Free space and room to reflect

Philosophy in organisations

Classical schooling for modern practice

Jos Kessels
Erik Boers
Pieter Mostert

Boom
Amsterdam

How

if you could

stake about you

a circle free of care

and that would be

your space

Bert Schierbeek

Contents

Tools and tips

Preface

Form and content

Proposals to tackle problems -- a veritable barrage of them assails us every day. We keep up with the news, read the columns, listen to plans launched by customers and to ideas advocated by the staff. We mull over memoranda and ponder policy documents. Proposals are hardly in short supply.

Often such proposals zero in exclusively on the content of the issue at hand. Whether a proposal is successful or unsuccessful however is not so much determined by its content, by the quality of its input, as it is by its form**,** the quality of its presentation. Compare the father who tells his pubescent son: 'Tidy your room, boy.' The son walks off in a huff, doesn't want to be ordered around. The father is intent on the content of the message: the room needs tidying. But the form chosen, a command, is disastrous. No matter how right he may be, his approach dooms his proposal.

Surely, most of us recall instances of this fatal flaw in many far more complicated situations. For example: company directors tell management that the organisation is in need of change. But the directors have pre-cooked the entire scheme. So the managers are made to feel more like pawns than partners and, like the son, they too are apt to balk.

The form chosen by the father and the directors makes the message, the actual goal, very clear. Their first concern is not open dialogue, or shared effort, or cordial relations. What they want is primarily implementation of their pre-set ideas and objectives. Consciously or unconsciously they communicate that others are subordinate to this and had better comply with their plan. They act strategically.

Free space

Widely praised -- though rarely practised – is the contrasting approach of genuine interactive communicating. Everybody knows that this is essential in guiding youth, in the shaping of character, and that it is basic to the development of leadership qualities and community spirit. Genuine communicating however presupposes an attitude and a set of skills that are hard to attain and apply, especially in the – often hectic - context of one's job or organisation. A first prerequisite for this is that we create 'free space', room to step away, temporarily, from our strategic stance. We need some distance from our fixed goals and from the problems that keep distracting us. This is how we open the way to shared thinking, to exchange and harmonisation of ideas, to rediscovery of our basic aims. In brief, 'free space' is a necessary condition for exploring the proper perspective on the issues confronting us. 'Free space' offers us a chance to 'philosophise', to reflect on what we (mean to) do, to take our measure in a mirror.

Nowadays the word 'philosophising' seems to connote 'non-commitment'. The notion is that once you let go of your strategic attitude, you are left with a manner of thinking and speaking that obliges you to nothing, thought unhindered by rules and practical objections, a dreamy kind of thinking oblivious to factual reality. This is not, emphatically not, its original meaning. Time was that 'philosophising' meant: a thinking and discoursing intent on rationality and insight, on transcending the limitations of the strategic point of view, on expanding and deepening our understanding of reality. And it was certainly not considered non-committal. Quite the contrary, it was expected to enhance awareness, to engender accountability, to evoke responsibility.

Liberal arts

To share this kind of reflection and speaking you need certain skills. This is a second prerequisite for communicating. Of old, these skills were bundled in the three linguistic disciplines of the 'liberal arts'. This *Trivium* consisted of *dialectics*, the art or skill of conducting dialogue; *rhetoric*, the art of persuading; and *grammar*, the art of arresting and fixing ideas. All three of them are 'formal' disciplines, that is to say, they do not deal with the content of an issue, they treat of the communicative form in which the issue is cast. They say nothing about the substance of a proposal or the relevance of an argument. The topics discussed relate to the form given to arguments, the presentation of proposals, the path of fruitful exchange of ideas. These disciplines investigate the conditions for genuine communication.

In terms of their orientation the liberal arts are formal disciplines. In terms of motivation, though, they are not formal at all; underlying them is a very strong substantial ambition. The communication they seek is not only a condition for, but also part of what philosophers call 'the good life', i.e. the common good, the general well-being of a group, the flourishing of ourselves and those who live and work with us. In other words, deeply inscribed in the liberal arts is an ethical orientation. Reflection on the good life is essential to living it, to engagement in it. This implies that we must be willing to investigate our views on 'flourishing', that we render account of how we live and how we want to live. Here we meet a third prerequisite for communicating.

Philosophy at work

We believe it to be vitally important that this form of communicating be achieved in organisations. After all, differences of opinion and insight abound, powers are unequal, interests collide, objectives differ and goals diverge, as do temperaments and characters. In the midst of all this, high-calibre communicating is crucial. Time and again however our inability to 'bracket' our strategic preoccupation gets in the way. It seems impossible to create free space for the sake of conscious and capable reflection – for philosophising, if you will. In this book we describe how to do that, how philosophy in organisations works.

Unlike most philosophical tomes and treatises, this book aims at practising. We describe the practice of philosophising in organisations. And we present our methods in ways such that anyone can apply them. In fact, this is what we expect our readers to do.

The three of us wrote this book together. This turned out to be an inspiring enterprise, not least because we engaged in it with mutual outright frankness. All three of us have their roots in academic philosophy. We share the desire to put philosophy to work outside of the academy, among 'ordinary' people who are not necessarily predisposed to turn to philosophy. Each of us has years of experience in philosophising in the market-place. We have talked about this often, intensively and with dedication. This is how the book emerged. It was written as a sequel to *Socrates op de markt, filosofie in bedrijf* (Socrates in the market-place; Philosophy on the job) by Jos Kessels. The present text describes a wider view of the task we see for a philosopher who goes to market. We each took it upon ourselves to write one or more chapters and our probing and stimulating discussions have turned the whole into a truly joint venture. Jos Kessels did the final editing.

A word of thanks

We wrote this book ‘on the job’. Consequently, many others contributed to it: clients, students, staff members, colleagues and friends. Some of them merit very special mention. To begin with, we want to express our gratitude to the ‘fellows’ of The New Trivium. They helped us to articulate the ideal by making it work in the practice of organisations: Hans Bolten, Dorine Bauduin, Marjon van Es, Peter van der Geer, Erica Koch, Victor Müller, Lies Rookhuizen, Diet Verschoor. An important source of inspiration for one of us, Jos Kessels, is the work done by Hans Knibbe and Iene van Oijen in their *School voor Zijnsoriëntatie* (School of being orientation). We learned of certain approaches in classical philosophy because this school actually practises them. Nico Swaan, Erik van Ark, Karel van Haaften and Maria van Eeden supported us with both critical and encouraging comments. Last but not least, it was Hans Leewens who called our attention to the Trivium concept.

Jos Kessels
Erik Boers
Pieter Mostert

Spring 2004

Chapter I Schooling and free space

Schooling. The concept

The philosophical approach in this book hinges on the idea of 'schooling'. The term derives from the Greek word *scholē* meaning 'free space'. Originally a school was a retreat where people could reflect together with others on how the world weaves into a whole, what we and others ought to do, how the good life may be defined, attained and lived. School is a place where, for a while, we are relieved of the task of making a living, or taking care of others, or serving specific interests. Schooling is: making use of this free space to inquire into the ideas that guide our doings, to remind us of our initial intentions, to explore the meaning of words and concepts that inform our activities. As inquiry, schooling intends to upgrade our practice. It is a joint effort, since our words and ideas need to be 'honed' by those of others. In the progression of inquiry a team is forged in which participants can develop their own understanding, their personal view of excellence in action. And this in turn opens the way towards a vision shared by all.

First thing we notice in this general description of 'schooling' is the central role of words and language. Humans are linguistic creatures, beings gifted with speech. Schooling, then, turns on inquiry into words, on development of language. To engage in dialogue, to enter into debate, to present an argument, to formulate or write out a point of view, to study a text together – all of these are linguistic efforts. In every case the question is: How do we make use of words?

Within this broad area of language and discourse the schooling aimed at here is specifically focused on rendering account, that is, providing justification for actions. We are not only beings gifted with speech; beyond this we are beings able to respond, i.e. charged with responsibility. The words at our disposal enable us to account for our actions. Schooling teaches us how to do this. So we need the space to seek out the ideas and reasoning underlying our and other people's professional behaviour. We need space to reflect on the words we use to justify our actions for ourselves and towards our colleagues. We need space to inquire into the patterns of thought, the underlying values and the dominant images that colour our perceptions and direct our steps. To get at the bottom of all this, or rather, to let it come to the surface, we need methods that help us in the careful and precise choice of words used in justification of our professional conduct. Of old, such tools were bundled in the three classical linguistic disciplines: *dialectic*, the art of dialogue; *rhetoric*, the art of persuasion; and *grammar*, the art of formulation and good writing.

Reflection on and critical examination of our words and reasoning can best take place in colloquium with others, especially colleagues. After all, we picked up our professional language from our peers. We depend on others, and over time, as we live and work within a professional community, words acquire deeper significance for us. Take the word 'responsibility'. It can easily be defined as: 'burden of obligation in the execution of a task.' But it takes years of actually exercising responsibility to fully understand the numerous aspects implied here. It is in the context of shared language and shared practice that one's personal view on the job is formed. This is why the exploration of meanings is a joint effort; taking the time to discuss, in undisturbed freedom, the ins and outs of the job or issue at hand. Crucial here is the ability to

suspend our own ideas and judgements, to be receptive to the thinking of others, to be open to their frames of reference and their understanding of meanings. This is how one's own thinking gains strength. Paradoxical as it may sound, the ability to speak well is born in the ability to listen. The experiences and insights of others sharpen our own perceptions.
This simple fact impresses us with the importance of a 'public space', a forum for all in quest of clarity about group or community objectives. The free space of schooling is where this public space is tended and developed, both in simple disciplines as habituating ourselves to let others have their say, and in more complex disciplines like thinking together as a group. Thinking together presupposes a shared interest: to master our craft, to contribute to a project, to strive for a common goal, or whatever. Too often such shared interest is merely assumed. Is the assumption warranted? Joint reflection on basics like this clarifies individual opinions and fosters genuine consensus on what we deem important here and now.

Starting out
Ideally, schooling takes place on the work floor. To be sure, all kinds of interests engross our attention there. External pressures (imposed targets, competition) and internal pressures (personal interests, interpersonal clashes) limit the space and freedom for reflection. Nevertheless, these pressures should not be eliminated via the expedient of divorcing schooling and work. Pressures are endemic to this environment. In fact, frequently pressures are the reason why the need for inquiry into the meaning of concepts or the legitimacy of ideas arises – changes in the sector, personnel shuffles, differences of opinion, and so on. Meanwhile, we have to find a *modus vivendi* with them. This requires a degree of (psychological) distance. More accurately put, it requires the participants to understand that getting at meanings and ideas takes pride of place, and may push other admittedly pressing matters aside, at least for now. We must be willing to devote time and attention to this. And once we have created free space we must take care to leave it intact. We shall persist in holding off 'work' (solving problems, formulating policy, recommending strategy) until the pertinent ideas and concepts are -- near enough -- clear. This is an art: to guard the free space and to prevent it from succumbing to the pressures crowding in on us.

Reluctance to give up free space arises from the awareness that it has intrinsic value. To understand your craft, trade, business or profession you have to stop running about; every so often you have to call a halt, take a time out, stop the clock. Sometimes this is a tactic actually applied: there is the documented case that during trade union talks with the Dutch Railways the meeting-hall clock was stopped to create space for further negotiation. This ability to suspend time is peculiar to humans. We are beings that experience time. We are capable of stopping time. By doing that we withdraw – for a moment – from the events that chain us. We don't coincide with the course of events ('work, work, work'). And so we have the opportunity to reflect, to come to terms with a situation and with ourselves. This may sound attractive, but often it is not. It is easier, and perhaps more pleasant, to be carried along on the broad and self-evident stream of company objectives, career, network or whatever. This broader whole acts like a magnet, a constant pull to draw us away from free space. There are always plenty of reasons not to stand still, enough reasons to run with the clock and the tide. And of course we can't stand still forever; we would not survive. But purposeful pauses enhance the *quality* of life.

Free space is not only a matter of standing still; it is also a matter of making a start. Being human, and hence endowed with awareness of time, we know that things start and cease and events begin and end. Thus, we can look upon our acts as 'beginnings', as freely chosen initiatives rather than impositions or automatisms. We can learn to act as 'initiators', as people who start something, get it moving. That is how we develop a feeling of responsibility, of citizenship, of leadership. Of course we must beware of overextending ourselves. At times we may take on so much and feel responsible for so many matters at once that we spread ourselves too thin, which tempts us to gloss over responsibilities. Here we need to take stock and find the proper balance. Once again this requires a pause, distance, reflection – in short, free space to recall the basics. This too, is a way of rendering account.

Is it possible to carve out the free space needed for this kind of reflection amidst the turmoil of the day? Can we spare that kind of time? Can we stop the daily rush to see if we are still on course, to check whether progression is truly progress? What shape should such reflection take, concretely? What exactly happens during such group sessions, what should you keep in mind, which pitfalls should you avoid? In short, how do you do it, how does it work? The chapters below describe techniques derived from the Trivium disciplines. This introductory chapter presents a general sketch of the substance, importance and background of these techniques, beginning with a rather straightforward case: a management team meeting. Let us review what actually took place there and derive from this some philosophical and practical lessons.

Case. A management team meeting

We were asked to train the management team (MT) of a financial institution in the art of dialogue. 'It's not that things are wrong', the managing director explained, 'but we can probably do better'. It must be possible, he felt, for meetings to be more fruitful, more constructive, more of a dialogue. We agreed to spend two days off-site with his MT.

A scheduled MT meeting took place on the first day. This allowed us to see how the five MT members interacted. Every fifteen minutes we called a time-out and had the participants write down what they liked and disliked about the proceedings. After several rounds of this we assessed results. Things were going fairly well – the atmosphere was good, there was general involvement, evident attempts were made to work efficiently. Then again, things could be better – the agenda was too crowded, some issues had not been prepared by the participants. No wonder, really, since the agenda was known to them only just prior to the meeting, that very morning. Besides, the managers tended to speak hastily, particularly when sticky points were raised. And as the meeting progressed, unmistakable signs of frustration emerged, in tone, gestures, attitude. We wondered what was going on. What was wrong with their style of interaction?

After the lunch break we ran a feedback exercise. This loosened up the atmosphere, making it more informal. We arranged some short debates to illustrate the difference between debate and dialogue and to teach certain debating skills. The managers joined in readily and with obvious enjoyment. But of course this made the question as to what was lacking in their attempts at collaboration more intriguing still. Towards the end of the day the answer was found. As we mulled things over, puzzling and

pondering, one of us asked: 'To what extent do you want to be involved with each other? How do you want to relate?' These questions proved right on the mark, they caused a kind of shock wave. Not that they were answered readily – that is not what such questions are for. But reflection on them gradually led to a clearer picture of what happened in the meetings. If we zoom in on it we get something like this.

The chairman tables an item. The others perceive this item as a problem in need of solving, a decision to be taken. They think about it feverishly. Someone proposes a solution. The next speaker proposes something else, without paying much attention to the first suggestion. A third speaker recommends something different still. In short order various unconnected solutions, arguments and proposals are on offer. They begin to feel pressed for time. The item is taking too long; other points on the agenda claim attention. So the chairman announces a decision, either in terms of content or procedure. The others are left with the unsatisfactory feeling that their contribution did not count for much. For the next item the process repeats itself. Frustration builds up as the meeting continues. Supposedly, this is the place where all the organisational lines converge. But what if the team is about as cohesive as a handful of pebbles? Mounting frustration makes for a growing tendency to assume entrenched positions. The MT meeting becomes a formal decision-making machine, stuttering and stumbling. The fact that it does not grind to a halt altogether seems due to the lubricant of cordiality. A second look however shows that precisely this apparent mutual courtesy causes the stalemate: it prevents the MT members from truly getting involved with each other and to really pick each other's brains.

This insight marked the turning point in the session. During the second day we did dialogue exercises. Dialogue (and effective debate, for that matter) assumes the intention to engage with each other, to interact rather than to hide, to take note of what is said and to probe why it was said, to listen to words and 'hear' the (hidden) meanings. For this, you need to make room. You need space to come together, space to explore an issue rather than rushing a solution, space to discover a person rather than seeking hasty agreement or disagreement, space to reflect on yourself, your own thinking and feeling, rather than immediately venting a final judgement. This is first and foremost a practical matter of managing your time, to allot time to talk about a topic and to feel out each other's views on it. The necessary person-to-person relation takes form in the course of this. Here we have the essence of what the Greeks called *scholē*: free space, a time without obligations. To enter into dialogue you need to create such free space.

Below we will analyse the concept of free space much more extensively. Still, even now we can begin to see some of the biggest obstacles to genuine dialogue. As a rule our daily work leaves us with little time and usually we tend to be strongly goal-oriented and focused on results. Dialogue asks of us that we adopt the opposite pattern, namely a degree of independence from goals and results as well as sufficient time and free space. Can we do this in the daily practice of our work? Is it possible to attain, caught up as we are in the daily frenzy and the unceasing clamour for our attention, the peace and quiet we need for reflection and personal awareness? Is it reasonable and feasible that a management team defers its agenda and reserves time for inquiry and dialogue whenever they face an issue in need of some basic analysis? What would happen to organisation management if executives engaged in unrestricted philosophising?

Free citizens

Let us take a different approach to these questions. Suppose we do not take the trouble of seeking to create free space. We do not take the time to achieve genuine mutual engagement. We leave reflection and the exploring of ideas to people who have nothing better to do. What are the consequences of that?

At any rate we will lose a number of things that most of us are loath to do without. First of all, we won't have personal contact, the feeling that each of us matters to the others. Now surely, you could say that as member of a management team you are not hired for this. But next, you forgo pleasure, the basic and simple joy that stems from mutual involvement and community feeling, from going for something together. Of course, here too you can say that this is not part of the job contract. Nevertheless, mutual understanding and shared work enjoyment are basic to curiosity and confidence, to exchange of experience, to development of new ideas, to inspiration and innovation. They are essential for joint learning processes, for what nowadays we call knowledge sharing and knowledge production. These are aims that managers do pursue, for themselves, for their people down the line and for the entire organisation. This is why they bring in external expertise, have tailor-made training programmes designed and implemented, and even overhaul complete organisations. But these things won't work without free space. Nor will a number of other, still more essential and basic matters ignored by most of the management handbooks. We'll turn to these now. To do so, we go back to the days when dialogue was first 'discovered', back to ancient Greece during the fifth and fourth centuries BC.

In those days the Greeks were developing a society based less on raw power and rigid tradition than on recognised authority and rational persuasion. The ability to speak on public affairs, politics, social institutions, balance of interests and the like took on importance to the point that scores of schools of rhetoric were established. Such schools taught you to select and master the best ways to convince or persuade people in debates, dialogues and speeches. Many free citizens in the *polis* attended these. They made use of them, not only to become proficient in exerting influence in politics or in court, but not least because it was the duty of every free citizen to be involved in public affairs. Those who only looked after their own affairs (*to idiōn*) were looked down upon as lacking in well-rounded development, as *idiōtēs* – a word still with us today. Such persons did not function as free citizens and would in fact lose the rights and privileges given with that title. None but citizens could be free persons. Only those who involved themselves with others, with the group, with the community as a whole, could realise their potential as reasonable beings and develop their noblest, most human qualities. For this one needed *scholē*, free space, not as a place where the privileged could pass the time, but where free citizens would 'form' their freedom as an exercise of obligation.

Scholē then, or our word 'school', carries a double meaning. It refers to a place where you are free of obligations, liberated from the care for your own interests or those of others. It is also the place for self-development to freedom, to citizenship, to become the reasonable being that essentially you are. In short, freedom is both base and target of schooling. School is a place where you are free to reflect because you are temporarily relieved of your task as bread-winner, as caretaker of your neighbour's and other affairs. At the same time it is the place where reflection turns to what should

be done, what you and those around you truly seek, what are the good life and the common good, and what fair and just demands these lay upon us all.

One could object here that it wasn't all that difficult for those ancient Greeks to have this kind of free space and time. After all, they had their slaves to do the work and their women to keep house. No wonder they were free to reflect and debate all sorts of issues at leisure. But this objection won't hold. Think of all the conveniences surrounding us, the machinery and technological gadgetry, the means of transportation, the shops and public utilities at our command. Look around the house and count your slaves. Someone actually did, and found that on average there are at least 56 of them in any household. So compared to the ancient Athenians we should have plenty of free space and time.

To the classical mind free space was absolutely essential. We notice this if we attend to the word *otium*, the Latin word for *scholē. Otium* is the root of *negotium*, which refers to activities associated with business (think of 'negotiation'). Note that the word is a negative construct: *nec-otium,* the negation of free space, telling us that free space was the standard, the norm. Time spent on looking after your own affairs meant a deviation from the norm. *Negotium* was lack of free space, lack of opportunity to actualise your human potential as free citizen.

Summing up then, from this point of view free space is not only pleasant for personal satisfaction, nor just for initiating learning processes and knowledge production in an organisation. It is much more basic, more important and more profound. Free space is the *sine qua non* for free citizenship, for becoming a peer among one's fellows. It is needed in learning to consider the common good, in learning to carry shared responsibility. It is indispensable for self-development and the fulfilment of one's destiny as rational human being. Free space lies at the root of all mastery and excellence and of the virtue so central in the Socratic quest for meaning.

Original thinking

Throughout his life, Socrates, 'midwife' to Western philosophy, drew people into talks and inquiries, creating free space and appealing to their ability to be free. In the market place, the sports school (*gymnasium*), the homes of friends, everywhere his insistent questioning would urge others to inquire into what *eudaimonia*, the good life, entailed.

As mentioned, there were many teachers in those days who offered their mostly rhetorical wares to all and sundry. Like modern-day management gurus, these sophists prided themselves on the great practical value and usefulness of their knowledge. But when Socrates engaged in dialogue with them, he would invariably demonstrate that the sophists had no real clarity on what the good life implied, or what ultimate goal was served by the knowledge they offered for sale. Hence they were unable to say whether their lessons would be put to good use or bad. Sharp irony and cutting logic laid bare the sophists' failure; they argued in all directions, depending on the occasion and the interest to be served. To achieve the desired result, namely to effect persuasion to some point of view, was to them far more important than inquiry into what result was truly desirable, and why. In other words, just like their present-day counterparts, the gurus of those days were not interested in free space at all. They were first and foremost serving special interests. But that means that

freedom of thought and speech is restricted from the start. Free space demands a certain dis-interest, an open-mindedness and mental freedom that result from not being bound by specific obligations. This is as true today as it was then.

Does this imply that interests and obligations play no role in a 'free' discourse? No, certainly not. Free talks definitely involve interests and obligations. But there is a difference -- subtle, but crucial. The difference is that we are not chained by them, that we can keep free of them. Recall the management team meeting described earlier. The problem there was that at first the team members could not let go of their interests. They were unable to create a free space. They persisted in speaking in terms of goals, of the need to achieve results, to determine necessary operations, in short, from an attitude of hands-on management. Tied to these interests, they kept seeking to convince the others of their own point of view, their own image of the common good. It was not until they discovered that, notwithstanding their expertise and in spite of their goal-directedness and social skills, they were running aground and their meeting machine all but stuttered to a stop --- only then space was given to an essentially different way of speaking, not aimed at goals but at values, not focused on action or results, but on principles.
Both ways of speaking relate to interests, but they are of a very different nature. Philosophers call the first form 'instrumental rationality'. In simple terms, this is the kind of reasoning aimed at looking for the most efficient means to achieve a given objective. It is the problem-solving rationality. It seeks to interpret a situation or to fix behaviour such that you have a grip on things and hence are able to mould them to specified goals or interests. Let there be no misunderstanding here. Of course this form of thinking and speaking is important; no organisation can do without it. But it is a form that befits operational thinking, a thinking inside the lines of the playing field, confined to a pre-established framework, where freedom is limited.

The second kind of speaking, relating to values and principles, emerges from a quite different way of thinking. Here it is we who mark our boundaries, fix our goals, define our playing field. This is the kind of thinking appropriate to free space. Free space is where our thinking is 'original' in the literal sense of the word, i.e. from the origin, from the values and principles that move us. The difference between these two forms of thought and speech comes to expression in the language of classical Rome and Athens alike. According to Hannah Arendt, the ancients had two words for taking action: operational action (for which the Greek word is *prattein* and the Latin is *gerere*); and initiating action (*archein, agere*). This second form of acting was the prerogative of the leaders. Only they could initiate an action (*archein*) who were themselves leaders (*archon, princeps*). They were the ones who had free space. They could free themselves from daily cares to turn to the whole, the *polis*. They were expected to formulate starting points (*archai, principia*), to think in terms of values and principles, determine boundaries and limits, develop a vision. For the ancients, then, free space was intrinsic to leadership, to the ability to initiate, to begin something new, to introduce ideas and put them to work.[i]

Authority
In philosophical parlance this second kind of thinking, speaking and acting is referred to as 'substantial rationality'. In a nutshell, such thinking and speaking projects our little stories, our daily cares and the welter of practical, instrumental preoccupations, onto the background of our original starting points, our principles, the broader story

behind our immediate concerns, that which prompted our actions**.** By clarifying these origins, the values and principles at stake, recalling why we once chose this or that initiative, we can gauge the little stories, weigh and measure them, verify their value. Which allows us to decide: give them a new start or find them inadequate.

The content and effect of the two types of rationality differ in major ways. Consider ideas on the substantial level -- such as an answer to the question about mutual expectations asked at the MT meeting, i.e. the meaning and value of cooperation. Such ideas are more basic, less linear (less means—goal-oriented), more intent on larger, shared interests than on private ambitions. They are freer, more authentic and personal. And their effects are quite unlike those of instrumental thinking. Instrumental concepts – 'client-centred', 'efficiency', 'cost control', etc. – make for convergence and conformity, rules and sanctions, they restrict freedom. Substantial thinking is inspiring, creative, innovative, it enhances freedom. Instrumental rationality follows the law of entropy: its concepts cool and lose their vitality once the goal is reached. Substantial rationality invariably moves the other way: the more reality values and principles take on, the more strength they mobilise.[ii]

Core of the difference is that principles and values have authority. They are what we believe in, what we freely commit ourselves to. They motivate us in the literal sense: they move us, they make us initiate things. Socrates' interrogations were always probing for these wellsprings of our thinking and doing. 'Authority' -- Latin *auctoritas*, from *auctor* (giver of increase) and *augeo* (enlarge, make grow) -- is literally something that augments us, that makes us grow. Principles and values have authority because they make us grow, make us rise above ourselves. They are our 'starting points', the reason why we start things, the cause of our initiatives. They are 'larger than life'. It is in these 'prime movers' that our original choice resides, and hence our freedom.

Excellence and classical virtues

How are we to conceive of the substance and content of 'authority'? When is authority appropriately attributed? And how exactly do freedom and authority merge? As the name implies, the 'liberal arts' of the Trivium school us in freedom by learning to understand true authority and act accordingly. This section offers a brief outline of the classical view of the two concepts as brought together in the ideal of excellence, or mastery. The next section sketches the implications of this for communicating as in the case of the management team meeting described above.

Mastery was the core of the classical ideal of education and the condition for happiness or 'the good life' (*eudaimonia*). In the classical philosophy schools all training of the mind aimed at this. Notably, this was not merely a personal thing but an emphatically social ideal. Personal development was equivalent to development towards leadership. This is why Socrates could picture mastery over the soul and proper civil governance as two sides of the same coin.

Socrates assumed that all men desire happiness, flourishing, self-fulfilment, being in good shape. Its necessary condition is *aretē, virtus* in Latin – mastery, excellence, worth, capacity. As Socrates saw it, *aretē* was a specific type of knowledge, insight into proper conduct and right action, ability to perceive the path to well-being and happiness. This faculty of discrimination has to do with clarity on the essentials in a

given situation. It is not a purely mental power, nor a skill in the ordinary sense of the word. It is a form of knowledge that infuses our attitude and the way we relate to others: free or cramped, relaxed or stiff, magnanimous or narrow-minded. In other words, the master's knowledge is not of the same order as that of the scientist or the expert. It is more akin to virtuosity, to acting with *virtus*, than to expertise or theoretical reasoning. Virtuosity resides in the style of performing, in the freedom, the ease and the elegance of our actions.

This 'masterly' attitude is spelled out in the four so-called 'cardinal virtues' (*cardo* = hinge). They provide us with images of what, in the complexities of our intellectual and emotional economy, freedom and excellence and elegance mean. They are based on the three 'motivational centres' that the Greeks customarily identified with the head, the heart and the belly. As to the belly, this is the pleasure-seeking in man, the desire to satisfy our physical needs, the love of food, drink, sex and song, good company and admiration. Virtue here is moderation, self-control (*temperantia*). It is the ability to neither get drowned in a vortex of needs and inclinations, nor to deny or suppress them too much. It is the art, not to enjoy less, but to enjoy better. For control and cultivation of our needs lead to their intensification. 'The profounder our happiness', said Spinoza, 'the greater the perfection awaiting us.'

The heart is the seat of ardour, excitement, indignation, the fervent ambition to perform, to achieve, to count among men. Courage or fortitude is the mark of excellence here (*fortitudo*). It is the ability to contain our fears, conquer ourselves, transcend our libido. It is the freedom that arises when ardour does not escalate into foolhardiness nor shrivel into cowardice. At the threat of danger the timid slink away, the over-confident mount a reckless charge. Fortitude is the dignity of resolve, the steadiness in the face of disaster, the refusal to succumb to anxiety. It is the virtue that makes you start something, or re-start, it is the resolve to carry on in spite of fatigue.

With our head and mind we seek truth. We desire to know what is real and what illusion. The head focuses on intellectual rigor and veracity, searches out the right point of view and determines what is reasonable. Mastery here takes the form of prudence (*prudentia*). This is the ability to weigh in an appropriate manner the good and the bad in a situation. Prudence is practical, not theoretical. It is the virtue of acting wisely, the art of dealing with uncertainties and assessing risk. It is the gift of circumspection when faced with the unknown. Prudence is also the ability to note essentials, enabling us to know what to choose and what to avoid. According to Aristotle all virtues proceed from prudence. A virtue without the wisdom of prudence is like a rudderless ship.

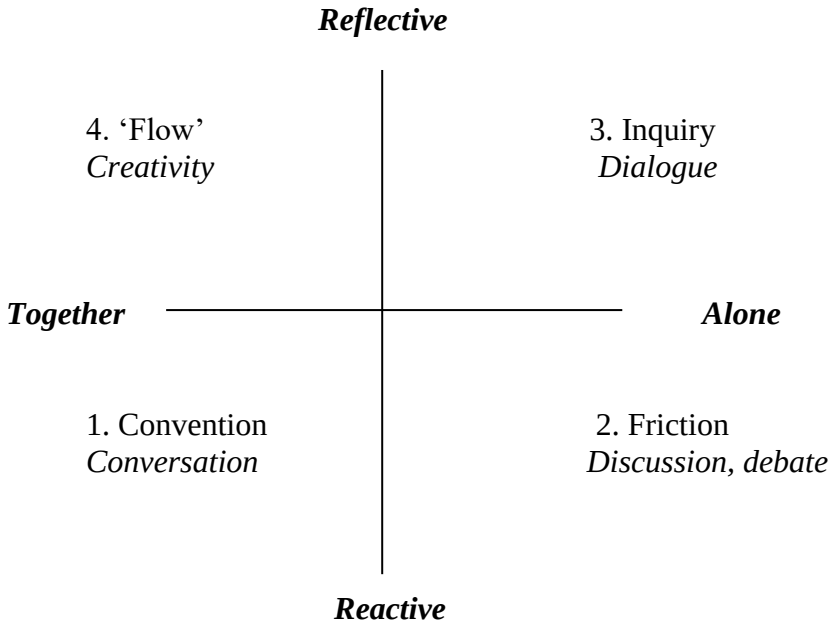
Apart from these three there is a fourth cardinal virtue – the ancients considered it pre-eminent – namely equity or justice. It is the ability to effect the proper equilibrium, both in oneself, between the belly, the heart and the head and, beyond that, in the reality outside, between different kinds of interest groups and their claims. Hence justice is, *par excellence*, the virtue of leadership. It is the art of the whole, the art of ensuring that each has its place, task and share, the art of giving the multifarious cohesion of a community its optimal form. Justice weighs need and merit, goal and means, rule and fairness, freedom and equality. It is the ultimate target of all other excellences, as social unity is founded on it. Justice is the virtue of order, of citizenship, of communal freedom. It presupposes great capacity to place oneself in

someone else's position, to be mindful of the perspectives and interests of others. And it demands that we not place ourselves above others nor above the law. Justice is the art of proportioning, apportioning and holding together. Without justice a society will collapse. Just like a dialogue.

These four cardinal virtues make up the continuous background (and sometimes emerge centre stage) in Socrates' inquiries into words and meanings. They may be seen as the fertile seedbed of freedom, as an ideal of responsibility, as a standard of accountability. They are the hallmark of mastery and excellence, they fuse authority and freedom into one.

The conversational grid

What is the impact of these cardinal virtues if applied to a meeting such as held by the management team? What role do they play in the creation of free space? What happens in communication in which participants lose their freedom or are unable to create free space? Some reasons already surfaced. The participants in the management team meeting pursued a purely instrumental train of thought. They acted like subordinates. They did not really want to engage each other. At this point we will introduce such reasons in the context of a current model of dialogue developed by systems therapist C.O. Scharmer, and simultaneously link them to the doctrine of virtues outlined above. Scharmer engaged in conversations with problem children in the presence of their families. Video recordings of these talks enabled him to develop a model of the different phases or 'fields' in discourse. Philosopher and dialectician William Isaacs adopted the scheme for the analysis of discourse in organisations.[iii]



The model consists of two axes. The horizontal axis points out whether in our talking and interaction we stress togetherness, the importance of the whole and the group, or

stand alone and pursue individual interests. The vertical axis illustrates whether in our communication we demonstrate reactive behaviour, induced by others, i.e. a dependent attitude, or reflective behaviour, self induced, i.e. an autonomous attitude. The two axes define four fields. Characteristic for the first (lower left), is that participants show togetherness and reactive behaviour. They conform to prevailing conventions, they are polite, friendly towards each other, well mannered. This kind of talk we call conversation. In conversation we want a pleasant atmosphere, or at least not unpleasant, and not abrasive. We are friendly and obliging, observe decorum, respect the rules of social conduct and don't upset the pecking order.

At some point this sort of communicating no longer satisfies. Conventions become restrictions, the rules a straitjacket, friendliness a fake. If against our better judgement we keep up the façade we are likely to lose our freedom. Freedom demands taking a stand. We may have to take some distance from the group, brush conventions aside, challenge the pack. In short, we shift to the second field (schematically represented on the lower right). This is the realm of friction. Here positions are opposed, arguments countered, propositions criticised. Conversation turns into discussion or, if managed properly, debate. Participants are now on their own.

For the most part, friction is reactive. Even if couched in the friendliest of terms an attack prompts defence. Note that one needs courage or fortitude to make this transition. Any transition from one field to another implies a crisis to be overcome. In this case it is the crisis of daring to stand alone. It is the critical decision to defy existing arrangements and relationships and to challenge fellow participants. Chances are that you disrupt the group and risk your hide. This takes courage.

A discussion or debate can be an outstanding way to collect and test a variety of relevant arguments. Equally, however, we can lose our freedom in it. When talking turns to friction and opposition, attack and defence, we tend to entrench ourselves. We marshal an armada of arguments to refute objections, to undermine the views of others, to convince others of our truth. A colleague has the floor, but no audience, because everyone is busy mentally repeating their next rebuttal. In short, we harness ourselves with mental blinkers, eyes fixed on the convictions that must win the day or at least be serious contenders: our own. Too often, disagreement with an idea is seen as dismissal of a person. This is what happened in the case of the management team, be it in a veiled manner.

In organisational discussions this is a common occurrence. Meanwhile we have seen what is needed to overcome such crises and to retain our freedom: create space and take time to establish real rapport. Stay your hectic pace, shed your shell of goal-directedness and dynamism, draw on a deeper level of rationality. To be sure, this implies a leap to another level of thinking and discourse – a leap in the dark for the action-oriented among us. For, next to creating free space we are called to suspend judgement. And this is a serious hurdle to take. We must learn to observe both our ideas and those of others. Observe them without identifying with them or rejecting them. We need a kind of distance such that we become bystanders, witnesses to our own and other people's thinking.

This is not to say that suspension of judgement is to cease judging. You can't. All you do is put some distance between your judgement and your immediate reactions, you

rise above merely reactive behaviour. By creating space you prevent mental myopia and tunnel vision. It allows you to listen, to inquire and to acknowledge new possibilities. Note that here too, you must let something go. To escape being hemmed in and to move on into the third field you must relinquish attachment to your own views, your wish to be agreed with and to convince, your inclination to return a punch. You must also set aside your infatuation with speed, action and efficiency, for this is not the way of genuine reflection. Reflection grows in the space and the emptiness of doubts admitted and confusion acknowledged. Is this too high a price to pay? Well, a fractious discussion cannot be turned into fruitful dialogue or seminal debate as long as the participants do not practise temperance and moderation, that is, as long as inclinations and predilections are not reigned in by (self-)control. Without moderation a discussion cannot possibly attain the level where personal and shared freedom flourish together.

In the third field the attitude of inquiry is dominant, which makes discussion turn into dialogue, explorative talking. Here we have space and time to reflect, not only instrumentally but also substantially, on our original intentions. We have room to reflect on relevant values and significant principles, on what we deem authoritative. We have the freedom to initiate something, to re-initiate it, or stop it. We investigate our interests with a degree of dis-interest and reinterpret them as we compare and test different judgements, views and arguments in terms of validity and legitimacy. In a dialogue we start giving our freedom a shared form. The next chapter describes in much greater detail the skills required for dialogue and the difficulties to be overcome. Here, however, just a word on how in this third field we can fail to realise our freedom. It is subtle, almost unnoticeable. What happens is this: once we have created space to engage in shared reflection, we proceed to exchange our views and thoughts about things. But these are quite literally ‘things thought’. They are the thoughts of yesterday, stored and shelved in our memory as fixed (and probably formerly successful**)** patterns. We tend to look upon the explication of our ‘thought’ as reflection. It might be more to the point to speak of (almost mechanical) retrieval, re-production. Real thinking, free thinking, is new thinking. That is quite a different thing.

New thinking requires that we let go of our old thoughts, fixed truths and evident convictions, so that we can look upon a question with unclouded eyes. We all are afflicted with a large number of unshakeable convictions, with built-in blind spots and fixations. Francis Bacon (1561-1626) termed them ‘idols’ or illusions: images coloured or distorted by our personal perceptions, needs, desires, character and so on.[iv] Dialogue is the outstanding means by which we can liberate ourselves from idols and fossilised thoughts -- on condition that we step out of our usual patterns of thought and ingrained mental routines. We need fortitude for that, and moderation as well. But we also need something of an entirely different order. We need imagination, the power to think new, as a ‘beginner’ in the sense described above. Imagination is the basis of discrimination, that is, the ability to distinguish importance and unimportance, relevance and irrelevance. And it is the basis of prudence, the ability to be realistic, to stand apart from our numerous illusions. Without imagination we, paradoxically, cannot see things as they really are.

All of us can recall when a group actually succeeded in ‘thinking the new’ and we were able to come up with truly new ideas. This is an inspiring, thrilling and even

euphoric experience, evoking a strong 'we' feeling. Nowadays we use the term 'flow' with reference to an experience like that. The classical term for it is *metanoia*, literally 'turn of thought', or shift of perspective. This is what goes on in the fourth field of our scheme. Isaacs compares this phase of conversation with a jazz band jam session. A jazz band improvises. And just like in a conversation, the musicians can rely on patterns they have since long used and perfected, or they can think of something new right then and there on stage, something they never played before which suddenly adds a new dimension to the old themes. The audience knows the difference. Without this spark the players may display great skill or even perfect technique, but the sound is dull, it doesn't swing, there is no soul in it. Alerted to the flow the group begins to 'shine'. You see the concentration and intense involvement with each other and the music. What you hear is an electrifying eruption of creativity and sheer joy. It is an amazing mix of discipline and surrender, of autonomy and togetherness, of freedom and commitment. This is the kind of freedom we are talking about, the freedom that arises in a well-conducted dialogue.

Schooling and the liberal arts

How can we make such freedom our own, personally and corporately, in our work and life? This calls for schooling. Without schooling most of us lack the ability to attain genuine individual freedom, let alone a freedom shared.

We, the writers of this book, believe that it makes sense to build this schooling on the liberal arts and their foundation in classical philosophy. History often demonstrates that renewal is predicated on a return to the beginning. The Trivium disciplines emerged when the Greeks first devoted free space to thinking and discoursing on the perfection of life, on how we can teach ourselves and others to grow in harmony with our 'beginnings' – excellence, mastery and the good life. Ever since then, for more than 2000 years, these disciplines have shaped the form and content of schooling and education throughout the Western world, be it in very different ways.

In the days of Socrates schooling was a matter of individual, professional teachers. As a rule they were found in the gymnasium. Originally the gymnasium was an army training field where, for a period of two years, boys received physical education (*gymnos* = naked) in preparation of their entrance into citizenship. After these two years they were expected to continue condition training: mobilisation was always a possibility. Hence men of varying ages attended training sessions. There was no entry fee, but the teachers were paid, so that especially the well-to-do were frequent visitors. In the gymnasium precincts these men gathered around the teachers, forming dialogue groups that eventually evolved into regular schools.

Plato was the first to offer a formal programme of three to four years at a fixed place, the Academy. This was the first renewal and the school was to continue its existence nearly a thousand years. Aristotle established a school of his own, the Lyceum. His daily programme consisted of morning classes for the initiated and afternoon sessions for the public. These were not institutes of learning as we know them today. Groups conversed about a broad variety of topics and from time to time received instruction in them. The University of Athens grew from this, when young men from throughout the Greco--Roman world came to Athens for schooling.

