Phrónêsis, Aristotle, and action research

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This article presents an interpretation of Aristotelian *phrónêsis* and its relevance for action research. After pointing out some insufficiencies in how *phrónêsis* is applied by other interpreters with relevance for action research, I present my own interpretation of Aristotle's concept in the wider context of his thinking on intellectual and ethical virtues. The article's conclusion is that *phrónêsis* is very important for both action researchers and others. But at the same time, *phrónêsis* is not a concept that can be adopted by itself, alone, and in isolation from other intellectual and ethical virtues or ways of knowing. *Phrónêsis* is necessary, but at the same time insufficient. *Phrónêsis* is not a concept primarily concerned with learning, inquiry, and research. Its primary focus is "application", performance, or enactment. Action research has a lot to learn from Aristotle, and *phrónêsis* is definitely among the things to be learned. Aristotle's *praxis*-orientation sticks even deeper, however. This more profound *praxis*-orientation becomes quite invisible by operating with simplified and mutually exclusive divisions between *phrónêsis*, *tékhnê*, and *epistêmê*, and by conflating other distinctions that were important to maintain for Aristotle. Aristotle's profound *praxis*-orientation is even more central to action research. It has to do with dialogue or dialectics whose tasks really are fundamentally concerned with learning, inquiry, and research.

Key words: Action research, Aristotle, Dialogical research, Judgement, Phrónêsis, Prudence, Rhetoric, Virtues, ethical and intellectual

Introduction

The purpose of this article is to discuss the relevance of the Aristotelian concept of *phrónêsis* for action research. *Phrónêsis* usually translates as "prudence", "practical wisdom" or "judgement" in English. The concept is currently receiving increased interest among a broad range of professionals and social scientists, including action researchers. Paul Ricoeur (1997: 21) speaks of a "*retour a Aristote*". This process of rediscovery no doubt springs from a deeply felt desire for finding concepts to grasp kinds of knowledge and skills that are directed towards understanding and acting in accordance with requirements of the concrete situations we find ourselves in. The search is for non-technical, non-mechanical ways of recognising the sovereignty and independence of our everyday cognitions and judgements, without constantly being referred and subordinated to "science". *Phrónêsis* appears to be a concept with a great potential for this. The primary source for all attempts at rediscovering and revitalising the concept of *phrónêsis* is, as a matter of historical fact, Aristotle (384-322 BC). In this article, then, I will discuss a) the Aristotelian meaning of *phrónêsis* based on my continuous preoccupation with the texts of Aristotle for more than 20 years (cf. Eikeland 1997, 1998, 2001, 2007), and b) in *what ways phrónêsis* might be relevant for action research, based on my action research work over an equal amount of years (cf. e.g. Eikeland 1987, 1995, 2006a, Eikeland/Berg 1997). This article summarises some of the conclusions from Eikeland (2007). There are always controversies regarding the interpretation of old texts. Such controversies are dealt with in more detail in Eikeland (1997 and 2007), which also brings in many concepts, aspects, and arguments, and contains detailed references to the works of Aristotle not possible to reproduce here.[1]

I will not spend much time here explaining systematically what I think action research is or should be, even though there are many variants working in

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very different ways.[2] Some of them may even be in conflict with each other. The focus in what follows is mostly on Aristotle's contributions and their relevance. Let me just state here, that action research as I see it, is not just applied social science, and neither is it most cogently construed as a separate discourse or even "paradigm", parallel to (and out of touch with) other discourses and approaches of social research. The fundamentally important and for social science transformative move made by action research in the 1940s, inspired by Kurt Lewin and John Dewey, was twofold. It was the double step of a) moving experimentation from segregated laboratories into the different fields of social life, and, even more radically, b) inviting the subjects of research to join the community of researchers in the primary interpretation of findings, thereby initiating the gradual deterioration and removal of the division line between the knowers and the known. This move was motivated not merely from democratic convictions and ideology, but just as much from a conviction that it would strengthen the validity of social research. Action research could and should be developed and justified through solving inner contradictions, tensions, impasses, and unfulfilled expectations in social research as it is institutionalised and practised in the modern era, i.e. as an immanent and transformative critique. In fact, action research could and should be seen as a latent and usually too tacit dimension emerging from within the practices of mainstream social research. The point is to bring this out, to make it explicit.[3]

Even though I definitely believe *phrónêsis* is an important concept and an important practice to excel in for action researchers (and others), many current attempts at using it are somewhat misguided by isolating *phrónêsis* too much from the rest of Aristotle's philosophy, and from his thinking as a whole. These attempts often result in a one-sided and therefore unfair and unjustified interpretation of Aristotle, not only because his theoretical philosophy gives important context and depth to his practical philosophy, but because very significant and clarifying remarks for ethics and politics are

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[2]   See e.g. O'Hanlon (1996), Toulmin/Gustavsen (1997), Hollingsworth (1997), McTaggart (1997), Reason/Bradbury (2001), Winter/Munn-Giddings (2001), Day et al. (2002).

[3]   See Eikeland (1985a, 1995, 2001, 2006a). Cf. also Argyris (1980).

spread all over his work. But even more importantly, the one-sided interpretation also often results in, or goes with, a) being practice-oriented in an insufficient way, and in b) an equally one-sided and therefore erroneous criticism of the theoretical ambitions and potentials of both action research and social research in general. As already indicated, these aspects are dealt with in more detail in Eikeland (2007). But action research cannot and should not be identified with or attach itself to *phrónêsis* in separation and even isolation from other forms of knowledge or intellectual activities, neither as they are described by Aristotle, nor in general.

There are what we may call "epistemic impulses" in everyday practices, which Aristotle utilised extensively in his philosophy, but which easily get neglected by an isolated and separate focus on *phrónêsis*.[4] Action research and social research in general, would profit much by connecting to and developing these impulses. In my opinion, the greatest potential for action research and for social research in general, lies not so much in retaining *phrónêsis* alone, while separating off from and abandoning all kinds of "epistemic" knowledge forms and theoretical ambitions for research through one unqualified sweep. It lies rather in a thorough transformation of epistemic and theoretical ambitions, as they are very often understood within a modern framework for science and research, and in giving *phrónêsis* its place and space within this transformed scheme. For details of this transformed scheme I have to refer to Eikeland (2007), however, while this article can only present pointers and indicators. It has been repeated often, at least since Rapaport (1970), that action research aims to contribute both to everyday practical concerns *and* to the goals of social science. I agree, but I would add, hardly without changing or transforming both. Both everyday practices and social science have to be modified and transformed in order for this potential to be realized. Action research is not simply an instrumental servant to contemporary everyday or scientific practices as they are. Neither is *phrónêsis*.

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[4] Members of the so-called Erlangen school in Germany, continuing in the footsteps of Hugo Dingler's (1881-1954) philosophy, have discussed epistemic impulses like these for many years under the designation of "proto-sciences". See for example the summary by Peter Janich (1992).

The philosophy of Aristotle is not only relevant for action research. We might as well consider most of it a result and an example of action research, since, in at least two ways, Aristotle's approach has clear similarities to action research as this has developed since the late 1940s. First, the aim of his so called practical philosophy (ethics and politics) is to change and develop individuals and communities, to improve them, and cultivate virtue or excellence in both. As suggested in Eikeland (1997), there are basic similarities stretching from the Hippocratic tradition, through Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, to the subsequent sceptical philosophers. In spite of obvious differences, they were either part of or had close affinities with ancient empirical medicine, they all emphasized acquired practical experience (*empeiría*), they were all sceptical of a) sense perception as the basis and origin of knowledge, and of b) both artificial rhetoric and competitive ways of speaking appropriate to the marketplace. They all emphasized the importance of a non-competitive, reflective conversational mode – dialogue, or dialectic – among "professionals". In the *Eudemian Ethics* (1215a9) Aristotle even claims that *every* inquiry (*pasan sképsin*) – including theoretical inquiries – should be directed towards clarifying how it is possible to live well (*eu kaì kalôs zên*). His whole philosophy was geared to develop and cultivate excellence in every field. Excellence in ethics and politics is not the same as technical excellence, however. The beginning of Book IV in the *Politics* (1288b10-1289a25) contains a program that most action researchers could recognize, stating what the serious student of politics should know in order to help different forms of constitutions establish, preserve, develop, or change themselves, and what constitutions are suitable for different circumstances and occasions. As indicated by e.g. Klosko (1986: 14) and Bodéüs (1993) the philosophical schools of Plato and Aristotle were more like training grounds for future statesmen and advisers for rulers than disengaged observatories of distant, external phenomena (including others and society).

Secondly, and even more importantly, Aristotle's theoretical philosophy is based not so much on "empirical observation" (and certainly not on fanciful "speculation") in a modern sense, as on the acquired, practical experience of the inquirer-knower-thinker-reader. Aristotle was, of course, also a pioneer of empirical research in a more modern sense, but basically his thinking is a

practitioner's thinking. While modern social science has abhorred "participation", I believe Aristotle's main view was that it is impossible to be truly "scientific" or "epistemic" without participating, or even "going", or rather "being, and staying native", in a certain sense. Both of these ways are important aspects in my opinion, which action research at least has to attend to. As these points indicate, then, Aristotle's relevance for action research is neither that he deliberates phronetically in his works (since he does not), nor is it his analysis of *phrónêsis* in isolation (since it is not isolated).

In what follows, I will deal in outline with several challenges in the interpretation of *phrónêsis*: First, I will discuss the relationship between the ethical and the intellectual aspect of *phrónêsis*. In order to do that, I have to bring in other ethical and intellectual virtues as well. I will also discuss briefly the relation between ends and means, and the relation between general knowledge and knowledge of particulars in the Aristotelian concept of *phrónêsis*. Finally I will discuss the relation of *phrónêsis* to other ways of using *lógos* or reasoned speech, including rhetoric and dialectics. This will indicate that although *phrónêsis* is very important, other aspects of Aristotle's philosophy are even more important for action research. *Phrónêsis* is necessary but insufficient. Even the importance of *phrónêsis* emerges fully only in this wider context, a context which cannot be unfolded fully in an article like this however (cf. Eikeland 1997, 2007).

Much of the current interest for *phrónêsis* springs from the efforts of Martin Heidegger and Hans-Georg Gadamer. Gadamer (1960: 295-307) made *phrónêsis* a model for his own conception of hermeneutics, interpretation, and application (appropriation / *Anwendung*) of tradition. In this context I will not review the broad renaissance for the concept, however. Within action research, *phrónêsis* has been approached several times rather cautiously over the last two decades, as an interesting and promising concept to bring into the action research discourse. It is mentioned *en passant* by Fals Borda (1991: 156), and by Greenwood/Levin (1998: 111). But none of them elaborate or discuss it, although Greenwood/Levin characterize it with words like "reasoning in action and local reflections by participants on their actions", "a different type of knowledge from that used to develop scientific theories", and quoting Stephen Toulmin, "the ability to spot the action called for in any

situation". Before presenting my own interpretation of Aristotle's concept of *phrónêsis* I will review a few attempts in English at approaching *phrónêsis* by people who seem especially relevant for current action research. This will clarify in a preliminary way how and where my view of both *phrónêsis* and action research differs from those reviewed. After presenting my interpretation of Aristotle I return to a discussion about action research.

