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**DEMOCRACY EDUCATION THE DIALOGOS WAY:
THE CASE OF UKRAINEAN TEACHER EDUCATION****Guro Hansen Helskog**

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Abstract. This paper takes its point of departure in action learning- and research carried out with teacher educators from six universities within the project Democracy Education in Ukraine, Norway and Palestine. The teacher educators received training in accordance with the Dialogos approach to dialogical philosophizing, and tried out the approach with colleagues and/or with students in their own teaching practices. However, the main concern of the article is the discussion the potential of action learning and action research in teacher education when it comes to the development of phronesis or practical wisdom as an element in democracy education. Democracy Education the Dialogos Way is part of the project Democracy Education in Ukraine, Norway and Palestine. The author stresses that the results of the project can be studied from many perspectives. In accordance to the author's point of view, it is relevant to see the project as a new step in the bigger action research project work to justify and show the relevance of the Dialogos approach, regarding the enhancement of democratic ways of living together in a shared world. Important in this respect, is that edification towards wisdom and prudence cannot be taught directly. It requires active participation from the student, a will to wisdom and a willingness to put his or her horizon of understanding into play in the educational situation. It requires teacher educators who are willing to do the same. The teacher educators and the students are in the philosophical dialogues as well as in the action research together. The author describes how she let Socrates speak through the written dialogue of Plato's Republic. The author concluded that according to Socrates the faculty of sight already exists in the human being. It needs only to be re-awakened.

Key words: Democracy Education; Philosophizing the Dialogos Way; Art of Living; Action Learning; Action Research; Phronesis; Practical Wisdom; Teacher Education.

Introduction. As part of the project "Democracy Education in Ukraine, Norway and Palestine"¹ I have had the honor of facilitating two three-day Dialogos workshops with teacher educators from six universities in Ukraine, organized as an action learning- and research project (Tiller, 1999, 2004). The word *dialogos* consists of two parts – *dia* meaning through, and *logos* meaning word, speech, reason and wisdom. It is an element in the word *logic*, as well as referring to cosmos and divine love. Essential to *the Dialogos approach* is holistic dialogical and thus democratic work on philosophical ideas and concepts from logical, emotional, experiential, existential and spiritual starting points and perspectives. Joint investigation of phenomena implied in the art of living well is at the core of the approach. It is a form of pedagogical

¹ The project is funded by DIKU- the Norwegian Directorate for Internationalization of Education, and is lead by Øyvind Wistrøm and Ingrid Reite Christensen.

philosophical practice aimed at nurturing our inner lives and our relationships by searching wisdom together from different angles. At its best, a Dialogos process not only promotes self-knowledge, flexibility of mind, inner peace and understanding of our relations to others and to the world. It also creates flexible relationships and deep connection between people, thus bridging world divides. This is especially important in culturally and religiously diverse contexts where misunderstandings and conflict can arise simply due to differences for instance in habits, values or beliefs. Hence, the Dialogos approach to philosophizing in education is inherently democratic (Stokke and Helskog, 2014; Helskog, 2015, 2017, 2019).

“Know yourself” was inscribed above the Apollo temple in Delphi. Learning to know oneself was a core aim not only of ancient “Western” philosophies of living, but also to ancient “Eastern” philosophies such as the more than 5000 years old Indian yoga tradition. Learning to know ourselves is also a core aim of Dialogos. Though Dialogos dialogues we “read” the text inscribed in our lives, as these are contextualized in the cultural webs we find ourselves embedded in. Dialogos is thus a school in the classical sense of the word: It is a free space where people can contemplate and reflect together with others upon questions of importance to them, personally as well as professionally. Through philosophizing the Dialogos way peoples’ lives might even become better, as has been the case in several projects in which the Dialogos approach has been tried out and researched through action research (Helskog, 2014, 2015, 2017, 2019).

In the Democracy Education in Ukraine, Norway and Palestine-project, one Dialogos workshop was held in November 2018, the other in May 2019, under the label “democracy in communication”². The workshops were drawing on the books *Dialogos – praktisk filosofi i skolen* (Helskog and Ribe, 2008, 2009), and *Philosophizing the Dialogos Way towards Wisdom in Education* (Helskog, 2019), as well as the article *Promoting Dialogical Democracy* (Stokke and Helskog, 2014). Chapter introductions and a couple of exercises from the original Dialogos books were translated to Ukrainian. Between and after the workshops, the teacher educators were supposed to try out the Dialogos approach to dialogical philosophizing in their own contexts. Later, they were supposed to teach groups of minimum ten colleagues each, making them able to facilitate Dialogos dialogues with students by themselves, with the aim of enhancing promoting democracy in education and society.

