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Socratic Dialogue as a Way Toward Wonder and *Aletheia* in Qualitative Research and Action Research

El diálogo socrático como camino hacia la admiración y la aletheia dentro de una investigación-acción cualitativa

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Abstract: In qualitative and action research, through Socratic dialogue, the researcher can help participants past a cognitive approach to the phenomenon, into a community of wonder (*thaumazein*), past observation of lived experience to foreboding and finally to openness. This openness serves as a ground for truth (*aletheia*). Researchers who try the Socratic approach may find it rewarding in the journey and in the research produced.
Keywords: Socratic, Dialogue, Hermeneutic, Phenomenology, Qualitative Research, Action Research.

Resumen: En la investigación-acción de carácter cualitativo el investigador puede, por medio del diálogo socrático, ayudar a los participantes a transitar desde un acercamiento cognitivo a uno fenomenológico si se ubican en el seno de una comunidad de admiración (*thaumazein*), desde observación de las experiencias de vida a la intuición y al estado de apertura. Esta apertura es la base de la verdad (*aletheia*). Los investigadores que usen el enfoque socrático encontrarán recompensas tanto en su trabajo como en los resultados de sus indagaciones.
Palabras clave: diálogo socrático, hermenéutica, fenomenología, investigación cualitativa, investigación-acción.

Introduction

While qualitative and action research will always vary somewhat in goals, methods, and outcomes, in both kinds of research dialogue between the researcher and participant can be a key part of the research process. Through dialogue, both the researcher and the participants – or co-inquirers – can come together in wonder, opening themselves up to better allow the phenomena under study to reveal themselves. Following up on earlier works on Socratic dialogue in philosophical practice[1], and after years of working with

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[1] DINKINS, Christine Sorrell: "Shared Inquiry: Socratic-Hermeneutic Interpreviewing", in: IRONSIDE, Pamela (ed.): Beyond Method: Philosophical Conversations in Healthcare and Scholarship, University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, 2005, pp. 111-147; DINKINS, Christine Sorrell and SORRELL, Jeanne: Our Dissertations, Ourselves: Shared Stories of Women's Dissertation Journeys, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2014; SORRELL, Jeanne, CANGELOSI, Pamela and DINKINS, Christine Sorrell: "Dialog on a Country Path: The Qualitative Research Journey", in Nurse Education Today, vol. 34, Philadelphia, PA (USA), 2014, pp. 295-298; HANSEN, HANSEN;Finn Thorbjørn: Den sokratiske dialoggruppe [The Socratic Dialogue Group], Gyldendal, Copenhagen, 2000; HANSEN, Finn Thorbjørn: Det filosofiske liv [The Philosophical Life], Gyldendal, Copenhagen, 2002; HANSEN, Finn Thorbjørn: At stå i det åbne: Dannelse gennem filosofisk undren og nærvær [To Stand in the Openness: Bildung through Philosophical Wonder and Presence], Aalborg University Press, Aalborg, 2008; HANSEN, Finn Thorbjørn: "One Step Further: The Dance Between Poetic Dwelling and Socratic Wonder in Phenomenological Research", in GALVIN, Kathleen (ed.): Indo-Pacific Journal of Phenomenology (Special Edition), New York, 2012, pp. 1-20; HANSEN, Finn Thorbjørn: Kan man undre sig uden ord?: Design- og universitetspædagogogik på kreative videregående uddannelser [Can We Wonder without Words? Design and University Pedagogic in Creative Higher Education], Aalborg University Press, Aalborg, 2014; HANSEN, Finn Thorbjørn: "Det sokratiske forskningsinterview [The Socratic Research Interview]", in MUNK, Karen (ed.): Metodefetichisme, kvalitative metode på afveje - ophav, kritik, nye perspektiver, Aarhus University Press, Aarhus, 2015; HANSEN, Finn Thorbjørn: "The Call and Practice of Wonder: How to Evoke a Socratic Community of Wonder in Professional Settings", in WEISS, Michael Noah (ed.): The Socratic

Socratic dialogue in the contexts of qualitative and action research, the authors have observed a consistent pattern of unfolding and opening in these dialogues. Through Socratic dialogue, the researcher helps participants through and past a cognitive approach to the phenomenon, leading to a point of being stuck or puzzled (*aporia*). Faced with *aporia* and encouraged to continue reflecting, the participant and the researcher enter together into a community of wonder (*thaumazein*), moving past mere observation and perception of lived experience to a sense of foreboding ("What *is* the phenomenon? Why is it hard to grasp? What in the phenomenon seems to call to me?") and finally to openness. This openness is the comportment necessary for what Heidegger calls the "clearing" or "event"[2]. This openness allows the researcher and participant to serve as a ground for *aletheia*, allowing the phenomenon to reveal itself. While the authors' earlier works have focused on aspects of *aporia* and *thaumazein*, this article will focus especially on the movement from wonder to foreboding to the open comportment necessary for *aletheia*.

Socrates' Goals and Method in Plato's Works

Since phenomenological researchers have a variety of established modes of questioning available to them, let us first examine the benefits specifically of Socratic dialogue, or Socratic shared inquiry. Heidegger asserts that in the search for truth, "the *wonder*

Handbook, LIT Verlag, Vienna, 2015; HANSEN, Finn Thorbjørn: "The Philosophical Practitioner as a Co-Researcher", in AMIR, Lydia and FATIC, Aleksandar (eds.): Practicing Philosophy, Cambridge Scholars Press, Cambridge, 2015.

[2] HEIDEGGER, Martin: *Poetry, Language, Thought*, Harper & Row Publishers, New York, 1975; HEIDEGGER, Martin: *Contributions to Philosophy (of the Event)*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 2012.

of questioning must be experienced in carrying it out and must be made effective as an awakening and strengthening of the power to question."[3] Likewise Gadamer, in discussing phenomenological hermeneutic methods, argues, "only the person who knows how to ask questions is able to persist in his questioning, which involves being able to preserve his orientation toward openness. The art of questioning is the art of questioning ever further."[4] Here, Gadamer's language points to an advantage in a questioning style that allows for follow-up questions, for digging deeper into an inquiry, moving the inquiry toward openness. Gadamer goes on to say, "the hermeneutic phenomenon… implies the primacy of dialogue."[5] Dialogue, unlike some sorts of questioning, implies a back-and-forth, a give-and-take. For a conversation or an interview to be a dialogue, the researcher must listen, respond, project an idea forward, listen, and continue this way in a reciprocal process. The Socratic researcher must listen for concepts or ideas that seem to resonate with a "living meaning" as opposed to "the dead trace of meaning."[6] The researcher can be helped in these goals by having a sort of phenomenological "musicality"[7] for the voice of the subject matter itself (*die Sache selbst*).