A philosopher defending action research

Action research has gained some friends among prominent philosophers of science over the last decades. The most prominent is perhaps Stephen Toulmin (1996a, b/c). Unfortunately, however, neither his characterization of Aristotle nor of action research are in my opinion quite adequate. In defending action research, Toulmin starts out by criticizing what he calls "Platonic science" applying (or approximating) mathematical models in explaining and deducing consequences, as *the* ideal scientific (epistemic) method, also in ethics and practical affairs. It is not hard to agree in general with this critique of the exaggerated pretensions on behalf of such a "Platonic" model. But in general, Aristotelian *epistêmê* is not like this. Toulmin, however, seems to believe that Aristotle operates with the same concept of *epistêmê* as he attributes to Plato, and he also seems somehow to leave this "Platonic model" alone as a valid model for basic science. The implication is, anyhow, that this (Platonic and / or basic science) is not what action research is or should be. But I think action research should be basic research, only not the "Platonic" kind apparently reserved for basic research by Toulmin.

Toulmin's defence of action research is based on an almost total dichotomy between this "Platonic" *epistêmê*, and *phrónêsis*. According to this defence, action research belongs in the latter camp, while most mainstream social research has tried to become members of the former. In spite of his mobilisation of many interesting parallel cases – primarily from clinical medicine and anthropology – to justify and defend action research as a discipline using *phrónêsis* rather than *epistêmê*, Toulmin in my opinion ends up with insuffi-

client characterizations of action research as well.[5] He claims (1996a: 3, c: 59) that action research, like clinical medicine seeks *phrónêsis*, not *epistêmê* (theoretical grasp). But to say that clinical medicine seeks *phrónêsis* (1996a: 3) is not quite accurate, and certainly not the whole story. Toulmin seems to confuse *phrónêsis* with *deliberation* (*boúleusis*) as described by Aristotle. But *phrónêsis* includes more than mere deliberation, and so does medicine. Secondly, to assimilate action research to clinical medicine is not accurate either, since it emphasizes still another dichotomy between experts and clients (1996c: 61), which it was important for Aristotle to overcome in his discussions about *phrónêsis* and ethics.

Transcending this dichotomy and others as well, is, should, and must be important for action research too. "For action researchers to ignore their (the workers') opinions would be like a doctor ignoring the patient's own statement of his or her symptoms", Toulmin says. But so it would for most interpretive social research using qualitative methods. And action researchers are hardly like doctors. Neither are action researchers like anthropological participant observers (1996c: 55) studying the others. There are many different ways of doing action research, as anyone trying to find out knows. But it is my claim that if, and I really mean *if*, the term "action research" is relevant for anyone involved in the relations of physicians or anthropologists, it belongs "prototypically" to "client-researchers", to worker-researchers, to any native-researchers, practitioner researchers, etc. Action research among groups like these is not at all the same as "going native", however, if that means simply accepting all local customs, habits and aims uncritically, and becoming like some constructed uncritical, average "das Man" native in Heidegger's sense. Cultures are not unitary, pure, and defined by sharp lines. Natives (workers, nurses, teachers, Norwegians, members of any and all [sub-]groups or [sub-]cultures) see things differently among themselves, and even disagree and criticize each other. All in all Toulmin's defence of action research ends up (ibid.) dichotomising in very un-Aristotelian ways, claiming

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[5] This concerns his descriptions of action research in principle. His lack of critical examination of actual action research practices is another matter, which I will not discuss further here, but he comes dangerously close to saying that whatever is done under the label of "action research" is OK, since it is *phrónêsis*, not *epistêmê*.

that the focus of action research is "practice *rather than* theory", "particular *not* universal, local *not* general, timely *not* eternal, concrete *not* abstract". But neither *phrónêsis* nor action research should (or could, or in fact *does* with Aristotle) end up in *one* of these opposites while excluding the other.

This general impression is mostly confirmed when reading Jonsen/Toulmin (1988) on casuistry. Casuistry would seem to be the more general kind of activity Toulmin interprets action research to be. In this book too the authors work with simple and universal dichotomies between a "Platonic" and geometrical concept of theoretical science on the one hand, which really was not Aristotle's working concept at all, and a "non-theoretical" (in the *same* sense) ethical *phrónêsis* on the other, discussing single cases. This dichotomy, however, does nothing to hold apart the casuistic discussion of single cases, which Aristotle several times emphasizes is *not* his business to perform in the *Ethics* (cf. EN1101a25-27, 1109b13-24, 1110b5-10, MM1208a21-b2), from an approach to ethics which actually *is* his working approach in the texts, which is much more theoretical (in a *different* sense) than is usually realised, even if the ultimate aim of ethics and politics is to change and develop virtue in citizens. But I will return to this below. Jonsen/Toulmin's presentation of two models of argumentation, one theoretical and deductive, the other practical, solving problems in light of previous similar cases (ibid.: 34-35), just confirms the dichotomies once more. By trying to conflate rhetoric, ethics, and dialectics (ibid.: 72-74) into the same model of practical argumentation, the distinctions Aristotle actually worked with become all but impossible to discern through their text. The most profound way, in which Aristotle was practical, even in his most theoretical endeavours, becomes totally invisible. But in my opinion, it is really this profound way, more than anything else, which action research needs to learn from Aristotle.

Even though it is not difficult to sympathize with Toulmin's more recent (2001: 2, etc.) concern for "reasonableness" rather than "rationality", the same dichotomies between formal argumentation and rhetoric, abstract theory and *phrónêsis* regulate the presentation (ibid.: 14ff.). But these are not the only alternatives, neither as complementary nor as rivals (ibid.: 27, 165, 168ff.). In this work Toulmin continues his defence of action research as well, but maintains the dichotomies (ibid.: 97) of action research as *not* being

directed at producing universal, abstract conceptual systems, *but rather* at local, timely knowledge of particular, concrete situations. Instead of general theory, Toulmin seems to put "narratives" of "case histories" (ibid.: 124ff.). But whatever merit narratives may have, they do not replace general epistemic accounts with Aristotle, as Toulmin still seems to believe (ibid.: 132-136). As both the *Nicomachean Ethics* (1181a16-b12) and the *Sophistical Refutations* (183b36-184a10) indicate, Aristotle did not have much positive to say about collections of examples. Aristotle's epistemic alternative was neither examples, nor narratives, nor tradition, nor abstract, deductive theory. To end up praising uncritically the existing theory-pluralism of the social sciences as an ideal "balance of reason" instead, as Toulmin does (ibid.: 172-173), seems a rather unpromising result (cf. Eikeland 2006a).

Making social science matter

Addressing the current impasse of social research in general, Bent Flyvbjerg (2001, 2003) has promoted his own version of "phronetic" social science or research from Denmark since the early 1990s, basing it to a large extent and most fundamentally on the authority of Aristotle (cf. Flyvbjerg 1991). I have no intention of trying to evaluate this approach as a whole here, even though I think what is marketed as "phronetic social science" (ibid.: 4) is quite at odds with *phrónêsis* as Aristotle understood it. Flyvbjergs "phronetic researcher", with the ambition to practise social science *as phrónêsis*, actually boils down to a kind of "phronetic" expert advisor, basing his expertise on currently quite conventional social research methods, expounded in Chapter nine in Flyvbjerg (2001). According to Flyvbjerg (2001: 132), the "phronetic researcher" remains an outsider who "gets close" to the phenomenon or group studied "during data collection", and then "remains close" during the phases of data analysis, feedback, and publication of results. What exactly "getting and remaining close" means is not explained, although exactly this is what most of all needs explanation in order to understand in what way his approach differs from other approaches, from either qualitative social research or action research. This whole expert role for *phrónêsis*, however, is something, which in Aristotelian ethical terms would seem to be a contradiction in

terms, because of the division of labour between the phronetic researcher and the rest.

All in all Flyvbjerg's presentation of *phrónêsis* (2001: 2-4, 53-65), which is what really concerns me here, is based on many of the same misunderstandings as that of Toulmin, plus some additional ones pervading his whole text. I will only introduce some of them here. First of all Flyvbjerg conflates Aristotelian *epistêmê* not only with geometry, as Toulmin (mostly) does, but with modern natural science as well (ibid.: 56), claiming that it builds on an "analytical rationality", which Flyvbjerg clearly does not like, but which really needs some explanation in this context. Flyvbjerg does not provide any explanation though, and the conflation with modern natural science is simply wrong, even though it constructs a convenient "enemy" to fight. He also seems to think (ibid.: 57-59) that it is unique for *phrónêsis* to be based on, or to require, accumulated experience in Aristotle's thinking, and that this imagined uniqueness is what ensures its grasp of particulars and saves it from becoming an *epistêmê*. But with Aristotle, both *epistêmê* and *tékhnê* are quite explicitly based on exactly the same kind of experience as *phrónêsis*, accumulated over time (*empeiría*). If anything isn't, it is mathematics because it works with abstracts.

Flyvbjerg also puts forward another unjustified claim that Aristotelian *phrónêsis* is the same as Max Weber's (1921: 12-13) value rationality (*Wertrationalität*), a claim I find highly dubious, and which at least, once more, has to be justified. But no justification or even discussion is presented. *Phrónêsis* is a much more complex concept than the kind of dogmatically directed action, compliant with any given "values" posited without considering consequences, which Weber attributes to value rationality. Any one of our contemporary fundamentalists acts according to "value rationality", but hardly prudently with *phrónêsis*. Flyvbjerg seems to equate *phrónêsis* primarily with a research strategy or methodology alternative to "analytical" and epistemic approaches, but Aristotle's concept is hardly a concept of research at all. In addition, the only comparison Aristotle gives between *phrónêsis* and any kind of research is precisely with "analysis" (EN1112b20-25).

Although Flyvbjerg's approach would seem to be similar to at least some kinds of action research, Flyvbjerg hardly ever even mentions action re-

search. His only mention (2001: 132/fn.6, 192, 2003: 370) is clearly derogatory claiming without any documentation or discussion that action research in general is "simple" and has "gone native". Action researchers are accused of identifying with the people they are studying, and with their perspectives and goals, as if the prototypical action researcher simply studies "other people", and as if "people's" perspectives and goals in general are "simple" or cannot be as advanced and differentiated as any social researcher's, "phronetic" or normal. In addition, there is no doubt that Aristotelian *phrónêsis* is intended primarily for "natives", much more than it is for modern social researchers. All in all Flyvbjerg's views on Aristotle as well as on action research, say considerably more about Bent Flyvbjerg than they do about either Aristotle or action research. But as already mentioned, evaluating his "phronetic social science" as a whole, is not part of my objective here.

Abandoning techniques

Thomas Schwandt is another discussant using both *phrónêsis* and action research to promote his own version of practical philosophy, as a critique of mainstream evaluation research mainly. In his latest book (2002: xi) his aim is to "recover a sense of evaluation as a practical-moral undertaking rather than a modern scientific task". Evaluation, accordingly, cannot and should not be construed as "applied social science", and neither as some kind of "professional practice of experts". His ambition is (ibid.: 2) to "restore Aristotelian notions of *praxis* and practical competence (*phrónêsis*) to the centre of our way of thinking about evaluation." Most of his examples throughout the book are from action research practices. His main opponent seems to be "method" as "technique", managed by outside experts. Schwandt does not try to mix *phrónêsis* and modern social science, as does Flyvbjerg. His approach is not positioned outside immediate practical contexts, neither as "positivist" nor as "interpretive" research (1996: 62f.).