Despite the limited training, the teacher educators who participated in the Dialogos workshops have shown a remarkable willingness to learn and to practice what

² Other workshops held parallel to the democracy in communication/Dialogos workshop, were workshops on democracy in mathematics lead by Sikunder Ali Baber, democracy in natural science held by Katrine Husby and democracy in social sciences held by Stig Bjørshol, as well as a workshop in action research held by Heidi Biseth.

they have learned. Some have already published from their work, and/or are working on publications. However, this essay is not an analysis of this work as such. Rather, it is a reflection upon reflective action research as a fruitful approach both for me and for the teacher educators when we are to plan, act and analyze processes and outcomes of our work in this and similar projects. However, to provide a concrete starting point for such a reflection, answering a first cluster of questions might be helpful: *What is action research, and how is it relevant to democracy education?*

Action research. Action research is often claimed to have originated with the work of American social psychologist Kurt Lewin (Argyris, Putnam, and Smith, 1985; Coghlan and Brannick, 2001; McNiff and Whitehead, 2002). Lewin argued that in order to understand and change certain social practices, social scientists have to include practitioners from the real social world in all phases of inquiry (Lewin, 1946, 1948). After Lewin, a bundle of different action research approaches and definitions have emerged. However, action research is often described as a form of collective self-reflective inquiry undertaken by participants in social situations in order to improve their ways of being together in social or educational practices, as well as of their understanding of these practices and the situations within which they are carried out. Within most definitions of action research there are four basic themes: empowerment of participants; collaboration through participation; acquisition of knowledge; and social change. The process that the researcher goes through to achieve these themes is a spiral of action research cycles consisting of at least four major phrases: planning, acting, observing and reflecting. In action research, practitioners and researchers, teachers and students, collaborate with the aim of improving their ways of living and acting together in the social context they find themselves in. Hence, because of the participatory and collaborative features of reflective action research, it is inherently democratic.

Democracy education the Dialogos way through action research in Ukraine. These understandings are relevant both to my work with Ukrainian teacher educators, and to their work with their own colleagues and students again. I planned and conducted the *action* as a Dialogos workshop modelled after a project I had conducted with teachers from 13 upper secondary schools in Norway earlier in the fall of 2018 (Helskog and Weiss, forthcoming; Weiss and Helskog, forthcoming), with the following content:

DIALOGOS WORKSHOP WITH UKRAINEAN TEACHER EDUCATORS	
Day 1	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Questioning 2. Reflecting upon experience 3. Statements, arguments and reasons 4. Criteria and perspectives

Day 2	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Interpretation and understanding 2. Emotions and attitudes 3. Ethics and moral actions 4. The human being in context 5. Existence and enlightenment 6. Final question: What is the relationship between wisdom, dialogue and democracy?
Day 3	<p>Independent dialogue facilitation practice in groups. Details concerning structure and content will be given Wednesday</p>

The fact that the chapter introductions and two exercises to each chapter of the Norwegian Dialogos books (Helskog and Ribe, 2008, 2009) had been translated to Ukrainian, was a success factor in the project. The teacher educators were then able to use this material when they tried out Dialogos dialogues in their own contexts. The book invited participants to read texts, formulate questions, share experiences, reflect upon experiences and seek answer, in a *philosophizing* manner. *Philosophizing the Dialogos Way* might imply both internal individual and external collective dialogue – a necessary element in democratic institutions and societies. Listening to others, trying to understand what they say and how they understand the world and the situation at hand, is considered more important than speaking one's mind in the Dialogos approach. It was interesting to see how the attitudes of the “democracy in communication” participants had changed fundamentally between the first and the second workshop. In the first workshop, I struggled as a facilitator to create a dialogical atmosphere in the room. The teacher educators wanted to discuss and argue. They interrupted each other and wanted to be “right” rather than searching for truth together as a collaborative effort. “You see, this is how we are in our culture”, one said. “Ukrainians like to discuss”. One reason for some of my struggles to create a dialogical atmosphere might also be that I was not able to speak Ukrainian, while only two of the participants understood enough English to understand what I was saying. This meant that we were dependent on a translator, which sometimes created discussions on the translations.

However, when we started the workshop in May 2019, I sensed that something had happened. From the beginning, the participants listened to each other, posed questions if they did not understand, and build on what others said instead of jumping to different topics. During the workshop, the teacher educators shared their experiences with each other, and planned further action and research. It became obvious that they had learned a lot from trying to facilitate dialogues themselves. Now, a new cycle of planning, action, observation and reflection started on their behalf, for all leading to changed teaching practices, and for some also to research publications.

Since May 2019 the teacher educators have been in contact with me and the project leaders Ingrid Reite Christensen and Øyvind Wistrøm via social media and e-mail, enthusiastically telling about their experiences, and about their research publications. This is an indicator that the teacher educators were empowered through the project, that they have experienced collaboration through participation, and that they have acquired new knowledge. This is supported by reflections based in four questions in November 2019, one year after the first workshop. One of the participants claimed that before the first workshop, she perceived situations only from one angle, discussing without following any rules, considered situations from her own experience and exercising decision-making without discussion. Moreover, she claimed that she had the desire to speak more than the desire to listen, that she had stereotypical understandings of the individual characteristics of others, and that she was applying critical thinking in the form of assessment only. However, after the training and work in the project, she experiences that dialogue processes have become more meaningful, that she has developed the ability to view situations from different perspectives, and that she now can facilitate this among students and teachers. Moreover, she claims that she has become more able to show empathy and compassion, and that she has developed the desire to listen more than the desire to speak. She now understands the individual characteristics of others with an interest in their life, cultural differences, accentuation on the strengths of the personality, and has gained a desire to learn something new and expand her own outlook. Finally, she experiences that she has increased her level of emotional intelligence and her use of critical thinking, such as analyzing and focusing on the best practices, communication mechanisms, etc, according to her reflection note.