If such dialogue is the goal, the ancient expert of philosophical dialogue, Socrates, can still be very relevant for researchers today. Socrates as he appears in Plato's dialogues is not just a model philosopher but a model *philosophical practitioner*. Unlike his

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[3] HEIDEGGER, Martin: *Contributions to Philosophy (of the Event)*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 2012, p. 10

[4] GADAMER, Hans-Georg: *Truth and Method*, Sheed and Ward Ltd., London, 1989, p. 367

[5] Ibid, p. 369

[6] Ibid, pp. 167 and 164

[7] HANSEN, Finn Thorbjørn: "One Step Further: The Dance Between Poetic Dwelling and Socratic Wonder in Phenomenological Research", in GALVIN, Kathleen (ed.): *Indo-Pacific Journal of Phenomenology* (Special Edition), New York, 2012, pp. 1-20.

predecessors and the majority of philosophers who came after him, Socrates was no theoretician or arm-chair philosopher, and he did not merely apply his philosophical theories to larger issues. He insisted on *practicing his philosophy* as a communal activity.[8] In Plato's *Apology*, when Socrates is on trial for corrupting the youth, given the option of accepting exile as his sentence, he refuses, saying it would do him no good since then he would be among strangers who would not talk with him, so he would be unable to practice philosophy.[9]

Throughout Plato's dialogues, we see Socrates pursuing philosophical inquiry through friendly, caring conversations with partners or a group. In fact, it is reasonably clear that Socrates was put to death not primarily for his views or for any sacrilege, but because he would not stop engaging in inquiry with the youth and encouraging them to pursue their own questions. Fortunately for modern researchers, Plato's dialogues provide rich illustrations of Socrates' mode of inquiry. While this method is not entirely consistent across all the dialogues, certain techniques and principles appear again and again, and these techniques and principles can serve as guides for modern researchers.

Socrates tends to start an inquiry by asking for a definition. In the *Meno*, when Meno abruptly asks Socrates whether or not virtue is teachable, Socrates insists, "I am so far from knowing whether virtue can be taught or not that I do not even have knowledge of what virtue itself is."[10] In other dialogues, when a friend or person of importance seems to be taking a significant action, Socrates begins an inquiry by asking the person to define the virtue relevant

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[8] PLATO: *Apology*, in GRUBE, G.M.A. and COOPER, J.M. (trans.): *Five Dialogues,* Hackett, Indianapolis, 2002, p. 29d

[9] Ibid, pp. 37c-38a

[10] PLATO: *Meno,* in GRUBE, G.M.A. and COOPER, J.M. (trans.): *Five Dialogues,* Hackett, Indianapolis, 2002, p. 71a

to the situation.[11] Starting with a definition allows both partners in the dialogue to have a foundation to examine, reflect on, and question as they explore their own ideas about the phenomenon under study.

To help an inquiry along, Socrates often uses an analogy to help his co-inquirer think through their own ideas and statements. When Euthyphro defines piety as a matter of service to the gods, Socrates asks about shipbuilders and generals to clarify what sort of service Euthyphro means.[12] In a similar way, Socrates uses examples to test out and explore a co-inquirer's statements. When Menexenus has claimed that two people can be friends when only one of them loves the other, Socrates presents a test example of a man who is hated by his beloved. Reflecting on this example, Menexenus finds that he wants to question his earlier claim, realizing now that neither person in such a case can be called a friend.[13]

A typical Socratic dialogue proceeds somewhat along the following pattern:

1. A friend asks Socrates a question or Socrates sees someone performing a significant or questionable act.
2. Socrates asks the person for a definition of the relevant virtue, thus beginning with his dialogue partner a shared inquiry into the nature of that virtue.
3. The co-inquirer offers a definition.
4. Using analogies, examples, and follow-up questions, Socrates prods the co-inquirer to help the co-inquirer find

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[11] E.g., PLATO: *Euthyphro,* in GRUBE, G.M.A. and COOPER, J.M. (trans.): *Five Dialogues,* Hackett, Indianapolis, 2002, p. 4c-d

[12] PLATO: *Euthyphro,* in GRUBE, G.M.A. and COOPER, J.M. (trans.): *Five Dialogues,* Hackett, Indianapolis, 2002, pp. 13e-14a

[13] PLATO: *Lysis*, in REEVE, C.D.C (ed.): *Plato on Love: Lysis, Symposium, Phaedrus, Alcibiades, with Selections from Republic and Laws*, Hackett, Indianapolis, 2006, p. 212b-c

conflicts in his beliefs or other revelations that make him doubt his definition.

5. The process of #4 leads the co-inquirer to revise or reject his definition of the virtue.

6. Socrates encourages the co-inquirer to try another definition. Steps 3-5 repeat.

7. The dialogue ends, usually with little resolution. A proper definition has not been found, and Socrates and his co-inquirer are left to ponder further.

Underlying these techniques and patterns, and just as important to his method, are certain principles Socrates seems to hold dear. He considers the inquiry to be a *shared* inquiry. While he maintains a Socratic veil and rarely shares his own opinion outright, he does participate actively in the dialogue, allowing his own expectations to guide his questioning as he and his partner explore the partner's beliefs about the phenomenon. Socrates sees this inquiry as a process that guides his partners to "discover within themselves a multitude of beautiful things, which they bring forth into the light."[14]

Socrates frequently and explicitly insists that his co-inquirers say what they actually believe, rather than saying the popular view or what they have heard from experts or what they think Socrates wants them to say. Socrates asks Crito, "try to answer what I ask you in the way you think best."[15] Theaetetus raises this issue explicitly when he says, "if I answer what seems true in relation to the present question, I shall say 'no, it is not possible;' but if I consider it in relation to the question that went before, then in order to avoid contradicting myself, I say 'Yes, it is.'" Socrates asserts that Theaetetus must say what he believes, not just what will allow

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[14] PLATO: *Theaetetus*, LEVETT, M.J. and BURNYEAT Miles (trans.), Hackett, Indianapolis, 1990, p. 150d

[15] PLATO: *Crito,* in GRUBE, G.M.A. and COOPER, J.M. (trans.): *Five Dialogues,* Hackett, Indianapolis, 2002, p. 49a

him to avoid contradiction: "if you answer 'Yes,'… the tongue will be safe from refutation but the mind will not."[16]

Socrates says that he is a midwife like his mother, except that he is a midwife of ideas. Midwives in Ancient Greece helped deliver babies and also were trusted match-makers. For Socrates, this midwife role involves helping his co-inquirer connect (match up) beliefs and ideas, looking to see which ones yield "phantoms" or "fertile truths."[17] Socrates seems to rely on a connectedness among his partner's beliefs and an instinct from the partner of which ideas are closer to the truth. Thus, if Socrates can identify a conflict between beliefs, he can press his co-inquirer to choose one over the other – which seems more right? The most dramatic example of this cross-comparison happens when Euthyphro describes care of the gods as giving them what they need. Socrates asks, do we care for the gods in a way that is supposed to make them better? Euthyphro, a good priest, responds "by Zeus, no!"[18]

Socrates explains this connecting-and-comparing process in the *Theaetetus*: "Our first aim will be to look at our thoughts themselves in relation to themselves, and see what they are – whether, in our opinion, they agree with one another or are entirely at variance."[19] In that same work, Socrates asserts that midwives are "marvelously knowing about the kind of couples whose marriage will produce the best children."[20] He seems here to suggest that he is an expert in helping his dialogue partners find which ideas to compare to think more deeply and reflect more

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[16] PLATO: *Theaetetus*, LEVETT, M.J. and BURNYEAT Miles (trans.), Hackett, Indianapolis, 1990, p. 154d
[17] Ibid, p. 150c
[18] PLATO: *Euthyphro,* in GRUBE, G.M.A. and COOPER, J.M. (trans.): *Five Dialogues,* Hackett, Indianapolis, 2002, p. 13c
[19] PLATO: *Theaetetus*, LEVETT, M.J. and BURNYEAT Miles (trans.), Hackett, Indianapolis, 1990, p. 154e
[20] Ibid, p. 149d

critically on their beliefs about a given phenomenon. This process has no set goal, no assumed outcome, beyond a search for, and love of, wisdom and truth. And with that love of wisdom comes "doric harmony: between *logos* and *ergon*.[21] As Socrates describes this beautiful process, "the lover of inquiry must follow his beloved wherever it may lead him."[22]

Together, Socrates and his co-inquirer can check each other's assumptions and help each other follow genuinely "the beloved" (the call of the inquiry or the phenomenon itself). The process may be largely negative – discovering false assumptions, realizing that perceived aspects of the phenomenon might not be accurate – right up to the end of a dialogue, when almost always the dialogue partner expresses frustration at not having found a definition. The partner, and the dialogue as a whole, are left in *aporia*. They are stuck, struck dumb by realization of how little they know that they thought they knew. But throughout the dialogues, it is abundantly clear that this *aporia* is a *positive* force. The *aporia* gets interlocutors past the illusion that they know what they do not know. After all, Socrates is the wisest man in Greece not because he knows so much, but because more than anyone else, he knows how little he knows.[23]

For some interlocutors, *aporia* may be where their inquiry ends. Frustrated, they know they do not know, but cannot or will not proceed past that point. For others – those who love wisdom, those who seek truth – *aporia* creates a sense of wonder, or *thaumazein*. Famously, in the *Theaetetus*, Socrates says, "For this is an experience which is characteristic of a philosopher, this

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[21] PLATO: *Laches*, in SPRAGUE, Rosamond Kent (trans.): *Laches and Charmides*, Hackett, Indianapolis, 1992, p. 188d

[22] PLATO: *Euthyphro,* in GRUBE, G.M.A. and COOPER, J.M. (trans.): *Five Dialogues,* Hackett, Indianapolis, 2002, p. 14b

[23] PLATO: *Apology*, in GRUBE, G.M.A. and COOPER, J.M. (trans.): *Five Dialogues,* Hackett, Indianapolis, 2002, p. 23b

wondering (*thaumazein*): this is where philosophy begins and nowhere else."[24] This oft-quoted sentence has led many scholars to attribute to Plato (or to Plato's Socrates) the claim that philosophy begins in wonder. But Plato gives us very little to go on here. What is this wonder? Why must philosophy begin in *thaumazein*? Ranner[25] argues that *thaumazein* is a philosopher's response to aporia. The choice and determination to continue dwelling in the realization of lack of knowledge, to continue the inquiry – this determination is *thaumazein*; this commitment is the beginning of philosophy. The beginning of philosophy in its original sense as "love of wisdom," not a theoretical, merely intellectual approach, but a true longing and desire. Heidegger writes about this passage, emphasizing the importance continually to *dwell* in wonder:

> This characterization of the origin of philosophy out of marveling… is often quoted and readily cited in order to account for the origin of philosophy psychologically and in that way to deprive philosophy precisely of the wondrous… But what is at issue here is only to raise philosophy – or any other essentially creative power – up into its inexplicability and to preserve it there, and only there, as a possible acquisition against all trivialization. To say philosophy originates in wonder means philosophy is wondrous in its essence and becomes more wondrous the more it becomes what it really is.[26]

This reading of *thaumazein* and its place in inquiry and in philosophy fits well with the Cave allegory. This t*haumazein* is a sort of love (*eros*) of wisdom, a love experienced as wonder. We

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[24] PLATO: *Theaetetus*, LEVETT, M.J. and BURNYEAT Miles (trans.), Hackett, Indianapolis, 1990, p. 155d

[25] RANNER, Oliver: "Plato and Aristotle on the Origin of Philosophy", available in http://www.apaclassics.org/AnnualMeeting/03mtg/abstracts/ranner.html (last access September 30, 2015), 2003.

[26] HEIDEGGER, Martin: *Basic Questions of Philosophy: Selected "Problems" of "Logic",* ROJCEWICZA, Richard and SCHUWER, Andre (trans.), Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1994, p. 141

experience true wonderment when we silently experience an ontological relation with something we really care for but that we cannot find words for or explain. The prisoner shackled all his life in the cave, who escapes to see the real world and eventually the sun, faces pain, hardship, fear, confusion, and is eventually rewarded with the light of truth. His experience is dazzling, blinding and at the same time wondrous and beautiful. Quite an egalitarian for his time, Socrates – who taught youth who could not afford to pay Sophists, and taught a slave boy to do geometry[27] – says after the Cave allegory, "our present discussion… shows that the power to learn is present in everyone's soul and that the instrument with which each learns is like an eye that cannot be turned around from darkness to light without turning the whole body."[28] This strong assertion by Socrates, together with the dialogue model Plato entrusts to us in his works, gives today's researchers a guiding path and also a promise. In a shared inquiry, each soul – researcher's and participant's – can be turned toward the light. This light is not a cognitive truth but rather a living ontological relation and sudden opening that happens so that wordless insight (*nous*) can happen.

   With the cave as a key illustration of the Socratic journey (following the "beloved"), and *thaumazein* understood in this light, it becomes clear that Socrates' questions in the dialogues are not seeking to expose mere logical deficiencies in interlocutors' statements. His questions seek what phenomenologists might call an existential or ontological deficiency. If a person cannot *live* his thoughts, or if his thoughts are out of harmony with each other, he is not out of the cave; he is not in the loving relation with the world. Socrates' dialogues aim to strengthen the interlocutor's

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[27] PLATO: *Meno,* in GRUBE, G.M.A. and COOPER, J.M. (trans.): *Five Dialogues,* Hackett, Indianapolis, 2002, p. 82b-84b
[28] PLATO: *Republic*, GRUBE, G.M.A and REEVE, C.D.C. (trans), Hackett, Indianapolis, 1992, p. 518c

ergon by way of studying and testing the *logos*. Gadamer writes in *Dialogue and Dialectic*:[29] "When we have been disappointed by another and must say of him that 'he has no idea of what friendship is', we are speaking of no logical deficiency in his ability to define something, to be sure, but of a deficiency in knowledge nonetheless." Thus, if we want truly to know what friendship is (ontologically) we must first *live* it, be-with and be-in-relation-to the phenomenon. The prisoner comes out of the cave into the light to *live* The Good and The Beautiful, to hunt for the words (*logoi*) while seeking to ground his deed (*ergon*) in truth (*aletheia*). To seek Doric harmony in life and actions.

Goals and Outcomes of Socratic Dialogue in Qualitative and Action Research

The goal of Socratic dialogue in Plato's works seems to be initially *aporia*, opening the way for *thaumazein* and, ideally, eventually, *aletheia* - truth. The goal of Socratic dialogue in qualitative or action research is largely the same, but with more emphasis on the search for and proper comportment to ground truth as *aletheia*. *Aletheia* is not a propositional truth or a clear concept description. Rather, it is the truth of the Ancient Greeks who came before Plato, the truth before humans began to think of truth as correctness. *Aletheia* is a self-revealing of the phenomenon that is the subject of the inquiry. The phenomenon unconceals itself.[30]

In seeking *aletheia*, Socratic dialogue in research seeks that openness that makes way for *aletheia*: An openness that comes

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[29] GADAMER, Hans-Georg: *Dialogue and Dialectic: Eight Hermeneutical Studies on Plato*, SMITH, P. Christopher (trans.), Yale University Press, New Haven, 1980, p. 10

[30] HEIDEGGER, Martin: *Being and Time*, STAMBAUGH, Joan (trans.), SUNY Press, New York, 2010.

with love (of inquiry, of wisdom), with care (for the phenomenon, for those encountered with it) and with a desire to live an examined life. This research is grounded in Socrates' claim that "an unexamined life is not worth living",[31] a commitment to help participants dwell in wonder rather than give up in *aporia*, to describe authentically lived experience and then move beyond to a reflective view of that experience and of that perspective. In that moving beyond lived experience, the participant and researcher may experience a foreboding – a sense of the phenomenon, of truth itself, concealing itself even as unconcealment is on the horizon. This foreboding is the final preparation for the openness that grounds *aletheia*.

Many elements of Socratic inquiry are synergistic with elements of phenomenological theory and practice. Eidetic reduction, for example, tends to involve comparisons, the imagining of differences, and a testing of what belongs to the phenomenon and what does not. Van Manen describes eidetic reduction in this way:

> Eidetic reduction aims to somehow express in language what is experienced prior to reflection on the experience… In eidedic reduction one needs to see past or through the particularity of lived experience toward the eidos that lies on the other side of the concreteness of lived meaning. The idea of phenomenological eidos does not refer to some immutable universal or generalization about human nature of human life… The first important reminder is that phenomenological inquiry is only concerned with "possible" human experiences - not with experiences that are presumed to be empirically or culturally universal or shared by all human irrespective of time, culture, gender, or other circumstances. The second important reminder is that phenomenological determination of meaning is always indeterminate, always tentative, always incomplete, always inclined to question

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[31] PLATO: *Apology*, in GRUBE, G.M.A. and COOPER, J.M. (trans.): *Five Dialogues,* Hackett, Indianapolis, 2002, p. 38a

assumptions by returning again and again to lived experience itself, the beginning of phenomenological inquiry. [32]

Along similar lines, Socratic inquiry is designed to compare, test assumptions, and ferret out the borders of a phenomenon. In addition to eidetic reduction, the hermeneutic circle is echoed in Socrates' inquiries, which often circle back to the beginning. Heidegger states that on the hermeneutic circle, "every inquiry is a seeking," and that "every seeking gets guided before-hand by what is sought."[33] Socratic method relies on Socrates' (or the researcher's) glimpses of what may lie just ahead in the inquiry to guide the questions asked of the partner or research participant. These glimpses are not just possible logical steps ahead but rather possible inspirations and forebodings from the "reverberation" of the phenomenon being invited into the inquiry.

Similarly, Socrates' model as a midwife suits the modern phenomenological researcher well. Socrates' inquiries are rooted in care – for the phenomenon as such, for his dialogue partners, for his community – just as a modern researcher's inquiry is or should be. In research through Socratic dialogue, the researcher and participant develop a trust and a closeness. The researcher must show vulnerability and expose some of her own assumptions to questioning, just as Socrates does. This finds its zenith in the community of wonder where both the Socratic researcher and the interlocutor(s) are taken and led by the questions and by the subject matter itself. Like Socrates, like a midwife, the researcher leads the participant to a way of self-care – an examined life; an authentic, reflective, philosophical life. By leading participants past *aporia*,

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[32] VAN MANEN, Max: *Phenomenology of Practice. Meaning-giving methods in phenomenological research and writing*. Left Coast Press, Walnut Creek, CA (USA), 2014, pp. 229-230
[33] HEIDEGGER, Martin: *Being and Time*, MACQUARRIE, J. and ROBINSON, E. (trans.), Harper & Row, New York, 1962, p. 24

encouraging them to dwell in wonder, to welcome the foreboding of the phenomenon as truth withdraws and then is revealed, the researcher can hope to help participants develop tools or cultivate virtues to keep thinking and reflecting beyond the limited situation of the interview or of the group research sessions. The researcher can guide participants to continue to see the sun even when they must journey back into the everyday life of the cave – whether that be taking care of a loved one with Alzheimer's or living one's daily professional practice.

In practice, Socratic dialogue in research follows the same principles and techniques as Socrates in Plato's dialogues. The researcher may start by asking for a definition or asks some other foundational question. In trying to answer the initial question, the participant is likely to hit obstacles and to discover conflicts in beliefs as the researcher asks about examples or offers analogies. Through this process, the participant's naturally *cognitive* approach to the phenomenon is accepted and even welcomed but eventually defeated. Any phenomenon under study resists clear, simple, objective description; the phenomenon conceals itself. Once the cognitive approach proves a challenge and ends in *aporia*, once the participants have rich awareness of their not-knowing about the phenomenon, the participants are ready for wonder, *thaumazein*, for openness to the mystery.[34] With the cognitive approach closed down, researcher and participant can stop *thinking at* the phenomenon and begin to *dwell in* that uncomfortable but intriguing space of ignorance and longing-to-know, the place where a certain "hearken" and foreboding starts to appear. They can pursue wisdom together, excitedly chasing after the call of the phenomenon. In their community of wonder, they can practice love-of-wisdom, philosophy, together. This process is akin to what

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[34] HEIDEGGER, Martin: *Discourse on Thinking*, ANDERSON, J.M. and FREUND, E.H. (trans.), Harper Torchbooks, New York, 1969.

Heidegger calls "the critical regress from correctness to openness."[35]

Having moved beyond the merely cognitive, this wonder and awareness of mystery allow participants to focus on their lived experience of and with the phenomenon. How has it actually appeared and been experienced, beyond what we *think* it is supposed to be? This phase of the qualitative interview, or of the "Wonder Lab" in the action research process, asks participants to relate to the phenomenon in an experiential, existential, even ontological way. What is it to be-with the phenomenon? To be-in-the-world in relation to the phenomenon? Participants are helped to articulate what they have witnessed and experienced, with many of their presuppositions and opinions now cleared away. In focusing on their lived experience, they come closer to their immediate connection with the phenomenon.

While lived experience is the focus or even the goal of much qualitative research in current practice, lived experience alone raises concerns about what it does or does not reveal about the phenomenon. Brinkmann[36] argues that limited questioning designed to elicit descriptions of lived experience lets the researcher learn more about the participant than about the phenomenon; he calls these interviews "doxastic," stating that they reveal primarily the participants' impressions or opinions about the phenomenon[37]. Van Manen[38] also discusses the limitations of a

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[35] HEIDEGGER, Martin: *Contributions to Philosophy (of the Event)*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 2012, p. 261

[36] BRINKMANN, Svend: "Could Interviews Be Epistemic? An Alternative to Qualitative Opinion Polling", in *Qualitative Inquiry*, Vol. 13, No. 8 (December), Los Angeles, 2007, pp. 1116-1138.

[37] Brinkmann instead suggests that we must go from doxastic intervieweing to 'epistemic interviewing', and Brinkmann connects the Socratic dialogue and maeiutics as a model for this epistemic interviewing in qualitative research in order to produce better scientific knowledge. But Hansen (2015a, 2015b) critically discusses this suggestion by Brinkmann and argues for a Socratic

focus on lived experience. Experience, he says, is immediate and elusive; complex enough that it is difficult for any description to capture its essence.

Heidegger also explores the limitations of lived experience. In *The Origin of the Work of Art*, his concerns about experience of art can alert us to concerns about focus on experience overall. He argues, "The way in which man experiences art is supposed to give information about its nature. Experience is the source that is standard … for art appreciation…Everything is an experience. Yet perhaps experience is the element in which art dies."[39] Heidegger is concerned that by focusing on experience, we Enframe the work of art, filtering and predetermining how it should appear to us. We force it to appear before us, to appear *for* us. Generalizing from Heidegger's concerns here about understanding art merely through experience, we can see that focus on lived experience leads participants to ask, "what does the phenomenon mean to *me*? How does it appear to *me*?" Focus on lived experience is a very useful step in grasping our direct connections with the phenomenon and beginning to articulate our experiences of the phenomenon. Limiting ourselves to lived experience, however, does an injustice to the phenomenon and fails to lay the groundwork for the process of *aletheia*.

Heidegger voices similar concerns about lived experience in *Contributions to Philosophy (Of the Event)*. In that work, he finds that "lived experience promotes and entrenches the anthropological

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interviewing that goes from doxa over episteme to thaumazein as it is in fact not knowledge, but this special kind of ontological not-knowing; a phenomenological, silent and wondrous seeing into the heart of things that may be the overall purpose of the Socratic maeiutics.

[38] VAN MANEN, Max: *Researching lived experience: Human science for an action sensitive pedagogy*, SUNY, New York, 1997.

[39] HEIDEGGER, Martin: *Poetry, Language, Thought*, Harper & Row Publishers, New York, 1975, p. 79

way of thinking."[40] He sees the focus on lived experience as linked to machination and our obsessive need to explain (and thereby control) everything, while beyng and truth abandon us.[41] Heidegger thus urges us to reach beyond this anthropocentric view to that which withdraws from us. To put this same idea in Socratic terms, the concern seems to be that even in focusing on lived experience, there is still an illusion of knowing, a blocking out of the not-knowing, of the phenomenon and truth that withdraw from us even as we try to grasp them. Of course, in any phenomenological inquiry, we are always examining the phenomenon through experience, because experience is all we have; experience is reality.

Nevertheless, addressing the concerns voiced above, we do not have to put ourselves at the center of that experiential truth. A philosophical practitioner can help a research participant move to a more reflective critical mode, looking from outside at this lived experience. The practitioner first can encourage the participants to 'unfreeze' the frozen concepts, assumptions, or intuitions which the participant has used to describe this lived experience or which seem to be taken for granted in the description. Next this Socratic practitioner can join the participants in trying to think *from within* or *towards* that which seems to emerge when the frozen concepts are opened up and the phenomenon becomes more free to 'speak back' in its own voice. To get into a resonance or dialogue with that 'voice', the researcher and participants in the dialogue have to move into a more contemplative, wondrous and listening kind of attuned thinking (which the Greeks called the movement of *theoria*). This critical reflection and wondrous thinking may parallel the journey out of Plato's cave, a journey researcher and participant make together.

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[40] HEIDEGGER, Martin: *Contributions to Philosophy (of the Event)*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 2012, p. 104
[41] Ibid, pp. 103-104

Awareness of the limits of lived experience, as this seeming knowing is revealed to be a new stage of not-knowing, can help bring on an uneasiness, a restlessness or anxiety, like what Heidegger calls the foreboding: "In the first beginning: wonder. In the other beginning: foreboding."[42] Many if not all researchers have experienced this foreboding, even if they have not labelled it in this way. It can be that spine-tingling or eerie sense that something beyond us speaks to us even as it withdraws. Heidegger says it is the "basic disposition" needed for *aletheia*; a disposition without which "everything is a forced clatter of concepts and of the mere shells of words."[43] Heidegger says the term "foreboding" will not always capture this disposition, which might also be called "shock" or "restraint." In whatever form it takes, it is the "sheltering of the unconcealment of the concealed",[44] i.e. it is the ground for *aletheia*.

In Socratic interviewing and the action-in-the-field done by the 'Wonder Lab' of Socratic action research (see later), as the researcher guides participants past the cognitive and any "clatter of concepts" or "mere shells of words" to *aporia* to a state of wonder and then a realization of the limitations of lived experience, the Socratic questioning provides a consistent reminder of the not-knowing. It brings on the vulnerability experienced in foreboding in order to make way for *aletheia*. Returning to the interpretation of Plato's *thaumazein* as a philosopher's response to *aporia*, Socratic questioning maintains the acceptance – even the embrace - of the not-knowing. It preserves the choice to inquire, to listen, to wonder, rather than to admit defeat or to declare a question decided. Heidegger calls for this same sort of attitude when he declares,

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[42] Ibid, p. 18
[43] HEIDEGGER, Martin: *Contributions to Philosophy (of the Event)*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 2012, p. 19
[44] Ibid, p. 19

"The questioners have broken the habit of curiosity; their seeking loves the abyss, in which they know the oldest ground."[45]

Socratic questioning thus prepares the way for *aletheia* by establishing and preserving the proper comportment for the grounding of *aletheia*. Truth as *aletheia* is an event, a clearing. This clearing, Heidegger says, is the clearing "for concealment (truth as un-truth), in itself conflictual." Truth, he says, is "the clearing for self-concealing."[46] On this understanding of truth, one cannot have truth (unconcealment) without concealment. Socratic inquiry's preservation of the not-knowing acts as a concealment – a shutting down of assumptions and of demands projected at the phenomenon, with a resulting protecting concealment to allow for the phenomenon's unconcealment. Heidegger makes the importance of this knowing-we-do-not-know clear in his insistence that the clearing, the potential unfolding of *aletheia*, must not become "an emptiness in which everything simply presents itself as equally easy to 'understand' and master."[47]

Socratic questioning, among all forms of dialogue, has perhaps the unique ability to maintain concealment – this awareness of not-knowing – while preparing the ground for unconcealment. Heidegger argues:

> The self-concealing protrudes through the clearing, and only if that happens, i.e. only if the conflictual in its intimacy reigns throughout the 'there,' can the dislodgement from the indeterminate (and, as such, not at all grasped) domain of representation and lived experience succeed and can steadfastness in Da-sein be attempted… Therefore truth is never merely clearing; it essentially occurs as concealment just as originarily and intimately along with the clearing. These, clearing and

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[45] Ibid, p. 13
[46] Ibid, p. 273
[47] Ibid, p. 276

concealment, are not two; instead they constitute the essential occurrence of the one truth itself.[48]

Thus, Socratic dialogue's reciprocal relationship between not-knowing and the love of wisdom and inquiry, between *thaumazein* and *aletheia*, may suit it perfectly for preserving and following this conflictual yet necessary relationship between concealment and unconcealment.

The Socratic researcher's goal to help participants live philosophically, to live an examined life, also fits well with what Heidegger views as the authentic life for *Da-sein*. He worries that we have lost the ability to be *Da-sein* as we fall prey to belief in our own knowledge and the control and power over the world that come with that knowledge. He urges that we must "let *Da-sein* arise out of … the essential occurrence of truth in order to ground therein beings as a whole and as such and, in the midst of them, to ground the human being."[49] Our calling, Heidegger believes, our role as *Da-sein* if we are to live authentically, happens only "in the modes in which truth is sheltered out of the securing of the cleared-concealed event."[50]

Thus, to pursue Socratic inquiry, to remain in wonder with a preservation of the not-knowing, is to live authentically, to live philosophically; to resist being curious for answers and instead remain open to being a ground for truth to reveal itself. When researcher and participant become, together, a ground for the clearing that is *aletheia*, the researcher is helping the participant to live authentically. There is a vulnerability in this process for both researcher and participant; they are allowing themselves to be thrown, unprotected, into the happening of the clearing.[51] This

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[48] Ibid, p. 276
[49] Ibid, p. 9
[50] Ibid, p. 26
[51] HEIDEGGER, Martin: *Contributions to Philosophy (of the Event)*, Indiana

vulnerability requires the care, trust, and respect that Socrates so often models in Plato's dialogues.

Socratic Dialogue in Practice – Qualitative Research and Action Research

A qualitative or action researcher who wishes to guide participants through this process from a cognitive to a more ontological approach to the phenomenon, seeking an openness as a grounding for *aletheia*, will be served well by a Socratic shared inquiry approach. Just as importantly, this approach enables the researcher herself to remain open, as the dialogue tests her own assumptions as well, avoiding what Gadamer calls "the tyranny of hidden prejudices that [make] us deaf to what speaks to us."[52] In addition to the benefits of the dialogue itself, beginning with a definitional question allows the researcher to start at a neutral point so that interview participants can take the conversation in their own direction. Participants are likely to introduce ideas the researcher may not have anticipated.

Following are specific examples from qualitative and action research to help give a more thorough picture of how this method unfolds in both of these contexts. In both qualitative one-on-one interviews and in action research in a group practice setting, it is best to explain to participants a bit about the method, so that participants will not be caught off guard by the questioning, nor mistake it as meant to challenge in an unfriendly way. The researcher might say, "I may press you a bit, and that is so we can both work to understand the implications of what you are saying." The researcher should make explicit that this is a shared inquiry: "I

University Press, Bloomington, 2012, p. 260
[52] GADAMER, Hans-Georg: *Truth and Method*, Sheed and Ward Ltd., London, 1989, p. 270

don't know the answers either – I want to learn from you," an echo of what Socrates tells his dialogue partners in almost every Platonic dialogue. [53]

A researcher using Socratic dialogue makes herself more vulnerable than one who is using a more structured approach to interviewing, for instance one with largely pre-determined questions. She must be ready to expose her own doubts and prejudices and also to think on her feet. Because the dialogue can be challenging for the researcher and participants, it is all the more important for the researcher to model clearly the virtues of friendship, love, humility, patience, humor, and courage. The researcher thereby can invite the participants to practice these same virtues: the courage to put oneself at play, to take a stand; the patience to wait for the phenomenon's call; the humility in accepting, without being too discouraged, our own lack of knowledge.

Socratic one-on-one interviews in qualitative research

In one-on-one interviews in qualitative research, after setting the stage and explaining the method, the researcher starts by asking for a definition of the phenomenon in question. Most likely, the participants have been chosen because of some significant connection with the phenomenon, so they will expect that they know a fair amount about it. In a recent study on women's experiences writing a dissertation,[54] the researcher started with the

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[53] See, e.g., PLATO: *Euthyphro,* in GRUBE, G.M.A. and COOPER, J.M. (trans.): *Five Dialogues,* Hackett, Indianapolis, 2002, p. 16a; PLATO: *Meno,* in GRUBE, G.M.A. and COOPER, J.M. (trans.): *Five Dialogues,* Hackett, Indianapolis, 2002, p. 70b-70c

[54] DINKINS, Christine Sorrell and SORRELL, Jeanne: *Our Dissertations, Ourselves: Shared Stories of Women's Dissertation Journeys*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2014.

question, "what is a dissertation?" Some participants tried definitions that were ultimately abandoned or heavily revised, while others were stuck from the very start, realizing they had written an entire dissertation but still could not say what one is.

When Eleanor was asked, "what is a dissertation?" she said: "When I started thinking about that question, I had trouble separating it from what I believe other people think it should be . . . and it's kind of funny because one of the things I think a dissertation is means our making that separation, and figuring out what we really do believe."[55] Here, we see Eleanor catching herself tempted to violate the "say what you believe" principle. It is often easier to articulate what we know others say of the phenomenon – what it is *supposed* to be – than what we think it is ourselves. Alecia found she could best express her definition of a dissertation through an analogy:

> The whole idea is very pregnancy-like, it's very much your baby that you create, but… it's totally you and I guess what people are able to do is to say, okay, this is my genes, and I want this, this, this, this, this, and this… having this huge project that looms ahead of you that you've spent all this time working in this area, developing this thing, you have some definite ideas about how this is, and then you're creating this kinda baby of yours.[56]

Many of the participants found that their understanding of a dissertation had changed as they had progressed in the writing process. Mary said, "When you start you think, oh, I'm going to answer an enormous question and make such a difference. But that's just not true. You're going to answer maybe a part of a question, or you're going to add to the body of knowledge about a

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[55] DINKINS, Christine Sorrell and SORRELL, Jeanne: *Our Dissertations, Ourselves: Shared Stories of Women's Dissertation Journeys*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2014, p. 3
[56] Ibid, p. 4

question that others are working on. But that kept me up at night, you know?"[57] In all of these interviews, the definition or the attempt at a definition is never a conclusive answer. Instead, the attempt at the definition opens up the participant's thinking, exposing assumptions, forcing a comparison of beliefs with each other and with actual experience, opening up the inquiry for genuine curiosity and wonder.

Examples and analogies help a participant in one-on-one interviews explore and test their beliefs and statements about the phenomenon. In a research study on the value of a face-to-face liberal arts education,[58] several students were asked the initial question, "What is X College to you?" The students explained that faculty and staff at their college "cared" about them as people, not just students. The concept of care can mean many things, and therefore examples and analogies were necessary to examine these statements further. How is this care the same or different as the care you would expect from a professional to a client, from a doctor to a patient? How is it the same or different from the care of a family member? One student explained that caring from faculty is unique:

> When you know that you are going to be asked to be engaged personally, there is an accountability there. It's like the professor says, "I care about you and I'm invested in you" - holding me accountable - I have to perform to get the most out of that relationship, and in the freshman year, we might not do that, but when you finally do that, the rewards are out of this world.

Another student responded, "it's more of a mentor/protégé sort of thing and that's been vitally important towards development of what I believe and my approach to my academics." This response,

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[57] Ibid, p. 6
[58] DINKINS, Christine Sorrell: "Articulating the Value of a Face-to-Face Liberal Arts Education," unpublished study.

in turn, prompted questions about what mentor and protégé meant in this context.

When a college counselor in this study said that the culture on campus is like that of family, this claim necessitated prompting on the ways in which the culture is or is not like a family of mother, father, son, or daughter living in a household. This questioning allowed the counselor to clarify that part of the family aspect on the campus *is* the living together, the being there for each other: "most of our students might [when they are stressed] - if they were living at home or in a different place might go to a parent or a best friend or someone who had known them for a long time - and they come here and they don't have that. They are looking for a safe place to be." The counselor explained, "I think that we do a lot of times help cushion or take the place of that family unit that these students are leaving for the first time."

In these one-on-one interviews, the researcher is always midwifing. She is connecting ideas, looking to see which ones might match up to lead to a fruitful step in the inquiry, even if that step is primarily a negative or purgatory one – bringing to light prejudices or gaps in knowledge. The interviews always reach a point of *aporia* in which both researcher and participant realize that what they do not know about the phenomenon far outweighs what they do know. In the dissertation study, this *aporia* was particularly powerful, as the women participants realized that after years of writing and eventually completing a dissertation, they still did not know what it was. This realization of not-knowing led to important dialogue about the lack of clarity in graduate programs about what a dissertation is or supposed to be, and eventually led to a link between this uncertainty and the frustrations and feelings of isolation the women had experienced.[59] The researcher and each

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[59] DINKINS, Christine Sorrell and SORRELL, Jeanne: *Our Dissertations, Ourselves: Shared Stories of Women's Dissertation Journeys*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2014, p. 19-21

participant thus moved from failed definitions, to *aporia*, to wonder and a richer description of the participants' broader lived experiences. In reflecting on these lived experiences, both researcher and participant came upon an uneasiness, and in it a tantalizing call, to learn more of the truth of the phenomenon under study.

In these one-on-one qualitative research interviews, the researcher is the keeper of the hermeneutic circle, welcoming a deliberate and fruitful circularity. The researcher may ask the same questions more than once of the same participant, comparing different answers the participant gives. Or she might retrace a conversation back to its beginning to see what details might have been overlooked or omitted. The researcher may even notice that the participant's own ideas from the beginning of an interview return later in the same interview; she then follows up on the implied connection that might warrant further investigation. The Socratic qualitative researcher follows the hermeneutic circle not just in this kind of circling back to earlier parts of an interview, but also in connecting one interview to the next. She allows what is learned in each interview to inform and influence her questions and responses in the interviews that follow. In this way, even though the participants do not have a chance to dialogue directly with each other, the researcher can serve as a connector of the separate shared inquiries, helping to make them part of a larger whole.

Socratic dialogue groups and 'wonder labs' in action research

There are of course many similarities between the Socratic dialogue form as it unfolds in a one-on-one interview in qualitative research and as it is played out in a Socratic dialogue group and wonder lab in an action research project. The processes and journey of first reflecting critically about a chosen concept or question and later to arrive at an epistemological puzzlement (*aporia*) and later

again to an ontological wonderment (*thaumazein*) and end in a kind of listening to the Call and truth-telling of the phenomenon (*aletheia*) in the lived experience – is the same journey in a Socratic action research approach.

The difference, however, might be seen in the following four aspects:

1) *When research is done in shared group sessions and inquires*: In an action research project and process[60] the action researcher is supposed to go into the field and participate on an equal level with the members of an organization or profession. Together the action researcher and pilot group of say 7 practitioners, decide on what kind of problem, possibility or wonderment they want to inquire into. The practitioners are seen as co-inquirers (not doing research on people but with people) in an even more radical way than qualitative researchers normally will describe their interactions and dialogues with the interviewees. Thus, doing action research is not so much as a qualitative researcher a question of going out to people in the professional field in order through interviews and observations to do an information gatherings and then later – safely back in the armchair – to reflect upon and analyze the 'empirical data'. This is not the case of course in the above description of Socratic one-on-one interviews in qualitative research done by Dinkins. But you can still say that the Socratic one-on-one interview is a kind of serial process of many interviews with many different people, where the only remaining person is the qualitative researcher. She moves around like a bee collecting 'philosophical nectar' at each one-on-one interview and back at the office and in dialogue with the academic research environment she herself develops the final 'honey' – the research result. Of course there will also be moments of armchair reflecting and 'academic honey-

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[60] BRADBURY, Hilary (ed.): *The SAGE Handbook of Action Research*, 3rd Edition, SAGE Publications, Los Angeles, 2015.

making' as well in the action researcher's work. But the Socratic action research is a more shared inquiry where the action researcher meets with the same group of people and main parts of the researching 'happens-in-action' and group sessions. And while always reflecting and being in groups the action researcher is also allowed more than 'the serial qualitative researcher', to have a better chance of following a dialogue and a thinking and a practice-based research that really is more in the hand of the practitioners than in the researcher's hand. The researcher thus can act as midwife, a 'match-encourager' of trying out life forms and ways of living in the participants' own lives where different important philosophical ideas are lived out – and tried out *in* the living or by living it at the concrete place or in the organization over time.

2) *Time, lots of time, is the leisure of doing Socratic action research*: The action researcher must allowed a huge amount of time that to stay out in the practice and culture of the practitioners, as well as time to facilitate different forms of Socratic dialogue groups or other wonder-based dialogue and reflection workshops with the participants. This extra time dimension seems paramount for the results of the Socratic action research.

Firstly it helps the Socratic action researcher to dwell in the unique life form and culture of the practitioners. Not in order – as the anthropologist – to spot and describe socio-cultural and socio-material patterns and habits, but rather to experience more phenomenological, at least in a glimpse, what it is like to be in such practices. This may help the Socratic action researcher to 'wonder-from-within-practice' at least in a better way than if the action researcher was only staying in the organization or professional community of practice for short visits. So in order to look for and critically question the 'lived philosophy' of the practice, that the practitioners seems to take for granted, it helps that the Socratic action researcher has also an embodied and lived experience of being in this place. But for sure, only the practitioner himself can

be a true insider of this place and practice. So the main purpose of the Socratic action researcher is – through dialogues and shared reflection-in-actions-with-the-practitioners – to act as a midwife for the lived philosophies and fundamental assumptions and values that is silently and often unnoticed taken for granted by the practitioners themselves.

Secondly it is also important to notice that to get people into an authentic and living wonderment in connection with the practitioners' own lives, lived experiences and professional practices – time, lots of tranquil and continuous time, is needed. Experiences from doing Socratic action research on a Danish design school[61] and a Danish hospice[62] shows that the most important insights, openings and wonderments did not in fact emerge during the facilitated group sessions and workshop (the Wonder Labs) but happened between these meetings and gatherings. Typically these wonderments and invocative clearings would happen when the practitioner was driving home, walking by the beach, taking a shower, or other places where an insight or wonder suddenly and unexpectedly came as an inspiration. Typically a Socratic action project will be of minimum one year and normally 2-3 years. And this of course will also give the action researcher and his co-inquirers in the field many opportunities to try out things, do experiments alone by themselves or with the action researcher and to let a more slow *Bildung* process occur

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[61] HANSEN, Finn Thorbjørn: *Kan man under sig uden ord? Design- og universitetspædagogik på kreative videregående uddannelser* [Can We Wonder without Words? Design and University Pedagogic in Creative Higher Education]. Aalborg Universitetsforlag, Aalborg, 2014.
[62] HANSEN, Finn Thorbjørn: *At undre sig ved livets afslutning: Om brugen af filosofiske samtaler i palliativt arbejde* [To Wonder at the End of Life: About the use of philosophical conversations in palliative care], Akademisk Forlag, Copenhagen, forthcoming.

where the Socratic virtues, mentioned above, can be learning and trained.

3) Wonder Labs as the action-in-the-field: When doing action research the people engaged are also expected to do some sort of new action in the field or professional practice in order to initiate change in the organization or professional practice 'for the better'. What 'for the better' means depend on what kind of tradition of action research we are working within. It is, though, important to know that normally action research is understood as a problem-solving and pro-active and emancipatory performance, where there is a goal for change to come in the organization or profession. The Norwegian action researcher, Olav Eikeland[63] would call such an action research for a practice-oriented and practice-based action research as opposed to praxis-oriented and praxis-based action research. Eikeland draws on the philosophy of Aristotle (especially *The Nicomachean Ethics*) and his notion of *praxis* as an activity that is a value in itself. Whereas *practice* is understood as mean for something else, when we really want to focus on the ethical and existential dimensions of a profession or organization Eikeland asserts that we must then concentrate primarily on action research as *praxis research*. This is also the case in the Socratic action research. As a result of this in a Socratic action research project we will not be searching for problems and pragmatic problem-solutions but rather after wonders, fascination, or life impressions that really have made an impression on us. The philosophy is that when being in a praxis we are on a more existential, ethical and ontological level in resonance with life and what is meaningful and

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[63] EIKELAND, Olav: "Phronesis, Aristotle, ad Action Research", in *International Journal of Action Research*, Vol. 2, No. 1, São Leopoldo-RS, Brazil, 2008, pp. 5-53; EIKELAND, Olav: "Action Research – Applied Research, Intervention Research, Collaborative Research, Practitioner Research, or Praxis Research?", in *International Journal of Action Research*. Vol. 8, No. 1, São Leopoldo-RS, Brazil, 2012, pp. 9-44.

worthy as such in being in and doing this praxis. So, the question the Socratic action researcher raises with his co-inquirers from the profession or organization is: How can we better connect with those enigmatic sources or life phenomena in daily life and professional and organizational work and living from where a deeper experience of meaning, beauty, and goodness is experienced? So, in order to awaken a growing sense for the "…regions where meanings and understanding originate, well up, and percolate, infect, touch, stir us, and exercise a formative and affective effect on our being…"[64] the Socratic action research that Hansen[65] has facilitated was typically built up around a Wonder Lab. This lab was a serial workshop of different exercises in phenomenological, hermeneutic, Socratic-dialectical, existential-contemplative and phronetic reflections and dialogue forms.[66] By going together as travel companions through these different forms of wonder-based reflections and actions the participants and the action researcher got – over due time – into a deeper dialogue with the praxis and the life phenomenon in this praxis which seems to call their attention. In the Wonder Lab they did not start up with a

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[64] VAN MANEN, Max: *Phenomenology of Practice. Meaning-giving methods in phenomenological research and writing*. Left Coast Press, Walnut Creek, CA (USA), 2014, p. 26-27

[65] HANSEN, Finn Thorbjørn: *Kan man under sig uden ord? Design- og universitetspædagogik på kreative videregående uddannelser* [Can We Wonder without Words*?* Design and University Pedagogic in Creative Higher Education]. Aalborg Universitetsforlag, Aalborg, 2014.

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[66] For a more detailed and step-by-step-description of these five momentums in the Wonder Lab, please read HANSEN, Finn Thorbjørn: "The Call and Practice of Wonder: How to Evoke a Socratic Community of Wonder in Professional Settings", in WEISS, Michael Noah (ed.): *The Socratic Handbook*, LIT Verlag, Vienna, 2015.

clear and chosen question or clarification of a definition as in a Socratic one-on-one interview. They typically started out with a story and lived experience of 'something' (they did *not* know what is was from the beginning), that seems to have made a great impression on them when working or being in their daily work life at the organization.

The researcher first facilitates the wonder lab, but then the practitioners themselves will make their own kind of wonder labs (and experiments of wonder-based reflections) *within* their own profession with colleagues that are not in the pilot group of the action research project. This is to see how *they* will change and find new and better ways to create wonder-based reflections and dialogues in their own context. And when that happens - about half in the 2 or 3 year project – then and only then the action researcher might follow the co-inquirers more as a Socratic qualitative researcher - interviewing and observing them in the Socratic way that Dinkins does in her research.

4) To encourage the practitioners to live a philosophical life in their own praxis: At last note on the feature of the Socratic action research is the ambition to train the practitioners to become Socratic researchers in their own praxis. Through the exercises and training in Socratic dialogue groups[67] and Wonder Labs they will acquire a growing phenomenological sensitivity as well as a Socratic musicality for hearing and seeing the wonders and mysteries in their daily work life and life as such. This will help them also after the Socratic action researcher has 'left the ship' to take over and start taking 'phenomenological snapshots' from their life-worlds as practitioners in their field as well as creating Socratic communities of wonder on their own. This was indeed what happed for the staff of the Danish hospice when the action research project

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[67] HANSEN, Finn Thorbjørn: *Den sokratiske dialoggruppe* [The Socratic Dialogue Group], Gyldendal, Copenhagen, 2000.

was over. Today they have a continuous wonder lab each second week on equal basis as the psychological supervision group which also is held with the staff every second week.

Conclusion

While the techniques and principles discussed in this article are a helpful base for Socratic interviewing or Socratic action research through wonder labs, a researcher wishing to try them out should not let herself become too tied to the specifics of these techniques. Certainly, they are important, and Plato in his illustration of Socrates' dialogues employed them for a reason. Also important, though, is the dialogue itself. A dialogue between researcher and participants must be authentic, a genuine interaction in which the researcher listens carefully and respectfully and responds and questions honestly and openly.

After years of conducting qualitative and action research using Socratic shared inquiry, both authors have found it fruitful and rewarding for researcher and participants alike. Participants in one-on-one interviews tend to report them being "cathartic" or "fun." Participants find the interviews to be revelatory, and they seem to enjoy reflecting on and questioning their own beliefs. In action research there seems to follow a kind of philosophical lifestyle and *Bildung* process among the practitioner in the aftermath of a Socratic action research. And when evaluating the whole process many of the practitioners comment on the new kind of slowness and careful awareness in their thinking, that makes them able to 'stand in the openness' without rushing to find an answer or find a quick solution. At the Danish Hospice one of the older and very experienced palliative nurses said that one of the greatest things she learned for the action research project was the possibility as a professional to "become small together around the Big Questions".

This experience had taught her how not to try to act (seemingly professionally) as if one knows things – when in fact we in the encounter with the big question of life and death are all equals as fellow human beings, whether a patient, a relative, a nurse, or a philosopher.

The hope of the authors is that researchers who find their goals aligned with those outlined here will try out the Socratic approach in their research. Because of its flexibility and responsiveness, it can lead to wonderful connections between researcher and participant, and thus is rewarding not just in the research produced but in the journey to get there.

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