Schwandt definitely resonates better with Aristotle in this, and his project is not hard to sympathize with. But still Schwandt's version dissolves several distinctions that are important both to Aristotle, and to current attempts at finding ways of cultivating knowledge and competence as well. First of all,

Schwandt does not seem to have any alternative concept of "*epistêmê*". Even though his main opponents are technical approaches (*tékhnê*), as Toulmin and Flyvbjerg he seems to assume that there is only one undifferentiated notion of *epistêmê*, which has been constant since Aristotle until modern natural science and today. But as I have already indicated, Aristotle's main working concept of *epistêmê* is far more "practical", rendering it possible to be "epistemic" in ways hardly imaginable with only this modern concept in mind. Schwandt concentrates instead on what is not science, nor presumably, technique, i.e. on the everyday practices and ways of reasoning of most of us. He wants to resist this sphere being conquered by artificial technologies of knowledge production and expert management, of which mainstream evaluation research seems to be an example. Schwandt wants to say goodbye completely to epistemology, and to the whole theory project and theoretic attitude. Even qualitative, interpretive inquiry "remains largely descriptive, objectifying, and theory focused" (1996: 63) in ways his practical philosophy is not, and should be avoided. But although I share his diagnosis of interpretive inquiry, I am not so sure it necessitates saying goodbye to all kinds of theory or epistemology.

Hence, leaving "science", "research" and "theory" behind for a moment, to enter the everyday world of practitioners with Schwandt, there are distinctions disappearing which even everyday practitioners could, would and should find useful. In Schwandt's scheme of things (2002: 47-58), trying to work out a "science (sic!) of practical philosophy", any and all distinctions between deliberation, rhetoric and dialogue seem to dissolve. Deliberating, you have a dialogue with others and the situation you find yourself in, resulting in persuasive speech, "the conclusion of which is adopting a proper course of action in some particular situation" (ibid.: 53). This may very well be, but not according to how Aristotle tried to specify aims and tasks for deliberation, dialogue, and rhetoric respectively. For Aristotle these were distinct ways of using *lógos* or reasoned speech, not to be confused with each other, even though they definitely mesh and overlap.

Schwandt's project seems to be the improvement of the rationality of practices through the protection of ordinary practices from encroachments from "science", quite understandable, in my opinion, on the background of

our current situation. I think, however, that Aristotle's project was to "rationalize" the everyday situation he was confronted with, where rhetoric was dominant, with support from the "analytical" and "epistemic" efforts of philosophy, and his discussion of *phrónêsis* was part of this effort. The difference hinges mainly on the concept of *epistêmê*. What was apparent for Aristotle but not, it would seem, for Schwandt, is that we do not have to defend neither detached spectator-epistemologies, nor technical-manipulative methods of inquiry, in order for *any* theoretic or epistemic project to be meaningful. In fact the founder of epistemology did not. *Theôría* was not just speculation and calculation from a separate and insulated observatory (where distance, "getting close" or "remaining distant", is totally irrelevant and indifferent). With Aristotle it meant something like studying for the purpose of understanding and truth, without intervening, and without the study being subordinated to or serving to promote any immediate plans for action of any kind. It did not necessarily mean studying strange (or estranged) phenomena from a distant and disengaged spectator position, however. On the contrary, acquired, practical, participant experience (*empeiría*) was necessary. Schwandt seems to think, with Toulmin and Flyvbjerg, that this kind of experience was something uniquely required for *phrónêsis*, but not for *tékhnê* or *epistêmê* (2002: 49, 106, 115). But, although not exactly the other way around, there is definitely more to it.

In conclusion, Schwandt seems to throw away from his own thinking what for Aristotle were the most important things of all, in both practice and theory, i.e. a) *theôría*; studying in order to gain general competence and insight, not just in order to fix some immediate action, and b) *skholê*, free space and time, relieved from immediate action requirements. One would think that Schwandt needs these as well, in order to do what he does in thinking and writing about practices. But the necessary space to accommodate this need has not been incorporated sufficiently into his own thinking. Aristotle knew that even the improvement of the rationality of practices needs this, only *not* as separate, insulated, distant observatories, populated by full-time professors and students (either positivist, or interpretive) without practical experience, visiting short-time or part-time only, to get close enough for observing and explaining. Leisure (*skholê*) is needed in order to develop virtue or virtuosity

in any field (Pol1329a1-3). But what was and is needed is *theôría* and *skholê* embedded in practical contexts. To sort this out properly, distinctions like those between rhetoric, didactics, dialogue, *phrónêsis*, and deliberation became important in the thinking of Aristotle. It seems to me that the irony in the efforts at escaping from the maze of modern social "science" comes full circle when Schwandt enlists the arch-epistemic and anti-rhetoric figure above all in his anti-epistemic expedition, i.e. Socrates himself, "as interlocutor and teacher" (2002: 56). I agree that Socrates is needed, but I am not certain if Schwandt and I would agree exactly on why and how to employ him.

The authors above write as if there only existed two opposite and reciprocally excluding alternatives to choose between for action research and others interested in learning from Aristotle. Although somewhat differently conceived, apparently *either* we have to be Cartesian, deductive, mathematical, empiricist, technical, etc., *or* we have to resort to rhetorical, everyday, on-the-run-practical, *ad hoc* problem-solving ways of knowing. But the Aristotelian scheme cannot be reduced to these two alternatives. Other options are available, although neither independent nor excluding each other. What for Aristotle was specifically dialogical or dialectical, gets ripped apart and invisible in this dichotomous thinking. It is as if the only alternatives were *either* Aristotle's *Prior* and *Posterior Analytics*, or his *Art of Rhetoric*, with *phrónêsis* enlisted on the side of rhetoric. But this is a false, unnecessary, and un-Aristotelian dichotomy. We cannot choose one side alone, and these are not the only alternatives anyhow. The authors consequently neglect commenting on, and even noticing at all, two *major* intellectual virtues; *nous*, often translated as "intelligent intuition", and *sophía* (theoretical wisdom), and the same goes for lesser ones like "understanding of particulars" or *súnesis*, and others as well. Hence, these ways of dichotomising simply miss the complexity and richness of both Aristotle and the world confronting us.[6]

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[6] Joseph Dunne (1993) has also delivered a very interesting study of *phrónêsis* and *tékhnê* in Aristotle. My main objection to his interpretation concerns his attempt at redefining the role of *phrónêsis*, based mostly on Dunnes lack of concern with the theoretical aspects of the philosophy of Aristotle. Others do not focus on *phrónêsis* in particular, but emphasize other selected and limited aspects of Aristotle's practical thinking as most important, e.g. Ramírez (1995) who sees rhetoric as the most basic discipline, and Janik (1996) who seems to consider the practical syllogism as the core of

The virtues – non-dichotomous thinking:
Ethical and intellectual aspects of phrónêsis

So, what is *phrónêsis*? According to Aristotle, *phrónêsis* is one of the "intellectual virtues" or "excellences of the mind" (*aretai dianoêtikai*). But *phrónêsis* is not only an intellectual virtue. It is an ethical virtue as well (EN1140b25, MM1197a14-20). Aristotle claims that we cannot be (intellectually) prudent (*phrónimoi*) without being (ethically) good (EN1144a36, 1178a16-19, EE1246b33). Hence, *phrónêsis* presupposes ethical virtue. But simultaneously, ethically virtuous acts presuppose *phrónêsis*. We cannot act virtuously without exercising *phrónêsis*. Except for theoretical wisdom (*sophía*), which is said to be a part of virtue as a whole (EN1144a5), the other intellectual virtues are not given intrinsic ethical value, since they as rational powers (*dunámeis*), apparently can be used for both good and bad (ethical) purposes.

The Greek concept of "virtue" (*aretê*) means in general what makes any thing or activity work at its best (*áristos*).[7] The virtue of an eye or a horse or any other thing is the specific state or condition that makes it perform its task or function (*érgon*) well. In Aristotelian terms an ethical or intellectual virtue in human beings is a *héxis*, or *habitus* (the Latin translation), which means an acquired ability, skill, habit, or incorporated *disposition* for acting and feeling in certain ways, resulting from practice, exercise, or habituation, as Aristotle points out.[8] A *habitus* can be either bad or good, but *virtue* is the best *habitus* within its kind of activity. Every ethical and intellectual virtue or *aretê* is the result of a process of perfection (*teleíôsis*) from *within* a specific activity or

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Aristotle's practical philosophy. Other contributors, as for instance Forester (1999), are definitely also action research relevant. He writes much about both deliberation and practical judgement as well, but with references to Aristotle only indirectly, mostly through Martha Nussbaum's interpretations. The same goes for Polkinghorne (2004), who, in addition, also misjudges the epistemic and theoretical parts of Aristotle's philosophy in line with Toulmin and Flyvbjerg. I will not bring contributions like these directly into my discussion here, for reasons of space.

[7] EN1106a15-26, EE1218b38-1219a23

[8] See Cat8b25-9a13, 12a26-13a37, EN1103a16-26, 1103b22, 1114a10, EE1220b1 &18-20. The concept *habitus* has gained great influence in modern social science through Pierre Bourdieu's (1972/1980) appropriation of it from the scholastic tradition. See Broady (1990: 236ff.) for documentation.

practice, resulting in a certain virtuous *habitus*.[9] This means that for every thing and every activity that has some task or function, there exists a virtuous *habitus* in every performing "entity" as a condition that makes it able to perform that task or function in the best possible way. The virtues are neither written nor unwritten rules or commandments. Nor are they merely "attitudes". The modern word "virtuosity" actually carries the original meaning better than "virtue", since it is more activity-oriented than attitude-oriented. This aspect is actually quite important to Aristotle. This is why "excellence" also may be a better translation than the somewhat worn out modern concept of virtue. In spite of this I will mostly continue to use "virtue" here.

The intellectual virtues

For Aristotle, as well as for Plato, the activity of the intellect or mind – thinking (*dianoeisthai* or *nóêsis*) – is lingual, i.e. it consists in the (internal or external) use of language or reasoned speech (*lógos*).[10] The common work, task, or function (*érgon*) of *all* the intellectual virtues is to attain truth by affirming and denying, as Aristotle puts it (EN1139a18-31, 1139b12-17, EE1221b27-34). The different intellectual virtues have, or rather *are*, *lógos* in this proper sense and in themselves (*kuríôs kaì en hautô*) (EN1103a2-3). It is their *lógos*-character that makes these virtues intellectual. They all consist in the ability to use *lógos* correctly for their purpose, and this (i.e. "correctly") is what makes them virtuous. *Phrónêsis* is a virtue in using *lógos* in certain ways for certain purposes.

In order to get the picture quickly and see the place of *phrónêsis* within it, I have to give short and too simplified characterisations of the most important intellectual virtues. The virtues I will bring into this discussion beside *phrónêsis* are the following, all in quotation marks since these traditional translations anticipate the content, sometimes in biased and confusing ways: "theoretical wisdom" (*sophía*), "intuitive intelligence" or "intellectual intuition" (*nous*), "science" (*episteme*), "technical reason" (*tékhnê*), "understand-

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[9] EN1103a26, Ph246a10-248a9, Metaph1021b21, EE1220a22-b10

[10] See deAn427b15, 428a23-25, 432a12, SE170b12-20, Int16a1ff., EN1139a21-32, 1139b11-17, EE1221b29-32.

ing of particulars" (*súnesis*), "cleverness" (*deinótês*), and "quickness of mind" (*eustokhía*). These virtues are not separate "parts" of the mind, however. There are several overlaps that are too complex to bring into this presentation, however. At the base of all of them lies gradually acquired, practical experience (*empeiría* ≈ German *Erfahrung* ≠ *Erlebnis*) (cf. Eikeland, 1997; 2007). The virtues are identified according to the different kinds of activities and tasks (*érga*) of the mind and their excellences or perfected forms. The virtues differ in their task structures, in what they relate to, in what they do and pursue, in how they do it, and for what purpose. This is how virtues or excellences of different activities are distinguished.

Sophía (theoretical wisdom) is said to be part of virtue as a whole. It encompasses all the virtues, both intellectual and ethical, and is considered by Aristotle to be at the head of the others. The head is part of the body, however. Bodies should not be beheaded. Theoretical wisdom is said to be composed of two virtues immediately "below" it, *nous* and *epistêmê*. These both relate to and deal with things that are (more or less) stable and invariant. Although I find it somewhat misleading, *nous* is usually translated as some kind of intuitive intelligence or intellectual intuition. *Nous* moves inductively, "upwards" from particulars, but grasping and defining principles. But it deals with both universals and particulars. *Epistêmê* is usually translated as "science", but should not in general be identified with modern science. *Epistêmê* is the virtue of theoretical knowledge after competence in some field or activity has been stabilised and analysed, has received a defined and more or less "finished form", and can be articulated adequately in language. It concerns those aspects of its field of study that remain more or less stable independently of our actions or interventions. It is primarily a skill in deductive demonstration (*héxis apodeiktikê*), and in didactics or the instructive lecturing of teachers (*lógos didaskalikós*). It starts and moves "down" from basic principles. But although *epistêmê* consists of words, it cannot in general be reduced to words alone. Nor is it simply formal and syllogistic. It implies personally embodied skill and substantial knowledge as its base.

Both *phrónêsis* and *tékhnê* concern things that can, and do, vary (EN1139a7-16, 1140a1, MM1197a2-13). And, maybe more importantly, since natural science *also* concern things that change and vary naturally,

phrónêsis and *tékhnê* concern things that we ourselves can control, i.e. decide on, choose, initiate, change, develop, or stop, so that the change and variation depends on us. They are both prescriptive and give recommendations on action. But *phrónêsis* and *tékhnê* work in quite different ways. *Phrónêsis* deliberates, *tékhnê* calculates. Although Aristotle's comment in the *Nicomachean Ethics* (1139a13) opens up the interpretation for deliberation, he simultaneously conflates the distinction between deliberation and calculation. But the wider context implies difference. *Phrónêsis* and *tékhnê* also differ between themselves by being assigned as rational virtues or excellences to different forms of activities. *Phrónêsis* is assigned to *praxis* or "doing", i.e. to activities having their ends and objectives within themselves, as with acts of justice, or more generally with processes of perfection. *Tékhnê* is assigned to *poíêsis* or "making", having as its aim the production of change in external objects, or bringing into existence things that may or may not exist. In *praxis* ends and means – beginning, middle, and end – are formally identical. Acting justly you realise justice, and practising as a novice is formally identical to performing as a virtuoso. In *poíêsis* however, ends and means are formally different, and the end is always some externalised product, never the activity of *poíêsis* in itself.

In a way, *tékhnê* is the application of epistemic knowledge of "high regularity" in creating changes induced by us (APo100a8-9), where the application of a cause of a certain kind will predictably produce the same chain of causes and effects regularly. This is done with the use of *lógos* – reasoning and arguing – by the technicians in a certain phase, deliberating what to do – i.e. in finding and applying the right stimulus as a cause – and then in calculating the ultimate effect as the result of a chain of predetermined causes and effects in the objects concerned. But it is done without any use of *lógos* in persuading or convincing the manipulated or influenced object itself to react in certain ways, or in showing and giving it reasons and justifications for choosing, acting, or reacting in certain ways – explaining it why. Purely material things do not need, and are unable to receive that. Their operational mode is, in Aristotelian terms, efficient and material causes. But for *tékhnê* the other *is* a thing (possessing a mind or not), used as a predictable or controllable tool or as material. If speech is used technically, it is used as an in-

fluencing power, where the effect is what counts, not the validity of the intellectual, cognitive content of something said and communicated. Understanding in the recipient has nothing, or only accidentally something, to do with it. *Tékhnê* does not speak to the object it manipulates or influences as to an autonomous mind like itself, persuading, convincing, or showing it how and why to act in certain ways. *Phrónêsis* does. *Tékhnê as such* hardly deals with particulars or individuals through deliberation, as *phrónêsis* does. *Tékhnê* calculates effects, on humans as well as on other objects

Súnesis – understanding of particulars – is another intellectual virtue. It is not prescriptive like *phrónêsis*, but neither is it merely the same as to have an opinion (*dóxa*). Everyone has opinions, but not everyone has understanding. Nor is *súnesis* restricted to universals, the way *epistêmê* is. When we make up our minds about what another individual says, by distinguishing well in what s/he says, either in learning an *epistêmê*, or in judging what *phrónêsis* is about – merely interpreting it, as we might say – then we engage our *súnesis*, *not* our *phrónêsis* (EN1143a12-35). *Súnesis* is needed as presupposed knowledge in listening to lectures (APo71a7&13), and in dialogue with others (e.g. Metaph1062a12, Top160a17-34). The most important, and distinguishing, common property of both *phrónêsis* and *súnesis* appears to be this specific knowledge of the concrete situation, the specific particulars of and in this situation and context. The difference, however, is that *phrónêsis* is normative and is directed at promoting action, while *súnesis* is merely descriptively and analytically distinguishing (*kritikê mónon*). It merely observes differences critically, engendering knowledge about particulars, without intervening, desiring, pursuing, or preferring one or another alternative practically. It is about things that can vary and be different, while *epistêmê* is about things that do not vary, or are stable for the most part.

Still another intellectual virtue is mere cleverness or *deinótês*. Deliberation distinguishes *phrónêsis* from the virtues presented so far. In this it also differs from a kind of "quickness of mind", or wit (*eustokhía*), which "sees" the "what", "why" and "how" of situations, immediately, without inquiry or reasoning (EN1142a32-b6, APo89b10-20). *Phrónêsis* is not mere quick-wittedness. *Phrónêsis* deliberates, and deliberation is slow, while quick-wittedness is swift. But *phrónêsis* only deliberates about means, not ends.

Deliberation as a whole *is* about means, not ends, according to Aristotle (cf. EN1112a18-1113a9, EE1226b10-1228a22). And cleverness deliberates too. Cleverness is the capacity to deliberate well about means to any, arbitrary end, far-sighted, near-sighted, selfish, evil, whatever. *Deinótês*, then, is for "smart guys". Cleverness seems to be what modernity, at least since David Hume (1739-40: 413-418/457-459), has tended to see as rationality *simpliciter*, a technical instrument, and a servant, of an emotionally (or a-rationally) regulated will ("the slave of the passions"). Cleverness works as *phrónêsis* does, taking particulars of the here-and-now into consideration, but for any "practical" purpose whatever. So, although *phrónêsis* deliberates, every deliberation is not *phrónêsis*. Although deliberation is concerned with particulars, every concern with particulars is not deliberative. Deliberation has normative and prescriptive aims. It is directed towards action, promoting specific action. *Súnesis* is not. And although *phrónêsis* is concerned with particulars, every concern with particulars is not *phrónêsis*. *Súnesis* is not.

Phrónêsis, according to Aristotle, only deliberates about means for realising ethical virtue (*aretê*), and "happiness" (*eudaimonía*) (EN1142b23, 1144a36) meaning competent, well functioning, flourishing activities. This means that if you do not deliberate and act with these ends in mind, what you do will be reduced to cleverness. But, surprisingly maybe, *phrónêsis* does not determine or define ends (aims, objectives) for actions in Aristotle's scheme. Ends are given (*data*) for *phrónêsis* by the ethical virtues, and this is why, in order to be a true *phrónimos*, you have to be ethically good and virtuous (*agathós*) already (EN1144a36). This relation between ends and means is a point repeated very many times by Aristotle, and it seems to have been an important point for him.[11] It is also a point, which has caused a lot of controversy, doubt, and confusion among commentators, since it threatens *phrónêsis* with immediate collapse into mere cleverness, syllogistic reasoning, or dogmatic "value rationality".[12] The restrictions put on *phrónêsis* also

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[11]   See EN1111b27, 1112b12, 1112b29-35, 1113a14, 1113b34, 1139a14, 1140b17-20, 1141b11-12, 1144a7-9, 1144a26-36, 1145a6, EE1226a8, 1226b10, 1226b19, 1227a7, MM1189a8-11/26, 1190a1-28, Rh1359a34-b24, 1362a18, Top116b23-117a4.

[12]   Cf. Natali (2004: 222/227ff.). This whole discussion deserves a separate treatment at least. I cannot free myself from the impression, however, that authors like the follow-

immediately raise the question about *how* we become virtuous, since we apparently have to be virtuous *first* in order to be prudent. But in fact, Aristotle seems to insist on this restricted range for *phrónêsis*, and *why* this insistence, is an interesting question.

The ethical virtues

The "ethical virtues", or rather "excellences of character" (*êthikai aretai*) do not just consist in the use of *lógos*, as the intellectual virtues do.[13] According to Aristotle, the ethical virtues are rather concerned with the formation of character (*êthos*) through becoming habituated and accustomed to, and thereby gradually avoiding and seeking "spontaneously" or by inclination, the "right kinds and amounts" of pleasures and pains in acting and feeling (EN1104b9-1105a16, cf. 1121a3). Hence, the ethical virtues require the perfection, through practice and habituation, of *more* than just thinking and speaking. Ethical virtue is defined to be in the middle between excess and deficiency. But it is no compromise or average, nor is it simply "moderation".

The ethical virtues or excellences of character are called "*álogoi*" by Aristotle, a word often translated as "irrational". But the ethical virtues are not in themselves irrational in the sense of being in any necessary opposition or contradiction to reason, or being "beyond" and unattainable by reason. *Álogoi* simply means that these excellences do not primarily consist in the use of *lógos* or reasoned speech, but mainly in non-lingual conduct. They are tacit,

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ing take a great effort in trying to explain *away* Aristotle's notorious insistence on keeping deliberation and *phrónêsis* restricted to what contributes – here and now – to the realization of the ends, without letting them influence the content of, or the theoretical clarification of, or even the choice of the ends themselves. See Wiggins (1980), Nussbaum (1986: 297ff.), Sherman (1989: 70-94), Cooper (1975: 58ff.) – holding a different alternative open though – and Dunne (1993: 350-356). While I agree with Natali (2001: 39-61) in restricting deliberation to "means", we disagree on several important details in the interpretation of this. Even though I find it quite uncontroversial, the expression "*concerned* with the components of the end", as well as with instrumental means, used by Nussbaum (1978: 170) and others, is not sufficiently clarifying about practical reasoning. The "explaining away" of Aristotle's insistence often appears to go with a need to apologize for his theoretical project. But Aristotle's theoretical project needs to be understood, not apologized. Aristotle's theoretical project is dealt with in Eikeland (1997) and (2007).

[13]   See EN1102a29-1103a10, 1117b23-25, 1139a5, EE1219b26-1220a13, MM1196b12.

in Michael Polanyi's sense (1958/1966). They are not necessarily completely "wordless", but they always consist in *more* than words and speech, and hence, cannot be *reduced* to words and speech alone. Still, they are able to (and must) be guided and influenced by (external or internal) speech, and to follow recommendations or instructions given by it. Thus, according to Aristotle they do take part in *lógos* after all, but in a different way (EN1102b13-1103a3, EE1219b26-1220a13). The central point in this, then, is that these tacit abilities and dispositions differ *both* from clean-cut reason or mind (*nous*), consisting in the use of *lógos*, on the one hand, *and* from pure corporeal nature (*sôma*, or *sarx*), quite unable to become modified directly by *lógos*, on the other hand. They occupy their own proper middle ground in-between, as properties of the living "ensouled" body (*psukhê*).

