Socratic Dialogue as a Tool Box in the System-Life World: an overview between Italy and the Netherlands

Master Thesis Philosophy of Management and Organizations

Rosa Calandra

S2562153

Philosophy of Management and Organization

Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam

Supervision by Govert J.Buijs

Abstract

Any organization can sell product 'x' or provide service 'y', but what differentiates a company from other companies in its field is its organization's philosophy. A company's philosophy is a distillation of its culture into a group of core values that inform all aspects of its business practice. Having a strong company philosophy is a good way to guide employees at decision-making crossroads, but it can also be a strong branding tool and generally make the workplace more congenial.

It is fairly well known that in the human quest for meaning, work occupies a central position. Most people spend the majority of their time at work, which often serves as a primary source of purpose, belonging, and identity. In light of these benefits to employees and their organizations, organizational scholars are increasingly interested in understanding the factors that contribute to meaningful work, interpersonal relationships and organizational missions, as well as exploring moral rights. In this thesis, I am going to examine contemporary practices of philosophising in organization. In retracing the philosophical practice used by nine contemporary philosophical practitioners, mainly based on Socratic dialogue, this thesis deals with both criticism surrounding the Socratic dialogue, and the overall effectiveness of the dialogue as a concept and practice. These practitioners help me to articulate and interpret the Socratic technique, and at the same time evaluate how this technique can be used as a utensil for organizational behaviour. But most importantly they help me to acknowledge the development and the utilisation of the Socratic dialogue both in Italy and in the Netherlands. Despite the practitioners showing clear differences in their ideas and interpretations, a common core can be traced. All of them communicate that we all have a philosophy of life, whether we know it or not, and express that we can benefit from identifying that philosophy, making sure it helps us rather than hinders us, defining success in such a way that we might eventually achieve it. This approach allows me to develop a knowledge

based on the importance of practical wisdom within organizational research. It is my belief that there is an inextricable link between philosophy, organizations and the Socratic model and I will explore this link further by focusing on how organizations use the Socratic model to better evaluate the morals that encompass their businesses.

However, the Socratic dialogue places a lot of importance on *human capital* and the relationship between profit activity and human value. This leads me to pose the significant question: how exactly does philosophical performance provide an effective solution to increase profit and profit alone?

Preface

This thesis is made in the context of the study *Philosophy of Management &Organization.* For this reason, the aim is a critical reflection on how it is possible to connect Philosophy to Organizations. Through this thesis I hope to develop both my knowledge and awareness about what it takes to live a life in pursuit of what matters. Therefore from my academic year I have experienced that as an individual, whether I can be myself, my 'philosophy skills' have made me more reflective about answering, evaluating, and reasoning on life's most basic, meaningful, and difficult questions.

I therefore give thanks to their fundamental help to: firstly, *Govert J. Buijs*, supervisor and one of the main professors in my academic year, who has supported me with suggestions, knowledge, patience and understanding.

Secondly, I give thanks to my *nine philosophical practitioners* who gave me the time and extraordinary support to explain my thesis and to discuss it. But most importantly for sharing their special experiences with me.

Thirdly, I give thanks to my blessed *family* just because they are always there.

Last but not least, I give thanks to two unique friends: *Bea & Jen*. The first one to have walked beside me all this year full of news and changes. The second one to have highlighted and inspired my professional perspective, even thousands kilometres away.

Amsterdam, July 2016

Rosa Calandra

vrije Universiteit *amsterdam*

Table of Contents

vrije Universiteit *amsterdam*

Introduction

0. 1. Socratic Dialogue: A Way of Thinking with Care

An organization is defined as a group, ranging from two people to tens of thousands that intentionally strive to accomplish a shared common goal or set of goals. Therefore, the ethics of an organization should function as an attempt to define its mission and values, recognize values that could cause tension, seek effective solutions to these tensions, and manage the operations to maintain its values. In fact, it seems that the ethics process serves as a mechanism for organizations to address ethical issues regarding financial, business, management and relationship decisions. Hence, the objective is simple: better decision-making.

It was at the turn of the century when the German philosopher Leonard Nelson developed the Socratic dialogue method to philosophise dialogically in groups. His aim was not teaching philosophy, but to teach pupils to *philosophise*. One of his friends and disciples, Gustav Heckman, kept Nelson's method alive and critiqued the Socratic dialogue himself. The Socratic dialogue was brought to the Netherlands around ten years ago, where Jos Kessels translated Nelson's work, introduced the dialogue on strategy, and was the first to practice 'Diner Pensant'.[1]

This thesis will connect philosophy to organization by focusing on the importance of the Socratic Dialogue as a teaching and learning approach, using excerpts from Socrates' conversations with his interlocutors in Plato's work to support my findings. I will outline the process by which employees, who are marked by ambiguity, dubiety, surprise, and conflicting values, arrive at *knowledge*. This means that I propose the Socratic method as one of the philosophical tools that organizations can use to facilitate organizational knowledge, building and exchange. Consequently, I will not choose a specific

---

[1] T. Le Bon (2011:13).

interpretation of the Socratic method, rather I will try to explore within the limits of my sources and literature, the meaningful range of this method.

Through the interviews that I have conducted for my thesis, I have taken into consideration the work done by contemporary philosopher practitioners that are involved in both Socratic Dialogue, and philosophical counselling. Reviewing the experiences of the nine contemporary philosophical practitioners, who I will use as my primary sources, I will compare two countries: Italy and Netherlands. This approach has allowed me to develop knowledge based on the importance of practical wisdom within organizational research.

Practical wisdom, says Aristotle in his *Nicomachean Ethics* is "a true and reasoned state of capacity to act with regard to the things that are good or bad for man."[2] Therefore, while practical wisdom involves knowledge of what is good or bad, it is not merely theoretical knowledge, but rather enables a person to act on such knowledge as well.

For the ancient philosophers, the word *philo-sophia* simply indicates the love of wisdom. In the *Symposium*, Plato had shown that Socrates was the symbol of the Philosopher and he was likened to *Eros,* who knows how to achieve wisdom.

Philosophy was an important method of spiritual progress, which demanded a radical conversion and transformation of the individual's way of being. In fact, philosophy presented itself as a tool for achieving independence and inner freedom. This idea is portrayed by many greats, such as Socrates, the Cynics, Aristotle, and Epicurus.

According to my practitioners, when training through the Socratic dialogue an individual or a group of people acquire the capacity to transform their thinking at a fundamental level. The participants gain the ability to design new ideas, understand new frames of meaning, and acquire new types of knowledge. Through the Socratic dialogue, they create knowledge based on their personal experiences and the facilitator uses the practical intelligence of all participants. One of the fascinating outcomes is that this knowledge forms the structure and design of the participants' lives, from the past to the future.

---

[2] Aristotle (VI.5)

vrije Universiteit amsterdam

There are some crucial questions one must ask to delve further into this topic. What are the philosophical tools needed to start this research? Why it is important nowadays to connect philosophy to organization? Why philosophy and not psychology for instance? What are the reasons that drive people to seek philosophical counselling? Lastly and significantly, what do participants receive from this training in Socratic dialogue? As mentioned above, through the interviews and the experiences of my practitioners, I am trying to point out the belief that through the art of the dialogue, an organization can achieve the important skill needed to deal with and investigate the common good or the general well-being of the group. However, does the general well-being of the group correspond with the profit of the company?

Generally speaking the practitioners believe that the role of the philosopher is not to try to answer questions, or solve issues that the participant has in his own mind. They believe that the philosopher should (as Socrates did in Plato's *Socratic Discourses*) stimulate the interlocutor to find the truth within his own experience. Within a logical and methodical dialogue, the whole group or the individual reflect on their feelings and thoughts in order to achieve a better knowledge of the future by focusing rationally and realistically on the present. However, as one of my practitioners pointed out during our interview, trying to connect philosophy to organization poses difficulties, and we must be aware of this weakness. Vander Lemes states that "this is exactly the problem nowadays with philosophy". This highlights the issue that philosophy is generally seen as linked to the academy and to books, whilst profit and money are viewed as dirty affairs. For these reasons, organizations are reluctant to rely on the theories of a philosopher.

In Lemes' second article he rejects the Nussbaums' argument on *No Profit.* Lemes believes that our society needs to understand that we need profit, "and this is not a contradiction with philosophy," says Lemes. "It is important to remember that philosophy comes from the market, so from everyday life."[3] In fact, according to Lemes, the Dutch's approach has no prejudices about profit, or money. Rather, he point out: "on which bases are you going to make money?" According to Lemes, philosophy is beneficial in that it can establish a good basis to make profit without violating morality. It is my opinion that enforcing the terms of the Socratic method into a corporate environment increases professional responsibility, and

---

[3] V. Lemes (interview: 2016).

subsequently practical knowledge. However, when considering the Socratic dialogue as an important tool for organizational life, yet another challenge arises, seeing as from this perspective it is possible to establish a criteria for making profit.

One of the most pressing concerns during the interviews was whether, through this rational and methodical approach, the interlocutor might deny his/her passions and feelings. Fortunately, the general answer given by the practitioners was significantly negative. As a result, people should never separate *Pathos* and *Logos,* because through a healthy balance between rationality and passions, people will achieve the beauty of experiencing life. However, the bulk of research in organization and management studies is generally characterized by a rationalistic orientation towards judgement. Even when the importance of 'tacit knowledge' in shaping judgement is appreciated, the emphasis is still on judgement as mainly a mental process of problem solving, which often leads to seeking the intervention of a psychologist. Michael Polanyi explores the idea of tacit knowledge when he points out that human knowledge starts from the fact that 'we know more than we can tell.'[4] In this way, tacit knowledge is contrasted with explicit knowledge. Very loosely stated, tacit knowledge refers to all those things that we know how to do but perhaps do not know how to explain. "Our body is the ultimate instrument of all our external knowledge, whether intellectual or practical."[5] As the capability that led people to better achieve the beauty of experiencing, we will be able to see that through a healthy balance between rationality and feelings, participants can grasp the deep core of the Socratic method and therefore understand even the most complex areas of tacit knowledge as intended by Polanyi.

0. 2. Introducing the Research Question

For me, the anchor that brings together the various steps in my analysis of the Socratic dialogue is the *Balance Theory of Wisdom* of Robert Sternberg, which I will deal with at the end of this thesis. For example, Stemberg argues that as a manifestation of 'practical intelligence', wisdom is underlain by certain general

---

[4] M. Polany (1967: 4).
[5] Ibid (1964: 15).

vrije Universiteit amsterdam

'met components' that fit the information processing-problem-solving model. As Stemberg remarks: "wisdom typically is acquired by selectively encoding new information that is relevant for one's purposes in learning about that context, selectively combining pieces of information to make them fit together into an orderly whole"[6] In other words, although these processes are used in all kinds of intelligence, what distinguishes wisdom, according to Sternberg, is that the latter is highly context-dependent, with a strong leaning towards problem solving.

An example of practical wisdom will be analysed within the fourth chapter where the project of Ada Fiore is presented and analysed. In a small Italian village, the former mayor and teacher of philosophy founded a genuine philosophical industry called *Kalopatia*. According to the media, it has become the most philosophical town in Italy. Her way of dealing with knowledge, as a philosophical practitioner, is based on her aspiration to transport philosophy from the books to the market, or as she says, 'to the market of virtue'. Thus, she with her group of co-workers, are currently developing new products that instead of decreasing our creativity, (as often happens with new technological devices that we obsessively buy) enrich the awareness of developing our own creativity. The project initiated by Ada Fiore, is similar to another Italian project launched by Nadia Bray, which will be analysed in the same chapter. Through these examples and experiences, it will be possible to determine how the widespread use of the Socratic dialogue in Italy is still as authentic as possible, as a solution to dealing with everyday life and with what really matters in that context. Therefore in Italy the development of the Socratic dialogue strives to be a counter-culture that tries to create its own 'outside' organization, and attempts to lead and drive the entire community away from the globalized market. On the other hand, through the Dutch system an example of making room for reflection within practical experience is evident, which will show that the development of the Socratic dialogue in the Netherlands is clearly part of the systemic-world. Hence, the interview conducted with Dutchman Erik Boers will be crucial.

Co-founded by Jos Kessels, Erik Boers, and Pieter Mostert, the *New Trivium* is a network organization which is based on the idea of opening a certain way of shared thinking, to exchange and harmonise ideas and to discover basic aims.
However, what does *New Trivium* mean? The organization firmly believes in

---

[6] R. Sterneberg (2000: 640).

the vital importance of increasing shared thinking within the organizations, and that, at the very least, organizations should raise awareness of the importance of communication. According to them, this *Trivium* consists of three main aspects: dialectics; the skill of conducting dialogue, rhetoric; the art of persuading and grammar; the art of fixing ideas. All three disciplines deal with the communicative form in which the issue is cast. The goal of the *New Trivium* is to achieve what philosophers call 'the good life', as to say, the common good, the flourishing with both ourselves and those who live and work with us. To me, to be practically involved with the world implies that one has developed a certain sensibility, a particular orientation that indicates a person's priorities and involvement regarding work, and therefore a certain emotional assimilation with it. Consequently, we cannot be emotionally neutral - after all, what happens in the world matters to us.

Donald Schön explores similar ideas in his book *The Reflective Practitioner.*
He reflects on the idea "that institutions are not devoted to the production and distribution of fundamental knowledge in general." Schön states that "they are institutions committed, to a particular epistemology, a view of knowledge that fosters selective inattention to practical competence and professional artistry."[7] In fact, from his perspective, the relationship between theory and practice has tended to portray it as a one-way street, as well as a process in which theoretical knowledge is applied to practice. Schön represents one of the first authors to introduce a new approach to cognitive design theory. Schön formulated his view on design in terms of 'reflective activity', and more specifically 'reflective practice', and 'knowing in action'. For Schön, design was one of a series of activities in domains that involve reflective practice: city planning, engineering, management, law, education, psychotherapy and medicine. He wanted to make an inquiry into the epistemology of practice.

Generally, practitioners are embroiled in conflicts of values, goals, purpose and interest. Schön reflects upon this issue when he states that "The crisis of confidence in the professions, and perhaps also the decline in professional self-image, seems to be rooted in a growing scepticism about professional effectiveness in the larger sense, a sceptical reassessment of the professionals' actual contribution to society's well-being through the delivery of competent services based on special

---

[7] D. Schön (1983: vii).

knowledge."[8]   According to him, there are actions, recognitions, and judgement, which we know how to carry out spontaneously, and we do not have to think about them prior to or during their performance. To use once more Schön's words: "from the perspective of Technical Rationality, professional practice is a process of problem solving. Problems of choice or decision are solved through the selection, from available means, of the one best suited to establish ends. But with this emphasis on problem solving, we ignore problem setting, the process by which we define the decision to be made, the ends to be achieved, the means which may be chosen. In real world practice, problems do not present themselves to the practitioner as a given, they must be constructed from the materials of problem situations which are puzzling, troubling, and uncertain."[9] Thus, it seems that reflective practice is a dialectic process in which thought is integrally linked with action. Through this dialectic process of thought and action, the practitioner takes an active role in shaping his or her own professional growth.

However, the society in which we live suffers from limited awareness, and our limited ability to manage complexity is the base of our conversational structure. On the other hand, a competent reflective practitioner repeatedly reflects on experience and is capable of reflecting-in-action, continually learning from experience to the benefit of future actions. As a result, to go back to the Socratic Dialogue and its benefits, what Nelson/Heckman offer is exceptional in the way in which a fundamental question is answered via examples and experiences of the participants.

This is central to the method itself. According to Vander Lemes, the New Socratic Dialogue, founded by Heckman, is an approach for planning space for the method itself, in which emotional issues arise within the Socratic Dialogue.

Through this method, which operates between a dynamic group of people, the emotional aspect is a very relevant moment, in which "you get the non-verbal language" says Lemes.

In response to one of my questions, which asks what kind of knowledge it is possible to develop from an immersion of the Socratic dialogue, Minke Tromp highlights once again the importance of practical wisdom, which represents *immediate knowledge*. This is the knowledge that eventually arises from the Socratic dialogue. According to Tromp, within this method the connection between

---

[8] D. Schön (1983: 13).
[9] Ibid (1983: 40).

vrije Universiteit amsterdam

feelings and rationality is crucial. To use her words, "we must become aware of the connection between how we feel, and on the other hand, how this perception is the consequence of my reflection."[10] Furthermore, when I asked her what the weaknesses and the strengths of this method were, she firstly responded with the following question: "which kind of the several interpretations of the Socratic dialogue do you take into consideration?"[11]Given that, it is not simple give reflections about a person who never committed any of his ideas to the written word, my intent is to navigate through the limits of my sources, the most influential features of his method that have led me to connect it with the modern organizational system.

The angle which I am using to approach this criticism requires me to focus on some key questions to help me to explore my title thoroughly. Considering that organizations are aware that knowledge is essential for their survival in dynamic markets and that intellectual capital is a valuable asset, my three questions are these:

How is the Socratic Dialogue practiced within organizational context in the Netherlands and in Italy?

What can be learned from these two contexts regarding both strengths and weaknesses of the Socratic Dialogue?

What philosophical method is suitable to build a carefully reflective knowledge?

These crucial questions will be scrutinised and evaluated over the next chapters, using a range of criticisms and approaches to formulate clear answers.

The thesis proceeds as follows: first of all, and this will be the first chapter, is the question: what is a Socratic dialogue? In this chapter I will discuss firstly who Socrates was, and why he is still relevant to the world of philosophy. Subsequently, I will outline the three main reasons that have led me to focus on Socrates' case.
Consequently, through varying portraits of Socrates made by several thinkers and practitioner-philosophers, I will outline the important value of the Socratic

---

[10] M. Tromp (interview: 2016).
[11] M. Tromp (interview: 2016).

dialogue in which the participants try to understand each other and engage in a common enterprise.

The following subchapters will highlight the features of the Socratic dialogue, and the importance of introducing philosophical reflection in the domain of real life experience by means of the dialogue. Then through the second chapter, I will prepare the field for two very different contexts: Italy and the Netherlands. Within this chapter, I will draw upon the critical reflections of some of the nine practitioners, which will provide an insight into the features of the modern day Socratic dialogue. On this basis, I have decided to make a comparison between the very different ways philosophy and the Socratic dialogue are connected to organisations in The Netherlands and Italy. I believe that as an Italian student who lives in the Netherlands, I have firstly, the linguistic and intellectual access to the Italian sources, secondly, the curiosity to investigate into a field full of a range of interpretations, and thirdly, the will to explore the great experience that the Netherlands already possess in the field of Socratic dialogue.

Thus the third chapter will deal with the development of the Socratic dialogue in the Netherlands. Through the experience of my Dutch practitioners, I will show that in the Netherlands the Socratic dialogue is used as a philosophical instrument to make deep analysis of the identity of organizations, businesses and their goals. I will highlight how the dialogue has clearly become part of the System. In fact whether it is education, culture, government or business the Socratic dialogue in the Netherlands seems an effective educational strategy that develops the social and intellectual capacities for active citizenship in a democratic society.

Chapter four will further ideas discussed in chapter three, but changing the focus to the use of Socratic dialogue in Italy focusing on the development and evolution of the dialogue. The fourth chapter will show the utilization of the Socratic dialogue within the Italian field. I will take into consideration the philosophical projects of two female practitioners, who have both portrayed a way in which the Socratic dialogue can still remain authentic, despite the changes and the innovations of our technological modern society. As a result, the Italian cases will show how the Socratic dialogue is used as an instrument to restore the lives of citizens, and move them away from the globalized market. Subsequently, within this context, it seems important to me to reflect on the benefits that can exist in the

relationship between rationality and feelings. By adopting this healthy balance, individuals can eventually overcome the radicalized consciousness of modernity, based on the advance of science and technology. Thus, as demonstrated by the two Italians practitioners, the Socratic method moves its steps against the technical progress and self-determination .The previously touched upon ideas of the ability to experience life through a healthy balance between rationality and feelings and the concept of *Tacit Knowledge* will be studied in more depth. I will discuss the ability to distinguish between various types of knowledge and how, within a Socratic dialogue a participant can grasp both explicit and implicit knowledge.

The ideas presented in chapter four lead me to the last chapter which explores what kind of knowledge can arise from the Socratic dialogue. This chapter will evaluate the type of knowledge that arises from the Socratic dialogue, with particular focus on *practical wisdom.* Through the philosophy of three thinkers I will discuss firstly, how professionals think in action (Schön). Secondly, through the philosophy of the system of Habermas, I will evaluate the tensions between the system-consumer world (the Netherlands) and the life-world (Italy). Lastly, through Sternberg's theory of practical wisdom I will analyse how wisdom is defined as an application of successful intelligence, towards the achievement of a common good through a balance between intrapersonal, interpersonal, and extra personal interests, over short and long terms, in order to achieve a balanced consensus.

Yet, does this approach fit with real profit? In this context, it is understandable how profit making can be ambiguous, based on the relationship between organizational activities in pursuit of profit, and human capital. Although the belief that the Socratic method is one of the most suitable approaches for organizational development, a more complex argument unfolds my research in this conclusion.

Since, the benefits of this method are intrinsically related to human beings, because stimulate their thinking with questions they do have tend to be superficial, it seems to me, that still remains incomprehensible how exactly does philosophical performance provide an effective purpose for increasing profit and profit alone.

vrije Universiteit amsterdam

CHAPTER ONE

Socrates, an Obstetrician of Ethics

Over time we have witnessed the emergence and blossoming of practices inspired by philosophy on the didactic and pedagogical scene. In this context, Socrates' philosophy represents one main point of reference. In fact, Socratic dialogue is now a model for a maieutic concept of teaching as well as for the constitution of dialogical communities, for an interrogative enquiry into reality. It is especially relevant for setting up a new kind of organizational behaviour, which focuses on the ability to engage in learning dialogues and conversational inquiries. However, Socrates remains an enigma; he is considered one of a handful of philosophers who forever changed how philosophy itself was to be conceived. Why is Socrates considered relevant and influential in the wide world of philosophy, from the past to the present day? Several thinkers believe that Socrates' case is a phenomenon extremely rich in its literary, pedagogical, and psychological implications. To speak about Socrates is, of course, to expose oneself to all sorts of historical difficulties. The figure of Socrates is ambiguous, troubling, and extraordinarily bizarre. Furthermore, what makes Socrates' case more difficult is the fact that he wrote nothing, because he engaged only in dialogue. But why is Socrates' case so fascinating?

There are at least three main reasons why my research focuses on the phenomenon of Socrates. The first reason is that through his method, Socrates projects philosophy out into the public sphere. The second reason is a reflection of the first one: in projecting philosophy outside the walls of the privileged, he became an intermediator between the mystical idea of wisdom and tangible human reality. Thus, from these previous motivations, has emerged my third motivation. Since I consider Socrates as an extraordinary individual with the capacity for self-criticism and critical thought, it is plausible to think that our Modern society and along with it the organizations can grasp from the Socratic method the importance

vrije Universiteit amsterdam

of loving life. Furthermore, this paper is presented from the perspective of a student of Philosophy of Management and Organization, and more recently a student of Socratic dialogue. Therefore, my intent is not to set the reconstruction of the historical Socrates, but explore the notion of how an organization can achieve a better reflection on moral actions within the company through the Socratic model.

In addition, I will show later on, through the experiences of contemporary practitioner's philosophers who use the Socratic dialogue, how this method facilitates the construction of knowledge through discourse based on personal experiences, and how this can create a culture of sharing knowledge within a social space.

An Expert of Moral Knowledge

Socrates had the good fortune of having Plato, one of the great literary figures of the West, to tell his story. Ancient literary theory distinguishes three types of dialogue within Plato's work. Firstly, the 'dramatic' dialogue, in which only the conversation is reproduced. Secondly, the 'narrative' dialogue, which reports a conversation, and lastly, 'a mixed form', in which the dialogue starts out with a directly displayed conversation and continues with a report of a conversation inwhich Socrates took part.[12] In the *Apology*, Socrates claims that his philosophical search for knowledge is an obligation and duty to the gods. He traces this mission and 'service to the gods' to the Delphic Oracle.[13] He began his mission by questioning the citizens of Athens who claimed to have knowledge. He went to the politicians, only to find that "none of them knew anything about beautiful and good."[14] Although they appeared to be wise, they did not know anything.[15] He then went to the poets, and found they "did not compose their poems with knowledge, but by some inborn talent and by inspiration, like seers and prophets who also say may fine things without any understanding of what they say."[16] Finally, Socrates confronted the craftsmen. Although they possessed a technical knowledge in their specialized field, they falsely claimed to have knowledge outside of their

---

[12] K. Doring (2002: 25).
[13] Apology (23b).
[14] R. Cross (1970:112).
[15] Apology (21c).
[16] Ibid (22c).

speciality.[17] It seemed that Socrates' search for wisdom was fruitless. "His activities had only revealed to him that they lacked all such wisdom, while others seemed to have a portion."[18] However, he began to understand the Oracle's meaning. Therefore, at this point his mission of systematically questioning people who claimed expert knowledge began. He searched not for a worthless and illusory knowledge, which the wise men of Athens possessed, but for the wisdom that gods possessed: 'divine wisdom', specifically, an expert moral knowledge.[19]

The Platonic dialogues make it clear that expert moral knowledge is a craft.
First, Socrates' understanding of divine wisdom as a craft is evident in his belief about the gods. Since the gods hold divine knowledge, Socrates concludes that they are divine craftsmen, having a specific purpose and function.[20] Second, the knowledge he is seeking (piety, temperance, justice, and so on) must have the same quality as a craft. In the *Republic* in fact, Socrates makes it clear that the wisdom for which he is searching, namely justice, is a craft. He asks "now, what does the craft we call justice give, and to whom or what does it give it?"[21] Expert moral knowledge shares all of the qualities of a craft. Among other things, Socrates requires a craft to be teachable and learnable, explicable, repeatable and inerrant when the form is followed, unique, and functioning. It must also count as a form of knowledge or virtue, as he illustrates in the *Gorgias.* Socrates argues that oratory may fit the other characteristics of a craft, but it lacks the virtuous element. He compares it to pastry baking, which "is not a craft but a knack and routine […] along with 'oratory', cosmetics and sophistry."[22] We see here that a craft must count as a form of knowledge or virtue. Socrates' requirement that expert moral knowledge must be a craft is found often in the dialogues.

A dialogue that is merely based on the nature of knowledge is for instance the *Theaetetus.* Here Socrates' profession of 'ignorance' does play a significant role; indeed, it is here and here alone in Plato that we find the theme of Socrates as an intellectual midwife, someone who is himself intellectually infertile, but who can

---

[17] R. Cross (1970:112).
[18] M. MacPherran (1996: 216).
[19] Ibid (1996: 217).
[20] Euthyphro (13d-14a).
[21] Republic (332d).
[22] Gorgias (463b).

inspire wisdom in others.[23] By ancient Greek convention, the midwife is herself no longer capable of conceiving, but she delivers the offspring of others. Similarly, Socrates claims to be barren of wisdom himself, but capable of eliciting the wisdom from others. In the *Apology,* Socrates also portrays himself as engaged in a life of constant inquiry. He hoped that one could direct one's life, if necessary redirect it, through an understanding that was distinctively philosophical, that is to say, general and abstract, rationally reflective, and concerned with what can be known through different types of inquiry. The aims of moral philosophy, and any hopes it may have of being worth serious attention, are bound up with the fate of Socrates' question, even if it is not true that philosophy itself can reasonably hope to answer it. Therefore what makes an inquiry a philosophical one is reflective generality and a style of argument that claims to be rationally persuasive. Our modern life is pervasively reflective, so a high degree of self-consciousness is required. However it is my belief that philosophy in the modern world cannot make any special claim to reflectiveness, though it must be able to make a special use of it. Socrates' question is the best place for moral philosophy to start. And Socratic reflection can certainly take us somewhere. However, how the Socratic method works is the aim of the following subchapter.

---

[23] R. Bett (2016: 217).

The Knowledge of the Socratic Method

To use Erik Boers words: "Socratic dialogue is about inquiry, and helping people to take time to think, to explore before taking a decisive solution."[24] However, it seems to me that the philosopher does not like giving a resolute answer to potential client's problems, as a psychologist could do. In fact according to Boers, this represents one of the weaknesses of the Socratic method. The fact that it is not result driven creates doubt among organizations about this approach. It seems to me crucial to understand what a Socratic dialogue is and where it comes from. Socrates' practice is illustrated by, and passed down to us through the work of others, primarily Plato, who was a devoted disciple of Socrates. In fact, Plato gave Socrates a central role in his work, and this is the reason why for many people the word 'Socratic Dialogue' immediately invokes memories of Plato. Socratic dialogue as a literary genre emerged in Athens during the 4th century BC, immediately after Socrates' death in 399 BC.

The Socratic dialogue is acknowledged as the most important method of Socrates' practices, where participants try to investigate the truth and the value of their opinions by attempting to respond to a self-chosen question. It appears, as a key point that the conversation is meant to be a dialogue, and in fact does not concern either formal debate or informal discussion.[25] Socratic questioning is disciplined questioning that can be used to pursue thought in many directions and for many purposes. According to Richard Paul, and Linda Elder, the Socratic dialogue is a crucial moment to explore complex ideas, achieve the truth of the statements, open up issues and problems, analyse different concepts, distinguish what we know from what we do not know, and to follow out logical implications of thought.[26] The interesting distinction between Socratic questioning from questioning per se, according to Paul and Elder, is that Socratic questioning is very systematic, disciplined, and deep, and usually focuses on foundational concepts or issues. Consequently, it seems that the art of Socratic questioning is intimately connected with critical thinking because the art of questioning is important to excellence of thought.

---

[24] E. Boers (interview: 2016).
[25] K. Van Rossem (2006:48).
[26] R. Paul & L. Elder (2006: 2).

vrije Universiteit amsterdam

However both critical thinking and Socratic questioning share a common end. In their book, Paul and Elder pointed out that; "critical thinking provides the conceptual tools for understanding how the mind functions in its pursuit of meaning and truth; and Socratic questioning employs those tools in framing questions essential to the pursuit of meaning and truth."[27] As a result, Socrates developed the philosophic method referred to as the method of *dialectic*, which has come to be known as the *Socratic Method*. This method, according to Rick Whiteley, is an approach by which one seeks the truth via a process of questions and answers. As R. Whiteley pointed out; "the basic approach is to first present a general question, often in the form of a 'What is…?' question, to which the interlocutor replies, and to which the questioner might respond by indicating that the interlocutor's answer is inadequate."[28] Through this process of dialogue, the initial response is often destroyed, however further thought might arise. In fact according to Whiteley, the Socratic approach is used to get one to re-examine what they believe, and it is not an approach used to present absolute information.

Through the words of Plato, Whiteley in his article says; "for one to become a dialectician, one needs to understand the nature of each things. It is through the dialectic method, based on reason, that one gains this understanding, and it is also through this method that assumptions are destroyed."[29] Thus, it seems that the questioning strategy is the foundation of the Socratic approach. As Witheley has shown in his article the questions can focus on the participants' knowledge, e.g. what marketing theory is illustrated by a particular fact, or comprehension, e.g. why would sales be falling if prices were increased? In addition, questions determine the ability to apply a particular technique.[30] As a matter of fact, in this dialogue the participants try to understand each other and engage in a common enterprise. The first and fundamental feature of the method is that it is a *maieutic method.*

The word Maieutic, which literally refers to midwifery, can be defined as an art that by operating through dialogue enables the soul to give birth to the truth it seeks. However, the truth is already present in the soul of the seeker, in fact the

---

[27] R. Paul & L. Elder (2006: 3).
[28] R. Whiteley (2006: 66).
[29] Ibid (2006: 66).
[30] Ibid (2006: 68).

Socratic questioning is the modality through which Socrates helps his interlocutor to discover the truth he already possesses.[31] Thus, through continuous questioning and answering, the art of Maieutic enables the questioning soul to generate what he or she already knows. But this is just one side of the method. According to Candiotto, for the soul to be ready it is necessary to have a preliminary stage, addressing errors, false beliefs, and prejudices. In doing so, Socrates uses the *Elenchos*, i.e. refutation.

The Elenchos holds two distinct moments; firstly, the thesis of the interlocutor is analysed, secondly, objections are proposed. This logical movement arousing the negation of falsity is accompanied in the Socratic Method, by a psychological movement through which the interlocutor externalizes the contradictory character of his or her argument. However, according to Candiotto, if this moment of awareness, known as a moment of negativity, is lacking, the Elenchos cannot support the second phase of Socratic Maieutic, namely the production of a positive thesis.[32] The second important feature of the Socratic method is its ethical, political and educational relevance. Is not surprising then, that the topics debated by Socrates and his interlocutors in the first Platonic dialogues settle a kind of connection between working on one's self and improving the life of the polis. As Socrates says in Plato's *Apology*: "you know, men of Athens, that I have never held any other office in the State, but I did serve on the Council."[33] The third main feature instead concerns the type of relationship which develops between Socrates and his interlocutors. Here, Socrates stresses the fact that the interlocutors must collaborate towards a common goal, rather than asserting their supremacy through a type of dialogical fight.[34]

When discussing the different views of the Socratic dialogue as a theoretical model, one must briefly take into account the portrait of Socrates, made by Pierre Hadot, who focused on maybe the most unique feature of Socrates: the *irony*. Through the words of Nietzsche, Hadot has pointed out: "it is significant, that Socrates was the first great Hellene to be ugly, everything in him is exaggerated, *buffo*, a caricature."[35] However, the irony according to Hadot, has played a very

---

[31] L. Candiotto (2013: 2).
[32] L. Candiotto (2013: 2).
[33] Plato & Xenophon (1910: 338).
[34] Ibid (2013: 3).
[35] P. Hadot (1995: 148).

important role in his life. To use the words of Alcibiades, Hadot reports that "he spends his whole life playing the part of a simpleton, a child."[36] But why did he pretend to be ignorant? According to Hadot, with the irony Socrates has characterized himself, in a way that in using skilful questions and to stress his interlocutors with an eternal interrogator, he coaxed his interlocutors into admitting their ignorance. In doing so, Socrates disturbed them so much that they were led to reflect on questions regarding eventually their whole life.[37] I believe that in doing so Socrates has shown, as the real philosopher is the one who, like a gadfly submits himself and the others to a series of hammering questions. In fact, he invites man to "know himself", not to be afraid to ask yourself and to continually ask questions about what's going on around your own life.

Hadot is perfectly aware of the Socratic character of his method, however, it is not part of his interest to try to extricate what may be properly 'Socratic' in the conversations reported by Plato, rather as he pointed out, he wants to discover the significance of Socratic irony. He rightly claims; "obviously, we cannot know exactly how Socrates' discussion with the Athenians took place."[38] According to the description of Otto Apelt, who divides Socrates' character into two parts, Hadot stated; "there are two Socrates: the Socrates who knows in advance how the discussion is going to end, and the Socrates who travels the entire dialectical path along with his interlocutor. Socrates' interlocutors do not know where he is leading them, and therein lies the irony."[39] Subsequently, according to Hadot, the magical essential point in this ironical method is the path, on which Socrates and his interlocutor travel together. As a result, the interlocutor appears to be divided into two: firstly, there is the interlocutor as he was before his conversation with Socrates, and there is the interlocutor who, in the course of their constant mutual accord, has identified himself with Socrates, and who henceforth will never be the same again. [40] Thus, it seems that Socrates had no system to teach. His philosophy was a spiritual exercise, an invitation to a new way of life, active reflection, and of course living consciousness.

---

[36] Ibid (1995: 148).
[37] P. Hadot (1995: 149.)
[38] Ibid (1995: 153).
[39] Ibid (1995: 153).
[40] Ibid (1995: 154).

"Some of you may think I am in jest, but I assure you I will only tell the truth. The truth is, men of Athens, that I have won my name because of a kind of wisdom, nothing more nor less." (Plato & Xenophon, Socratic Discourses, Apology).

The ancient philosophers described philosophy as the form of an exercise of the thought, in which the achievement of wisdom represented the main point. In fact according to them, Hadot stated that "wisdom was a way of life which brought peace of mind (*ataraxia*), inner freedom (*autarkeia*), and cosmic consciousness".[41] From the perspective of a student of Philosophy of Management and Organization, my goal is to reflect on the possibility to adopt the Socratic method within the field of organizations. Therefore it is vital to be familiar with the method that Socrates himself used in the dialogue. This seems to me an important step to acknowledge that this singular and precise approach can eventually be transferred in everyday life.

There are at least three main elements to take into consideration: firstly, the importance of questioning strategy, secondly, the art of the Maieutic, and lastly the use of the Elenchos. All of them are part of the Socratic philosophical discourse, which appears in its totality a systematic approach that may provide the mind with a small number of principles linked together which derived greater persuasive force and mnemonic effectiveness precisely from such systematization. Accordingly, through the portrait of Hadot we have seen how the ironic aspect of Socrates has marked him as one of the main important and still enigmatic philosophers of any time. Therefore, does philosophical life consist of the application of the Socratic method, in order to resolve life's problems, and more specifically organizational problems? And how exactly do modern philosophical practitioners deal with Socratic techniques nowadays?

---

[41] P. Hadot (1995: 265).

vrije Universiteit amsterdam

CHAPTER TWO

Newest Evolutions of Socratic Methodology

In spite of the present popularity of knowledge approaches, we are still lacking an adequate theoretical, empirical and practical understanding of many of the causal mechanisms and contextual factors that are related to knowledge and the attainment of practical knowledge and wisdom within the context of organizations. The explosion of rationality, the rise of science and evidence based on verified knowledge, leave little room for reflection as such. As mentioned in the introduction, this thesis wants to connect philosophy to organizations. Therefore, it will focus on the importance of the Socratic Dialogue as a teaching and learning approach. In this thesis, I outline the process through which people in organizations in circumstances marked by ambiguity, dubiety, surprise, and conflicting values, arrive at *knowledge*.

In management and organization all kinds of decisions have to be made that are impossible to classify as the application of abstract or scientific knowledge. So what kind of knowledge is involved? Which philosophical tool can be profitable in order to conduct a philosophical inquiry within organizations? It seems essential for any organization to have a keen awareness of what is going on in society. Actually, it appears that when organizations are entirely out of touch with the social atmosphere, they may lose ethical consciousness.

Socratic Dialogue: the Art of Questioning in Search of Truth

One of the contemporary Dutch facilitators in Socratic training that I interviewed was Hans Bolten. He has convincingly shown in one of his papers that the Socratic method can help to create a culture in which moral actions are the rules, not the exceptions, and in which responsibility plays a central role.[42]

Common to almost all approaches is that a group starts with a focus on an initial question. Kristof Van Rossem and Hans Bolten are, according to Van Rossem, the newest evolutions in training in Socratic dialogue. Their training is based on the research of the hardest questions, thus practicing questions in a better way. Van Rossem claims that the main secret of a Socratic dialogue is that, in engaging thoroughly with the investigation, you can experience and investigate the very subject you are talking about in your own behaviour here and now.[43] According to K. Van Rossem, in Plato's written dialogue entitled Laches, when Socrates' interlocutors are dealing with the question 'what is courage?' they cannot conclude the conversation before they have answered the question. This means, according to Van Rossem, the effect is that one no longer looks for the answer somewhere outside, but comes closer to self-knowledge.[44]

Although the search for truth must be found firstly within yourself, according to the founders of the *New Trivium,* Erik Boers, Jos Kessels, and Pieter Mostert, claim that for a Socratic dialogue, it appears crucial that people develop the ability to suspend their own ideas, in order to be receptive to the thinking of others, to be open to their frames of reference and their understanding of meanings. In fact, according to them, this is how one's own thinking can achieve strength, in which the ability to speak well derives from the ability to listen.[45] This natural movement, constituting of questions, answers and listening, represents the importance of a public space, a forum for all in search of clarity surrounding group or community

---

[42] H. Bolten (2001: 21).
[43] K. Van Rossem (2006: 48).
[44] Ibid (2006: 48).
[45] J. Kessels, E. Boers, P. Mostert (2004: 16).

vrije Universiteit amsterdam

objectives. As a matter of fact, Socrates has been a master in tempting other people to achieve reflective conversation. These conversations however, according to the New Trivium, were free, with the intent to create room for reflection.[46] However, how can we acquire and cultivate the use of Socratic dialogue through practice?

Latest Features of Socratic Dialogue

A Socratic Dialogue, as we have seen until now is a kind of free space, the willingness to take abundant time to inquire into relevant issues. As the New Trivium has pointed out, the Socratic dialogue is an experiment designed to reach a common answer through systematic teamwork in which people together try to reflect on important questions. [47] This method is constructed on the idea that analysing and sharing experiences led people to a better and deeper understanding. According to New Trivium, in the early twentieth century the German philosopher, pedagogue and politician Leonard Nelson developed the Socratic method both theoretically and practically. There are two important features of Nelson's method. Firstly, the idea of regressive abstraction is extremely important. In other words, this means that starting out with a specific example, one regresses to the foundations upon which these experiences are based. Secondly, one *analyses* an example to get a deeper understanding of the underlying expectation. In this way, one can develop a better general abstractive understanding. [48]

The New Trivium has developed an *hourglass model* that includes the most important moments of the Socratic dialogue according to the tradition of Nelson and his pupil Heckman. The structure of this specific model is characterized by the following moments: Question, Example, Core statement, Rules, and Principles. This method shows that in this approach a question is certainly not answered directly, rather through the exercise of linking the experiences. In doing so, we pass from a single example to a core statement. Subsequently, the presuppositions of the

---

[46] J. Kessels, E. Boers, P. Mostert (2008: 11).
[47] Ibid (2008: 36).
[48] Ibid (2008:36).

particular statements are explored within the general purpose. Hence, the structure of the dialogue appears for the New Trivium, as a shape of an hourglass model.[49]

There are several publications and studies on the importance of the Socratic dialogue made by the New Trivium. In their *Free Space, Philosophy in Organizations,* they pointed out *ten steps* in a Socratic dialogue. The Logos is extremely significant here. According to them, when Socrates required his interlocutors to account for their thoughts and actions he was asking them for the logos, for the reason behind their belief, and consequently for the explanation of their behaviour.[50] The room for reason provides the empathy with other's ideas, thus implying an open attitude to otherness as a kind of predisposition to acknowledging the other as worthy of respect. As a result, in a persuasive sentence, the New Trivium says: "dialogue is the free space and meeting place of friends."[51]

Back to the ten steps of the Socratic dialogue, it appears that the central skill is directed to the achievement of practical wisdom. The steps proceed as follows: 1) select one of the initial questions. 2) Briefly explain an example from your own life, which is relevant for the question itself. 3) Let the selected example be the basis for the whole conversation. 4) Explain with relevant details the example, in order to get the people to deeply understand your experience. 5) As a core statement, focus the example on a crucial and central moment. 6) Question the core statement, as to say 'why did you do that?' This means focusing on the background of your action. 7) Take into consideration the other's position. 8) Define the essence. 9) Try to search for consensus through the whole group. 10) Recall the dialogue as to say, 'what did you like and what not?'[52]

As Erik Boers has stated in an article, he and his organization worked on the genuine level of philosophising in everyday life. The participants take responsibility for their own thinking and at the same time achieve a unity of thought. However, as Boers claims, there is always a profound question which connects the participants. This method establishes a kind of ethical practice: "we

---

[49] Ibid (2008:40).
[50] J. Kessels, E. Boers, P. Mostert (2004: 37).
[51] Ibid (2004: 39).
[52] Ibid (2004: 171).

vrije Universiteit amsterdam

think about philosophical issues", says Boers, "and try to behave in accordance with the way we think together."[53]

The next approach that I am going to take into account regards Kristof Van Rossem. In one of his papers, Van Rossem stated that he holds *three basic rules* in Socratic dialogue. Firstly, say what you have in mind to say. Secondly, maintain a kind of concreteness. Lastly, try to create a common establishment. [54] According to Van Rossem, the challenge of the dialogue is that of course most of the results are not achieved at the end of the dialogue, rather in the process itself. "There is never a definite answer at the end of the S. D," says Van Rossem. Therefore, he divides the goal of Socratic dialogue into two levels: content level and discipline of thinking. Van Rossem explains that "in the first level, the participants will reach an understanding about a general consensus, and yet remain perhaps confused at the end of the dialogue, with new questions to investigate." The second level, according to him, is founded on the basis of a proper attitude – a trait that is required in doing a Socratic work. This level holds the three rules already mentioned above. "A Socratic dialogue is a conversation in which participants try to have a dialogue together, which seems different than having a discussion."[55] In fact, in a valid scheme, Van Rossem has shown the main differences between *dialogue* and *discussion*. Based on using the rhetoric, rather than the dialectic, the discussion increases the level of judgment, which means taking a standpoint that leads to an offensive or defensive behaviour. The answer plays a central role, which most of the time is tailored to the individual. Instead, within a dialogue, investigation and checking are aimed at the truth, through carefully listening to yourself and others, the whole community points out different questions within a dialectic shape.[56]

Very close to Van Rossem's approach seems the approach of Hans Bolten. According to Bolten, a Socratic dialogue is based on a didactic method, which contains philosophical, ethical, and more general investigations, through conceptual questioning with a group of people and in any situation. Bolten as well as Van Rossem, has clearly shown the differences between partners in dialogue and in discussion. Respectively, the first one investigates a matter through questions, in

---

[53] E. Boers (2009 :3).
[54] K. Van Rossem (2006:49).
[55] K. Van Rossem (2006: 49).
[56] K. Van Rossem (2006: 49).

order to enable clarity, understanding and create room to speak. This leads the participants to a common understanding of the matter, and at the same time investigates differences of opinions, to finally achieve a consensus. The second one, looks upon each other's speaking time as lost time, in fact generally the participants demand speaking time. Usually, within a discussion one attacks another's arguments, and this conduct strives after approval of their own viewpoint.[57] Thus, according to Bolten, making use of dialogical techniques, by formulating the subject, listening, asking questions, and making examples, the Socratic dialogue has been used with logical criteria.

Philosophical Interventions to Human Capital

As Leonard Nelson and Gustav Heckman developed the Socratic dialogue in the first part of the last century, they both emphasized the importance of having the philosophical reflection of the dialogue grounded in the domain of real life experience. Along these lines, for the purpose of this thesis I will consider the traditional term 'Socratic method' to refer to the method used by Socrates in Plato's dialogues. Under this ancient technique, our modern society should direct its conduct. But as a modern society, have we replaced a sense of community with economic prosperity and private obsessive ambition? Since this thesis is an effort to connect philosophy to organization, it seems to me that the Socratic learning method is extremely reasonable as a tool for human knowledge organization. Thus, transforming the mentality of the people inside any organization appears like one of the goals of this thesis.

Yet, an important and unsolved question appeared in my mind during the development of my thesis. According to Van Rossem, the kind of knowledge, which arises from a Socratic dialogue, is a better knowledge, in which feelings, facts and critical reflections are generally related to *human aspects*. So, how do philosophical interventions deal with effectiveness and profit making*?* By installing a Socratic style, employees, stakeholders, managers or leaders will become more independent and autonomous thinkers. Autonomy and the ability to

---

[57] Ibid (2001: 24).

make rational judgment are essential to building a healthy and democratic organization. By transforming people into active, Socratic learners, we are sowing the seeds for a kind of practical wisdom, between those people that are involved in pursuing the same purpose. However, it seems to me that still something is missing, because the Socratic method is focused on *human affairs*.

As we know, there were philosophers before Socrates, but they were not interested in human affairs. Socrates himself began as such a philosopher, seeking for the truth, as the best way of life for human beings and social value. Back to Plato, one famous example of the Socratic Learning Method occurs in the dialogue *Meno*. In *Meno*, Meno asks Socrates whether virtue is taught, acquired by practice, or whether it is present in men innately. As a result, Meno's very question implies his preconceptions towards what virtue is and its possible sources: teaching, practice, and nature. Seeing Meno's preconceptions toward virtue, Socrates encourages Meno to clarify his understanding of virtue by soliciting a definition. To proceed in accordance with Abraham D. Stone, there are at least two main ways to divide the *Meno*. In both parts, Socrates reduces Meno to perplexity. Furthermore, in both instances Socrates steps in with his own proposal and, by the end, makes Meno confident once again.[58] According to Stone, Socrates thus teaches him a truth. The formal point of the demonstration is to show that teaching is reminding rather than establishing the merits of any one teaching method. The procedure, according to Stone proceeds as follows: 1) elicit the confident response. 2) Show him that it is incorrect, and that he cannot produce a better one, thus reducing him to perplexity. 3) Introduce a new answer that emerges from his own thought. 4) Return him to confidence. [59]

What does Socrates teach to Meno? According to Stone, Meno has complained that he not only knew what virtue was, but was actively experiencing it. However, Socrates has anesthetized his mouth and soul, depriving him of his awareness and doctrine. Consequently, Socrates forces him to admit a kind of mental habit of active inquiry and vigorous thinking. After all, the ultimate goal of Socratic method is to help the participants examine their own beliefs and new information they encounter. Consequently, the utilization of the Socratic method generates the

---

[58] A. D. Stone (2010: 2).
[59] Ibid (2010: 4).

importance of cultivating higher order thinking skills or critical thinking skills, which of course clashes with our technically advanced society, which is composed by high speed communication, effortless connections and short meetings. Becoming part of a new organizational behaviour demands that people step away from the comfort of assured truth, from the nestling feeling of being surrounded by people who share one's convictions and passions. If one begins life as a child who loves and trusts his parents, it is tempting to want to reconstruct workers along the same lines, finding in an idealized image of a leader a surrogate parent who will do our thinking for us.

Through cross cultural and philosophical inquiry, fostering a greater knowledge of the world will develop workers who can operate as world citizens with greater sensitivity and understanding. However, as it has been widely mentioned, the notion of learning through discovery is the heart of Socratic dialogue, which operates by creating an opportunity for reflection and interchange in a conversational setting. Subsequently, the group needs to be open, non-adversarial and treat all opinions as equally valid and important. The group should be relatively small, however it is possible to do the Socratic dialogue one on one. Here, members of the group may come from diverse backgrounds and status levels. The interest of the participants needs not be a philosophical force, but there must be an interest in learning from others.

This chapter portrays a sense of the vivacity and scope for innovation in the Socratic dialogue. What actually happens in a Socratic dialogue? A group of 6-10 people find, through thinking, a fundamental question that interests them all. The dialogue should deal with a suitable question. For instance, 'What is courage?' Thus, the investigation is at the same time a self-investigation, where participants eventually should consider questions as such: 'What are my presuppositions or experiences?' In fact, each participant will be willing to put their judgments at stake, they will be willing to investigate their own thinking and maybe alter their own values. The core of Socratic dialogue, according to three of the nine practitioners is to achieve a genuine consensus about the answer to the general question. In addition, the general core of my practitioners insist that the starting point of the analysis is an example from real life. The philosophical method followed by Nelson, claims that the facilitator does not participate in the dialogue

on content. His task is to create the opportunity for participants to think about the general question according to the Socratic method. However, the general essence of our contemporary practitioners, believe that the facilitator should be a kind of active guide that follow the process, and never stay out from the dialogue. Facilitating Socratic dialogue requires many skills and insight, a certain sensitivity and of course knowledge. In fact, in comparison to the Nelson/Heckman style, my practitioners made me aware that many things have already changed, and in a way, they should follow the requests and the needs of the organizations, and still remain authentic and solid. However, this chapter as a theoretical one, has shown already some of the experiences of my nine practitioners, but yet remains incomplete. In order to better understand some critical issues of the Socratic dialogue, we will need to know what has been brought up during our interviews. This will allow us to come more close to their experience regarding the development of the Socratic dialogue nowadays.

CHAPTER THREE

How did the Socratic dialogue develop in the Netherlands?

A Philosophy for the systems world

As already mentioned in the previous chapters, as a student in Philosophy of Management and Organization, for the last ten years reading philosophy and engaging only recently in dialogue with philosophers has gradually not only changed my private life, but also how I imagine my professional life. It has shaped the vision on how I could eventually see myself as a manager, and the relationship that I could potentially build with colleagues, even in circumstances where I will face important choices and ethical dilemmas. Therefore, the purpose of this chapter, is mainly an attempt to rationalize why and how philosophy has had such a positive impact on careers within organizations among those people who are engaged in profound and enduring philosophical dialogue. The aim of this chapter is to find out how it is possible to sell philosophy to organizations and indeed become synchronized with the mentality of the world-system by analysing the widespread use of the Socratic dialogue in the Netherlands.

The first part of the chapter will follow the experiences of Vander Lemes and Erik Boers to see how a practitioner can sell their philosophy nowadays. Secondly, I will deal with the goals of the Socratic dialogue within an organization, according to the point of views of four of the nine practitioners. Thirdly, through the critical reflections of Artur Massana and Hans Bolten I will be able to identify some critical aspects of the Socratic dialogue. The end of the chapter will show how my contemporary practitioners classify and analyse the weaknesses and the strengths of the Socratic dialogue within an organizational environment.

Can One Sell Philosophy?

In reviewing the benefits of the method, the reader will notices that the aim of the Socratic dialogue, will lead the participants towards an attitude of inquiry that involves an ability to recognize the existence of problems and an acceptance of the general need for evidence in support of what is asserted to be true. By posing a relevant number of questions to the participants that force them to confront weaknesses in each position, the Socratic dialogue trains participants to assess the strength of their own arguments. However, the Socratic dialogue can also be criticized for some reasons.

How can we design a philosophical project to serve the immediate needs of knowledge workers and therefore the organization's needs? Why did you choose to come and hear this talk? What I am going to say? Have you ever been in similar circumstances before? What did you do? Don't you think it is a mistake to ask questions without a goal in mind?

These are questions. Are they equally useful questions? Are they fairly consistent for improving business profit? How do organizations generally reply? The processes of Socratic method, despite the aim is to achieve a practical wisdom, which seems to me fluffy in practice, because it isn't a result-driven approach. The method's commitment to non-judgmental evaluations, and non-authoritarian community pushes unhealthy group dynamics and problems beneath the surface, where they are harder to see. In fact, I wonder whether some unhealthy personalities are more attracted to the Socratic method also because of these underestimated features. To be clear, the Socratic method is certainly fascinating and insightful, however through engaging with my practitioners it has become clear that the Socratic method poses some complications.

One of these complications forms a main part of my thesis: is it really possible to introduce philosophy into an organization. Vander Lemes was a well-known architect and director of the Architect Association school in Barcelona, which was a corporation consisting of 200 people. He started to ask himself after this experience, how it could be possible to connect philosophy to organization. After an interview with Erik Boers, Lemes realized that it is indeed possible to connect

philosophy to organization, especially after having witnessed the success of this marriage in Dutch businesses. He started research on both dialogical philosophy and the use of Socratic dialogue. During his research on business organizations, philosophy of management and efficiency in action, he was immediately faced with the first problem; how can one develop a model that cannot be applied in an organization? According to Lemes, organizations are very rigorous and rigid which is shown when he says "they don't want share their knowledge".[60] Therefore, he decided to learn the method through training in Socratic dialogue in England. Subsequently, he could build a reputation and image, and eventually people started to recognize him. He pointed out during our interview that "philosophy cannot be sold", however, "you can build a reputation beyond you and your work, and eventually start to have followers and persuade people to start practising Socratic dialogue."[61] Consequently, he advised me to explain very clearly what, as a practitioner, you are going to do for the organization, and especially what the team can reach through an immersion in Socratic dialogue.[62]

Lemes recognizes at least two main problems in trying to connect philosophy to organizations: first of all, as a matter of fact it is very difficult to demonstrate that the activity of Socratic dialogue will offer to the participants something concrete, something that you actually can explain. The second important issue regards the following question: "how we ensure that people get satisfaction if we cannot sell results?"[63] Here Lemes has followed Erik Boers' advice - "Do not try to explain logically the mechanism of the Socratic dialogue to the organization, rather ask them for a couple of hours to give them the opportunity to experience a Socratic meeting and see how their organization can benefit."[64] According to Lemes, this is what Boers actually suggested to him, and in doing so he reduced the attitude of reservation among the business owners and managers.

On the other hand, it was in 1996 when Erik Boers with a group of colleagues and teachers set up the university course in Philosophy of Management and Organization. After studying philosophy at VU University of Amsterdam, Boers began attending managerial conferences on intuition and rationality in

---

[60] V. Lemes (interview: 2016).
[61] IV. Lemes (interview: 2016).
[62] Ibid (interview: 2016).
[63] Ibid (interview: 2016).
[64] Ibid (interview: 2016).

vrije Universiteit amsterdam

organization. What he immediately faced was that many people in organizations deal with philosophical, epistemological, and ethical questions. Thus, in order to increase his experience he started to work with Philips. He became a manager trainer, and he learned how to facilitate groups of people in order to increase their conversational skills. In addition, through the Socratic method, he realized that "you do not learn philosophy, but how to philosophize."[65] Thus, he started to introduce Socratic dialogue into organizations, and developed it into a practice. He asked himself: 'what it is the role of Socratic dialogue in organization?' In order to answer this question, he started an *Ethical Café* in one of the main banks in Holland. Hence, he had to deal with some ethical tasks. One of these tasks was to help professional people to think about responsibility in many different fields and also help to increase their vision and strategy for the business through extrinsic effects such as finding proper words that could help the participants to find the desire to want to develop the organization. Another task was to help professionals to listen better, communicate more effectively and experience their true selves by working together. By intrinsic effects, this would inspire the professionals to start thinking about their role within the organization, and importantly exceed the isolated aspect that too often involves people in organizations.[66]

To conclude this section, I was really fascinated by how Mr Boers prepared his participants before driving them into a Socratic dialogue. He has convincingly stated during our meeting, that before he started with Socratic dialogue he engaged the participants through a type of *Mental Stretching*. "by picking a general question, the one that attracts and involves everyone, as why are you here, people start to get interested and in a way involved, which means that they are already in the proper mood to start making proper inquiries and asking big questions."[67] "In doing so," he says, "you arouse curiosity and internal interests."[68]

---

[65] E. Boers (interview: 2016).
[66] Ibid (interview: 2016).
[67] Ibid (interview: 2016).
[68] Ibid (interview: 2106).

vrije Universiteit amsterdam

The Ambitions of Socratic Dialogue

"What makes a consultation 'Socratic'? One obvious requirement is that in such a conversation, something similar to what our Athenian friend did must, in some sense, take place."[69] But as Kristof Van Rossem rightfully stated, 'do we really know what exactly Socrates did'? To use Kristof Van Rossem's expression: "we do not really know what he did!"[70] However Van Rossem, through the words of Rossetti continues: "One thing is sure: Socrates himself did not have a definable method that he applied to everyone he met."[71] A trainer in practical philosophy in different organizational settings, Kristof Van Rossem studied science of religion and philosophy in Leuven, Amsterdam and Uppsala. He is also engaged in adult education and teaches teachers at the European High School in Brussels and at the University of Leuven. He claims that the Socratic dialogue is an important tool to explore all of the ideas produced by participants through a deep reflection. In one of his articles, he pointed out that a Socratic dialogue is a conversation in which you reflect on at least six junctures: 1) to take a position, 2) to concretize, 3) to argue 4) to listen literally, 5) to criticize, 6) to mirror.[72]

During our Skype meeting, I asked Mr Van Rossem to define the ambitions of the Socratic dialogue. He divided the goals of Socratic dialogue into two stages: the *Content level,* in which the participants will find out the consensus, although at the end of the dialogue there is confusion among the participants, which will guide them to a new level of investigation. The second level is defined by Van Rossem as the *Discipline of thinking.* As already mentioned in the first chapter he, together with Hans Bolten made a list of 27 Socratic competences that we can summarize within five movements. 1) Take a position standpoint 2) attempt to give arguments 3) listen carefully 4) concretizing and 5) critical moment.[73] In sharing his experience, he made me aware that a general definition of Socratic dialogue always should refer to a critical investigation about the truth of people's uncertain experiences. "Here the big difference with other philosophical styles is the

---

[69] K. Van Rossem (2014: 1344).
[70] Ibid (2014: 1344).
[71] K. Van Rossem (2014: 1344).
[72] Ibid (2014: 1349).
[73] K. Van Rossem (interview: 2016).

vrije Universiteit amsterdam

Reference to Experience."[74] This means that he is called by the organizations when some issues or disagreements arise, especially in the field of high positions such as judges, doctors, teachers and so on. What generally happens among these positions is an overly polite conversation between professionals. By implicitly accepting the work done by other colleagues, they never really admit any kind of critical reflection, or simply ask questions. Therefore, a company pays him for a Socratic dialogue which is less smooth, goes into more depth, and is more analytic.[75]

Among the Dutch female practitioners one of the main protagonists in philosophical counselling is Minke Tromp. A graduate in Philosophy of Management and Organizations, she has developed her own ideas on how to approach the philosophical practice. Her philosophical counselling is generally divided into three interviews of one hour. Her main point is directed by the importance of human thought. Through the technique of the Socratic dialogue, a group of people work both on a question that is relevant for everybody and at the same time the participants train their conversational skills, and their ability to reflect. In order to answer my question regarding the goals of the Socratic dialogue, she divides them into three parts: 1) Short-term goal; in which after a couple of hours of Socratic dialogue, the participants can create such things as free space, critical thinking, basically everything is possible to achieve within a short-term.
2) Indirectly- achieved goal; in which the Socratic dialogue is a means to achieve any goals in the field of organizational development. 3) Adaptability-learning-culture; in which the Socratic dialogue is a means to develop the learning ability or adaptability of the company as a collective. [76] However, the general and positive results that are achieved after an immersion in Socratic dialogue are at least two, according to Tromp. Firstly, the participants have the opportunity to experience the value of thinking, and secondly, they have the possibility to build important changes.[77]

Remaining within the Dutch female practitioners, Van Paridon a teacher of philosophy presents the idea that the Socratic dialogue is essential if an organization doesn't have a solely profit-focused mind set. She was a marketing manager for 15 years in multinational and semi government organizations, and

---

[74] Ibid (interview 2016).
[75] Ibid (interview: 2016).
[76] M. Tromp (interview: 2016).
[77] Ibid (interview: 2016).

after having spent time travelling, she started to study philosophy, now working for an organization in which she did an open course for training in Socratic dialogue. Her idea of the Socratic dialogue claims that this method teaches not to judge. In fact, if your attitude fits with the ideology of the Socratic model she says "you keep wondering if you are going on the right track, and here you will use a Socratic dialogue to see if what you do is in line with your goals."[78] She divides the ambitions of Socratic dialogue into five parts: 1) All the participants will eventually become more ethical 2) Correct your own vision through critically evaluating your principles 3) The participants will discover how to share their principles 4) Through a moral debate, the whole team learns how to connect with each other 5) The team will achieve the attitude to make judgments out of the questions.[79]

To conclude this section, I am going to take into account the idea of the ambitions of the Socratic dialogue of Artur Massana. He studied philosophy at the University of Barcelona, and Business school (MBA) for two years. He is a member of the analytical philosophy department at the University of Barcelona. In addition, his teaches as an associate professor in the business school to MBA students, and entrepreneurs. Lastly, he has his own company called *SIACARA,* in which he does consulting in innovations, and training. He focuses on the idea of persuasive management, which was probably elaborated in a first instance by a Danish professor. Thus, he claims that in management the idea of influencing others by using words, is one of the basic skills of management and leadership. This concept, according to Massana, is different from the role of technical manager, who is more rational, and in a way is technical in solving problems and maximizing functions.[80] Rather, continues Massana, "*persuasive management* is a kind of Naïve, more Sophist, is based on Greek historical experience which believe that humans are animal with logos."[81] In fact, this kind of management holds the rhetoric as a major tool to better influence others with words. He pointed out that "a good idea sometimes cannot be enough, however, having influential and charismatic behaviour will help you to achieve your purpose."[82]

---

[78] V. Paridon (interview: 2016).
[79] Ibid (interview: 2016).
[80] A. Massana (interview: 2026).
[81] Ibid (interview: 2016).
[82] Ibid (interview: 2016).

vrije Universiteit amsterdam

Furthermore, in order to answer my question about the ambitions of Socratic dialogue, he pointed out one of his personal experiences. During a seminar, he spent the last two hours in Socratic dialogue. His focus was to determine what 'excellence' is in sales. He believes that the magical moment here, is when the employees have the possibility to share their best experiences within the organization. Thus, a kind of social space is achieved where people can share their best experiences. Although it can be important and useful, the Socratic dialogue "it is not so important," says Massana. "It can be used for learning from the past, but still the methodology has some limitations. Nowadays, organizations are seeking for innovations"[83]. Massana furthers this by saying that "organizational issues are: how are we going to reinvent our company? How can we be more creative and innovative?"[84] So, this means according to Massana, that the Socratic dialogue cannot be helpful for these types of questions. However, he concludes that is useful to increase a better communication between the employees, to make them feel a valid part of the company, because in that moment they have the opportunity to share the best version of themselves.

This conclusion leads me to the following assumption: Socratic method is the ancient root of modern dialectics. Questions and answers can move the investigation of a problem one step forward. Of course there exist problems with play on words or cyclical traps, but no practice is a panacea by itself. We need a combination of good practices and not the same for all kinds of problems. The Socratic method is difficult to define in simple terms, but generally helps the participants to increase their analytical and critical thinking. This is given in the general logic that this method invites the participants to: 1) share goals and objectives 2) share questions and problems 3) share information and data 4) share modes of interpreting   and 5) share key assumptions. All of the participants, according to my practitioners share their experiences, and their principles. Despite the general core of my practitioners believing in this just mentioned feature of the Socratic dialogue, Artur Massana, pointed out that the kind of magical moment is when the participant in having space and chance to reflect, share their *best* experience. But this raises a somewhat troublesome question: how is it possible to

---

[83] Ibid (interview: 2016).
[84] Ibid (interview: 2016).

know what kind of question will lead the participants to share his or her *best* experience? Deep questions drive our thoughts and force us to deal with complexity. Questions of point of view force us to examine our own point of view and to consider others as well. Is it plausible to determine what should be included and what excluded and how facts should be interpreted by adopting the assumption that the 'magical' moment is based on shared best experiences only? Do unfavourable and adverse experiences alter the consequences of the Socratic dialogue?

<u>Some Critical Sides of Socratic Dialogue</u>

Artur Massana does not label himself as a trainer in Socratic dialogue. In fact, he gives to the Socratic dialogue a maximum of a couple of hours at the end of his training. "Socratic dialogue", says Massana, "within the Nelson/Heckman tradition is not a basic tool for organizational performance, organizations generally want results, and as we know the Socratic dialogue cannot guarantee specific results, and in addition it takes too much time."[85] As Massana, Hans Bolten shares a similar critical opinion on the reflection of the Socratic dialogue. Hans Bolten has studied philosophy and social sciences at the University of Amsterdam. For seven years, he was a high school teacher of philosophy. Bolten became interested in the Socratic dialogue in 1992, and he started as a facilitator in an International school, where he met the founders of the New Trivium. They usually met each other weekly, for a year, to discuss and develop a method. In 1999, Bolten started to work with the people of the New Trivium until 2010. As already mentioned, Jos Kessels was the first to work practically with the Socratic dialogue in the field of organization. Subsequently, Bolten started to do the same. Both of them focused on the moral issues surrounding organizations. After ten years of working together, Bolten for many important reasons decided to start to work alone, and with his own courses, and therefore he left the New Trivium. During our meeting, Bolten highlighted the imperceptible but fundamental diversity between his method and the Socratic dialogue.

---

[85] A. Massana (interview: 2016).

He pointed out: "I do not see the Socratic dialogue as helpful to an organization, rather for the people within an organization."[86] In fact this is one of the reasons why he does not deal with the Socratic dialogue in the field of organization. Rather, what he does when he is called by an organization, is to philosophise with the people, and guide them into a deeper conversation, which is a kind of education in their capabilities, that in a way deals with Socratic skills. [87] According to Bolten, organizations are not interested in philosophy, but their interest is focused on questions such as: "how are we going to think as a team?" and also: "how are we going to talk as a team?" So, I posed the question; what can people within an organization learn from an immersion in a Socratic dialogue? He promptly replied "what they can learn from the Socratic dialogue is the art of questioning, thus using words in a deeper sense."[88] According to him, in using the Socratic method the participants understand that they are doing philosophy, and not solving the problems of the organization. In fact, he continues by saying: "the problems regarding the organization should not obstruct or interfere with the dialogue itself; people do this small piece of philosophy, because in a way they want to get away from the problems of the organization for a while."[89] This means, according to Mr Bolten, that philosophy does not solve problems, but if there is a problem, the best thing that a philosopher can do is ask why there is a problem.

Hans Bolten focuses on words, on helping people to learn how to speak and think properly. He wants to stress the importance of promoting the accuracy of human thought, therefore *reflection in practice.* So in practice his work consists of analysing how feelings are conveyed in people's reflections. Subsequently, he uses the feelings to analyse and reflect on the statement that arises. In one of his articles, he says how feelings, even confused feelings, are useful to learning something from the experience. In the case of confused feelings, it is plausible that the confusion may be the precursor to a profound change in one's conversational attitude from which a dialogical attitude may follow. In fact, he continues as follows, "without this open conversational attitude it is impossible to deal with ethical issues well; this attitude is the basis of every morally accountable action."[90] According to Bolten, by following the sketch of Socratic dialogue, a newly

---

[86] H. Bolten (interview: 2016).
[87] Ibid (interview:2016).
[88] Ibid (interview:2016).
[89] Ibid (interview: 2016).
[90] H. Bolten (2001: 21).

acquired knowledge and set of skills arises. The most typical changes noted are: creating room to speak, shifting from convincing others to investigating with them, making tacit knowledge explicit, and developing shared vision.[91] This system works properly, however the core of the method is focusing on asking questions repeatedly. It seems that the Modern Socratic method is a process of questioning used to carefully lead a person to knowledge through small steps. This knowledge can be specific data, training in approaches to problem solving, or leading one to embrace a specific belief. Therefore, it is much easier to lead a person, by baby steps, to specific knowledge through a series of questions than it is to force a person to abandon a cherished idea and rethink an important issue just by asking creative questions. However, raising intriguing questions about the value of the Socratic method as a technique in today's corporations is forcing the participants to invest themselves in the outcome. The problem comes alive for them, as a dilemma to wrestle with and make choices about. The Socratic method makes them reflect carefully. So how can an insecure and fragile personality react to the high amount of significant questions? Are there any types of 'collateral effects'?

---

[91] Ibid (2001: 26).

What are the Weaknesses and the Strengths of the Socratic Dialogue?

As the previous chapters have shown, the Socratic dialogue or method can help the participants sharpen their analytical and critical skills and help them to begin to understand the reasons behind their actions. According to the traditional idea of Nelson, and partly followed by Boers, the Socratic method is the art of teaching not philosophy but philosophizing, the art not of teaching about philosophers but of making philosophers. The overall purpose of Socratic method, is to challenge accuracy and completeness of thinking in a way that acts to move people towards their ultimate goals. And this is something that the Dutch experience perfectly knows. However, this particular activity holds not only advantages but also disadvantages, and it is my intent to deeply analyze them. Thanks to the Dutch practitioners, which are intrinsically connected to the work-place, I could established both weaknesses and strengths of the method. There are numbers of weaknesses in the Socratic dialogue, some of which are highlighted by Erik Boers, who (after having followed the German Nelson's tradition of dealing with five days of Socratic dialogue) feels that it is almost impossible to sell organizations the notion of the Socratic dialogue nowadays.

Consequently, in order to adapt his meticulous method to the needs of the organization, he often spent two hours at a time engaged in Socratic dialogue. Therefore an example of a new kind of Socratic dialogue has seen Mr Boers conduct a Socratic meeting with both a small group of six people in the middle, and another bigger group of about fifty people sitting around them. The meeting was about Solar Energy, focusing on how to invest in Solar Energy. Boers pointed out that "ideally Socratic dialogue is dealing with a group of ten people, however the presentation of the investigation is very little. Thus, dividing the group into two parts, it seems more possible to involve both people and presentation within an organization."[92] As a result, consumption of time is clearly the first weakness of Socratic dialogue. The second weakness, which holds even a third one, is that Socratic dialogue does not offer a result-driven solution. According to Boers, the method is presented not to solve issues, but rather to guide people to reflect on their words, as to say, on their reflective capabilities. This means, and here lies the third

---

[92] E. Boers (interview: 2016).

vrije Universiteit amsterdam

weakness, that in a group divided into two parts, the facilitator may reach a consensus, only within the small group.

Lemes and Bolten share this view with Boers. Both of them think that the main weaknesses of Socratic dialogue are both the large amount of time needed in order to better achieve both reflection and consensus, and the fact that the Socratic dialogue has no compromise with results. However, in retracing the significant strength of the Socratic dialogue, Bolten pointed out that "given that we consider the Socratic dialogue not suitable to solve problems, this is actually a kind of strength, because for the first time they can skip this state on their mind, in which they must solve problems all the time, rather they can focus and analyse the words that they are using to talk about the world." [93] In other words, given that the dialogue itself appears very demanding for the participants, according to Bolten, it is perhaps better for them walk off from the problems of the organization, and try to focus their reflections on their own obstacles.

According to Minke Tromp, determining the weaknesses and the strengths of the Socratic dialogue, basically depends on the method that we are going to take into consideration. For instance, in taking into account the traditional method of the Socratic dialogue, she pointed out that "the strength of this method is the intellectual integrity beyond the idea, however at the same time, it seems abstract and vague. It has seven steps, which therefore makes it easy to comprehend, but the weakness is that it has only seven steps."[94]

Original seems the way in which Kristof Van Rossem explains the weakness and strengths of the Socratic dialogue. In fact, he conveys that weakness and strengths in the Socratic method are actually the same. According to him, since the Socratic dialogue is an inquiry through experiences in order to develop better decision making skills for the future, it is a kind of approach that takes once again, too much time and energy. He states that "Organizations clearly do not want to spend their money, in spending too much time in Socratic meetings, and this is the reason why psychological trainings are more easily implemented in organizations."[95] He continued by saying; "psychological processes are generally involved in thinking about what is going on in your own life, therefore concerns

---

[93] H. Bolten (interview: 2016).
[94] M. Tromp (interview: 2016).
[95] K. Van Rossem (interview: 2016).

vrije Universiteit amsterdam

analysing the future, not the past, and eventually concerns finding answers."[96] According to Van Rossem, this approach remains superficial. Instead, given that the Socratic dialogue forces research through experience, a participant will grasp a critical and analytical thinking, thus a better knowledge.

Time-Consumption also seems to be a critical issue in the mind of Van Paridon. She is perfectly aware of how long it takes to complete a Socratic dialogue in the traditional way, following Nelson and Heckman. However, she is actually working and studying a shorter way of completing the Socratic dialogue within thirty minutes. She states that "People are basically all the same, when we deal with some issues, usually the most important question is useful for everyone, that's why it is plausible to think to deal with a shortest way to conduct a Socratic dialogue."[97] In sharing her experience, she told me during our meeting that it seems very important that who is monitoring or conducting the Socratic dialogue must not to be someone from the company itself. It can happen that the person in charge of conducting the dialogue seems, according to her, not interested at all in Socratic dialogue. Thus she holds the criterion that a person that guides the Socratic dialogue should not belong to the organization, rather should be an independent person.[98] However, she concludes to claim that usually organizations only start to deal with Socratic dialogue, once a certain problem arises.

Through the real experience of my Dutch practitioners, I have discovered that in the Netherlands the Socratic dialogue is used as a philosophical instrument to make a deep analysis of the identity of organizations and business and of their goals, and therefore the method becomes clearly part of the System-World. Whether it is education, culture, government, health-care or business, the Socratic dialogue in the Netherlands has been seen as combined with the mental systems of workers and indeed subject to the modern criteria i.e. efficiency, productivity, adaptability and capacity.

---

[96] Ibid (interview: 2016).
[97] V. Paridon (interview: 2016).
[98] Ibid (interview: 2016).

vrije Universiteit *amsterdam*

CHAPTER FOUR

How the Socratic dialogue has been developed in Italy

A Philosophy for everyday life

In this section, I shall focus on the relationship between ethical theory and practice of management. This is a problematic subject. Ancient Greek philosophers who spoke of emphasized qualities such a wisdom, justice, beneficence, courage and moderation, were referring to the need to hold other characteristics in balance. A re-emergence of interest in the virtues and personal character has been a feature of philosophical ethics in Western societies during the latter part of the twentieth century, perhaps in part due to concerns about an eclipse of moral values in society generally. According to Kevin Gibson, most of the Western world operates under a capitalistic economic system based on fundamental assumptions. Generally, as pointed out by Gibson: "the consequences of these assumptions are momentous for our quality of life. Furthermore, many of us will spend the majority of our adult lives in a work setting […] and will be affected by moral assumptions."[99]

An organization, as mentioned already in the introduction, is defined as a group, from two people to tens of thousands that intentionally strives to accomplish a shared common goal or set of goals. So organizations are systems composed of input, as human and monetary resources, a process, that guide the organization to achieve goals, and outcomes. In fact, it seems that the ethic of the organization should refer to an organization's attempt to define its mission and values, recognize values that could cause tension, seek the best solutions to these tensions, and manage the operations to maintain its values. Hence, the objective is simple: better decision-making. The only issue is that there are so many different views over what we mean by better. According to all my practitioners, at the core of all decision-making is the need to balance power with responsibility, as the vehicle for resolving the better question. However, how to get it? How to keep it? And where does wisdom come into this concept?

---

[99] K. Gibson (2007: 3).

The Scope for Profit Concerning Ethical Behaviours

As already mentioned in the introduction, a good example of practical wisdom has been realized by the ambitious project of Ada Fiore. In her Italian town, Corigliano d'Otranto, a province of Lecce, the teacher of philosophy has developed a new economy named *ethics economy,* in which according to her founder, the profit will arise from ethics. The main question built around her philosophical industry called *Kalopolis* is this: can a culture generate an ethics economy, build new healthy relationships, create a new intellectual franchise system, and finally develop an idea of virtue marketing which is able to cope with the real needs? Hence the necessity to build Kalopolis as an industry that demonstrates how philosophical thinking combined with creativity is able to be translated into concrete actions, creating a positive impact on the common habits and determining new possible market strategies. Profoundly inspired by the encyclical letter *Laudato Sì*, Kalopolis is a place where the myths of modernity - individualism, indefinite progress, competition, and consumerism - are replaced by a different ecological balance, which underlines solidarity and openness to all living beings. This means that within this project it is possible to see environmental themes, social themes, and moral themes.

Having graduated in philosophy in the University of Salento, Ada Fiore started immediately to teach philosophy and motivated students to a different and alternative philosophical approach that distances them from the general *stunning* due to the mechanical impact of our era. She became mayor of the city, and with the first project she opened a *philosophical desk* for all citizens. For the second project she, with her group of co-workers built a philosophical garden named *giardino di Sofia* with twelve clay amphora's. These twelve amphora's describe twelve philosophical quotes that lead the visitors to the read- tour at the garden, or even to rent a philosopher for a guided tour. Although, she was a mayor for nine years, after this experience she decided to keep moving philosophy outside of the university walls, and her idea was to build a kind of tourism of thought, thus creating objects that could encourage human thought. As a result, Kalopolis arose

vrije Universiteit amsterdam

with the aim to build products that must have contrary characteristics to those which we habitually buy. This awareness, according to Mrs Fiore, creates a state of well-being called *Kalopatia* (love for beauty).[100]

Until today, Kalopolis has enforced three main activities: 1) *La semina:* the first activity which starts with a book presentation, that invites the citizens to plant the Aristotelian virtues, sold in the form of pouches for seeds. 2) *La cura:* a second activity rotates around the question: "how is it possible to live well in Kalopolis?"[101] Sold in the form of packs of cigarettes, the *thinking reed* inspired by Pascal, are ten parchments with ten philosophical questions that want to develop the capacity of thinking in everyone, as to let them understand the importance of the philosophical exercise.[102] 3) *La raccolta:* a game for a new society, with the aim of building a global plan. The game consists of solving 25 problems that afflict 25 nations, inspired by the values of solidarity, cooperation, and analysis. The game helps people to reflect with some urgency to the real needs of a certain nation that invites you to live responsibly. Thus, Mrs Fiore pointed out that "the philosophy is understood as a method that forms the new citizens through a real life education."[103] She continues to say that her idea of the marketing of virtue is opposed to the marketing of vice.

To answer the question of which kind of knowledge can possibly develop from this work, Fiore stated that; "from this project a participant will not acquire a certain knowledge, rather analytical and reflective skills which affect real life, and that will help the individual to feel good in the world."[104] It seems that her philosophy is a kind of creative philosophy, that guides people to recognize a greater awareness of themselves. Therefore, it is possible to buy these products, in which for the very first time says Fiore "the profit can earn from ethics."[105] In fact, in her ethics economy people are not merchandise, but want to help to develop their awareness living in this world. The cost of the products are more or less equal to the cost of production, which means that these kind of cultural objectives have

---

[100] A. Fiore (interview: 2016).
[101] Ibid (interview: 2016).
[102] Ibid (interview: 2016).
[103] A. Fiore (interview: 2016).
[104] Ibid (interview: 2016).
[105] Ibid (interview: 2016).

their own values.[106] It seems that Ethics, as part of Fiore's philosophy is a kind of affirmation of identity, that establishes a relationship between capacity, creativity and moral actions. Transferred from ethics to organizations this dominant approach is one possible way to reach a new dominant organizational behaviour that is focused on ethical choice.

It is difficult to consider significant organization decisions that cannot be challenged or justified in the name of ethical criteria in contemporary times. The contemporary organizational space has been seen through the Socratic method, and more specifically between two countries: the Netherlands and Italy. I have presented eight of the nine philosophical practitioners that have made me aware of the use of Socratic dialogue nowadays. Since the necessity of philosophy in everyday life has a crucial place in modern society, it seemed useful to establish the Socratic method as an important tool for organizational development. Lemes and Boers have shown how it is possible to settle the philosophy in the world of organizations, in which Socratic dialogue can facilitate a group in conversational skills, and philosophical conversation. Consequently, through the work and experience of Kristof Van Rossem, Minke Tromp, Van Paridon, and Artur Massana we have seen the ambitions and the goals of the Socratic dialogue within organizations.

However, Massana and subsequently Bolten have been the first to make me aware of the critical aspects of the Socratic dialogue. The first one argued that organizations follow innovations, thus the Socratic dialogue it is not a crucial tool for doing this investigation, it rather helps people to create moments, in which they can share their best experiences. Bolten believes that the Socratic dialogue is useful for employees, not for the organization itself. Socratic method, cannot solve any problems, and the reason why people could feel attracted to the Socratic dialogue is because the problems of organizations should not at all interfere with this activity. However, Bolten underlines the importance of the result of the participants in Socratic dialogue, because he wants to stress the importance of promoting the accuracy of human thought, therefore *reflection in practice.* As a result, the section ends with a significant example of practical wisdom, which shows how it is possible to connect philosophical activities to business profit, thus create a new economy - ethics economy. With *Kalopolis* it seems that even in Italy it is possible

---

[106]http://www.industriafilosofica.it/it/idee-delle-cose/kalopolis

start to thinking that is achievable to connect philosophy to organization, and why not, even create an industry, a philosophical one.

Socratic Method: an Antidote to the Ills of Globalization

Everyday ethics, making hard choices in a complex world emerged as a solution to Nadia Bray's problem. According to the teacher of philosophy Nadia Bray, learning the theories is not sufficient. All people need an opportunity to practice decision-making skills and try the different theories. A graduate of the history of philosophy in the University of Salento, she is currently a researcher in the history of medieval philosophy. Nadia Bray is my second Italian practitioner resource. Her project sees the Socratic method as an important instrument against the diseases of Capitalism and Globalization. In fact, she pointed out during our Skype meeting that "The Socratic dialogue must be seen as a method that is humanly committed, as a factor of development not only within organizations, but in the cities, in the state."[107] Her idea is based on the fact that she does not want to see the Socratic method as a tool for organizations, rather that this method is returned to a method on which all other disciplines can rely. She states "As organizations have already their own methods, which often are circumscribed by their own statutes, rather the Socratic method must be transferred within the public settings, where the dialogue becomes an instrument of man as such."[108] It seems that for Bray, the Socratic method should not become an instrument for organizational development, but as a tool for those people, who identify themselves as 'social animals'. So what constitutes the project of Nadia Bray?

Nadia Bray wants to see organizations develop virtuous circles for the economy. She is clearly aware that Italy is a country in which the education system is closed within itself. Companies, organizations and industries are not interested in humanistic knowledge; in fact those organizations do not look to humanistic resources as factors of social and economic development. However, she wants to overcome this limit through an openness between the humanistic

---

[107] N. Bray (interview: 2016).
[108] Ibid (interview: 2016).

knowledge and economic ability. Her project called *Periferie Senza Scarti,* transfers the Socratic maieutic to the city, where the philosopher, the expert, meets and talks with people, and thus collects the views of everyone. The name of her project Periferie senza scarti, which means *Peripheries without any waste*, shows a contrary attitude towards unfavourable thoughts and feelings that we generally hide. The first step of this project is to recover a public but discarded place, that no one knows anymore (Chiesetta Balsamo). She believes that it is the economy that drives our interests nowadays. In fact, she pointed out that "nowadays we know only places where we can eat, or buy, we know only the public places in which people meet each other in order to not feel alone, thus these places become the unique places that we recognized, as our points of reference."[109] In others words, this means that according to Bray, it is only the dominant power that aggregates peoples, and thus determines the *intrusion* or *exclusion*.

Despite the difficulties to run this project and deal with the opinion of the Italian sceptics, she immediately found two companies that helped her to finance part of the project. The two companies (Monteco, and Ecomet) working respectively in the field of waste, and recycling of iron, immediately embraced the project. As a result, Nadia with her group of co-workers have built two laboratories, one for adults and one for children. The aim of these laboratories is to work on the issue of waste. Bray claims that "working on our emotional wastes, through the Socratic method, can help people to build and develop a new reflection of themselves, in which this emotional waste can become strengths from which to start again."[110] In here the academic and practical part are involved in the same activity: through the maieutic art, making people aware that it is possible to consider our mistakes as an opportunity and not as a mistake.

The difference with the project of Ada Fiore, says Bray, is that Fiore acts as an autonomous enterprise. Rather Periferie senza Scarti is linked to another idea of investing in dialogue and the humanities, since her founder proudly belongs to the University of Salento. However, it seems even more different from the idea already mentioned in the previous chapter of Artur Massana. His idea stressed the importance of the magical moment of the Socratic method, based on sharing the best experiences of the participants. Thus, from this standpoint we actually do not

---

[109] Ibid (interview: 2016).
[110] N. Bray (interview: 2016).

vrije Universiteit amsterdam

know what could happen if the participants involved in Socratic dialogue, start to reflect and share their worst thoughts and experiences, which are therefore discarded. However, this kind of argumentation led me to ask my practitioners what kind of relationship can exist within a Socratic dialogue between rationality and feelings. My question was, since the Socratic method is actually a type of rational and methodical tool, is there the possibility that the participants will eventually discard their human feelings? However, this is the core of the following subchapter.

Pathos &Logos: A Harmony of Effective Communication

Can emotions be intelligent? To use the precise question posted to my practitioners: since the Socratic dialogue is a kind of rational and methodical instrument, does this imply a separation from human passion?

It was one of my main concerns to understand the relationship between Pathos and Logos within the inquiry of the Socratic method. During the interviews with my practitioners I wondered whether through this rational and systematic approach, the interlocutor might deny his/her passions and feelings. Fortunately, as already mentioned in the introduction, the general answer given by the practitioners has been significantly negative. According to all of them, people should never separate *Pathos* and *Logos,* because through a healthy balance between rationality and passion, people will achieve the beauty of experiencing life. So, thanks to the Italian application of the Socratic dialogue, I shall argue that critical thinking cannot successfully direct our benefits and actions, unless it continually assesses not simply our cognitive abilities, but also our feelings or emotion states, as well as our implicit and explicit drives and agendas. In other words, that critical thinking provides the crucial link between intelligence and emotions in the 'emotionally intelligent' person. It is critical thinking which provides us with the mental tools needed the explicitly understand how reasoning works, and how those tools can be used to take command of what we think, feel, desire, and do.

The original nucleus of this phenomenon is *Armonia*. To use Consuelo Casula's words, Armonia is the daughter of Aphrodite and Ares, love and war.

Aphrodite has the power to transform rough materials into precious ones infused with life and love. Ares, the impartial god of war, besides being a warrior, is also a dancer and a lover connected with spring, the season of revival and renovation. Thus, according to Casula, with such genes in her blood, there is no doubt that Armonia, has important skills, useful not only during the mythological era, but also in the technological world of the XXI century.[111]

Therefore, can harmony be a synonym of inner strength, social intelligence and effective communication?

According to Casula, social intelligence is based on the knowledge and the intuitive comprehension of what the other person may feel and think during an interpersonal exchange. In fact, as Casula has shown in her article, social intelligence is based on social emotions that help us to live with others and understand their needs, to initiate and maintain relationships based on trust, reciprocity, and bonds.[112] To get a fuller understanding of the importance of basing an organizational relationship on the balance between rationality and feelings, a scheme of five components made by Daniel Goleman may be a greater tool. Through the words of the psychologist E. L. Thorndike, Goleman in his article pointed out that; "one of the main aspects of emotional intelligence, is the ability to understand others and act wisely in human relations."[113] The elaboration of the five steps shown by Goleman, it is actually a definition of five main domains of emotional intelligence made by Salovey and Mayer. The five elements are subdivided as follows: 1) *Knowing one's emotions* - this self-awareness is the keystone of emotional intelligence that guides the sensation of personal decision-making. 2) *Managing emotions* is the ability that builds on self-awareness. 3) *Motivating oneself* - this emotional self-control underlines accomplishment of every sort, such as self-motivation and creativity. 4) *Recognizing emotions in others* - it seems that empathy is the fundamental 'people skill' in which the social cost of being emotional is the openness to others needs. 5) *Handling relationship* -

---

[111] C. Casula (2015: 1).
[112] Ibid (2015: 2).
[113] D. Goleman (1995: 42).

the art of relationship is the skill in managing emotions in others.[114] Consequently it seems that when we are aware of our feelings and thoughts we are eventually able to control them as well as controlling our behaviour. As a result, we can communicate with others with more efficacy. To go back to Goleman's words, awareness about what we feel is the essence of interpersonal intelligence, while awareness of other's feelings is the essence of social intelligence.[115] Therefore this statement brings me back to my practitioners. As already mentioned all of them have embraced the idea that believing in the relationship between Pathos and Logos within a Socratic dialogue is crucial. Indeed there is no separation between these two domains.

Boers claims that the Socratic dialogue deals with a theme, experiences, and everyday life. He stated that "once a question begins, then the real experience from one's participant arises, and as a result new questions such as 'what did you feel, think and do' represent the proper way to deal with decision."[116] Hence some questions arise in my mind, like how can an experience, a feeling, that comes from another person influence my vision on what is good or bad? How is it imaginable that what is good or bad for someone else will be identical to my beliefs?

Through his experiences in organizations, Lemes shows me that within a dynamic group of people, Socratic dialogue, trying to talk about an issue, is relevant for every employee. According to him, in this moment the emotional aspects are very important, because people can grasp the non-verbal language. He stated that "this is the role of the facilitator, watch the group and help them to overcome difficulties, and make sure that emotions do not cut out the critical thinking, that will be useful to transform wrong questions in important questions, where everybody can discuss on."[117] However, an interesting explanation about the harmony between feelings and rationality has been given by Van Rossem. To answer my question regarding whether the Socratic dialogue disregards human passions, he pointed out that "a facilitator should not ignore the feelings but give them a proper place."[118] According to him, giving a place for feelings, a facilitator can do this in two ways; firstly, to not ignore feelings, but rationalize them, and

---

[114] D. Goleman (1995: 43).
[115] D. Goleman (2006: 5).
[116] E. Boers (interview: 2016).
[117] V. Lemes (interview: 2016).
[118] K. Van Rossem (interview: 2016).

secondly, through the Aristotelian way in which the facilitator should distinguish carefully between Pathos, Ethos, and Logos. This means, according to Van Rossem, that there are two important distinctions in the expression of the participants: first-order-level, which is the particular level in which feelings are involved and the second-order-level, which is the general level in which different opinions may arise.

In talking about radicalism, with regards to his experience within training in Socratic dialogue for a Mussulmen community, he highlighted how important is to distinguish the two levels just mentioned above. Given that the young guys from a Mussulmen community generally have identity problems, as a facilitator Van Rossem will work firstly on the level of Ethos and Pathos, and secondly on the rational level. In this case he tabled two statements, firstly, 'I am afraid of women', and secondly 'All the women are dangerous'. In this, he was perfectly aware of the distinction between these two levels. Thus the first statement belongs to the particular level in which feelings are responsible, therefore the facilitator can accept this statement. On the contrary, the second statement belongs to the general level, in which different opinions arise, and a participant must gave a valid argument for this statement. It is important to discern questions such as: do you mean that all women are dangerous? Or do you mean that women make you afraid?[119]

As a result, through a careful harmony between rationality and feelings, we can see how emotional intelligence is related to self-control, enthusiasm, perseverance, and ability to motivate ourselves. Instead, social intelligence has to do with the ability to organize and lead groups, to cope with conflicts and negotiate solutions in order to establish bonds and to analyse social situations. To conclude, when we are fully awake, with all senses alert, we better understand the complexity as well as the mystery of life, which enables us to solve problems with deeper understanding and *practical wisdom.*

---

[119] Ibid (interview: 2016).

vrije Universiteit amsterdam

M Polanyi: 'A Knowledge that we Cannot Tell'

The healthy balance between Pathos and Logos, as seen in the previous sub-chapter is the result of a significant capability that leads people to better achieve the beauty of experiencing life. As we know, in every organization there are managers or leaders, and they are actually crucial for the direction that an organization is moving toward. It seems that in management and organization all the decisions have to be made in a way that seems very demanding to grasp the type of knowledge that is involved. But how do people within an organization come to a judgement or a decision? To understand the resources of *Tacit Knowledge* and its challenges within an organization, this subchapter will take into consideration Michael Polanyi's interpretation. This type of knowledge was originally defined by Polanyi in 1966. One of the most distinguishing features of Polanyi's work is his insistence on overcoming well established dichotomies such as theoretical vs. practical knowledge, science vs. the humanities or, to put it differently, his determination to show the common structure underlying all kinds of knowledge. Polanyi was a chemical engineer turned philosopher of science. This biographical detail is not incidental, for Polanyi emerged from his laboratory with the news that the philosophers had scientific practice all wrong: their account of how science proceeds was massively weighted toward the propositional, encoded, formulaic knowledge that is exchanged between laboratories, and almost totally ignorant of the set of skills that are required to actually work in one of those laboratories. Tacit knowledge is messy and very difficult to study. For him the idea that there is such a thing as objective knowledge, self-contained, detached, and independent of human action, was wrong and pernicious. "All knowing", he insists, "is personal knowing, participation trough indwelling."[120]

Take for example, the use of geographical maps. A map is a representation of a particular territory. As an explicit representation of something else, a map is, in logical terms, not different from that of a theoretical system or a system of rules. They all aim at enabling purposeful human action, i.e. respectively, to get from A to B, to predict, and guide behaviour. We may be very familiar with a map per se but to use it we need to be able to relate it to the world outside the map. More specifically, to use a map we need to be able to do at least three things. First, we

---

[120] M. Polanyi & H. Prosh (1975: 44).

must identify our current position in the map. Secondly, we must find our itinerary on the map. And thirdly, to actually go to our destination, we must identify the itinerary by various landmarks in the landscape around us. In other words, a map, no matter how elaborate it is, cannot read itself; it requires the judgement of a skilled reader who will relate the map to the world through both cognitive and sensual means.[121] Subsequently, the same personal judgement is involved whenever abstract representations encounter the world of experience. Given that the map is a representation of the territory, I need to be able to match my location in the territory with its representation on the map if I am to be successful in reaching my destination. Thus, personal judgement cannot be prescribed by rules but relies essentially on the use of our senses. To the extent this happens, the exercise of personal judgement is a skilful performance, involving both the mind and the body.[122] The crucial role of the body in the act of knowing has been persistently underscored by Polanyi. As already said, the cognitive tools we use do not apply themselves; we apply them and thus we need to assess the extent to which our tools match aspects of the world. Insofar as our contact with the world involves our somatic equipment, "the trained delicacy of eye, ear, and touch",[123] we are engaged in the art of establishing a correspondence between the explicit formulations of our formal representations and the actual experiences of the senses. How then do individuals know how to exercise their skills?

Understanding the different forms that knowledge can exist in, and thereby being able to distinguish between various types of knowledge, seems an essential step for knowledge management and organizations. In fact, it seems plausible to me to believe that within a Socratic dialogue, a participant can grasp both explicit and implicit knowledge. It seems conceivable, that to fully understand how to exercise human's skills, the Socratic dialogue may help the participants to enable them in both explicit and implicit knowledge. Given that, according to Bolten, the Socratic dialogue is not particularly helpful for the organizations, but rather for the people in the organizations, it seems that through a Socratic dialogue a certain kind of knowledge can be captured, translated, and thus, converted. Consequently the knowledge within an organization is a practical one: to improve organizational capabilities through better use of the organization's individual and collective

---

[121] M. Polanyi & H. Prosh (1975: 30).
[122] Ibid (1975: 19).
[123] Ibid (1975: 31).

knowledge resources. Such resources, achievable trough a Socratic method include skills, capabilities, experience, routines, and norms. It also seems that attention for knowledge management is growing. Companies are recognizing that they compete in increasing knowledge, in a very competitive market. Therefore they recognize the Socratic dialogue as a solid base for the development of a practical model of knowledge management and organization, and as an appropriate instrument.

To return to Polanyi, it seems to him, that there is not an 'either or' between tacit and explicit knowledge. It is not something amenable to conversion. However, it can be transferred and made more explicit in certain circumstances. Indeed for him, all knowledge has a tacit component. In his book, *The Tacit Dimension,* he discusses that the ability to be tacit is something personal, an ability or skill to do something or to resolve a problem that is based, in part, on one's own experiences and learning. With the appropriate use of language and communication, much of this knowledge can be shared between individuals who share a mutually agreed language. Through Plato's dialogue *Meno*, Polanyi reflects on the Tacit Dimension in various ways. In the *Meno,* Plato pointed out that it is contradictory to say you can see a problem but that you don't know the solution. Thus Polanyi wrote; "but how can one see a problem, any problem, let alone a good and original problem? For to see a problem is to see something that is hidden."[124] Therefore, it seems that for him all of the philosophers have been wrong for 2000 years, simply because they did not see that knowledge was often tacit. Thus, Polanyi has established that non-verbal signing is not just an evolutionary stage, but a vital part of all human life. He stated that; "we keep expanding our body into the world, by assimilating to its sets of particulars which we integrate into reasonable entities. To conclude, human knowing involves the whole range of forms of sign-processes, not just those cognitive or linguistic. In fact, the ability to develop the key elements of practical wisdom depends on the abilities which work together to produce good actions and results.

Both the project of Fiore and the laboratories of Bray have highlighted the Italians 'commercialization' of the Socratic dialogue, that still wants to remain as authentic as possible, despite the innovations of the global market. In fact, as part of the system of life, the Socratic dialogue in Italy does not want to conform itself to the system-consumer world, with its emphasis on criteria of efficiency,

---

[124] M. Polanyi (1966: 21).

vrije Universiteit amsterdam

productivity and so on. Rather, the Italian commercialization of the Socratic dialogue has actually created a proper counter culture that deals with the important things in life through the dialogue. For me it was important to deal with both rational part and feelings within a Socratic meeting. In fact this section has shown a consensus among the practitioners about the healthy balance that a person must preserve, in order to better achieve the sense of experiencing life. Polanyi's interpretation of Tacit Knowledge as a vital part of human life is significant because it has shown that through a healthy balance between rationality and feelings, participants can grasp the deep core of the Socratic method and therefore understand even the important resources of Tacit Knowledge. As a result, the ability to develop elements of practical wisdom, depends on the abilities of implicit and explicit knowledge working together in order to produce good actions and results. This statement leads me to the last chapter which analyses what kind of knowledge can arise from the Socratic dialogue.

vrije Universiteit amsterdam

CHAPTER FIVE

Cultivating Communication Capacity: Phronesis as Professional Knowledge

The heart of the following chapter is an analysis of the structure of reflection-in-action. Practical wisdom represents the balance as the use of one's intelligence, creativity, common sense, and knowledge toward the achievement of a common good trough a balance among interpersonal interests and experiences. To use a Descartes' quote "I think, therefore I am." This links to organization and philosophy through the idea that devoting your days to thinking about life's big questions and in particular organizational questions, make an individual or a group of people accustomed to thinking logically and critically about issues, to analyse and construct arguments and to be open to new ways of thinking. Given that according to my practitioners the knowledge that arises from a Socratic dialogue is practical, and therefore relates to the achievement of *practical wisdom*, it seems that we are in need of inquiry into the epistemology of practice. What is the kind of knowing in which competent practitioners engage? What is the nature of knowledge by which organizations, institutions and societies transform themselves? And finally, how can we interpret the Socratic dialogue as a phenomenon today? Reflective practice in the learning arena can be traced, as we already know, back to Socratic questioning method, where one question is answered by another question so as to challenge the subject under discussion.

Within this methodology, reflection improves basic academic skills and promotes a deeper understanding of course subject matter and its relations to the real world. It improves higher level thinking and problem solving and a participant's ability to learn from experience. According to my practitioners, critical reflection promotes personal development by enhancing participants' self-awareness, their sense of community, and of their own capacities. This chapter will take into account three main approaches on the ability to reflect critically and therefore reveal a capacity for communicative action. The following section uses the idea of reflection-in-action to argue against the technical idea of rationality as

vrije Universiteit amsterdam

the grounding of professional knowledge. As seen within the previous chapters, the notion of Socratic dialogue involves looking to our experiences, connecting with our feelings, and attending to our theories in use. As a result, it entails building new understandings to inform our actions in the situation that is unfolding. The chapter proceeds as follows: in the first subchapter, I will take into account Donald Schön's lesson on how professionals think in action. It will show how professional people are tasked with the design and implementation of strategies to address systematic societal problems in a variety of contexts.

The complexity of ecological, social, economic system and crisis confidence in professional knowledge means that such approaches often struggle to achieve their stated ambitions because they are based on an incomplete understanding of the systems involved and can fail to fully engage the people whose cooperation is vital for success. So, Schön through his book *The Reflective Practitioners*, will show an analysis of the distinctive structure of reflection-in-action. Secondly, the following subchapter will engage with the philosophy of Jurgen Habermas. In order to reflect on the interpretation of the Socratic dialogue as phenomena between the world of system and the world of life, Habermas' lesson will show a criticism towards the modern societies that it is divided into two levels. One shows an analysis of communicative rationality built into everyday speech, and the other, a theory of modern society. On the basis of this division, Habermas assesses the pros and cons of modernization, to overcome its one version of rationalization. Finally, the last subchapter will briefly analyse the balance theory of wisdom of Robert Sternberg. The balance theory of wisdom is presented as the application of tacit knowledge as mediated by values toward the achievement of common good. This is achieved through an equal amount of intrapersonal, interpersonal and extra personal interests which together create a balanced adaptation to the existing environment, and a deep sense of practical wisdom.

D. Schön: Knowing is in our Action

The idea of the need for reflection goes back to the time of Socrates who claimed that the unexamined life was not worth living. More recently however, Donald Schön, after examining Dewey's theories, defines reflective practice as the practice by which professionals become aware of their implicit knowledge base and learn from their experience. In his book *The Reflective Practitioners,* he raises the problem in the first part of the book where he questions the limitations of technical rationality. He feels that it seems to ignore the importance of problem setting in problem a solving activity, which leads to a crisis of confidence in professional knowledge. It seems that the skills associated with stepping back and pausing to look, listen and reflect, are closely related to those concerned with critical thinking. This requires you to unpack whatever you are focusing on, not simply accept what you read or hear at face value. Through this process you will probably identify things you would not otherwise notice. In fact, this reflection is used by practitioners when they encounter situations that are unique, and when individuals may not be able to apply known theories or techniques previously learnt through formal education. According to my practitioners the key to reflecting is spotting the patterns and links in thought which emerge as a result of your experiences in life and in learning. Consequently, it seems that the general core of my practitioners believe that the great benefit of including reflection within the Socratic way is that, by understanding why you do something in a particular way and recognising how you feel about it, you can spot where your strengths and weaknesses lie. This gives you, according to them, the chance to build on your strengths and develop strategies to minimise your weaknesses.

However, Schön presents the reflective practice as a criticism of technical rationality or to the positivist philosophy created by the French philosopher Auguste Comte. According to Schön, technical rationality is the Positivist epistemology of practice. It became institutionalized within the modern university, founded in the late nineteenth century.[125] From his perspective, the history of Western society has been shaped by the rise of science and technology, therefore, the general idea is that human progress would be achieved only by harnessing science in order to create technology for the achievement of human

---

[125] D Schön (1983: 31).

ends.[126] Take as his starting point the loss of the stable state. This means that our society and all of its institutions are in continuous processes of transformation, so we must become adept to learning. Schön is clearly aware of the evils of Positivism expressed by Comte. Thus in his book Schön divides them within three main doctrines of Positivism: 1) Empirical science is the unique positive knowledge of the world. 2) There was a need to clear men's minds of mysticism, superstition, and other forms of pseudo knowledge. 3) There was the desire to extend scientific and technical knowledge to moral and human society.[127] As a result, with the coming of the new model of the university, the Positivist epistemology found expression in normative ideas about the proper division of labour between universities on one hand, and the professions on the other. Through the words of Thorsten Veblen, Schön pointed out; "the universities have a higher mission to fit men for life of science, and they are concerned with such discipline only as they will give efficiency in the pursuit of knowledge; whereas the lower schools are occupied with instilling knowledge and habits as will make their pupils fit citizens of the world in whatever position in the fabric of workday life."[128]

This statement brings me back to Lemes, who was the first practitioner to expose me to the real problem that exists between philosophy and organization. In fact, as already mentioned, Lemes claims that once philosophy becomes intrinsically attached with the academy the bond with reality is lost, creating a crucial contradiction, since philosophy comes from the market, thus from everyday life.[129] In the first two chapters of his book, Schön argues that technical-rationality failed to resolve the dilemma of rigour versus relevance confronting professionals, and he suggests this dilemma is somehow the reason for the crisis of confidence in professional knowledge and expertise. His basic idea is that "our knowing is in our action, we can gain verifiable insight into our thought processes.[130] So what is reflective practice? Schön defines reflective practice as the practice by which professionals become aware of their implicit knowledge base and learn from their experience. He talks about *reflection in action* and *reflection on action*. Reflection in action is to reflect on behaviour as it happens, whereas reflection on action is to reflect after the event - to review, analyse, and evaluate the situation. Hence Schön

---

[126] Ibid (1983: 31).
[127] Ibid (1983: 32).
[128] Ibid (1983: 35).
[129] V. Lemes (interview: 2016).
[130] D. Schön (1983: 49).

vrije Universiteit amsterdam

coins the term 'knowing in action' to describe tacit knowledge. He feels that every design task is unique, and the basic problem for a designer is to determine how to approach such a singly unique task. Schön places this tackling of unique tasks at the centre of design practice, a notion he terms knowing-in-action. He stated;

"*Once we put aside the model of Technical Rationality which leads us to think of intelligent practice as an application of knowledge to instrumental decisions, there is nothing strange about the idea that a kind of knowing is inherent in intelligent action. [...] it does not stretch common sense very much to say that the know-how is in the action that a tight rope walker's know how, for example, lies in and is revealed by, the way he takes his trip across the wire, [...] There is nothing in common sense to make us say that the know-how consists in rules or plans which we entertain in the mind prior to action.*"[131]

In other words, refection-in-action is the reflective form of knowing-in-action.

It is Schön's opinion that "competent practitioners usually know more than they can say."[132] So, it seems that this statement illustrates the classical, generally applicable difference between 'knowing how' and 'knowing that'. In addition, it involves looking to our experiences, connecting with our feelings, and attending to our theories in use. It involves building new understanding to inform our actions in the situation that is unfolding. He states that "the practitioner allows himself to experience surprise, puzzlement, or confusion in a situation which he finds uncertain or unique. He reflects on the phenomenon before him, and on the prior understanding which has been implicit in his behaviour. He carries out an experiment which serves to generate both a new understanding of the phenomenon and a change in the situation."[133] In other words this means that we test our theories, but to do this we do not closely follow established ideas and techniques. According to him, we have to think things through, for every case is unique. As a result, in reflection-in-action, doing and thinking are complementary. Doing extends thinking in the tests, moves, and probes experimental action, and reflection feeds on doing and its results. Each feeds the other, and each sets boundaries for the other.[134]

---

[131] Ibid (1983: 50).
[132] Ibid (1983: viii).
[133] D. Schön (1983: 68).
[134] Ibid (1983: 280).

vrije Universiteit amsterdam

The impact of Schön's work on reflective practice has been significant. Reflective practice is about awareness of the knowledge we use, how it is used and how we can improve our action in real time. Is about how our minds work and how we use and create theories in practical situations. It is about invisible, and visible, tacit, and explicit, blindness and sight. It seems that reflective practice is about flexibility, adaptation, and effectiveness. It is my opinion, that if we reduce our learning to the methods and techniques, our knowledge expires in a short period of time and our brain will not work properly. Rather, if we can renew our theories and the conceptual framework that are behind them as a permanent attitude, we will be able to deal with disruptive changes that the future will bring to our lives. Reflective practice is a dialogue of thinking and doing as a means to boost skillsets. But does the Socratic dialogue not have the exact same purpose?

J. Habermas: Communication as the Design of Social Action

In reaching the end of this research, that has shown the philosophy of contemporary practitioners within the context of organizational life, it seems appropriate underline the main difference between the use of Socratic dialogue in Italy and in the Netherlands. Socratic dialogue is intended as an open space for people to think, not to make psychological issues of problems that arise. In the Netherlands the tradition of the Socratic dialogue is broadly influenced by Nelson/Heckman tradition. On the other hand it seems difficult to retrace the Italian tradition of Socratic dialogue, due to the fact that as a new approach it is difficult to pinpoint where and when it took place. However thanks to the wisdom and experiences of my nine practitioners, we could establish how the Socratic dialogue has been developed both in Italy and in the Netherlands. It has become clear how the Socratic dialogue has been implicated within companies as a philosophical tool to make deep analysis of the identity of organizations, their business models and their goals.

Whether it is in education, culture, government or business, the Socratic dialogue in the Netherlands seems to link to the mental systems of workers. By using traditional philosophy, creative learning methods and future design tools, the

Dutch approach analyses employees by investigating their presumptions, making their values explicit and developing their goals in order to make them creative designers. On the other hand, the Italian field, highlighted to me by the philosophical work of two practitioners, has shown how the Socratic dialogue has been seen as an instrument that restores the lives of all the citizens, and moves them away from the globalized market. As a result, the theory of J. Habermas about the two systems is a sophisticated social model, archetype, or construct by which to understand and criticize the present late-stage of capitalistic society today. To simplify what is a very comprehensive and complex theory, Habermas argues that the life-world is based on communication, agreement, and consensus. Rather, the economic and political systems require instrumental rationality for the sake of control. Consequently, the communicative patterns of the life-world, begins to be eclipsed and absorbed in instrumental rationality, making people become means to economic ends not in their interest, nor under their control.

Bridging continental and Anglo-American traditions of thought, Habermas has engaged in debates with thinkers as diverse as Gadamer, Foucault, Rawls, