungsprojekte. Die Beurteilungen der NSD seitens der TeilnehmerInnen spielten dabei eine wichtige Rolle. Sie fielen für die hier diskutierten NSDs ausgesprochen positiv aus.⁴⁵ Insgesamt lässt die sozialwissenschaftliche Begleitforschung in den beiden Projekten den NSD als geeignetes Instrument für die Behandlung bioethischer Fragestellungen zwischen ExpertInnen verschiedener Disziplinen und medizinischen wie wissenschaftlichen Laien erscheinen.⁴⁶

Dennoch seien im Folgenden einige kritische Einschränkungen zu diesem generellen Statement dargelegt:

Versteht man den NSD als eine Form Habermasscher oder Apelscher Diskursethik, so geht es im NSD idealer Weise um die prinzipielle Gleichberechtigung aller Teilnehmenden, im vorliegenden Fall um die

⁴⁴ z.B. Hajer (2003), Hennen (1999a, b).

Diese Kritik trifft auch die vielerorts durchgeführten lokalen Agenda 21 Prozesse (Kersting 2008).

⁴⁵ Griefler/Littig (2006) und Griefler/Littig/Pichelsdorfer (2009).

⁴⁶ Griefler/Littig/Pichelsdorfer (2009), S. 299.

Gleichberechtigung von medizinischen und wissenschaftlichen ExpertInnen und Laien auf dem Gebiet der Bioethik.⁴⁷ Gleichberechtigte Kommunikation ist in den hier beforschten NSD mit gewissen Einschränkungen gelungen. In den Dialogen zur Ethik der Xenotransplantation wurden als Beispiele für riskantes Handeln ausschließlich Situationen aus der Alltagswelt der Teilnehmerinnen erzählt und analysiert.⁴⁸ Daran konnten sich alle Teilnehmerinnen problemlos beteiligen. Als es allerdings um den Transfer der ethischen Befunde auf den Fall Xenotransplantation ging, war Fachinput unumgänglich, was die Experten-Laien Asymmetrie deutlich hervortreten ließ. Im vorliegenden Projekt war die Transferphase mit einer Stunde ohnehin viel zu knapp bemessen. Mehr Zeit und der Einsatz von anderen dialogischen Instrumenten wären hierbei unbedingt erforderlich (z.B. sokratische Dialoge im Kontext von Konsensuskonferenzen und eine umfängliche Aufklärung aller Beteiligten über die zugrunde liegende Thematik).

Auch im Projekt „Gen-Dialog“ war die Asymmetrie zwischen medizinischen ExpertInnen und Laien jedenfalls am Beginn der Gespräche präsent. Sie manifestierte sich in längeren Fachdiskussionen über die medizinischen Spezifika der geschilderten Beratungsfälle. Es bedurfte gezielter Interventionen seitens der Moderation, um diese Situation im Sinne einer gleichberechtigten Gesprächsteilnahme zu bewältigen. Dazu gehörte u.a. den MedizinerInnen für eine sehr begrenzte Zeit im gewissen Sinn eine Bühne für die fachliche Performance als ExpertInnen zu geben, diese aber auch mit dem Hinweis auf das eigentliche Thema der Dialoge (Selbstbestimmung bzw. Verständigung) abubrechen. Darüber hinaus stellten der/die Moderator/in – beide nicht medizinisch ausgebildete Fachleute – immer wieder einfache Verständnisfragen zu dem präsentierten medizinischem Fachwissen. Dadurch waren die Medizinerinnen (wie in der genetischen Beratung auch) gezwungen, Fachbegriffe einfach und für Nicht-Mediziner verständlich zu erklären. Damit wurden gleichzeitig die nicht-medizinischen TeilnehmerInnen ermutigt, ebenfalls laienhafte Fragen zu stellen. Derartige Interventionen

⁴⁷ Apel (1989), Habermas (1983), Gronke (1996).

⁴⁸ Dies war methodisch notwendig, weil Xenotransplantation bislang nicht am Menschen angewendet wird und es aus der professionellen laborartigen Forschung keine geeigneten Beispiele für den NSD gegeben hätte. Geeignete Beispiele im NSD sind klar darstellbare und für alle nachvollziehbare Handlungssituationen.

setzen voraus, dass die ModeratorInnen als Autoritäten anerkannt werden. Die Stellung der Gesprächs-Leitung des neosokratischen Dialogs muss ihnen zuerkannt werden, nicht im Sinne inhaltlicher Stellungnahmen, aber im Sinne der Durchsetzung der Regeln und diskursethischen Zielsetzungen des neosokratischen Dialogs.

Diskursethik basiert auf der Annahme, dass der Diskurs auf die Erarbeitung und das Abwägen von guten Gründen, also letztlich einer vernunftorientierten Argumentation, zielt.⁴⁹ Gute Gründe sind solche, so auch Wolfgang van den Daele, „die nach einer vorurteilsfreien Prüfung im Lichte aller verfügbaren Einwände und Kritiken, standhalten“.⁵⁰ Auch in dieser Hinsicht zeigen die Ergebnisse der Begleitforschung, dass der NSD einen derartigen Kommunikationsprozess begünstigt, und die Äußerung von affirmativen wie kritischen Statements fördert.⁵¹ Allerdings sind solche Prozesse sehr zeitaufwendig und sie sind nur in einem kleinen Teilnehmerkreis möglich.⁵² Dies wirft die Frage nach der Praktikabilität derartiger Verfahren auf, ganz zu schweigen von der Reichweite. Zur Entkräftung dieses Einwandes möge der Hinweis genügen, dass ethisches Handeln nicht durch einen Moralkodex oder durch Übungen anhand von Dilemma-Situationen zu erzielen ist. Ethisches Handeln und, als Vorstufe dazu, Kommunikation über Moral muss vielmehr erfahren und reflexiv erlernt werden.⁵³ Das gilt für das Alltags-handeln ebenso wie für das professionelle Handeln.

Partizipative Verfahren und so auch der NSD leisten im Bereich der Bioethik trotz aller Einschränkungen einen kleinen Beitrag zur Schaffung

⁴⁹ Toulmin (1985).

⁵⁰ Daele (1996), S. 323.

⁵¹ Griefler/Littig (2006) und Griefler/Littig/Pichelsdorfer (2009).

⁵² Diese Probleme zeigten sich bereits bei der Rekrutierung der TeilnehmerInnen. Um in der Regel viel beschäftigte Personen dafür zu gewinnen, ein halbes Wochenende (wie im Projekt „XENO“) oder gar ein ganzes Wochenende (wie bei „Gen-Dialog“) für einen neosokratischen Dialog aufzuwenden, bedarf es starker Anreize; sei es in Form von attraktiven Tagungsorten, Kostenerstattungen, von zusätzlichen Vortragenden etc.

⁵³ Daele (2001).

Moralisierende Diskussionen über bioethische Themen wie dem genetisch modifizierten Mais helfen bei der Bewältigung von bioethischen Problemen nicht weiter. Sie führen in Sackgassen und schlimmstenfalls zum Abbruch von Verfahren, der Aufkündigung der Gesprächsbereitschaft der einen oder der anderen Seite. Dem stellt v. d. Daele (1996) das diskursive Kommunizieren über Moral gegenüber.

„sozial robusten Wissens“.⁵⁴ Dieses Konzept verweist auf die zunehmenden Zweifel an der Omnipotenz und Zuverlässigkeit wissenschaftlichen Wissens für die Lösung gesellschaftlicher Handlungsprobleme und Entscheidungsprozesse. Um eine höhere gesellschaftliche Akzeptanz zu erzielen, bedarf das wissenschaftliche Wissen einer Anreicherung um andere Wissensformen und muss neben innerwissenschaftlicher Validitätskriterien auch „gesellschaftliche Robustheit“ aufweisen. Letztere wird dadurch gefördert, dass in die Forschung, Entscheidungsfindung und Verhandlungsprozesse über einen Gegenstand möglichst viele Betroffene oder Repräsentanten von Betroffenen (stakeholder) miteinbezogen werden. Die Wissensproduktion wird so transdisziplinär, sie überschreitet die üblichen wissenschaftlichen Grenzen.⁵⁵ Auch wenn im Falle der transdisziplinären, diskursiven Verfahren – u.a. dem NSD wie er hier präsentiert wurde – der Geltungsbereich einzelner Ergebnisse auf die jeweilige Dialogzusammensetzung beschränkt bleibt und die Gruppen aus Gründen der dialogischen Gesprächsführung klein sein müssen, so gehen die dort erzielten Ergebnisse doch über vereinzelte Privatmeinungen hinaus. Im NSD werden letztlich gesellschaftlich verbindliche Elemente von Moralität thematisiert: der Anerkennung der Person, ihrer Würde, Unversehrtheit und ihr Wohlergehen.

Der NSD kann darüber hinaus zu den anspruchsvollen kommunikativen Voraussetzungen deliberativer Formen des Politikmachens, von Governance, beitragen. Insofern kann der NSD als ein Instrument zur Umsetzung sozialphilosophischer Diskurstheorien verstanden werden. Der NSD könnte als eine (in der Realität natürlich nie perfekte) Realisierungsform dessen verstanden werden, was Jürgen Habermas unter „idealer Sprechsituation“ und Karl-Otto Apel unter „idealer Kommunikationsgemeinschaft“ verstehen.⁵⁶ Diese erweist sich allerdings als ausgesprochen sensibles Gebilde. Die Gefahr des Umschlagens der Kommunikationsbeziehungen in asymmetrische verlangt hohe Aufmerksamkeit der TeilnehmerInnen und eine starke Moderation. Jedenfalls erwies sich der NSD als ein Instrument zur Einübung diskursethischer Kompetenzen, und diese sind nicht nur im Sinne lebenslangen Lernens erstrebenswert, sondern auch demokratiepolitisch dringend erforderlich.

⁵⁴ Nowotny et al (2001), Felt/Fochler/Müller (2006).

⁵⁵ Nowotny et al (2001), Balsiger (2004).

⁵⁶ Gronke (1996).

Allerdings ist es dabei nicht mit einzelnen experimentartigen Pilotforschungsprojekten getan. Vielmehr bedürfte es eines schon frühzeitigen regelmäßigen Übens und Verbesserns dialogischer Fähigkeiten.

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Trial Application of the “Dialogue Complex” on the Theme of In-Home Medical Care

1. Introduction

At the beginning of 2003 we proposed to use the “Dialogue Complex” for the project: *Model Development and Practice of Clinical Communication*, which has been recommended as a scientific and technological policy to the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology. From May till November 2003 the staff in the Clinical Philosophy Department of Osaka University, comprised of faculty, graduate students and medical professionals, conducted a Dialogue Complex on the theme of in-home medical care. In the following we introduce the concept of the Dialogue Complex in the first place, then show the results of the conducted dialogues and some comments of participants expressed in the questionnaire. In conclusion we will briefly refer to the significance of the Dialogue Complex, in which the Socratic Dialogue is installed as its most important dialogue form.

2. Concept of the dialogue complex

We have designed the Dialogue Complex as a comprehensive dialogue model that can facilitate effective discussions on public issues relating to scientific technology, medical care, welfare and education among concerned parties with different interests and positions, including experts and non-experts. The Dialogue Complex, so named to signify that it is a combination of dialogues, is comprised of the following four dialogue forms or ‘Components’. Each Component has a specific function: making a starting point, developing the theme, suspending the theme and returning to the theme. By articulating these Components to each other,

the Dialogue Complex aims to realize the process of discussions in public.