The ethical virtues are said by Aristotle to be with good and articulated reason(s), or justifications (*metà lógou*). This is important since the ethical virtues are not only "in accordance with" right reason (*katà tòn orthón lógon*), as some of his contemporaries seem to have defined them. On the other hand, the ethical virtues are not in themselves reasons (*lógous einai*) either, or kinds of *epistêmê*, as Socrates thought. They are dispositions – converted into right action and right emotion – *with* the right reason (*metà tou orthou lógou*), and *phrónêsis* is right reason in these matters, according to what is said in the *Nicomachean Ethics* (1144b17-33). The ethical virtues, then, are not only "in accordance with" reason, because things can be done in a formally correct way "by chance", technically, or under the influence of others (as in mechanical rule-following, or in following orders) (EN1105a17-b9). On the other hand the ethical virtues are not in themselves reasons, because they demand right action and emotion, not just abstracted words or thoughts. Hence, the final consummation of ethically virtuous action distinguishes it from merely doing things a) mechanically, as in following a rule, an order, or habit, or, b) unknowingly, meaning not knowing whether and why an act is an ethically good act, or, c) coincidentally, by chance, meaning not deliberately chosen from an established virtuous disposition or *habitus*, or, d) for ulterior motives and not for their own sake.[14] As an intellectual vir-

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[14] EN1105a17-b12, 1109b35-1112a17, 1135a20-b11, 1144a13-23, MM1197b37-1198a21.

tue, then, *phrónêsis* has ethical import. But as this shows, the ethical virtues in and by themselves also have what seems to be an intellectual aspect to them. Being ethically virtuous appears somehow to imply knowing and understanding what ethical virtue (*aretê*) and "happiness" (*eudaimonía*) are as competent, well functioning, flourishing activities. Adjusting to particulars of the situation is not arbitrary.

Several other aspects of the virtues as Aristotle sees them, need to be mentioned. As indicated, ethical virtues, like temperance, courage, justice, friendship, and others, are defined as a mean (*méson*) between excess and deficiency. But the ethical mean is not a compromise, some kind of mediocrity, or uncritical "moderation", not taking the effort of doing everything possible. It obviously is not a statistical mean, or average, either. Doing the right thing ethically is compared to hitting the centre of a target (EN1106a26-1107a8). In relation to "the best" and "goodness" then, virtue is considered an extreme (*akrótês*).[15] Aristotle suggests that virtue is more accurate and better than any technical art (EN1106b10-15, 1100b11-17), and that it is like a work of art where nothing can be added or subtracted without ruining its perfection. An ethically virtuous act hits even a moving target in the middle, period.

In a way, the ethical virtues are at one (top) end of a continuous, vertical spectrum of opposites within themselves or their kind of activity. At the other (bottom) end are vices, which really are incompetences. Within the spectrum of virtues and vices, each of the virtues have in a sense two opposites, excess and deficiency, which are both vices. So if virtue is on top of a hierarchy because it is an excellence and an "extreme" among contraries, it stands on top of two separate spiral staircases below, excess and deficiency, both of them with vices at their lower ends, representing the other extremes.[16] In general, virtues are also continuous, not discontinuous. There are many intermediate qualities and "states". These intermediate states are not to be confused with the ethical mean (*tò méson*), however, since the ethical mean actually is the extreme of being "completely good". The intermediate states are like steps in

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[15] See EN1107a8&23, 1123b13-15, EE1220b31-35, and Metaph1078a32.

[16] See the list in EE1220b38-1221a12. Cf. Cat13b36-14a7, EN1107a1-6, 1108b11-1109a19, 1133b29-1134a12. See also EN 1107a9-27 on acts and emotions in themselves evil.

the two spiral staircases. Being in the middle (*tò méson*) of the target, ethical virtues have two (or even more) contraries.

Another characteristic is also used by Aristotle to identify ethical virtues. In the arts and sciences, a voluntary error is not as bad as an involuntary error. A voluntary error simply shows that you are in control technically as a master of the art, as when a virtuoso singer or pianist slips out of tune on purpose. But in ethics, i.e. when performing acts with ethical import, and for virtuous action including *phrónêsis*, a voluntary mistake is worse than an involuntary mistake.[17] A voluntary mistake would imply e.g. inflicting a premeditated injustice on somebody, or consciously not bothering to find out anything about the special background of someone before judging. Doing this is worse than doing the same "not-on-purpose". If you really know and understand medicine, or any other art or science, you are *de facto* considered to be a doctor, no matter how you use it. But really knowing and understanding what justice is, does not automatically make you into a just person, and if you have a thorough knowledge and understanding of justice, but do not even attempt to act justly, it makes you even more unethical than being inactive or a perpetrator without the knowledge or understanding (cf. MM1183b8-17, 1199a19-29). Injustice is not the same as ignorance (Top114b9-13) since the injustice increases when unjust acts are done with knowledge, and just acts can be done even without knowledge. In matters of emotion and practice, words are often less convincing than deeds, as Aristotle points out (EN1172a35-b1).

According to Aristotle, external goods like wealth, health, strength, friends, etc., and all merely rational capacities or "powers" (*dunámeis*), arts and crafts (*tekhnai*), and "sciences" (*epistêmai*), can be used for both good and bad purposes. Good things like these can obviously be (ab-)used for bad purposes. They can all easily be forfeited by fools or by unwise decisions. Rational capacities study subjects that are, as it were, spread out, as what we may call horizontal opposites, before them. Medicine as an art and science, for example, carries the potential of – or power over – both health and disease

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[17] See EN1140b23-24. Cf. 1116b3-23, 1135b25-1136a5, 1136b3-5, 1137a10-26, 1138a8-9.

("un-health"), since it studies them both and can produce both.[18] So, the use must be controlled by an ethically good will. Hence, skills like these are not ethically good in themselves. Whether they are used for good or bad purposes depends on the character and choice of the user. But both these kinds of goods and the rational capacities remain what they are in themselves, *qua* goods and powers, no matter what purpose they are used, or not used, for. It is possible to be an evil doctor, while remaining technically skilled and fully competent. Both health and wealth remain good things, even if ruined by fools or abused by evil owners. In other words, goods like these are instruments (EN1099a31-b8, 1099b28, cf. Pol1332a19-28), or enabling powers, with no necessary, intrinsic, or immanent relation to one specific ethical purpose or aim within the scope of the subjects they study.

This is not so with the proper ethical virtues. They are not mere instruments. Ethical virtues cannot be used for bad ethical purposes. Purely technical virtues, however, can be used for bad ethical purposes, and as just indicated, even for bad and incompetent performance. Justice, for instance, cannot be used for unjust purposes according to Aristotle, and neither can *phrónêsis.*[19] For Aristotle this is one way of identifying ethical virtues. Ethical virtues produce what Aristotle calls noble actions (*kalà érga*), which are laudable (*epainetá*) in themselves, and as ends. They are done for their own sake, not only as means for something else. They are forms of *praxis*. They are also laudable and praiseworthy because it is up to us to perform them or not, they are not due to chance, luck, necessity, force, or other external causes influencing. *We* decide and we are responsible, and for that reason we praise those who make virtuous decisions. Justice, or "just-ness" as a virtue of an individual, necessarily produces just actions, and just actions are independent ends, not something done for ulterior motives, to achieve something else, since to use justice for other purposes at least raises serious doubt as to whether it really is justice at work, not something else. External goods (wealth, health, strength, etc.), however, can be used for any purpose without

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[18] Cf. Metaph1046a36-b28, 1050b28-35, 1051a4-22, 1047b31-1048a24, EN1129a12-23, EE1227a23-b5

[19] See EE1246a27-b36, Rh1355b2-3, EN1129a12-16, 1105b19-1106a13, MM1206b8-29

losing credibility as good instruments. The results or use of enabling, instrumental powers like health, wealth, or strength are not in themselves praiseworthy. Their character as praiseworthy or not depends on the purposes of their users (EE1248b17-37). But health, wealth, etc. are still considered goods independently of the purposes of their owners. In the ethical virtues, the good purpose of the agent is included in the definition, making them into a special kind of goods.

For Aristotle, this indicates how the ethical virtues cannot be reduced to an intellectual level of knowledge and technical competence, as Socrates seems to have thought (EN1145b21-31). The facts of "weakness-of-will", self-indulgence, unrestraint, or incontinence (*akrasía*) on the one hand, and self-control, restraint, or continence (*egkráteia*) on the other, discussed extensively in Book VII in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, where emotions, desires, and habits are in conflict with reasoned conviction and knowledge, also indicate that ethics has more to it than mere knowledge and technical competence. But *phrónêsis* is not only an intellectual virtue of reasoned speech alone. To forget something purely intellectually held (or merely technically performed) is not considered an ethical deficiency. But forgetting *phrónêsis* would be (as would forgetting about justice!). Through properties like these, then, *phrónêsis* is distinguished as a different form of knowledge from the other intellectual virtues (*génos állo gnôseôs*), having a truly ethical import in itself.[20]

Since *phrónêsis* is a rational (ethical) virtue, without which other natural (ethical) virtues cannot be perfected, it also follows, according to Aristotle, that if a man has *phrónêsis* he must necessarily have the other virtues as well. It makes no sense to talk about *phrónêsis* separately, alone, without other ethical virtues like justice, courage and temperance, since *phrónêsis* is their specific reasoning power when they act with right reason (EN1144b30-1145a6, 1146a8-10). The other ethical virtues are the bases without which *phrónêsis* cannot exist either. But this also means that *phrónêsis* cannot be acquired alone, isolated, and independently from other ethical virtues, simply reckoning the others will follow automatically as a consequence from focusing solely on *phrónêsis*. *Phrónêsis* is nothing without the other ethical vir-

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[20]   See EE1246b36, MM1183b8-17, and Top152b1-5

tues. It is simply impossible to separate *phrónêsis* from the other ethical virtues in this way. We cannot be prudent without being good, but we cannot be fully good either without being prudent, taking the particulars of the situation into account.

Phrónêsis and rhetoric

Rhetoric as Aristotle sees it, is not an ethical virtue in itself, as *phrónêsis* is. Rhetoric is a useful skill (*khrêsimos*), which can be used for good and bad, just and unjust purposes, as can all other *merely* rational powers. As such, it is closer to cleverness, than to *phrónêsis*. Aristotle speaks unambiguously of rhetoric as a *tékhnê* (1354a1-15, 1355a4, b9-41). As rhetorical *performance* the aim of eloquence, persuasion, lies in-between influencing and manipulating technically on the one hand, and convincing and showing intellectually on the other, directed as it is, mainly at *moving* the soul (*psukhê*) – as the mediator in-between the body (*sôma*) and the mind (*nous*) – to some decision, action, or emotion, using character-appearance (*êthos*), emotions (*páthos*), and persuasive *lógos* as means (1356a1-38). If people can be persuaded into doing things voluntarily, force and necessity become superfluous (cf. EE1224a5-1225a1). But still, the point in using rhetorical art is the wanted decision, action, or emotion as an effect in the receiver of persuasion, not his or her independent understanding of anything, nor the validity of the contents. Rhetorically considered, both "understanding" in the other and "validity" of arguments may be useful means for achieving the intended effects. But if they are not, rhetoric chooses other means.

The performance of *phrónêsis* is not limited to the public arenas (popular assemblies, courts of law, and festive occasions) Aristotle assigns to rhetoric, of course, but the performance of rhetoric and the activity of *phrónêsis* still overlap significantly. First of all, even rhetoric is not restricted to these arenas, but may operate in private spheres (*idía*) (Rh1358b9), and towards individuals (1391b10-25). *Also*, they overlap in being concerned with things about which we deliberate (cf. EN1141b30-34, Rh1357a317, 1359a33-b1), i.e. events that are not part of natural developments, either necessary or eternal, but may issue in different ways, and where the results depend on our own

decisions, efforts, and actions. To put it bluntly, as Aristotle does himself (Rh1355a24-34, 1357a2-16, 1404a1-9), rhetoric is primarily necessary because it aims at the persuasion of simple people, who are hard to teach, and unable to follow long chains of argument, where appealing to the mind (*nous*) alone is insufficient. And in everyday activities, persuading people like this is often necessary, of course, as every PR or advertising consultant knows. But rhetoric is also useful because sometimes even defenders of just causes and true accounts lose their case, due to their inability to speak clearly and appropriately to the point to their audiences, and also because even in teaching it matters how things are presented, not ideally maybe, but in fact. So, they both need to attend to "techniques of presentation".

Phrónêsis is primarily deliberation, done by a prudent *phrónimos* by and for himself, in an open search to find the best means for acting virtuously, here and now. It can also be performed in company with others (1112b10-12). Rhetoric is primarily directed at making assemblies of others decide in certain ways by persuading them of the decisions' correctness, usefulness, profitability, or whatever will make them decide as the rhetorical speaker wishes. Persuasion can also be performed in smaller circles, or even face to face, however. Done either individually or in a group, *phrónêsis* is required to reason correctly for the sake of virtue. *Phrónêsis* is not simply persuasive. Rhetoric does not have such restrictions, however. Rhetoric as a *tékhnê* may use all means of persuasion for all kinds of purposes, virtuous or not (1355b8-35). Among the means of persuasion, *phrónêsis*, as such, can hardly use character (*êthos*) (e.g. I am an honest guy, so I should pay attention to myself!) and emotion (*páthos*) as means, as rhetoric does, in order to move ones own mind or soul to a decision (cf. EE1240b4-8), and it may not be quite noble to appeal to these in counselling others either. These are undoubtedly real means of persuasion, however (Rh1355b16-18). Real means of persuasion may include incorrect reasoning processes as well (e.g. arguing from signs, and from the "confirmation of the consequent", cf. SE167b8-20), and even true conclusions may be concluded correctly from false premises. Rhetoric, then, may very well be useful and necessary for *phrónêsis* too. But it is not identical to it. In Aristotle's opinion, rhetoric is clearly for the most part a derived and subsidiary art, based on, and combining, the more funda-

mental studies of dialectics / analytics, and ethics / politics. In order to be a master of rhetorical arguments, you must first know both syllogisms in general (Rh1355a4-21), and the human emotions, characters, and virtues (1356a23-38), the study of which none belongs to rhetoric itself, but to the other disciplines just mentioned (1359b2-20). As a field of study rhetoric has the special task of studying the general means of persuasion, falling outside the proper fields of the separate arts and sciences.[21]

Phrónêsis and tékhnê summarised

In the end, then, what really distinguishes *phrónêsis* from other deliberative processes (rhetoric, cleverness, or other forms of *tékhnê* and *epistêmê*) is its ethical content and its immanence to *praxis*. *Phrónêsis* is both ethical and intellectual. Why and how? It deliberates about how I or we should and could be just, fair, friendly, and caring, etc. in relation to other people here and now, people with very different needs and wishes, all things considered, but still respecting their autonomy as thinking minds and wills separate from ours. Because *phrónêsis* has to heed appearances through the different opinions and desires of different people at different stages, phases, or situations of life, and how one identical, accidental property of something may appear pleasant to one, harmful to another, indifferent to a third, and simply useful to a fourth, there cannot be any *tékhnê* or precept for dealing with it. In addition, *phrónêsis* cannot be used to deliberate instrumentally about how to make anyone do what we want, or serve our purposes and at the same time remain itself. Doing that would reduce it to *tékhnê*.

   Phrónêsis does not try to manipulate, or merely persuade, but must present its own thinking and reasons for deciding and acting in certain ways as openly as possible to the mindful judgement of others, trying to show, and convince, making them *see*, but still respecting their autonomy (cf. Rh1378a6-21). *Phrónêsis* must take into consideration where the others are, emotionally, intellectually, and in their skills and attitudes, in trying to find the right thing to do, but it cannot use these circumstances manipulatively try-

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[21]   See Rh1355a4-16, 1355b28-37, 1356a23-40, 1359b2-20/EN1094b4, 1181a15

ing to set through some hidden agenda, without ruining itself *qua phrónêsis*. It must know how to deal with egotistical, strategic, manipulative behaviour in others without itself becoming like this, but also without simply being subdued by it and letting such behaviour prevail in others and in general. So this is why *phrónêsis* is both ethical and intellectual, a) because we would blame someone for forgetting or neglecting to do these intellectual exercises in dealing with others (acting e.g. as if we only perceived an abstract human being in front of us), b) because we would also blame someone for deliberating more cleverly for other – unethical – purposes in dealing with others, and c) because abstaining consciously and voluntarily from doing intellectual exercises like these would be considered an ethical deficiency.

But Aristotle does see many analogies between ethics / politics and *tékhnê*, especially with medicine. But the analogies have clear limits (EN1143b30-1144a9, Pol1269a19). The responsibility, the independence, and the autonomy of ethico-political virtue, is completely common to all who are able.[22] *Tékhnê* cannot be universally common among human beings, however. *Praxis* can. Technical and instrumental relations cannot be generalised universally, since they are based on complementary differences and divisions of labour, some being users or manipulators, others merely tools or material. They are not based on similarity and on shared understanding and relations. *Praxis* is. In ethics there can be no such division of labour as there is in the technical arts. Ethics cannot be delegated to technical experts. We cannot do in ethics as we do in medicine. We do not all study medicine in order to become healthy. Instead we follow orders and recommendations, and get treatment from the experts who have, since medicine is mainly a technical art of making (*poíêsis*). But in ethics we cannot simply take the orders or advice of others who possess *phrónêsis* in the same way as we follow the advice from a doctor knowing medicine. Following the advice or orders from other individuals presumed competent is *not* sufficient in relation to the requirements for ethical virtue.

Hence, the normative and prescriptive character of *phrónêsis*, giving recommendations, orders, or instructions, must be directed at an "I", or a "we",

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[22]   See EN1099b9-33, EE1214a15-b6&1215a13-19

not at (the soul or body of) externalised others not equally involved in the deliberation. We all have to acquire *phrónêsis* and act on our own. Here the persistent analogy with medicine finally breaks down. Medicine is a *tékhnê* that produces health technically (*poíêsis*) in others as patients (*páthos*). Rhetoric is a *tékhnê* that may very well produce "right" opinion and "correct" behaviour persuasively or seductively in others. But in ethics (*praxis*) no one could be a merely receptive patient, nor could anyone be a mere user. No one can merely be in the position of "material" or "instrument" for others' manipulative creativity or utilization. *Praxis* cannot simply be imposed on others. *Praxis* concerns what is shared and common, and a practical relation is a relation to what we share in common (e.g. language, standards of conduct) as human beings, or *qua* professionals, members of certain ethnic communities, etc.

Phrónêsis, then, cannot make others virtuous in the same way as clinical medicine makes others healthy. It cannot even make ourselves virtuous, but presupposes that we already are, in the same way that professional deliberation presupposes professional competence in certain disciplines. In ethics and politics we are all equally like the professional practitioners, carrying the full responsibility and the practical virtues ourselves. Hence, the analogy between the ethical virtues and the arts is made both stronger and weaker simultaneously. It is made *stronger* because everyone carries a "professional" responsibility comparable to, or even more so than any technical artisan or master craftsman. But the analogy is made *weaker* too, because ethics does not use or make any *thing* as the arts do, and cannot relate to others as to externalised (mute, deaf, and dumb) things merely.

Different ways of using lógos

The question we might reasonably raise now is: What are the preconditions for doing intellectual exercises like those *phrónêsis* requires? Could any child, or fool, or uneducated individual do it? *Would* any of these in fact (want to) do them? It seems it requires some form of knowledge and understanding of what justice and other ethical virtues are. And in addition it requires a general disposition or *habitus* making us inclined to and want to do the ethically right thing. This is where Aristotle brings in the virtues as pre-

conditions. We have to be virtuous *already* in order to be able to and want to reason prudently. The ends for which *phrónêsis* deliberates are presented by the ethical virtues as "data". And these ends are given by the virtues *without* argument or reasoning according to Aristotle. But *phrónêsis* is definitely a way of arguing and reasoning, a way of using *lógos*.

So, how do we become virtuous, and how do we get to know and understand the content of virtuous ends like e.g. justice, if not by "theory" or *lógos*? By "intuition"? By spontaneous imitation of others? By simply being socialised in any way into our local culture and community, and without *any* use of *any* kind of *lógos*? It is hardly plausible. *Phrónêsis* only deliberates about means, not ends. Deliberation as a whole *is* about means, not ends. As already indicated, in this, *phrónêsis* resembles cleverness, a capacity to deliberate well about the means to any arbitrarily chosen end. *Phrónêsis* only deliberates about means for realising ethical virtue (*aretê*), and "happiness" (*eudaimonía*). So, *phrónêsis* does not determine or define ends (aims, objectives) for actions in Aristotle's scheme. Ends are given for *phrónêsis* by the ethical virtues.

It is my contention that the question of how to engender the virtues as general capacities, and what is contained in such capacities is the most central question for Aristotelian philosophy and for ethics in particular. More details of this contention are contained in Eikeland (1997 and 2007). Here, I have to make the story shorter. How to engender the virtues is a question of how to learn and inquire, i.e. of how to acquire certain virtuous conditions and dispositions. In more modern parlance this is a question of how ethical and intellectual competences are developed and explored. I think this is the most relevant challenge for action research as well. *Phrónêsis* is not Aristotle's answer, and neither is ordinary didactic instruction, although both are contained in the answer. But both presuppose some form of general knowledge in the deliberator or teacher respectively. This is where my interpretation definitely parts from the otherwise very interesting interpretation presented by Dunne (1993: 291ff., cf. Dunne; 1999) where he ends up by giving *phrónêsis* a central role in the genesis of virtue, and in inductive processes in general. But he doesn't present any evidence in the texts of Aristotle for an interpretation like this. And, as will become clear, there is no need, nor possibility, for

phrónêsis, as it is defined in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, to take on a central role in these processes. Aristotle says interesting things about how these processes are guided by a different form of *lógos*.

In order to see the answer we have to realise that Aristotle talks about very many different ways of using *lógos*, i.e. of arguing. *Phrónêsis* is only one specific way. The question is: Does Aristotle mean any and every way of using *lógos*, or does he have specific ways of using *lógos* in mind when saying a) that practical ends and principles of action are not apprehended through the use of *lógos*, and b) that basic theoretical principles as well are not apprehended by *lógos*? Different ways of using *lógos* for different purposes are distributed by Aristotle, without much explanation, to different contexts and works. It is beyond much doubt that the persuasive *lógos* of the *Rhetoric*, the essential *lógos* of the *Metaphysics*, the deductive and didactic *lógos* of the *Posterior Analytic*, and the deliberative *lógos* of the *Ethics*, are all quite different. And Aristotle even speaks of a defining *lógos*, and an inductive *lógos*. These ways of using *lógos* all have different tasks and ends to pursue, and their practices are structured differently accordingly. For our purposes here, it is important to distinguish between 1) *lógos*-forms moving upwards from particulars and from how things appear to us at first, spontaneously and phenomenologically, to basic principles, general concepts, and ends, and 2) lógos-forms moving downwards from similar principles, concepts, and ends. Aristotle considers this difference crucial (cf. EN1095a31-b1).

There are two separate ways of using *lógos* moving "down" according to Aristotle, 1) didactics or demonstration (*apódeixis*) and 2) deliberation (*boúleusis*). Both are said to argue from (*apó*) principles and ends, both presuppose general competence and knowledge of ends in certain fields. But although they both move in a similar direction from similar starting points, they move in quite different ways. Didactics moves demonstratively or deductively, applying formal syllogistic logic. It is primarily the way of the most finished and precise sciences where the meaning of terms used are held constant through the reasoning process. But Aristotelian *epistêmê* is not restricted to what is described in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, concerning only eternal and necessary truths. Both music and grammar (APr43b18, Cat11a23-35, EN1112b2-3), and even boxing and wrestling are all called *epistêmai*

(Cat10b1-7), neither of which is strikingly similar to the primary form. *Epistêmê* is also defined as knowledge of things that only for the most part (*hôs epì tò polú*) follow a regular pattern, and thereby, according to this criterion alone, overlaps with areas that need deliberation, e.g. medicine, gymnastics (Metaph1064a1), navigation, "business" (EN1112b5-10), ship-building (Pol1288b10-22), and even natural philosophy (Ph196b10-197a7, 198b33-199b32). Natural philosophy, however, studies things that change naturally, not as a result of our intervention or activity. Hence, natural philosophy does not deliberate. But there is no doubt, neither in the *Nicomachean Ethics* (1112a21-b12), nor in the *Metaphysics* (1064a2-10), that Aristotle sees different disciplines as having received an "epistemic" form to a greater or smaller degree. The less it has, the more it needs to deliberate. The more it resembles the "primary" *epistêmê* of Book VI in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, however, the more it can go from deliberation to calculation, and deduction (cf. Pol1258b34). Technical calculation uses deduction too. But deliberation is not restricted in the same way. Deliberation is partly a) an analysis of the concrete situation, partly b) a weighing of different practical aims and arguments against each other in deciding what to do.

When Aristotle illustrates what he means he uses examples from professional disciplines (EN1112b12-16, EE1227b23-1228a4). The end of medicine is securing and producing health, the end of politics is making good laws, the end of oratory persuasion, etc. When professionals act *as* professionals, they do not deliberate about the ends of their disciplines. They know them and take them for granted. They deliberate about how to achieve the end, i.e. about the means. Usually Aristotle takes contexts like this for granted in ethics too, where ethically virtuous individuals are presupposed to know the virtues in a similar way to how professionals know their disciplines. When, occasionally, he specifies, as he does in Book VII of the *Nicomachean Ethics* (1151a15-19), it becomes clear that he does not have just any kind of *lógos* in mind when claiming that the virtues render the principles and ends without *lógos*. What he means is that ends and principles are apprehended without the didactic, deductive *lógos*, moving down. So ends and principles are provided neither by deliberation nor by deduction, i.e. by none of the forms moving downwards from principles and ends. Now there are three in-

tellectual virtues that move downwards: *Epistêmê* moves down deductively or demonstratively, or in a didactic manner. Its conclusions remain descriptively within language. Cleverness and *phrónêsis* move down deliberatively. They conclude with actions. But none of them provide ends and principles.

And this is the point. In spite of some confusing remarks, I think it is clear that *some* other ways of using *lógos are* involved, even for Aristotle, in a) clarifying and defining ends and principles, and in b) distinguishing particulars too. As I try to show in some detail in Eikeland (2007), there is an inductive way, and a defining and revealing way of using reasoned speech, involved. It is important to remember, however, that neither "induction" nor "definition" can be assimilated to purely formal or verbal exercises in Aristotle. They are not "non-verbal" either, but formative of *habitus*. This formative way is dialogue or dialectics. Inducing and defining are dialogical ends. According to Aristotle, dialogue proper explores and inquires systematically into differences and similarities, it constructs and deconstructs, and it works inductively from particulars and by defining, towards principles and ends. It starts from wherever partners in dialogue are and in their acquired experience (*empeiría*). It creates transitions and transformations (*metabibázontes*, *metabaínein*) in personal understanding, advancing to deeper insight by grasping premises and principles (e.g. Top101a34, Metaph1029b3-12, EN1097a24, EE1216b30). Two intellectual virtues are dialogical: *nous* in analysing and articulating principles, and *súnesis* in analysing and articulating the concrete situation critically. In Eikeland (1997 and 2007) I have tried to show in detail how particulars are apprehended in Aristotle and to show how and why *nous* should be interpreted as a dialogical *habitus* (*héxis dialektikê*) in analogy to and complementary to how *epistêmê* is called a deductive or demonstrative *habitus* (*héxis apodeiktikê*) by Aristotle himself.

Hence, the core task and practice of dialogue or dialectics, explored primarily in Aristotle's work *Topica*, is neither rhetorical (moving an audience), nor deliberative (finding the right or smart thing to do), nor deductive (proving that some defined and known property belongs to something), nor formally syllogistic (reasoning sophistically as if words / terms were unambiguous). Dialogue pursues a common task of generating knowledge, understanding, and insight. It is transformative through defining and distinguishing simi-

larities and differences in actions, things observed, words used, etc. Hence, there is a *specific* approach at stake with dialogue, different from rhetoric, deliberation, deduction, and formal syllogistic reasoning, as specified ways of using *lógos*, but also different from negotiations, and considerably more than merely psychologically comforting talk and "small talk".[23] Dialogue, or dialectics, is a way of thinking and speaking that may be performed either alone or in conversing others. It has nothing to do with merely *two* (*dúo*) people talking to each other. Dialogue is a distinctive cognitive, emotional, and practical process – usually unfolded among several participants – that proceeds critically through (*dià*) common ways of speaking and through reasoned speech *([tou] lógou)*.

In Aristotle's scheme of things, dialogue belongs primarily to *theoretical* reason, since it is usually done in order to gain insight into or understanding of intellectual, ethical, social, political, historical, cultural, and other kinds of landscapes or topographies we live and enact. It is not practical in the sense that it is directed to promote some specific action or decision as a conclusion. This is important in order to prevent it from transforming into rhetoric. But dialogue has a practical starting point in being about our personal, acquired experience and about developing our *habitus* from incompetence, through the acquisition of experience (*empeiría*), to virtue. This dialogical way upwards includes the task of collective learning in the practical development of establishing what Aristotle calls concord (*homónoia*). Our *habitus* is moulded in and enacts the landscapes suggested. Dialogue forms and transforms our individual and collective *habitus*. Hence exploring our individual and collective *habitus* dialogically is the most promising way to knowledge and understanding of the different topographies (cf. Eikeland 2006a). So, dialogue is about articulating tacit knowing, and about guiding and accompanying a defining and perfecting movement from within practices, through training and practice (*teleíôsis* / *ethismós* / *áskêsis* / *melétê*), from any potential to perfected activ-

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[23] This specifically dialogical approach is even differentiated into several subdivisions with different techniques, determined by their different ends by both Plato and Aristotle. I will not discuss these further here, but see Eikeland (1997: 163-299).

ity.[24] Dialogue belongs primarily to a *praxis₁* moving "upwards" (*Einübung* in German), while *phrónêsis* belongs primarily to a *praxis₂* moving "downwards" (*Ausübung* in German). To these correspond different aspects of Aristotelian ethics I call "theor-ethics" and "phron-ethics", presented and discussed in Eikeland (2007). While deduction may seem more abstract, "linear", and detached, the defining part of theoretical reason, then, is clearly not unhooked from emotions, practice, and experience. The defining work necessarily elaborates and sorts experiential and experimental similarities and differences from within emotions and practice. But it does this for the sake of theory – developing competence, insight, and understanding – not merely for the sake of deciding what to do here and now.

Neo-epistemic, dialogical action research

So, where does this bring us in relation to the authors presented earlier in this article? My conclusion is that Aristotle does not operate with the kind of total dichotomy that especially Toulmin and Flyvbjerg operate with. First of all, divisions do not necessarily operate in pairs, neither in Aristotle nor in the real world. In addition the divisions are not always mutually exclusive. There are many overlaps, and many fuzzy borderlines. But where Aristotle makes distinctions for specific purposes between e.g. deliberation, dialogue, rhetoric, and *phrónêsis*, Toulmin and Schwandt especially, conflate distinctions as if they did not have specific tasks to solve, but were all almost synonymous. Next, neither *phrónêsis* and dialogue, nor ethics and politics, lend themselves to any kind of technical and complementary division of labour between experts and clients. Both Toulmin and Flyvbjerg continue writing and acting as if they do, however. Flyvbjerg even bases and constructs his own "phronetic" research on such a division. But by conflating erroneously and making the wrong distinctions in much too dichotomous ways, the way Aristotle is practical even in his most theoretical endeavours becomes completely invisible, i.e. in what I called *praxis₁* elaborated dialogically. But as I see it, this is exactly where action research most of all needs to learn from Aristotle in order

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[24]   John Shotter (1993) and his action research followers should read Aristotle on developing emergent knowledge from within practices

to be more than just applied research, and in order to be able to challenge the dominant modern concepts of theory and science. Flyvbjerg does not want to be "analytical". But with Aristotle both *phrónêsis* and *súnesis*, through dialogue, are necessarily analytical in sorting similarities and differences both in particular situations and in general concepts. Flyvbjerg and Schwandt seem to think acquired practical experience (*empeiria*) is peculiar to *phrónêsis*. But this kind of experience is the basis for all the intellectual virtues, while ethical virtue and *phrónêsis* are explicitly not reducible to this in Aristotle.

I started out by claiming that focusing on *phrónêsis* alone, and in isolation from the totality of the philosophy of Aristotle, could easily reinforce an insufficient practice orientation. There is hardly any reason to doubt, I think, that *phrónêsis* properly understood, as Aristotle thought of it, mainly takes principles and ends for granted, through and from the virtues, in searching for the right means here and now. It doesn't develop and define the ends and principles itself, but leaves that to experience-based *nous* and dialogue. Deliberation is a general and common competence that presupposes more specialised and substantial competences and insight. It is for "professionals" in every field, even as *phrónêsis* for "professionals" in ethics and politics. This makes *phrónêsis*, or deliberation more generally, necessary for all practical purposes, but insufficient at the same time, since "professionalism" must first be acquired.

Action research works in similarly insufficient ways, when the action is emphasized more than the research process, and it becomes project work or problem-solving activity in collaboration between researchers and practitioners, applying general knowledge acquired elsewhere and in other ways, at best. But action research is not just deliberation and application, which presupposes adequate general knowledge and virtue. Conceptually action research must encompass both the research process and the application process. Hence, action research and action researchers have to work with developing systematic, practically based insight as an aim in itself as well, challenging how basic social research has been done methodologically and organised institutionally for the most part in the modern period. As I said at the beginning, action research cannot just serve everyday practical concerns, and the goals of social science too, without transforming both. This is easily ne-

glected by carving out a separate and special "niche" for action research as complementary "mediator" in-between the existing academic world and practitioners, leaving "*epistêmê*" in the modern sense alone, instead of encompassing and transforming both the institutionalisation of social research and our everyday practices in ways rendering space for *praxis*, *phrónêsis*, and dialogue within practice based communities of inquiry.