Even though not all the participants have been as active as the one above, the fact that the atmosphere in the second workshop had changed so remarkably, it seems justifiable to anticipate that the Dialogos dialogues at least to some degree have led to social change in the contexts of the participants. According to some of the participants, the cultures of teaching and learning prior to the Dialogos workshops were characterized by more or less authoritarian top-down lecture based teaching. As one participant argued:

Prior to learning about philosophical dialogue, I often used active methods of teaching students, but this was mostly unsystematic and not clearly thought out. The use of philosophical dialogues allowed students to become more aware of the educational material, to express their own attitude to one or another problem, to learn democratic communication with students and the teacher.

Dialogos dialogues, action research and practical wisdom. This said, not all forms of action research are compatible with Dialogos philosophical dialogues as an inductive, bottom up, wisdom oriented pedagogical practice (Helskog, 2019). Let me elaborate: In Western societies we have seen an increasing academic theoretization of the relational professions such as the teaching professions, the nursing professions and the social work professions the last decades (Hansen, 2008). Much of contemporary educational research and so called evidence based teaching practices have developed in a technical and instrumental direction (Løvlie, 2004, 2013a, b). Practical knowledge and professional practice are often conceived of as skills that are based in some kind of theory and theoretical knowledge, which then is to be implemented in practice. In the attempt to meet this narrow view on research and teaching practice, and also to try to find a unique position for the research on these professions, many have seen it as fruitful to draw on the Aristotelian distinction between episteme, techne and phronesis (Hansen 2008, p. 242; Eikeland, 2006). Episteme refers to explicit, theoretical knowledge which in our age is associated with academic institutions, while techne refers to the skills typical for the handcraft worker who instrumentally produces objects. The third concept – phronesis – refers to practical wisdom inherent in the practice of the experienced professional teacher educator or teacher.

In the ancient philosophical traditions, the concept wisdom referred to cosmic existential, intellectual and moral insight that has come about through deep transformation of the individual. Inner freedom, inner balance and inner peace was essential to different conceptions of wisdom (Hadot, 1985). In this paper I will look at how transformation in direction of wisdom might be an important prerequisite for professional action characterized by phronesis, also for action researchers. The overarching question I seek to answer is the following: How can action research practices foster processes of edification towards wisdom? First, I briefly outline and discuss the concept Edification, relating it to ancient and medieval philosophical practices aimed at seeking wisdom. Using the Platonic allegory of the cave as an illustration of a possible path towards existential wisdom, I discuss some developments in the field of action research. Finally, I ask how action research could be a form of philosophical practice in itself, and a way of life that can lead the community of action researchers- and learners on to a path towards (practical) wisdom.

Edification towards (practical) wisdom. The concept Edification is a German term that flourished as a concept with primarily discursive philosophical, cultural and political connotations in neo-humanist thought the period 1770-1830, though dating back to 16th century Pietistic theology, in which the Christian should seek to cultivate himself in line with the image of God, which was innate in his soul (Schmidt, 1996).

This pietist concept is again linked to medieval and baroque mysticism (Gadamer, 2010), to which Meister Echart was essential.

One of the signs pointed to by Slagstad (2003) is the remarkable return of the themes of Edification in the cultural reflection and debate in our time. The concept edification/danning has become a central educational concept both in policy documents and in academic debate in Norway the last decades. This development was initiated in the late sixties and seventies by scholars like Jon Hellesnes (1969, 1992, 1975), Hans Skjervheim (1976) and Lars Løvlie (1979). It gained increased interest in the early 1990's (Løvlie 1994, 2000, Dale 1992), and exploded in academic debate after 2005 (Bostad and Pettersen, 2006; Arneberg and Briseid, 2008; Rise, 2010; Brekke, 2010; Ohrem and Haddal, 2010; Hagtvvet and Ognjenovic, 2011; Steinsholt and Dobson, 2011; Eikseth, Dons and Garm, 2012). Reviewing the main literature in the debate on edification from the first reemergence in the late 1960's, I have found that the development can be categorized in three main phases. What seems to have initiated the debate, are mainly threats felt within the science of pedagogy (phase 1:1970's), which transformed into an academic interest in analyzing school as a cultural institution from the perspective of edification (phase 2: 1990's). Further, it transformed and exploded into an extensive response to forces understood as a threat to higher education and academic freedom from bureaucratization and business management ideas following the Bologna process (phase 3: 2005–2014). In contemporary debate, the concept is dominantly treated as a critical concept with cultural and political connotations, more than a concept with existential, spiritual and ethical connotations, which was essential to ancient and medieval thought. The existential and ethical dimension was central to all the ancient Greek philosophical schools, according to Pierre Hadot (1995). To them, philosophy was a way of life or an art of life. While the different ancient Greek conceptions underlying the German term *Bildung*, which I have chosen to translate as edification, are complex and by no means unitary, they all held wisdom as an important goal for human education, with the sage (the wise man) as an ideal that modelled their understanding of wisdom. In his great book "Philosophy as a way of life" Pierre Hadot (1985) shows how this was the case both for the Platonic, the Aristotelian, the Stoic, the Epicurean, the cynic and the sceptic schools or traditions. The different conceptions of what education towards wisdom implied, were all related to a cosmic, universal understanding of being. Education implied learning to experience oneself as part of a greater, cosmic reality. Even though wisdom was an ideal, it was not thought of as a condition one could reach. A philosopher was not a *Sophos* (a wise man). He was a philo- sopher, a lover of wisdom, from Greek philo meaning love/friend and sophia meaning wisdom/insight. Driven by eros, he was on his way towards wisdom. He was searching it, but he had not reached it.

Texts written by the authors who represented the different philosophical schools (like Plato, Aristotle, the Stoics or the Sceptics) were all different forms of philosophical and spiritual exercises aimed at transforming ones life in direction of inner peace, inner freedom and balance. The exercises were means to self-education. For instance, Plato`s dialogues were first and foremost model dialogues illustrating a search for wisdom, while the texts written by Aristotle were lecture notes, and by no means a systematic, coherent philosophical system, as widely held in academic philosophy today, according to Hadot (1995). For the purpose of this paper, I will limit myself to let one conception of edification towards existential wisdom help me answer the question posed in the introduction, namely the Socratic-Platonic conception as illustrated by the famous allegory of the cave in book VII in Plato`s Republic. In the discussion I rely on Finn Thorbjørn Hansen`s (2008) interpretation of this as an existential process.

The allegory of the cave as an illustration of edification towards wisdom.

“(...) let me show in a figure how far our nature is enlightened or unenlightened”, Socrates tells his interlocutor in the Republic. He then describes how human beings are living in an underground den or cave, which has “a mouth open towards the light and reaching all along the den”. The human beings have been in the cave from their childhood, with their “legs and necks chained so that they cannot move”. They can “only see before them, being prevented by the chains from turning round their heads”. Socrates describes how “above and behind them a fire is blazing at a distance, and between the fire and the prisoners there is a raised way; and you will see, if you look, a low wall built along the way, like the screen which marionette players have in front of them, over which they show the puppets”. Behind this low wall, people are running back and forth. The prisoners see only their own shadows, and the shadows of one another and things, “which the fire throws on the opposite wall of the cave”. The allegory then describes three turns or phases in the enlightenment process. The first turn or transformation comes about inside the cave, when the philosopher through his questions frees the spiritually imprisoned human beings who live and understand themselves only through “the world of the shadows” from their chains and make them turn around and walk. This is a painful process, which Plato let Socrates describe in the following way: “At first, when any of them is liberated and compelled suddenly to stand up and turn his neck round and walk and look towards the light, he will suffer sharp pains; the glare will distress him, and he will be unable to see the realities of which in his former state he had seen the shadows; and then conceive someone saying to him, that what he saw before was an illusion, but that now, when he is approaching nearer to being and his eye is turned towards more real existence, he has a clearer vision, – what will be his reply? And you may further imagine that his instructor is

pointing to the objects as they pass and requiring him to name them, -will he not be perplexed? Will he not fancy that the shadows which he formerly saw are truer than the objects which are now shown to him?"

This is a turn away from the world of shadows; the world of construction and opinion or doxa. towards a more systematized and general knowledge (episteme), which Finn Thorbjørn Hansen (2008, p. 85) drawing on Hannah Arendt calls "the science turn" or "the epistemological turn". A new turn or transformation occurs when this person is lead from the aims and light of science or episteme into the sun or the Good itself, which appears last in the enlightenment process, which Plato lets Socrates describe in this way: "And suppose once more, that he is reluctantly dragged up a steep and rugged ascent, and held fast until he 's forced into the presence of the sun himself, is he not likely to be pained and irritated? When he approaches the light his eyes will be dazzled, and he will not be able to see anything at all of what are now called realities".

This is according to Finn Thorbjørn Hansen "the second ontological or "socratic-erotic" turn. The prisoner now becomes able to "see" on a spiritually higher level, with his heart and inner eye. Socrates explains: "Last of he will be able to see the sun, and not mere reflections of him in the water, but he will see him in his own proper place, and not in another; and he will contemplate him as he is". Now he will remember his old ways of living in the cave, and the ways of his fellow prisoner, and feel sorry for them. Moreover, he will not care to take part in their activities anymore, which he sees as ridiculous and competitively driven by unenlightened egos: "And if they were in the habit of conferring honours among themselves on those who were quickest to observe the passing shadows and to remark which of them went before, and which followed after, and which were together; and who were therefore best able to draw conclusions as to the future, do you think that he would care for such honours and glories, or envy the possessors of them?"

To the people competing for honor and glory by observing and counting passing shadows, the newly enlightened prisoner would be the one seeming ridiculous and clumsy: (...) And if there were a contest, and he had to compete in measuring the shadows with the prisoners who had never moved out of the den, while his sight was still weak, and before his eyes had become steady (and the time which would be needed to acquire this new habit of sight might be very considerable) would he not be ridiculous?" (...)

Moreover, he would be in trouble if he had to meet the conceptions of those who had never been out of the cave, and who relied on their shadow images: "And is there anything surprising in one who passes from divine contemplations to the evil state of man, misbehaving himself in a ridiculous manner; if, while his eyes are blinking and

before he has become accustomed to the surrounding darkness, he is compelled to fight in courts of law, or in other places, about the images or the shadows of images of justice, and is endeavouring to meet the conceptions of those who have never yet seen absolute justice?”

Instead of withdrawing into a contemplative life outside of the society, the former prisoner who has now experienced the enlightenment process and seen the Good itself, should return to the cave and contribute to the common good, and to help his fellow citizens who are still chained and see only the shadow images of things, have similar experiences of enlightenment. Thus, when the philosopher, the lover of wisdom, returns to the cave and to her fellow human beings, a third and last turn occurs. This is what Hansen calls “the phronetic turn”, referring to the Aristotelian concept of phronesis. Returning to the cave she has to get used to the darkness in the cave again, and as the quote from *The Republic* shows, she is likely to appear strange and ridiculous to her fellow human beings. If she tries to tell them what she has experienced in a straight forward way, they cannot understand. To them her talk is non-sense and a waste of time. She therefor has to tell about her experience in an indirect way. This is when phronesis – her practical wisdom, becomes important. In the *Nicomachean ethics* Aristotle (2000, p. 153) defines phronesis as related to the crafty and deliberate human being, and to cleverness or practical wisdom, which makes him capable of doing what is good for him not only now, but concerning the good life in general. Phronesis implies sensitivity and attunement towards people and things, rather than concern for mastery or domination, as in *techne*. Moreover, rather than being a purely intellectual process occurring separable from experience, as in *episteme*, phronesis is exercised in the course of experience and involves being open to experience (Dunne 1993:256). The concept is related to the ontological dimension in all relational practices, a dimension that according to Hansen (2008, p. 245) is more fundamental than *episteme* and *techne* (instrumental skills associated with the hand craft worker) when it comes to research in practices, and thus also, I will add, to action research within the relational professions. Summing up: The way out of the cave is the path from the world of appearance/the world of *doxa* via and beyond the world of *episteme*/the world of science towards the world of socratic-erotic wisdom/the Good. When returning back into the cave and readjusting to life here, wisdom comes forward as phronesis – practical wisdom. This is an existential or spiritual enlightenment process where the “inner eye” or “the heart” awakens. It awakens a phenomenological sensual, listening and hermeneutical, dialogical and wonder-based attitude. This attitude is both connected to phronesis and to the socratic eros. The latter is a necessary aspect, because, Hansen argues, without the socratic eros phronesis would easily

become a conservative and culturally stiffness in the community of practice in which the professional is situated.

Another problem, I would add, is that remaining within the world of doxa, or even making the epistemic turn alone, seems to be insufficient seen from the existential-moral perspective of wisdom (sohia) and prudence (phronesis). This might be more or less an intellectual turn that does not (yet) enhance the person`s sense of justice and goodness, nor the person`s ability to think and judge in a sound way. It does not (yet) make the person able to see with the heart, to borrow the words of Hansen (2008). A classical example of a person who acts with intelligence within a “world of doxa”, in this case the national socialist state, is Karl Adolf Eichmann (1906–1962), as described by Hannah Arendt (1963). Eichman was head of the Department for Jewish Affairs in the Gestapo from 1941 to 1945, leading the so called «final solution» (Enlösung) for the «Jewish problem» in Europe: He was chief of the deportation of three million Jews from across Europe to the extermination camps. Hannah Arendt uses the phrase "the banality of evil" to characterize Eichmann's actions. She did not see his actions as having emanated from a malevolent will to do evil, a delight in murder. Rather, Eichmann became involved in the genocide through an absence of the faculties of sound thinking and judgement, Arendt argued. She concluded that far from exhibiting a malevolent hatred of Jews, Eichmann was an utterly normal, intelligent, innocuous individual. Thus, he could also claim his innocence, because he “had only followed orders”. He operated unthinkingly, efficiently carrying out the orders, with no consideration of their effects upon those who suffered from his actions. The extermination was indistinguishable from any other bureaucratically assigned and discharged responsibility. Eichmann was incapable of exercising the kind of judgement that would have made his victims’ suffering real or apparent for him. It was the absence of the imaginative capacities that would have made the human and moral dimensions of his activities visible to him, that made him carry out the genocide, and not the presence of hatred, that enabled him to do it. Eichmann failed to exercise his capacity to have an internal dialogue with himself, to think, Arendt argues. An inner dialogue with himself would have permitted self-awareness and self-reflection as a basis for judgement requiring that he exercise his imagination necessary to judge his deeds from the standpoint of his victims: To imagine how they experienced his deeds. Eichman was acting with great technical skill and intelligence demanded within the “world of appearance” and doxa of the Nazi regime, but without existential and moral wisdom. He did not feel moral responsibility for what he did. He was a no-body, not a some-body.

While science (episteme) and wisdom (sophia) is related to the eternal and unchangeable world, practical wisdom (phronesis) is related to the human, changeable

world. Hansen (2008, p. 279–280) distinguishes between four different conceptions of phronesis: 1) The pragmatic-functional conception, where phronesis is interpreted as an intuitive optimization concept for problem solving activities. 2) The critical-emancipatory conception, where phronesis is interpreted as a conception involving *sensus communis* and critical discernment 3) the postmodern conception, where phronesis is interpreted as a contingency concept. 4) The existential conception, where phronesis is interpreted as a conception for radical self-creation and value creation, and finally 5) the ontological conception, where phronesis is interpreted as a conception for sensual sense of being. In the latter conception, the action researcher is what Hansen (2008:290) calls “the servant of the moment”. He understands phronesis as “sensing being”, while *sophia* (wisdom) is interpreted as “understanding being”. Both phronesis and wisdom is seen as something that reigns above the sciences (Ibid, p. 294).

The problem today seems to be that dominant knowledge regimes in the field of education are more oriented at control than at sensing and understanding being. It seems to force people (teachers, social workers etc) to stay in Plato’s cave counting shadows in the world of appearance and *doxa*, imprisoning them in the language of “evidence based practice” and “what works”. Instead of challenging themselves in a way that can lead them towards wisdom and contribute to their development of wiser practice, they are forced to use the epistemic knowledge created by more or less positivist and main stream researchers that fit with this dominant and often politically defined *doxa*. In such a culture, (action) researchers that have a phenomenological and hermeneutical approach, and who place themselves in the humanistic tradition of Edification are marginalized and to some extent ridiculed.

What counts as knowledge? Modernity frequently reminds us of its tremendous success in gaining ever-deeper understanding of reality through reason and, through this, tremendous potential for expanded technical control, Kimbriel (2014) argues. What is far too little discussed, is the fact that this claim to expanded knowledge comes only on the basis of a shift in what counts as “knowledge” or “reason”. Not the least, this effects dominating ideas about what “real” research and science is, making it difficult for other approaches to justify themselves. Hans Georg Gadamer addresses this challenge in his far reaching book *Truth and Method* from 1960 (2010). In the introduction, he states that the aim of his investigation is to attend to the truth experience that exceeds the methodical, scientific control domain, and to ask for the legitimacy of this experience. In this way he attempts to bring the humanistic (spiritual) sciences in contact with forms of experiences that are to be found outside of science, such as the experience of philosophy, art and history. In these forms of experiences, truths that cannot be verified methodically by mainstream science is communicated, he states. These truths, which are relevant to practical knowledge as

such, have existential and ethical dimensions, Hansen (2008) argues. The problem is that when the professional educator or supervisor with reference to science want to describe, analyze and systematize these experiences, they are in touch with something that cannot be captured by a scientifically based professional language. It needs an indirect approach and language – a poetic, narrative and wonder-based approach, where the phenomena can speak for themselves.

This makes the theme of this paper rather urgent, I would say, and I will now proceed to look at some approaches in the field of action research from the perspective outlined above. How can the allegory of the cave, along with the distinctions between the “world of appearance”/”world of doxa”, “world of episteme/world of science”, “world of socratic-erotic wisdom”, and “phronesis/phronetic action” help us shed light on different forms of action research? In the following, I will try to discuss some action research approaches in relation to this allegory and these distinctions. In addition to the work of Finn Thorbjørn Hansen, I take my point of departure in Samuel Kimbriel book “Friendship as sacred knowing” (2014) who, drawing on Charles Taylor (1989, 2008), argues that “we are haunted, I suggest, by a certain habit of isolation buried, often imperceptibly, within our practices of understanding and relation to the world” (p.1). He is concerned with the scientific modes of understanding in our age, which also haunt the dominant understanding of what education is about, I will suggest.

Staying in or moving out of Plato`s cave? Action research is a research tradition that has grown directly out of the discomforts with the disengaged and buffered ideal of science pointed to by Gadamer (1960/2010), Taylor (1989, 2008), Hansen (2008) and Kimbriel (2014). As already mentioned in the introduction, the founding father of action research is claimed to be Kurt Lewin (Argyris, Putnam, and Smith, 1985; Coghlan and Brannick, 2001; McNiff and Whitehead, 2002). He advocated a research approach where social scientists and practitioners should cooperate and seek to improve intergroup relations. For this purpose, traditional social research approaches were too abstract and too distant to the reality studied, and thus insufficient (Lewin, 1946). He argued for “a type of action research, a comparative research on the conditions and effects of various forms of social action, and research leading to social action”. Further, he claimed that this research approach is “not in any respect less scientific or “lower” than what would be required for pure science in the field of social events” (Lewin, 1946, p. 35), calling his approach “social management” or “social engineering”. Through experiments and analysis in the fields, the researchers and practitioners should work to resolve the social problems that were the objects of research. The point of Lewin was that relevant knowledge must be created through a practical localization of the research. Leading to qualitatively different knowledge than traditional science. Through cycles of situation diagnosis, planning, action, and

evaluation, action research would serve both practice and science. Moreover, Lewin stressed the need for ‘self-critical reconnaissance’ on the part of people as they studied themselves in action, claiming that one must be helped to reexamine many cherished assumptions about oneself and one’s relations to others (Lewin, 1948). The idea was that by observing the observer, and listening to your listening, self-awareness of thoughts, feelings, and experiences, past and present, seep gently into consciousness. Lewin’s research was aimed at exploring and improving group tendencies that threatened “the peace and happiness of our social living” (1946, p. 47). In his classic formulation of field theory, Lewin (1951) also held that behavior is influenced by its environment and by the context within which it occurs. Lewin’s research stance, despite its rational and instrumental character, challenged aspects of the buffered and disengaged stance of modernity. This can be seen in his focus on practical engagement and collaboration with the researched (researching with people more than conducting research on people), in his emphasis on self-examination, and in his emphasis on the dialectical and porous relationship between the behaviour of the individual and the context within which he or she is placed. Even though Lewin to a great extent challenges existing scientific regimes and introduces new ways of doing research that involves a less disengaged research stance, he is still operating within a socio-technical control domain that has epistemological ambitions. The research within the socio-technical tradition is typically carried out as experiments led by the researchers themselves. The epistemic process of knowledge development is seen as a shared horizon between researchers and practitioners, aiming at practical change. The criterion for truth or new knowledge is primarily a question of creating experiences that potentially can change the values and conceptions of all the participants through the process. Thus, it is not only a question of measuring and interpreting data. There seems to be an ambition of making it possible for practitioners to make at least the first turn or transformation in the allegory of the cave – the epistemic turn away from the “world of appearance” or “world of doxa” towards a more universal or general “world of episteme/world of science”, which again could make possible changes in practice. This socio-technical tradition was, as the label indicated, rather technical. Whether or not the practitioners were able to take also the second turn towards the “world of Socratic-erotic wisdom” which is also an ethical turn towards the Good, and the third turn back into the world, now able to act with phronesis is an open question. The problem is that if this second and third turn s not made, we are still in danger of remaining non-thinking “Eichmans”.