Component 0: Prior researches and interviews on the theme (making a starting point)

Component 1: Itemization of perspectives and free discussion (developing the theme)

Component 2: Dialogue on “fundamental questions” (suspending the theme)

Component 3: Theme discussion (retuning to the theme)

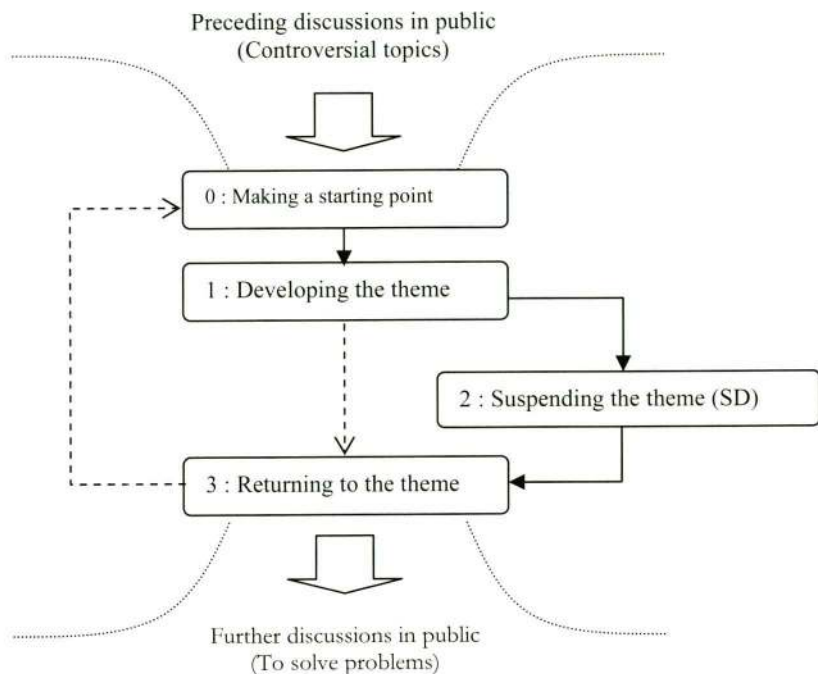
The first dialogue form has been purposely named Component “0” because it is considered to be the starting point or basis where the results of the preceding discussions in public – such results may be on a socially controversial topic relating to the theme – can be only made available for connecting further Components. In this sense the actual dialogue evolves in Components 1-3. Especially Component 2 plays an important role in the Dialogue Complex. The purpose of this dialogue form is to suspend involvement in the theme developed in Component 1, in other words, to leave the actual problem for a time in order to find the principle or the way of arguments, which lies behind and frames the problem. Participants can make use of the result of Component 2 when they return to the theme again in Component 3.¹

Component 2 is based on the Socratic Dialogue (SD) model. The SD was originally developed as a measure for exploring a fundamental or philosophical question to find the principles – mainly ethical – included in judgments, based on the concrete experiences of the participants, and as a training program for argumentation based on dialogue. The SD is incorporated into the Dialogue Complex as a meaningful detour to enable participants to solve a variety of problems in practical settings through dialogue.

The Dialogue Complex is not simply a rote rendition of the four dialogue forms. In response to a particular theme, to the scale of the

¹ The concept of Component 3 is inspired by the “application” or “transfer” phase of Socratic Dialogue to the concrete social issue, which Beate Littig and her colleagues have developed in a sociological research on xenotransplantation. See Griessler, E. and Littig, B (Autumn 2003): Participatory Technology Assessment of Xenotransplantation: Experimenting with the Neo-Socratic Dialogue. *Practical Philosophy*, pp. 56-67.

dialogue and to differences in commitment among the participants, specific forms may be repeated or omitted, while in others several forms may go on in parallel. Or a series of the Components can be repeated, starting with Component 1, with the same or different participants, based on the results of the first series. In this case, Components 0-3 of the first series correspond to Component 0 of the second series. The following figure shows the whole structure and process of the Dialogue Complex, which can be set between preceding and further discussions in public.



3. Dialogue complex on in-home medical care

It has been controversial in Japan, how to understand and how to permit/restrict the in-home medical treatment by homecare workers. The practice of medical procedures such as sputum aspiration and tube-feeding on in-home patients and the bed-ridden aged by home care

workers is called into question. In addition, various practices, such as enema administration, physical assistance with bodily functions and even clipping of nails, are even now classified as “medical action”, that is in principle permitted only for physician or nurse. Nevertheless, such practices are being – or cannot help but be – provided by homecare workers, either routinely or at the request of patients/families.²

We chose the relatively extensive theme “in-home medical care” in order to consider such issues with concerned parties. That is: in addition to asking whether or not to legitimate the practice of medical procedures by homecare workers and how to distinguish between medical and non-medical practices, the larger problems behind these issues – for example the meaning of the provision of in-home medical care and the construction and proposal of a framework for it – must be discussed.

First, we show the whole passage of the Dialogue Complex on In-Home Medical Care, before describing its contents in each Component.

Theme selection (May-Jul in 2003)

First, our staff listed as many issues related to medicine, nursing care and welfare as possible. And in light of the standards we had set for choosing a theme suitable for a Dialogue Complex, we narrowed the list down to “information disclosure in a medical care setting” and “in-home medical care”. We ended up choosing the latter theme, because it is currently controversial – for sputum aspiration in patients with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS) by home care workers – and would draw concrete dialogues.

² In Japan, sputum aspiration had been exceptionally permitted – or found not illegal – to family members of homecare ALS patients with general recognition that the former should take care of the latter including sputum aspiration about once in 30 minutes. Then in July 2003, the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare issued – in response to the urgent and longtime request of exhausted ALS families – a notice which permitted homecare workers as well to conduct sputum aspiration based on the request of patients. But even after that, few homecare workers are said to be willing to conduct it mainly due to the risk of civil lawsuit in case of accidents. The discussions and the conclusions of dialogue participants below reflect this development and their unresolved concerns.

Survey and analysis (Aug-Sep)

We sent a total of 500 copies of a questionnaire on the theme of in-home medical care to about 50 related parties in the Kansai area. Questions were open-ended, and included the advantages/disadvantages of in-home treatment and various problems/questions. We analyzed the (about 50) answers received from different kinds of social positions (physicians, nurses, homecare workers, patients and his/her family members), and assembled the arguments pertinent to the theme that emerged from them. This step corresponded to Component 0 of the Dialogue Complex.

Forum (Oct)

Focusing on the survey respondents, we invited related parties to a forum, where we presented our analysis of the survey. The more than 20 participants engaged in discussion from the viewpoints of their respective professions and positions: physician, nurse, homecare worker, administrator of the organization dispatching homecare workers, care manager, the bereaved family, administrative official and researcher (of ethics). This step corresponded to Component 1.

Dialogue sessions (Nov)

Based on the survey results and forum discussions, we planned and conducted small-scale two-day dialogue sessions around SD and theme discussion on in-home medical care. The two-day SD was facilitated by Horie on the theme of “What is a permissible action?” and attended by 7 people (physician, teacher of care-giving, ethicist, bereaved relative, 2 homecare workers and student nurse). The subsequent theme discussion was facilitated by Prof. Nakaoka, Osaka University, and attended by 11 (3 homecare workers and 1 philosopher in addition to the participants in the SD). The SD and the theme discussion corresponded to Components 2 and 3, respectively.

3.1. Making a starting point and developing the theme (component 0, 1)

From the survey results and analysis and the forum, we extracted many different points, about that the people prefer to talk or that we want to make the people discuss, and assembled them as follows (A-I):

Difference between “legitimate/illegitimate practices” and “practices requested by patients”: Homecare workers are being faced with the dilemma of whether or not to provide unauthorized practices requested by patients/family members. This dilemma gave rise to discussions on how far the range of legitimate practice by home care workers needs to be extended. However, argumentation based on the identification of what is demanded in the in-home medical care setting is missing.

What is lost or gained because of a “contractual” relationship: Before the Long-Term Care Insurance system went into effect, the relationship of homecare workers to clients took on the character of volunteerism. After the system went into effect, that relationship acquired a clearly defined contractual character. What was lost and what gained by entering into a contractual relationship? Medical care by homecare workers must be reconsidered from that viewpoint.

Some various kinds of “responsibility” in the in-home care setting: In addition to the patients and family members, there are various people and organizations from different professions involved in the in-home medical and healthcare setting. Stances toward responsibility and manner of accepting responsibility vary in such a setting. However, the differences in the positions of the participants were not taken into consideration in the discussions of the issues under the theme. Stances toward the manner of accepting responsibility (who and how) are diverse. Therefore, those stances must be fully organized before starting discussions.

Need for “cooperation, linkage and networks” in medical and social welfare systems: Many participants pointed out issues related to cooperation and linkage systems for in-home care. The question is not one of providing medical care as an individual but such medical care as is fulfilled through a system or network. How can collaboration systems to support in-home care be made consistent with medical care that must be provided according to “directions from a physician”?

Differences of “safety standards” between in home and in hospital: Safety standards and priorities in in-home care are considerably different from those for a hospital. The significance of safety-related matters for medical care necessarily varies with the different settings (home/hospital). However, hospital safety standards are often applied without modification to the in-home care setting by medical professionals.

Establishing a “trust relationship” in the in-home care setting: It is often said that medical professionals and homecare workers cannot fully practice in-home medical care where a trust relationship with patients/family members is lacking. The trust relationship is an essential – even critical – factor for in-home medical care. However, to simply state the importance of the trust relationship will not encourage discussion. How do we define the trust relationship that is necessary for in-home medical care?

“Decision and management” accessible to patients and/or family members: Patients/family members enjoy the benefit of being able to select/decide various matters in the home-care setting. In other words, liberated from the rules and accommodations of hospitals, they are allowed to modify/manage in-home treatment, including medical care. The issue that was extracted is how medical professionals should monitor – not instruct – patients/family members with such accessibility.

The expressions “ordinary life” and “environment where patients have long resided”: Many respondents expressed the advantages of receiving in-home care as being able to lead an “ordinary life” and feel tranquil in “the place/environment where the patients have long resided,” as if these were stereotypes. In fact, these words express the advantages of in-home care very well. However, continual mental/physical/economic burdens on the family members of patients and changes to patient homes that must have occurred because of the medical care administered there must not be neglected.

Shift of the viewpoint from medical care to “support for living”: Even after discharge from a hospital, the framework of care provided to a patient often continues to be that of hospital medical care. In the in-home care setting, the same framework and standards continue to be practiced while various additional types of care are needed as measures for support for living rather than medical care. Attention must be paid to differences in the fundamental frameworks of the two settings.

In the theme “in-home medical care”, the same as in other socially controversial issues, lie various complex perspectives. This makes discussion or communication difficult, especially when someone wants to bring his/her own perspective to a discussion and neglects other perspectives, or when the variety of perspectives have not yet been organized. Therefore, a full extraction and itemization of these perspectives, that is, the development of the theme, is necessary.

3.2. Suspending the theme (component 2 or SD)

Engaging in dialogue on a fundamental question, the SD participants *suspend* their involvement in the practical problems and distance themselves from them. The aim of SD is: to step back from practical problems discussed only as affected by the different interests, positions or specialties of the people involved, and to make the participants discuss how much mutual understanding can be achieved and how much agreement can or cannot be reached.

However, the SD in the Dialogue Complex does not leave the theme completely, but rather makes use of the viewpoints presented in Components 0 and 1. It is based on the notion that if the people involved in the theme can find something positive in common and generate a common ground on their own through this process, it will empower them significantly when they return to the dialogue on the theme (Component 3).

Our staff made the list below with reference to the viewpoints expressed in Components 0 and 1. On the list are fundamental questions beyond differences in specialty or interest presented on the theme of in-home medical care. We presented the list in advance to the SD participants and had them indicate the subject of their choice. In the end, they chose the subject: What is a permissible practice?

- What is a safe action?
- What is it meant by “leading an ordinary life”?
- When is a sense of trust established?
- *What is a permissible action?*
- In what situations does teamwork function well?

- On what occasions do people judge that something is unavoidable?
- How far should we go to satisfy other people's wishes?

To find answers to a fundamental question, SD uses an example from the experience of an SD participant as the basis for identifying the core judgment in that experience and probes for the reasons of that judgment through dialogue by the participants. Furthermore in this SD session, the facilitator requested the participants to formulate "generalized reasons" for the judgment in order to get answers easily. The following is a summary of the dialogue:

Example:

After my wife passed away, I felt like keeping a dog. I knew that pets were prohibited at our condominium complex, but my wife's death had changed my view of life and I thought it all right to take a so-what attitude. So, I got a dog. Six months later, the superintendent caught me going out with my dog. When I visited him some days later, he said to me "You have a big dog, don't you?" I lied to him that it was my brother's dog. Looking relieved at my reply, he again made sure that the dog was not mine. This made me think that it (keeping a dog) was allowed. The superintendent had known that I had a dog, but it became impossible for him to turn a blind eye once he actually saw it, so he asked me about it

Core judgment and reasons for it:

I told an untruth acceptable to the superintendent, because:

I wanted to protect my status quo.

I gave consideration to the other party's position.
the rule is nominal.

I wanted to make my position understood.

I wanted to seek a common ground or compromise between the other party and myself.

I expected a lenient attitude from the other party by showing my weakness.

I expected to be understood by the other party.

I sought to reach a point where each could respect the other's position

Generalized reasons for the core judgment:

People tend to seek common ground acceptable to others even though it is not in line with the rules (they might even tell an untruth for that purpose), because:

People have something they cannot give up in order to live.

People have something that they want to protect to lead a happy life.

People need to respect each other's positions within a fluid application of the rules.

In this SD session, due to time constraints, participants were not able to arrive at a final answer to the question, "What is a permissible action?" However, they came infinitely close to an answer in regard to the following two points: Some action is permissible or acceptable even though not in line with the rules, by reason that (1) there is something that the person cannot give up or wants to protect; (2) which also means finding a compromise within a fluid application of rules. This conclusion can be considered very interesting when we consider the criteria for medical practices by homecare workers that are not legally permissible and to what extent such practices might be accepted.

3.3. Returning to the theme (component 3 or theme discussion)

The purpose of the theme discussion (Component 3) is to return to the theme: to confirm any findings or to reach agreement on any suggestions regarding the theme. This is the most difficult part of the entire Dialogue Complex process. To begin the discussion, the facilitator outlined the problems raised and agreement reached during the SD session on the whiteboard, and requested the participants to provide further perspectives that could be derived from them and draw conclusions on the theme. The participants came to the following conclusions concerning in-home medical care:

1. Homecare workers can be allowed to provide medical practices, at the request of patients or family members; regarded as "support for living" rather than "medical care"; without adherence to laws and regulations, but in a manner acceptable to the administrative body.

2. Moreover, parties involved with in-home medical care should endeavor further to meet the needs of patients and medical service users by seeking a more organized legal environment, and engaging in activities that engender broader understanding and sympathy for the services they provide.

The above conclusions are the fruit of an entire Dialogue Complex process on the theme of in-home medical care. In Component 3, the participants have indicated a possible overall direction for the study of in-home medical care. The first item, in particular, reflects the results of the dialogues in Components 0, 1 and 2. The idea of dealing with in-home medical care “in a manner acceptable to the administrative body” and “at the request of patients or family members” reflects the agreement reached in Component 2: “People need to respect each other’s positions within a fluid application of the rules” on the grounds that “people have something they cannot give up in order to live.” Meanwhile, the idea of “support for living” was suggested in Components 0 and 1.

People tend to fix on the legally permissible range of medical practices and how to distinguish between medical and non-medical practices when talking about in-home medical care. While the participants were struggling with how to solve the issue, the Dialogue Complex allowed them to take advantage of “a fluid application of the rules,” and then change their attitudes toward in-home medical care, arriving at a concept of “support for living.” It represents a step in the development of a discussion on how to deal with the issue (in-home medical care) into a new dialogue for rethinking the basic framework of the issue (and proposing a new framework).

4. What the participants noticed – from the questionnaire on the dialogue session

After SD and theme discussion, we surveyed the participants. We see below what the participants noticed, which appears on the questionnaire on the dialogue session.

Comments on investigating SD example (in relation to the theme “in-home medical care”):

It was interesting and profitable to see for myself how the ‘example’ is recorded and fleshed out through a clear, visible approach in the course of exchanging real-time questions and answers, analyzing, and listening to opinions, and that the accumulated ‘example’ was further organized and shared by the participants.

I was most interested in the procedure for studying the theme where we talked about a specific case (SD example) not directly relevant to in-home medical care. It was a nice way to investigate the theme from another angle, opening a way to look at the issue of medical care, which has not been discussed by people from a variety of circles, from a daily life perspective.

If the case (SD example) had been one that involved medical technicalities, the discussion would have been considerably limited, according to the participants’ medical experience. So it was wise to have a dialogue based on a case not directly related to medical details.

Comments on returning from SD to theme discussion:

I thought the discussion was somehow moving along different wavelengths when we first switched from the SD to the theme discussion. With the additional participants joining in, it took a lot of time to get the discussion moving along the same wavelength. When we finally managed to get on track, the session was almost over.

We focused on the theme “What is a permissible action?” in the SD. In contrast, we dealt with a wider range of issues in the later theme discussion, which made it difficult to arrive at a working conclusion. I can’t help feeling that we forced ourselves to hammer out some sort of conclusion, or settled on a compromise conclusion with the attitude that that was about all we could do.

I was a little confused by the gap between the thinking styles focused on a general case during the SD and focused on specific cases in real life during the theme discussion when we moved from the one to the other. It would be nice if there were an intermediate stage between the two processes. For example, talking about a specific instance of in-home medical treatment would make a proper transition.

Comments on facilitating the SD:

Since the chairperson is usually regarded as a person who makes authoritative comments, discussion participants are prone to look to the chairperson for help if the discussion reaches a dead end. In our SD,

however, the facilitator remained in a supporting role. It is imperative to have a facilitator when people with different ideas get together to discuss a subject step by step.

It was exciting to see that the facilitator adjusted and coordinated the variety of views to gain the understanding and agreement of the participants (while leaving rightful disagreements alone). During that process, I also saw people's differences and common points on 'how they felt' clearly indicated, and how agreement (compromise) was reached.

Other comments:

I think a medical doctor sees the theme through a doctor's eyes. The same goes for the other disciplines. I myself see the theme through the eyes of someone who has lost a family member. So, for this type of discussion, the key to success is a balance between the number of medical care providers and receivers. Realizing how difficult it would be to form such a balanced gathering, I thought the SD was more important than the theme discussion.

When we discuss a matter with various kinds of people, a different opinion often prompts us to new ways of thinking. The presence of fresh points of view is an intellectual incentive for us, so it is better to have new members with a common interest, rather than to be surrounded only by familiar faces. Usually when an expert talks about his/her expertise, he/she is trapped in his own intellectual framework, bringing the whole discussion to a standstill. The SD breaks down that stiff framework, and enables us to share a common thought that will become a common starting line for the discussion, in the course of studying the same specific example. The removal of the unnecessary framework and sharing of thoughts works well when we go back to discussing the original expert theme.

5. Conclusion

In relation to the theme "in-home medical care", the most of the participants feel the investigation of an example and also the facilitation in the SD useful. Moreover, as the last two comments show, they become to see how important it is to share a common thought regarding

other persons' interests or positions. Thus, we may conclude provisionally that our trial application of the Dialogue Complex was meaningful. But at the same time, they have had some trouble to return from SD to the theme. It is the trouble to "transfer" the result of SD to the social (actual) issues. Finally, we would like to give brief consideration to this point.

1. It seems quite crucial for SD to distinguish an "SD example" from the "case study". SD does not deal with a peculiar case but aims at understanding an example of something universal in human life (as "1, 2, 3..." are examples of the "natural number"). Not a few specialists are familiar with the case study, but "a case" is always described and interpreted in the context of a certain specialty. It should be difficult for the participants to discuss or understand a case beyond their specialties. In this viewpoint, we can see that the participants were able to understand this difference. That is why they found a sort of "gap" between the SD and the theme discussion.

2. The fact that the participants found a sort of "gap" between Component 2 and 3 can be regarded as a positive influence of Component 2 (SD). In this sense, the Dialogue Complex including SD might be effective in bringing the participants to a change of their attitude or thinking style. This change is important, because a discussion in public requires that participants understand a theme beyond their positions or specialties. SD (and the Dialogue Complex with SD) can meet this requirement. On the other hand, the way to "transfer" the result of SD to the following discussion leaves much room for improvement. We can consider, for example, the possibility of giving a session similar to a philosophical café before or after the theme discussion or – given the small group setting of SD - an open-ended discussion to disclose underlying difference in values among the participants. Such an improvement must be our next challenge.

Erik Boers, Jos Kessels, Pieter Mostert

Free Space and the Art of Conversations

Facilitating Dialogue within Organizations²⁸⁶

1. Introduction

Imagine a management team which talks about its own moral teachers, a group of professionals who try to identify their long cherished illusions, directors of health care who reflect on the essence and excellence of their work, directors of schools who describe their vision of quality assurance, consultants who discover that fundamental questions are hidden in unnoticed events, software developers who engage in a debate with their managers about the idea that management interferes with the professionals' work, lawyers who express their considerations in a dilemma in just one sentence, neighbours who engage in a meeting about how they want to live in the neighbourhood, help desk staff who try to find the middle position in emotionally loaded situations, ...

We have been practising philosophical conversations with many different groups and in many different ways and have developed numerous guidelines to facilitate them. We make them available in this field guide for anyone wanting to start and conduct philosophical conversations, which are rich in content, depth and reflection.

In our hi-tech world, we engage in high speed communication, effortless connections and ultra short meetings, but we also notice we cannot do without conversations. In those conversations the underlying questions can be asked, the slow questions, the ones that deserve time and attention, the questions about meaning, structure and the direction of what is happening, about aims and points of departure, about the

²⁸⁶ Text taken from: Jos Kessels, Erik Boers, Pieter Mostert, *Free Space Field guide to conversations* (Boom Amsterdam 2009). To be ordered at <http://www.hetnieuwetrivium.nl/page/publications>

good, the true, the beautiful and the pleasant. Raising those questions is important for our individual wellbeing. And it also influences the quality of our environment, the place where we live, even society as a whole. There needs to be a place where there is room to reflect – a free space.

In such a space one can have a proper conversation. From our own experience we know that such conversations do not arise by themselves. And the opinion that we all know *how* to engage in such conversations is not evident in practice. Slow thinking is easily replaced by the impatience of achieving a quick answer. If one truly wants to think together, then forms of conversation are needed. Such forms of engagement enable us to stay with the question, for a longer period of time than we are used to in a pleasant and strict way. Staying with the question is an art in itself. It requires one to disentangle oneself from all the actions focused on a specific aim or result. Philosophy – the longing for wisdom – is practised by careful scrutiny of what one wants, does, chooses, decides, achieves. It is a meticulous process of clarifying, formulating and justifying underlying concepts and ideas. It is the process of critically checking, sharing and comparing the different views at stake. To articulate what should be valued – this is also the art essential to organizations. There can be no vision without strategy, no clarity without effectiveness, no direction without focus.

Liberal arts

This book offers an extension of the practical guides in our previous book, *Free Space and Room to Reflect* (2004). It contains pointers to a large number of ways of speaking and writing, each of which aims to make our thinking deeper and more reflective. We have developed them through the past years in all kinds of organizations. Quite often we have started from historical sources. We bring them together here, because they have proved inspiring in our work. Many of the people with whom we worked want to use these familiar and unfamiliar practical guides themselves. All the practical guides foster personal and mutual inquiry, in small and large groups, in formal and informal settings, ranging from the boardroom of the CEO to a local café around the corner.

Like *Free Space and Room to Reflect* the practical guides are divided into the three *liberal arts*, namely, dialectic, rhetoric and grammar, plus the art of the good life, ethics. Some of these guides require some practice or an experienced facilitator, others don't and can be used right away. But all practical guides lead to conversations which have a high level of personal and mutual inquiry and reflection. We believe such conversations to be 'the most fruitful and natural exercise of the mind' (Montaigne) and 'the most fulfilling and highest activity of a free person' (Aristotle). Beyond that, these conversations are of vital importance in our daily hectic, kaleidoscopic lives, in which we need to exchange our own visions and values to experience togetherness amidst mutual differences.

Socrates is the founder of the conversation of inquiry and philosophical reflection in the European tradition. In every conversation he took part in, he investigated serious questions in depth. By exchanging and challenging opinions he led his companions to measure themselves and their acts and to inspect their beliefs about what is important in man's life. His conversations were always aimed at assessing what was of value in somebody's life. To get there he always started by asking somebody to formulate his beliefs about a question carefully. But then he took a more confrontational stance – he didn't only want to know what that person thought of the question, but also wanted to find out how that person dealt with that question practically, in daily life. Investigating your own ideas is the first thing; investigating your own behaviour, attitude and way of life is the second thing. Socratic inquiry is basically an inquiry into yourself.

Free space

Socrates must have been a master in tempting other people to engage in reflective conversation. He was convinced that intelligence or reasonableness is not just an individual affair. To foster it one needs other people and especially people who are willing to think with you and at the same time are able to create doubts. By using the friction arising from different opinions and approaches one can achieve what one cannot do when one is alone, that is, formulating what really is of value,

to find an inspiring idea, to create an image of a good life. That is what Socrates tried to establish in his conversations.

Such conversations are quite different from a consultation, a call for help, a meeting with a coach, or the construction of a solution. Socrates' conversations were free – not aimed at helping or counselling, nor at the development of a strategy or a solution, nor at the achievement of a specific result. His conversations were aimed at creating a free place and room for reflection. In the old days a distinction was made between the free and the useful arts, the *artes liberales* and the *artes serviles*. The free arts are practised to bring free space into one's life. These are the arts of a contemplative, reflective life, the *vita contemplativa*. The other arts are the useful ones, necessary to fulfil a certain profession. They belong to the *vita activa*. The first type of life one leads for its own sake, the second type one leads to achieve something else.

We think it's most important to create free space amid the hectic rush of daily life, a place where one can stand instead of run, where one can shift from doing to thinking. It's not only because good ideas arise in slow moments, when there is room for reflection, on one's own or in meeting other people. It's also important as a counterweight to the dominance of the useful. Life is more than just a chain of useful moments. We also need moments of play, celebration, spare time, ease. "We are busy (restless) so as to have ease", Aristotle says. In a society which values business and being busy so highly, it's difficult to sense the deeper meaning of 'ease'. Interestingly both in Greek and Latin 'being busy' had a negative connotation, *a-scholia*, *neg-otium*. Free space, *scholé*, should be the measure, not the deviation.

Excellence

The focus in the useful arts is on the acquisition of expert skills, as a manager, a teacher, a doctor, a lawyer, or whatever. The useful arts develop one professionally and socially and in exercising them one increases one's skills. The liberal arts, on the contrary, are focused on the development of the intrinsic human capacities – consciousness, communication, language, thinking, speaking, writing. So they are about skills of a different kind. These are not specific professional or social

skills, but general, human skills – reasonableness, excellence, freedom, living the good life. Aristotle defines what we aim at in the exercise of the liberal arts like this, “Virtue, then, is a state of character concerned with choice, lying in a mean, i.e. the mean relative to us, this being determined by a rational principle, and by that principle by which the man of practical wisdom would determine it.” [*Nicomachean Ethics*, 1106 b36, translated by W.D. Ross].

Aristotle wanted to distinguish between expertise and mastery – an expert is mainly interested in making the right decision in a specific case and in how that decision can best be effected. Mastery is about a state of mind in which one makes the right decisions. What kind of attitude, of world view and of thinking is needed for that state? What kind of a person is someone who *has* reason and practical wisdom? The expert is focused on solving a problem, the person of practical wisdom is focused on an ‘idea’. By ‘idea’ we mean the underlying pattern in a question or an issue. An idea shows one how different parts of a complex issue are connected to each other and when we get the ‘idea’ we are able to relate all the aspects of a particular issue to each other and see a meaningful whole. An idea, although it’s abstract, depicts reality at its best, reality when it is ‘in shape’, just like when you and I are ‘in shape’.

In daily life the useful and the free arts overlap. Most often both kinds of skills are needed. The practical guides in this book contribute to the development and application of the free arts, the joy of inquiry and reflection in a free space. It is a serious and necessary play, to be engaged in the free arts, and often demanding and challenging. It may even be useful, if you want it to be. But above all it is a beautiful and fulfilling play, fit for free spirits.

2. The liberal arts

Dialectic: conversations in depth

The ability to conduct dialogues has become more and more important in organizations and in society as a whole. This is especially true in societies which have become individualized at a rapid pace. Traditional ties – through family, neighbourhood, church, work, political party –

have become looser. Individual freedom and autonomy have put social cohesion under pressure. Cohesion is not just a matter of living and working together, or of sharing values. It is also an emotional thing, it's about the *feeling* of belonging.

Conversation is one of the basic expressions of belonging. It is through the ongoing conversation about who we are and what we have to do that a sense of identification and cohesion is felt. Of course, there are other conditions for becoming a community too, like a shared aim or idea, a shared practice and adequate leadership. But ongoing conversation is essential to any kind of community building. In this ongoing conversation dialogue plays a crucial role.

The dialogue is a special kind of conversation, that is, a conversation which is focused on inquiry, and more specifically, an inquiry into oneself. To conduct a dialogue is an art and a discipline which demands a lot from the participants, both in skills and attitude. Every conversation is not a dialogue. Talking about the weather, however sensible it may be, is not a dialogue. A debate about a political issue, however sharp and illuminating it may be, is not a dialogue. A dialogue is neither *just* a conversation, nor a discussion nor a meeting. It is an explicit, joint effort to inquire into something. It is a conversation at its best about who we are and what we have to do.

When Socrates asked his companions in the dialogues to give an account of their thinking and doing, he asked them to provide the *logos* for their acting and their ideas. He asked for the reasons for their point of view, an explanation of their behaviour, the story behind their position. Those reasons and explanations should be consistent – that is the formal meaning of 'logic'. But to provide the *logos* is more than just that. It is more than giving your reasons, it is also about why you think that these are good reasons and what the 'standards' are against which these reasons are measured. They are what Plato referred to as the 'Form' or the 'Idea'. Dialectic is the skill to look for the *logos* in all these different meanings.

It is for good reasons that in current discourse the dialogue is highly esteemed. For many people taking part in a dialogue is a surprising experience, used as they are to the brute force of the public debate, the cynicism and superficiality of the media and the paleness of most meetings. At the same time it should be our concern that although many

talk about the importance of dialogues the ability to actually conduct them is hardly developed.

Rhetoric: frankness in freedom

Rhetoric is the art of public speaking in a frank and inspiring manner. It is an important art, as there are numerous situations, inside and outside organizations, where one speaks to one another: taking a stance, defending a proposal, criticizing previous conduct, challenging new ideas. All that sounds lively and open, direct and colourful. But in reality it is quite different. Meetings are boring and endless, conversations are stale and tiresome, and most of what is said is rather predictable. If there is any dynamism or liveliness it is because some speak louder or interrupt others continuously.

How different this can be, when people master the art of speaking in a frank and free way. No longer will the loudest voice dominate. No longer will time be spoilt at intricacies that lead nowhere. Participants will know how to respect the rhythm of position and opposition. They will underpin their arguments with compelling examples. They will get to the heart of the matter. They will not only speak to others, they will touch them. Trivial manners will be shoved aside, the stimulating speech by one participant will encourage another participant to present his view in an even more compelling way. All feel responsible for throwing light on all the relevant aspects of the issue.

The practical guides in this section on *rhetoric* are tuned into the most important conditions for developing such conversations: *openness*. How does one create more openness? The basic techniques are questioning and listening, in the process of inquiry into a key issue. *Rhetoric* is about persuasion and conviction, about taking a position and offering opposition, about pro and con. All these are techniques which elicit all the aspects that need to be taken into consideration.

The classical tradition of rhetoric offers a wide variety of ways of speaking, not only to 'to be heard', but also to enliven the public debate in organizations and develop a culture of conversation in which difficult issues are dealt with in an open and frank way. We have transferred a number of these classical forms to modern days and adapted them so

that they support those who share the importance of speaking in a free and inspiring way.

Grammar: words that work

Gramma in Greeks means ‘carving’. Grammar is the art of carving, the ability to find words that leave an impression, an imprint of the mind. Words that work leave such an imprint in our memory. Grammar is the study of how that works, how words do work, when they have an effect and why that happens. A careful study is required, of all different kinds of words, from rhetoric to poetic, from authoritarian to seductive language, from the mere name of a word to the deeper structure of its meaning. The study of the words is the basis of all liberal arts, it is the entrance to personal development.

Man is a word-being. Without words we would not be able to communicate in a civilized manner. ‘Words help us to heap shame on those who are bad and to praise those who are good’, Isocrates one of the greatest Greek orators, says, ‘We consider the right word as the best token of a right insight. And in the careful, correct and targeted use of words we see the reflection of a sound and reliable spirit. Through the use of words we engage in debate about disputable matters and enter areas that were unknown to us before. And the words with which we convince others when we speak are the same as those with which we convince ourselves when we reflect.’

There are many different ways of using words, many different styles and genres in writing. For some of them we present a practical guide, for others we do not, as this field guide is not a collection of exercises in writing literature. We aim to show how writing according to a particular format supports the selection of words that work, and from there supports a further inquiry or conversation about what it is all about. Let us share what there is and how it is.

Writing is an important preparation for speaking. ‘The pen is the best teacher for speaking’, Cicero says. ‘Because all the arguments, whether they derive from expertise (*ars*) or from creativity (*ingenium*), present themselves to us while writing as a spying eye of the mind. All thoughts and words that fit a certain topic and clarify it, will necessarily flow to the

tip of our pen'. In his book about public speaking he describes how in his early years he himself practised delivering speeches by first reading, from literature or politics and then capturing it in his own words in as many different ways as possible. That does not only require that one gains insight into the content and the background of the different views, but also into the pro's and con's, in style and choice of wording, in the use of metaphors and other rhetorical figures. 'For our personal development we have to deliver speeches about all kinds of subjects, both pro and con, and have to make use of everything that adds to persuading others', he writes. The liberal arts are there for developing oneself into someone who is conscientious and benevolent, eloquent and congenial.

Ethics: from expertise to mastery

Ethics (from the Greek *ethos*) is about how one usually behaves when one is at home, in one's own domicile: 'that is the way we do it here'. At the same time ethics is the reflection on these ways, reflection on what good habits are or what just behaviour is. Ethics is therefore the study of character, of a good life, of flourishing, of excellence.

Socrates assumed that if one really knows what just behaviour amounts to one will also be just in one's behaviour. And vice versa, that if one does not do what is just one actually does not know what it amounts to. That is why he constantly tries to persuade his dialogue partners to give account of their acts, to justify what they were doing. Again and again they came to the conclusion that they had inadequate knowledge of what it actually is to lead a good life. Or at least that they were not able to explain that adequately. By doing that he stimulated them to reflection, he challenged them to think about themselves, their attitudes and ambitions. This is the way to develop a clearer picture of oneself, of one's relation to others and to the community as a whole.

Many people think that ethics is mainly a matter of moralizing, of raising your hand and saying: this is what you should obey, that is what is not allowed; if you don't behave you'll get punished. But that is a superficial, hardly effective approach. When you work with the practical guides from this section you will soon see why. Ethics is mainly a matter

of inquiry, of trying to find out how you can flourish, on your own and together with others. How do you want to live? Who are your moral teachers? What are your guiding values? Are you able to flourish in a difficult situation? Those are the questions ethics is about.

3. Practical guides: how do they work?

For reflective conversations in organizations one needs a specific format, an image of how the conversation will evolve, a proper way to work. Otherwise confusion will arise about 'What kind of conversation are we having here anyway?' That would damage the quality of the conversation. That is why we brought together such a wide variety of practical guides, so that one can choose a specific format for a specific topic or circumstance.

Technical skills and freedom to move

Some practical guides are similar, others are surprisingly different. The one is easier than the other. With some one can start a conversation right away, without any preparation. Others require some study or practice before one can handle them well. And finally there are some which require a high level of expertise or experience as a facilitator. Such a gradual increase in difficulty is true in any art, so also in the liberal arts. But it is not only the level of expertise that counts; there is something else, something that goes beyond being skilful. In music it is called 'musicality'. There too, in music, it is true that one should practise long and systematically. That is the only way to master the necessary skills. But 'musicality' is different from having mastered the technical skills, it is the feeling for what it is all about, the ability to move beyond the technique, the ability to play. It is a kind of freedom, not limited by rules or by the limits of skills, it is the ability to do exactly what is needed in that situation. An experienced artist knows how to mould the technique into the shape he needs, so that his play becomes free, not limited. For a practitioner of the liberal arts that is altogether true.

All the practical guides we describe presuppose this combination of technique and freedom. On the one hand they invite precision in their use. The practical guides specify where one should be strict and accurate, identify where ‘something like this’ is not good enough. On the other hand the practical guides need to be interpreted again and again, like the scores of the music, they demand a personal reading, an individual interpretation. One cannot apply them as if they were mechanical, without paying attention. The art of using the practical guides is to learn to play with them, that is to master the technique of each of them in such a way that one can set oneself free from them, that one can turn them into music, with one’s heart and soul in it.

The pleasure of the format

We made the guides as practical as possible. That is why they work. Keep in mind that all guides are meant to facilitate a conversation, meant to create a mutual exchange of thoughts and ideas, but at the same time an inquiry into oneself, in each of the participants. That is a subtle and delicate aim. It will not be achieved when one just ‘tries something else this time’. Think about the aim of a particular guide and what is needed to achieve that aim. All practical guides help to establish a certain kind of inquiry. We have tried to describe them in such a way that the reader will look forward to make use of them, that they create the expectation of ‘this will be a pleasure, but very serious at the same time’. That is what a conversation should be, a serious play, with relevant issues at stake.

We arranged the practical guides inside each of the liberal arts in such a way that they work like an introduction. The less complicated ones are at the beginning. Then there are the practical guides that lead to conversations in depth. Some build on previous ones, others show how one can approach the inquiry from a different angle. ‘Dare to bring in variety’, is our theme. But once you have chosen, you should stick to the format of that particular guide. It offers clarity and support, it helps the participants to focus on the content, to pay attention to the issue that needs clarification. The format of the practical guide supports the inquiry; it helps to preclude conversations from wandering off into different directions and ending nowhere. If things work well, the format will be pleasure.

Recommended reading

Free Space: Field guide to conversations

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- Miller, S. (2006): Conversation. The history of a declining art. New Haven: Yale University Press.
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Dialectic: Conversations in depth

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Rhetoric: Frankness in freedom

- Bauer, O. F. (1999): Fundamentals of debate. Theory and practice. Rockbrook: Rockbrook Press.
- Ericson, J. et al (1987): The debater's guide. Carbondale IL: Southern Illinois University Press.
- Quintilianus (1951): The institutio oratoria of Marcus Fabius Quintilianus (ed. & transl. by C. Little). Nashville: George Peabody College.
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Grammar: Words that work

- Bradbury, R. (1989): Zen in the art of writing. Essays on creativity. Santa Barbara: Joshua Odell.
- Gardner, J. (1991): The art of fiction. Notes on craft for young writers. New York: Vintage Books.
- Montaigne, M. de (1993): The complete essays. New York: Penguin Books.
- Nussbaum, M. (1995): Poetic Justice. The literary imagination and public life. Boston: Beacon Press.

Ethics: from expertise to mastery

- Aristotle (1998): *The Nicomachean ethics* (transl. by D. Ross). Oxford University Press.
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- Cicero (1991): *On duties* (ed. by M. Griffin & E. Atkins). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hadot, P. (1995): *Philosophy as a way of life. Spiritual exercises from Socrates to Foucault*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Marcus Aurelius (1964): *Meditations* (transl. by M. Staniforth). New York: Penguin.
- Nussbaum, M. (1994): *The therapy of desire. Theory and practice in Hellenistic ethics*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Pico della Mirandola (1998): *On the dignity of man* (transl. by P. Miller et al.). Indianapolis: Hackett publishers.
- Quinn, R. (1991): *Beyond rational management. Mastering the paradoxes and competing demands of high performance*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Dialogues Initiated by Art – a Creative Form of Developing Joint Insights

“If the doors of perception were cleansed every thing would appear to man as it is, infinite ...”

William Blake (The marriage of heaven and hell) 1793

Abstract

The article presents and discusses a form of dialogue where the Socratic method is combined with the techniques of looking at art. The extremely stimulating effect of works of art can support the search for solutions. As in the Socratic dialogue the group chooses a question, problem or project of a participant for the conversation process. In addition they then have to opt for a piece of art (i.e. painting, sculpture, photography) that they think corresponds to the chosen question. By examining the object, asking what we actually see, why we see it, and finding our own interpretations, we learn not only to look more precisely at the object, but most importantly to reflect our own assertions. Art, especially contemporary art, provides a variety of material for creative reasoning. Through its complexity within a seemingly abstract form, it opens the mind for exploring innovative ideas and comments. The approach focuses on the ability to develop arguments. It offers the chance to reflect critically upon our own standpoint.

Introduction

For the 6th International Conference “The challenge of dialogue – Socratic Dialogue and Other Forms of Dialogue in Different Political Systems and Cultures – a global perspective” we were invited to present a workshop “Dialogues initiated by art – A New Approach for

Developing Joint Insights”. Our background is the field of art education. Over the years we developed a new approach of talking about art and arriving at joint conclusions. We wanted to explore our idea of a combination of Socratic dialogue with the techniques of looking at art. The chance to experience our approach with knowledgeable philosophers seemed very appealing. The satisfaction of all participants of our workshop proved that both approaches have very similar traits and that they are very fruitful in combination. In the following we would like to show how the workshop was structured, explain the theoretical basis and how it relates it to human resource management training methods.

Combining the principles of Socratic dialogue with the study of a work of art

The workshop we presented at the conference investigated a new communication method for the exchange of different ideas, opinions and attitudes towards a certain issue, by bringing together the principles of Socratic dialog with the techniques of looking at art. A chosen topic such as “responsibility”, “democracy”, “visions”, “team”, “understanding” was juxtaposed with a piece of art, and established a relationship. Hence our working hypothesis is, that everything the art-object consists of, from colors and shapes to symbols and motives as well as the emotions it provokes, the ideas that come to mind, can enrich our own opinions concerning the chosen topic of the dialogue.

By questioning the object, and asking what one actually sees and what in the work determines that one sees it, we not only learn to look more focused at the object, but most importantly to reflect our own point of view. In the dialogue with the group the participants are able to realize that the actual object – visible in front of everyone’s eyes – helps to develop and formulate personal opinions. Every participant can look, describe and discuss. Art offers a wide field for statements to be made. Through its complexity it opens the mind for exploring innovative ideas and comments. A work of art is the trigger for the discussion and a dialogue. This creative communication method supports the critical reflection upon our own values and statements, and helps the group to come up with new insights in a dialogue. Moreover, with the object of

dialogue in front of every participant's eye it facilitates a joint interpretation. It is the specific form of questioning the structure, form and content of the artwork that helps the participants in the dialogue to re-structure their thinking.²⁸⁷

Looking at images and objects: Approaching the unknown – How to look at art?

Art History, especially in the European tradition, has developed many aspects and approaches of studying an artwork. Erwin Panofsky and Aby Warburg are among the pioneers in the field who established a structure of analysis through their studies in iconology.²⁸⁸ For our communication method we refer to a less complex system based on Edmund Burke Feldman's model of description, analysis, and interpretation, which comes from the field of art criticism, and was very influential in the American tradition of art education. His model divides the critical act into four phases: description, analysis, interpretation and evaluation. The skills related to all four phases are common for the inquiry processes of both disciplines, art history and art criticism. They most certainly sum up traits of what can be called a general scientific model of inquiry used in most disciplines. For the process of exploration we omitted the last phase in our workshop, since evaluation can be set aside in favor of a general understanding of the artwork. Therefore the fourth phase of the model is not presented in the following.

Phase 1: Description

Assignment:

Please describe what you see by pointing out the single features, objects, and abstract elements such as colors or textures! Do neither judge nor interpret!

²⁸⁷ Perkins, 1994.

²⁸⁸ Panofsky, 1955.

At first you have to take inventory of all the aspects in a work of art. The language used while describing should be as “unloaded” as possible and should carry absolutely no judgments.²⁸⁹ This first phase is purely about perception, looking and experiencing. Hereby our own apprehension, personal impression and individual sensation of the object are in focus. We learn to listen to other opinions and statements and get to know the “reality” of other persons.²⁹⁰ This first step offers the possibility of an aesthetic contemplation, by experiencing apperception, different approaches and an expansion of a personal consciousness for the different elements in a work of art. Description is the most challenging of all the three steps, since the viewer has to label elements with words and phrases.

Phase 2: Deduction (Formal analysis)

Assignment:

Make a precise statement about what determines your individual perception of the artwork! How is the work structured and why? Apply a connection of the descriptions to the elements of art such as e.g. repetition, contrast, balance!

Stimulated by the observation and experience of the artwork, with the second phase starts the formal analysis by questioning the descriptive inventory to discover the relations among the things that were named. It is absolutely necessary to yet defer any form of interpretation; the focus is purely on the elaboration.

²⁸⁹ Feldman 1981, p. 471.

²⁹⁰ Vygotsky, 1978.

Phase 3: Interpretation

Assignment:

Make statements about a possible meaning of the work based upon the descriptions and formal analysis given in the first two steps!

This last phase is about analyzing the meaning of the work. What does the work of art mean to communicate? What themes does it deal with? What intellectual or artistic problems does it solve?²⁹¹ Interpretation relates to all comprehension skills, with an emphasis on inference, deductive reasoning and drawing conclusions.

The Workshop

For the workshop we modified the rigid form of art criticism. We allocated more space and time to the initial emotional response, with the intention to encourage talking. Nevertheless the three steps mentioned above served as a strict guideline that every participant always has to return to throughout the exploration process.

Following the method of Socratic dialogue the dialogue started with a question concerning the personal experience of the work of art, for example:

What effect does it have on you?

What does it do to you?

What do you feel when you look at it?

The response was followed by a precise enquiry:

What in the work made you come up with your statement? What made you feel that way?

²⁹¹ Perkins, 1994.

The challenge of dialogue

As in the Socratic dialogue the group chooses a question, problem or project of a participant for the dialogue process. In addition they then have to opt for a piece of art (i.e. painting, sculpture, photography) that they think corresponds well to the chosen question. Correspondence here means a spontaneous feeling towards the artwork in relation to the specific topic. This choice for an artwork has to be made by all group members in mutual consent. To allow for a rewarding choice the workshop should be held in a gallery, a museum or among any sort of art collection, but it is also possible to work with a set of reproductions in reasonable size and good quality. Again, in accordance to Socratic philosophy all the examples have to come from personal experience, since this is the only option to probe the statement and give a deeper understanding and not to speculate. In the course of giving statements and questioning them, the dialogue may take on all sorts of directions, but it is important to continuously return to the initially chosen question/topic and the work of art. It is of the essence to check every statement made against the information given in the object of art.

The following questions were given to the participants as a guideline in individual group discussions:

- (1) *Try to put your very first impressions into words! The aim of this exercise is to name and identify your emotional response.*
- (2) *In a second step try to find out exactly what in the picture determines that response!*
- (3) *Now think about the chosen subject – what aspect in the picture relates best and why?*
- (4) *If you have formulated your idea, look at the picture again and try to find visual parallels or correspondences that support your assertion.*
- (5) *Describe then what element in the picture helps you to make your statement!*

It is the task and responsibility of the group and of each participant to relate statements to the piece of art in front of their eyes. This means that the dialogue leads to individual interpretations and ideas, which always have to be brought back to the art object by tracing the visual elements it contains. During the discussion every participant is asked to find the visual proof in the work of art that lead to his/her own opinion.

Everybody is invited to join the following discussion by describing what one can see in the painting in relation to the chosen subject. It is the obligation of everyone to focus on elaborating his or her own statements during the discussion.

- (6) *Does the painting give me any new ideas on the issue I already know?*
- (7) *Can I learn from the statements of others brought into the dialogue in relation to the painting?*
- (8) *What are my emotional responses towards the painting/ subject?*
- (9) *What can I transfer from the painting into my cognitive argumentation?*

Reflection

The workshop in case ended with a reflection on the method and the participant's experiences.

The question whether the method is suitable for trainings in adult education or other learning was discussed. There was a general consensus that it is very suitable for learning environments.

The role of art as a trigger in communication

Art of any kind can be employed in this procedure, but we believe that contemporary art is especially appropriate for the purpose, since contemporary art is perceived by many people as difficult and strange. That is exactly the reason why contemporary artworks lend themselves perfectly to be used as subjects of a discourse in which to train one's own openness. Elements that at first glance seem to be incomprehensible or insignificant, force us to step back, to examine and to describe. For the group and their communicative process artworks serve as a common basis of discussion. Statements brought forward need to be related to what is visible in front of all eyes. Thereby a communicative structure is established that is comprehensible for everyone involved. The immediate exposure to art, to something probably alien, serves as a catalyst but also focal point and offers the chance to develop the openness needed to understand someone else's statements.

Contemporary art broadens the horizon

It is a challenge to arrest someone's attention with words. It is hard enough to scrutinize assessments, predications and statements in verbal dialogue. That is different with the concentration on an image. (Compare if you will the growing need to use PowerPoint in presentations.) The observer experiences an immediate access. The image is physically present and serves as an anchor of attention. The viewer always has a personal reference to fall back upon, i.e. judgments can be reassessed directly and substantiated by means of description.

The role of the Socratic method in art-orientated communication

Our communication method "dialogue initiated by art" uses the Socratic method within the tradition of the Socratic Dialogues by Leonard Nelson and its pedagogical enhancement by Gustav Heckmann.²⁹² The method refers to the ten principles of dialogue according to Heckmann (1981) and Hartkemeyer/Hartkemeyer (2005). The ten disciplines listed below have to be held up beyond their cultural determinations and limitations. These disciplines ask us:

- (1) To assume the attitude of a learner
- (2) To have a radical respect for the partner
- (3) To speak sincerely and be brief
- (4) To listen to another person carefully
- (5) To suspend assumptions and judgments
- (6) To have an inquisitive attitude
- (7) To plead productively
- (8) To be open
- (9) To slow down when speaking
- (10) To observe the observer.

The Socratic method aims to assure that all participants of a dialogue understand what is said and meant. Consulting a work of art that is

²⁹² See also Nelson 1996, Heckmann, 1993.

visible for everyone supports this ambition. By permanently relocating our statements in the visible structure of the work of art while constantly questioning our personal perception, we experience a “collaborative thinking-experience” in the sense of the Socratic Dialogue.²⁹³ Much as in the “classical” Socratic dialogue the aim is to reach a consensus within the group in relation to the initial question. For this the equality of all conversational partners is a precondition as well as the appreciation and consideration of all contributions.

The dialogue is to be understood as a conversation between the participants, who face each other with little knowledge at first. Together they come to a conclusion by asking precise questions. Therefore the piece of art is approached from a neutral point where previous knowledge or information about the work’s content is irrelevant.²⁹⁴

The process is centered only on subjective perception and personal statements. In contrast to Socratic Dialogue, statements are not to be supported by personal examples but should be tied to the piece of art. For example, a general statement such as “This painting is ugly!” has to be justified in relation to the concrete painting: “For me the picture is too dark!” “I do not like the expression of the faces.” etc. are examples for concretion. Each of these statements has to be comprehensible by the other group members. The moderator’s task is – as it is in traditional Socratic Dialogue – to support the participants to develop their own opinions and interpretations.

The moderator needs to carefully steer the participant’s conversation to enhance their mutual understanding and to keep them focused on the particular question at hand. A main objective is to support the group member’s ability to think clearly and independently to enhance the quality of statements.²⁹⁵ In addition to traditional Socratic Dialogue the piece of art serves as a medium to ensure an inter-dependence of the different thought strands. The moderator needs to consider the following aspects:

- Sufficiently familiar with this method
- Ready to accept other points of view, especially alternative perceptions of “truth”

²⁹³ Raupach-Strey, 2002.

²⁹⁴ See also Maieutics, Nelson, 1996.

²⁹⁵ Nelson, 1975.

- Willing to acknowledge the diverse social, ethnical and moral backgrounds and believes of co-workers
- Self-confident enough to act as a “naive” questioner
- Able to attribute the dialogue’s success to the group and not to claim it personally.

Conclusion/Perspective Application in human resource training

Recently art has been used as a stimulus in human resource development trainings as well as in organizational development processes.²⁹⁶ Likewise, and in a modified form, the Socratic method is used within organizational development and development of companies, but there has yet not been a combination of the Socratic method and art in this field.

Art is been used in business communication to improve communication between co-workers, create connections between art and the company’s products or to create synergy between public relations, internal communication and human resource development.²⁹⁷ In creative work environments such as advertising agencies art has been employed as a catalyst of brainstorming methods to support the creation of new ideas and solutions. The use of the Socratic method in combination with art in addition creates new affordances for communication processes:

- Improving one’s own critical thinking²⁹⁸
- Supporting the self-efficacy of participants
- Increasing self-responsibility
- Deepening independent thinking
- Enhancing motivation to work and learn.

Key to the success of the method is to know the preconditions and goals of the group in advance as well as to be ready for a “real” dialogue. Being

²⁹⁶ See Institute Terhalle Gbr 2009; Torsten Blanke, 2002; Franz Josef Löhner, 2004; Felix, Zdenek/Hentschel, Beate/Luckow, Dirk, 2002.

²⁹⁷ Terhalle, 1999.

²⁹⁸ Nelson, 1975, p. 220.

a “slow” method, participants have to bring patience and be interested in the other’s ideas; otherwise resistance among discussants will be high. The method is fulfilling and valuable only if the moderator is successful in convincing the participants to engage actively in searching for insights and to leave behind them any kind of persistence on their initial point of view.

Socratic dialogue should be used whenever a group of people strives for clarifying terminology or to match and adjust their common goals. Participants need to be able to be aware of their thinking, to describe it and finally to critically reflect it. The selection of an appropriate piece of art is determined by the group structure and composition, the general topic(s) at hand, and the goal(s) to achieve.

Because of the versatile field of application it is necessary to do concrete planning of the participants’ roles and tasks. Some groups may be able to moderate themselves in breakout sessions based on given rules and a discussion-plan, others may need moderation all the time. Key to success is a transparent communication and adherence to the principles of Socratic dialogue.

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Socratic Dialogue: Kant's Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and the Sublime

The only translation of Nelson's Socratic Method that I know is the 1949 Dover publication of the *Socratic Method and Critical Philosophy*. In those essays the debt to Kant is clear. Kant accepts the first premise of Cartesian philosophy that we begin with self-consciousness, but he rejects the Cartesian conclusion that all knowledge has to be a reflection upon the ego and its contents. Kant then accepts that philosophy has to focus consciousness, and he accepts that this must involve self-consciousness, but he does not accept that this had to mean that *consciousness of an object* had to be reduced to *the consciousness of consciousness of that object*. In setting out this kind of agreement and disagreement with his predecessors Kant sets out his idea of the self, the human subject that Kant reasoned could not be a substance or 'thing'. Things can be represented in a way that the self cannot and things cannot be described as having complex inner lives. More importantly things cannot be attributed with complex emotional dispositions. The latter I believe are significant for the metadialogue.

The 'meta' allows a space for aesthetic concerns, about taste, beauty, and imagination – all of which are important for human beings but not necessarily important for the reasoning itself in the Socratic Dialogue. The 'meta' should not be thought of as an appendage – something that is added on to the dialogue that sorts things out when a dialogue has started to go a little wrong. I want to argue that the meta is also important for aesthetic observations similar to those made by Kant in his pre-critical essay on the *Beautiful and Sublime*.

Why are aesthetic considerations important for the meta?

Going back to both eighteenth century Scottish and German philosophy, aesthetics is concerned with the general category of human experience. It is concerned with the evaluation of that experience. In the beginning this evaluation is not confined to the experiences of art. Tracing experience back to people we encounter problems about dispositions showing exactly how complex the psychological lives of humans can be. But it is in the complexity of human subjects that we find all the generalized reasons for the conditions of universal respect – regardless of considerations of age, gender, ethnic or economic background. Respect has to be in all human interactions because the human is so damn complex. Respect left at the procedural level is always empty. Respect only becomes something of substance when it embraces the diverse and endlessly awkward range of human complexities that make up human subjectivity. Human subjectivity is at the centre of aesthetics – it is at the centre of evaluative experiences. Kant writes:

“The person whose feeling leans toward melancholy is called melancholy, not because he broods in morose heaviness of heart robbed of all the joys of life, but because, if his emotional reactions were to be enhanced beyond a certain measure or were to be misdirected for any reasons, they would more easily tend towards that condition than any other. He has a special *feeling for the sublime*. Even beauty, for which he also has a feeling, must not merely charm but also move him, inasmuch as it fills him at the same time with admiration. The enjoyment of pleasures is more serious, but is on that account no less enjoyable. All emotions of the sublime contain more enchantment for him than all the deceitful enticings of the beautiful. His well-being will be closer to contentment than to gaiety. He is steadfast. For that reason he regulates his emotions by principles. The more general the principle of regulation, the broader the high feeling which compromises the lower one within itself, the less these emotions yield to unsteadiness and change ... The person of melancholy frame of mind cares little for what others think, what they consider good or true; he trusts entirely to his own insight. Since his grounds of motivation take on the nature of principles he is not easily brought to other ideas; occasionally his steadfastness degenerates even into willfulness. He looks upon the change of fashions with indifference and upon its glamour with contempt. Friendship is sublime and is therefore agreeable to his temperament ... Affable

conversation is beautiful, thoughtful silence is sublime. He is a good keeper of his own secrets as well as those of others. Veracity is sublime; he hates lies and pretence. He has a high regard for the dignity of human nature. He esteems himself and regards any man as a creature of respect. He will endure no depraved submissiveness and breathes freedom in a noble breast. He abominates all chains, from the gilded ones worn at court to the heavy irons of the galley-slave. He is a severe judge of himself and of others and not rarely is disgusted with himself as well as with the world.”

This is a person clearly with an inner life. This is a person with a certain sort of temperament. The description of that temperament is nowhere near exhausted in the term *Verstandesmenscb*. This person may be awkward and they may not be a team player. This person has an ‘inner’ life. I would argue that this complex inner life, this complex sense of subjectivity is one of the reasons that Kant initiates the conditions of universal respect for humans everywhere regardless of gender, culture or whatever. The way respect works in his moral system is a different question. The reason we have respect in the first place is because of the complex psychology involved in human subjectivity. And that complexity comes out in Kant’s aesthetics and pre-critical work.

Kant’s beautiful and the sublime

What has fascinated me for a long time is the way that Kant as ‘the educator of mankind’ manages to fit into his universal project a place for the education of the particular man. And how within his ambitious project of reason he finds a space for feeling. This puzzle is compounded when you read Kant on art – not just aesthetics in the Third Critique – you almost see another Kant, a Kant that really does know the difference between the beautiful and the far more ambivalent sublime. So I want to look at feeling in relation to dialogue work

In Paul Schilpp’s amazing book, written in the late 1950’s, *Kant’s Pre-Critical Ethics*, there is a section on page 20 detailing a preparation for a series of classes – around 1757. Kant gives an outline as follows:

“The *Animal Kingdom*, in which man will be viewed comparatively with regard to the differences of his natural form and color in different

regions of the earth ... I shall lecture on this first of all in the natural order of classes and finally cover in geographic survey all the countries of the earth, in order to display the inclinations of men as they grow out of the particular region in which they live; the variety of their prejudices and types of thinking, in so far as all of this can serve to make man more intimately acquainted with himself; and in order to give a brief idea of their arts, commerce, and science, an enumeration of the ... products of their various regions, their atmospheric conditions etc.: in a word, everything which belongs to the physical geography.”²⁹⁹

Kant is concerned with everything that furthers man’s knowledge of himself – man’s knowledge of himself of course characterizes the Socratic agenda. Kant always goes for that which furthers a grip on our own subjectivity. This does not lead to subjectivity being founded on a self as substance. But it also does not lead to some kind of negation of the project of self-understanding simply because there is no substance at the end of it all. Understanding how we understand as subjects is the way that we are shaken out of indifference about ourselves and others – it is the first position of critique and it is the way we initiate the universal conditions of human respect – including self-respect. Respect has to be based upon the complexities of psychology. It has to involve human feelings and in Kant it involves experiencing the feelings of the beautiful and the sublime. To this you could add the feeling of disgust but we had better not go there.

At this point I want to make a wee digression. I want to mention the Tate Modern in London. This is my favourite gallery in the entire world. It is the old Power Station just across the river from Westminster, on the same side as the National Theatre and the Film School. It is in a rough and tumble area of the city. Shakespeare’s Globe is next door and the whole Gallery site sits on the side of the river looking over at St Paul’s and the west end and centre of Finance in the city. The gallery itself is on the edges of the old east end.

Walking into that building I am always full of awe. I am always full of something that is half excitement and half dread. For me it is exactly like going into a good meta. I never really know what to expect but I always know I will be aware of significant feelings in some way or another and I know those feelings will be instructive about myself ... As you walk

²⁹⁹ The reference given is: Kants Gesammelte Schriften (Akad.-Ausgabe), vol. II, p. 9.

down the ramp it is a little like coming face to face with all the combinations of space that constitute the space that is modernity. In this space is our time. And it is ambiguous and in no way singular. It involves concepts that are never ever completely analyzable. The Tate is an industrial space and yet it is a space that inspires feelings more akin to those of walking into a cathedral. For me it is a little like going into the playground of a meta-dialogue. For the most part, in the Tate you encounter the ordinary, you encounter the work of some sort of reason as one space leads into the next in a sort of order. But in emotional terms the content of that order – what leads into what in each space – is best described by Kant in his *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime* (1764). For me walking through the Tate is like walking through myself ...

I want to suggest that the message of Kant's century that sees art as education is centrally correct. But this is an emotional education and it relates to values about what is good, what is pleasurable what is fearsome. It is an education that is a superb primer for the experience of going back into the Socratic Dialogue – which is all about our reasoning. Obviously I am not suggesting that we all nip off to visit the Tate every time we do a dialogue. I am not suggesting for one second any procedural changes in the way that dialogue should be done. All of the knowledge about not choosing psychological examples, for instance, seem to be sound. So I am not suggesting any adjustments to the dialogue process itself. The dialogue is what it is ... but I do want to suggest that the kind of openness we need for going into the Tate is just like the openness we need for going into a meta-dialogue and that kind of openness inevitably yields knowledge on the nature of our own subjectivity that is not always comfortable. I am saying that both walking through the Tate and participating in a meta are different, but they both work best when we are not closed to feelings that tells us something about our subjectivity – something about the way we understand the dispositions of our own selves. Kant explains this in a number of statements and propositions.

He says temperaments that possess a feeling for the sublime are drawn gradually, by the quiet stillness of a summer evening as the shimmering light of the stars breaks through the brown shadows of the night and the lonely moon rises into view, into high feelings of friendship, of disdain for the world, of eternity.

Temperaments that, on the other hand, incline towards the shining day stimulate busy fervor and a feeling of gaiety. But then he says: the sublime *moves*, the beautiful *charms*.

I would add to that and say the sublime involves a change in our being – a change in our subjectivity. And what I am saying here is that as well as being prepared to do our best reasoning in a dialogue, we should be open enough to receive moments of feeling coming from the beautiful and the sublime that shift us in other ways beyond simply reasoning. This in no way impairs the quality of reasoning. This is clear in much of the pre-critical work. Yet Kant does not leave things here. He goes further with his classification of the sublime and says there is the *terrifying* sublime, then the *noble* sublime, and finally the *splendid* sublime.

Kant's focus is on the 'feelings' of the sublime and the beautiful. He categorizes these saying they are only 'partially' analyzable. They cannot be completely analyzed because they arise 'not so much (from) the nature of external things that arouse them as upon each person's own disposition to be moved by these to pleasure and pain'. He then goes on to give the dimensions and the nature of temporality that are involved in his classification. He says *deep* loneliness is sublime, but in a way that stirs terror – he gives an example in a story he reads in a magazine of a dream. He says the sublime 'must always be great' whilst 'the beautiful can be small'. 'The sublime must be simple; the beautiful can be adorned and ornamented' and 'a great height is just as sublime as a great depth, except that the latter is accompanied with the sensation of shuddering, the former with one of wonder'. Hence 'the latter feeling can be the terrifying sublime' and 'the former the noble'. In all these feelings there is some information about the complex experiential world that is our subjectivity.

Difference and indifference?

My thinking is that some of the insights of a good dialogue require the kind of discernment – an internal discernment that Kant is describing that is ultimately in and about us. It is that which might emerge in various forms and for very fleeting moments. I doubt that we could withstand intense and prolonged feelings of the sublime without being of

an exceptional temperament. There is only so much self-knowledge that humans can stand at any one sitting. But as different moments work towards the sublime there might be some *resistance*. This is a sort of *resistance to ourselves*. But this might not be the case. If the insights are beautiful then there are the familiar feelings of mirth. Kant says the sublime is different because it is of ‘different kinds’. It is in feelings ‘sometimes accompanied with a certain dread, or melancholy; in some cases merely with quiet wonder; and in still others with a beauty completely pervading a sublime plan’. All of these we must be prepared for in experiencing the reasoning of a good Socratic Dialogue. Often people say that the experience cannot be described. I believe that is often true – because moments of sublime feelings are never completely describable – as in other situations involving nature or art. So I am saying reasoning is describable but some of the experiences of reasoning are not. Add to this the experience of shared reasoning and the experience is doubly indescribable. But my argument is that we must be open to these moments – just as we are hopefully open to the same in moving around the Tate. They are an aspect of what is being shown to us about ourselves in a dialogue. It is obviously not everything that is being shown to us but it is an aspect, a dimension of subjective selfknowledge that the project of Kant is all about.

Conclusion

With the best will in the world no facilitator can foresee the work of different dispositions. In the same way no gallery can ever plan for or protect us against the experiences of good and bad art. So much is down to ourselves. What I am suggesting we do is be prepared ‘for’ and be open ‘to’ the possibilities of experiencing both the beautiful and the sublime in our feelings that are encountered in dialogue work – gaining full and frank expression in the meta-dialogue. We might be prepared for much more without ever indulging all of the psychological dimensions of what goes on in a dialogue. After all, few people would go down the ramp that leads into the Tate with a closed mind, with a mind that shuts out the possibilities of the beautiful and the sublime. And what I have tried to argue is that we should maybe take a very similar ‘open’ approach

in all aspects of the dialogue. This does not change the way we reason. It does not change the focus on reason and it most certainly does not change the structure of the dialogue. It does suggest a sort of readiness for aesthetic experience - for the feelings that go with that experience in the work by Kant. It suggests that as well as deepening our insights into our understanding of the way we understand the world we also deep our respect for one another and for ourselves. It suggests a deeper respect for human difference.

**Satzung und Ausbildungsordnung der
Gesellschaft für Sokratisches Philosophieren e.V.**

Am 9. Januar 1994 wurde die Gesellschaft für Sokratisches Philosophieren e.V. (GSP e.V.) gegründet und anschließend in das Vereinsregister beim Amtsgericht Hannover unter der Nummer 6668 eingetragen. Sie führt die Sokratische Arbeit in der Tradition von Leonard Nelson und Gustav Heckmann weiter und arbeitet eng mit der Philosophisch-Politischen Akademie e.V. zusammen. Im Folgenden sind die **Satzung der GSP e. V.** in der Fassung vom 4. November 2006 und die **Ausbildungsordnung der GSP e. V.** nach Beschluss der Mitgliederversammlung vom 10. Januar 2004 abgedruckt.

Satzung der Gesellschaft für Sokratisches Philosophieren e. V.

[Beschluss der Mitgliederversammlung der GSP e. V. vom 4. November 2006]

§ 1 Name und Sitz des Vereins, Geschäftsjahr

1. Der Verein führt den Namen ‚Gesellschaft für Sokratisches Philosophieren e.V.‘, Sitz Hannover, abgekürzt auch GSP e.V. Der Verein ist in das Vereinsregister Hannover eingetragen.
2. Das Vereins- und Geschäftsjahr ist das Kalenderjahr.

§ 2 Zweck

1. Zweck des Vereins ist die Förderung und Weiterentwicklung des Sokratischen Gesprächs, wie es in der Tradition der Kritischen Philosophie von Leonard Nelson und Gustav Heckmann begründet wurde, sowie die Ausbildung von Leiterinnen und Leitern Sokratischer Gespräche.

Zu diesem Zweck veranstaltet er Seminare, öffentliche Diskussionen, fördert entsprechende Initiativen und Aktivitäten, gibt entsprechende Schriften heraus und verbreitet entsprechende Literatur.

2. Der Verein arbeitet eng mit der Philosophisch-Politischen Akademie e.V., Sitz Bonn, zusammen.
3. Der Verein ist selbstlos tätig, er verfolgt nicht in erster Linie eigene wirtschaftliche Zwecke

§ 3 Mitgliedschaft

1. Jede natürliche und juristische Person kann Mitglied werden. Der Verein hat ordentliche und außerordentliche Mitglieder. Ordentliche Mitglieder können nur von der Mitgliederversammlung aner-

kannte Leiterinnen und Leiter Sokratischer Gespräche sein. Mitglieder, die ihre ordentliche Mitgliedschaft ruhen lassen, sind außerordentliche Mitglieder.

2. Nur die ordentlichen Mitglieder sind bei den Mitgliederversammlungen stimmberechtigt.
3. Außerordentliche Mitglieder, deren Mitgliedschaft ruht, können mit schriftlicher Erklärung ihre ordentliche Mitgliedschaft wieder aufnehmen.
4. Außerordentliche Mitglieder unterstützen den Verein.

§ 4 Erwerb und Beendigung der Mitgliedschaft

1. Die Mitgliedschaft muss schriftlich beantragt werden. Der Aufnahmeantrag bedarf der Unterstützung durch mindestens zwei ordentliche Mitglieder. Die Aufnahme erfolgt, wenn in einer Mitgliederversammlung zwei Drittel der anwesenden Mitglieder zustimmen.
2. Die Mitgliedschaft endet durch Tod, durch eine Austrittserklärung oder durch Ausschluss durch die Mitgliederversammlung. Die ordentliche Mitgliedschaft erlischt auch durch Inaktivität des Mitgliedes. Mitglieder können ihre ordentliche Mitgliedschaft durch schriftliche Erklärung ruhen lassen.
3. Der Austritt wird rechtskräftig sechs Wochen, nachdem er schriftlich dem Vorstand mitgeteilt wurde.
4. Der Ausschluss durch die Mitgliederversammlung bedarf der Zustimmung von zwei Drittel aller ordentlichen Mitglieder.
5. Inaktivität ist dann gegeben, wenn ein ordentliches Mitglied an zwei aufeinander folgenden Jahreshauptversammlungen nicht teilnimmt, ohne sich vorher bei der/dem Vorsitzenden zu entschuldigen.

§ 5 Beiträge

Der Verein erhebt keine Beiträge.

§ 6 Organe des Vereins

Die Organe des Vereins sind der Vorstand und die Mitgliederversammlung. Sowohl Vorstand als auch Mitgliederversammlung können für bestimmte Arbeiten Ausschüsse einsetzen.

§ 7 Vorstand

1. Der Vorstand im Sinn des § 26 BGB besteht aus dem/der Vorsitzenden und zwei Stellvertreter/innen. Er führt die Geschäfte des Vereins. Jedes Vorstandsmitglied ist berechtigt, den Verein allein zu vertreten.
2. Die Wahl des Vorstandes erfolgt durch die Mitgliederversammlung für die Dauer von zwei Jahren. Die Wahl der Vorstandsmitglieder erfolgt mit einfacher Mehrheit.
3. Aktives und passives Wahlrecht haben alle ordentlichen Mitglieder, die das 18. Lebensjahr vollendet haben.

§ 8 Mitgliederversammlung

1. Die Mitgliederversammlung tritt einmal im Jahr zur Jahreshauptversammlung zusammen. Der Vorstand kann nach Bedarf außerordentliche Mitgliederversammlungen einberufen. Auf schriftlichen Antrag von mindestens 40% der Mitglieder ist ebenfalls zu einer außerordentlichen Mitgliederversammlung einzuladen.
2. Die Mitgliederversammlung ist beschlussfähig, wenn mindestens die Hälfte der ordentlichen Mitglieder anwesend ist.
3. Die Mitgliederversammlung berät und beschließt über alle Vereinsangelegenheiten mit einfacher Mehrheit der auf ja und nein entfallenden Stimmen, wenn nichts anderes bestimmt ist.
4. Die Mitgliederversammlung wird vom Vorstand schriftlich und unter Angabe der Tagesordnung mit einer Frist von mindestens vier Wochen eingeladen.
5. Über jede Mitgliederversammlung muss ein Protokoll geführt werden. Protokolle bedürfen der Genehmigung durch die Mitgliederversammlung, der Unterschriften des/der Protokollanten/in und eines Vorstandsmitgliedes.

§ 9 Satzungsänderungen

1. Satzungsänderungen können nur mit Zustimmung von drei Vierteln der zu einer Mitgliederversammlung erschienenen ordentlichen Mitglieder erfolgen.
2. Alle rechtzeitig eingegangenen Anträge auf Satzungsänderung müssen vom Vorstand in der Einladung zur nächsten Mitgliederversammlung angekündigt werden.

§ 10 Auflösung

1. Die Auflösung des Vereins muss auf die Tagesordnung der nächsten Jahreshauptversammlung gesetzt werden, wenn dies von einem Drittel der stimmberechtigten Mitglieder beantragt wird oder wenn eine Jahreshauptversammlung wegen Beschlussunfähigkeit nicht zustande gekommen ist.
2. Die Behandlung des Auflösungsantrags muss vom Vorstand in der Einladung zur nächsten Mitgliederversammlung angekündigt werden.
3. Die Auflösung erfolgt durch eine beschlussfähige Mitgliederversammlung, wenn drei Viertel der erschienenen Mitglieder dem Antrag zustimmen. Ist diese Mitgliederversammlung nicht beschlussfähig, wird erneut wie unter Punkt 2 eingeladen. Dann erfolgt die Auflösung, wenn drei Viertel der anwesenden Mitglieder der Auflösung zustimmen.
4. Bei Auflösung des Vereins fällt eventuell vorhandenes Vermögen des Vereins an die Philosophisch-Politische Akademie e. V., Sitz Bonn, die es unmittelbar und ausschließlich für gemeinnützige Zwecke zu verwenden hat.

§ 11 Inkrafttreten der Satzung

Die vorstehende Satzung wurde von der Gründungsversammlung am 9.1.1994 beschlossen. Sie tritt in Kraft, sobald der Verein in das Vereinsregister beim Amtsgericht Hannover eingetragen ist.

Aufnahme in die Ausbildung zur Leitung Sokratischer Gespräche und Ausbildungsordnung

**[Beschluss der Mitgliederversammlung der GSP e. V.
vom 10. Januar 2004]**

A. Voraussetzungen für die Antragstellung:

Vor der Aufnahme zur Unterstützung der Ausbildung sollen vorliegen:

- mindestens die Teilnahme an drei einwöchigen Sokratischen Gesprächen der GSP bei drei verschiedenen Leitern/Leiterinnen zu Themen aus drei verschiedenen Bereichen (Ethik/Praktische Philosophie - Erkenntnistheorie - Mathematik)
- mindestens die Teilnahme an drei weiteren Veranstaltungen zur Sokratik innerhalb oder außerhalb der GSP
- zwei Fürsprecher/innen. Die Fürsprecher/innen (ordentliche Mitglieder der GSP) müssen die Antragsteller/innen als Teilnehmer/innen in einem von ihnen selbst geleiteten oder als Mentor/in begleiteten Sokratischen Gespräch erlebt haben.

B. Antragstellung:

Der Antrag wird schriftlich formlos gestellt. Er enthält eine Aufstellung der unter A genannten Voraussetzungen und muss bis zum 1. November eines Jahres bei der 1. Vorsitzenden/dem 1. Vorsitzenden der GSP eingegangen sein, um auf der darauf folgenden Mitgliederversammlung entschieden werden zu können.

C. Aufnahme:

Die Antragstellerin/Der Antragsteller ist in die Ausbildung aufgenommen, wenn die Mitgliederversammlung dem Antrag mehrheitlich zustimmt.

D. Ausbildung:

Die in die Ausbildung Aufgenommenen werden zu allen Veranstaltungen der GSP eingeladen, die sie für ihre Ausbildung verwenden können.

Die folgenden Ausbildungselemente sind verpflichtend:

- Eine Hospitation bei einem einwöchigen Sokratischen Gespräch der GSP, das von einem Mitglied der GSP geleitet wird. Zur Hospitation gehören die Anfertigung einer schriftlichen Ausarbeitung zum konkreten Gespräch und die Reflexion mit der Leiterin bzw. dem Leiter des Gesprächs.
- Die Leitung eines einwöchigen Sokratischen Gesprächs mit Begleitung eines Mentors/einer Mentorin. Dazu gehören die gemeinsame Besprechung der Themenformulierung, die gemeinsame Vorbereitung des Gesprächs, die Anfertigung einer schriftlichen Ausarbeitung zum konkreten Gespräch sowie die Reflexion der Gesprächsleitung.
- Zwei Fortbildungsveranstaltungen der GSP zum Sokratischen Gespräch im zeitlichen Umfang von jeweils 1½ Tagen.
- Ein etwa 20minütiger Vortrag vor der Mitgliederversammlung der GSP mit anschließender Diskussion.

Die in die Ausbildung Aufgenommenen tragen die durch ihre Ausbildung entstehenden Teilnahme- und Reisekosten. Dazu gehören:

- die eigenen Teilnahme- und Reisekosten für die Fortbildungsveranstaltungen
- die eigenen Teilnahme- und Reisekosten für das in der Ausbildung selbst geleitete Gespräch
- die Teilnahme- und Reisekosten der Mentorin/des Mentors, die/der die Leitung des einwöchigen Sokratischen Gesprächs betreut.

Für mögliche weitere Gespräche mit eigener Leitung, die im Rahmen der Ausbildung durchgeführt werden, werden die Teilnahme- und Reisekosten der Gesprächsleiterin/des Gesprächsleiters und der Mentorin/des Mentors erstattet.

Verwaltungskosten werden nicht erhoben.

E. Anerkennung als Sokratische/r Gesprächsleiter/in:

Der Antrag wird schriftlich formlos gestellt. Er enthält eine Aufstellung der unter D genannten Voraussetzungen und muss bis zum 1. November bei der 1. Vorsitzenden/dem 1. Vorsitzenden der GSP eingegangen sein, um auf der darauf folgenden Mitgliederversammlung entschieden werden zu können. Die Antragstellerin/Der Antragsteller ist als Leiterin bzw. Leiter Sokratischer Gespräche anerkannt, wenn die Mitgliederversammlung dem Antrag mehrheitlich zustimmt.

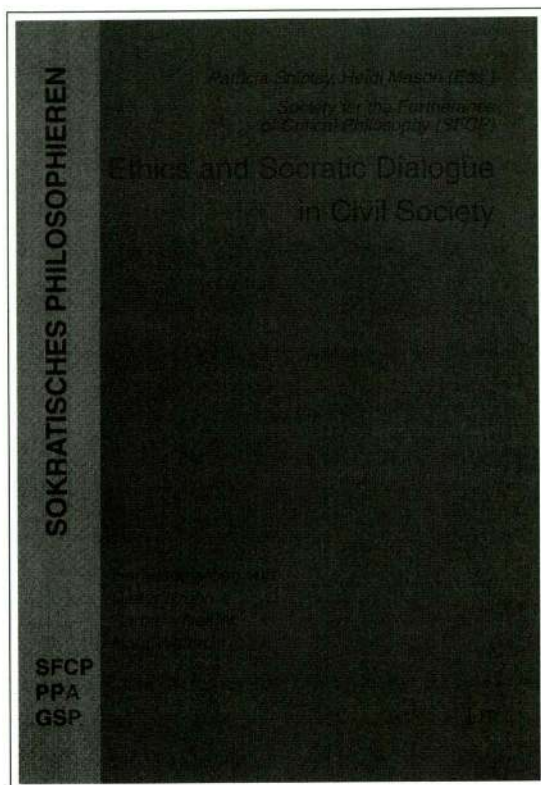
F. In-Kraft-Treten und Geltung:

Diese Bestimmungen sind mit dem Beschluss der Mitgliederversammlung am 10. Januar 2004 in Kraft getreten. Sie gelten für alle, die nach In-Kraft-Treten dieser Bestimmungen in die Ausbildung aufgenommen werden.

Sokratisches Philosophieren

Schriftenreihe der Philosophisch-Politischen Akademie (PPA) und der Gesellschaft für
Sokratisches Philosophieren (GSP)

hrsg. von Dieter Krohn, Barbara Neißer, Nora Walter †



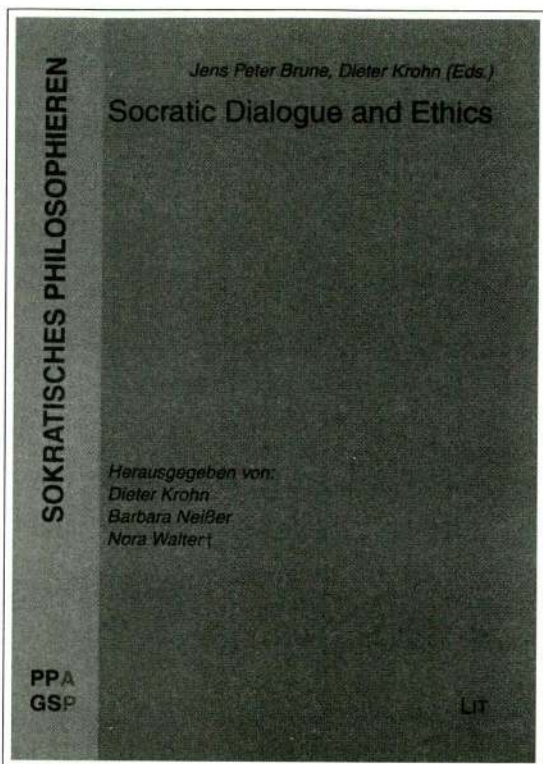
Patricia Shipley; Heidi Mason (Eds.)

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Jens Peter Brune; Dieter Krohn (Eds.)

Socratic Dialogue and Ethics

This volume presents the proceedings of the 3rd International Conference on Socratic Dialogue held in Loccum, Germany, in 2000, convened by the Philosophical-Political Academy (PPA, Germany), the Society of Socratic Facilitators (GSP, Germany), the Society for the Furtherance of Critical Philosophy (SFCP, UK) and the Dutch Network of Socratic Facilitators. The proceedings focus on what Socratic Dialogue can contribute to ethical questions in different social fields. They range from philosophising with children to management consultancy and refer to projects and experiences with Socratic Dialogue in different countries demonstrating how to conduct ethical discourse on a global level.

Bd. 9, 2005, 208 S., 19,90 €, br., ISBN 3-8258-6309-3

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The twelfth volume of the "Series on Socratic Philosophizing" reflects the international discussion on Socratic philosophizing within a global perspective. This volume throws light on the challenges Socratic Dialogue and other forms of dialogue face in different political systems and cultures. The following sub-topics are discussed: the development of the theory and the practice of Socratic Dialogue, examples of dialogues practised in different political systems, and the role of dialogue in mutual understanding within and between different cultures and in the political and economic sectors.

Dr. Jens Peter Brune, Berlin, works at the Free University of Berlin in the Research project on Complete Works of Hans Jonas. He is member of the PPA and the GSP.

Dr. Horst Gronke, Berlin, founded the company "pro argumentis" which specializes in Socratic Dialogue. He is deputy chair of the GSP and member of the PPA.

Dr. Dieter Krohn, Hannover, is Executive Member of the Philosophical-Political Academy (PPA) and Chair of the Society of Socratic Facilitators (GSP).

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