When in Rome education began to be institutionalised distinctions (though not very strict ones) were introduced between lower, intermediate, and higher education. Lower education consisted mostly of learning to read and write (compare our British 'grammar school'). Intermediate education focused on rhetoric, the theory and practice of debate and public discourse. Higher education added dialectics, logic and epistemology or theory of knowledge, and other disciplines such as law, medicine and, later, theology. In the course of the Middle Ages the linguistic Trivium was united with four mathematical disciplines, the *Quadrivium* of arithmetic, geometry, astronomy and music, to form the seven 'liberal arts'. Together these made up the propaedeutic for any further study, prerequisite in the development of free-minded men. Throughout Western civilisation especially the Trivium has continued to exercise great influence on the form and content of education.

Up until modern times the scope of the liberal arts was far broader than the name suggests today. Grammar included the reading of literature and the study of literary theory. Rhetoric embraced law, composition and stylistics. Geometry also dealt with what we call geography, natural history and medical botany, research into the medicinal properties of plants. Music treated not only of the rules for choral song but also of musical theory and the relation between harmony and number theory. Evidently, the scheme of the seven disciplines was a fertile and flexible concept. In times of ignorance and intellectual stagnation it would withdraw into a lean and dry formalism. In times of revival and intellectual growth it underpinned the vigour of cultural achievement. The Church could give it a dogmatic, scholastic dress. Conversely, in Renaissance humanism the liberal arts reinterpreted and reinstated the classical idea of freedom: autonomy, self-control, generosity and the full realisation of human potential. In the 19th century the liberal arts still inspired German educational reformer Wilhelm von Humboldt.

Currently there is renewed interest in the Trivium disciplines. They prove attractive not only to philosophers, logicians or communication theorists, but also to practising consultants, educators and leaders in organisations. This need not surprise us. These skills of language are much in demand, on both the instrumental and the substantial level. On the one hand people in key positions of responsibility are expected to argue well, to be convincing, and to contribute to discussions. Leadership entails that you can distinguish between reasonable and unreasonable, desirable and unwanted, pertinent and irrelevant. On the other hand, formulating a corporate policy requires the ability to develop shared meanings, to find values and principles that can guide a group and set contours for a policy framework. It implies that you are able to justify starting points and test them together. Where these abilities are lacking or inadequate we are not able to associate appropriately, and achieving a shared freedom is next to impossible. The Trivium provides schooling in these abilities, schooling in reasonableness and freedom. It is this schooling that we have adapted to present needs and remoulded in modern form. This is the subject matter of the present text.

Arrangement of the text

In this first chapter we introduced some essential concepts. We encountered the idea of free space and its relevance for learning processes in organisations. We noted the interplay between free space and public space. We clarified the difference between instrumental and substantial rationality and the relationship between the latter and both the classical understanding of 'virtues' and modern views on dialogue.

The next three chapters successively focus on one of the liberal arts. Chapter II looks at dialectics, the art of dialogue. We describe and analyse a case of dialogue and explore the various steps or stages it traverses and the difficulties that may arise. Chapter III is about rhetoric, the art of candid and persuasive speech. We examine the relation of rhetoric to dialectics and the role of debate in organisations. From the broad spectrum of rhetorical techniques we select some that are crucial in 'free-space' discourse. Chapter IV is devoted to grammar, the art of formulation and good writing. Here too, there exists an abundance of exercises and methods. We feature some that tend to be overlooked in the literature on writing but are quite specifically relevant for philosophising in organisations.

After this, in Chapter V, we move on into ethics, the art of the good life and the mastery required for this. Here too, a concrete case demonstrates the freedom that the liberal arts are intended to bring to fruition. We trace lines to classical philosophical schools. Their programmes can furnish the equipment for excellence and mastery for us today as well. The last chapter considers the public side of mastery, i.e. leadership, and the classical philosophical approach to appropriate schooling. Keynote for this chapter is Plato's conception of form and the need for philosophical depth in leaders. The Appendix contains selected study materials and practical tips, 'job aids' in the creation of free space and meaningful philosophical discourse.

Chapter II In search of reason (Dialectic)

Features of dialogue. The *logos*

We start our sketch of the Trivium disciplines with dialectic. The noun comes from the verb *dialegesthai*, literally meaning 'to talk through'. Dialectic is the art of talking through something thoroughly with others, the art of dialogue. This in turn led to the current meaning of dialectic – the art of argumentation or logic. Originally though, the word 'logic' had a far profounder connotation than the mere formalism we ascribe to it today. Logic was knowledge of the *logos*, a concept comprising a whole series of meanings that in our language are rendered with different terms.

At a first level *logos* means word, reason, explanation. When Socrates required his interlocutors to account for their thought and action he was asking them for the *logos* of their ways and views, that is, the reasons for their beliefs, the explanation for their behaviour, the story behind their stance. To be sure, the reasons and explanations given should be consistent, logically coherent – this is logic in the formal sense. But presenting the *logos* embraced far more. When a dialogue partner offers reasons we can ask whether or not the reasons given are good reasons. And what reasons shall we consider good? Suppose someone tells us: 'I was unable to meet our appointment, something came up.' Is that a good reason? Why not? Or when is it?

To determine whether or not a reason holds or an explanation is adequate, you need a criterion. For example, the person who disregarded an agreement said that she had committed herself to other agreements of, as she saw it, at least comparable importance. She added that she was pressed for time and since I, too, had not complied on an earlier occasion, she felt excused for not sticking to this one. Now, I can deny the validity of these arguments: I certainly did make good my promise; evidently she misunderstood our appointment; her other preoccupations were certainly not of equal importance, etc. In other words, both of us appeal to an array of arguments, interpretations, underlying considerations, to demonstrate that our reasons are good reasons. This complex totality is the standard by which the explanation is measured and the story found to be wanting or legitimate. Experience teaches that in practice this complex whole can be expanded with all kinds of ideas, assumptions, objectives, principles and strategic considerations – to the point that a fully-fledged vision spreads out before us. This is a second meaning of *logos*: a vision, a comprehensive story, a totality of normative conceptions and representations. Socrates' dialogues may be understood as a joint effort to clarify this totality of meanings.

There is still a third meaning worth noting. For clarifying the *logos* in a dialogue– analysing and comparing views, adjusting, nuancing or augmenting them, rearranging or reinterpreting them -- seems to be guided by an intuitive awareness. Though unarticulated, it is the touchstone for each contribution made. At least, that is what it looks like when a group dialogue moves to fundamentals. And so it feels when you participate. It seems as if you are applying criteria for judgement that were there all along, except that you only saw them through a glass darkly. It is as if the talk lets you unearth standards that lay buried below your views and imaginings, silent and unnamed. It is not easy to put them into words. Yet they are there, undeniably so.

In the case we will examine below (which also deals with agreements made) notions surface such as clarity in working relationships, perspicuity in agreements, the scope of commitment, and the like. They are the model, the standard in terms of

which we measure the correctness or incorrectness of a view or an opinion. They are the touchstone for our thinking, the yardstick to which we match our thoughts. It is because of them that philosophy sometimes is referred to as 'the highest geometry': in philosophy we measure to the highest standard, the highest principle, Reason itself. Accordingly**,** entering into dialogue, seeking the *logos*, is more than offering reasons or explicating under what conditions reasons are good reasons. Beyond this it is an attempt to articulate the most basic standards for these reasons, i.e. the principles in which our beliefs are rooted, the measure by which we test our way of thinking, the essence of an issue or the excellence of a situation. They are what Plato called Form or Idea.[v] Dialectic is the ability to search out the *logos* in each of these three senses.

Suspension of solutions. Otherness

Chapter I pictured the importance of free space for this kind of inquiry, a 'retreat' from the hectic pace of our daily work. We need this space to recall our original intentions, our yardsticks, to inspect the roots of our thought and action. Now, this type of dialogue differs greatly from the usual talk in meetings. We all know the procedure: there is a problem to be solved; together you shortlist a number of possible answers; those solutions are discussed and ultimately one of them is selected. All this can be quite productive. Then again, it can merely *seem* productive. Anyhow, the underlying notions receive no in-depth attention; likely they are not even expressed. To do these things we need a 'breather', we need free space. Instead of the fell swoop approach bent on immediate, concrete solutions, we need room to consider the full sweep of views purporting to uphold concepts and the reach of the yardsticks by which we judge them. Suspension of solutions – this is a second feature of genuine dialogue.

This shows from which types of conversation a dialogue is to be distinguished. The polite exchange is a first example. These are typically talks in the manner of 'I have my opinions, you have yours; we won't get much further than telling each other about them.' No less does dialogue differ from discussions meant to culminate in decisions. A jury must arrive at a verdict; at management meetings decisions must be taken; the House must take a vote. It is well that these things happen; we couldn't do without them. But they are events that stand outside of dialogue.

A third feature of dialogue, flanking the search for the *logos* and suspension of solution seeking or decision making, is that you respect 'the otherness of the other.' This seems self-evident, but in practice it proves not to be. In fact, it is downright difficult, certainly when dialogues become heated. It does not only mean that you consider your dialogue partners as equals or that you acknowledge the others' otherness. It implies much more: that you empathise with ideas that aren't yours, that you are prepared to consider points of view that prima facie you would be inclined to reject. To open the door to 'otherness' is to value what may be irksome, exasperating or even painful. Is this possible, you might ask. Yes, it is. This is exactly what Aristotle pictured as the core of friendship. We value friends, in part because they are unlike us, and we can disagree without jeopardising the friendship. This attitude towards the other is essential in dialogue; it is a predisposition to acknowledge the other as worthy of respect in his otherness. Dialogue is the free space and meeting place of friends.

This does not mean that dialogue is always placid or that no great interests are at stake. On the contrary, dialogues among friends often evince intense involvement and dedication. Things can be said that you would not accept from others. Among

friends you drop your defences. There is room for disagreement, and it does not detract from the mutual bond. In part, this is because the dialogue is not intent on finding an answer or a solution. No goal needs to be reached; it is enough that things be talked over. To foster understanding, to gain insight into how others look at the matter, to compare your opinion with those of others – this will suffice. No contest here, you're not out to win an argument. What we want is to understand the other's truth, to explore each other's perspective, to look at things through his or her eyes. Just as in a dialogue between friends.

Case. Example of a dialogue

The question we now face is: Is dialogue possible under conditions where the pressing demands of interests and results prevail? Is it realistic to assume that in an organisation or in the public domain free space can be created in order to search out the *logos*, in an attitude of friendship and without asking for solutions? Is dialogue feasible in that kind of context? Are not the conflicting interests bitterly opposed to the point that such inquiry is doomed in advance? Our answer is that it is not only possible to conduct such dialogues, but that it is eminently important to do so. In this chapter we describe several examples of dialogues taking place in the context of interests. These examples will clarify five basic dialectic techniques.[vi] They are these:

- demarcation of the issue;
- clarification of experience with the issue;
- selection of a crucial moment;
- putting yourself in another's place;
- naming the essential.

We start with a case in political discourse. It shows that political debate and philosophical inquiry are not just polar opposites. They also need each other – badly. If political debate is not sufficiently embedded in inquiry of fundamentals it can easily be undermined, lose its legitimacy and, hence, its social function. This is what the case is about.

Issue: interactive policy development

Some time ago the director of a consulting bureau, with frequent commissions from the government and from public organisations, decided to analyse an issue that he and his staff were repeatedly confronted with. He characterised the issue as follows:

> Government long recognises that it cannot pursue adequate policy without the contribution of all parties involved. One of the aids the government has therefore been implementing is 'interactive policy development', that is, early involvement of interested public partners in policy making. In doing so the government enlists the expertise and creativity of citizens, and simultaneously creates support for the policy. But use of this instrument raises a number of questions. How, for example, does the people's representative fit into this? How much leeway does a member of parliament still have to make his/her own assessment, if in the course of lengthy and intensive consultations, civil servants and representatives of diverse interests have prepared a policy proposal? Does not this grass-roots approach detract from the primacy of

politics? The director wished to organise a symposium where this issue would be investigated by means of a Socratic dialogue with the parties involved.

The first step here was demarcation: formulate the issue in terms of a single initial question. This is an outstanding means to focus and structure a dialogue. The question must meet a number of criteria. It should be a basic one, that is, it must zero in on the core of the issue. It should be formulated simply and intelligibly. And one should be able to illustrate the question via actual examples and experiences. Specific for Socratic dialogue is that, rather than remaining at the level of generalities, the inquiry is linked to one concrete case, a personal experience of one of the participants.

Experience shows that finding the initial question is not an easy thing to do. One characteristic of free space is that we take time to formulate this question properly. In this case that was done in the course of some preliminary talks. We scouted the problem area, various angles of approach (whose problem is it, what symptoms alert us to the problem, who is bothered by it, etc.), and a number of possible descriptions of the issue, such as the one given above. Finally the director, together with his partners, formulated the matter in a single question: *Is interactive policy development compatible with democratic decision making?* The organisers felt that this question targeted the essence.

Experience: Schiphol Airport and the environmentalists

Next came the selection of an actual experience, an exemplifying case as vehicle for analysis of the question. This sample case, too, must meet certain requirements. In particular, the presenter must have had first-hand involvement with the case, either as actor or by way of personal participation. Also, the story needs to be told well and with clarity.

The case selected for this purpose was the rise and fall of the Temporary Consultation Platform Schiphol (hereafter referred to as Schiphol Platform), a (then) recent, media-covered attempt at interactive policy development. The case would be presented by Hans van der Vlist, platform chairman. Prior to the symposium we examined the Schiphol case with him. Preparation completed, the small conference (planned to take up an afternoon) could start. The group consisted of ten participants in the dialogue, representing different interest groups: politicians, municipal and provincial authorities, civil servants, the environmentalist movement, consultants. In addition, there was an outer circle of another twenty guests.

Van der Vlist introduced the case. In 1998 Minister Jorritsma (Transport, Public Works and Water Management) asked him to look into the possibility of starting talks between Schiphol and the environmentalist movement. Earlier Van der Vlist had successfully helped to solve problems between Shell and the environmentalists. The Schiphol situation was much polarised. Schiphol grew more rapidly than envisioned; environmentalists were more active than anticipated. Discussions between the two camps took place in court only. None were happy with the endless row of legal proceedings relating to governmental tolerance policy. Van der Vlist had a number of informative talks with Schiphol and the environmentalist movement. Then a new government was formed, in which Netelenbos was the responsible minister. Netelenbos held that other interest groups should join the consultations as well: the Air Traffic sector, the V.N.O. (Confederation of Netherlands Industry and Employers), the trade unions, residents, municipalities and province. Schiphol Platform was instituted on 4 November 1998, and comprised a

total of eighteen parties. The Platform was instructed to advise the minister on newly proposed environmental standards (mainly regarding acceptable noise levels in populated areas). Meanwhile the minister had informed the Lower House that she would decide towards the end of 1999.

Six months after its inception Schiphol Platform presented an interim report containing a large number of areas of agreement. Van der Vlist was unhappily surprised when Netelenbos vented disappointment with this report. He considered her injudicious, she evidently underestimated what had been achieved in these complex consultations. To get eighteen parties to agree on the relevant facts in this issue, the so-called 'environmental snapshot' -- surely this must count as a commendable feat.

Schiphol Platform next agreed on the procedure to be followed. Parties were very conscious of the fact that consensus on all aspects would be impossible. After all, interests were sharply divergent, opposed even. Nevertheless this raised no objections; all subscribed to the need for clarity, and anyhow, the ultimate weighing of interests could be left to politics. The professional project group National Airport Development would now elaborate specifications of the standards. After that, Van der Vlist would consider these bilaterally with the various Schiphol Platform participants. On the basis of those talks he intended to submit proposals that could be considered in plenary session. Matters on which no agreement was reached could then be referred to politics. The procedure could be completed before the end of 1999.

Two months later the project group submitted its draft. Schiphol however opined that this draft bowed too deeply to environmentalist demands and refused to deal with it in the Schiphol Platform. This meant that the project group had to revise it before Schiphol Platform could proceed. The consequent delay made it impossible to complete the agreed procedure in 1999. Meanwhile Schiphol, circumventing the platform, began direct negotiations with the Department. This caused much irritation among the environmentalists, who felt that they were not being taken seriously. They did not want to continue cooperation in Schiphol Platform if the Ministry permitted one of the partners to play the game at two tables.

Notwithstanding this, the minister meant to take her decision prior to the year's end. She did, but the decision was based only on the bilateral consultations between Schiphol and the Department. So the environmentalists moved out. Schiphol was satisfied and felt no need for further talks. Exit Schiphol Platform. After a successful and promising start the process of interactive policy development ultimately came to nought.

Crucial moment

The next step in a Socratic dialogue is to look for a moment in the case – an act, experience or judgement – where the relevance of the initial question is manifest. We might call this the core statement, the identification of a crucial moment or 'hot spot' in the case. It is important to note and name that point to delimit the inquiry, so that you need not investigate everything at once. It is the lever as it were to unearth and test the underlying arguments and mental models that led to the act, experience or judgement. Also it is indispensable in the matter of putting yourself in the other's place: would the other participants in the dialogue have done or thought the same at that point, and for the same reasons, or would they have responded differently?

Van der Vlist's core statement was straightforward. He was disappointed at the moment that the minister permitted Schiphol 'to play at two tables', disappointed because of the lack of commitment of the minister to the process of interactive policy

development that she herself had initiated. Evidently the minister did not want to stick to the agreement. It may be true that she violated no formal democratic rules, but she did miss the opportunity to enhance the quality of decision making and public support. The Lower House, too, could be lectured; it should have admonished the minister, which it did not.

Van der Vlist adduced many reasons for his position. As he saw it, the minister's behaviour detracted from the quality of administration. For credible decision making, he said, one needs perspicuity. Schiphol Platform was mandated to clarify the differences between the parties involved and to indicate the choices that had to be made. The actual decisions, however, were the province of politics; they were beyond the platform's competence. He considered interactive policy development to be eminently compatible with democratic decision making. But purity in implementation was prerequisite.

Putting yourself in another's place

After this, the other interlocutors had their turn. Did they agree with the position as outlined? If they put themselves in Van der Vlist's place, would they, too, have been disappointed at the same juncture, and for the same reasons? Some said they would. Democratic rules had certainly been violated. After all, agreements with public groups had been disregarded, both the minister and the Lower House had erred in this, to the detriment of the legitimacy of the decision-making process.

Others pointed out that commitment differs from formal agreement. It was commitment, which is more than covenant, that was violated here. On the other hand, the minister had not only committed herself to the Schiphol Platform process, but also to the promise that, before the end of 1999, she would present a proposal for new environmental regulations. She had in fact permitted the one to fall in order to attain the other. Even so, an administrator who thwarts a proposal hammered out in interactive policy formation should in any case publicly justify such action. And this did not happen at all. These responses laid bare a number of conditions that interactive policy development should meet if it is to fit democratic decision making: commitment on the part of the administrator; rendering account for deviating decisions; clear agreements concerning rules and scope (process architecture).

'But why be disappointed', someone asked. These events could be viewed in quite different ways: sympathetically, loyally, or cynically. If sympathetic, you want to achieve a thing of beauty, such as a consensus among various public groups. If you are loyal, you are not so much after great achievement; you just don't want to obstruct things. If your point of view is cynical you are merely out to serve your own interests. According to this participant, 'interactive policy development' was viable only when it would hold sufficient interest even to the cynical eye. Looked at in this way there was no call for disappointment. Simply put: there had to be something in it for each party. But this had not been sufficiently clear. All parties should have understood (or been made to understand) that there was no other possibility to guard their interests. If they had understood this, the environmentalists would not have gone to court and Schiphol would not have sat separately with the government.

'Still', another said, 'you can't really expect the parties to give up alternative ways to look after their own interests, can you?' That's why the government should have protected Schiphol Platform by forcing Schiphol to continue its promotion of interests there, and only there. 'Time pressure should have been removed', somebody interjected. 'For then it might have been possible to bring the parties together again.' As it was, time had simply been too short. Another added that

this is a perpetual problem. He suggested that this difficulty can be overcome by early inventory of the interests pursued by the various parties (as is done in other negotiations, e.g. collective trade agreements). On that basis you can stipulate that the result meets minimal demands, including a time-table. Others, Van der Vlist among them, doubted this. If the interests had been formulated more stringently at the beginning, including the governmental interest, it is likely that no platform would have materialised at all. This happened only because enough space had been created. This view evoked approval. In many negotiations, someone said, more than fifty per cent of the talk is about the agenda: what do we want to discuss, what brings us together, what do we have to do with each other? At any rate, a good interactive policy development process demands that the discussion regarding the agenda is taken seriously.

In this way a great many ways of approaching the question and the case were illuminated. The example shows that in this phase of the dialogue it is not easy to maintain a clear structure. A barrage of views, arguments, counter arguments, and changes of perspective is fired away. Still, the basic structure of the contributions is the same every time: If you put yourself in another's place, would you at the crucial moment have had the same experience as the presenter, would your reasons be the same, are those reasons valid, and on the basis of what criteria?

Naming the essential

Towards the end of the dialogue we tried to indicate the essential in the spread of arguments. This yielded rather different pictures. 'Ultimately, the minister had too little to gain by Schiphol Platform', one contributor said. 'Her interests were too close to those of Schiphol.' Another thought that Schiphol Platform, in spite of good intentions, was rife with hidden agendas and power struggles. This raised the question as to how a Van der Vlist could work with that. What would *excellence* mean here? Someone said that, if he had been in Van der Vlist's place, he would simply have telephoned the minister. They even belonged to the same political party. According to others this would have been meaningless; the issue was too intricate. Van der Vlist himself pointed out that, apart from his disappointment, Schiphol Platform in fact contributed significantly to policy development. Importantly, 'a separation had been effected between Schiphol and the government. The airport was now treated as any economic enterprise. Former regulations for noise and pollution control were replaced by new, measurable standards. Agreement was reached for maintaining more adequate monitoring and compliance.' These results pointed up how tragic it was that the process was allowed to run aground. One person said that one must accept the 'shortcomings of democracy'. Another added that he, in Van der Vlist's place, would want to keep his own task clearly in mind. The minister had saddled the process with expectations quite disproportionate to the group's objective, capacity and responsibility. In a democratic process you must not take upon yourself the faults of others.

This is where the session ended. Time for the formal part was up. (As one might expect, over drinks lively talks continued.)

So, what was gained in this symposium, one might ask. The initial question remained unanswered, did it not? No solution was found regarding the correct relation between interactive policy development and democratic decision making, was there? Nor about the question as to what standards can be applied, and what central concepts

such as ‘transparency’ and ‘commitment’ really mean.[vii] True**.** This is precisely why a free space could emerge: no final answers needed to be given even if the inquiry was continuously aimed at this; we did not feel pressed to provide solutions even if the dialogue was focused there; nothing of immediate use needed to materialise even if this would be to the benefit of all. This is the essence of creating free space, *scholē*.

It is like the story told by writer Gerrit Krol about learning to ride a bicycle. His dad held him, he teetered on his child’s bike, eyes fixed on the front wheel and the three or four feet of pavement before it. ‘Look ahead’, his father said, ‘look at where you want to go. And don’t hold on to the bars so tight, or you’ll fall.’ But Gerrit didn’t dare, afraid to topple if he slackened his grip and lifted his stare. Then, suddenly, he did dare. And he relaxed and somehow rode unassisted, tasting the freedom and the broad space before him and the unexpected sensation of lightness and ease. He experienced the precarious and yet heady balance remembered so well by all of us who ever learned to ride a bike. And contrary to what he had thought, freedom lay in looking ahead, not in focusing nearby. To ride a bicycle you have to expand your vision, open, wide. And you will find that a light touch on the handlebars suffices.

The truth of cyclists is also the truth of seekers after the *logos*: the first effort is difficult. We tend to be mesmerised by immediacies (‘What’s in it for me?’), grimly seek to chalk up results and find answers. And we translate our achievements into rules that we lay upon ourselves and others henceforth to obey. This is exactly why so many organisational discussions are arid and uninspiring and the organisation itself short of innovative élan. In the free space of the Socratic dialogue, too, our thinking is goal directed but, as when riding a bicycle, we look far ahead, towards a goal that has authority for us and causes us to grow.[viii] A dialogue aimed at the *logos* lets you grow because you articulate ideas that are ‘authoritative’, ideas that express what you are ultimately after in an issue. That allows you to loosen your grip.

A dialogue aimed at the *logos* has still another effect. Among the dialogue partners a reason-inspired order arises. This is because the standards reflected on in the dialogue – commitment, accounting for, openness, accepting inadequacy – play a mirror role in the dialogue itself, in our discourse, our listening and responding, in how we support or critique each other. Inquiry into the process and the results of the Schiphol Platform is enhanced by the wide perspective brought to bear on them. This in turn enhances the quality of the dialogue.

Methodological aspects

How to find a good initial question

Dialectic is far more comprehensive and worked out in much greater theoretical detail than the five-step framework for Socratic dialogue introduced above. Here however we restrict ourselves to some aspects of dialectic as an art, as a discipline to be practised. For each of the steps, we comment on difficulties that may arise and illustrate them with brief samples of other dialogues. To begin with, then, how shall we delineate an issue, how determine the initial question?

To formulate a good initial question seems a simple matter. What is difficult about thinking up questions? Are we not swamped by an avalanche of questions, just take your pick? However, the point is not to ‘think up’ a question. The point is to determine in all honesty what the question is that requires investigation. That question is not about others; it is about ourselves, about what we know, what we do, what we have experienced. The dialogue is, first of all, self-examination. This presupposes that

the questions we ask arise in our own experience and derive their meaning and significance from it. Questions that do not prompt self-examination are of no use here.

Self-examination questions are asked, not because we do not have an answer, but rather because the answer we have lacks clarity. In the Schiphol case we examined the disappointment of the presenter. The feeling of disappointment refers to expectations, and in this case these refer to views on (political) decision making. As our reflective inquiry proceeds we explicate and (re)construct those views. The initial question in a dialogue should have the power to get this process going. In fact, determining that question is itself part of the inquiry. Compare the story below.

The director of a recently merged nursing/rest home pondered strategy for the next few years. Should he, too, enter the commercial market, since it is there that the well-to-do acquire the services they seek, or is it part of his institution's identity to be a non-profit organisation? What if this means – with some exaggeration – that his will merely be a home for the destitute? He kept worrying this question. Meanwhile two other questions clamoured for attention. First, one of the department heads told him that a resident had requested euthanasia. The nursing home is based on Protestant principles. Accordingly, a large part of the staff finds euthanasia unacceptable. The resident's request was laid aside. Next, a woman from Suriname applied at the personnel office. She was a registered nurse and wanted to go back to work. When it became clear that her religion was Islam the personnel officer informed her: 'Madam, you cannot be employed here; we work on a Protestant basis.' In the management team meeting these three stories were seen as interrelated. What should be done with them?

After a first consultation with us the director decided that his strategic question is indeed an essential one, but that there is little sense in devoting a lengthy investigation to it. Ultimately it is the analysis of the environment that answers this question, whether he take it or leave it. But what about the other two questions? Is it useful to convene a study group or working party Euthanasia that… well, what? …that will investigate under which conditions euthanasia is permitted? That makes no sense. There is nation-wide policy aplenty; moreover, the event proved that for part of the staff there is no problem at all: a request for euthanasia simply cannot be complied with. The second situation is comparable. Those involved do not experience the event as a problem; it is the leadership that interprets the incident as symptomatic of a problem. What, then, is the problem? Is the problem the absence of a euthanasia policy and/or the absence of a policy for foreign residents? Or is there a problem in the experience of the principles on which the institution is based? What does it mean in practice to be an institution based on Protestant principles? But how would you go about investigating that?

This is the point we reached in two preliminary talks with the director, each of 1.5 hours' duration. Because the core question still eluded us we arranged for a third talk. In that conversation the notion surfaced that the two cases lie at the intersection of a) individual norms and values and b) the norms and values of the organisation. Evidently, the latter are not very clear; consequently, individuals act in accordance with the former. But that is no problem, is it? In fact, it is commendable. Nevertheless, the image of the intersection seems a promising approach to the question. In a fourth conversation, two weeks later, we continued along this train of thought. In the course of an hour the contours of the initial question emerged. Ultimately, it was formulated

as follows: What norms and values may I (as managing director) expect my staff to underwrite on behalf of the organisation?

We add an explanatory note.
- Norms and values extend to both the personal role (What is my view on this?) and the functional role (What is my view on this as organisational leader?). The question is about the relation between these two roles.
- Norms and values do not excuse you from careful thinking; they oblige you to it (and are of help).
- A leader is expected to make statements, choices and decisions. But this does not mean that he has a personal window on truth allowing him to pronounce 'I decide…'. As leader you frequently cannot go beyond saying: 'This is the decision I take, and these are my reasons and considerations', that is, without the pretentious claim that the decision 'rests on truth'.

In the above case, no less than four consultations over a period of two months were needed to determine the initial question. Now, this was long, intensive, and even somewhat embarrassing, at least, against the background of the expectation that a director should be able to get to the heart of the matter. Isn't that what directors are for? As to whether this expectation is warranted, practice frequently tells us otherwise.

Pseudo questions
It is nothing less than an art to distinguish real questions from pseudo questions. Some questions seem eminently suitable for inquiry into the *logos*, but just like in nature – where not every animal that looks like a butterfly is in fact a butterfly – we can be fooled by them. In practice we meet the following phantoms:
- Pseudo-profound questions, often as imitations of traditional philosophical problems: Does competence presuppose knowledge? Are seeking profit and caring for the environment compatible? Is the demand for care unlimited? That such questions possess only seeming profundity is evidenced by the fact that they cannot, or hardly, be made concrete in relevant situations.
- Complicated questions, in which it is not clear what action or decision is at issue: 'How can we best anticipate the consequences bound up with the use of market-conforming prices for services that until the present time were purposely kept low, in order to retain maximum accessibility for the financially weak?'
- Questions that in advance focus too specifically on one aspect of a case: Why is our system of cost accounting so complicated? (This system can be made to figure as case for a problem situation. The inquiry will then begin with determining the real question).
- Questions that are certainly meaningful, but implicitly oriented to a group problem; of such problems it is doubtful whether inquiry into the *logos* will be of much help. Examples are: Which are indispensable prerequisites for collaboration? (Implicit: in our group these are not met.)
  What is the added value of a manager? (Implicit: our boss is useless.)

All of these seem genuinely basic questions but, as indicated, they drop out for various reasons. On the other hand, you can be too puritanical in formulating the question and reject some that may be relevant and appropriate. A 'how' question is not always an instrumental question (which would for that reason be rejected). For example: How do I know that someone is honest? Commonly a 'when' question does

not refer to a time, but to a criterion. For instance: When is discord constructive? A closed question can indeed lead to sensitive inquiry, as in: Does knowledge become obsolete? Often, the combination of question and illustrative case determines whether or not the proposed initial question really invites creation of free space.

Genuine questions – a philosophical digression

Many philosophers, following Socrates' lead, have expressed themselves on the question as to what might be genuine questions. We present two of them, Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1951) and Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900). Wittgenstein accentuated the way of Socratic questioning: if something is doubtful one should be able to say why**.** There should be reasons for doubting. If I only state 'I doubt whether I have ten toes' and leave it at that, I am not really doubting. I must be able to offer reasons. After all, as a rule we expect people to know whether or not they have ten toes. Moreover, if you say that you doubt something your doubt should be reflected in your behaviour somehow; otherwise you lose credibility. Doubt makes a difference; doubt is visible in action. Socrates goes to work with his questions; he undertakes all sorts of things, engages in conversation, drags other people in, he explains, shows surprise, amuses himself, displays curiosity, keeps people to the point. His behaviour testifies that investigating a question is of great value to him.

Nietzsche certainly did not count himself among Socrates' fans. One of his reasons for this was that the Socratic way of philosophising has been taken up in a manner 'so exemplary' that subsequent generations, up to the present day, are still asking the very same questions. In other words: we have given up the selection of crucial questions. Often we assume that the questions are 'given' and all we need to do is try to answer them. Nietzsche suggests that we ask the questions in radically different ways. He would have us reflect on the origin of our questions, on our reasons for asking a specific question. In line with this Nietzsche considers the question 'Why do we want truth?' much better, more authentic and more fundamental than the usual Socratic version 'What is truth?' He explains:

> The will to truth which will still tempt us to many a venture, that famous truthfulness of which all philosophers so far have spoken with respect – what questions has this will to truth not laid before us! What strange, wicked, questionable questions! That is a long story even now – and yet it seems as if it has scarcely begun. Is it any wonder that we should finally become suspicious, lose patience, and turn away impatiently? That we should finally learn from this Sphinx to ask questions, too? Who is it really that puts questions to us here? What in us really wants 'truth'? – Indeed we came to a long halt at the question about the cause of this will – until we finally came to a complete stop before a still more basic question. We asked about the value of this will. Suppose we want truth, why not rather untruth? and uncertainty? even ignorance?[ix]

If in this quotation we replace 'truth' with (for example) 'learning organisation' and read 'management gurus' for 'philosophers' we would get an interesting shift in perspective on which question should actually be examined.

Selecting a concrete example

During the dialogue the initial question is the steering element in the inquiry. An inquiry also needs substance, raw material. Accordingly, we select a concrete example

the explanation of which rests on the personal experience of the presenter. This seems a curious combination: a basic initial question and a concrete example. Are we not dealing with a general question and the corresponding views? Should that not prompt us to beware of the particular? Our answer is: No, you can't be too concrete and specific. To discuss a question *in abstracto*, without the help of a concrete example, would be very cumbersome. We would only too readily be snared by generalities, we would have no mutual understanding and we would lose sight of the question. This is why many conversations on fundamental issues fail; they get caught in abstractions and bog down. This does not happen if the issue can be made really tangible. In that case the experiences and activities from the concrete example provide study material for the inquiry. At the same time these experiences constitute the touchstone for all that is said and thought, the integration of theory and praxis. In doing so they keep the dialogue on the track of the initial question.

To return to the Schiphol story, the original plan was to devote a Socratic dialogue to the relation between interactive policy development and parliamentary decision making. In our preparatory phase we looked at a number of possible examples. There were evident reasons to select Schiphol as case. The case is relatively simple. It seems in part to affirm the relation between interactive policy development and democratic decision making, and for another part not. There is a concrete 'pivotal point', a crucial moment. Schiphol Platform failed; should we be disappointed? And, if so, why? Contrary to what one might expect, it is not easy to find a concrete example featuring an evident pivot. Typical here is the response of a participant when he
asks for a concrete illustration: 'I've got plenty of examples; in our organisation this is a common occurrence.' But it still takes a long time to successfully name a single concrete example really illustrating the initial question.

When the example is concrete we will not become entangled in abstractions. But there is more: it prods our tacit knowledge. We are unaware of much of our knowledge; it has become so matter-of-course, so much part of our routine, that we no longer realise that we know, or what precisely we know. We become cognizant of it only when we pause at crucial specifics in a situation. This type of knowledge resides more in observation than in thinking, it is perceptual rather than conceptual.[x] A Socratic dialogue, as the Schiphol case reveals, is first of all schooling in observation, to explicate the knowledge stored up in it, so that it can be investigated and tested.

Selecting a crucial moment

In the dialogue we concentrate on one single moment in the case, on one still from the film as it were. That one instant offers insight into the underlying views. In the Schiphol example this is the moment when the minister shows lack of commitment to the process of interactive policy development she herself helped to initiate. The presenter gives expression to that crucial moment: he is disappointed.

Sometimes it is not easy to locate a moment like that. Examples are stories, and stories are known to run from a beginning to their end. Examination of the depth-structure of a single moment can however uncover more than a study of the surface-structure of the whole, not to mention an issue without a concrete story. Another brief illustration of this.

In the summer of 1999 one of us, Pieter, together with his 12-year-old daughter Jeanette, trekked through Australia for a period of seven weeks. On that journey he was repeatedly amazed by an – as he saw it – overly strait-laced attitude. You could devote a generalising, socio-critical essay to this. You can also recount one

crucial moment, paradigmatic for the issue. At the start of the journey a moment like that occurred at Sydney Airport.

Jeanette's ticket said 'Mrs J.C. Mostert'. This led to delay at customs. Initially Pieter did not understand why. Nor could he make much sense of queries about his wife (who was not present). He noted suspicious glances, but did not have a clue as to what should occasion them. Passport and ticket were taken in and subjected to careful scrutiny. After some time they were returned, with the terse comment: 'All right'. He asked what was the matter. He was told that they found it hard to believe that Jeanette was a twelve-year-old Mrs. This Mrs J.C. Mostert should be a married woman, and hence the suspicion: is this man trying to smuggle a child into the country under cover of his wife's name?

Pieter's core statement would be: 'I was amazed at this mistrust.' But why? And why did customs not understand his amazement? Can he place himself in their situation and climate of thought? What exactly are the two implicit conceptions that confront each other here? If this one moment of this single case is looked into more deeply the event develops into an *exemplum,* a moment in which in the little story the larger story becomes visible. Moments like these offer access to our thinking. Such is the strength of a crucial moment.

Another illustration, to underscore the kind of difficulties that can arise. In a large transport company we conducted a Socratic dialogue about the question how you can do staff members justice in the assessment of their development. Behind the question lay the notion that development is for the most part a personal thing. As manager, however, your assessment should also do justice to the demands of the job and the company. Is there a commendable way to merge personal development and job requirements? The participants were asked to submit, prior to the dialogue, a case, that is, a concrete experience of their own that mirrored the problem to be discussed. This proved a difficult assignment. One of the managers submitted the following:

> This concerns a conversation with a product manager, theoretically schooled and exceptionally intelligent. I wanted to discuss the value of combined practical and theoretical knowledge. In three talks we came to the conclusion that more of the same would not be sufficiently motivating and stimulating. Ultimately the staff member, in order that he might develop further, was given the job of sales manager.

The example seems concrete. It cannot however be used as it stands, since essential elements are lacking: the role and involvement of the presenter is unclear; as is the pivot-point and what the presenter did, thought or experienced then. We surmise that he has evaluated the product manager, that opportunities for development were looked into and that he decided to offer the product manager a new position. But this is guesswork. A rewrite might look like this:

> I evaluated X, product manager at…, as a person who is theoretically highly schooled, but I wanted him to combine theory with practical knowledge more effectively. In our meeting I offered him the position of sales manager, because I am convinced that in that function he can learn what he wants to learn – better than in his present job.

This version contains interesting crucial moments for further inquiry in a Socratic dialogue. Just take the core statement: 'I wanted him to combine … more effectively'. That statement gives rise to questions like:

- On what basis did I judge that improvement in this area was desirable/necessary?
- Did X want such improvement?
- How did I know whether X was capable of such improvement?
- Was I guided by the potential for development in X, or by company interest, in which X as sales manager was a desideratum?

We see, then, how an initial question plus a concrete example plus a crucial moment in the example lead to a focus for the dialogue. The next step is that participants put themselves in the place of the presenter at the crucial moment in the example.

Putting yourself in another's place

In the dialogue on Schiphol the facilitator asks the participants to put themselves in the presenter's place. What we mean is this.

First of all, the participants should empathise with the example, the story, and in such a way that they can imagine that this is their example. Next they are asked to empathise with the crucial moment of the presenter. The participants will then ask themselves: 'What do I see myself doing in that situation?' In the Schiphol case: Would I have been just as disappointed, and what would be my reasons?

Note that we are not after identification with the other. That would be at odds with dialogue as self-examination. The substitution relates to empathising with the other's situation, not with him or her as person. The question then is, first: What do I see myself doing in that situation? Not: What do I think I should do? Or: Now that I have time to think about it, what would seem the best thing to do? At this stage that is not the issue. The point is that we take ourselves seriously as we are, and place ourselves, just as we are, in that situation. And then we ask: What do I see myself doing? What would be my typical response? Answering this question presupposes strict honesty, not making yourself look good but being true to yourself. That is anything but easy, it demands that you can suspend your own judgement.

What does it mean, to suspend judgement? The figurative meaning of 'suspending' is: to postpone to a later time or date. 'Negotiations were suspended', or 'the court suspended the case'. The intention is that the process will continue, but not just now. Analogous to this, suspending one's judgement implies that we mean to arrive at a judgement, but postpone it. This is a delicate business; we are only too quick to colour someone else's utterances with our own ideas, and then proceed to judge. This is because we have many judgements of our own, generally very strong ones. Point is that we must 'suspend' those judgements of ours, like we use suspenders so that our clothes won't hamper us as we work. This is what we mean: bearing our judgements, just like wearing our clothes, in such a way that they don't get in the way during work**.** Mind you, this is not a matter of throwing our judgements away, or pretending not to have them. On the contrary, they are and continue to be our judgements. We only take care that they don't obstruct us. Leonard Nelson, founder of the Socratic method in its modern form, speaks of 'withholding judgements', meaning not only that you keep them to yourself, unexpressed, but also that you prevent them from pressing forward. This too is an image we recognise: our judgements have a way of elbowing forward and obstructing our vision on what we want to investigate.

In the history of philosophy suspension of judgement has a further component, namely, to refrain from categorical assertions concerning what is undoubtedly the case or what is undoubtedly true. The classical Greek word for this withholding is *epochē.* The term was used by the sceptics (of the school of Pyrrho, 4th century BC). In those days, too, rival dogmatic systems battled one another. Pyrrho's followers counselled a moratorium on 'unshakable' statements and were the self-appointed champions of thorough inquiry ('*scepsis*'). To this end they withheld their judgement as best they could. As they saw it, this suspension was not a temporary matter but a perpetual necessity. Every judgement (that is, agreement with a proposition as true) is preliminary. In modern times Edmund Husserl **(**1859-1938), using the same term *epochē,* advocated 'bracketing' of our judgement concerning matters that are not 'entities' although our language and our thinking treats them as if they were. Think of illness, health, consciousness, soul, personality, etc. Actually, this holds for many concepts that we tend to treat as if they were things with properties: work pressure, market trend, quality care, plebiscite, and so on.