Hence, *basic* action research would profit much by appropriating a different "middle ground" delineated by Aristotle's concept of the *epistêmai*, between conventional modernist social science pretending to be astronomy (or technology) on the one hand, and non-epistemic and un-principled everyday deliberation on the other. Aristotle has a lot to contribute in order for people not to become totally framed by institutionalised current divisions of labour and collaboration, quasi-essentialising the frameworks as a "Quasi-Platonic, Niche-Republic" where all play their appointed, complementary roles, nothing more. Action research should not and cannot be reduced to reasoning "from" and within such given ends and principles, neither as deductive "proof", nor as mere unprincipled deliberation or application. If action research is going to be more than just "applied research", or complementary "research/er assistance" to practical development processes, leaving basic research uncritically to other approaches, it has to concern itself with and transform the formative learning processes and the research work directed towards principles, ends, and definitions, too.

So, instead of "stretching for" an epistemic model borrowed from astronomy in moving "up" towards principles, based on "experience" as observation from a distance, and on data as bits of information, and on formal deduction moving "down" from them, Aristotle's epistemic model works upwards dialogically, based on, and focused on analysing the acquired practical experience and *habitus* of the researchers-learners themselves, cast and inscribed in social, economic, and other institutionalised historical arrangements (cf. Eikeland, 2006a). Most of what Aristotle actually calls *epistêmê* works downwards mainly by deliberating, adjusting to the circumstances. This means that instead of studying "the others" (the natives) as objects and events "in nature", from the viewpoint of external spectators or manipulators, in order to predict, modify, and control their behaviour, the dialogical ap-

proach studies, as a combined researcher-researched-performer, the "how-to-do-things" and the "what-it-means-to-be-or-perform-as-something", through inner objects and objectives, as "things" or forms of practice we have (potentially) in common as proficient practitioners and natives, in order to solve impasses and pragmatic contradictions, and improve individual and collective practices. Action research, then, cannot merely "move down" "phronetically" from spectator-based theory. Action research must primarily "move up" and be the dialogical development of kinds of skills and knowledge that are not about external things and events. Instead it must organise and structure the competence of its carriers, within a certain field, or in general, and become primarily a qualification of these carriers themselves, as with grammar. It remains, however, to unfold the details of a research practice based on the dialogical insights found in the writings of Aristotle.

Also, in order to develop the epistemic impulses and desires within the everyday life-worlds of most people, special preconditions must be provided, different from normal, "problem-solving" project-organisations, or "special task forces", and also different from everyday work organisations and "business-as-usual".[25] A permanent *skholê* (leisure – open, free space – school) embedded in practical settings is needed, making it possible to develop, unfold, and articulate the "grammars" of different social settings. All the authors commented in this article seem to miss this point completely in their dichotomous thinking dividing modern science, confusingly baptized *epistêmê*, from a totally separated and segregated *phrónêsis*, often having little resemblance to Aristotle's original. Thinking as they do, this whole dimension of Aristotle's philosophy disappears. Western institutions, and their divisions of labour, are undoubtedly partly a product of how Aristotle has been interpreted through the centuries. But his emphasis on practical experience and dialogue, as "the way" to all principles and ends, has hardly been understood nor heeded. Hence, schools have been insulated from practical settings, and

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[25] Also different I believe a) from the socio-cultural learning theory of e.g. Wells (1999), inspired by Bakhtin and Vygotsky, b) from the learning by legitimate peripheral participation (LPP) of Lave/Wenger (1991), opposing a form of "learning by hanging around" (LPP) to a unilaterally didactic school-learning, and c) from problem based learning (PBL). A comparison with these needs a separate treatment though.

filled with didactic, deductive teaching much more than with dialogical learning, while research institutions have been "observatories" equally insulated, or "laboratories" researching other humans as "natural objects" receiving treatment and manipulation, explaining their behaviour with "covering laws" and statistics, instead of providing standards and methodological guidelines for each and every autonomous practitioner, as "grammarians" of social practices.

Not only dialogical basic research is experience-based, however. Even the deductive didactics of Aristotle is based on preconditions of prior accumulated experience among the listeners, and, of course, among the teachers. Didactic teachers were supposed to be master craftsmen and ethical virtuosos, and the students were supposed to have sufficient experience and training already, to be able to understand what the systematized didactic teaching was about. Didactic teaching, alone and in itself, did not provide the necessary basis for understanding. What schools have become, however, are places where teachers specialised in a separate discipline of teaching, mostly teach without being experienced masters in the subjects they teach, and where students, at their best, listen and try to remember without experience. Instead of teaching being a different, more "architectonic" aspect of substantial professional practice, it has mostly become a separate profession in itself, just as the sophists operated (wrongly) in teaching politics, according to Aristotle (EN1180b28-1181b12). Instead of experience, words have been transmitted, replacing it, hence mostly empty. Students are not attending as apprentices either, on their way to become as their teachers, masters of a professional discipline. Instead of letting the speech of teaching help organise and systematize the presupposed previously accumulated or simultaneous experience of the students, the speech of teaching, together with learning by listening, replaces experience, requiring students to believe what they hear (SE165b3). Formal, abstract reasoning (*logikós*), not germane to the subjects at hand, was sophistic, according to Aristotle (SE169b20, 171b7). But it has dominated scientific thinking for centuries. So, even though Aristotle more than the sophists, has been used as legitimising authority (and has taken the blame), the sophists, more than Aristotle, have been running the show.

What we can learn from Aristotle, then, is that systematic space, for both dialogue and deliberation, is necessary in practical social life: work life, pri-

vate life, professional, ethical, and political. Trying to eliminate it, replacing it with hierarchical, "deductive", or technical practices in order to become "more exact" and efficient, not only breaks down the autonomy, dignity, and responsibility of all practitioners, wearing them out, but it seems by a necessary tendency, to produce more inexact results in areas (genera) not suited.[26] I think Aristotle as well as anyone after him, has explained both why this is so, and what dialogue and deliberation means. In spite of contradictory evidence, what Aristotle conveys, is an understanding of why deliberation and dialogue cannot be separated and delegated to specialists within a social or technical division of labour. Both deliberation and dialogue are necessary, but they are not to be confused or conflated. They have different roles to play, different tasks to perform. Deliberation is part of professional practice, ethical conduct, and political discussion, where ends, principles, and causes are chosen arbitrarily, or defined and given from the institutional frameworks and framed positions of these activities, as well as by conscious definitions and limits set by the professions themselves. Within certain limits like these, "nobody" deliberates about ends. Everyone takes them for granted. Proper dialogue, however, is transcending and transformative, transcending all institutional frameworks and horizons (being in itself an ultimate horizon) by bringing the local frameworks themselves "into the middle" and "into the commons" as a theme for critical dialogue, instead of letting them frame and direct the conversation. If, then, deliberation is part of professional practice performing, dialogue is professional practice reflecting and inquiring. And, although difficult to keep apart in real life, the conceptual distinctions are important.

Obviously, to talk as Aristotle does about wisdom and happiness today might seem a bit far-fetched, and even ridiculous, at least when dealing with the trivia of the everyday life-world, as action research does and has to do. The content properly transposed and transformed, is not ridiculous, however. The desire and demand for wisdom both theoretical (*sophía*) and practical

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[26] This seems gradually to become better understood, although not in Aristotelian terms, by mainstream organisational research as well, as indicated e.g. by the authors, all leading figures, in Tsoukas (1994). "Organisational ambiguity makes instrumental action far less effective than is conventionally assumed", as Tsoukas (1994: 18) himself points out.

(*phrónêsis*) and for happiness as well functioning (*eupraxía*) have all in many ways reappeared as a serious concern for supporting sustainable, well functioning, reflecting, and learning communities of practice in professional work, and in both work life and social life in general.[27] Working to develop and maintain "good practices", "excellence", and "quality" (albeit often determined merely by customers' market demand), securing and providing for their preconditions, these are all on the agenda today as much as ever. With today's educational level of professional workers, and the knowledge intensity of production, the preconditions for suspending the division of labour between thinking and behaving, are present more than ever too. A conclusion from the previous exposition could be, then, that general *phrónêsis* is very important as a skill in "clearing the ground" for "the way" of "wisdom" (organisational learning) and "happiness" (unimpeded work performance in work organisations) to establish itself. But *phrónêsis* is insufficient alone. Action research cannot be just *phrónêsis*. Nothing can be merely phrónêsis, since phrónêsis is the ultimate, practical perfection of the other virtues – ethical and intellectual – stretching towards judgement and decisions about particulars, while these virtues themselves – as general dispositions and *habitus* – are developed in different ways, dialogically.

In summary, the thrust of the whole argument is towards a different social organisation of knowledge management and knowledge generation, and a completely different institutionalisation and transformation of "social research", as something that has to be cultivated in practical contexts, letting the "natives" themselves start "dialectical gatherings" in order to map their social, intellectual, organisational, relational, emotional, economic, etc. topographies, enabling them to experiment, learn, deliberate, choose, act, and cooperate more wisely. In the aftermath of Gibbons et al. (1994), such an emerging "new mode (mode 2) of knowledge production" has moved increasingly into the focus of discussions about the altering relations between research institutions, educational institutions, and work life organisations. In a way, the follow-up by Nowotny et al. (2001) has set the stage with "new

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[27]   See e.g. Schön (1983, 1987), Argyris/Schön (1996), Senge (1990), Wenger (1998), Wenger/McDermott/Snyder (2002).

constellations" (Bernstein; 1991) for a new kind of discussion – reshuffling old elements – by re-introducing a "post-modern" concept of the *agorá* or public space to the centre of the discussion. The ancient *agorá* or *forum* is the historical starting point both for thinking about and the real history of some of the most central institutions of Western civilisation, like markets, public spheres, popular assemblies, schools, news media, courts of law, and theatres. Hence, re-introducing the *agorá* sets the stage for new kinds of discussions about how these institutions could and should relate, and be "re-shuffled", under new conditions for learning and knowledge production in the 21st century.[28] *Phrónêsis* is still highly relevant. But rightly understood, not alone.

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Aristotle:

The edition mostly used is Loeb Classical Library. Abbreviations used are borrowed from Liddel/Scott. Bekker-pagination used for references is indicated in parentheses

Categoriae	(Cat)	(1-15)
De Interpretatione	(Int)	(16-24)
Analytica Priora	(APr)	(24-70)
Analytica Posteriora	(APo)	(71-100)
Topica	(Top)	(100-164)
Sophistici Elenchi	(SE)	(164-184)
Physica	(Ph)	(184-267)
De Caelo	(Cael)	(268-313)
De Generatione et Corruptione	(GC)	(314-338)
De Anima	(deAn)	(402-435)
De Sensu	(Sens)	(436-449)
De Memoria	(Mem)	(449-453)
Historia Animalium	(HA)	(486-639)
De Partibus Animalium	(PA)	(639-697)
De Motu Animalium	(MA)	(698-704)
De Generatione Animalium	(GA)	(715-789)
Problemata	(Pr)	(859-967)
Metaphysica	(Metaph)	(980-1093)
Ethica Nicomachea	(EN)	(1094-1181)
Magna Moralia	(MM)	(1181-1213)
Ethica Eudemia	(EE)	(1214-1249)

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[28]   See Eikeland (1999a, 1999b).

Politica	(Pol)	(1252-1342)
Oeconomica	(Oec)	(1343-1353)
Rhetorica	(Rh)	(1354-1420)
Poetica	(Po)	(1447-1462)

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