Within the socio-technical tradition a pragmatic turn occurred. Now the researcher should not design experiments, but concentrate on creating space for dialogues. The question of interest was whether the action research led to increased

self-understanding and thereby had a therapeutic function, and lead to knowledge about how reflexivity could be made efficient and useful, based on the assumption that dialogues and reflexivity in actions would lead to a less reified society and less traditional organizations. Habermas (1968) classifies many of the historical–hermeneutic disciplines – descriptive social science, history, and aesthetics, legal, ethnographic, literary, and so forth as belonging to the practical domain. Internationally, many action research approaches seem to fall under this pragmatic–dialogical category, and thus more engaged and porous research stance than the original stance of Kurt Lewin. The question is whether or not this stance will lead participants out of Plato’s cave, or if it is only a way of counting shadows inside the cave. It probably relies on the extent to which the practitioners are able to challenge themselves and each other in the process, so that transformation can occur. Are they willing to question their previous beliefs in the dialogues with others? Are they willing to change their minds? Are they willing to take the perspectives of their interlocutors and risk transformation? Are they willing to question their “world of appearance” and their “doxa” in order to move towards a more general and epistemic view? Are they able to come to a point where they can see with their hearts and inner eyes, from a position in the world of Socratic-erotic wisdom? Are they willing to adjust their way of life, whether professional or general, in accordance with their new insights and wisdom, making the turn towards “phronesis/phronetic action”?

The third epistemological line of development is the line of development that most directly has links to the notion of phronesis. It is represented by so called critical-utopian action research that have traditionally been inspired by critical theory, as developed by Horkheimer (1937/1979), Adorno (1957/1970) and Marcuse (1937/1970). Max Van Manen (1990) argues that critical theory has tried to make a dialectical synthesis of philosophy and scientific understanding of society. Social imagination, experiments and the sketching of an alternative un-reified future that can be publicly discussed are the most important elements in the production of knowledge within the critical tradition. The critical-utopian epistemology claims that new democratic structures in society can only emerge from democratic collaboration in concrete fields of action and experiment. Paulo Freires work (1970, 1992) belongs to this third group of epistemologically based action research. He was devoted to empowering the oppressed, impoverished Central American peons, by a variety of methods. These included self-directed, appropriate education. Freire refers to the false consciousness of the oppressor, and emphasizes the need to lead the oppressor to see how reification dehumanizes himself as oppressor as well as the oppressed. Freire’s main concern lies with the social transformation of the Central American political situation by educating both the oppressors and the oppressed through critical self-

reflection. The critical-utopian dimension is perhaps even more obviously present in his *Pedagogy of Hope* (1992) than in *Pedagogy of the oppressed* (1970). Hope is by definition directed toward the utopian imagination of a better future. In putting forward an idea of a better future, the critical-utopian researcher and the participating individuals clearly engage with an idea that has the potential of transforming their lives and the context within which they live. Kemmis (2008) describes critical participatory action research as a form of explanatory action that takes communicative action into social practice, using social practice as a source of new understanding. It occurs with the practical aim of *phronesis* – the commitment to acting wisely and prudently in the particular circumstances of a practical situation. It is practical in the sense that it aims at the production of the good for individual persons and for humankind by aiming for right conduct, the best one can do under the circumstances. In this critical-emancipatory conception, *phronesis* is interpreted as a conception involving *sensus communis* and critical discernment. It does not seem to remain somewhere between the “world of appearance”/“world of *doxa*” and the “world of *episteme*/world of science”, whereas the “world of Socratic-erotic wisdom”, and “*phronesis/phronetic action*” seems not to be reached, even though Kemmis is directly relating to the Aristotelian tradition.

None of the action research epistemologies discussed so far seem to take on the existential conception of *phronesis*, where *phronesis* is interpreted as a conception for radical self-creation and valuecreation, nor the ontological conception, where *phronesis* is interpreted as a conception for sensual sense of being. Hansen (2008) asks whether what he calls an “*eksistensiell og sokratisk aksjonsforskning*” (existential and socratic action research) inspired by philosophical practice could be a way to go. This form of action research would look for the possibility of discovering and receiving deep existential meaning, as something different from the functional meaning we can create and construct ourselves. If action research is to challenge existing *doxa*, it needs to challenge people to think, i.e. to have existential and moral dialogues with themselves. What could this form of action research imply?

Edification towards wisdom through Socratic-erotic action research?

Hansen (2008, p. 248–250) suggests to let a phenomenological and existential praxis-ontological research stance be the first stage in an action research process that is followed by a praxis-epistemological stance: First, there would a fundamental phenomenological wonder and intuition related to a search for hermeneutic truth-experiences, which gives room for the creation of completely new concepts, categories and aims. Then, there is the domain of scientific methodological control regimes, which makes it possible to verify and falsify the insight brought about at the first stage, which makes it possible to talk about evidence based “after-knowledge” or “meta-

knowledge”. This would mean that first, the action researcher is acting together with others in action learning processes, being phenomenological attentive and ontologically present, creatively engaging in the process with the action learners. Both during the process, but mostly afterwards, she would be reflecting upon the process, trying to make sense of the process by hermeneutically interpreting and understanding it, and finally critically exploring it through rational analyses and reporting on it through research papers or books. This process, I will argue, can take on the form of philosophical practice – as forms of philosophical exercise that involves the whole person or the whole group of action learners. This is to a large extent what I have done in the process of developing and justifying the Dialogos approach to practical philosophy in education. The overarching action research questions in the action research project were the following: How can I develop an educational approach that has Edification towards human maturity and wisdom – i.e. Humanität- as its ultimate purpose and ideal? How can I evaluate and justify the approach? In the period 2004-2009 I developed the approach through a series of books aimed at helping teachers and students create philosophical dialogues in their contexts. This action inquiry process led me through a painful personal transformation that was life changing and world view transforming, as outlined and analyzed in the paper “Re-imagining Edification zur Humanität – how I developed the Dialogos approach to practical philosophy in education (Helskog, 2015). In December 2008 I received the Gandhi scholarship from the government of Norway, and had the chance to try out the Dialogos approach together with a group of 18-21 year olds in a multicultural and multi religious upper secondary education context in Norway. This process is described and analyzed from different perspectives in the papers “The Gandhi Project: Dialogos philosophical dialogues and the ethics and politics of intercultural and interfaith friendship” (Helskog, 2014a), “Promoting dialogical democracy. (Stokke and Helskog, 2014), “Enhancing relational spirituality” (Helskog and Stokke, 2014), and “The healing power of Dialogos dialogues: Transformative learning through dialogical philosophizing” (Helskog, 2014b). After the Gandhi Project was completed, I was asked by the school principal to try out philosophical dialogues according to the Dialogos approach in a multicultural and multi faith class ridden by severe, damaging and, to some, traumatizing conflict. Later, I named this project “the reconciliation project”, describing it in the paper “Moving out of conflict into reconciliation. Edification through philosophical dialogue in intercultural and interreligious education”. In this latter paper the concept Bildung or edification is related to the reconciliation process in the class, in which students moved from being “enemies” to speaking of and to each other as friends. All in all, I conclude that the Dialogos approach to practical philosophy is promising if Bildung zur Humanität, understood as

transformation towards human maturity and wisdom, is the ultimate purpose in education.

Final comment. Democracy Education the Dialogos Way is part of the project Democracy Education in Ukraine, Norway and Palestine. The results of the project can of course be studied from many perspectives. For me, it is relevant to see the project as a new step in the bigger action research project work to justify and show the relevance of the Dialogos approach, this time regarding the enhancement of democratic ways of living together in a shared world. However, this has not been the main purpose of this essay. Rather, the purpose has been to discuss action research as a form of research that enhances *phronesis* as opposed to *techne*, *dialogical and democratic ways of teaching* as opposed to instrumental.

Important in this respect, is that edification towards wisdom and prudence cannot be taught directly. It requires active participation from the student, a will to wisdom and a willingness to put his or her horizon of understanding into play in the educational situation. Not the least, it requires teacher educators who are willing to do the same. The teacher educators and the students are in the philosophical dialogues as well as in the action research together, as am I. Again, I will let Socrates speak through the written dialogue of Plato's Republic: "But then", Socrates says, "if I am right, certain professors of education must be wrong when they say that they can put a knowledge into the soul which was not there before, like sight into blind eyes". His interlocutor agrees, and Socrates goes on to say that the capacity to learn exists in the soul already. The soul needs to gradually get adjusted to endure the light and the sight of being, he states. "Just as the eye was unable to turn from darkness to light without the whole body, so too the instrument of knowledge can only by the movement of the whole soul be turned from the world of becoming into that of being". It has to "learn by degrees to endure the sight of being, and of the brightest and best of being, or in other words, of the good". Thus, according to Socrates as we meet him in Plato, the faculty of sight already exists in the human being. It needs only to be re-awakened. "And must there not be some art which will effect conversion in the easiest and quickest manner; not implanting the faculty of sight, for that exists already, but has been turned in the wrong direction, and is looking away from the truth?"

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ДЕМОКРАТИЗАЦІЯ ОСВІТИ ШЛЯХОМ ЗАПРОВАДЖЕННЯ ФІЛОСОФСЬКОГО ДІАЛОГУ: ДОСВІД УЧИТЕЛІВ ІЗ УКРАЇНИ

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Анотація. У статті висвітлено результати дослідження, проведеного серед викладацько-професорського складу із шести закладів вищої педагогічної освіти в межах проєкту «Розвиток культури демократії в освіті в Україні, Норвегії та Палестині. Викладачі ЗВО взяли участь у тренінгах, розроблених із урахуванням діалогового підходу та діалогічного філософування, а також запровадили цей підхід у своїй практичній діяльності та під час проведення тренінгів серед учителів закладів загальної середньої освіти. Головним завданням

статті є висвітлення потенціалу діяльнісного підходу в підготовці майбутніх учителів для розвитку практичної мудрості як складової демократичної освіти.

Ключові слова: демократизація освіти; філософський діалог; мистецтво життя; діяльнісний підхід; практична мудрість; підготовка вчителя.

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