Abiding in uncertainty

An example of *scepsis* is suspension of judgement. We conducted a Socratic dialogue on the question: Can knowledge become dated? This seems an odd question. Aren't we told, almost daily, that knowledge 'overtakes itself', at an ever faster rate? Question is, what do we mean by 'knowledge', what by 'dated'? We went to work like true sceptics, and subjected the generally accepted thesis ('knowledge gets dated') to a critical inquiry. Jan offered an example. Thirty years ago he completed his studies as physician, but he long ceased practising. Recently he read an article on a novel treatment of ulcers, entitled 'Old knowledge no longer valid'. The dialogue oriented itself to investigating what precisely is dated and what we mean by that. Describing his example Jan made a number of unwavering statements:

- as physician I know that a large segment of complaints disappear of themselves;
- the medical model is not questioned;
- 90% of my occupational knowledge is still up to date;
- government does not have the right to prescribe what knowledge is dated.

Next, he described his shocked reaction upon reading the article. 'God, I'm out of date.' He added: 'I knew this already, but this publication had a lot of impact. Before, I could still choose which treatment I would want to apply, after reading this I no longer had that choice. I simply had to adopt new methods. What hit me is that I had to change, I had to learn again.'

We put ourselves in Jan's position as he was reading the article and realised that his knowledge from his medical training was dated. As if in a virtual world we stepped in and looked around, looked at ourselves and the stance we would take in that situation. We asked ourselves: would I, too, have realised at that moment that my knowledge of ulcer treatment was dated? If not, the inquiry would seek to clarify the reasons why we came to different judgements.

The point in taking the place of the other is that we do not identify with the others' thinking, but that we do think along with the other. This can be done only if we 'bracket' some of his judgements, such as the four statements above. We think along with him without being committed to his judgements (his assertions, views and arguments). As investigators we take his place with a sceptical, inquiring attitude; we refrain (for now) from passing judgement on the claims he expressed with utter

conviction. From our 'sceptical' stance we say: 'I'm not so sure about that; we can look into it.' We elect to remain uncertain.

With that attitude we consider what knowledge as referred to in the example means for us. We concentrate on what we experience and observe as we take his place. We explore the impact of reading the article. We inquire into the emotional charge of the concept 'dated' or 'obsolete'. We do not engage in theoretical reflection on (development of) knowledge, but explore what this means for us in the concrete practice of the example. In this way we seek clarity on the basics of our experience with and our thinking about the issue. We compare our own conceptions with those of others. And finally we try to put into words the essence of the inquiry.

Naming the essential

At the close of a dialogue we would like to gather the harvest. What did the inquiry yield? Commenting on the Socratic dialogue about the Schiphol case we already mentioned what might count as result. Only rarely will a dialogue lead to consensus on the answer to what we have called the initial or guiding question. On the instrumental point of view this would count as a lack, a failure. Seen in the light of 'free space' and inquiry into the *logos*, however, that is quite beside the point, since arriving at a useful result was not the purpose. The aim was to render account, to clarify the *logos*, to test our principles, concepts and standards, by those of others and by what has authority. Thus viewed, the creation of free space is itself sufficient result, and the diversity of approaches and insights reaped in the dialogue value added.

Nevertheless, it makes sense to wind up the meeting. There are a number of ways to do so: we sum up; we can list the insights found and the questions left unanswered; we can formulate the leading principles that gave the dialogue direction. Below we offer a method for this third activity, i.e. formulating the principles. Put succinctly, it comes down to this: we name the essential in the issue analysed or what, as far as we now understand the situation, excellence means there.[xi]

In the course of the substitution phase in the dialogue we compared many views, arguments and approaches. To distil the essential out of this you must not only consider the issue with your head, but also with your heart and belly. In Chapter I we saw that these are three centres of motivation, and that each is linked to one of the cardinal virtues or excellences: moderation, fortitude and prudence. Jointly they lead to the harmony of justice. To get at the essence of an issue, or to what constitutes excellent action in a situation, we can ask what these excellences mean for each of us when we put ourselves in the other's place. These are the sort of questions we have in mind:

- What touches you? What should we take to heart?
- What courage is needed to do justice to that? What must you give up for it (measure)?
  What needs to be faced (prudence)?
- Hence, what is required for the whole (justice)?

Answers to these questions will make clear on what values and principles our view factually rests. It makes of the dialogue a highly personal affair, so that involvement and the attitude of friendship -- basic features of dialogue – stand out strongly. Also, it once again places the inquiry in the explicit context of the classical teaching of virtues, the excellences to which we ascribe authority. As a rule these questions give rise to much reflection and invite further inquiry. This is inherent in free-space dialogues.

Socrates often closed a dialogue with the remark: ‘Let us continue our investigation on a later occasion’.

Rendering account

Socrates took the position of not-knowing as long as those around him proffered ‘unshakable truths’. His intent was to investigate such utterances critically, with discernment and depth. Whence this motivation? Did Socrates believe that, if only you searched long enough, ‘the’ answer would be found? In a way, yes. The dialogue seeks to answer the initial question. This is likely to be a long and arduous journey, and an answer will not always be found, or perhaps no more than a partial answer will emerge. Nevertheless, we intend to arrive at insight such that for the participants in the dialogue the question is answered.

Sometimes, however, it is doubtful whether a question is answerable at all, not because of lack of time, but because of the nature of the question. The maximum attainable seems to be insight into why the question admits of no answer. For example, over a period of three days a study group for environmental education conducted a Socratic dialogue on the question: ‘What does nature mean in our life?’ All were convinced of the relevance of this question, all considered it a basic one. The ensuing inquiry was fascinating, but none of the answers satisfied, because in every instance nature was viewed from a single perspective. We did not succeed in bringing a plurality of perspectives together in one integrated answer. The success here was that we did achieve in-depth clarification of our inability to answer this sort of question.

The questions tabled in a dialogue are prickly questions. Characteristically, they call us to account. They are questions that make you uncomfortable, because you feel that you should know the answer, but soon discover that you have no decisive answer. But do we really need an answer? Max Frisch, whose diaries speak of ‘troubling questions’, thinks not. He makes a distinction between ‘answer a question’ and ‘answer to a question’. What he means is this:

a) When you must answer a question you can say that you have no answer; you can refer to someone who does have the answer; you can say that you lacked time to find the answer, or that you are not very interested in an answer. But when you must answer to a question, you cannot absent yourself. The seriousness and the importance of the question oblige you to answer. In this sense genuine questions are troubling questions.
b) Once you have answered a question, the matter is closed, at least for now. If the answer was adequate the question need not be posed again. But when you render account of yourself, that is, when you answer to a question, it is not thereby set aside. After account is rendered the question continues to hover over us.

Socratic dialogue is marked by rendering account of your own thoughts, acts and feelings, rather than by seeking answers to questions.

Reporting and analysing a Socratic dialogue

In a Socratic dialogue we sometimes make use of argument analysis. This is an instrument by which we gain insight, intermediate or at the end, into the structure of the various arguments. This analysis (ca 1.000 words) consists of the following parts:

- A brief description of the issue;

- A brief description of the example;
- The core statement of the presenter;
- The major arguments supporting the statement (the little story);
- Alternative core statements by others, including the arguments;
- Where applicable: general principles on which the arguments are based (the big story);
- An answer to the initial question.

Below, we present a sample of an argument analysis, taken from a dialogue with trainers and consultants, and we show how argument analysis can be used to define and structure an inquiry.

Issue
A mark of mastery for any professional, hence for trainers and consultants as well, is to know what lies within your field, when training or advising is pertinent or possible and when it is not. For many, though, the boundaries are vague. Hence the question: when do you stop training or advising or, more generally, when do you stop helping?

Example
One of the participants, Margot, offered the following example. Her partner, Jesse, was faced with the choice to take a new job or to stay at his old job. He was a person who generally tended to avoid choices and always tried to have others do that for him. This time he was true to form. Margot felt that he should make the choice himself. But she did help him to weigh advantages and disadvantages. Awkward was that she herself had a vested interest in the matter. If he took the new job Jesse would spend much less time commuting, and she considered this an advantage for herself.

Jesse, however, could not make up his mind and kept pushing the decision Margot's way. Eventually she began to feel that this was a burden, her burden. His irresolution cost her much energy. At that point she decided to stop helping him. She no longer wanted to talk about it. In spite of this he kept asking for advice. But she staved him off, recommended that he talk to others. This he did. At some point he leaned towards the choice for the new job, although at his present job some new, interesting colleagues had come in. But his new employer wanted a definite commitment. On the day he had to give his answer Jesse telephoned Margot five times. She finally pulled the plug.

Margot stopped here with her assistance. Was that the right moment, or should she have done so sooner, or later, and why? The participants put themselves in her place and from that point of view exchanged arguments. This was as far as we got the first round. The assignment for the next session was that all participants wrote up their analysis of the dialogue. The facilitator gathered the reports and arranged their substance in line with the three different statements that were central in the reporting. The first one is that by Margot. It is supported by her own arguments and by those of others. The other two statements represent the positions of other participants. We assigned numbers to the arguments, so that in the dialogue we could readily refer to them.

Statement 1
This is where you must stop helping.

Arguments

1. Assistance ceases to aid development (insight, behaviour).
2. You did the best you could.
3. This constant appeal for help is a serious problem for you as helper.
4. Jesse proves unable to take responsibility.
5. If you are forced to direct someone's life you should not co-operate.
6. I cannot leave my own interest out of the picture.
7. I do not want to make the wrong choice.
8. I am saddled with it; we are not solving this together.
9. I don't have enough insight to tackle the underlying causes.

Statement 2
You should not stop helping at this point.

Arguments
10. You are dealing with someone who generally cannot choose; this is a problem with broader implications.
11. If someone cannot assume responsibilities I would keep stimulating him to do so.
12. When I notice that rational weighing has no effect I would propose that the decision be made in some other (more intuitive) way.
13. You can refer him to a third party to discover why it is so hard for him to make choices.
14. It is not (yet) detrimental to your relationship.

Statement 3
This is not a matter of stopping or continuing assistance.

Arguments
15. You are in this together, so this is not a situation where one helps another.
16. Jesse did not see this as his problem, so there is no genuine help request.

This review was the starting point for the next meeting. The reports made clear that there was no agreement within the group; some said the help should be continued, others felt that Margot justifiably stopped, still others argued that the problem was not posed correctly (example and question did not fit). Could we unearth the underlying views that were mutually opposed here? And which of all the reasons adduced were decisive reasons? To get at these underlying views and decisive reasons we gave the participants the assignment to sharpen their argument with the help of the syllogism.

Syllogism
In the traditional syllogism an argument consists of three elements: a) a number of facts that lead to b) an act, experience or judgement, on the basis of c) a number of assumptions or justifications.

The standard example of a syllogism is the following argument:
- All men are mortal (major premise);
- Socrates is a man (minor premise);
- Hence: Socrates is mortal (conclusion).

This argument is progressive; it moves from a general rule (the major premise) and a specific instance (the minor premise) to a conclusion. Inquiry in a Socratic dialogue

moves in the opposite, regressive direction: it starts with a conclusion (an act, experience or judgement), seeks within the given conditions (minor premise) the general rules underlying them (major premise), and tests their validity. Here is an example:

- I stopped helping Jesse (conclusion);
- Because repeated appeals for help started to become a problem for me (minor premise);
- When you get problems with helping someone, you should stop helping (major premise).

The obvious question is: Is this argument valid? Are the facts correct? Is the major premise plausible? Can the conclusion be deduced directly from these two premises? Or should more premises be added?
In the second meeting every participant was asked to write out a strong syllogism for his or her own conclusion. The first syllogism that was offered ran as follows:

- Conclusion: I stopped helping by no longer talking to Jesse about the choice, because:
- Minor: The helping had no effect;
- Major: If help has no effect, it is better to stop.

This led to an inquiry of the minor: How do you know that the help has no effect? So the minor was sharpened by formulating an auxiliary syllogism:

- Conclusion: You know that help has no effect, because:
- Minor: Jesse kept coming back, and
- Major: If someone persists in asking for help, the help given is evidently ineffective.

Again, we may question whether this major is sufficient support. In the dialogue, however, the first major was shot down. Is it indeed the case that it is better to stop when help has no effect? No, some judged. This is permissible only if you are certain that other available ways of helping will be without effect as well. Next, the second major premise was criticised. The fact that someone keeps coming back to ask for help does not necessarily mean that the help is without effect. On the contrary, it may well indicate a positive effect. After all, it was not accidental that Jesse kept coming back to Margot, was it? Perhaps Margot should have exercised more patience, perhaps Jesse looked upon their talks as just a necessary crutch. In response to this Margot formulated a new conclusion, provided with a new minor premise:

- Conclusion: I stopped with my way of helping (talking about the choice) and I also stopped offering other help, because:
- Minor premise:
    a. My way of helping did not lead to a choice;
    b. Other ways of helping (for instance, uncovering the background of his indecision) are not acceptable to him.

This led to a new investigation of the case. Did this picture fit the facts? Are these actually facts? Are they not rather assumptions? How would you formulate, on the

basis of these ‘facts’, the major premise required to justify the conclusion? Instead of writing that out, others composed a new major for the contrary conclusion that it would be better not to stop helping at this time, because:

- Counter major: If you notice that the person asking for help has not yet learned to make his own choices and does want to do so, you should (continue) to help him in this.

The problem here is the minor premise. Because this major makes clear that in the decision of stopping or not stopping help, the element of will plays an important role. To what extent can we in this case say that Jesse has the will to learn? To what extent can someone who cannot choose want to be helped? These were (some of) the underlying questions on which the polarity in the group proved to turn. In the end a consensus arose on the last major premise, the principle that only those should be helped who want to be helped. That was part of the larger story, an essential. Still, difference of opinion persisted regarding the minor, the question whether in this case it could be assumed that Jesse really did want to make his own choice.

It is clear that argumentation analysis, as attempt to summarise the core of argumentation in a tight syllogism, structures the investigation and can significantly sharpen the argumentation.

Chapter III Frankness in freedom (*Rhetoric*)

Rhetoric and dialectic

Plutarch (1st century after Christ) wrote an essay on 'frivolous speech' (*peri adoleschias*). He compared babbling people with the Black Sea, where no door prevents water from discharging into the Mediterranean.

> Those who hold that it is vain to have cellars filled with provisions but lacking doors, and purses without clasps, yet have mouths without clasp or door, whereby all must necessarily spill out as from the estuary of the Black Sea -- such as they fail to esteem aright the guidance of reason (*logos*). And they never enjoy the confidence at which all speaking aims.

Athuroglōssos (unable to keep one's tongue within doors), one does not know when to speak and when to remain silent, nor what to say and what should be left unsaid. The Greeks contrasted this with *parrēsia*, frank or open-hearted speech. The concept involves both openness, daring to speak freely, especially to the powerful, and the courage to be free in the sense of not clinging to your judgements.[xii]

Rhetoric, the art of persuasion, is based on these two capacities, on frankness and reticence, to speak your mind and to hold your tongue. Both are needed in an organisation to establish the free space required for inquiring into substantial questions.

Rhetoric is the mirror image of dialectic. A dialogue consists in asking questions, listening, being open to others and thinking along with them. In a dialogue you must be able to suspend judgement, put yourself in the other's place, cope with uncertainty. In contrast, a debate is full of positing and opposing, daring to take a stand and championing a cause, introduction of objections, doubts and criticism. For this you need the courage to rise above easy-going, indolent (literally: painless) conversation, to voice your view, give your reasons for it and defend it against arguments advanced by others. It further requires that you not allow yourself to be swept along by indignation or to insist on being in the right. In short, rhetoric is a matter of friction, conflicting views, a war of words. To practise it rightly is an art worth mastering.

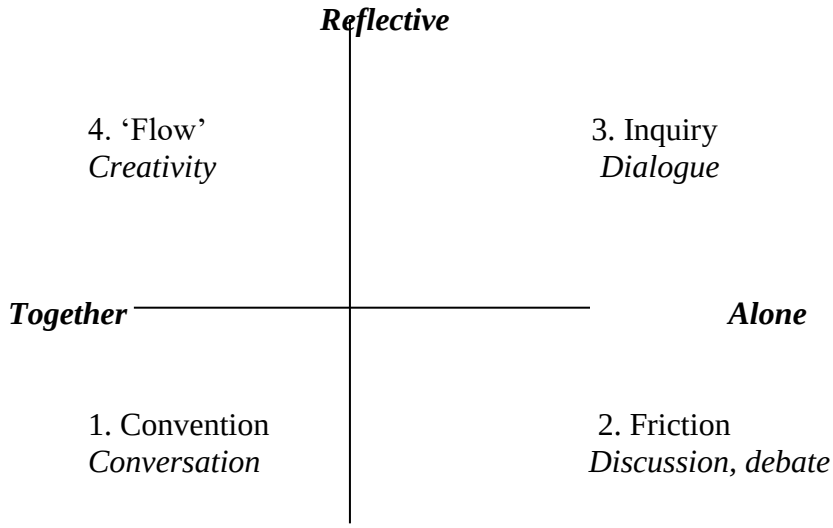
Strangely, the better a debate is conducted the more it approaches dialogue. In quality debate, attempts to convince move towards persuasion rather than conquest. Conversely, the more spellbinding dialogues are those between people who are capable of doing battle. The ability not to avoid conflicts, and even evoke them as the need arises, is an important condition for creating free space. Compare an argument among friends: battles may be fought, you plead, you seek to convince, you criticise, you speak your mind, you raise your voice … to win? No, the struggle is not a personal slugging match, it is a battle between opposing views. And it does not matter which view is ultimately victorious. It is not even required that any one view should win the day. What counts is that the views at stake are worthwhile. Accordingly, I might help my dialogue partners to reinforce and expand their view, via polarisation and exaggeration of the controversy, so that the inquiry becomes truly worth our while. The friendship is not threatened; you don't hang on to your point of view at all cost, you remain willing to listen and ready to change your mind. Such is the freedom

of rhetoric – one of the *liberal* arts. And an art it is, because in the heat of the debate you risk becoming your own prisoner.

Provoking

Characteristic for the rhetorical attitude is assertiveness and magnification, overstatement. You don't say: 'I wonder if thinking makes one happy'. What you say is: 'Thinkers are worriers and worriers are losers.' You magnify your thesis in expressive pictorials: 'This is not merely the bother of a leaking tap; what we're dealing with here are floodgates collapsing under tremendous pressure.' Doesn't that kill the enquiry? Maybe so. But sometimes you need to prod to get an issue placed on the agenda or to underscore its importance.

The first chapter introduced Scharmer's 'conversational grid'. Most likely all of us recognise the development of talking as sketched there: it begins with a rather superficial conversation, and then someone unleashes the dogs of war. Each successive contribution adds fuel to the fire, until the participants realise that the 'yes, it is' – 'no, it isn't' game leads to nothing. That is when the need arises for structured debate or in-depth inquiry by way of dialogue.



Let us take as topic: 'client-oriented'. When managers discuss this you first hear fashionable buzzwords ('stakeholder value'), or hobby horses ('We pick up the phone before the second ring'), wishful thinking ('as long as the customer is happy') and politically correct declarations ('Our corporate values emphasise this quite consciously'). The discussion becomes interesting once people dare to take a stand ('The customer has no idea what he needs') or when dilemmas arise ('How far can you go?'). Here emerges an opportunity to investigate the theme by way of delineating and analysing it, looking at it from various sides. In debate however many pitfalls await us. It can easily degenerate into a free-for-all ('Your claim is unacceptable'), a trench war ('If you carry on like this, I'll stop talking to you') or a tired cease-fire ('To each his own'). Genuine exploration of the underlying views that led to the stand taken ('What is actually going on here?') remains out of reach.

How can you ensure that the discussion does not continue to laze in phase 1, the realm of platitudes? And how do you prevent its entrenchment in phase 2, degeneration into fruitless fighting? We offer an example of how this can be achieved. The example is taken from a situation in a large institution for social and medical care, where debate and dialogue were basic to its selected trajectory of management development. The institution had recently come into being due to a merger of a number of smaller organisations: home care, parent-and-child care, crèche facilities, private care, nursing and old-age homes. The board of directors intended to integrate and develop the organisation by injecting a 'strong learning stimulus'. The board was thinking of keynote meetings for section managers, heads of staff, team leaders, etc., where a succession of experts would address them on a theme in 'health care in transformation'. They wanted a 'provocative' exchange of ideas and so initiate a corporate learning process.

To prepare for this, the entire management was trained in debate and dialogue. Debates are fast, thrilling, entertaining. They offer participants a chance to table much of their concern in a brief span of time. Debates are therefore suitable preparatory exercises for dialogue. In addition, if you want to know how to avoid discussions-without-end, and how to get the learning process in an organisation on the way, it is most advisable to learn to master the skills and attitudes of both debate and dialogue, and to become adept at rapid switches from the one to the other. Accordingly, the training aimed at learning to discuss a prominent issue in a rapid succession of debate and dialogue over the span of about an hour.

We turn to an example of how such a combination of debate and dialogue proceeds.

Case: A debate on client orientation

A debate turns on a central thesis. By formulating a thesis you focus the discussion. This makes it possible to demarcate and structure the inquiry. It is important, of course, that the thesis is a fundamental one; you don't debate trivialities but issues of interest, topics worth investigating. In this case the thesis surfaced in a preliminary discussion concerning the newly planned organisational policy. It mentioned that one of the major objectives of the institution was: to intensify client orientation, both on the organisational level (chain care, functional integration) and on the level of care as practice. The idea is that people in need of care should continue to direct their own lives as long as possible. This implies that the client's wishes settle the question as to what care is to be provided when. Can this actually be practised? And what would such practice concretely mean? The initiators wanted to have this issue explored by letting groups of about 25 persons discuss it. They formulated the theme in a provocative proposition for debate:

'The client must get the care he or she wants.'

At the start of the debate the group was divided into three subgroups: adherents, opponents, and jury. Note that a role need not express someone's own point of view. In the debate we are out to find whatever arguments and means to convince are available in an issue. It is very possible, and certainly instructive, to gather arguments for a point of view that you do not agree with. After a brief period of preparation for each party the debate commenced. We summarise the major arguments.

Proponents started with saying that clients are quite capable of assuming responsibility for the care they need. Nowadays clients are emancipated. Moreover, the customer pays, and those who pay should have say. The opponents doubted this. They suggested that customers, lacking expertise, are often not at all able to determine what help they need. That's what professionals are for. And if you let clients decide what care they require they may well over-ask. In the present period of personnel scarcity this is a luxury we as organisation simply cannot afford.

The proponents disagreed with this. They suggested that you can very well, together with the client, decide what is needed. Next, you can see what care can be provided. In this way the initiative remains with the client. But the opponents replied that in that case the most verbally adroit will get their way, while a less assertive client won't. No, available care should be distributed equitably, which can be done only if the organisation sets out the parameters of care.

But this is how we did things in the past, the others rejoined. It is high time that we start out from demand, not from supply. The client must be enabled to direct his life. Unsolicited intervention in a client's life is, basically, unlawful invasion of privacy. To this the opponents retorted that it is simply impossible to get everything you ask for. Clients can demand anything; somewhere you have to draw the line. As a matter of fact, to prevent waiting lists it is better to care some for all than not to care at all for some. And don't forget the staff. If clients decide what care they get you saddle the staff with a lot of 'bosses'. Client orientation is fine, perception-oriented care is wonderful. But should that be at the cost of the social worker or nurse? Before you know it you're in for still more absenteeism.

Now this, the defenders said, is nonsense. Staffers are professionals. They won't let things get out of hand. There are plenty of directives (collective labour agreement, Factories Law) to protect employees. On top of that, you can give them an extra reward, a bonus for example.

Relativising

After some ten minutes we halted the debate. It looked as if the most important arguments had been advanced by then. And the 'temperature' of the debate was rising. This is hardly unusual. Irrespective of whether you advocate your own views or support a thesis you do not subscribe to, in a debate you are inclined to dig in, to defend yourself and attack the other. You start looking for ways to bend 'right' your way, not only through argumentation, but also by playing on sensitivities: an ironic or surprised look, a throw-away gesture, repeated interruption, and the like. The well-versed in these rhetorical tricks gather a lot of votes. But they also run a risk; the 'heat' thus engendered may cause you to lose your freedom and the space it affords. This happens when you identify too much with your position, when you are too much 'hung up' on your own ideas and those of your supporters. You lose sight of the whole, you have no room for other perspectives, let alone for the possibility that the other party may be right. It is an art, not a set of tricks to play your role with evident conviction, yet without losing yourself in it, and without turning fierce, snappish, or piqued.

That is not easy, it places demands on you. The first difficulty is already given the very moment you enter into debate and take a stand. It requires a degree of courage (fortitude) to take that step. Because when you do so, you come forward

out of anonymity, away from your safe place, away from the shared lethargy of unarticulated or broadly accepted views. By taking a stand you make yourself vulnerable. Nobody knows what one uncovers if one uncovers oneself; you don't know what the effect of your words will be. Another difficulty is the fear that your statements will provoke friction, evoke objections, challenge views. You may therefore erode group stability. You may make others unsure, or yourself become uncertain by the counter-arguments advanced by others. The biggest difficulty of all however is that you can be drawn into a debate to the point that you feel personally challenged or attacked. You begin to defend yourself and to retaliate by seeking to convince others that they are wrong. You become narrow so that there is no room to listen to others. You feel hurt and all you really want to do is hit back. In short, you lose your freedom. Here, precisely at this point, mastery would be to keep your freedom, keep the space around you, not to identify with your judgements, perceptions and feelings, and to keep looking upon these as building blocks in a corporate inquiry.

This is* parrēsia, *frankness in freedom, which is both the courage to be free and the freedom to be courageous. To attain it you must give up the attachment to safety and the attachment to being right. Here we have the exact point where you, in terms of the classical ideal, can be a citizen, a free and full member of the community. Here you can choose, for taking responsibility or for insisting that you are right, for the common good or personal interest, for leaving space for others or locking up in your own perspective. Here you can become a rational being or an* idiōtēs, *someone looking after nothing but his own parochial interests.

Images with power

Meanwhile, our brief debate achieved much:

- many took the floor;
- the participants spoke freely; they dared to take a strong stand, from the (assigned) position in the debate;
- many arguments were tabled;
- the arguments were disassociated from the speakers;
- the interests, views and values underlying these arguments were discussed;
- many of the arguments were known, but they were lived through and experienced anew.

The debate invites the participants to magnify their point of view. This prompted the emergence of a number of powerful images and catch phrases – each of which could be topic for a well-knit argument:

- 'those who pay should have say';
- 'unsolicited intervention is invasion of privacy';
- 'the client must be enabled to direct his life';
- 'client orientation leads to absenteeism',
- 'the loudest talkers get the most';
- 'draw the line, or share responsibility for waiting lists'.

Because the participants do not only defend their own position but are also required to respond to the other side, they must necessarily confront the two points of view, argue their respective strengths and weaknesses. In this way there is room to do justice to as many aspects of the central thesis as possible. This is a space where one looks for the

essential in a theme. But this space can easily be lost again when people no longer consider the inquiry as a whole but – in the thick of the battle – give in to the temptation to entrench themselves, or when they want to win at all costs and are prepared to undermine the other party by playing the man instead of the ball. If you have had some debate training, though, you will know how to avoid this sort of thing. Moreover, as we mentioned earlier, the better a debate is conducted the more it approaches dialogue. And the better the dialogue, the more debate it can afford to assimilate.

In terms of Scharmer's model, then, not only a transition from field three to field four is possible, but also integration of the one into the other. The next section pictures such linkage and integration of debate and dialogue.

Dialogue: sounding the depth

In a dialogue you do not act a part, you are neither proponent nor opponent, you voice your actual beliefs. We made use of an abbreviated model of dialogue, derived from the Socratic dialogue (cf. p.**XXX**). Our objective was to add a depth dimension to the debated issue and to define it by focusing on a concrete case. The debate thesis was reversed, that is, the assertion was turned into a question: Should clients receive the care they want? One of the participants presented an actual situation in which she herself was involved. Her story shows that the question is a thorny one.

> She was a team leader in the home care division. One of her team's clients was a domineering woman, aged seventy-three and recently widowed. She had been a care recipient since two years. Her behaviour towards the home care workers had much deteriorated over time. At times she was quite offensive; she would curse and swear at everyone. She considered each worker ignorant and inept. She laid down all kinds of rules. Home care workers were admitted to the house only if they rang the bell thrice. If they did not, the door would remain locked. They were not permitted to make conversation. Just dress the woman's leg and leave. Or they were sent upstairs to the unheated attic, where they had to do the ironing.
>
> Noting that things were becoming a problem, the team leader decided that she should visit the client and discuss her behaviour. Initially the woman refused. Somewhat later the team leader did pay her a visit. The effected improvement lasted about a month, after which the woman reverted to her old pattern, cursing every worker who came to dress her leg. One after the other, even the hardiest of the staff were put off. A consultation with the client's physician was no help: the woman simply had to have her leg dressed, on pain of amputation. Meanwhile, relations between client and team leader had deteriorated to the point that they could no longer communicate.

Naturally, the team leader was troubled by the situation. She was angry with the client, felt frustrated and powerless, even if she did sympathise with the woman's unhappiness about the frequent replacement of workers. But she, the team leader, was unwilling to make concessions at the cost of the well-being of her staff. In short, the question was a pressing one indeed: Should even this client receive the care she asked for? Or: What does 'client-oriented' mean in this situation?

In a Socratic dialogue, participants are not onlookers commenting on the situation from the sidelines. Rather, they substitute, they take the place of the presenter. The

question then immediately facing them is what, given the presenter's situation, they themselves would have felt, done and thought, and what their reasons would be. In the present case this led, after some additional clarification, to the following responses.

> 'Things have to change here, that much is certain', one said. You can't permit workers to break down one after the other because of a client. On the other hand, there's more to it with this lady, and the team members can't fix all that. So one thing you've got to do as team leader is to involve others, like her doctor.
> Another felt that it had to be made clear to the client, somehow, that her behaviour was unacceptable. She did not see why, in spite of what the presenter had said, a personal talk at this point was out. She would impress upon the woman very clearly what home care does and does not offer. And the client would just have to take the consequences of her behaviour. She would confront her with possible sanctions and let her make the choice. If worse came to worst she would start a procedure to stop the care.
> A third participant pointed out that this kind of situation happens more often. It is important that, as team leader, you take some distance. This can be done by talking about it with colleagues or tabling it in a review group (as we were doing now). Then too, in the past she had worked with an exchange scheme, to 'spread the pain' over a number of team members. The presenter had mentioned that the woman rejected this. Why should you go along with that? If you let clients have their way in everything you don't get around to doing your daily work. As organisation, you have to state your limits very clearly.
> A fourth contributor held that, nevertheless, you should look for a possible solution. Perhaps a training course in dealing with troublesome clients would help. Or else take a good look at other incidents and draw lessons from that. Team consultations usually reserve too little time for this.

Essentials

Various approaches to deal with the problem were suggested. In Chapter II we noted however that the substitution phase, i.e. considering how you would cope with the situation in the example if you were the presenter, is not meant to solve the problem posed in the case. If we tried, we would be back at the level of debate. Dialogue is intended to formulate underlying views and to exchange them. The case, the concrete problem, is merely an aid in preventing that we rest content with abstractions, that we only theorise and lose sight of the link with actual praxis. Just as you can lose the free space in a debate when you over-identify with a standpoint, you can lose free space in a dialogue if the inquiry is narrowed to problem solving. The core question recedes and your preoccupation is with a problem in the case.

The thing to do here is to focus on explication of the underlying values and principles. You ask questions in the order of: What is at the bottom here? What is the essence of the story? What are the suggested recommendations based on? (cf. p. **XX**) Such questions address a deeper level, the level of essential motives and intentions rather than that of instrumental rationality. In the present case this yielded comments and explanations such as these:

For me the point is to realise that you have a shared responsibility for a client. I mean, you are not in this alone, neither as team worker nor as team leader. You can appeal to other experts. It is important to keep this in mind.

At stake in this example is the quality of care. Basic principle is that the client receives the care he/she requests. People have the right to make their own choices. But you should not become a client's slave. If you do, you detract from your own professional autonomy. As leader you should have the courage to stipulate limits or even to terminate care if all options to improve the situation failed.

We are called to care for difficult clients no less than easy ones. We can learn something here, both we and this team leader. This is why it is so important to have this sort of dialogue more often. Shoptalk is crucial; you stay alert and you continue to learn.

Bottom line is that client and staffers learn to acknowledge each other's limits and inabilities.

No matter how difficult, don't let the communication break down; draw the line, but do so while keeping everything in perspective. Humour is more effective than sanctions.

We should give up the idea that everyone can handle difficult clients. The organisation should be able to develop a flexible policy, aimed at distributing difficult clients among a number of workers.

It is evident that these remarks derive from significantly different perspectives on the case and on the issue. 'We are called to care for difficult clients no less than easy ones' is a point of view quite different from 'you should not become a client's slave'. In a dialogue it is sufficient that these perspectives are made clear. In practice, of course, clarification is not enough. An organisation must decide on policy, arrive at agreement as to how these cases can best be dealt with, how staff members can implement the ideal of client orientation concretely. This is where the debate resumes, no longer as a discussion in free space, but now as part of actual decision making. Basic to this is a principled choice. For instance: for clients such as these we draw the line precisely there where client orientation threatens to be at the cost of the staff members. By gathering the available arguments in a debate and by formulating the various points of view in a dialogue it is easier to arrive at this decision. After all, everybody knows that you can't please everybody all of the time; that there has to be a corporate policy, that lines have to be drawn somewhere. Even if you do not agree with the choice for a specific policy, the inquiry will render the choice respectable because transparent. And this in turns makes a decision effective.

Political arena

To gather available arguments and to formulate the essence of an issue is to look for truth. Yes, but hold it! Are organisations the proper place to mount a search for truth via debate and dialogue? Is it not so that in organisational praxis truth is always subordinate to the never-ending battle of interests? Divisions seek to legitimise their existence, employees want recognition for their efforts, managers try to climb the ladder, clients insist on response to their complaints, directors want to see their policies carried out, shareholders demand profits -- squabbles as frequent as Irish rain. Organisations are full of rhetoric and pseudo-truths. Some things are made to look better than they are, others are painted in forbidding hues, people ask for more than

they need because they know they will be curtailed anyway, decisions are pre-cooked behind closed doors; ideas, plans or stories are communicated to different parties in different ways. You'll find such gerrymandering in every organisation. Surely, it is impossible to conduct a discussion on essences or on truth in this thoroughly political arena! Is it not rather the case that the essence of an issue can be uncovered only if no interests are at stake, when you are disinterested by definition?

We do not think so. For in that case you would circumvent a basic trait of our existence, namely, that we live in the midst of others (*inter-esse*). We experience this very concretely when our interests collide with those of others. Such conflicts are critical to a discussion on essentials. They make painfully clear that we tend to overlook things. It is not these clashes that toll the death knell for in-depth discussion -- disinterest and non-commitment do. Mastery consists in tracing, per situation, how you can do justice to those divergent interests, such as the interests of clients, care workers, team leaders, people on waiting lists etc., in the discussions above. Condition is that these interests do have to come out into the open. We achieve this by challenging each other to formulate the interests so clearly that we are forced to take them into account in our own view. This is what debate is for.

Let us not deny that in praxis the battle of interests can hinder you while you attempt to create free space in the organisation. People easily let themselves be drawn into defence of their own point of view. Others feel intimidated by the presence of an influential colleague whom they do not want to antagonise. Still others are inclined to reduce the situation to simplistically opposed interests and immediately have a solution or compromise on offer. All of these are ways not to sound the depth of personal interest or the interests of others. Debate and convincing speech are predicated on the art of rising above all this and to gain an overview of the shared interests, as the essences above. This requires that you take your rightful place in the community of discourse, that you are open to what others contribute, that you can listen quietly and speak when you must. This is not just a matter of political survival. It goes far beyond that. It is schooling in frankness, speech both courageous and free, aimed at the development of mastery and leadership.

Robert Quinn pictured the path travelled by those learning this in his 'Paradigms of organizational life', a contemporary version of Aristotle's *Nichomachean Ethics*.[xiii]

We note that in the course of their career staff members adjust their view on the organisation. As managers they learn to conduct themselves skilfully in the political system. When they grow to the level of leadership and authority they will retain their technical competence and their political sensibility, but these will no longer be the determining factors in their life. The standard measure for them now becomes their own

Three paradigms of organisational life

	Individual contributor Technical paradigm	*Manager* Transactional paradigm	*Leader* Transformational paradigm
First objective	Personal survival	Personal survival	Vision realisation
Nature of organisation	Technical system	Political system	Moral system

Source of power	Technical competence	Effective transactions	Core values
Source of credibility	Technical standards	Organisational position	Behavioural integrity
Orientation to authority	Cynical	Responsive	Self-authorising
Communication patterns	Factual	Conceptual	Symbolic
Source of paradigm	Professional training	Administrative socialisation	Personal rebirth

moral system, and they act on their own authority. However, Quinn notes, this requires nothing less than a personal 'rebirth'. You will need to develop firm resolution in order not to be swayed by the issues of the day. In short, development of courageous frankness implies far more than development of debating skill only.

Where truth resides -- a philosophical digression

This can also be understood from the historical roots of the term *parrēsia*. The word, which we may roughly translate as open-hearted speech, first appears in Greek literature in a work of Euripides.[xiv] In the tragedy *Ion* he describes how truth moves away from the temple at Delphi to the market-place of Athens. Of old, the oracle or shrine in the temple of Apollo was the abode where the god, through the mouth of his priestess, would speak truth to every mortal who sought his counsel. In the *Ion*, however, Apollo's utterance misleads the protagonists. When Creüsa asks the oracle concerning the fate of her son Ion, begotten by Apollo himself when he seduced her, the oracle remains silent. Unknown to Creüsa, at that very place and time Ion is in the temple, servant to the oracle. When next Creüsa's husband, Xuthos, inquires whether he has a son, Apollo has the priestess reply that the first person he meets as he departs from the temple will be the son**.** The first person Xuthos meets as he departs is, of course, Ion, standing at the temple gate. Xuthos is unreservedly convinced that Ion is his natural son. But Ion does not believe him, and they decide to seek out the truth themselves, via a game of question-and-answer: 'Let us, aided by another sort of discourse, attempt to trace the truth.' A subsequent scene in the tragedy depicts a similar discussion between Creüsa and her servant and, later, with Ion. In the course of these dialogues the truth is unravelled slowly and fully revealed at last.

Apollo hides the truth from Creüsa, and himself stays hidden throughout the remainder of the play. He lacks the courage to admit his own failings. Even when the tragedy closes and, as custom dictates, the most important divinity is called upon to act as final judge, he persists in his absence. Athena, guardian goddess of the city, appears in his stead. This is a decisive turn: truth shall be obtained from oracles no longer. No more shall knowledge be drawn from a single, irrefutable, divine source. (This is a state of affairs that we, living in the twenty-first century, recognise – within and outside organisations.) Henceforth we mortals must decide what is true and what is good. We discover this as we frankly state our views (*parrēsia*) and find, in the welter of opinions, a rational principle (*logos*).

In this way Euripides provided justification for the Athenian democratic constitution. He wrote his tragedy at a juncture in time when the Athenians sought to conclude treaties with other cities against Sparta. Accordingly, the *Ion* can be read as a political manifest, a plea for popular democracy and against the Spartan militaristic aristocracy.

This is the background against which we should see the life and work of his contemporary Socrates. The Socratic method of 'doing philosophy' was aimed at stimulating people to express their opinions, to underpin them and to engage in (corporate) action in terms of them. He wanted to enhance the citizenry's love of truth by bringing the truth of each citizen into the world. As he saw it, this method was both epistemological and political. And he accepted the political consequences it brought him. At the trial, accused of corrupting the Athenian youth and denying the gods recognised by the state, the then seventy-year-old philosopher frankly proclaimed his critical judgement of the accusation and the arguments presented by the popular assembly. You can read the story in Plato's *Apology* – a magnificent piece of rhetoric. But when the popular court (some 500 citizens) judged him guilty (by a majority of 60**)** Socrates accepted the verdict, realising that he was unable to make them love truth more. Given the choice between exile or poison he rejected exile, aware that his open-heartedness would be no less costly to him elsewhere. Having lived in Athens, it was fitting, he said, that he should die there. 'But if you think that by killing people you can prevent reproaches for living wrongly, you think wrongly.'

Aspects of method

The way to convince. Logos, status
No less than dialectic, rhetoric is a comprehensive and theoretically well-elaborated domain. We restrict ourselves to a few practical aspects of method taken from the classical wisdom of convincing speech. According to Aristotle three such means are available to us when we desire to convince others. In ascending order of effectiveness, they are these:

logos:	the reasonable content and the inner logic of an argument;
pathos:	the impact a presenter has on his audience;
ethos:	the integrity, credibility and authority of the presenter.

The latter two are non-rational means to convince; the first is rational. From each of these categories we select a few methods and apply them to the case described above.

We start on the *logos* level. The first question that arises when we mean to investigate an issue is: What issue are we dealing with or, more concretely, what is to be investigated? Which thesis is the topic of debate? What is the initial question in the dialogue? This question about the actual issue can be subdivided into three:

a. What are the facts?
b. What do the facts mean?
c. What is our judgement?

These are questions regarding the 'status' of an issue, the actual 'state of affairs' that gives rise to the problem. As a rule this area is explored in preliminary talks in preparation of a debate or dialogue. For example, in the client-orientation issue recounted above we explored the following:

a. How does the issue arise, where do you actually run into the problem, what exactly happens then? The answers refer to a variety of experiences and examples, as we saw in the dialogue.

b. How shall we interpret these facts? How must we understand the events in the case? According to one party it was a matter of disproportionate claims for client orientation that health-care teams are unable to live up to, and that there was a need, therefore, for general directives to which employees can refer. Another felt that there was no problem; some clients just happen to be difficult and, although it takes some extra attention, these too should receive regular care.
c. Such interpretations imply different approaches to the problem. One assessment was that this was a general policy problem that would have to be tackled organisation wide. Others judged that these problems were personal quandaries for individual employees. That is to say, the various judgements differed on the status the issue was accorded. And this status is exactly what the debate must clarify. Accordingly, the thesis should be formulated such that all these interpretations and judgements can be brought to bear on it. In the case this was done by compacting in a charged and challenging assertion one unambiguous point of view: 'The client must get the care he/she wants.'

Structure

In good debate the participants present their points of view convincingly. One major rule of debate, though neglected in many an organisational discussion, is brevity. The more succinctly and comprehensibly one states a position, the more convincing it is. In debate lengthy discourse is misplaced, since it precludes discussion. A presenter must be brief and to the point, go for the jugular. Which does not necessarily imply that you just 'barge in'. You structure your argument. A good way to do so is to use a *pathos—logos—pathos* sequence. Your start establishes rapport, a relation with the audience (*pathos*). Next you introduce your most important considerations, the substance (*logos*). You close with another relational statement (*pathos*). The last notes echo longest.

Pathos *Logos* *Pathos* **[insert sketch here]**

This is a simple model of the structure of an argument. The classical model presents additional specification:

- introduction: establish contact, arouse interest, appeal to feelings;
- exposition: present relevant facts;
- thesis: formulate judgement or position, identify the issue;
- argument: interpret the facts, support the position taken, refute possible criticism;
- conclusion: appeal to feelings once again.

This structure consists of three elements of the doctrine of status (facts, judgement, reasoning) expanded with an introduction and a conclusion. In the debate on the thesis that a client must get the care he/she wants, an argument so structured might look like this (an opponent's view):

- You plead for having clients determine the care they get. Are you aware that in this way you continue to burden yourself with waiting lists, and make them even longer?

- All of us know that we experience many wrongs in the area of client orientation. Many clients want far more than they might justly claim. In consequence of this, demands on colleagues are too great and they end up being on sick leave.
- This means that, unless we set a limit, we as organisation are co-responsible for the long waiting lists.
- Certainly, we must listen carefully to what clients want. And we no longer want the patronising approach practised in the past. But we do want to provide quality care for all those men and women who truly stand in need of it. Our experience is that clients lack insight into what care is available and what will meet their requirements best. If you let them turn this into a free-for-all they are sure to ask for more than they need. Before you know it our team staff will acquiesce. After all, they are keenly involved in the weal and woe of their clients. But the result is that many of them end up on sick leave. And that means that our resources become scarcer still.
- It is up to us to ensure an equitable distribution of the available care. But in that case we must not allow ourselves to be caught up in the managerial 'hype' of client orientation.

Pathos. Topics. Images and metaphors

In this example we already see a second category of convincing strategies at work. These have to do with *pathos*, when the presenter seeks to evoke emotions in his listeners. Clearly, emotions loom large in our judging. Strong feelings – enthusiasm, relief, pride, sympathy, disgust, indignation, anger, fear – all of these show that whatever the feeling is about touches us deeply. In debate or argument these feelings should be made visible and put into words. People want to know how you, the presenter, feel about the subject. 'People want to know how much you care, before they care how much you know.' If you put feelings into words you help your audience to share something with you, and this in turn determines how convincing you are.

How feelings can be made visible and how to strengthen or reduce them in the audience is treated in a discipline called *topics.* A *topos* (plural: *topoi*) is literally a place you share, or believe to share, with others, a place where you have a bond with others. For the most part, *topoi* are commonplaces, general truths or crucial arguments to which all subscribe. They often come in images, metaphors, proverbs, or other maxims. Selecting the right *topoi*, you as presenter can intensify existing feelings in the direction of your own point of view.

A good illustration of this in the debate we analysed above is when one of the opponents speaks of 'invasion of privacy'. This is a loaded concept. It is legal parlance, and implies that you are breaking the law. You enter a domain where you do not belong; you 'invade', 'move in'. Would anyone want to think of his/her work in home care as 'invasion'? Nobody would. Meanwhile, the comparison has some holes in it. Home care is a different kettle of fish compared to upholding the law. People's homes are by definition the proper domain for home care. In spite of this, the presenter selecting this image steers the emotions of his audience towards his point of view by creating a 'common place': No, none of us like invasion of (our) privacy.

Another example is the slogan: 'Those who pay should have say.' Succinct, powerful (also due to the rhyme) and its truth seems self-evident. The statement suggests that you can buy health care like you buy a loaf of bread. The customer pays and places the desired merchandise in the shopping bag. Yes, of course, you are inclined to say. But behind this image hides a lot of indignation at the way clients have been patronised for decades, because they had no say over what would fill their

shopping bag. The appeal here is: let us listen closely to what clients want, and let us not overpower them with our own narrow regulations and rigid working habits.

Such *topoi* can be opposed with other *topoi*. As counterpoint you could for example make a comparison with the acquisition of a television. Before people actually purchase one they let themselves be informed about built-in features and the comparative quality of various types and brands. Often, people are not really aware of what they actually want or need until they get this information. This too is an image that has the suggestion of matter of course. Which of these two images best fits the health-care situation? This is a new formulation of the core question of the debate on in how far an organisation should be client oriented. Clearly, the answer to this question is not only a matter of who has the better arguments, but also: Who can present the most telling images (and express them most vividly)?

Aristotelian topics: Anger

We will expand on one segment of the teaching on *topics* by lifting out one emotion from the debate, namely *anger*. We consider how you can intensify, play down, or redirect it.

There is a lot of anger in the debate. Some participants are angry about the frequently patronising attitude towards clients in health care. Others are indignant because of the pressure of work, the overtaxing of health-care workers, the fact that management climbs the bandwagon of client orientation, the waiting lists or the rude behaviour of a client. In his *Rhetoric* Aristotle gathered a large number of *topoi* in the area of anger and indignation.[xv] Anger, 'a painful desire to obtain satisfaction for an evident disparagement', arises, Aristotle said, when three conditions are met:

a. A specific mental situation.
   There is a *painful need* for something; examples in this case are: a mature way of communicating with clients, or reduced working pressure, or willingness to oblige on the part of a troublesome client, or catching up with the waiting lists.
b. A specific stimulus.
   When the need is not met, the situation is experienced as *damaging* one's dignity, as an affront.
c. An object of emotion possessing certain traits.
   The person responsible for the non-fulfilment of the need is *reprehensible* or *objectionable*. (In the case of the troublesome client it is clear at whom the anger is directed. In other cases it may be more diffuse -- 'the management' or some other non-identified person or group.) .

On the basis of the above analysis the following *topoi* can be distinguished to make one's anger visible and to evoke the same emotion in others.

a. Legitimise the need.
- the need at issue is not just a purely individual interest, it rises above that. It is, for instance, essential for the status of a professional group, for the job enjoyment of employees, for open relations with the client.
- Important values are at stake here, such as quality awareness, realism, maturity, a healthy financial policy. Make sure these values become explicit.

b. Expose the affront.
- Emphasise the qualities of the affronted, his expertise and experience, his defence of or adherence to the values at stake, and the right this gives him to speak.

- Emphasise the belittlement, the denial of his qualities, the disrespect for the values at stake, how thoroughly the affronted was maligned.

c. Expose the culpability of the person at whom the anger is directed.

- It is he who lacks the qualities the affronted expressed so commendably. He has other negative traits as well; he is inconsiderate, indifferent, insufficiently familiar with the issue, inept, etc.
- Play on other emotions, such as future risks, that these people can be a social danger, etc.

Along with these there are many general *topoi* suitable to evoke anger.

- Wake up your audience. You, your job, your work enjoyment, your future, are at stake. This is a much bigger issue than you might think; it is a typical example of the deterioration of health care in our country.
- Detailing. Look at your colleagues' agendas. How early they start; how late they quit. How many clients they have in a day. The few short breaks they take. And on top of all that they have to attend meetings. And they have to keep their books.
- Repetition. Just put yourself in the patient's place. In the morning, when you are helped out of bed, they treat you like a child. When you get your coffee they treat you like a child. At lunch they treat you like a child. And so it goes, all day long.
- Comparison. Suppose supermarkets would operate like we do. Then they would not be filled with shelves. It would have rows of counters -- and rows of waiting customers.
- Examples. In Belgium you have no waiting lists. Not in Germany either. People fly to Thailand to avoid them.
- Appeal to authorities. Dunning said so years ago. Timmer agreed with him. People like Schnabel advocated it strongly. And you want to believe that they were blind?
- Display something. For example, a photograph of a home situation, a report describing the case, a client's letter.

Calmness-inducing topoi

Aristotle also offered useful *topoi* to soothe or deflect anger, in both you and others. Calm can be restored if the following conditions apply.

a. A specific mental situation.

- Pleasurable rather than painful.
- Satisfaction already given.
- Conviction strong enough to face objections.
- Thinking that the culprit won't understand that the retribution comes from you, nor why.
- After a cooling period.
- Thinking that you would be wrong to demand satisfaction; thinking that your suffering is just.

d. A specific stimulus.

- A situation where no anger-triggering events occur, or perhaps unintentionally only.

e. An object of emotion possessing certain traits, someone who

- admits the wrongdoing and offers excuse;
- displays submission and does not contradict you; this persons seems to acknowledge his subordination;
- shows respect;
- has compensated you with adequate favours;
- you fear, or show respect.

'It is clear, then', Aristotle said, 'that those who would soothe the audience should speak of these things, and that they should lead their audience into the right state of mind by presenting the object of the anger as someone who commands or deserves respect, or whose achievement is commendable, or who did not act of his own volition, or laments his deeds.'

Ethos. Judicious speech.
In the debate above some speakers had more impact than others, not so much because their arguments were better or their speech was more emotive; rather, they had charisma, authority, *ethos.* This is the least tangible and most influential of all means to convince. Literally, *ethos* means character or personality. Sometimes the concept is used to denote credibility or perceived integrity. According to Aristotle *ethos* consists in three elements:

- personal merit
- level-headed judgement
- positive intention

You don't make a point of these things when you speak. *Ethos* is revealed, not so much in what you say as in how you come across as person. Our way of speaking calls up an image of who we are, of our character, of our personality. *Ethos* is the constant companion of every word we utter, shining through them at every instance. In fact, *ethos* depends only in part on our performance of the moment. For another part it depends on factors beyond that specific situation: your reputation, the stories known about you, the power or influence attributed to you. The performance as such tells you whether the speaker is competent, judicious, astute, whether he is concerned, sympathetic, prepared to help you further. Let us take a closer look at level-headedness, i.e. the person who restricts himself to judicious, well-considered speech.

A considered judgement is perceived as such because the speaker displays calmness, radiates a grasp of the whole and speaks with evident authority. It is the very opposite of *athuroglōttos*, which is the inability to control one's mouth. Succinct, pithy speech is important. The impact of a single, brief and well-considered statement is greater than that of an endless chain of arguments. Also, frank speech is to no purpose unless your timing and dosage is right. Isn't it beautiful when you listen to a discussion for some time and then offer just one to-the-point remark and, presto, the matter is settled?

In practice it is not easy to speak succinctly and to shut up when we ought. We tend to ramble on, sometimes unawares.

- We mean to report on something, discover that certain points are interesting and proceed to expand on them.
- We like to be helpful, and hence present additional and extraneous information.
- We try to soften a tough message with less controversial comment.

- We are taken aback by the disconcerting silence when conversation halts, and we are quick to fill the void.
- We note that there will be no chance to break in when others have the floor, so we take advantage of the opportunity and keep talking until the chair tells us 'whoa'.
- We think that the more arguments we throw in, the more convincing we will be.
- We don't want to keep people ignorant of all the fine things we thought of.
- While talking, we try to get our ideas straightened out for ourselves ('How can I know what I mean if I don't hear what I say?').

We succumb to our penchant to talk, and so neglect to dose our message in terms of timing and content. Because we speak longer than we should, the force of our argument dwindles away. Worse, opponents are always ready to pounce upon an ill-considered utterance.

Making each word count

A special kind of discussion, an exercise in pithy yet deliberate discourse that serves to forestall overheated debate, is derived from the practice of silence surrounding life and work in the contemplative monastic order founded by St. Benedict of Ursia. Silence attends even the 'joint deliberation on weighty matters'. Following tradition, the Abbot has the monks convene for the *capitulum* where the consultations take place under a number of specific rules. The Abbot introduces the subject of discussion, and everyone is given the opportunity to offer his view. The younger monks first, St. Benedict prescribed, and the older ones thereafter, since otherwise the former would not dare to speak their mind. The discourse is couched in silence, that is, when a speaker is finished an interval of silence ensues -- its length equal to the duration of the address. Once all have presented their contribution the Abbot ends the discussion and announces his decision. If he did not do so personally, the others might still hesitate to speak freely for fear of the consequences of their own comments.

This is a powerful exercise. Participants experience it in widely different ways. Some find it attractive: 'I know I will get my turn and will not be interrupted. Makes me relax. Superfluous thoughts filter out automatically during the pauses.' Others however consider it troublesome, unnatural, not spontaneous: 'Sometimes the main thread disappears altogether.' Many find it instructive: 'It takes some getting used to, but then you adapt to the dynamics. You learn how "valuable" speaking time is. It makes for amazing profundity.'

The importance of meeting

All the means to convince that have their place in debate and dialogue in the reserved space which is the theme of this book return elsewhere, in particular in what we know as 'meetings'. But do these two differ much? By way of a brief aside we turn to the function and the historical roots of 'meeting'.[xvi]

We Dutchmen are known to engage in extraordinary amounts of consultation. A handbook for expatriates mentions this.

> Those who work in the Netherlands are often under the impression that a lot of time is wasted in discussions and that these discussions all lead to nothing. There are often meetings, commonly named *overleg* (consultation), with documents, an agenda and a chairperson. All those present will have their say, after which their remarks are discussed. All this can be done quite eloquently.

> At the end, everyone will pull out their agenda (calendar), to schedule the next *overleg*.[xvii]

Expatriates are amazed at this frequent consultation, where everyone openly speaks his mind, even when the boss is there. Why is this done? What is its value? Like many others, the author of the text quoted above explains this by referring to the positive effect on productivity: valuable suggestions are brought in, groups are formed, and decisions are implemented rapidly upon general agreement. But this instrumental explanation is a threat to Dutch consultation culture rather than an explanation. It seems to assume that consultation purposes nothing but problem solving. Perusal of the history of Dutch consultation culture teaches differently however. A *vergadering* (meeting) is a (formal) gathering or assembly where participants are invited to share in corporate citizenship, to set out a point of view convincingly and investigate it jointly, preparatory to possible decision making.

The fact that the Dutch engage in much mutual consultation has a historical background. State formation and *vergadering* developed hand in hand over the past five centuries. This is true of other countries as well. But in the Netherlands it has taken on a very specific meaning. *Van Dale Dictionary* defines *vergadering* as: an organised gathering of people where a number of points are discussed and (possibly) decisions taken. How did the word gain its present denotation?

Originally the verb *vergaderen* (to gather, to assemble) had many meanings, such as ‘coming to blows’, ‘throng or crowd together’, ‘unite in wedlock’, ‘be in (each other’s) company’, ‘agree’. It came to be used to refer to administrative consulting of the Provincial Estates and the Estates General. Use of the word *vergadering* as name for the meetings of the highest councils of the Republic represented a break with the previously dominant way of speaking together and decision making at the centre. Up until then decisions were made by kings and their courtiers. Henceforth, people attended *vergaderingen*, they met with representatives of other groups in order to discuss and decide together. This was a sheer need, since no single body was sufficiently powerful to bend others to their will.

This specification of the meaning of the word went in tandem with the development of a shared Dutch language of the representatives of the various regions. Prior to this time there was no common language. Official communication was in French or Latin. As the concept of *vergaderen* in the sense of ‘joint decision making’ spread, local vernacular (‘ding’, ‘werf’, ‘rocht’, ‘morgensprake’, ‘waardag’, ‘keurdag’, ‘schouw’, ‘concilie’, ‘synode’, and a host of others) receded. Subsequently, the concept, and the social mores associated with it, gradually penetrated from the highest national political assemblies to all decision-making gatherings, via handbooks and training practices. Many remnants of parliamentary origin are still in use in meetings: an agenda, papers, chairperson, table arrangement, decision-making procedure. The opening and the gavel go back far in history. The formal opening (‘Hereby I declare commencement of the meeting’) is a weak echo of the ‘salutation’ (literally ‘word of peace’) spoken by the bailiff as court convened, so that parties would parley without violence. The sharp tap of a chairperson’s gavel is reminiscent of the bailiff’s sword striking the shield thrice as he pronounced the formula.

Vergaderen, then, is not the same as jointly solving problems. It is a cultural heritage, a custom closely bound up with the way people and parties have learned to interact in Dutch society. A *vergadering* offers people a space where each participant can act as representative of an area of expertise or of an interest, a space where anyone can learn to deal with incompatibilities. Consultation is a custom that

permeates the whole of Dutch society, a habit that should be maintained if we would retain our social ways.

In line with the dissemination of the *vergadering* concept Dutch society has 'parlementarised' in the course of the ages. 'Voice' has become normal in countless organisations. Ever more people are involved in meetings, work consultations, project start-ups, improvement teams, retreats, etc. Increasingly, people are invited to have say. Mutual dependency within and among organisations has intensified to the point that a mere authoritarian word has long ceased to force an issue. To take time to consult means to accept such interdependencies and to use them as point of entry to find the golden mean or the proper balance.

Structuring a debate. Seating and timing

A dialogue benefits from an open, circular seating arrangement; the round conference table symbolises companionship and mutual involvement. In contrast, for a debate we create opposition by literally placing the opponents over against each other. In debate a speaker takes a stand, so he/she rises to speak, and faces the opponent and the third party: the public and/or jury. It is the third party that must be convinced, not the opponent (since that is impossible). The speaker is therefore forced to formulate such that the larger group rather than the opponent is led to believe.

A formal debate consists of a number of 'rounds' of agreed upon, fixed duration, usually two or three minutes per speaker. In each round a different participant takes the floor, so that as many have their turn as possible (preferably all). Two minutes suffice, not only to formulate a position but also to present arguments or to respond to the opponent. At the same time, it precludes long-windedness. As speaker you must stick to the essentials.

A debate usually has four rounds. The first round sets out the positions, and both parties state their view. The second round is devoted mostly to retort. During the third round repartees are freely exchanged and in the fourth round both parties formulate their conclusion. The chair keeps track of the time and signals the speaker halfway his/her turn. The scheme is as follows:

1. For	position	2 min.
Against		2 min.
2. For	defence	2 min.
Against		2 min.
3. Free debate		4 min.
4. Against	conclusion	2 min.
For		2 min.

The proponents end the debate; they have the last word. This is meant to compensate for the disadvantage of having to defend a thesis, while opponents only need to criticise. Nothing is easier than mere criticism. During the free debate anyone who wants to speak can rise to take the floor. The chairperson can summon a speaker to conclude his address. The public, too, can react. If participants are more accustomed to debating one can opt for a less restrictive scheme.

Thesis and explanation

To delineate and focus the discussion the debate turns on a posed thesis. This forces you to take a position and justify it. A good debating thesis must meet certain conditions: it must get at the essence of an issue, it should be readily understood and 'debatable', that is, it must be possible to argue for and against it. There are different kinds of thesis. The simplest of these is the *value* thesis, which takes the form of: X is good, equitable, desirable (or, bad, unjust, undesirable), or X is more important (better, worse) than Y. For example: 'replacement of physicians by nurses is undesirable.' Another kind of thesis is the *policy* thesis. This would be a statement like: the organisation must rescind its current policy X and replace it with the new policy Y. Or, more tersely, Organisation O must do Y. Examples: 'The organisation must reward its employees with profit-sharing', 'The client should have the care he/she wants'.

The thesis should be as concrete as possible, for instance by formulating it as a policy proposal or an instruction for action. In a university community we were asked to arrange an open discussion on some moot points within the department. The issues to be discussed emerged in the preliminary talks and were formulated in theses that could be topics for debate. A succession of brief debates were held, after which a plenary discussion ensued. One of the theses was:

> Faculty researchers should not succumb to the attractions of externally financed applied research, but should primarily focus on government-funded pure research.

The first part of this policy thesis is formulated negatively. It is risky to leave it at that, even though the basic problem is named. But it is not yet clear what one actually supports. In the second part this is spelled out. To clarify the exact significance and relevance of the thesis (why is this mooted?) it is advisable to add a brief explanation. In this case the following was provided:

> Third-party funding is sometimes called industrial prostitution of academic research. On the one hand this is detrimental to the purely scientific effort. On the other hand many hold that third-party financial inputs are needed because good research is costly, so that funding provided by industry cannot be done without. While government funds (second-party funding) are diminishing we can no longer meet our own standards for quality research. At the same time these standards are under pressure because scientists can strut about with commissions received from well-known companies.

The trick is to formulate a thesis as simply as possible. This is never completely successful. Always, there is room for interpretation and specific accentuation. The phrase 'should primarily focus' above can mean all sorts of things. This is true for other concepts as well. The person who opens the debate has an important advantage in that he/she, as first speaker, can interpret the concepts. The accents placed at that moment determine much of the ensuing debate. In this case, for example, you can focus the thesis on the words: 'faculty researchers'. In doing so you direct attention away from official department policy and towards the personal inclinations of individual researchers. This is one way of pre-empting the opponents' preparations focused on department policy.

This advantage, where the proponents can interpret the thesis to suit, is a counterweight to the relatively simpler task the opponents have. They need not defend

a thesis, all they have to do is demonstrate that the defendants' contributions cut no ice. It is important that this specific task assigned to opponents is clear in advance. It is the only way to ensure that the major arguments will surface. Too often, opponents tend to formulate and defend a thesis of their own, with the consequent danger that two arguments are pursued simultaneously, never touching each other. The opponents could for example formulate: 'Pure research should be subservient to contract research'. It is doubtful, however, whether this is in true opposition to the first thesis. You run the risk that the two parties defend their own position without refuting the other.

Preparation and time-out

As mentioned, we divide the debaters into two parties at random, independent of their own views on the thesis. In a small group a few people are assigned the role of jury. For larger groups a series of theses can be formulated and more debates held in succession. During the debate on one thesis the proponents and opponents of another thesis can act as jury and audience.

Prior to commencement of the debate the parties are given about fifteen minutes to prepare themselves. The brevity of this period enhances creativity and forces the group to get to the root of the matter quickly. To order the arguments they can peg them in terms of the so-called 'standard issues':

- What are the advantages of implementing the thesis?
- What are its disadvantages?
- Are these strengths and weaknesses important?
- Do the strengths outweigh the weaknesses?
- Does the thesis solve the problem noted?
- Are there better ways to solve the problem?
- To what extent can the thesis be put to work?

In the preparation period the groups also designate their spokespersons if there are more people in the group than rounds of debate. The idea is that a maximum number of people get to speak in the debate. Further, in this preparatory phase it is useful to remind each other of some important speaking skills, such as 'restrict the number of arguments' or 'mix logic and sentiment'.

As the pace is high, both in preparing and conducting a debate, which may detract from quality, everyone has the right to request one 'time-out'. Especially prior to and after the third round (free debate) this can be helpful. In the first two rounds the respective positions have become clear, and the third round is the last opportunity to advance new arguments. After the third round the parties must address themselves to formulating a convincing conclusion. The preceding must all be swept together and placed in a convincing sequence. As facilitator, too, you can call time-outs to have people pause and consider the shifts that occurred in their successive steps of thought. This helps to prise participants away from the battle and to point them to the development of their own thinking. Such development does occur, and quite readily so. It often happens that people who are asked to defend a (to them) unsympathetic position soon gain more affinity with it. In the pressure cooker of a debate thoughts can realign very quickly. After all, most thinking is exactly that: a change of thought.

Jury and audience

The jury proclaims the winning party in terms of the following criteria:

a. Refutation of the opposing arguments;
b. Eloquence, humour, non-verbal presentation.

Because refutation of someone else's arguments counts heavily, it is not permitted to introduce new arguments in the last round. This final phase is meant to sum up the most important (unrefuted) arguments and to draw a conclusion on the basis of them. Refutation of arguments is a major guide to ensure that the debate is a genuine, substantial confrontation. There is the constant danger that two discourses never engage each other. After the debate the jury retreats a few minutes to decide on the winner and finally announces and motivates its verdict.

It may be of interest to involve the audience in the debate, for example by asking in advance what they believe to be the major arguments for or against. During the debate they can make their approval or disapproval known (applauding, heckling). The facilitator might, during the free debating phase offer the audience the opportunity to pose (critical) questions to both parties. All of these means contribute to the creation of a public space where people together seek out, in Socratic terms, what the good life entails and what is needed to achieve it.

Chapter IV A tale of two stories (Grammar)

Words that work

Birth flings us into the world, and from the midst of things (*in medias res*) death wrenches us away. The human condition is to be always 'in between'. To see meaning and significance in this situation people need a sense of coherence and direction. This is why they – often unconsciously – assume a 'beginning' and an 'end' so that a story can be told. This story is not limited to the here and now, the brief moment in our existence that can be held in purview. It embraces the whole, what went before and what comes after, whence it came and whither it will go. It offers a context that holds the little stories together, a framework for all the daily cares and the multitude of experiences. The big story is a need to make existence understandable and to be at the helm of it. Except in literature however these tales are seldom told and rarely put in writing. Concern with them is most unlikely in organisations, which is why organisations so often lack coherence and direction, meaning and significance, comprehensibility and motivation.

Organisations do produce a lot of little stories: letters, reports, memoranda, minutes, policy proposals, anything from jotted notes to lengthy brochures. Most of them are business-like, meant to brief others. Often they are also intended to win others over to a point of view, to convince them of an idea or to interest them in something advantageous. But organisations, too, require a bigger story. Texts are needed to motivate and inspire personnel, like a policy statement of the organisation, its background and its future aspirations.

Many of those texts are hopelessly boring. To read them is a chore if not almost torture. It is as if we enter a grey neighbourhood devoid of hope, visiting someone at his colourless tenement who tires us with pale and joyless notions, words without taste or tinge. Just read the text below, taken from a health-care institution's information booklet.

> Ours is a reliable institution. In addition, there must always be alertness for renewal and improvement of our services. In this, the client's wishes determine the direction of change. Everything changes; everything can be done better. This is the basic principle of our organisation. To stay on top you must move ahead rather than stand still.

It is not likely that the personnel of this organisation feel greatly inspired by this text, or are able to see it as portraying the meaning of their work. However good the writer's intentions – be it to clarify the business plan or to present a mission – the formulation is powerless, without 'soul'. There is nothing original in it; it does not rise above a succession of triteness and managers' jargon. One description of an organisation is: 'a legitimate coalition around an idea'. Well, if these are the ideas that must reflect the legitimacy, the *raison d'être*, the bigger story of this organisation, things are not looking well. Would you go all out in support of a pale, superficial ideal like that?

Compare this to the next fragment, taken from the same booklet, where a poet (Justus van Oel) introduces health care institutions.

> Does the defenceless still have value? These are breathless years in a nation that, with the stock market index as lodestar, sees a happy harvest growing on the trees. An army of pickers, their eyes fixed ahead, advancing towards the horizon. No time for those who linger. Hurry. Today seems hardly to exist. The sun has scarcely risen and already we dream of tomorrow. A moment unused is a moment lost, a resting spell is a delay. The conquerors move on, and those too weak to march, alive but lagging, are stranded in yesterday. Prisoners of a time abandoned by others.

The note sounded here is in a different key. It is clearly not the voice of the manager. This is an observer of culture who, with a few strokes of the pen, sketches the essence of our time. The language is alive with variety and rhythm. And full of imagery, pictures that make us uneasy. There is indignation about the fate of those who lag behind, the helpless and the weak who fall victim to the breathless tempo of the pace-setters. There is no time to waste on the tardy among us, they delay the fortune seekers who are always in a rush and consider every unused moment as time lost. The text is an accusation: How could we let this happen? It is a call, too: let us fight this with all our strength. For a health-care institution this is a powerful justification for its being. The text addresses us with an appeal to underwrite its *raison d'être,* to support the ideal, to really help bring it about. These are words that work, this is a much bigger story.

Grammar is the art of writing, of finding words that work, of arresting ideas such that they have impact. It is also the skill of correct use of language, proper spelling and clear sentence construction – what we usually refer to as 'grammar'. Actually, it is much more than that. *Gramma* literally means carving, inscription. Originally letters were carved in stone, wax or some other material. Words, too, can leave a groove, their 'impact' can leave an 'impression' on our mind. Words become inscribed in our memory when they are charged with power and expression.

Not every text lends itself for poetic power of expression. Some texts simply have to be dry and business-like – even if many of them would gain greater impact if they were a little more colourful. Nevertheless, the dry, business-like text shares an important feature with poetic texts: both impress us when they seem to cut through to the essence of the matter at hand, and they do so when they afford a glimpse of the 'big' story in our 'little' story. This is exactly where the two text fragments quoted above are different. In the first fragment we meet only a little story, the narrow concerns of a manager in his attempt to point people in the same direction. In the second fragment we meet a care far more sensitive, richer, more intimate and simultaneously more enveloping, rising far above the own organisation. The poet situates the work of the health-care institution in the context of a bigger story. He creates a panoramic view, he makes you aware of how things weave together. He inspires, touches you to the quick by articulating the organisation's initial intent and future aspirations. He lights a path, he offers an inspiring perspective for action.

In this chapter we present a number of ways to find words that work, words that create space and freedom because they picture the direction we can give to the stories we live. We seek out the essential, the bigger story in the vortex of chance and little stories. As in the two earlier chapters on dialectic and rhetoric, we start with a case again.

Case: How can people be led to learn?

A text never emerges out of nowhere. A lot of thinking and conversation come first. Below we describe this process, the run-up to writing a text that would reveal something of the organisation's bigger story. In this case we first conversed about the theme to be described, a dialogue of roughly an hour's duration. Next the participants engaged in an exercise taken from the classical body of thought: a 'consult' with our 'inner guide', our personification of vision and authority. After that they wrote a special kind of text, an editorial. The daily newspapers carry such texts, explicitly meant to point a direction, to show relationships and to remind readers of this or that basic issue, to paint the larger picture.

The discussion began with a concrete case presented by one of the participants, Monica. As trainer in a large institution she had recently had an experience that she wished to investigate with the other participants. The context was a programme in management skills for managers in agriculture, extending over a number of days. For the evening of the first day she had invited someone to speak on developments in the sector. It had been a stimulating, but somewhat wandering story about the significance of organised interest groups, the relation between various administrative levels, a number of social trends and a few more items. The idea was that the speaker would subsequently start a discussion with the people taking the course. But that part did not go very well. The trainees did not interact; they listened poorly, two or three dominating participants did the talking and the rest were silent, and the speaker hopped from one topic to the next without structuring the discussion much. Monica began to feel uncomfortable. Should she interfere? She hesitated, at some points she wanted to jump in, but postponed it because she did not want to edge out the speaker. In the end she had remained in the background throughout the discussion. This left her with ambiguous feelings. In retrospect, would it not have been better to intervene after all? And if so, just exactly how?

To get clarity on the situation we asked a number of questions. How did the two earlier parts of the day go? What was the skills level of the participants? What was the programme meant to achieve? Did the speaker know about those objectives? Had they been discussed with him beforehand? How much experience did Monica have with the trainees? What kept her from intervening? And so on. Finally we also asked what might be the essence of what she thought we should investigate. Monica thought about this and formulated the following question: How can people be led to learn? This became the issue to be investigated.

Next we put ourselves in her place. What would we have thought, felt and done, and why? And what would that mean for the issue at hand? Some said that they would have intervened by summarising the points raised, by clarifying the main thread, by giving the hitherto silent the floor, by acting as intermediary between speaker and group. They felt that people have a chance to learn only if you structure both the theme and the process. Others disagreed; they would not have acted until the end of the evening or the next morning. Have the group reflect on the way the discussion went and whether they learned anything from it. According to them people will learn only if you make them aware of their own learning process, and let them take responsibility for it. Still others would have suggested a time-out halfway during the discussion, to take stock of how things were going. You only learn when you feel reasonably happy. And if you, as trainer, sit there with clenched fists, you can bet that part of your audience is not feeling all that happy either.

Thus an array of opinions, reasons and views were put forward. We exchanged, compared and criticised, we tested and weighed in an attempt to become clear on what was at the bottom of this. At the end of the discussion we had collected an

interesting sampling of notions about learning, and a number of sharper and profounder questions than at the start (like the question about proper timing for intervention and the question of the correct proportion between your personal traits and your effectiveness as leader) and some essential values: daring to be unsure of yourself, having the courage to intervene even if you don't quite know what other tack to take, having concern for your group, relinquishing the safety of non-committal. At this point we ended the dialogue.

The inner pilot

The question now was how to make the bigger story visible. How can we recount the analysis in this discussion in a way that speaks of vision, a broader, recognisable landscape to inspire readers, to give them orientation and direction? It sounds like a difficult assignment. And yet, we encounter such texts every day. Take newspaper editorials for instance. In them, editors write with the express purpose of guiding the reading public. Ideally, they sketch a well-balanced perspective on a current political or social issue and seek to do justice to diverse interests, approaches and standards. Their aim is to inform the public on a matter of general interest rather than pursuit of self-interest. A good editorial refuses to get drawn into heated polemics over a concrete issue. The editors see it as their task to let the main line and the larger totality stand out from the confusing abundance of detail. One needs a certain frame of mind to write this kind of commentary. You need to reckon simultaneously with a plurality of rivalling views. You must be very clear on how much weight should be given to this and to that. A successful editorial presents 'the measure of things' that should be kept in mind.

One time-honoured way of creating scope to gain perspective on the measure of things is to let your imagination picture an insightful and authoritative person, and to look at things as he or she would. All of us know of people who would fit the bill. Perhaps a well-known political person (Mandela, Martin Luther King), perhaps simply mum or dad, a historical figure or some self-created personage. It doesn't matter who or what, for in fact they are in every case projections of your 'better self'. The point is that you learn to tune in to this image of a broad-minded, big-hearted person with tangible authority.

In the philosophical schools of antiquity this was one of the basic exercises. Socrates, we are told, would frequently pause to retreat into his innermost self. His own explanation was that at those moments he was in touch with his *daimonion*, his 'divine mark' or 'spiritual guide'. The Stoics spoke of a *hegemonikon*, an 'inner pilot'. Aristotle characterised him as *phronimos*, a person endowed with practical wisdom. These are varied though related ways of personifying the *logos*.

In our day and age we are more familiar with an impersonal form of the *logos*, namely 'conscience', literally that which you know together (*con-scientia*). Although our conscientious weighing is personal and individual, the principles supplied in our conscience belong to a communal knowing, a *sensus communis* as Immanuel Kant called it. What the term 'conscience' does not make clear, which the image of the inner pilot or of the person with practical wisdom does, is that determining the right way of thinking is not only a matter of insight, for example into the interests at stake, but also and especially a matter of personal attitude. The inner pilot does not just address my mental faculty or argumentative skill, but equally my attitude, the quality of my involvement, the nature of my bond with the issue and with the people who act in it. This is why Socrates tuned in to a person rather than an abstract concept or universal maxim (like Kant's categorical imperative).

In fact, the imagined pilot does not always tell you what to do or not to do. He is no oracle or soothsayer. The pilot shows an attitude, a way of being that evinces wisdom, balance and freedom. In the above discussion, after the dialogue ended, we took time to pause, like Socrates, to reflect on ourselves and put the issue to our own 'guiding light'. First everyone wrote out their 'inner conversation' and listed the underlying principles thus emerging. Those were given the form of an editorial. We present some brief samples.

Editorial comment

One of the participants had chosen his uncle as 'pilot'. Let us call them Job and uncle Theo. Job, putting himself in Monica's position, presented Theo with the problem. His inner conversation went like this:

J. How do you get people to learn?
T. Odd question. People always learn. You don't need to get them to do it. I guess your question is: How do you get people to learn what you want them to learn?
J. That's right. That's what I was hired for.
T. You don't say.
J. Sure. That's why we get students, so they learn something from us.
T. (Silence) I thought people came to you for quite different reasons.
J. What kind of reasons, then?
T. To learn to know themselves, and others, and the world around them […].

These few sentences already show a confrontation between differing views on schooling. Job's inner guide challenges him, sympathetically but acutely. From the start Theo places Job's questions and remarks in another, broader perspective. This made Job aware of certain principles. He formulated them as follows:

- It is not I, as teacher or trainer, who determines what people should learn. That's up to them.
- People are always already learning. Except they do not always know that they learn, what they learn and how they learn.
- To have people learn your most important task as trainer is not to get in the way.

Job put these principles in an editorial form, meant for the newsletter of his organisation. The heading and the first few sentences went like this:

> *Learning: don't get in the way*
> People can't leave off learning. But they are not always aware that, what and how they learn. It is up to us, trainers, to make this clear. That is not always easy. Take the following case…

The headline is a compact statement of what Job sees as the greatest error you, as trainer, should seek to avoid. The compact formulation makes it function like a guide post. The first sentence is the so-called topical sentence, the sentence containing the *topos*, the 'commonplace' shared by all, a general truism from which all else follows (see Ch. III, 'Aspects of method'). In tandem with the headline it conjures up the big story, a view on learning, a picture of what is the intent in the work of trainers and

advisers. Monica's case has become an illustration of this larger story. This story does not only point the direction that answering the questions should take; it also issues a personal appeal to Monica, Job and the other colleagues to confront the question of learning and the problems in the case with the broad mind and the mature attitude of the inner pilot, no matter how difficult this may sometimes be.

We present a second example of an inner dialogue and an 'editorial' inspired by it. It is interesting to see how, in spite of differences in images and the formulation of the bigger story, the aura of space and maturity is very much the same. Participant Evert had evoked for himself the image of his former guitar teacher, Frederico Marincola. This was a man with definite views on learning music: pleasure comes first, the music next, and technique comes last. Evert's inner talk with Frederico about the case and the inquiry proceeded like this:

E: Frederico, you teach people to play the guitar. I teach people to work in organisations. What would you do if you noticed that they didn't listen to each other?

F: People have to listen to themselves first, otherwise they don't even hear their own music. That's a problem sometimes, if they lack technique. They'll unconsciously start to play louder, louder than you, as conductor, want. I can correct them, but that makes them insecure. If they don't know their own part they don't even dare to listen.

E: So the loudness comes from uncertainty! To me it sounds rather cocksure.

F: Yes, but they can't step away from it, can't keep a kind of distance.

E: I recognise that. But the others start complaining or feel left out, or don't dare to resist it, or become lazy.

F: That last point is important. I go for the others, let them show or develop pleasure in their part of the composition. When the loud ones get that, they too will start to listen to their own ability or inability.

E: Would you show me?

F: Get your guitar. We'll play a Carulli duet. Just start with the first part; I'll join in and follow. Don't be afraid to go wrong, we'll do alright together.

E: Fine.

F: Look. Here you worked very hard to play this fast passage properly. You keep speeding up, the joy is gone. I hear you alright! And you are right! But music it is not.

E: So I was making noise!

F: Yes. Unawares. No problem. Obviously you are not sure of yourself, so you work harder. But you only get to making music once you can leave that behind you. Take your distance. Listen to yourself and to my guitar. Slow down where it gets difficult. I'll follow. And consider: Why are you insecure? What are you uncertain about? What undermines your confidence?

E: The fact that you are there. The little time we have. Afraid that I don't live up to expectations after all these years of guitar lessons.

F: Exactly, outside standards. Something comes between you and the music. Or something pulls you away from it.

Here too there is confrontation, whereby Evert is challenged to a broader perspective. This inner conversation, too, does not only point the direction where a solution should be sought, it also appeals to Evert and the others to meet the issue in Monica's case with a broader view. Evert formulated Frederico's underlying principles:

- Seeing the ‘why’ of behaviour is better than immediate correction.
- Realise that what needs to be learned may be quite different from what you assume.
- To have people learn you must tempt them, let it be fun.
- The best way to have people learn is to go about it together.

Evert put this in an ‘editorial’ the first lines of which read:

> *To be or seem to be*
> When they start out, students of music think that the important thing is to master difficult passages. But their teacher soon explains to them that the important thing is to master your uncertainty. The music is sure to follow.

Once again the heading is a terse summation, an anchor for memory. The first sentence – the topical sentence – describes a typical, readily recognised misunderstanding among music students. The second sentence takes issue with it. The rest of the argument will be about these oppositions; between loudness and listening, between performing and tempting. Such images from the little story are reflections of a bigger story, about the way people learn. Evert chooses to follow his inner dialogue and formulates his editorial in terms of a metaphor. The power of the metaphor is the substitution: the better you can see yourself in the situation sketched by the metaphor, the more effective that metaphor will be.

Realism and imagination

The big story exhibits wisdom and prudence by situating things between a beginning and an end. This requires a combination of realism and imagination. People in organisations generally prefer to be realistic; they want reliable facts, figures and forecasts. To interpret and assess these correctly, however, you need imagination as well. The one cannot do without the other. Facts as such are mute. For that reason Aristotle claimed that literature is of greater value than historiography. For, he said, the historian only recounts what happened, what the facts were. In contrast, the fiction writer links fact and essence. It is only then that the true nature of reality lights up and facts gain structure and meaning. The writer’s imagination creates wisdom because he presents the essence and the whole, the core of the matter and the comprehensive interpretative frame.[xviii]

Contemporary poet and scientist Rutger Kopland speaks in similar vein.[xix] In one of his essays he describes his discovery that the difference between science and poetry is quite unlike he assumed. Previously he always thought that science is objective and deals with fact, while poetry is subjective and proceeds from imagination. In the course of his own scientific research however he began to understand that both science and poetry originate in questions about facts. Except that questions of fact can be asked in vastly different ways. And the questions asked determine what reality will reveal. His own research was in medical science. Until then it had seemed to him comparable to knowledge of an engine, a machine, where the construction dictates the kind of repairs required. But he discovered something entirely different:

> I was confronted with an unknown machine. Pure observation yielded no knowledge of its inner workings. One needs to ask questions for that. It may

sound dramatic, but it changed my view on the world. Maybe I should say that it awakened a dormant world view, namely, that all we know about reality is due to our questions and not because nature is eager to show itself in its 'true from'. The belief I was brought up with – the human machine – paled. What we know about the human being is due to generations of medics who questioned the human organism *as if* it was a machine.

That's when I started to write a different kind of poetry. Also, it seemed like I was 'permitted' to poetise more. Now that the grip of form had weakened, the notion that science dealt with the 'existing' objective world and poetry with the 'non-existing' subjective world had faded away, space opened up in me to recognise the poetic drive as no less legitimate than the scientific, and to give each an equal chance. I began to see that my tables and graphs were not merely products of reality. Without my questions, without the methods of observation and analysis they would not be. About poems I understood better that they were not only products of the imagination. Without some reference to objective reality, without traditional compositional rules, too, they would be inaccessible for others, even for me; protocols of incomprehensible daydreams. I wrote a thesis and, simultaneously, a volume of poetry of which one of the first poems goes like this:

Rowans	Lijsterbessen
Poetic composition consists	De dichtkunst beoefenen is
in noting most meticulously	met de grootst mogelijke zorgvuldigheid
for example that	constateren dat bijvoorbeeld
in the early morning	in de vroege morgen
rowans are decked with a thousand tears	de lijsterbessen duizend tranen dragen
like a childhood drawing	als een tekening uit de kindertijd
very red and very many.	zo rood en zo veel.

Aspects of method

Anecdote

Does not this poetic description of rowans lead us far astray from the daily practice of organisations? It seems farther than it is. One way of making the bigger story visible, other than the editorial, is to tell a little story 'most meticulously'. Kopland's precise description of this one observation, that 'rowans are decked with a thousand tears', reveals a fact that, small as it is, can fill existence with meaning. It pictures an experience that rises above all our daily needs, a disinterested enjoyment, as Kant said. It is this disinterest that evokes emotion, its being untouched by our non-stop preoccupation with this or that advantage or disadvantage, apart from and transcending it. In this way a higher value can become clear, a higher purpose, the initial stake. Disinterest allows us to step outside of our fixed, limited frameworks; it creates room.

Let us look at an example of organisational practice. In one of the conversations where we analysed how you can have people learn, how you introduce change in a person's behaviour, a participant offered the following:

> I used to be a very proper boy, even as a student. Then the years of student revolt at the end of the sixties caused me not only to change my views but also my appearance. An important part of the change was my resolve, based on conviction, never again to wear a necktie. Some ten years later, when I had meanwhile joined a brass band, came the first time that I was permitted to wear the uniform in public. I donned my uniform at home, without the necktie of course, though I did bring it with me to the club house. The conductor pointed out that I should wear the tie. I replied that this was against my principles. Then he said: 'Seems to me that you should leave your principles at home.' Crucial, however, was my feeling that he treated me with respect. So, without grumbling I put on my necktie and joined the band's march down the road.

What happened here is something similar to Kopland's poem. The storyteller described an anecdote, a little story, loaded with great implications for himself: a belief long cherished, part of his very self, was offhandedly put aside. The conductor changed his behaviour, let him learn something by somehow transcending the usual focus of his interests and by breaking through his normal frame of reference. Confronting the conductor he could have insisted, could have claimed dispensation, could have left the band etc. He did nothing of the kind. Was this because he carefully weighed pros and cons, the fact that playing in the brass band meant more to him than his principles? No, that is only part of it. Something else happened, something of a different order altogether. It is not easy to say what this was; purpose of the discussion was precisely to inquire into that. At any rate, it had to do with the fact that he felt treated with respect. The meticulous description of this little fact had a broad bearing and an almost poetic impact, not only for himself but also for the others in the discussion. We noted the same phenomenon in Monica's story. Meticulous description alone can be enough to make a little story reflect the big story.

It is not always possible to put the big story into words. Often, the story is suggested rather than made explicit; a rough sketch of contours rather than finely drawn details. There are many ways of evoking the contours of a bigger story. It can be done with brief fragments of text, for example, or with picture material (as we often see in annual reports). We describe some less frequently used approaches, the summary of arguments, the essay and the preface respectively.

Summary of arguments

An example of a summary of arguments is this. In a transport company we had a Socratic dialogue with a management group. The subject was 'integrity', one of the company's four core values. A participant wrote the report presented below. The intention was to inform those who had not attended the dialogue such that they could continue the exchange of thoughts in their own setting.

> These are fascinating days. Certainties lose their self-evidence, structures crumble, customs fade. To some this is threatening; others see opportunities. Either way, there is sufficient reason to get together to consider what we want to guide us. What are our guiding values or, maybe better, our 'core values'?
>
> As we know, a few years ago the company opted for four core values, one of which was 'integrity'. 'Nice big word', you might say. 'Wouldn't hurt if they explain what they mean here.' Alas, explaining the word is not of much help.

> You have to find out for yourself. We did. We spent two Socratic dialogues on it, helped by a concrete example. And one thing is clear: it proved more complex than we had envisioned.
>
> What do you think of when you hear the word 'integrity'? We thought of matters like honesty, respect, upholding norms and values independent of situations. That sounds simple. But somebody came with an example; we had received a governmental subsidy that, strictly speaking, we had no right to. Should we cash in, or inform the donor of the error? Does integrity imply that you provide all relevant information to a business relation, even if this is not (yet) requested?
>
> Obviously, there is a dilemma here; you have to choose, but every choice has its disadvantages. In the dialogue we noted, though, that it is quite a job just to get the dilemma straight. Some said: the dilemma is, we badly need the money, but we run the risk that it will be known that we did not really have any right to it. Others said: the dilemma is that we need the money but we don't want it if we haven't earned it. In the first case the solution would be to limit the (possible) negative consequences: you want the money but not the consequences. In the second case the consequences are not the issue, the principle is. You do accept the money because you need it, but not at the cost of the principle of 'pay must be earned'. To solve the dilemma a choice must be made between a need and a principle.
>
> The dialogue taught us that you cannot use 'integrity' like a pencil to draw the line between 'this is permissible, that is not'. Integrity, we think, can be ascribed to a person when he weighs matters and – together with colleagues and directors – considers whether he can justify a given choice or act for himself and for the company.

This is a two-pronged story. It introduces the reader, in this case members of the organisation, to a way of thinking about integrity, either alone or with colleagues. At the same time a perspective on integrity is presented, in which justification relative to oneself, colleagues and the company as a whole is put centre stage. The report's brief summary of the arguments and positions in the dialogue is an invitation to continue the inquiry and to take a stance. This is part of the view on integrity: to render account of yourself.

Essay

A second approach to putting the big story into words is the essay. The essay shares a number of characteristics with editorials, anecdotes and summaries of arguments. It distinguishes itself because it is first of all an exercise in dialogue with yourself, with the other in you, with the many others whose familiar views reverberate in your thoughts. In an essay you seek to determine the value of such views. Usually, the subject is an issue of importance where opposed views are presented, as for example the question how you can get people to learn or what integrity may mean. With the help of arguments, angles of approach and essences from various views, a plurality of bigger stories can be sketched or compared. This is what the essayist does. Less restricted in length, an essay is more suitable for careful inspection of a view than an editorial, an anecdote or an summary of arguments. In an essay you can develop your train of thought more extensively.

The structure is as follows. The author first introduces a generally accepted point of view and indicates its strengths. Next, he gradually moves towards a turn in

the argument, and ends with the conclusion that the accepted view is not valid, or only partially so. In the turn the author describes what he finds in himself and others in the way of thoughts and considerations; he acts as chronicler of what is. 'I hear this, but there is that, too, and we should not neglect….' These are personal observations, so that an essay is a personal document. This is reinforced by the personal selection of the authors, thinkers, persons with vision and authority with whom the writer is willing to enter into dialogue.

Michel de Montaigne was a grand master of the essay. Between 1572 and 1592 he wrote more than a hundred of them. They are polished reports of dialogues with himself, his friends and authors in the classical tradition. In one of his essays he explored a line of thought that in the examples described above plays a role as well: should you be a friend to your students in order to have them learn? Should you aim at friendship with your business partners? Or even: should a father be his child's best friend? According to Aristotle friendship is the highest form of inter-human relations. However, Montaigne asked himself, is friendship always possible? For example, is the ideal relationship between a father and his child one of friendship? When we look carefully we find that this is not the case. He offers the following reflections:

> Respect, that is what a child has for its father. Friendship is nurtured in the exchange of confidences which, where inequality is insurmountable, as between fathers and children, cannot occur and would otherwise collide with their natural obligations. Fathers cannot display before their children their secret thoughts, so that no inappropriate intimacy would arise, and also children cannot chide or correct their fathers, which is a most outstanding service among friends. There have been peoples where custom let children kill their fathers, and others where fathers commonly killed their children to prevent their rivalling each other, and because by nature the one depends on the fall of the other. Philosophers there were who despised the natural bond of blood, as Aristippus who, when someone insisted that it behoved him to show a fondness for his children because they once proceeded from him, he commenced to spit, saying that this spit, too, proceeded from him and that lice and worms proceed from us as well. And that other, whom Plutarch would move to reconcile with his sibling, replied: 'I do not esteem him more because he emerged from the same hole.' Most assuredly, 'brother' is a beautiful name and filled with depths of ardour. And this is why we, he and I, made of our bond a brotherhood. But when intermingled with material interests, the inheritance, and the truth that riches for one implies destitution for the other, the brother bond clouds and weakens mightily. When brothers must needs better themselves by the same path and at equal pace, frequent collisions and frictions are unavoidable. Moreover, why should this congeniality and involvement, fertile soil for perfect friendships, be found among relatives? A father and a son can differ vastly in character, no less can brothers. 'He is my son, or my kinsman, but he is a bore, a rogue, or a fool.' Further, to the measure that these friendships are laid upon us by duty and natural ties, our free will, and the personal choices inscribed in it, will receive less satisfaction. Yet nothing is more entirely a personal choice of the free will than congeniality and friendship are. This is not to say that I, among my kin, experienced less than the full measure of congeniality, since mine was the best father that ever was, and the most understanding, even when very old, and I

> was born into a clan renowned as exemplary for its brotherly harmony from one generation to the next.[xx]

Montaigne dissects the concept of 'friendship' in a way that makes very clear what it is and what it is not. The fragment displays a number of typical essay characteristics that enable him to link a little story, such as a case or anecdote, to the bigger story, friendship.

First, an essay is a personal reflection. Montaigne writes about himself, his own circumstances and his own thoughts. At the end of the quotation he indicates that he found nothing wanting in the relationship with his father. It was this best and most understanding father who, while he was pondering the relationship, led him to the conclusion that this relationship should not be viewed as one of friendship. Friendship is an expression of free will, and that is incompatible with 'natural obligation'. This is the argument that ultimately carries the greatest weight – to Montaigne it is the principle of friendship. It is not an abstract insight, however. It is an insight tested by personal experience. Montaigne inquires what friendship means in his own life and his own actions.

A second characteristic is that the essay begins with an authoritative view. He does not want to deal with some incidental, 'original' observation; he wants to examine conceptions that have authority. In this case it is Aristotle's view on friendship.

A third trait is that an essay is limited in scope. No matter how positive in tone, an essay is modest in its claims. It is not a scientific theory, proceeding from a single perspective, comprehensive and well rounded. No, it is an individual exercise based on a simple approach: reflect, analyse, take a position. It is precisely this approach, if done properly, that has far greater impact, a deeper 'carving' than the impersonal, pseudo-objective or pseudo-scientific style donned by many text-writers in organisations.

Preface

Another way to effect a linkage with a bigger story is to write a preface. 'Nothing to it', we may think. The director asks a staff member to add a preface to the annual report. 'You know, something catchy.' And if this employee is schooled in this, he knows the technique of pulling the reader in: 'You and I usually want to be well informed about the quality of the products and services we want to procure.' This sentence is taken from the preface of a authoritative report on quality management in higher education. Hardly brilliant, but it is about 'You and I'.

We are not after this kind of preface. Suppose that Monica, the trainer in the case discussed earlier, writes a report for her institution in which she unfolds a perspective on learning. Suppose her title is: 'Don't get in the way'. Now, what could she put in the preface? Certainly nothing like 'You and I regularly experience that…. Accordingly, you should not get in the way of the trainees.' Her preface should not have the effect that colleagues will merely follow her conclusion or uncritically adopt her views. She does not want her report to be read as a final result; she wants readers to go through the process of thinking for themselves. That is what the preface should be about, about doing your own thinking.

A preface is an important instrument to draw the reader into the writer's world of thought. Just as in the inquiry we suspend our judgement and imagine ourselves in the place of the presenter, so also the preface is an appeal to the reader to be receptive for what follows. In the preface the author indicates how he would have his story read.

In this he plays a double game. The preface is simultaneously both part of and not part of the argument. It is not the actual discourse, but at the same time it would lead the reader – before the story starts – to the essential. With some exaggeration: the preface tells the real story; the rest is explanation.

One philosopher who mastered this playing with prefaces and exploited it with finesse was Friedrich Nietzsche. Between 1885 and 1887 he provided his published works, that until then had hardly caused a stir, with new prefaces. In them he laid down in sharp words and a compelling key what was at stake in the book and – more generally – how he wanted to be read. It is easy to shrug them off: the lonely, misunderstood genius in search of readers and interpreters. That may be so. Philosophically it is nonetheless interesting. Evidently the author's confidence was crumbling. Will his message be understood, radical as it is? Nietzsche feared that his new vision would be forced to fit old patterns of thought and their radical nature prevented from coming across. One way of keeping the reader from doing so is to describe the 'climate' in which the book emerged. The preface of *The gay science* starts as follows:

> This book may need more than one preface, and in the end there would still remain room for doubt whether anyone who had never lived through similar experiences could be brought closer to the experience of this book by means of prefaces. It seems to be written in the language of the wind that thaws ice and snow: high spirits, unrest, contradiction and April weather are present in it, and one is instantly reminded no less of the proximity of winter than of the triumph over the winter that is coming, must come, and perhaps has already come.

Even this was not enough for Nietzsche. He also wanted to confront the reader's expectation that the sequel would consist of general truths, abstract theories or naked facts. And he would liberate the reader from this expectation.

> We are not thinking frogs, nor objectifying and registering mechanisms with their innards removed: constantly, we have to give birth to our thoughts out of our pain and, like mothers, endow them with all we have of blood, heart, fire, pleasure, passion, agony, conscience, fate, and catastrophe. Life – that means for us constantly transforming all that we are into light and flame – also everything that wounds us; we simply can do no other.[xxi]

In this way the preface is an announcement of the big story that will come, tersely summarised in the thesis: life is continuous change of all that we are and all that overcomes us.

Nietzsche's prefaces are exceptionally strong magnifications for the genre, but this exaggerated enlargement does make their function clear. In practice we use a more modest or veiled form; a preface should liberate the reader from the chains of his customary thinking. We do this by naming his frame of reference and to show the difference between it and 'the spirit of the inquiry'. We want the reader to think along in this spirit rather than read in terms of a priori expectations, which from the outset would block understanding and appreciation of what is to follow.

An example from praxis, a much smaller story. There is a college with an office especially created to help students with personal problems. A project group prepared a report for this office, concerning objective results of the service offered. In

conversations the group noted that employees at this office had divergent associations with the concept of ‘result’. Some of these associations are certain to block correct understanding of the project group’s recommendations. This already came out during intermediate discussions. The project group wanted to counteract this by naming the major associations with ‘result’, and to explain the differences. The preface includes the following passage:

> The word ‘result’ comes from the Latin. *Re-saltare* means: jumping or bouncing back. A result is literally something that bounces back, what you get in return. Meant here is the echo, the sound that bounces back. The association with sound is mostly lost in English, although we do still say ‘the words struck a sympathetic chord, echoed or reverberated in his mind’. Other than that, echo has been generalised to ‘effect’. A result is the measurable effect of what I do.
>
> Is the result of our office identical with our production? No, there is a difference. Suppose we arrange to talk twice a year with any student whose study lag is greater than x credits. The production figure, so many talks, shows whether this is achieved. This is a measurable effect. But it is not the result. Purpose of our office is not to conduct interviews, that is merely a means. The purpose is to help reduce arrears. The envisioned result is: fewer (students with) study arrears. This is what we want to get in return. Subsequently this can be translated into concrete target figures – different from production figures. These will let you measure annually whether the envisioned result is attained.

This conceptual analysis of how ‘result’ should and should not be understood proved to work in practice. Colleagues found it illuminating in reading the report, even if the distinction remained troublesome. By announcing in the preface how the report should be read the project group was able to prevent that inappropriate expectations triggered by the word would obstruct proper understanding of the text.

Reading and examining a text

One way of placing things in a broader perspective, seldom used in organisations, is to read and examine together a text or a book. We present an example of how a readers’ group works and what the effect of it is on the participants. In a readers’ group, reading, writing and speaking merge beautifully. It is an effective instrument to clarify one’s own conceptual framework, to test it in comparison with that of others and to incorporate it in a big story.

The structure is like this. Every member of the group reads the text or the book in advance. After reading, all write a brief report, guided by questions such as:

- What do you consider to be the core message?
- Which is the crucial passage in each chapter?
- What do you appreciate about the text, which passages?
- Which parts do you find difficult to understand?
- What passages would you disagree with?
- What does the content mean for your daily activities?

The report helps to guide examination of the text, so that genuine inquiry can take place. An example.

In a small group we reviewed *Systems of survival; A dialogue on the moral foundations of commerce and politics* by Jane Jacobs.[xxii] In this book Jacobs explains that our society functions in terms of two contrasting moral systems. The differences between the two systems have to do with their origins; the one is derived from commerce, the other emerged in conquest and territorial control (politics). Their precepts are for the most part diametrically opposed, like 'be thrifty' (commerce) versus 'be magnanimous' (politics). Within either single system the precepts reinforce each other. Accordingly, it is risky to mix precepts from the two systems together. That is likely to result in hybrid monstrosities (corruption, cartel formation). Still, society needs both systems. Citizens should be aware of the origins and meaning of each.

Our small group met in the home of one of us. All had read it and prepared a reader's report. Now we could talk about it together. We began by indicating what occasioned our interest in the book. One person, for instance, put it this way:

> For many years I worked for the government. It is only in the last few years that I began to wonder what would actually be crucial objectives and values for civil servants. I notice that much damage is done because people would have government function like a company. That is why the book intrigued me. What are the essential differences between commerce and public governance?

Another formulated his interest as follows:

> I meet many managers. Often I ask myself how it is that good managers nevertheless make poor choices. It is not obvious how one should act in specific situations. Sometimes one must lie, and industriousness proves counter-productive. How can that be?

In spite of the name, a readers' group is primarily a conversation group: conversing together about a reading experience. But when we take each others' reading experiences seriously, we are led to reread, and to read better what the text says. Doing justice to the text is by itself an achievement. Too often our reading amounts to confirmation of what we knew already, certainly if we speed read. In those cases reading is work, while good reading is the opposite, namely letting the text work (on you). Good reading is a matter of ruminating, as it was literally called in the monastic tradition of the *lectio divina* (sacred reading). A powerful exercise in this is to rewrite significant passages. When you rewrite a text you linger over every word. And that is important: Why did the author choose this word rather than another? While copying like that you will find that a first comment readily flows from your pen, result of a personal *ruminatio*. An example.

> One of the surprising insights the book offered me is that we usually attribute 'robbery' to commerce. Jacobs however makes clear that it is just the morality of civil servants that is based on robbery and violence. She describes this most tellingly: 'All of these difficulties, that up to the present time are intertwined with public governance, can be reduced to making a living by taking whatever is ripe for the taking.'

The readers' group is a writing group as well. To do justice to an author's thoughts and point of view it is important that we can identify every step in the argument. That

is an essential part of the reader's report, an excellent aid to start ruminating. You are asked to follow the steps in the author's thinking by pointing out crucial passages, by terse restatement of the core message, by spelling out what is unclear and by formulating your points of criticism. Finally you are requested to effectuate a linkage between the big story in the book and your own story. A commentary by one of the participants:

> We were unaware of time. At the end the book had been discussed from cover to cover. We thoroughly enjoyed the conversation. At the same time we sharpened our assessment of the book: while the subtitle suggests an equilibrium between the moral system of commerce and that of politics, the book does not confirm this. The author sheds a far more positive light on commercial morality than she does on political morality.
>
> At the end we had discovered no general truth we could go to work with. There was no list of intentions or actions to be taken. Did we consider that unfortunate? No. A book of this kind provides no unambiguous solutions for practical problems. It is a thought experiment. We felt that the author went too far, but the voyage of discovery yielded many meaningful images. We noted that we had become more sensitive to the diversity and backgrounds of the moral concepts in our society. I will certainly read tomorrow's news differently.

If you let a good book work on you properly, you will read your own life story in a new light.

Reflective diary

A way of writing that we should not fail to mention here is the reflective diary (we return to it in the next chapter). The reflective diary is a way of creating a time out in the midst of an overwhelming dose of experiences. It does not have the function of a chronicle, fixing what happened in time. It has the function of reflection: how to name what happened. A reflective diary offers the opportunity to review the events of the day, to weigh them, analyse and interpret them. Writing forces you to 'slow' your thinking. It gives you the chance to test your actions in terms of the rules of life that you accept for yourself, to link those actions to your own bigger story, or to recall what that story was. Take for example Polish writer Witold Gombrowicz's diary. Towards the end of 1954 he put in the following entry:

> Monday. Yesterday in the Polish club…. Submerged in the pressing crowd I felt almost like the men who sailed with Odysseus: how many tempting sirens in these friendly faces gathered about me! Perhaps it would not have been difficult to embrace these people and to say: I am yours and always have been… Beware! Don't let sympathy bribe you! ….
> Be forever a stranger! Be difficult, suspicious, laconic, sharp and egocentric. Stand tall, boy! Don't let your kind domesticate you, tame you. Your place is not among them, but outside of them, you are like a children's skipping rope that you first swing out ahead of you in order to jump across it.[xxiii]

Gombrowicz reflects on the experience of being among fellow countrymen abroad. His relationship with Poles was ambivalent. His works were banned, but he knew

himself a Pole. Should he, in a foreign country, in a Polish club and surrounded by compatriots, believe himself to be among allies, or should he be suspicious and remind himself: 'Your place is outside of them'? He chose the latter.

We offer an example taken from our own coaching. A young marketing manager, after some successful projects in the Netherlands, was transferred, upon his own request, to a branch in Eastern Europe. He began his international career energetically. Before long, however, he ran into a number of barriers. He was not broken in and guided in his new job, although this had been expressly promised. His Anglo-Saxon chief and his Slavic colleagues evinced an attitude towards work quite unlike what he was used to. Also, the home front was under pressuredue to all the busy preoccupations, while he did want to reserve time for his wife, who was nearing the end of her pregnancy. Upon our recommendation he made time in between his activities to keep a reflective diary (two hours weekly). In it, he kept track of the more important developments. But he utilised the diary particularly to investigate his own attitude, in order to find anchorage for his work as manager in a stormy environment. Monthly, he sent us an update about which we exchanged thoughts per telephone and e-mail.

Writing did this for him:

> Writing, thinking from one word to the next, helps you to get a better picture of the underlying causes. And you enter into a positive spiral.
> Writing leads me into a more serious and profounder condition. I notice that in work situations I can activate a comparable thought condition, but you really need calmness to arrive at greater clarity of ideas.

In the course of his writing and rereading a thread develops in his diary about which he keeps reflecting.

> Obviously, I keep thinking about this: How do I deal with disappointments? I still remember that during the application interviews I was questioned on this matter. At the time I was perfectly honest in saying: 'I've never known disappointments.' But now I'm running into them head on. The major point is the way people treat me. It seems as if they are not the least bit interested in my well-being. In my former working environments relationships were always based on equality. Here, my chief expects me to toe his line, and it seems that subordinates expect a similar management style on my part…. 'There is operation, but hardly co-operation.' I am not used to being confronted with disappointments, and also, I am apparently someone who prizes personal attention and appreciation.

Here and there a motto emerges, a guideline he formulates for himself. In time they begin to tell a bigger story, about finding the right direction without an outside crutch.

> If you don't know where you want to go, the reason is that you don't know yourself well enough, that you are not sufficiently aware of yourself. You don't know who your 'I' is, you are not in touch with yourself.
> If you want to know where you want to go, it is important to know where you are now. And, no less important, where you come from. Compare it with driving an automobile. If you know what city you want to go to, you must, to

> determine the right direction, know where you are now and where you came from.
> Just as another cannot tell you where you want to go, another cannot tell you whether you are happy with where you are – nor who you are. You have to do this yourself. And that is a lot harder than having an opinion about somebody else.

Meanwhile the diary has (for the most part) come in the place of his ‘job lists’.

> I always wrote up (short) work lists with intentions and points of action. I would start at the top ones. The other points would soon get buried. What was worse, though, is that because I was satisfactorily busy, I forgot to do the thinking needed to analyse the real, underlying problems.

Chapter V Mastery

The art of the good life

If you want to learn to play a musical instrument you need to master many techniques: dexterity, touch, embouchure and so on. This requires much practice. Nevertheless, technique is not the ultimate criterion in playing. It turns on something else, something that cannot be caught in technique, namely music. Music is of another order than technical control.

This is true of the liberal arts as well. Many skills are needed to achieve freedom in our daily practice, to create free space for ourselves and for the people around us. This, too, requires much practice. Ultimately though, these skills are not ends in themselves; freedom turns on something that cannot be caught in them, namely the good life. And this is an art of a different order. The liberal arts are necessary building blocks. Still, no matter how well we learn to make use of dialectic, rhetoric and grammar, without ethics or mastery these remain empty shells or, worse, instruments of control or manipulation.

Mastery is the art of the good life. It is the art of making the good life possible for yourself and for others. For this, we must attain personal freedom and create communal freedom. This is what the liberal arts are all about.

Obviously, the question is what, concretely, good life and freedom mean. Socrates assumed that we already know this, all that is lacking is clarity. Our awareness of it is intuitive but clouded. It is a 'dark knowledge', as philosopher Leonard Nelson says.[xxiv] We can draw this knowledge from the depth of our selfhood via self-reflection, by letting the essences of our existence emerge from the bottom of our consciousness as it were, and examine them. To do so requires both personal and joint inquiry.

There are many ways to demonstrate that we truly possess such darkly known intuitions. Poet Kopland for example, in his 'Memories of the unknown' describes his first encounter with eros. 'The first kisses I received from a girl … pervaded the farthest reaches of body and soul. Something lay awaiting that I did not know was there; a longing I learned to know in the fulfilment.'[xxv] The power of such experiences and their significance for mastery will be discussed further in Chapter VI.

Another way to picture our intuition of mastery is to consider how we make music. Take the simplest way of making music, singing together. Almost everybody can sing, together with others, even in harmony -- even people with no musical experience are able to do so. We can effortlessly fit ourselves to a common rhythm. We can conjoin a melody to one or more contra voices. We are able to adapt our singing in the group so that we achieve the right harmonious proportions. We do all this matter-of-factly, with self-evident ease. To the measure that a group is larger, there may arise a need for a conductor to balance and nuance the whole. But the basic principles of music -- rhythm, harmony, melody -- are innate. At least, we join in without difficulty even if unschooled. We don't know how we do it, we don't exactly know what we do, we just do it.

Those of us who have engaged in choir singing -- or, more generally, making music together -- also know the experience of the personal and shared freedom this affords, the sensation of space, of literally regaining your breath, being simultaneously carefree and disciplined, the feeling of communality and, of course, beauty. In this, music is an almost tangible metaphor for mastery and the good life. In our work and in our life, too, we strive for that feeling of space and balance, for the

combination of personal satisfaction and joint effectiveness, for knowing your place in the whole and for optimal performance of your part in it. There too, the basic principles seem innately inscribed in us, measure, courage, prudence and justice -- virtues that happen to be very similar to the basic principles of music: measure, harmony, melody, direction. Measure is the individual adjustment to a collective structure; harmony is about finding the proper relationships; melody is the series of leading ideas or themes; and the conductor is the leader who ensures the proper balance of the whole (compare the discussion on classical virtues in Chapter I).

In music we apply these principles effortlessly, without having to think about them. In everyday practice, however, it takes much effort to gain clarity on them. Only then can we exchange them, examine them, account for them and use them to guide us. We do have our intuitions, but these fall short of clear vision, nor are they easily formulated consistently and convincingly. Yet we do need that if we want to arrive at a shared view of what we originally intended or what we seek to attain. This demands a large degree of skill in the liberal arts. Such schooling is necessary for the development of mastery. But mastery is more than proficiency, it reaches beyond that. Mastery is of another order.

The intermediate position

We explore the comparison with music a little more. There are many flute players who can play Bach's sonatas. Few of them however we would call masters. The same notes can, depending on the flautist, leave you unmoved or affect you strongly. Why is this? Apparently, mastery does not reside in the ability to play the correct notes, but in something else, something that lifts the notes above themselves and turns them into music, something whereby the whole is more than the sum of its parts, something to which your heart responds so that you feel 'Yes, that's how it should be played, that's how it was meant.' The same goes for our work and our life. Mastery is not only a matter of doing the right things, however important that in itself may be. It is, more than anything, inherent to how you do those things. It has to do with the 'form' of performing, the manner or style. Nor is it a matter of what your actions in fact achieve, however important that, too, may be. Mastery resides in the act itself, in the nature and quality intrinsic to it, rather than outside of it.

Many have tried to analyse what accounts for this subtle difference between technical proficiency or craftsmanship and mastery. For our part, we will begin with the classical analysis laid down by Aristotle in his *Ethics*. After that, we turn to the analyses of some other philosophical schools.

All forms of mastery, Aristotle said, can in fact be reduced to a single basic principle: the right choice between too much and too little. 'Mastery is a kind of mean. For it is possible to fail in many ways; to succeed is possible only in one way, for which reason the one is easy and the other difficult -- to miss the mark is easy, to hit it difficult' (1106-b). This holds not only for the distinct arts, such as the art of flute playing or the art of persuasion. It is true also for the general, all-embracing art, the art of the good life. Aristotle defines mastery as follows:

> Mastery is the condition of character that enables one to make the right choices, choices that observe a mean between that which, relative to the person, would be too much and that too little, and determined by a rational principle, namely the principle that a person of practical wisdom would apply.[xxvi]

First, then, mastery is a 'condition of character', a disposition which you, according to Aristotle, have made your own by habituation. A single right choice does not bespeak mastery. It is one's capacity of invariably making the right choices that leads us to call that person a master. This is attained only through much training. How do you do that, train for the good life? For flute playing or some other specific art this is clear enough; keep practising scales, repeat the parts, shave and hone until you feel that it touches you, that it fits, that you play as you think it was meant to be played. But how do you do this for the comprehensive art of living the good life?

The first part of Aristotle's answer to this question is simple. Continue to reflect on the choices you actually make. There are two kinds of life, Aristotle said. One is living like the beasts or plants; they can neither make choices nor learn. The other is human life. Human beings are able to make their own choices, and we can render account of our behaviour, we can call forth the images and standards of the good life as we carry them in our consciousness, examine them and compare them to our factual choices. Because of this we can learn and literally *lead* our life. The non-rational part of ourselves, too, our habits and feelings, we can steer and adjust. In other words, mastery can be learned by way of systematic reflection.

The second part of Aristotle's answer is brilliant. To determine the precise mean in a concrete case, the arrow on centre target, he recommends that we should first see what would be too much and too little, overshooting and falling short. It is only when you are clear on this that the proper mean comes into view, the position where you avoid both pitfalls. It is the only position where you are truly free because you do not let yourselves be carried away by feelings or inclinations -- too much -- nor deny or exorcise them -- too little. In this way you shake off your 'hang-ups', your own conditioned obsessions of hope and fear, your familiar, repeating stories. This gives you a sensation of freedom, of space and clearness, and simultaneously of discipline, as in the case of music. It gives you that same feeling of 'Yes, that's how it should be played, that's how it was meant.' This is the core of the exercise that Aristotle described at length in his *Ethics*. His definition adds some auxiliary aids for schooling in mastery, such as finding the 'rational principle' or key to the situation, and imagining a person with practical wisdom (see also Chapter IV).

Referring to a concrete case, we will look at working with the middle position. Below we describe a case from a coaching session where we applied this line of thought. Jan Willem, the person coached, was an experienced interim manager in his late forties. He submitted the following experience.

Case: Anger

At the time of this session Jan Willem was interim head of communication in an institute for advanced education. He told us that during a meeting with the board of directors he had turned rather harshly against the chairman. This chairman had given a colleague, the head of finance, a public thrashing that was entirely out of proportion. The colleague was visibly taken aback and tried to defend himself, but unsuccessfully so. This had caused the atmosphere in the meeting to sour. Initially Jan Willem kept aloof, although he was somewhat embarrassed, as were the others. At some point he did side with his colleague by remarking, in measured tones, that the chairman's reproach would also apply to him, Jan Willem: his budget did not balance either. This had everything to do with the laxity in the organisation. In fact, he added venomously, the organisation was a mess. This would have to change.

The chairman responded with agitation: 'This remark contributes nothing and complicates matters needlessly.' That was when Jan Willem became really angry. His

sharp reply was that he had simplified rather than complicated the issue because this was a general problem, not an individual one. Moreover, this was no way of dealing with each other. The vice-chairman intervened. He considered it irrational that everyone was becoming angry, suggested that the antagonists should have ‘a good talk’ at some more convenient time, and that the meeting should carry on with the remaining items on the agenda. All were obediently silent and did as told.

Jan Willem wanted to investigate how he could cope with his own anger and that of others in this sort of situation. It was clear to him that his had not been the right approach. We dissected his story. What exactly happened when he became angry? And what would have been a better way to deal with the situation? What would mastery imply here?

We first identified the feelings that played a role in this situation. There was not only anger directed at the chairman’s behaviour. Jan Willem was also afraid to confront him with it. And he felt compassion for the head of finance. This is what provoked him to mount the barricades. Still, the dominant feeling had been anger, extreme pique. We examined this feeling in terms of Aristotle’s methodology. What would have been a ‘too much’ of anger here? What form would that have taken? What would happen to him if he permitted that? How did an overdose of anger feel?

It takes courage to carry out this kind of self-examination. You are not putting yourself in the most favourable light. Also, Jan Willem was not the type of person whose anger is easily triggered. After some concentrated reflection, though, he could show convincingly what a ‘too much’ of anger would imply for him: steer a collision course, as he put it, shout down his own fears and throw himself into the situation recklessly. He would not only jump in uninvited, he would also challenge the chairman, the potentate, and seek escalation by calling him to account and by flinging his own dissatisfaction in his face. And that of the others, too. The more Jan Willem immersed himself, the more palpable became his being caught up in his aggression.

Next, we focused on the other non-freedom, ‘too little’ anger. This is an entirely different state of mind, immediately yielding a quite different physical posture: leaning backwards, slouching, bodily indicating that you have nothing to do with it. Jan Willem recalled that this had been his literal behaviour and thoughts at the start of the meeting: this is not about me, luckily I am not the victim. It felt like non-involvement, a flight from danger, and lifeless, a collapsed balloon. But then too, there was an element of being above all this, considering it below your status to be confronted with this boorishness. Essentially, it was just cowardice, Jan Willem said, half-heartedness. This version of anger was, in a sense, easier; you just acted as if you were not there, as if all was serene, as if the painfulness of the situation and your own anger did not exist. It was evident, however, that this was mere ostrich policy, a flight from reality. In this version non-freedom was even more insidious than in its counterpart, the collision course, where you at least let yourself be seen. Here you just slunk away.

Authenticity

We now turned to the intermediate position. What would happen if Jan Willem in the given situation would not let himself be caught up in his anger, nor in his cowardice and fear? How would it be if he let his anger rise neither too much nor too little? What would he experience if he kept in touch with the events -- the painful silences, his own aggression towards the chairman, his uncertainty about what to do, his need to protect his colleague -- without running away from them, yet not forcing the issue? What, in other words, would be the free form of Jan Willem’s anger?

This is a difficult, subtle question. Freedom and mastery, Aristotle said, do not reside in *what* you feel or experience, but in the *manner of dealing* with those feelings and experiences. To examine this is a vulnerable affair. It is effective only if you turn to genuine self-examination, as Socrates demanded of his discussion partners. If it is no more than a thought experiment or a mental puzzling game it yields nothing but noncommittal jabber for people to hide behind rather than to reveal and unravel themselves.

As Jan Willem carried out the exercise -- deliberately, with concentration, physically sitting up straight and slowly pivoting his body -- his anger, his feeling about the situation, his attitude towards the others transformed. In both the initial situation and the two positions we had until then investigated he had experienced a feeling of constraint, of restriction, discomfort and compulsion. He had been a slave of the circumstances and his own impulses. Now he felt freedom and space returning, a feeling of a very different quality. He no longer felt anger, or fear; rather a kind of being sorry for the chairman. Of course, the man had to be corrected, what he did was not right. Still, it would make little sense to let the situation come to a head by knocking him down in front of an audience, even laying his own incomplete budget on his plate. Moreover, his impulse to come to his colleague's defence seemed prompted mostly by the fact that he had not yet gotten over his own pain concerning a comparable situation in the past. What he had in fact been doing was to seek retribution for his own former humiliation. That, too, made little sense. It would have been better to offer this hard-pressed chairman support by acknowledging his burden, sympathise with his impatience and, in passing, make clear that his lunge at the head of finance was incorrect and not in proportion. But do so in a non-abrasive manner: unambiguous but sympathetic.

Jan Willem depicted his feeling in this position as a combination of involvement and distance. He was keenly conscious of the injustice in the chairman's performance and of his own feeling of hurt, yet without the immediate need to hit back or ward off, to oppose or to go on the defensive. He had, he said, more space, felt literally enlarged; he could take on more. Also, he now felt calm and alert, and had the idea that, now that he could take a punch without fighting or fleeing it, he was able to see much sharper what went on: the situation was exasperating and painful, but also really quite simple and transparent. All involved parties had the feeling that they had gotten short shrift. That was a misunderstanding, which had to get cleared away. Jan Willem felt at ease; he did not have to battle anything, bend no-one to his will, no need to pursue strategy. This was quite a different scenario than the previous film, he said. More realistic, more authentic. This was how it really was.

Freedom

It appeared that Jan Willem had at this point restored harmony with the situation, recovered his balance and regained his freedom. That's how it should be played, that's how it was meant. Towards the end of the inquiry he tried to name the key that unlocked this way of seeing, the rational principle that a man of practical wisdom (the personification of the middle position he himself meanwhile had made his own) would use. For him this principle coalesced with the concept of mildness. Mildness was the key to freedom here. Only from an attitude of mildness the situation could be seen in its true light. Mildness was the rational standard by which he would measure his actions and stance. To cope with his anger rightly he had to hold on to mildness, keep his temper and indignation in check, not be drawn along like a blind horse by his aggressiveness. Also, he should not close the door on the situation, but remain in

touch, accept his responsibilities and keep a level head. In short, a little wisdom wouldn't hurt.

This is the kind of insight that Aristotle and his teachers Plato and Socrates were after. It is liberating, and at the same time issues an appeal to you. It gives both space and direction. It lets you understand that there is nothing wrong with anger, as long as you are at the reins of it and know when to hold in or let go. It appeals to your better self, to excellent action and mastery. Freedom is manifest in mastery, in the ability to remain at an even keel, leaning neither towards too little, nor towards too much.

We, as coaches, must beware of two pitfalls. The first is that we begin to 'philosophise' with someone, in the sense of non-committal talk 'about' -- about the problem, about our ideas, about possible action and attitudes -- instead of engaging in true self-examination. Socrates had little patience with this kind of hypothetical babble. When Protagoras (in the dialogue of that name) begins to speak in this way Socrates immediately calls him to order. At stake are not if--then arguments or possible conceptions. That kind of inquiry is utterly fruitless. 'You and I ought to be examined', Socrates said. 'And when I say "you and I", I mean that it is best to leave 'if' aside.'[xxvii]

The second pitfall is that we engage in therapy or offer advice, and become involved to the point that we start to 'help'. This, Aristotle said, is what people do who would straighten warped wood. To get this straight again, restore its middle position, you must first force it the other way. This needs strength, and time, and it is a painful process. But Socrates was not a therapist for warped behaviour. Neither do we consider it our task to straighten out distorted situations. What we do in the coaching process is to challenge individuals to think in depth about the situation and about themselves, so that they learn to liberate themselves from the twisted tangle. Key word here is reflection, recalling the original intent, dwelling on the meaning of the good life, considering whether your ideas about that are the right ones, and so on.

Obviously, both pitfalls are themselves paradigms of a too much or a too little. Non-commitment falls short of involvement, help goes too far. The mean lies in between these, the position from which you do neither too much nor too little. Again, this position is liberating for the coach as well, because he takes the proper measure of responsibility. And it calls upon your better self, on excellent action and mastery.

The master's knowledge

The above makes us aware that the knowledge we uncover by the exercise of finding the mean -- the initially 'dark knowledge' stored up in our consciousness -- is of a quite different kind than 'knowledge' as we generally think of it. It certainly is not abstract, scientific knowledge (*epistēmē*), that is to say, it is not knowledge that is conceptual, explicit, objective, fixed and verifiable or built on theory. On the contrary, the knowledge of which you become aware in the middle position is practical wisdom (*phronēsis*, a kind of knowledge that is perceptual rather than conceptual, a knowledge that primarily has to do with observation and the ability to distinguish relevant detail, the eye of the master. Often, practical wisdom is tacit rather than explicit; it is not always easy to put into words. It is subjective rather than objective, flexible instead of fixed and immutable, situational rather than general.

The master's knowledge also differs from that of the craftsman, the expert, as we mentioned earlier. The knowledge of the expert -- craftsmanship or expertise (technē) -- is instrumental, a means to achieve a specific goal, like in music to play every note faultlessly. In contrast to this, practical wisdom, the master's knowledge, is

non-instrumental, substantial. It has to do with the music itself rather than with technical control, with the quality of an act rather than the result, with the right intonation rather than the correct notes. A telling difference between the master and the expert is that in a situation where various interests play a role the master remains disinterested, that he retains his freedom in spite of the press of circumstance; that he, in musical terms, notwithstanding the exacting technical requirements demanded by the composition, is not fettered by them and, transcending them, achieves a higher level of playing. The expert, on the other hand, works diligently, does his very best, is concerned to do things correctly, tries to find answers to everything. This is exactly what he considers his expertise, his ability to solve all problems, his possession of an extensive repertory to make himself useful. The master, the one who is in the middle position, does not work hard at all, at least not in the manner of the expert. He is relaxed and at ease; he is open and carefree. In spite of the pressure of the circumstances he maintains space, frankness, freedom. He is not one who has all the answers, but he can be at ease with what is not easy, he dares to be empty-handed, without a proven repertory, in order to always respond to situations in novel and original ways. The master's impact, too, differs from that of the expert. The expert directs your attention to the content of an issue and the interests involved. Primarily he addresses your head. The master always goes for the person first, he speaks to your heart. And there is still another difference. While the expert is concerned with the good and the scientist with the true, the master attends also to the beautiful. He has room for this, free space.

Of old, philosophy has been schooling in mastery. Nowadays the word philosophy makes us think especially of studying abstract, theoretical matters without much connection with our personal daily lives. This is because in the course of the ages philosophy has become increasingly separated from its original ideal. First, in the Middle Ages, it was shunted to a side track as 'handmaiden to theology'. Next it was developed in the context of the emerging universities as an academic auxiliary subject, accessible to specialists and scientists alone. Currently, though, there are diverse impulses to return to the classical philosophic ideal, where philosophy does not consist in highly abstract analyses or the exegesis of difficult texts, but first of all in personal exercise, training and schooling. The purpose is less a scientific investigation into general patterns of thought and conceptual frameworks than a personal examination of our own views and our own way of life. The point is to learn to see yourself and the world in a new way, to nurture a mature attitude and a fitting way of life. In this light philosophy is an attempt towards transformation. It is a persistent and systematic quest, that is, a discipline, a schooling. And it is an attempt aimed not only at the individual but also at the corporate, intent on forming both the person and the community.

Philosophical exercises

In the classical philosophical schools teachers designed a broad range of exercises for the development of mastery. We describe some of these here, to give an impression of what the practice of schooling in this area involves.[xxviii]

A first exercise, prerequisite for all the others, is to take time for yourself, time for reflection and contemplation. Mastery consists in realising and retaining 'free space'. This implies, first of all, that we literally make room in our restless and hectic existence, that we step away, withdraw, take time to think. In itself this is a discipline already, something you can make your own only through repeated practice. The space thus emerging allows you to look away from the 'many things' and focus on the

‘needful’. This is what Socrates invariably did; he helped his discussion partners to recall the original intention. It is only when you learn to keep in mind the true needs that you become a person with space about you, someone who can remain free and unworried in the press and care of everyday life. Here we note a difference with Buddhist meditation, which aims at attentiveness empty of thought. Philosophical meditation, in contrast, is an exercise of reason, an activity of thinking. It aims at finding words that work, words that call us back to the necessary and urge us to mastery, as in the case above where ‘mildness’ was the key.

A second exercise, emphasised by all classical schools, is training in attending to the here and now, in being aware of the moment, in mental alertness. In a sense this is the key to every exercise of the mind. To pay attention is: disengaging ourselves from our own ‘running stories’, weaning us from our conditioning, away from how our fears and needs colour our world; our ties to the past and preoccupations with the future and our hopes and worries recede. Paying attention is, literally, presence of mind, the condition of presence that makes us capable of seeing what is there and how it is, and just as it is. This is the only way to respond to situations adequately, or make the right choices as Aristotle said. To this end we need to have the basic principles of mastery ‘at our fingertips’. In fact, schooling in mastery consists in continual recall, application and rethinking of those principles or keys, so that we do indeed have them ready to hand at all times.

Regarding the question as to what are these principles, the schools diverge or supplement each other. Among Aristotelians one of the basic principles (and a basic exercise) was the search for the proper mean, as we saw.

In the Epicurean school a basic principle was to distinguish genuine needs or desires from spurious ones. The idea behind this is that we in fact need very little to enjoy the simple fact of being alive. Our natural and necessary needs are modest and readily met: not to suffer hunger, cold and thirst, to enjoy a healthy body and an untroubled soul. According to Epicurus, the trouble is that we actually nurture many imagined, artificially inculcated desires. They are unnecessary, such as the desire for luxury, or even unnatural, such as the desire for great power or prestige. Since it so happens that precisely such needs and desires are difficult or even impossible to satisfy, we burden ourselves with great chagrin. To hold on to our freedom and the simple pleasure of being it is important to train ourselves to refuse admission to desires that render us dependent or needful. We make ourselves unhappy when we nurture desires that we cannot satisfy or can be satisfied through disproportionate effort only. By systematically filtering our wishes we learn to retain our freedom and to be satisfied with simply ‘being there’. The exercise accomplishes still more, it also teaches us to understand that for the most part whatever pain and misfortune may come our way is easily borne. And so we are liberated from needless cares or fears, and instead our attention is directed to the true meaning of our life, uncomplicated and modest things, like friendship, being together and artlessly natural fulfilment of the senses.

In the school of the Stoics one of the basic principles was: to distinguish meticulously between that in which we are free and that in which we are not free, between that which is and is not within our capacity. Background here is the idea that the wise are happy because they know where their freedom lies and how they can uphold it. We are free only in those things that do not exceed our capacity, the things over which we have control. All else should leave us unperturbed, we must learn not to let those things trouble us. After all, we bring upon ourselves many trials and much trouble when we attempt things that are beyond us, when we become agitated over

things we can do nothing about. That which is within our reach, in which we are free, are these only: our views and judgements, our aspirations and strivings, and our acts. These three areas, then, are what we must school ourselves in to truly master them. We should rid our views and judgements of illusions, preconceptions, fantasies, in order to make them objective and in agreement with the real. Our personal ambitions should be brought into alignment with the aspirations intrinsic to the world as a whole, the inherent goal-directedness of nature. And the impulses upon which we act should be attuned to the whole of the human community. This, in a nutshell, is the schooling in freedom and mastery.

A few comments in explanation. Schooling of the first capacity is the discipline of thought (logic or dialectic). It is aimed at right judgement, the faculty of distinguishing whether we should let something affect us or not. For, it is not the things themselves that lead us astray, it is only our incorrect judgements, the wrong views and false conceptions we form, and also the emotionally coloured inner dialogue we carry on about them. The things themselves cannot touch us, nor can they shape our judgement. This we can only do ourselves.

Schooling of the second capacity (physics) is aimed at insight into the universal coherence of all events and phenomena. We are part of a much larger whole, nature or the cosmos. In the view of the Stoics, the order of this totality is the work of a universal or divine reason (the *logos*). Nothing in our existence occurs that is not the will of this universal reason, nature's inherent intelligence. Our own human reason is part of this much larger reason. To live according to reason therefore requires that we continually see ourselves as part of this greater whole. This demands, according to Stoic doctrine, that we learn to acquiesce to whatever this greater whole, universal reason, at any moment places before us. The point here is to learn to see how every coincidence has it own causes and its own rationality. This leads us to accept whatever comes our way, because it is the work of a higher intelligence, the divine reason. And herein we find our freedom, the *amor fati*, acceptance of our destiny. This is what lies within our capacity, at least, if we school ourselves to it.

The third discipline (ethics) is based on the awareness that none of us is an island; that all of us are part of a larger whole where we all have our place and role. The world is one city, one community, one totality of rational beings. In light of this we must learn to control our impulses to action such that our doings serve the entire human community. This implies not only that we do justice to each person, or that each individual has the right to fair treatment, but also that we learn to take our responsibility for larger wholes: the group, the organisation, the community, humanity.

Writing and imagining

An important element of schooling in these disciplines is, as we said earlier, the repeated articulation and reformulation of the basic principles of mastery. This too is an exercise met with in all classical philosophical schools: daily notations of brief personal comments, to name for ourselves the principles of mastery, to let them come alive for us and to make them our own. This trains us to have them ready to hand. Formulating such notations requires self-meditation, an inquiry into our inner dialogue and our attitude relative to events. A famous example of this are the *Meditations* by Marcus Aurelius, Roman emperor in the second century after Christ. We cite some samples.[xxix]

> With what are you discontented? With the badness of men? Recall to your mind this conclusion, that rational animals exist for one another, and that to endure is

> a part of justice, and that men do wrong involuntarily; and consider how many already, after mutual enmity, suspicion, hatred, and fighting, have been stretched dead, reduced to ashes; and be quiet at last. (iv, 3)
>
> Everything which happens is as familiar and well known as the rose in spring and the fruit in summer; for such is disease, and death, and calumny, and treachery, and whatever else delights fools or vexes them. (iv, 44)
>
> Retire into yourself. The rational principle which rules has this nature, that it is content with itself when it does what is just, and so secures tranquillity. (vii, 28)
>
> Perhaps the desire of the thing called fame will torment you. See how soon everything is forgotten, and look at the chaos of infinite time on each side of the present, and the emptiness of applause, and the changeableness and want of judgement in those who pretend to give praise, and the narrowness of the space within which it is circumscribed, and be quiet at last. (iv, 3)
>
> Among the things readiest to your hand let there be these two. One is that things do not touch the soul, for they are external and remain immovable; our perturbations come only from the opinion which is within. The other is that all these things, which you see, change immediately and will no longer be; and constantly bear in mind how many of these changes you have already witnessed. The universe is transformation: life is opinion. (iv, 3)

In these few entries Marcus Aurelius also refers to a theme that we repeatedly come across in philosophical meditations, namely the anticipation of death. Philosophy is learning to die, as Plato once put it. It is the training of the soul not to be sold out to desires or aversions, a training to let go of our attachments, in not clinging to life as such. Learning to die is really learning to live. More than all else, the awareness of the finitude of our existence places infinite worth on every moment of it, because it impresses us with our freedom and our authenticity, it gives focus to what we are about, on the 'needful' rather than the 'many things'.

Still another exercise much used by the various philosophical schools, one we met in Chapter IV, is to call to mind a vivid image of the master, a personification of our inner pilot and of universal reason, the *logos*.[xxx] We can picture in our mind how the master would act in the situation we are investigating, not so much in the sense of what, concretely, he or she would or would not do, but rather what intention or attitude becomes evident in this. So we need to learn to get in touch with this transcendent being. Obviously, this is an image, but very real nonetheless. It is an image of our highest aspiration, our best self. Note that the master is not a moralising superego, posing demands we cannot meet and always reminding us of our inadequacies. The master does not burden us with duties but shows us how we can be free. Nor is the master some external dependency-demanding authority. The master personifies our own excellence, a nourishing and sense-filling image of our freedom, a spontaneous embodiment of our personal flourishing. Socrates, as we saw, called it his *daimonion*, his divine 'sign'. The Stoics named it the *hegemonikon*, the inner pilot. And Aristotle spoke of the *phronimos*, the person gifted with practical wisdom.

Ethics

For the most exuberantly descriptive image of the master and of the schooling to mastery, though, we must go to Plato. Having taken a brief look at the Aristotelians, the Epicureans and the Stoics, we will in the next chapter visit with Plato a little longer, to consider mastery and ethics from the point of view of leadership. This is an important aspect of ethics. Ethic is from the Greek *ethos*, 'usual abode'. Meanings derived from this are 'custom', 'mores' 'character'. Our usual abode is the place where we live. Ethics, then, has to do with where we are at home or how to come home. In one of his famous stories Plato, using Socrates as spokesman, pictures the human soul as consisting of three parts, a team of two winged horses (the desires of the belly, and the courage of the heart) and the charioteer (the insight of the head). Whenever things in the world, people, thoughts, emotions or whatever, remind the human soul of the beauty, the goodness and justness of his original abode above the heavens, Socrates declares, the wings of the fiery horse start to grow and gain strength and the soul is filled with but one desire (*eros*): to ascend to that original home.[xxxi] It is the charioteer who must lead this desire along the right paths and, to the degree possible in this world under the stars, create the opportunities to come home.

Chapter VI The philosophic life

Form in function

The foregoing chapters described various ways of schooling, ways of creating free space (*scholē*) and, in that space, ways of examining our beginnings, our initial intentions, our starting points and principles. The paths we took were those of the three 'freedom arts', dialectic, rhetoric and grammar, and the 'master art' of ethics. In this chapter we turn to the public side of mastery, leadership, and the classical philosophical views on schooling in it. They all come down to this, that to fulfil a genuine leadership role a turn to philosophic life is indispensable.

To lead you must have authority. One part of authority is that you know the route a group or organisation should take. You must have vision, an ideal, an idea of corporate flourishing and collective well-being. Development of that kind of vision demands investigation and systematic study. Along with this you must, to attain authority, develop yourself. Just as an athlete needs physical exercise to be 'in peak form', that is, to bring his body in shape, so also a leader, one who would have authority and be a captain, needs mental training to be in shape spiritually. This is one of the reasons why Socrates conducted many of his philosophical discussions in the gymnasium, the sport school. Just like the sport trainers there, he too wanted to get his discussion partners into shape, though in this case at the mental level. He wanted to train and guide them towards a condition of flourishing, of functioning optimally, both as individuals and collectively as city state.

The obvious question is: What exactly does 'being in form' mean? When are you 'in form' as person? And when is a group, or an organisation as a whole, 'in form'? This was the subject of many of Socrates' conversations. They were the same sort of conversations that can be heard around many sporting events even today.

One answer to this question -- more often thought in secret than spoken out aloud -- is that to be in form is a matter of having power, just as in the case of physical training. A racing cyclist in peak form has power in his legs, a swimmer has power in his arms. To attain form, then, you must do this one thing: increase your power. You do this by training to take good care of yourself, that is, by pursuing, as well as you can, your own interest. In this view mastery is the ability to look after your own interest. And leadership is its superlative. On close analysis, adherents of this view hold, leadership is not about serving the common good or about corporate flourishing or similar lofty hog-wash. That is only the outside, the packaging. Essentially, leadership is about power, about getting it, expanding it and holding on to it. Those successful in this are the leaders. They are leaders because they are the best at looking after themselves and their interest. You may call that cynical, you can also consider it realistic. When leaders avail themselves of phrases like the common good, or social responsibility or political necessity, they are seducing you. These are rhetorical terms that gloss their deeper intentions, which are: more power, greater status, higher profits, increased influence. Such is the true face of leadership. If you can't play this game, if you don't want to dirty your hands, if you don't use your elbows to be first in line, don't bother to go for a leadership function.

Some adherents of this view refer to Macchiavelli or to Nietzsche to underpin their thinking. Others simply refer to the animal world. It's the survival of the fittest. A law of nature. In the human world things are no different, they say. Forget freedom, equality, fraternity. Freedom is the privilege of the strong, equality the nagging of the weak. And as for fraternity, responsibility, integrity -- that type of terms is mere

public relations. They build and bolster your image, but it would be foolish to act on them. By nature it so happens that people just want their own desires expanded to the full and then have the power to satisfy them. But only the strong have what it takes for this, the weak do not. That is why the strong always get the better deal. For example, petty crime is always punished. The big criminals are smart enough to avoid the penalties. In short, form is a matter of power, of the capacity to look after your own self and your own interest. This is a position taken by many, overtly or covertly, especially in the higher echelons of management.

Lacking form

Socrates used a variety of arguments to undermine this point of view.[xxxii] Does a person always know what actually is in his own interest? One can be sadly mistaken in this. Is expansion of power always the best way to achieve peak form or to keep it? No. Some things there are in which you can gain power (speed, stamina, and the like), but others not at all (collaboration with others, for example). For these you must develop qualities of a quite different sort. And as to the form of an entire team, would it be best if each for himself seeks first place? It seems not. In other words, it is not at all simple to know how you can attain and retain form, or even what good form would be. This is true already at the physical level. Those who satisfy their every need, and eat and drink all that is placed before them, are not likely to stay in shape. This is evident. And those who do not scrupulously continue their training will never deliver peak performance, and even risk serious injury. Which needs, then, should be satisfied? And what is scrupulous training? These questions are valid also for the realm of the mind. A mind in form, Socrates said, may be compared to a bucket that, once filled, requires no further attention. But a mind untrained, and lacking form, is like a leaky bucket full of holes, and you must keep adding, yet it will never be full. Such a person suffers mental leaking and is incontinent, never replete, and when he, for a short time, ceases to fill himself, he undergoes excruciating pains. It may be that much is in his power, but his own self and his desires are not. For this reason a person who lacks form is unhappier than he who is in form.

This is true not only for individuals, but equally so for a team or an organisation. If its members are primarily after power and self-interest, rather than discipline and coherence, a team will not be much good. Instead of developing shared strength it is likely to fall apart because of friction and conflict. This shows that seeking power and self-interest is certainly not always to your advantage, even if you are the strongest in the group. On the contrary, a team is no stronger than its weakest link. A true leader therefore will be less concerned with personal power than with the power of the team-mates he is coaching. For it is on this that the interest of the whole depends. A leader who puts his self-interest first is myopic and incompetent. He has no idea what ‘in form’ means. True form, genuine excellence, implies that you are able to coach yourself and your environment, that you can establish harmony and balance in both. Only those who have this ability will truly flourish.

Plato’s doctrine of form

In Plato’s major work on leadership, *The Republic*, Socrates, after this first exchange of arguments, was challenged to describe more precisely what he understands by ‘form’, both in the case of an individual and in the case of a group. This led to an extensive investigation in which Plato, using Socrates as spokesman, developed his famous doctrine of form. Socrates began with comparing the ideal organisation or society to the ideal person. A person possesses -- as we saw in Chapter I -- three basic

powers, three motivational centres, belly, heart and head. The belly is oriented to everything pleasant, in particular the satisfaction of physical needs: wining, dining and sex. The heart, that fiery centre, seeks recognition, performance, ambition, to be one who counts. The head wants truth, knowledge, seeks understanding and would like to know how things really are. A person is mentally and spiritually in form when these three motivations are in proper balance, separately and jointly. In the first chapter we also saw that the four cardinal virtues or excellences are needed for this, moderation, fortitude, prudence, justice. Chapter V described excellence as the mean between too much and too little.

In the ideal society, Socrates said, there are also three kinds of people, whereby each category cares for one aspect of the whole. One group takes care of society's belly: farmers, labourers, craftsmen, merchants, etc. Another group, fiery and ambitious, cares for social arrangement and order: the managers, government officials, including police and army. And there is a third group with the qualities of leadership, the administrators, politicians and government leaders. One expects of the last group that they have insight and overview in order to design proper policy for the common weal. Accordingly, for society as a whole the same applies as for an individual: the community has form when all contribute, when everyone is in his own rightful place, each receives his due and the three groups are in harmonious balance both in themselves and in the relations with the others. If so, the whole will also meet the standards of excellence: discipline, inspiration, reflection and equilibrium.

The leader's knowledge

Crucial is, of course, that leaders understand the ideal form aright, and how to achieve it. For this they must obtain thorough schooling. In the course of the investigation conducted in *The Republic* Socrates was asked how such schooling proceeds. He distinguished four levels of knowledge that a leader must traverse. These levels are still found in many present-day models of cognitive, moral or pedagogical development.[xxxiii]

At the lowest level our mind is concerned with nothing but itself, looking after itself every moment. This mind is narrow and cramped. An unschooled mind has no freedom and is stuck in all kinds of habits and conditioning. Its major occupation is daydreaming. Its consciousness is not a clear window on the world; it is hazy, obscured by a veil of fantasy primarily meant to ward off pain. And although the fear of pain is a source of willpower and a drive towards survival, it is also a source of blindness. On its account our mind is forever at work weaving a distorting web to hide reality, so that we may feel secure. The first step in schooling is aimed at liberating us from this world of fantasy, away from all those false conceptions prompted by primitive self-orientation, emotional defence and mental fixation. Our 'knowledge' on this first level, then, fragmented and inconsistent as it is, does not really merit that name. Socrates called it fantasy (*eikasia*).

Through investigation, study and mental training we begin to wean ourselves away from our fantasies and fixations, and achieve the second stage of development. Now we obtain a far more realistic and objective view of ourselves and the world. And we begin to form ourselves, to mould our character. On the cognitive level progression is known by the fact that increasingly we are able to identify and explain our experience and place it in a wider context. We learn to underpin our views with arguments. Contemporary scientists refer to this knowledge as 'mental scheme' or 'cognitive model'. Socrates spoke of belief, conviction, argument-supported opinion (*pistis*). (We will examine the affective level below.) Reaching this level tends to make many

of us feel self-satisfied. After all, we have the idea that we now understand much better how reality is put together, what its true face really is. That's why our power to convince both ourselves and others is far greater. We have a better grasp of things, we can fix the world our way. At the same time, though, we run great risk in this phase. Because this still limited picture empowers us to undertake much more than we could before, we readily accept it as the truth itself; we rest content with our achievements thus far and loiter at that restricted place of insight. What it means to be in true form, what true form would be -- of that we have but a vague idea.
Glaucon, Socrates' interlocutor, then asked him to explain the higher steps of knowledge and development as well. Initially Socrates protested that this could not be done. But Glaucon insisted and, thus pressed, Socrates carried on -- not with a direct description but by way of a comparison: the Allegory of the Cave. In it, the four stages of development are pictured, the step-by-step liberation from bondage to ignorance, and, simultaneously, the schooling towards leadership.[xxxiv]

The Allegory of the Cave

> Next, said I [Socrates], here is a parable to illustrate the degrees in which our nature may be enlightened or unenlightened. Imagine the condition of men living in a sort of cavernous chamber underground, with an entrance open to the light and a long passage all down the cave. Here they have been from childhood, chained by the leg and also by the neck, so that they cannot move and can see only what is in front of them, because the chains will not let them turn their heads. At some distance higher up is the light of a fire burning behind them; and between the prisoners and the fire is a track with a parapet built along it, like the screen at a puppet-show, which hides the performers while they show their puppets over the top.
> I see, said he [Glaucon].
> Now behind this parapet imagine persons carrying along various artificial objects, including figures of men and animals in wood or stone or other materials, which project above the parapet. Naturally, some of these persons will be talking, others silent.
> It is a strange picture, he said, and a strange sort of prisoners.
> Like ourselves, I replied; for in the first place prisoners so confined would have seen nothing of themselves or of one another, except the shadows thrown by the fire-light on the wall of the Cave facing them, would they?
> Not if all their lives they had been prevented from moving their heads.
> And they would have seen as little of the objects carried past.
> Of course.
> Now, if they could talk to one another, would they not suppose that their words referred only to those passing shadows which they saw?
> Necessarily.
> And suppose their prison had an echo from the wall facing them? When one of the people crossing behind them spoke, they could only suppose that the sound came from the shadow passing before their eyes.
> No doubt.
> In every way, then, such prisoners would recognize as reality nothing but the shadows of those artificial objects?
> Inevitably.
> Now consider what would happen if their release from the chains and the healing of their unwisdom should come about in this way. Suppose one of them set free

and forced suddenly to stand up, turn his head, and walk with eyes lifted to the light; all these movements would be painful, and he would be too dazzled to make out the objects whose shadows he had been used to see. What do you think he would say, if someone told him that what he had formerly seen was meaningless illusion, but now, being somewhat nearer to reality and turned towards more real objects, he was getting truer view? Suppose further that he were shown the various objects being carried by and were made to say, in reply to questions, what each of them was. Would he not be perplexed and believe the objects now shown him to be not so real as what he formerly saw?
Yes, not nearly so real.

Illustration of the allegory on opposite page, containing the words:

insight
thinking, understanding
values, beliefs
fantasies

Thus Socrates described the first two levels of knowledge. The prisoners in the cave see nothing but shadows, that is to say, at the lowest level of development we think of all that we perceive as real, and our knowledge as true. In fact, though, they are no more than our sensory impressions. What they mean, how they originate, how they fuse together, how we are to evaluate them, whether they contribute or do not contribute to our well-being -- we have no insight into any of this. We live in a world of fantasy. We have no idea of the real. We are too much caught up in cares and fears to gain clarity on that. But when the fetters of our perception and the fantasy colours of our impressions are removed we begin to see things more objectively. Their form stands out more clearly in the light of the fire. Suppose an amphora is held up above the wall. The prisoners below see but the shadowy contours of the vase. But he who is unchained and led upwards will see, once the light no longer blinds him and he has recovered from the shock of the unknown, the vase itself as it is in the light shed by the fire. And he discovers that this is of a quite different order than the shadows he was accustomed to see.

Well then, just as the prisoner does not really see the amphora unless he looks upon it in the firelight, just so we do not see the meaning of something unless the light of certain values is shed over it. Without those values you have no idea what a thing or an event really means, how you must assess it, whether it is good or bad for you, whether you should be happy with it or rather the opposite. The allegorical fire may be understood as a set of values enabling us to judge things, attribute significance to them and hence see them as they are. It is through these values that we truly learn to distinguish things, evaluate their importance, explain their coherence and present arguments for our views. By way of values we develop conviction, a mental scheme

through which we get a grip on the world. There is, however, the danger that we hold this directly for truth itself and remain stuck in the narrow circle of our insight. For what the vase is really like, this we see but partly. After all, the light of the fire is poor, its illuminating power weak, flickering and unstable. It is little more than a glimmer, leaves some parts of the amphora in shadow and sheds a vague or sometimes flattering glow over the remainder. To really see the vase in its true form the prisoner must ascend higher still, leave the cave altogether and step into the light of day. Plato, still using Socrates as his spokesman, described this in the sequel of the story:

Seeing the 'form' of things

> And suppose someone were to drag him away forcibly up the steep and rugged ascent and not let him go until he had hauled him out into the sunlight, would he not suffer pain and vexation at such treatment; and, when he had come out into the light, find his eyes so full of its radiance that he could not see a single one of the things that he was now told were real?
> Certainly he would not see them all at once.
> He would need, then, to grow accustomed before he could see things in that upper world. At first it would be easiest to make out shadows, and then the images of men and things reflected in water, and later on the things themselves. After that, it would be easier to watch the heavenly bodies and the sky itself by night, looking at the light of the moon and stars rather than the Sun and the Sun's light in the day-time.
> Yes, surely.
> Last of all, he would be able to look at the Sun and contemplate its nature, not as it appears when reflected in water or any alien medium, but as it is in itself in its own domain.
> No doubt.
> And now he would begin to draw the conclusion that it is the Sun that produces the seasons and the course of the year and controls everything in the visible world, and moreover is in a way the cause of all that he and his companions used to see.
> Clearly he would come at last to that conclusion.
> Then if he called to mind his fellow prisoners and what passed for wisdom in his former dwelling-place, he would surely think himself happy in the change and be sorry for them. They may have had a practice of honouring and commending one another, with prizes for the man who had the keenest eye for the passing shadows and the best memory for the order in which they followed or accompanied one another, so that he could make a good guess as to which was going to come next. Would our released prisoner be likely to covet those prizes or to envy the men exalted to honour and power in the Cave? Would he not feel like Homer's Achilles, that he would far sooner 'be on earth as a hired servant in the house of a landless man' or endure anything rather than go back to his old beliefs and live in the old way?
> Yes, he would prefer any fate to such a life.

This is Socrates' image of the third and fourth level of insight and development. Before the prisoner is able to see the true form of the object, in the clear light of the sun, he must turn his faculty of thinking and his psyche away from the limited and incomplete picture that until then he had deemed adequate. He must cultivate a 'second look', a reflective inspection that would look below the layer of the familiar, self-evident meanings and conventional values. A most difficult step it is, this turn to

the life philosophic. Yet it is a necessary condition for the development of leadership and vision, for leaving behind the instrumental rationality bent on problem solution, for arriving at a substantial rationality aware of the original intention. The road ahead is rough and steep, a path where we, groping and stumbling, bring our perceptions and partial insights together, rub the one against the other as it were, to specify and harmonise them. That is to say, it is the path of thorough, systematic and joint reflection, comparison of ideas, practice of dialectic. This is because the value of a thing, i.e. that which it in essence is, is always surrounded by a cloud of possibilities and alternatives.

In our culture of fast images and instant communication, where we are readily satisfied with an opinion that at first glance appears convincing or carries a patina of plausibility, the turn to this sort of investigation calls for a painful breach; it seems as if you turn against yourself, violate yourself. As you quit the cave's exit the strong light blinds you, your former perceptions are of no further use, you have lost your sense of direction, you must postpone and readjust your judgements. In short, initially you are disrupted. It is only when you persevere and stay out there in the painful sunlight that gradually you begin to see things take on their true form, the way they really are. This is the third stage, which Socrates identifies as understanding or thinking (*dianoia*).

At this point it may happen that the prisoner -- similar to his first liberation, when he was pulled up from the depths of the cave to the level of the fire -- not only sees the things but also becomes aware of the source of light itself, that which enables him to see all, the sun. This time, however, it is a clear and stable light, showing things as they truly are. He will, then, discover that this light rules the entire visible world, that on its account there are seasons and years, growth and development, warmth and fertility. This is the fourth level (*noēsis*), the highest level of insight, which is insight into the source of all values, into the transcendent perfection on which all things valuable depend for their first illumination. Only he who can see this truly knows what it means to be in form: he can see the things 'in form' through the clear light of the ultimate giver of form. Elsewhere Plato said that this is an insight that cannot be put into words. It emerges only in the course of long, devoted study, when, suddenly, it arises in the soul, like a fire kindled by a jumping spark that feeds on itself and then begins to radiate its light in the soul.

Dutch philosopher Cornelis Verhoeven compares this insight with learning to know someone well. At first, you try to deduce from his behaviour what characteristics he possesses, and what character lies behind these. Your knowledge is still groping and hypothetical. It is not until mutual contact has endured that, sometimes, an awareness arises as to with whom you are dealing. And this awareness is richer, profounder, than the totality of your empirical data. You now know this person to the point that you know things of which earlier you were ignorant. This is a knowledge that does not consist of words or disjointed thoughts. It is the realisation of how that person is put together, how he essentially is, what his form is and how he is when in form. This is the insight a coach needs to supervise an athlete. And this is the insight a leader needs to guide an organisation into form, or a politician the entire polity.

Forging solidarity

We know that in present-day politics and in many organisations the quest for this kind of insight and the concomitant schooling is hardly popular. Politics is since long the domain of managers who consider problem solving and control of administrative

processes more important than the clarification of the underlying vision, the doctrine of form, in a political debate. Ministers talk in terms of 'Don't complain, do something' or 'We are managers, we don't really have time for House talk'. They are preoccupied with the need to 'chart the route' and to chalk up 'results' to the point that they seem to have forgotten that politics requires at least two more 'R's: 'room for reflection' and 'rendering account'.[xxxv] After all, no less at stake in politics is the identification of big social issues and to debate them, that is, to create space to weigh the various roads or directions and to give account of the choice made. Instead, however, it seems as if managing and result-oriented activity are the sole political mantra today. The same is true, to even greater degree, for organisations. To be sure, they send their people to all kinds of courses and training sessions. Schooling in leadership, though, in rendering account, in the creating of space to weigh routes and results in fundamental ways, often plays but a limited role. The paradigm overruling all is instrumental rationality.

Of course, this is understandable. The turn to the philosophic life, to substantial rationality, is a difficult step. It can imply a painful break with our familiar views, our habitual ways of acting. It is a 'steep and rugged ascent' that can make you feel terrible and agitate you greatly. Nor is it a merely cognitive turn. At this level of inquiry you yourself as person are fully involved. It requires a mental turn-about to make a start, to no longer accept easy opinions and fashionable convictions, to confront the confusions arising when you truly begin to explore things, to develop the keenness and stamina necessary to distinguish which views stand up also on second sight. It requires a conscious choice to create space for this sort of inquiry, an investigation into the form in which a team or organisation can function best. It demands that the coach, the leader (or team of leaders) seeks out which deployment is optimal, that he develops an accurate picture of how those involved can be brought together and become mutually involved, that he shapes a perspective that can forge the members of a team or the organisational staff into a single unit. It asks that you weld close ties with others and that you can inspire others to do so among themselves. Just as you can only learn to know a person truly through solidarity, so also you will learn to see the right corporate form of a team or an organisation only if there is sufficient bond. Not until then are you prepared to develop a second look, only then can you penetrate to the deeper layers of how you want to associate with each other and what is the genuine core of collaboration.

In other words, to coach others into form neither power nor knowledge or insight will suffice. A necessary additional condition for actual leadership is the ability to establish solidarity. Without solidarity the step towards substantial rationality and the philosophic life cannot be carried out. The trainer who would coach his team into form must be able to let this involvement emerge. Every leader who would get his organisation in form will have to create fellowship, unity of mind, a combination of discipline and 'soul'. Power and expertise alone will not suffice here. Beyond this a leader needs authority and charisma. That is, he must evoke the right 'chemistry', loyalty to himself and loyalty in the group. He must fascinate, build bridges, invite enthusiasm, have the power to attract. Shall we use an unexpected term here, and say: a leader must eroticise? At any rate, he must awaken a drive towards intercourse, an urge to unity. This is, as Plato saw it, what schooling in leadership ultimately reduces to: a schooling in Eros, in love. The turn to the philosophic life is also a turn to this schooling.

The Symposium

Can you school love? Can you learn solidarity? Can you teach people to establish loyalty? What in fact is fellowship? What is power of attraction? What happens when there is 'chemistry' between people? In *The Symposium* Plato recounted a conversation concerning these questions between Socrates and a small group of friends. We present a brief sketch of this dialogue. Throughout, the main theme is love, Eros, but the question of leadership is there too, implicit at first, later explicit as well. Use of dialogue provided Plato with the opportunity of bringing forward different aspects of love and loyalty. At the same time he illustrated the distinct stages in development of knowledge that a leader must traverse, as in the cave allegory, including the confusion and hardship attending it.

At the beginning of the dialogue the group decides not to get drunk again this evening. They still have a hang-over from the previous night, when one of them, Agathon, received a literary award. Instead, they agree that in turn each will present an ode to love, in support of one of the companions, Phaedrus. He is a writer himself, and is of the opinion that no meritorious piece on love has ever yet been written. He therefore intends to do so himself.

Pheadrus takes the first turn. He argues that love is the wellspring of all creation and the driving force of all motivation and development. Anyone can see this in his own experience, he says. For, when you have erred, your feeling of shame is in no instance as great as it is before your beloved one. Far worse when the beloved finds out than when some other person does. This proves that love induces shame, and hence love is the spur towards all improvement.

The theme of the second speaker (Pausanias) is the great difference between desire, which is turned inwards upon itself, and love, which delights in the best of the other. This is what we referred to at the start of this chapter, when we spoke of power and self-interest.

The third speaker, Eryximachus, who is a physician, asserts that love is mutual accord and harmony between distinct beings or between the different parts of your own being. And as when you take a medicine, or when you mix musical tones or compose melodies, so you must know very well what will and what will not lead to 'harmony and symphony'. For it is not the case that all things can be joined together without discrimination.

Playwright Aristophanes is the fourth speaker. He clarifies the enormous power of love by telling the story of the round people. Once upon a time people were round. They had four legs, four arms, a spine at 'front' and at the 'back' and two faces on a single head. These round people were extremely powerful. They rose up against the gods, and planned to assault them, wishing to storm the heavens and be gods themselves. Noting this, the gods convened to consult one another concerning how the round people might be kept in check, without destroying them. Having pondered the matter at length Zeus found the solution: 'Methinks I have a plan which will humble their pride and improve their manners; men shall continue to exist, but I will cut them in two and then they will be diminished in strength and increased in numbers; this will have the advantage of making them more profitable to us.' Zeus carried out the plan himself, cut all mortals in two halves and had Apollo heal the wounds. The effect spelled disaster. All halves engaged in desperate search for their counter-half. And when they thought they had found it they embraced each other, clung to each other, and tried to re-unite again. So great was the strength of their ardour that they did nothing else, so that eventually they would starve to death. Then Zeus took pity on them and had Apollo arrange that their union would be rewarded with a measure of

satisfaction, in order that they, at least intermittently, would find rest and take time to tend the fields.

Next is Agathon, the poet, who sketches the romantic side of love and solidarity. Love is happy and beautiful and young and tender; love has a supple form and can be found wherever people flourish. Love never hurts anyone, is capable of great self-control and courage and strength; is endowed with extraordinary creative powers, etc. Towards the end of his discourse he is transported to the point that he begins to speak in verse. The audience is much impressed.

Socrates is the last to speak. He is given the floor after various views have been advanced, each of them plausible and supported with arguments. Which of these is correct? Or are none of them, perhaps, entirely correct? What we have here is a transition from the second to the third level as described in the Allegory of the Cave. Also, it is a typical situation for a leader: in a confusing manifold of perspectives he must plot the proper course and carry enough conviction to successfully unite people around his ideas.

Wealth and poverty

Socrates starts by saying that he will be quite unable to present as beautiful a speech as Agathon did. But then, as he understood it, the agreement was not that they would tell beautiful stories, but rather that they would pronounce the truth about love. After some prompting by the others he decides to proceed in his usual way, by asking questions, and so to examine the truth about love. His initial series of questions refutes Agathon: love as such is not beautiful and happy, but rather the desire for beauty and happiness. Since you can desire only that which you do not possess, Eros, the god of love, is himself neither beautiful nor happy. Is he ugly and unhappy, then? No, not that either. He is something in between fair and foul, in between happiness and unhappiness.

Socrates here shifts to telling the story of how, long ago, a woman, Diotima, taught him about love. First he gives her description of what love is: the urge towards unification. Diotima had led him to understand that love is the mediator between the human and the divine. Love lets you rise above yourself, it raises you to a new perspective, an other form of consciousness. Love awakens the memory of your divinity, a longing and a fulfilment of which you, as Kopland wrote, did not know that they existed until you learned them through the kisses of a beloved. Love has this mediating function, Diotima said, because Eros is the son of Wealth (*Poros*) and Poverty (*Penia*). For once upon a time there was a feast in the heavens, and after the banquet Wealth, ‘who was the worse for nectar, went into the garden of Zeus and fell into a heavy sleep.’ Poverty, begging at the door as custom allowed, saw him and plotted to have a child by him. Accordingly she lay down at his side and conceived Love. This is why Love, as son of Poverty and Wealth, has the following characteristics:

> He is always poor and, unlike most people think, not at all sweet and beautiful. Being homeless he looks squalid, goes barefoot, sleeps on the naked earth, in doorways, or in the street beneath the stars of heaven. Like his mother, he is always in need. For another part, though, he is like his father: always scheming for the fair and good; he is bold, enterprising, strong, a mighty hunter, weaving one intrigue after another, keen in the pursuit of wisdom, fertile in resources; always seeking understanding, terrible as an enchanter, sorcerer; able to convince others. He is by nature neither mortal nor immortal, but vibrantly alive when things go

> well for him, and near death soon thereafter. But because of his father's nature, he revives again. Whatever he obtains he loses again and so he is never in want and never in wealth; and, further, he is in a mean between ignorance and knowledge.[xxxvi]

Generation in beauty

This is a mythical description of mastery. The master is able not to defend himself, not to arm himself in a too much or a too little. He is able to remain free and open. Only those who have this daring, who would be completely 'poor' and human, and do not tenaciously cling to their successes but have the courage to let them go -- only those can rise above themselves, taste their divine origin and achieve form. This is what love does to you; it lets you be rich because you can be poor; it lets you be divine because you allow yourself to be human. Love is the great giver of form, the intermediary between poverty and wealth, between the human and the divine. It raises you from 'poverty consciousness' to 'consciousness of wealth'.[xxxvii]

Next, Diotima explains what kind of 'activity' love is, what is the nature and quality of the master's acting, of someone in form. She describes this quality as 'the desire to procreate in beauty'. She explains:

> Look, Socrates, all men have a certain potency, both in their bodies and in their souls. And when we reach a certain age our nature urges us to procreation. Now it is impossible to procreate in ugliness, it must be in beauty. It is a divine thing, and in a mortal creature precisely this is the immortal principle: potency and generation. Without harmony generation cannot possibly be, and ugliness is always inharmonious with the divine. Only beauty stirs us to procreation. When therefore the potent approaches beauty it softens, enjoys and relaxes, it diffuses and begets. But at the sight of ugliness it frowns and contracts, gloomily it turns away and shrivels up, refraining from begetting. And it contains its seed as a burdensome pressure. That is why the potent and teeming gets so excited and ecstatic in the presence of beauty, that can relieve him of enormous tension. For love, Socrates, is not, as you imagine, bent towards beauty….It is bent towards generation in beauty.…And why generation? Because a mortal creature finds a sort of eternity and immortality in it.' [xxxviii]

In other words, by nature love aims at 'generation in beauty' because in this way we attain immortality. But such generation in beauty is not restricted to sexual, erotic love and to a personal chemistry between two people. It is vastly more comprehensive; in fact it includes our total quest to put to work everything for which our heart beats faster, everything we want to be involved with, all that we hold to be good and valuable. This is what makes us grow, elevates us to personal mastery and develops in us the art of leadership. In his story, Socrates is primarily concerned with this stepwise transformation, the 'ladder of love', parallel to the ascent from the cave. When we are young, he has Diotima say, our intent is mostly physical. We fall in love, are fascinated by that person, delight in physical beauty, experience ardent desire. In this phase we seek immortality via procreation. Later, this potency becomes more spiritual, now we desire to conceive the sort of thing that suits the mind: insight, professionalism, true knowledge of what is socially worthwhile. This is how great writers, artists and statesmen have achieved immortality, 'by delivering marvellous performances and developing many excellent traits'. The most important and most valuable insight, Socrates adds, is that political insight regarding the social order

which is called ‘justice’ and ‘sense of proportion’. After that, your development reaches the stage in which your power becomes intent on the beauty of knowledge and wisdom, on good ideas, a rich world of thought and profound reflection. And finally, as you behold this ‘vast ocean of beauty’, you can gain insight into the original beauty, the source of longing, permeating into the farthest reaches of body and soul, that which awoke with the first kisses from a girl, waiting, though you did not know it was there, as Kopland says. Socrates finds his words faltering as he tries to express it.

> This, my dear Socrates, said the strange woman of Mantineia, is that life above all others which man should live, in the contemplation of beauty absolute; a beauty which if once beheld, you will find incomparably more desirable than gold, and garments, and young people (whose presence now entrances you; and you and many a one would be content to live seeing them only and conversing with them without meat or drink, if that were possible -- you only want to look at them and to be with them). But what if man had eyes to see the true beauty -- the divine beauty, I mean, pure and dear and unalloyed?[xxxix]

At this point Socrates ends his discourse.

Leadership and mastery

Such is Socrates’ sketch of schooling in love and leadership, in what you could call ‘political erotism’. Plato added a bizarre denouement. Just as Socrates finishes speaking Alcibiades, the young and influential politician and Socrates’ dear friend, comes rushing in. Far from sober and wishing to contribute to the series of speeches, he without inhibition tells the truth about his personal love affair with Socrates; how he planned to use his own physical beauty to obtain a share in Socrates’ spiritual beauty, how he sought to seduce him, how he could not entice him into his bed, how in the end he did, but that Socrates refused to come to him or even touch him, which still makes him feel angry and hurt. Yet, he praises Socrates; he compares him to the small statues of those ugly satyrs that you can take apart and they contain figurines of gods that have the power to cast a spell on you. For this, he says, is what Socrates does: he casts a spell on you. And he warns the others to beware of him.

Socrates is described here as the master who, in the face of the political leader’s unbridled, self-seeking and immature passion, displays perfect integrity and self-control, following his own course incorruptibly and inexorably, a paragon of being in form. All the aspects of Eros discussed in the earlier discourses come forward here. Alcibiades is ashamed before him whom he holds dearest. Socrates has shown him the difference between love and desire; he has demonstrated that in love you need to be very aware of what will lead to harmony and balance and what will not. He has confronted him with his poverty in the precise area where he thought himself rich, in sex. And thus he draws him out of his fantasy world, brings him down to earth and shows him an erotism of another order, one Alcibiades does not share. In short, Socrates demonstrates the true import of leadership and mastery.

After this a large troupe of merrymakers arrives, pressing everyone to fill their cups, so that things deteriorate to a hard drinking spree (‘*sym-posium*’ = drinking together). At dawn all are either drunk or sleeping it off, Socrates alone remains sober and is engaged in discussion with a few hangers-on, concerning the question whether you need comparable knowledge and expertise to write a comedy as is required for a tragedy.

The moral of the story is obvious. Eros, the drive towards unity and procreation in beauty, this Eros it is who liberates us from the cave, from our egocentrism, who lets us transcend ourselves, brings us to mastery and to leadership. Without Eros you will not achieve form nor will you bring a team into good form. We must, however, school this love and outgrow a primitive image of it. We need to filter and refine it, deepen and broaden it, just as we did with our drive towards knowledge and power. It is only then that love will help us to quit the cave and see things in form.

Alcibiades is the personification of primitive love. Especially he, the politician, whose task it was to forge unity and right relationships within society, was the poorest of the group. He is the instrumental thinker, merely after quick and easy results; not taking the trouble to consider the genuine, essential stakes, incapable of temperance, lacking the courage to be honest except when drunk, devoid of prudence. How could such a person create social coherence and balance if he cannot even achieve these in his own self?

The moral is not only obvious, it is also demanding. Not because of the required discipline, or the problems of self-inquiry and joint investigation -- these too are demanding, but relatively simple compared to the fundamental choice at issue here: to aim or not to aim for schooling, to turn or not to turn to the life philosophic. Like erotism, the schooling we are talking about here demands that we give up our purely instrumental thinking, let go our usual target orientation, switch off our need for power and control. Schooling flourishes in free space alone, where we dare to bare ourselves to each other, where we can look at naked truths about ourselves and the other, about our work and our life. This schooling is itself a kind of love play; it brings you into form precisely when you are not preoccupied with the results. The philosophic life, then, is not something you can learn to control the way you can learn to master musical scales, debating techniques or management skills. Mastery is in transcending such control, just as leadership is in transcending interests. Socrates, 2500 years ago, at the dawn of our civilisation, saw as his task always to create such free space, to implement this schooling in freedom, to issue an insistent appeal to our personal and corporate freedom. In this book we wanted to show that his call has lost none of its relevance.

Tools and tips

Introduction

In this Appendix we offer a selection of working materials and practical guides as we developed them over the years. They are brief instructions, planned steps, work forms and schemes that should come in handy when you want to engage in the liberal arts and the perspectives underlying them. The materials offered here emerged in practice and aim at practice. This implies that they share in continuous change and renewal -- something inherent in living practice. For this reason we invite all users of these tools: please do not hesitate to let us know about your experiences, comment, suggestions, new ideas or new work forms. Our e-mail: info@hetnieuwetrivium.nl If you do, we can also make these available to others, via our website www.hetnieuwetrivium.nl

Dialectic

Guidelines to establish dialogue

At the beginning of a group dialogue session, the facilitator distributes these guidelines and they are read together. Although we approach the dialogue in a number of steps (see below), its core is always shaped by the attitude of the various speakers.

1. Take your time. A dialogue is a form of slow thinking, aimed at depth.
2. Listen. Ask questions. Put yourself in the other's place. See the world through his/her eyes.
3. Decisions need not be arrived at. To foster understanding and to gain insight into each other's views is sufficient result.
4. Do not think in opposition to the other ('Yes, but…'). Think along with the other, think together, as one mind ('Yes, and…').
5. Don't concentrate on solutions. Examine the reasons, values and views underneath a problem or a solution.
6. Make room for new thinking. Move beyond old patterns of thought.

A good dialogue bonds people; it creates space and fosters understanding.

Rules for a Socratic dialogue

Most of the rules given below were formulated by one of the founders of contemporary Socratic dialogue, Gustav Heckmann.

1. Socratic dialogue is thoughtful reflection on a fundamental question based on the experience of the participants, not on what they have heard or read (no appeal to authorities or others).
2. This reflection is 'genuine self-examination'. That is to say, when a participant has doubts about the topic he should express them. But when after self-examination his doubts are resolved, he should not pretend to doubt (no hypothetical talk).
3. Participants should take the trouble to express themselves clearly, but also as briefly as they can, so that a dialogue can ensue. That is, they should save long speeches for some other occasion (no monologues).
4. A participant should not concentrate on his own thoughts alone; he should try to understand those of the others as well. To ensure correct mutual understanding, the facilitator can at any moment ask a participant to repeat in his own words the point raised by another participant (communication check).
5. Thoughts about basic questions are often expressed in general or abstract statements. Whether the speaker really knows what he is saying, i.e. whether his statement is more than a string of words, is evident if he is able to illustrate it by concrete examples that his audience can experience. During the discussion every general or abstract statement is subjected to this test (concreteness).
6. Investigation of a basic question is not completed as long as the dialogue partners still adhere to contradictory views (aim at consensus).
7. To keep the inquiry transparent the available instruments should be used to the full. These primarily involve: systematic notation of statements; clear distinction between main dialogue, strategic dialogue, meta-dialogue (methodical approach).

How you can be sure to fail

You can introduce dialogue rules by pointing out how things should be done to be successful. But you can also point out how the dialogue can fail. For instance in the following ways.

1. Consider the matter under examination as something you have nothing to do with.
2. Present solutions as self-evident; examine nothing; don't explain underlying arguments.
3. Consider yourself efficient and others inept.
4. Make no effort to arrive at a shared posing of the problem.
5. Listen to others with the attitude of 'just let them talk'.
6. Think of another's words as an attack, or 'the same old story'; withdraw or become angry.
7. Assume that the present is no different from the past.
8. Don't try to find out the other's intentions; just present a refutation as 'that's how it is, period'.

Steps in a Socratic dialogue

In Chapter II we described the most important steps in a Socratic dialogue. We list them briefly here. We formulated the steps such that they can be applied to longer and shorter versions, either in a group or in person-to-person conversations.

1. Formulate the theme of investigation in possible initial questions. Select one of these.
2. Look for examples in your own experience where the initial question plays a role. Each example should be explained briefly.
3. Select one example. Which is the most interesting? Which is the most fruitful example in terms of which to examine the initial question? Let this example be the basis for analysis and argument during the entire conversation.
4. Let the example be told in sufficient detail so that people can take the place of the presenter. Ask about the facts (circumstances, actions, who, what, where, when, how) and about the felt experience of these facts (thoughts, emotions).
5. Focus the example on a crucial moment: an act, experience or judgement of the person presenting the sample case (the 'presenter' or 'narrator'). The description of this crucial moment is the core statement.
6. Ask about the motives for the act, the explanation of the experience or the reasons for the core statement. 'Why did you do this?' 'How come you felt that way?' 'Why did you think that?' 'Was that the background of your action?' Link the answers to these question back to the initial question. What is their significance for this question? Concretise and specify the concepts of the initial question in terms of the core statement and these justifications.
7. Test the justifications by having the others take the position of the presenter. Would they, given this example, have done, thought, felt the same at the time, or not? And why? Is that a good reason? On what basis is the argument valid? Every general statement should be amenable to concretisation in terms of the selected example.
8. Formulate the essence. What is the pivot point of the matter for you? On which values or principles do you base your view?
9. Seek consensus on justifications and core statements. Can all agree on these? Is this the answer to the initial question?
10. Recall the dialogue. What did you like? What bothered you?

Ten tips for the facilitator in a Socratic dialogue

1. Be strict about procedure, but do not interfere with the content, even if you disagree with an analysis. Independent inquiry demands that the participants themselves determine the substance of their analysis.
2. Check that the initial question meets the criteria: is it fundamental, in readily understood wording, answerable via joint thinking, easily provided with concrete examples? Is the question relevant and motivating to the participants? Does it get at the core of the inquiry?
3. Check that the examples meet the criteria. A good example is one known first hand through personal experience on the part of the presenter. The presenter was actively involved by doing something or taking a stand. The simpler the example, the better. Do not be hasty in assuming that you already grasp its implications because it sounds simple. Avoid negative examples; they evoke hypothetical thinking.
4. Try for rapid selection of an example. List the preferences, let them be explained briefly, decide. Not everybody needs to like a specific example, as long as you can work with it.
5. Explore the example as well as possible by letting the presenter introduce the setting and context as concretely as possible (the 'film'), have the others ask questions, and let the presenter explain. The intention is that the presenter sketches the example in enough detail so that the others get a complete picture and can imagine themselves in the place of the presenter. Ask explanatory questions about:
   a. what actually happened (facts);
   b. what the presenter himself did (action);
   c. what the situation meant for him/her personally (emotion).
6. Let the example focus on one crucial act, one experience or one judgement, the so-called 'hot spot'. Trace what the presenter did, said and felt at that moment. Analyse the initial question in terms of that moment. First make that moment as concrete as possible by way of the questions asked under 5 above: what happened, what was done, what feelings were evoked? This description is the basis for joint inquiry in how you must interpret the event, act or experience. Write the hot spot on the blackboard (or flip-over) in two ways:
   a. the act or experience as such;
   b. the interpretation of it in relation to the initial question.
7. Make sure a joint inquiry starts. Prevent participants from merely formulating standpoints, opinions or judgements. Instead, let them help each other to think things through by suspending judgement and by asking questions ('What is your question, and whom are you addressing?'). Prevent debate; the point is not that that one wins or proves his right. We are after creating a wealth of images and arguments. Also, avoid to do no more than advise the presenter. A Socratic dialogue is not about solving his/her problem. We use the case to engage in joint examination of our underlying views and motives.
8. Often, people tend to seek definitions for the terms used, before they begin the inquiry. But definitions come at the end, not at the start. Far more effective to make the terms concrete first, rather than define them.
9. Stick to the main thread, prevent side-tracking. Summarise, repeat and order. Make use of a flip-over or blackboard to stay on course.

10. Ascertain that all participants can offer an argued answer to the initial question in relation to the case analysed. Let everybody in fact formulate that answer. Are the words expressive, do they point to essentials? Are they words that make a difference, that reach you, that engage you? Or do they just evoke derision and indifference?

Steps in a brief dialogue

A brief dialogue is a compacted version of a Socratic dialogue (duration about one hour). For a brief dialogue we follow a fixed pattern. We start with gathering and selecting problem cases in actual practice. One case is selected and discussed in accordance with the scheme outlined below. The method is very suitable for peer-group consultation. It should be remembered, though, that the intent in dialogue is to explicate, exchange and sharpen views rather than problem solving.

Four steps in a brief dialogue
Concentrate on a practical case in which the presenter was involved and that he/she experienced as a problem situation.

1. Recount your experience briefly.
- What factually happened (facts).
- What you did yourself (action).
- What the situation meant for you personally (feelings, emotion),
- What issue should be examined here (question).

2. The others pose explanation-seeking questions.

3. The others imagine themselves in the position of the presenter.
- What would the situation mean to you? (feelings, emotion)
- What would you have done? (action)
- How would you reply to the question posed (under 1)? (judgement)
- What would be your reasons? (view)

4. At the end all take a few minutes to formulate the crux for themselves, that is, the principles or values at issue here.
- What touches you? What should we take to heart (essence)?
- What courage is needed to do justice to that? What must you give up for it (measure)?
  What needs to be faced (prudence)?
- Hence, what is required in (your part of) the organisation (justice)?

Taking a shortcut

In many situations, for example during a work review, there is not enough time for a thorough Socratic inquiry. Even so, it is possible to carry out an inquiry in a brief span of time. For this purpose we have developed the following, less exacting approach.

Time
Agree how much time is to be spent on the dialogue. In a small group, and with trained people, a dialogue need not take more than thirty minutes. If the participants are untrained you must count on at least three-quarters of an hour to an hour.

Topic
Select the topic of discussion. Start things off with an introduction about the substance and importance of the subject. Write the compactly worded topic on a flip-over.

Questions
Give every participant the opportunity to formulate questions about the subject that can or should be investigated during the discussion.

Experiences
Let any willing participant contribute experiences on the subject from his/her own praxis. How do you run into this subject on the job?

Responses
The telling of these experiences elicits reactions and reflections from the others; questions, comments, objections. Make sure that the atmosphere of joint investigating is maintained (no discussion or debate).

The essence
After the most important questions and experiences have been considered and various views exchanged, you ask each participant to restate once more what he/she finds the essence of the topic to be. What really hits you here? Record these statements (minutes).

Review
At the end you take some time to review the dialogue. How did it go? What should you keep in mind for a next time?

Person-to-person Socratic dialogue

Although the Socratic dialogues we conduct usually involve groups, the method can be applied to person-to-person talks as well. The major difference is what happens after the example and the core statement are introduced and elucidated. There are no other participants present to take the place of the presenter and to examine the underlying views. Instead, in this phase of the person-to-person dialogue the questioner acts as 'devil's advocate'. In this way the validity of the arguments presented is critically examined.

Steps

1. Agree on a theme and a related initial question.
2. The questioner asks the presenter to offer an example illustrating the initial question, and leads him/her through the successive steps: focus on a crucial moment, formulate the main arguments.
3. Next the questioner examines the validity of the stated arguments by suggesting alternatives.
4. After that, the questioner has the presenter formulate the most important underlying views and general rules.
5. At the close of the inquiry the presenter identifies the essence of, or answer to, the initial question.

Tasks

Questioner: ask questions; insist on them; summarise; structure, mirror, concretise; test for validity; suspend judgement; let the other do the research; note down statements.
Presenter: say what you really think; no long discourses; concretise; examine your own experience; look for relevant arguments; seek an argued answer to the initial question.

Time span
As a rule, a Socratic dialogue between two persons requires no more than 20 - 30 minutes.

Selection of a good initial question

One of the most important steering instruments in a Socratic dialogue is to work with one single central question. Mostly, this question emerges from a crucial theme occupying the participants. By way of the steps given here a group can arrive at an argued selection of the initial question. At the same time, the participants gain insight into the criteria for a good initial question.

A. Individually
- Take a theme from your own job which you want to think through with this group.
- List some facts connected to this theme and consider how they should be interpreted and judged.
- Formulate on that basis three questions that can serve as starting point for a Socratic dialogue.

B. In threesomes
- Select, in mutual consultation per person the best initial question.
- Check that this question meets the following criteria:
  - a general issue;
  - of a substantial nature;
  - non-empirical, to be answered via reflection alone;
  - relevant for the participants;
  - provokingly formulated, so that the dilemma or moral weighing stands out;
  - formulated simply, with a minimum of 'troublesome' concepts;
  - easily provided with concrete, experienced examples.

C. Plenary
- The threesomes alternate to supply an initial question.
- The question is written out for all to see.
- The threesome explains which criteria are met by the question posed.
- From all questions thus generated one is selected to serve as initial question.

Report and analysis of a Socratic dialogue

In the course of the dialogue the views entertained in the group on some important question are explicated. The participants submit a large number of ideas, standpoints and arguments. To order and handle these it is advisable to prepare a report, an analytical summation of the arguments. The report can be the starting point for a subsequent round of investigation. It can also help to digest the dialogue or be used as basis for a Summary of arguments.

To write an analytical summation of the arguments it is important that each participant first writes his own report. All reports are sent to the other members of the group and to the facilitator. The latter orders the reports into an analytical summation.

Scope of the participant report

The report is a means to improve understanding of one's own convictions and arguments, and those of others. Because it is also sent to the other participants it should be neither too long nor too brief, say, no more than about 800 words. Write in understandable prose, not in 'report jargon'.

Present a brief description of the following elements:

- What happened in the example?
- Which is the presenter's crucial moment (action, thought, sentiment)?
- What is your own core statement?
- Which are the major arguments offered in the dialogue?
- Which general rules or principles are the basis for your own arguments (the big story)?
- What is, therefore, your answer to the initial question?

Scope of the analytical summation

This report presents a review and ordering of all introduced arguments. It serves as starting point for closer examination of the underlying views held by members of the group.

- Write out the initial question.
- State the names of the participants and the facilitator.
- Guided by the participants' reports draw a detailed picture of the example.
- Reduce the participants' arguments to two or more positions (statements) pertinent to the initial question.
- Collect, per statement, the arguments advanced by the various participants.

Formulating the syllogism

Analysis in a Socratic dialogue is focused on a 'hot spot', an act, experience or judgement on the part of the presenter. The description of it constitutes the core statement. Next, the assumptions behind those core statements are uncovered and examined. The logical structure of the argument so elucidated consists in three elements: 1) a number of facts led the presenter to 2) an act, experience or judgement, on the basis of 3) certain presuppositions or justifications. This argument can be summed up in an (informal) syllogism. The classical example of a syllogism is:

- All men are mortal (major premise);
- Socrates is a man (minor premise);
- Hence: Socrates is mortal (conclusion).

The form of this argument is *progressive*: the argument runs from a general rule (major premise) and a specific instance (minor premise) to a conclusion. Inquiry in a Socratic dialogue is *regressive*, it starts with the conclusion (the core statement), and seeks general rules on the basis of which, given the facts, the conclusion is justified. An example.

- I cancelled unilaterally the planned consultation with Jan (conclusion).
- Jan could carry on, whereas Femmy could not (minor premise).
- And if one person cannot carry on it is permissible to set aside an agreement with an other person who can (major premise).

Formulation of an argument in accordance with this logical structure can be an important aid in the inquiry. In every case the question is whether the logical argument is portrayed correctly (whether the minor and major premises are true), and if so, whether it is sound (whether the conclusion can in fact be deduced from the premises, or whether possibly other premises must be added). You can think of a Socratic dialogue as a search for the correct major premises. We look for the general rules that, given a number of factual arguments, allow valid deduction of a specific assertion from them.

Steps

1. Formulate the syllogism of the presenter.
2. Place yourself in the example. Formulate your own syllogism.
3. Can a syllogism be formulated, common to the entire group? Are there major premises held in common?

Guidelines for the strategic dialogue

During an extensive Socratic dialogue strategic decisions are repeatedly taken concerning the progression of the inquiry. This may for example be a decision to take a closer look at one particular statement, or to inventory the remaining contrasting views on this point in the group. In a group dialogue such choices are often made, usually in passing. Sometimes, however, it is necessary to take a strategic decision more deliberately. In that case the main dialogue is temporarily halted. A time-out is introduced.

1. A participant proposes that the main dialogue be halted, so that strategy can be discussed.
2. The proposal is motivated briefly, by stating at what point in the inquiry and why a decision is needed concerning how the main dialogue should be continued.
3. When all participants understand the motivation the strategic dialogue can commence.
4. The facilitator leads this part of the proceedings as well (which is not the case in the meta-dialogue).
5. The group lists the alternatives for continuation of the inquiry; these alternatives may be written down.
6. The group examines the arguments for each of these alternatives, without getting into their substance (since this would amount to continuing the main dialogue).
7. The group selects a continuation of the inquiry acceptable to all participants.
8. The approach thus selected is written out; the strategic dialogue is over; the group resumes the main dialogue.

Guidelines for the meta-dialogue

A long Socratic dialogue taxes participants' patience. A meta-dialogue provides opportunity to talk about how the inquiry and the mutual interaction is experienced. The participants thus learn how the others experience the dialogue. Also, they can think about how to continue the dialogue adequately.

1. We recommend that one or more time-outs for a meta-dialogue are stipulated in advance.
2. In addition, a meta-dialogue is started whenever a participant or the facilitator sees an immediate reason for it. This need arises when negative feelings hinder him or her in constructive participation in the main dialogue.
3. The main dialogue is halted; the facilitator indicates explicitly the objective and method of the meta-dialogue and may cede the chair to a (trained) participant.
4. The group members together examine the conversation climate. Have the dialogue rules been observed adequately during the main dialogue?
5. All negative feelings that get in the way of the main dialogue can be expressed and considered. Let all participants speak their mind.
6. When participants talk with each other about mutual irritations it is advisable not to speak in general terms. Refer to the concrete behaviour that occurred and the effect it had.
7. Feelings of well-being, too, can be expressed and their causes examined.
8. Investigate possible links between the interactions discussed and the substantial inquiry in the main dialogue.
9. Provide opportunity for questions about the method and structure of the inquiry so far.
10. Decide jointly what additional rules are needed to ensure effective continuation of the main dialogue.

Rhetoric

Guidelines for fruitful debate

1. Distinguish '*convincing*' (ego-oriented) and '*persuading*' (other-oriented).
2. Provide a brief *definition* of the major concepts.
3. *Structure* the arguments (for example: problem, seriousness, cause, plan, feasibility, efficacy).
4. *Reinforce* arguments with examples, metaphors, logic, facts, figures and authorities.
5. Be ready for critical reactions.
6. Select which counterarguments you will refute.
7. Beware of debating tricks and sophisms:
   - disregard personal attacks, or pay back in kind;
   - a thesis needs proof, insist on supporting arguments;
   - repeat your point of view patiently when you are being misrepresented.
8. Look for shared starting points, arguments and interests.
9. Listen actively -- keep summarising and ask many questions.
10. Address everyone and respect a person's emotions.

Rules for a debate

Preparation
- Read the instructions below regarding the progression of the debate.
- The facilitator introduces and explains the thesis.
- The group is divided (possibly at random) into proponents, opponents, jury and/or audience.
- Both groups of debaters are given time to prepare.
- Each group designates spokespersons who will take turns to speak on behalf of the group.
- After the debate is ended, the jury is given time for brief deliberation. Meanwhile the debaters report how they experienced the debate.

The debate
The debate consists of four rounds. In the first two and the last each speaker is given two minutes. The third round is a brief 'free for all'. The arrangement is as follows:

1. For	position	2 min.
Against		2 min.
2. For	defence	2 min.
Against		2 min.
3. Free debate		4 min.
4. Against	conclusion	2 min.
For		2 min.

+ time-outs + interruptions

Customary practice
- The speaker addresses the jury or the audience.
- Speakers stand.
- Allotted speaking time over, complete the sentence.
- Per group various speakers take the floor.
- As a rule a time-out (5 to 10 minutes) is inserted after the free debate, to review the group's own arguments.
- In the final round no new arguments are introduced.
- After the debate the jury has a few minutes to determine the debate winner, and proceeds to deliver its judgement and states its reasons.

The audience
During the debate the audience is permitted to make its preference and disapproval known (applause, heckling).

The jury
The jury designates the winning party on the basis of the following criteria:

a. refutation of the other party's arguments;
b. eloquence, humour, non-verbal presentation.

Time monitoring

Per round a person is appointed to keep track of the time (speaking time per speaker). Halfway a speaking time and five seconds before its end this person will signal the speaker.

Standard areas of dispute

Next to explanation of the thesis, the seven questions listed below can also help you to build up your argument in support of your own position, or to undermine the opposition. Try to present and defend your own position as strongly as possible. In the preparatory phase you should also consider the other party's possible arguments, objections and questions.

1. What are the advantages of putting this thesis into effect?
2. What are the disadvantages?
3. Are these advantages and disadvantages important?
4. Do the advantages outweigh the disadvantages?
5. Does the thesis solve the noted problems?
6. Are there better ways to solve these problems?
7. To what degree can the thesis be feasibly put to work?

Formulation of the thesis

Prior to the debate the initiators formulate one or more theses. A thesis must get at the core of an issue. Avoid difficult wording. The thesis should be 'debatable', that is, it should be possible to argue for and against it. A *value thesis* is of the form: something is good, just, desirable (or bad, unjust, undesirable), or something is more important (better, worse) than something else. For example: 'Quality of care is more important than economic growth', or 'It is undesirable to replace physicians with nurses.' A *policy thesis* has this form: policy maker x should replace current policy y with the new policy z, or more briefly, x should do z. For instance: 'The organisation should reward its employees with profit dividends', or: 'Care institutions should let themselves be guided by client wishes'.
The three questions of the doctrine of status help to find a good thesis.

1. What are the facts of the case? (for example, work pressure)
2. How should these be interpreted? (for example, lack of manpower)
3. What judgement obtains here? (for example, failing management)

A brief analysis like this will quickly lead to potential theses.
You can make the thesis provocative by formulating such that it contains two contrasting concepts, as in the theses above: quality versus growth, or profit dividends rather than just salary.

The classical structure of an argument

The classical structure of an argument continues to be a useful aid for debate or public address.

1. *Introduction*. Here you establish contact with the audience, kindle their interest, address their feelings. Start with an arresting question, a humorous anecdote or a remark that flatters your hearers. Make people curious about your message.
2. *Exposition.* Next, you present a brief review of the relevant facts, events, circumstances or figures on which your thesis is based.
3. *Thesis.* Now you state your point of view or judgement. Your thesis identifies what you believe the issue to be.
4. *Argument.* It is important that you support your thesis, to explicate the reasons underlying your viewpoint, the reasons why the facts should be interpreted in this way. Also, this is the moment to anticipate possible criticisms and to refute them.
5. *Closing statement.* It is advisable to end with a summary and a conclusion, once again address feelings or appeal to the audience.

Get the picture

Actors studying their part do not only work with the lines they are to speak. There is a ‘subtext’, too -- one they do not put into words. Yet this is what determines the colour, the portent and the significance of the text. The spoken lines are, as it were, the melody, the foreground, while the subtext is the background, the supportive part that determines how the melody is heard, as harmony or disharmony, sonorous or lively, threatening or relaxing, tensed or soothing, etc. In a dialogue or debate it may be helpful to look for views hidden in the subtext, to attend to the undertones of the spoken word.

Usually these conjure up a picture (a self-image, a picture of the situation or the organisation, a portrait of humanity, a world view) or a story. One way of finding such images and subtexts is to compare the topic under investigation, the group of speakers, the core question or the thesis with all manner of things. Examples:

- If you were to compare the discourse on this topic with music, what genre of music would it be?
- If all those involved were animals or plants, which would they be, and why these?
- If you had to report the matter as a weather forecast, what would it be like?
- How does the situation appear if you much simplified or amplified it in a caricature?
- What would you think of the matter if you were a capo mafioso? If you had six million Euro at your disposal? If your mother were in charge?
- Which proverbs or sayings would fit the occasion? Etcetera.

Steps

1. Think of the images or subtexts that come to mind during the investigation of the theme.
2. Exchange them with the other members of the group.
3. Do the images add information? If so, what?
4. Are some images shared?
5. What do the images mean for the central question or thesis?

Making each word count

An excellent way of restricting yourself to the core of what needs saying in a joint inquiry is derived from the practice of silence surrounding life and work in the contemplative monastic order founded by St. Benedict. Silence attends even the 'joint deliberation on weighty matters'. The Abbot introduces the subject of discussion to the monks of his Chapter, and everyone is given the opportunity to offer his view. The younger monks first, St. Benedict prescribed, and the older ones thereafter, since otherwise the former would not dare to speak their mind. The discourse is couched in silence, that is, when a speaker is finished an interval of silence ensues -- its length equal to the duration of the address.

Steps

1. Make sure the group is not too large (no more than 7 persons). Determine the length of time to be reserved for this exercise.
2. Select a theme to talk about. Or don't choose a topic in advance, just work with something you think of on the spot.
3. In silence. Fix your attention on the theme. Note how streams of thoughts come to mind. Some of those thoughts arrest you and lead you on. Express those thoughts to your partners. Then you fall silent again, observe your thoughts and your reactions to the others.
4. At the end devote a few minutes to recapitulation. How is it, to talk in this manner? What does the silence do for you, for the others, for the topic?

Authoritative speech

Only a *vir bonus,* a truly good man can be an excellent orator, said Quintilianus in his *Institutio Oratoria*. Your speech will not be persuasive unless you radiate reliability, integrity, credibility. To win others over to a point of view is a matter of authority rather than power. But what does authority imply? How do you command respect?

- 'Authority' has to do with positiveness, certainty, assurance. When a person speaks with authority he speaks with assurance: that's how it is. Yet, this is only part of 'authority'. Speaking with assurance could easily be authoritarian, dogmatic, hence belittling and forcing submission. To speak with authority means that the hearer experiences what you say as self-evident: yes, of course, that's how it is. Consequently: *assurance + self-evidence*.
- How do you establish such acceptance on the part of the hearer? You speak with authority when your convictions inspire the course you chart. Consequently: *assurance + direction, vision.*
- You can speak authoritatively when you survey the whole, indicate the major positions and state your own position relative to these. Consequently: *assurance + taking a stand.*
- To speak authoritatively is to be your own man/woman. You do not speak on behalf of some authority, you do not appeal to authority. You rest your case on your own discovery of what is regulative and true. Consequently: *assurance + authenticity.*
- Authoritative speech leaves room for others to think differently. You do take a stand, but you do not force it upon others. If you have thought things through carefully and have arrived at a different conclusion there will be room for this. Such space is not there for those who let love of ease dictate their actions. Consequently: *assurance + space.*
- Authoritative speech is an invitation to partnership and participation. It is an invitation, not only to agree with what is said, but also to share in social and personal life bound up with it. Consequently: *assurance + invitation to participation.*

Grammar

The ‘taste’ of words. Striking sentences

‘Words that work’ are words that leave an ‘imprint’, words that ‘carve’. To find such words you need to develop a feeling for the ‘taste’ of words: which words ‘grab’ you, which don’t?

1. One way of doing this -- and also a good way to explore an issue -- is this:
   a. Think of five words in an issue that appeal to you and five that you dislike. Or think of five words that tellingly characterise the issue or your relation to the issue, and five that completely miss the point.
   b. Read these words to the others.
   c. If you could borrow one word from another person, which would you choose?

2. Another way of getting a feeling for the taste of words is this: Select one word that is central to the issue. What associations does this evoke in you? Inventory the associations.

3. You can carve words in memory by compacting an issue, an idea, an argument in a single terse, striking sentence. Some examples are:
   Those who pay should have say.
   A penny saved is a penny earned.
   Waste not, want not.
   The man who enslaves his minutes liberates his hours.

4. This, too, helps you to be brief and terse: If you had to state the issue, or your view on it, on a picture postcard, what would you say?

Editorial comment

An editorial is a public attempt (essay) by a group of editors to sketch a balanced picture, a thoughtful perspective on a current political or social issue. They have discussed this among themselves first. They have listed the various interests, compared different approaches and formulated evaluative standards. Next, they put all this in writing, in a special way. Not prompted by personal interest but for the common good. Not in strident, polemical language but using cool argument. They do not take sides but seek to offer insight, to make visible what is essential, to place events in a framework so that the broad lines and the bigger story stand out from the confusing mass of detail.

Steps

1. Consider the issue you want to write about; what are the facts, how do you want to interpret them, how should they be assessed? Consider also the importance of the issue and what other possible interpretations and evaluations there may be.
2. Exchange ideas with others. Where would you agree? Where would you disagree? Discuss the major points that should be dealt with in the editorial. What is the main argument? Which is the bigger story behind the issue?
3. Compose a title or headline. Think of images, metaphors, catchy phrases.
4. Designate someone to write a concept.
5. Discuss this draft. Gather pointers for the final text.
6. Write the final text.

Imagine a person with authority

A classical way of creating scope to gain a balanced perspective on an issue is to let your imagination picture an insightful and authoritative person, and to look at things as he or she would. The point is that you learn to tune in to this image of a broad-minded, big-hearted person with tangible authority.

Steps

A. Plenary

1. Reflect: what is vision, really? And what is authority? What are the outstanding characteristics of these? Exchange ideas about this.
2. Do you know people who radiate vision and authority, either in your own environment or from the media? Present your reasons for mentioning them.
3. What experience do you have with people who acted with vision and authority?
What did you find striking in their performance?

B. Individually

4. Picture for yourself a person you admire, whom you respect and who has genuine authority for you. What does this person look like? How does he/she look upon you? All of us know of such people. Perhaps it is a well-known political person (Mandela, Martin Luther King), perhaps simply mum or dad, a historical figure or some self-created personage. In fact they are in every case personifications of your own inner compass.
5. Imagine that you are together with this person. What seems to be his attitude towards you? How does he make you feel? What does he radiate?
6. Suppose you tell him about the issue you are concerned with. How does he react? What does he want to show you? Which of your qualities or skills does he appeal to?

C. Plenary

7. Exchange ideas. Reflect on the significance of these images for a perspective on the issue.

Interviewing your inner pilot

An in-depth continuation of the above is to stage an interview with your own inner pilot, as described in Chapter IV. This is a subtle exercise, demanding calmness and concentration. Socrates was known to pause, totally immersed in himself, inaccessible for the outside world. If asked what he was doing, he would say that he was in communication with his *daimonion.* Given the required calmness and concentration, half an hour of such meditation will go a long way.

Steps

A. Individually

1. Find a place where you can work undisturbed. Let an image emerge of your inner pilot, your own person with vision and authority. Attune yourself to this person, his charisma, his effect on you.
2. Present this person with a burning question, that is, actually formulate and write out the question.
3. Attend to the answer this person offers. Write it down, and continue with further questions. Make sure you do not just note what you already thought anyway; stay tuned in to the authority of your pilot and be open to what he wants to make clear to you (perhaps he will say things you had not expected).

B. With one or two others

4. Read each other's interviews. Determine, per interview, which are the most important guidelines or principles arising in the interview.

Personal anecdote

One way of evoking the bigger story is to describe a small story ‘most meticulously’. Relying on simple, readily understood phrasing, stories can reveal something complex and profound. They address us on a range of levels, not just the cognitive. The most powerful form of telling stories is the recount of a personal anecdote. This is a story that meets the criterion of scarcity; people value whatever is rare. And what is scarcer than a personal story?

Steps

1. Everyone thinks of a personal anecdote relevant to the theme, thesis or question under examination. Make sure that a) it is your own story (first-person narrative, your own actions), b) it is pertinent to the theme, and c) the telling of it takes no more, but not much less than about three minutes.
2. Tell each other the stories. Also indicate briefly the point you want to make via your story.
3. Select the most expressive story.
4. Write the story out, chronologically, sentence by sentence on a flip-chart. Make certain that you put into words the most important elements of what happened. Avoid completeness or too much detail, go for the essentials.
5. Next, explore together what the anecdote says about the theme, the thesis or the question under examination: where did it happen, just what happened, how should you interpret this? Which bigger story lies behind this little story?

Summary of arguments. Essay

Both the Summary of Arguments and the Essay may be seen as elaborations of the earlier tips on 'Report and analysis of a Socratic dialogue (cf. p. **xxx**). In each of these the point is to analyse an issue in terms of a concrete example (or a number of examples) by way of collecting, comparing and mutually weighing the arguments. A Summary of Arguments and an Essay differ from a Report and analysis of a Socratic dialogue in that they are less concerned with listing every argument than with the readability of the text (the impact on the reader) and, particularly in the Essay, with the personal touch.

Steps

1. Collect the written material from the dialogue (notes, reports, flip-over sheets).
2. Determine what, to you, are the most important items, which is the guiding thread in the inquiry of examples, arguments, judgements, views and principles.
3. Recall which topoi, images or personal anecdotes in the session impressed you most.
4. Select a perspective: objective or personal, chronological or impressionistic. Select a style: story or argument, 'casual' (as in a column) or businesslike (commentary, editorial) etc. Select an ideal reader, a person who would be able and willing to read your text (a participant in the discussion or, purposely, a non-participant).
5. Write out a rough sketch, a division into paragraphs or sections, in catchwords.
6. Write the draft.
7. If possible, let the draft text be read by some sympathetic and critical person.
8. Process his or her comment in the final version.

Reading and reviewing a text

Jointly reading and reviewing a profound text or a book is an efficient means to clarify your own conceptual frame, to examine it in relation to that of others and to link it to a larger story.

Approach

1. Keep the group small (four to six participants), otherwise there is no time to let everyone have their say.
2. If the book is too large, a selection of chapters can be made. Make sure that a summary of the entire work is available.
3. Each member of the group reads the text or the book in advance. After reading they write a brief report, guided by questions such as these:
    - What do you consider to be the core message?
    - Which is the crucial passage in each chapter or section?
    - What do you appreciate about the text, which passages?
    - Which parts do you find difficult to understand?
    - What passages would you disagree with?
    - What does the content mean for your daily activities?
4. These questions can be used in a variety of ways. They can serve as agenda for the discussion: let them be addressed per person, let everyone take a turn in answering per question, select some items, etc.
5. Be sure to start the meeting with having everyone indicate what prompted interest for this specific text.
6. Appoint a discussion leader who will ensure that each can take the floor and that all points of interest are dealt with.
7. The review can be carried out in the course of one long meeting (a day), or else in a series of five or six brief gatherings. In the latter case a choice can be made to concentrate on one section or chapter per session. This encourages careful reading of crucial passages.
8. Additional background material can be found in published reviews or articles about the author. For some contemporary thinkers video interviews are available. It can be helpful to see and hear the author in person.

Reflective diary

A diary is a way of creating time out in the midst of the overwhelming dose of daily experiences. Its function is not that of a chronicle, which lays down what happened in a given period; rather, the aim is reflection on how to make sense of the events. A reflective diary gives you the opportunity to retrace the day's doings, to weigh them, analyse them, interpret them. Writing forces you to think slowly, giving you time to measure your actions against the life rules which you have set yourself, to link them to your own bigger story, or to call the bigger story back to mind.

There are all kinds of ways to write a reflective diary. A daily stint works better than a few entries per week. Short entries work better than a long text. Writing in the evening seems to be easier for many than writing in the morning. Working with a theme or guideline helps, too. For all of these, however, personal preference is decisive.

An interesting version is to keep a diary together with someone else, your partner for instance -- both write a daily piece in the same diary.

Approach

1. Make daily (or a few times per week) note of your thoughts and observations as occasioned by events of the day.
2. Select a question or theme on which you want to focus. Possible questions are these:
   - What guides me? What principles or values underlie my behaviour?
   - At what point was I free, when was I not?
   - Where did I find 'beauty and comfort' today?
   - What led to hope, to satisfaction or to engagement?
3. Reread the fragments periodically. What strikes you? Which are crucial insights? What catches your notice in the descriptions of your experiences?
4. In connection with these insights, formulate some images, incentives or aphorisms that represent the essence in provocative ways.
5. If possible, discuss the diary, including your analyses of the major themes and your aphorisms, with someone you trust. Work brief notes of that discussion into your diary as well.

Ethics

Analysis of habits

Ultimately, philosophical inquiry always comes down to self-investigation. Socrates challenged people to render account of their views, and examined these in the light of their behaviour and action. He held that mastery and the good life are the consequence of right insight. According to him, correct action can have no other foundation. This is why he assumed that, if you are unable to act correctly you obviously do not have the right insight. But much of our behaviour and acting is determined by habits, habits of mind and feeling, habits in what we aim for. These are as it were coagulated or frozen insights, by now self-evident opinions we no longer reflect on because we blindly assume them to be true. This is why it is important to become conscious of these self-evidences and to examine them.

Steps

a. Individually

1. Recall for yourself concrete experiences in which you flourished, and experiences where this was not the case. Select one of each. Choose experiences that genuinely touched you and that you can examine by assessing them with someone else.
2. Imagine a picture of those experiences as concretely as you can. For each of them, recall what you thought, what you felt, what you wanted.
3. Identify for yourself which habits of yours, what patterns, typical traits or ways of responding came out in those experiences.

b. Twosomes

4. Take turns describing such experiences to each other. Examine together what apparently is the view implicit in these characteristic habits.
5. Finally, list the habits that go with flourishing, and those that do not. Do these differ from the habits you actually have? If so, why then do you have such habits?

The middle position

In all we do or say feeling plays a central role. Purely rational considerations make up but a small part of what motivates us. Cognitive arguments are invariably flanked by arguments prompted by feelings. More than that, they are the ground of a feeling: views are not only a condition or occasion for a feeling, they are a constituent part of feeling as such.

One can easily become a slave of one's feelings. We may be led by anger now, by pleasure later, by pain sometimes, or love, often by fear. Tossed back and forth by all kinds of influences we are. The purpose of the inquiry below is to find ways to deal with a feeling such that we really come into our own, that we flourish, function best and are truly free.

Steps

1. Think of a situation in your own practice that you found to be a problem.
2. Recall the feelings that played a role then. Name them. Note, though, that often something is worded as a feeling, while it is in fact a thought ("I felt that I disagreed with him'). Putting feelings into words is an art in itself.
3. From the various feelings select the most dominant for further examination.
4. Concerning that feeling consider what, given the situation, would be 'too much' for you personally. Don't restrict yourself to a purely conceptual reference ('I would be very angry indeed'); rather, evoke the feeling itself. What are you like in such a situation? What would you think or want to say? How would you let yourself be caught up in it? Express this in a (wordless) posture.
5. Do the same in terms of 'too little'. (You won't find the middle position if you are not prepared to face these non-freedoms for what they are.)
6. Next, physically assume the middle position, sit up straight. Now consider how you are, in that situation and with that feeling, neither leaning towards 'too much' nor towards 'too little'. This is a subtle inquiry. You need time and patience for this. You are entering an area new to you, where your usual experience and judgement won't work, where you have no props and feel uneasy.
7. How would you describe your experience of the middle position?
8. There are tools to get clarity on the mean. You can ask yourself what you must let go (measure), what power or ardour is needed here (courage), what you need to face squarely (prudence). Also, you can conjure up an image of a person with practical wisdom, the personification of your inner compass, and ask yourself what this pilot would tell you on this score or how he would act under the circumstances. Hallmark of the mean is recognition: 'Yes, of course, that's it. Strange I didn't see this before.' Characteristic also is that it is realistic, reliable and, in spite of possible pain (your familiar self is undermined), simultaneously stimulating and inspiring.
9. Finally, formulate the key to the situation, the reasonable principle that the person with practical wisdom would apply. What key words will help you remember that middle position, so that in comparable situations you will retain your freedom?

What happened to 'Mastery and expertise' in the print-out? (Dutch pp. 217-17)?

Mastery and expertise

Aristotle distinguished various kinds of knowledge. The most important are:
- scientific knowledge (*epistēmē*),
- technical knowledge, the knowledge of the expert (*technē*),
- practical wisdom (*phronēsis*).

The knowledge of the expert is goal-directed, instrumental knowledge. It is a means to achieve a certain objective. In contrast, practical wisdom is non-instrumental, essential knowledge. It has to do with the quality and legitimacy of the goal as such. Socrates was always in search of this latter type of knowledge. We list a number of differences between the two.

Knowledge as expertise	*Knowledge as wisdom, mastery*
Central is technical skill	Central is the person
Aimed at the immediate interest of the client (assistance) assistance)	Disinterested, aimed at that which moves beyond immediate aid (no
Form: work hard, do your best	Form: easy, casual, loosened up
Routine, with extensive fixed repertory	Novel, original, without set patterns
Have an answer for everything	Dare to stand there empty-handed
Craving for success and approbation	Dare to risk failure and disapproval
Point is the utility of knowledge	Point is the attitude of freedom
Take on someone else's problem	Not let yourself be spellbound by someone else's problem
Make the other depend on you	Appeal to the other's mastery
Cognitive level	Level of the heart
Effect on the other: you want to gain something, you want advice.	Effect on the other: you become empty yourself, vulnerable, you are thrown back upon yourself.

The right pitch

A simple version of investigating the middle position is to look for the appropriate pitch. What is, in a given situation, the right chord to strike? You can overstate your message, pontificate too much, overexploit an emotion. Then again, you can fail to get the message across, belittle the issue, or underplay your own emotions. What is the correct mean? In classical rhetoric much attention was given to finding the appropriate key or tone. A common distinction was between three different styles, the grand or high style, a humble, simple style and a medium style. An important exercise in the schooling in rhetoric was to learn to articulate a message in different styles.

Steps

a. Individually

1. From your own occupational or private life think of a situation where you want to address a message to a specific person (an exhortation or recommendation).
2. Write the message out (no more than 100 words).

b. Plenary

3. Recite the basic text to each other.

c. Alternating individual and plenary

4. Rewrite the text as ‘coming on too strong’ and recite it to each other.
5. Rewrite the text as ‘spineless’ and recite it to each other.
6. Rewrite the text as ‘hitting the spot’ and recite it to each other.

d. Retrospect

- What are the characteristic traits of the ‘too strong’, the ‘too weak’ and the ‘just right’ formulations of the message?
- How do you experience the ‘proper mean’?
- Do some words need to be adjusted when the message is verbalised?

Reflective balance

The exercise ‘The middle position’ a few pages back is intent on finding individual freedom and balance. ‘Reflective balance’ is after corporate balance and freedom. In practice they often lead to the same insight. Still, the exercise ‘reflective balance’ adds a significant aspect, namely, the need to think in terms of the totality rather than in terms of yourself or part interests. Such totality thinking is the central characteristic of leadership.

Steps

a. Individually

1. Select a situation from your own practice that you found to be a problem.
2. Inventory all relevant ingredients in that case and sketch them on a large sheet of paper: the interests involved, the persons involved, the fields of force, areas of conflict and alliances, plus the various perspectives on the situation as entertained by the protagonists.
3. Focus the situation to a single point and investigate that; for instance by asking just one question about it, to pick out one conflict or one crucial moment.
4. Carry out the ‘middle position’ exercise and attend to your feelings on this selected single item. Note the predominant feelings, determine the ‘too much’, the ‘too little’ and the proper mean, formulate your key. Use the aids: what must you relinquish (measure), what power or motivation is needed (courage), what should you be prepared to face (prudence). Evoke an image of the person with practical wisdom: what does he/she show you?
5. Finally, determine the proper balance for this situation (justice).

b. With others

6. Explain why this is the proper balance.
   (Typical for the proper balance is that a picture emerges in which justice is done to everyone involved, in which each receives his due, where contact and mutual engagement grow. Characteristic also is that good reasons can be advanced why this is the proper balance, the correct linkage. One helpful tool here is: demonstrate how the little story of the situation can be taken up in the perspective of the big story in which all have their proper place.)

This exercise is not easy. One pitfall is the refusal or the inability to empathise with the others’ perspectives. All you get then is self-justification, no engagement. The part played by the listeners, then, is essential. They should not only listen with their head, but with their heart as well. Are you, as listener, merely convinced, or are you also touched?

The cardinal virtues

The tools and tips above make repeated mention of the four cardinal virtues. They aid us in grasping the essence of an issue and in naming the substance of mastery in a situation. Usually we put them to work in a discussion or inquiry by way of questions like those at the close of a dialogue.

- What touches you? What should we take to heart (essence)?
- To do justice to that, what courage is needed? What must you give up for it (measure)?
  What needs to be faced (prudence)?
- Hence, what is required in (your part of) the organisation (justice)?

These are simple, easily formulated questions, though the answer to them is often not simple or easy at all. It is important to keep in mind the background of these questions, i.e. the doctrine of virtues. This teaching is based on the three motivational centres: belly (desire), heart (courage) and head (thinking).

Measure (*temperentia*) is the check on desire. It is the capacity for self-control, enabling you to neither be drawn along by your needs or inclinations, nor to deny or repress them altogether. Usually, such moderation implies that you must give up this or that, you must make a sacrifice.

Courage (*fortitudo*) is the right form of inspiration and indignation. It is the capacity for facing your fears, to conquer your smallness and, in spite of your anxiety, to do what ought to be done, to follow your ambitions. Courage is the freedom that emerges when you do not allow your fortitude to bloat with recklessness or to shrink to cowardice. It is the dignity of steadfastness, resolve in the face of possible disaster, refusal to give in to your distress.

Level-headedness or wisdom (*prudentia*) is the correct use of that most human property, reason. It is a combination of realism and imagination. It implies that your are careful, have a keen eye for the essential in a situation, and that you do not let yourself be carried along by illusions or remain mired in an overly restricted worldview.

Justice (*iustitia*) is the highest of the four cardinal virtues. It is the art of the whole, the art to ensure that each receives his share, place and task in a community, in order that the community gains its optimal form. Because all social cohesion depends on it, it is the lodestar for all other excellences. Justice is the virtue of the right order, of citizenship, of corporate freedom. It is the leader's virtue *par excellence.*

Friendship

Friendship plays a major role in the classical views on the good life, not only as aspect of personal well-being, but also as condition for community building in an organisation or in society at large. 'It is clear', Aristotle wrote, 'that friendship holds cities together, and that legislators pay more attention to this than to justice. Clearly, solidarity looks like friendship, and legislators aim at solidarity first of all; they seek to exorcise discord among citizens as inimical element. When people are friends they are not in need of justice. But among the just friendship is prized. And the highest degree of justice is seen as a sign of friendship.'

Aristotle distinguished different forms of friendship:
- Profitable friendship: personal utility.
- Pleasurable friendship: attractive companionship.
- Character friendship: seeking mutual flourishing.
- Communal friendship: corporate interest.

Steps

1. Draw up a sociogram of friendships and relationships. Place yourself in the centre, sketch in others around you, determine the distance and the kind of relationship: does the emphasis fall on personal utility, companionship, mutual flourishing or common interests? A few helpful questions are: Who would you invite to a select party when leaving your present job? What ties do you have with these people? Why maintain those ties? Compare it with your relationship to two neighbours. What strikes you here?
2. Discuss your diagram with one or two others. What does this analysis mean to you?
3. Consider for each of the relations of friendship you charted, where the mean would lie between too much and too little, the excellent attitude in this friendship as you see it. To what extent do the cardinal virtues (courage, measure, wisdom and justice) play a role in these friendship relations?

Philosophical menu

Practical philosophical investigations often relate to a number of recurrent themes, 'knots' that have to be examined time and again and issues that keep coming back. Below we include a selection of this 'standard menu', subdivided into themes in organisations, social themes and classical themes. We also present some examples of 'specialties'. We use them in a preliminary inspection of a group's or organisation's menu.

Themes in organisations

Organisational structure
The strength of an organisation is in the people working there. And the strength of the people for the most part depends on their attitude towards the work. Can one change a person's attitude? What factors determine an attitude? How do you influence organisation culture? Can such culture in fact be 'managed'?

Time management
Some people (seem to) have worlds of time; others are always running short of it. Is this an objective datum, or a matter of mental attitude? Where lies the profit in chronic lack of time? A manager with time (to spare) -- a contradiction?

Authority
Some people are born leaders, people with innate charisma. But authority can also be derived from expertise, a responsible position, a winning manner or charming style. What factors are determinative here? What kind of authority is needed in an organisation?

Problem solving
Managers are decision makers, policy designers, creators of ideas. They solve complex problems. What skills do people like that need? What are the priorities for a manager? How should he justify his decisions, and what kind of justifications should he avoid?

Learning in organisations
Exchange of knowledge and expertise can be conducive to enhanced 'knowledge productivity' and broadening of perspective. In practice however, there is hardly room for learning processes on the job. How can you render knowledge productive? Can knowledge be managed? Can you learn to learn? And can you teach others to learn?

Weighing interests
Everybody is always busy comparing and weighing interests. How does that process proceed? What standards are used to determine the 'weight' of something? How does one compare apples and pears, i.e. weigh dissimilar interests?

Conflict management
When does it make sense to evoke conflict rather than to avoid it? When is it better to stick to one's own view rather than adopting that of another? Under what conditions can conflict be fruitful?

Social themes

Individualism
Nowadays people are more self-concerned than formerly. Still, we also feel the need to belong. Self-development is possible only in contact with others. To what degree should we be considerate of others? Are we responsible for them as well?

Consumption
Year by year we accumulate more ‘things’. We want to keep up with the Joneses, surround ourselves with conveniences, gadgets and luxuries. How should this be judged? Does it point to the power of the free market, or to lack of self-control? Do we live to consume or consume to live?

Progress
Science and technology have, compared to earlier generations, transformed our lives. What improvements did they bring, what deteriorated? Does ‘progress’ help us?

Tolerance
In our time people uphold vastly different norms. Hence, tolerance is a great good. Yet, not everything is to be tolerated. Where are the limits to be drawn. Why there?

Welfare state
Government is the guardian of the common good, citizens look to their own. Citizens however make ever greater demands on the government. Which general interests should government promote? To what degree? And what should be left to the citizens themselves?

Environment
Air, water and soil are threatened by our way of life and production methods. What causes in our attitude or way of thinking have brought us to this point? How should we change to restore our natural environment?

Integration
The issue of immigrants and asylum seekers receives increasing attention. Should immigrants relinquish their original identity for the sake of integration into our society? What should be the contours of a future multi-cultural society?

Classical themes

Freedom
Freedom is invariably considered a great good. But what does it actually mean? What forms of freedom are worthwhile? How free are we, really? And if our freedom implies unfreedom for others, where should the boundaries to our quest for freedom be drawn?

Happiness
Some seek grandeur or stirring adventure; others prefer a life of peace and quiet. Does happiness, or flourishing, differ per person? Or are there general rules that one had better observe? Is happiness something you can learn?

Friendship
One of the greatest joys in life is to have friends. What makes someone a friend? In what exactly does the pleasure of friendship consist? Can friendships actually be 'made'?

Truth
We have been taught not to lie. Yet, sometimes it is advantageous to 'adjust' the truth some. Should we accept this as a human shortcoming? And, if so, how far can we go in such 'adjustment'?

Sentiment
Sometimes it is better to follow the inclination of one's heart, sometimes our reason should guide us. When does the one apply, when the other? Is it a sign of weakness to express feelings, or of strength? Can one's feeling, at times, be more 'rational' than one's mind?

Good and evil
In the world much is wrong. We too, are no saints. Do we just have to learn to live with that? Should we fight it? What makes our attempts to change all kinds of things meaningful? When do we call something 'good'?

Beauty
Some people say: taste is beyond debate. They are wrong. Taste is certainly contentious. When does something have quality? What is required to recognise such quality? To what extent is a qualitative judgement subjective/objective?

Favourite questions

The best opening for a dialogue is a question selected by the participants themselves because it is something that occupies them. Below we give some examples of frequently posed questions.

- How much flexibility can you demand from your employees?
- Can you, as a private organisation, take a stance in social-political discussions?
- How can individual goals be linked to company objectives?
- To what extent are we responsible for the well-being of others?
- When have you lost integrity?
- What are the limits to tolerance?
- Is it wise to saddle people with a learning process when changes are being made?
- How should we deal with the tension between individuality and the coherence of the organisation?
- To what degree are we responsible for the consequences of our actions?
- When does uncertainty have a positive effect?
- How do you do justice to someone when evaluating his development?
- Can you know what is good for someone, better than that person himself?
- When do you stop helping someone?
- Can cooperation (or leadership) be learned?
- How do you know whether a change is an improvement?

Note on the illustrations

We selected the illustrations in this book from the work of printer-artist H.N. (Hendrik Nicolaas) Werkman (1882-1945). It is the combination of simplicity and expressive power in Workman's compositions that arrests us. His work displays neither affectation nor embellishment. We see it as an attempt to express the essential, to picture for us the hub of the matter. This he does in a manner that is -- for us at least -- most accessible. Part of this essence is that it is about people. His art makes visible the human factor.

The context in which his work came into being also appeals to us. The name of his printing group during World War II was *De Blauwe Schuit* (The Blue Barge), a name borrowed from the oldest carnivalesque association known in Dutch literature (a fifteenth-century text). For hundreds of years a ship was the only way for people to look upon society from a distance. On board a ship one could contemplate the weal and woe of that society with exceptional acumen, but also with humour, ridicule and relativising.

The (translated) titles of the works of Werkman we selected are:

p.**X** illustration for 'The return', a poem by Simon Vestdijk (printed in 1942)
p. Dialogue (painting by Werkman, 1938)
p. illustration for 'The return', a poem by Simon Vestdijk (printed in 1942)
p. illustration for 'The saviour's garden', a poem by Martinus Nijhoff (printed in 1942)
p. illustration for 'The free soldier', a poem by Louis Bouilhet (printed in 1943)
p. illustration for 'The cave', a poem by one of the friends of The Blue Barge (printed in 1943)
p. illustration for 'Ballad for an imprisoned poet' a poem by F.R.A. Henkels for S. Vestdijk (printed in 1943)

Literature: Background and suggestions

Chapter I. Schooling and free space

There are a number of good, easy-to-read introductions to the philosophical heritage that plays a central role in the present book. The best of these is by Klaus Held, *Treffpunkt Platon* (not yet available in English). An important and well-written basic text for our book is Hannah Arendt's essay 'Philosophy and politics'. The first chapters of Nussbaum's *Cultivating humanity* present similar ideas in a simple way. Introductory and focused more on industry, but rather American in style is Tom Morris's book *If Aristotle Ran General Motors*. Less easy, more philosophical and digging deeper is Nussbaum's impressive work *The fragility of goodness.* Another standard work underlying this book is *Arts liberaux et philosophie dans la pensée antique* by Ilsetraut Hadot, which offers an extensive and accurate summary of the substance and development of the liberal arts in Antiquity. In the area of management and learning in organisations the work of Peter Senge is comprehensive, instructive and readable. The same is true for the book by Stephen Covey, *The seven habits of highly effective people.* The significance of dialogue and the attitude of thought it demands are aptly illustrated and supported theoretically in André Wierdsma's book *Co-creatie van verandering* (Joint creation of change). André Comte-Sponville's *A small treatise on the great virtues* is a readily readable contemporary introduction to the theory of virtue.

Arendt, H. Philosophy and politics. The problem of action and thought after the French revolution. In: *Social Research*, 57 (1), 1990, pp. 73-103. (Jerome Kohn, ed.)

Baehr, P. *The portable Hannah Arendt*. New York: Penguin, 2000.

Blackburn, S. *Think. A compelling introduction to philosophy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.

Comte-Sponville, A. *A small treatise on the great virtues: The uses of philosophy in everyday life*. New York: Henry Holt, 2002.

Covey, S.R. *The seven habits of highly effective people: Restoring the character ethic.* New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989.

Hadot, I. *Arts liberaux et philosophie dans la pensée antique*. Paris: Etudes Augustiniennes, 1984.

Held, K. *Treffpunkt Platon*. Stuttgart: Philip Reclam Jr. Stuttgart, 1990.

Morris, T. *If Aristotle ran General Motors*. New York: Henry Holt, 1997.

Nussbaum, M. *The fragility of goodness*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986.

Nussbaum, M. *A classical defense of reform in liberal education*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997.

Perry, J & M. Bratman (eds.). *Introduction to philosophy: Classical and contemporary readings*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992.

Senge, P. *The fifth discipline. The art and practice of the learning organization*. New York: Doubleday, 1990.

Senge, P. *et al. The fifth discipline fieldbook*. London: Nicholas Brealy, 1995.

Senge, P. *The dance of change: The challenges to sustaining momentum in learning organizations*. New York: Doubleday, 1999. [Currency book]

Wierdsma, A. Co-creatie van verandering (Joint creation of change). Delft: Eburon, 1999.

Chapter II. In search of reason (dialectic)

Nowadays quite a lot of literature is available about Socratic and other forms of dialogue. We present a selection. The present volume is a sequel to *Socrates in the market place* by Jos Kessels. A good general introduction to the art of dialogue is (in spite of the title) Michael Kahn's *The Tao of conversation.* Also useful are the books by Dixon and Ellinor & Gerard. More theoretical is the work by Bill Isaacs, one of those who carried on with the form of dialogue developed by David Bohm. Bohm's brief work *On dialogue* remains an inspiring text, as does the transcription of a weekend seminar with him on dialogue, *Unfolding meaning*. In the same tradition we find the readable and practical article by Schein. Another practice-oriented book is that of Verhoeven & IJsselstein, *De kunst van het vragenstellen* (The art of questioning). More philosophical is Nelson's *The Socratic method*, central to which, next to the practical ambitions of this pioneer, is especially the neo-Kantian reinterpretation of Plato and Socrates. More practice-oriented again, but with a large dose of Habermas-inspired theory, is the work by Martin Hetebrij, *Communicatief management* (Communicative management). Those who would sink their teeth into the original philosophical enterprise, Plato's own Socratic dialogues, had best begin with the *Apology*. Beginners, too, can read this text and it presents a pertinent sketch of Plato's view on the role of philosophy in society. Good introductions to the works of Plato are, in ascending order of difficulty, Melling, Cornford and Jaeger.

Bohm, D. *Unfolding Meaning. A weekend of dialogue with David Bohm*. London: Ark Paperbacks, 1985.

Bohm, D. *On dialogue*. New York: Routledge, 1996.

Cornford, F.M. *Before and after Socrates*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1932, 1999.

Dixon, N. *Dialogue at work. Making talk developmental for people and organizations.* London: Lemos & Crane, 1998.

Ellinor, L. & Glenna Gerard. *Dialogue. Rediscover the transforming power of conversation.* New York: John Wiley, 1998.

Hetebrij, M. *Communicatief Management. Tussen macht en communicatie* (Communicative management. Between coercion and communiation). Alphen aan de Rijn: Samsom, 2000.

Isaacs, W. *Dialogue and the art of thinking together*. New York: Currency, 1999.

Jaeger, W. *Paideia, The ideals of Greek culture*. Vol. II, *In search of the divine centre.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1943, 1986.

Kahn, M. *The Tao of conversation*. New Harbinger Publications, 1995.

Kessels, J. *Socrates op de markt. Filosofie in bedrijf* (Socrates in the marketplace. Philosophy in organisations). Amsterdam: Boom, 1997. German translation: *Die Macht der Argumente. Die sokratische Methode der Gesprächsführung in der Unternehmenspraxis*. Weinheim/Basel: Beltz Verlag, 2001.

Melling, D. *Understanding Plato*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987.

Nelson, L. *Socratic method and critical philosophy; Selected essays.* New York: Dover, 1949.

Schein, E.H. Dialogue, Culture, and Organizational Learning. In: *Organizational Dynamics*, 22 (2), 1993, pp. 40-51.

Verhoeven, W. & Henk IJsselsteijn. *De kunst van het vragenstellen* (The art of questioning). Aarle Rixtel (Netherlands), 1997.

Chapter III. Frankness in freedom (Rhetoric)

There are all sorts of books on the technique of speaking and the art of debate. We select a few of them. For the train of thought we present in this book the classical authors are an important source of inspiration: Quintilianus, Cicero, Aristotle. They still constitute the basis of modern rhetoric. More theoretical works are those of Simons, Farrel and the studies by Van Eemeren & Grootendorst. Michel Foucault has reflected much on the term *parrēsia*.

Bauer, O.F. *Fundamentals of debate: Theory and practice*. Rockbrook**:** Rockbrook Press, 1999.

Burton, G.O. *Cicero. De oratore.* Brigham: Brigham Young University, 2001. See his 'Silva Rhetoricae' on the internet (rhetoric.byu.edu).

Eemeren, F.H. van, & Rob Grootendorst (eds.). *Studies in pragma-dialectics.* Amsterdam: International centre for the study of argumentation, 1994.

Ericson, J.M. *et al. The debater's guide*. Southern Illinois University Press, 1987.

Farrell, Th.B. *Norms of rhetorical culture*. New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 1993.

Flick, D.L. *From debate to dialogue: Using the understanding process to transform our conversations*. Orchid Publications, 1998.

Foucault, M. *Discourse and truth: The problematization of* parrhesia (Six lectures given by Michel Foucault at the University of California at Berkeley, Oct.-Nov. 1983). Evanston: Northwestern University, 1985.

Little, Ch.E. *The* institutio oratoria *of Marcus Fabius Quintilianus* (with an English summary and concordance). Nashville: TN, 1951.

Sather, T. *Pros and cons: A debater's handbook*. London: Routledge, 1999.

Simons, H.W. *The rhetorical turn. Invention and persuasion in the conduct of inquiry*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990.

Chapter IV. A tale of two stories (Grammar)

Books about the art of writing or about writing in organisations seldom mention a link between the small and the big story, as we do so emphatically in this book. Nor do they work with a notion like free space. As a rule, guides for the writing of business texts or expositions are purely technical -- and can be outstanding examples of their kind. To write the bigger story, however, you need techniques of an altogether different sort, more akin to literature. A good introduction to that genre is John Gardner, *The art of fiction.* Modern classics in this field are the books by Dutch poet and scientist Rutger Kopland, whom we quote in various chapters. Such poetics is more important for management and organisation practice than its theorists tend to think. A direct application of poetics to organisations is Erik de Haan's wonderful booklet *The consulting process as drama: Learning from King Lear.* Aristotle's brief *On poetry and style* continues to be an important foundational text for poetics. A book that demonstrates how a story can incisively alter our perception of what happens in an organisation is Gareth Morgan's *Images of organization.* A very nice example of how you transform little stories into big ones, and attuned to actual practice is the book by Udo Rosenthal *et. al.*, *Ambtelijke vertellingen* (Civil servants' narratives). A famous book in the theory of literature -- we consulted it for this chapter -- is Frank Kermode's *The sense of an ending*. Obviously, to mention good examples of 'words that work' would be a Herculean effort, there are just too many of them. In the text we quoted Montaigne and Nietzsche, both grand masters of writing, and we restrict ourselves to referring to them.

Gardner, J. *The art of fiction. Notes on craft for young writers*. New York: Vintage Books, 1991.
Grube, G.M.A. *Aristotle on poetry and style*. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1976. [Library of Liberal Arts,13th printing]
Haan, E. de *The consulting process as drama. Learning from King Lear.* Karnac Books, 2003.
Kermode, F. *The sense of an ending. Studies in de theory of fiction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966.
Kopland, R. *Het mechaniek van de ontroering* (Mechanism of emotion). Amsterdam: Van Oorschot, 1995.
Kopland, R. *Mooi, maar dat is het woord niet* (Nice, but that's not the word). Amsterdam: Van Oorschot, 1998.
Montaigne, M. de *The complete essays*. New York: Penguin, 1993.
Morgan, G. *Images of organization*. Beverly Hills: Sage, 1986.
Nietzsche, F. *Human, all too human. A book for free spirits*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.
Nietzsche, F. *The Gay Science* (Translated, with commentary by Walter Kaufmann). New York: Vintage Books, 1974.
Rosenthal, U. *Ambtelijke vertellingen. Over verschijnselen die niet onbenoemd mogen blijven* (Civil servants' narratives. On phenomena that may not remain unnamed). Utrecht: Lemma, 2000.

Chapter V. Mastery (ethics)

Easy to read and still inspiring texts are the *Enchiridion* by Epictetus and the 'Letter to Menoeceus' by Epicurus. The same is true of the reflective diary by Epictetus' famous pupil Marcus Aurelius, the *Meditations.* A modern version, continually reprinted, is the diary of Dag Hammarskjøld, *Markings*. Cicero's *On the good life* and Seneca's *Dialogues and letters* are also quite readable for modern readers and offer handholds and inspiration for mastery. A good and readable review of the classical schools and their views on mastery is Nussbaum's *The therapy of desire.* Nussbaum has a predilection for the Aristotelian school. Pierre Hadot prefers the school of the Stoics, as he shows in his *Philosophy as a way of life* and, more explicitly, in *The inner citadel*, which is a commentary on the personal entries and spiritual exercises of Marcus Aurelius. A number of works by Foucault, who has occupied himself extensively with the classical views, were translated into English, among which essays on the technologies of the self. Basic text for much contemporary work, such as that of Nussbaum, is Aristotle's *Nicomachean ethics*. This work however is comprehensive and not easily read. Good, trenchant introductions to it are those of Urmson and Reeve. An interesting classical text, in which the bond between personal mastery and communal involvement is central, is Cicero's *On duties.* Modern, present-day texts on mastery are for example those of Robert Quin, about personal mastery in management, and, more general, Thomas Moore's *Care of the soul*. The book by Covey referred to in Chapter I is also an example of this kind of text. Like the mentioned texts of Antiquity, modern texts on mastery are effective only if embedded in the practice of a school. An inspiring illustration of this is the work by Hans Knibbe and his School of Being Orientation. The texts he writes are part of a vigorous and rich practice. There is appreciable overlap between the approaches of this school and those of the classical philosophical schools, even if there are important differences as well, and Knibbe starts out from non-Western philosophy (Buddhism).

A wonderful booklet from the christian tradition is Wil Derkse's translation of monastic Benedictine spirituality to the life of every day.

Aristotle. *The Nicomachean Ethics*. Translated with an introduction by David Ross. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1998.

Cicero, Marcus Tullius *On duties* (edited by M.T. Griffin and E.M. Atkins). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991.

Cicero, Marcus Tullius *On the good life* (translated by Michael Grant). New York: Penguin Classics, 1971.

Derkse, W. *Een levensregel voor beginners. Benedictijnse spiritualiteit voor het dagelijks leven* (A rule of life for beginners. Benedictine spirituality for everyday life). Tiel: Lannoo, 2000.

Epictetus. *Enchiridion* (translated by George Long). Promethean Books, 1955.

Epicurus. *Letter to Menoeceus* (translated by Robert Drew Hick). The Internet Classics Archive, 1995.

O'Connor, E.M. *The essential Epicurus: Letters, Principal Doctrines, Vatican Sayings, and Fragments*. New York: Prometheus, 1993. [Great books in philosophy]

Foucault, M. *Ethics: Subjectivity and truth: Essential works of Foucault, 1954-1984*, Vol 1. Paul Rabinow (editor), Robert J. Hurley (translator). New York: The New Press, 1998.

Hadot, P. *Philosophy as a way of life. Spiritual exercises from Socrates to Foucault.* Oxford: Blackwell, 1995.

Hadot, P. *The inner citadel. The meditations of Marcus Aurelius.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998.

Hammarskjøld, D. *Markings.* New York: Knopf, 1964.

Knibbe, H. *Handboek Zijnsoriëntatie* (Handbook of being orientation). Utrecht: School voor Zijnsoriëntatie, 2001.

Marcus Aurelius *Meditations* (translated by Maxwell Staniforth). New York: Penguin, 1964. [Viking Press]

Moore, Th. *Care of the soul. A guide for cultivating depth and sacredness in ordinary life.* New York: Harper/Collins, 1992.

Nussbaum, M. *The therapy of desire. Theory and practice in Hellenistic ethics.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994.

Quinn, R. *Beyond rational management. Mastering the paradoxes and competing demands of high performance.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1991.

Reeve, C.D.C. *Practices of reason. Aristotle's* Nicomachean Ethics. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995.

Seneca, Lucius Annaeus, *Dialogues and letters* (translated by C.D.N. Costa). New York: Penguin Classic, 1997.

Seneca, Lucius Annaeus *Letters from a Stoic: Epistulae morales ad Lucilium* (translated by Robin Campbell). New York: Penguin Classic, 1969.

Urmson, J.O. *Aristotle's Ethics*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1988.

Chapter VI. The philosophic life

Plato's views on leadership, politics and the organisation of 'the good life' continue to be a vital object of study. The best way to get acquainted is to read one of the many introductions to Plato, for example those by Klaus Held, Cornford or Melling (these were mentioned above). After that you could turn to Plato's *Apology* or a selection from his writings such as Rouse's *Great dialogues of Plato.*

Some philosophers are rather critical of Plato, in the wake of Sir Karl Popper's frontal attack in *The open society and its enemies.* A brief, easy to read defence is Ackrill's essay 'What's wrong with Plato's *Republic*?'. More elaborate, but readable and inspiring, is Nettleship, *Lectures on the* Republic *of Plato.* In Otto Duintjer's *Inexhaustible is the truth* we find an interesting, highly personal essay on Eros and transcendence in Plato, which also points up all manner of linkages between Western and Oriental philosophy. The literature on Plato is extensive and often specialised (examples are Irwin, Kahn, Reeve). Even the essays by Iris Murdoch, devoted Platonist, are not easy to read for the uninitiated. Dutch philosopher Cornelis Verhoeven has written a number of readable and penetrating essays on Plato's theory of knowledge. Those who are not daunted by analytic acumen should find Plato's *Politeia* and *Symposium* rewarding reading. An excellent but specialised commentary to the *Symposium* is offered by Leo Strauss.

Ackrill, J.L. What's wrong with Plato's Republic? In: *Essays on Plato and Aristotle.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997, pp. 230-51.

Cornford, F.M. *Before and after Socrates.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1932, 1999.

Cornford, F.M. *The* Republic *of Plato* (translated with introduction and notes by F.M. Cornford). London: Oxford University Press, 1941, 1976.

Duintjer, O. *Onuitputtelijk is de waarheid* (Inexhaustible is the truth). Budel: Damon, 2002.

Irwin, T. *Plato's Ethics.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995.

Kahn, C.H. *Plato and the Socratic dialogue.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

Melling, D.J. *Understanding Plato.* Oxford: Oxford University press, 1987.

Murdoch, I. Re-reading Plato, 1964-86. In: *Existentialists and mystics, writings on philosophy and literature* (Part Seven). New York: Penguin, pp. 297-531.

Nettleship, R.L. *Lectures on the* Republic *of Plato.* London: Macmillan, 1967.

Popper, K.R. *The open society and its enemies* (Vol 1). Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971.

Reeve, C.D.C. *Philosopher-kings. The argument of Plato's* Republic. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988.

Rouse, W.H.D. *Great Dialogues of Plato* (translated by W. H. D. Rouse). Signet, 1999.

Strauss, L. *On Plato's* Symposium. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001.

Verhoeven, C. *De ogen van Plato* (The eyes of Plato). Amsterdam: Boom, 2000.

About the authors

Jos Kessels (1948) is partner and co-founder of The New Trivium. He read law and philosophy, obtained a PhD on a study in the didactics of philosophy and specialised in Socratic dialogue. After fifteen years of research and teaching at the university, direct involvement with the market prevailed. Since then, in numerous organisations Jos has initiated dialogues aimed at the creation of free space, analysis of fundamental questions and paving the way to joint deliberation. He published a number of books and articles. Of his full-length texts we mention *Socrates op de markt. Filosofie in bedrijf* (Socrates in the market place; Philosophy on the job) (Boom, 1997); *Geluk en wijsheid voor beginners* (Luck and wisdom for beginners) (Boom, 1999); *De zaak Arlet. Inleiding in de kennistheorie* (The case Arlet; Introduction to the theory of knowledge) (Boom, 1989)

During his studies in philosophy at the Free University, Amsterdam, **Erik Boers** (1960), together with some lecturers, established the branch of study *Philosophy on the Job*. To gain experience in management and organisation practice he started to train managers in a large electronics firm and moved on to a training and consulting bureau. From 1997 onwards he expressly concentrated on development and application of philosphical methods in management training and management consulting. Together with Jos Kessels he established The New Trivium in 1999. As philosopher/trainer he stimulates people to reflect, by letting them think systematically about their own practice, simultaneously urging them to critical self-reflection. Annually, Erik conducts a series of guest-lectures 'Philosophising in organisations' at the Free University, Amsterdam. He wrote articles that appeared in the professional journals *Filosofie in Bedrijf* (Philosophy at Work), *Filosofie* (Philosophy), *Opleiding en Ontwikkeling* (Training and Development), *Management en Organisatie* (Management and Organisation).

Pieter Mostert (1952) took his studies at the University of Amsterdam in the 1970s, and gained philosophical skills via the works of Friedrich Nietzsche. Upon completion of his formal studies he taught philosophy in many places, from Groningen to Maastricht, to a variety of audiences, from pre-school children to neurologists. In collaboration with Karel van der Leeuw he obtained his PhD in 1988 with a study of the objectives and methods of teaching philosophy, entitled *Philosophieren lehren* (Learning to philosophise). In 1990 he co-founded the Centre for Child Philosophy. In 1990 and 1996 he was a member of the Inspection Committee Philosophy. As of 1994 he works as adviser in innovation and quality care. His special expertise is in the area of training and learning. He is *par excellence* a developer, someone who enables managers to find their way. In this work he combines speaking (as coach, discussion leader, project leader) and writing (on the system of thought as it develops). He is a partner in the BDF Consultancy Group.

[i] Hannah Arendt, 'What is freedom?' in: Peter Baehr (ed.), *The Portable Hannah Arendt*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2000, p. 456. This contrast may not be entirely correct linguistically. *Archēin* means 'beginning something', and moves to 'ruling' and 'displaying initiative'. There is a link between *archēin* and acting from *archai*, principles, leading to the connotation of originality and mastery. The usual Greek term for acting is *agein* in the sense of 'to lead', 'to be in command'. The same holds for Latin *gerere*, 'perform something' and *agere*, to lead, to be in command. We followed Hannah Arendt because the contrast points up our distinction between instrumental rationality and substantial rationality. Perhaps, though, it is more an interpretation than a factual definition of the classical meaning. (Thank you, Marjon van Es.)

[ii] Compare G. Broekstra, 'De verschillen van waarde' (Differences of value) in: *Liber Amicorum, Professor W. van Dinten.* Utrecht: Rabo, 2000.

[iii] *Dialogue and the Art of Thinking Together*. New York: Currency & Doubleday, 1999, p. 261.

[iv] For a discussion of Bacon's views and the role of idols in organisations, see Jos Kessels, *Socrates op de markt. Filosofie in bedrijf* (Socrates on the market; Philosophy on the job). Amsterdam: Boom, 1997, pp. 36-9.

[v] *See* Chapter VI for a more detailed account of Plato's philosophy of Form.

[vi] For a more extensive treatment of dialectical techniques and Socratic dialogue *see* Jos Kessels, *Socrates op de markt. Filosofie in bedrijf* (Socrates on the market; Philosophy on the job). Amsterdam: Boom, 1997.

[vii] Jos Kessels describes such elenchus (refutation, shaming) at length. See *Socrates op de markt,* pp, 57-62.

[viii] Compare the remarks made in relation to *auctoritas* in Chapter I.**[add page number]**

[ix] Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Beyond Good and Evil*, Translated, with Commentary by Walter Kaufmann. New York: Vintage Books, 1966, p. 9.

[x] See Jos Kessels, *Socrates*, Ch. 6, 'Socrates' view on knowledge. On the relation between theory and praxis'.

[xi] In terms of the Socratic method and the Hour Glass model this would be the transition from the level of rules to the level of principles. See Jos Kessels, *Socrates*, pp. 199-204.

[xii] Michel Foucault, Discourse and Truth: the Problematization of Parrhesia. Six lectures given by Michel Foucault at the University of California at Berkeley, Oct-Nov. 1983. Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University, 1985.

[xiii] Robert E. Quinn, *Deep Change. Discovering the leader within*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1996, p. 123.

[xiv] We borrow from Michel Foucault, *op. cit.*

[xv] Aristotle, The Art of rhetoric. Translated with an introduction and notes by H. C. Lawson-Tancred. London: Penguin, 1991, Ch. 2.2 and 2.3.

[xvi] See Wilbert van Vree, *Holland als vergaderland. Opkomst en verbreiding van het vergaderregime* (Holland as meeting land. Rise and spread of the meeting regime). Groningen: Wolters-Noordhoff, 1994.

[xvii] *The Holland Handbook*. The Hague: Xpat Media, 2001, p. 48.

[xviii] Aristotle. *Poetics*, 1451 b. Transl. by Stephen Halliwell. Cambridge (Mass.): Loeb Classical Library, 1995.

[xix] Rutger Kopland. *Het mechaniek van de ontroering* (The mechanics of emotion). Amsterdam: Van Oorschot, 1995, pp. 27-28.

[xx] Michel de Montaigne, *Essays*, transl. [from the French] and ed. with an introduction and notes by M.A. Screech. London: Allen Lane/Penguin Press, 1991.

[xxi] Nietzsche, Friedrich. *The Gay Science*, Translated, with Commentary by Walter Kaufmann. New York: Vintage Books, 1974, pp. 32, 35-6.

[xxii] Jane Jacobs, *Systems of survival. A dialogue on the moral foundations of commerce and politics*.London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1993.

[xxiii] Witold Gombrowicz, *Diary*, ed. by Jan Kott; transl. by Lillian Vallee, Vol. 1, 1953-1956. Evanston (Ill.): Northwestern University Press, 1988.

[xxiv] Leonard Nelson, *Socratic method and critical philosophy, Selected essays*. Translated by Thomas K. Brown, forew. by Brand Blanshard; introd. by Julius Kraft. New York/Dover, Yale University Press, 1949.

[xxv] Rutger Kopland, Herinneringen aan het onbekende (Memories of the unknown), in: *Het mechaniek van de ontroering* (Mechanics of emotion), Amsterdam: Van Oorschot, 1999, p. 85.

[xxvi] Aristotle, *Nichomachean ethics*, 1106 b 36 (translation ours)

[xxvii] Plato, *Protagoras*, 331c (translation ours). Cf. Jos Kessels, De socratische methode bij Plato en Nelson (The Socratic method in Plato and Nelson), in: L. Nelson, *De socratische methode.* Jos Kessels, ed., Amsterdam: Boom, 1994, p. 11.
[xxviii] The first two exercises are for example described in Pierre Hadot, *Philosophy as a way of life. Spiritual exercises from Socrates to Foucault*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1995. For other exercises see the list of Annotated Literature below.
[xxix] Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*, transl., with an introduction by Maxwell Staniforth. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1964.
[xxx] This exercise plays an important role in the work of Hans Knibbe. See his *Handboek Zijnsorientatie* (Handbook for orientation of being). Utrecht: School for Being Orientation, 2001.
[xxxi] *Phaedrus*, 146-252, par. 25-33.
[xxxii] The arguments presented here are derived in part from Plato's *Gorgias* and in part from the first book of *The Republic*.
[xxxiii] For example: Piaget, Kohlberg, Van Hiele. For an introduction to Piaget's genetic epistemology and Kohlberg's stages of moral development see William Crain, *Theories of development; Concepts and applications*, Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1993. Van Hiele, a mathematician from the school of Freudenthal, applied Piaget's theory to the development of mathematical insight. See P.M. van Hiele, *Begrip en inzicht* (Concept and insight), Purmerend (the Netherlands): Muusses, 1973.
[xxxiv] Plato, *The Republic*, Book VII, [514a-516e]. We use the Cornford translation, Oxford University Press, 1941.
[xxxv] See Paul Schnabel, 'Bedreven en gedreven: een heroriëntatie op de rol van de overheid in de samenleving' (Competent and inspired: A reorientation on the role of governement in society) in: Bram Peper *et al., Haagse tegenstrijdigheden. Vier essays over burgers, overheid en politieke partijen in Nederland* (Contradictions in The Hague. Four essays on citizens, government and political parties in the Netherlands). Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2002.
[xxxvi] Plato, *The Symposium* [203]. The paraphrasing is ours and follows Koolschijn's Dutch translation of The Symposium.
[xxxvii] These terms are borrowed from Hans Knibbe.
[xxxviii] *The Symposium* [206-207a]. Translation ours, after Koolschijn.
[xxxix] *The Symposium* [211e-212a]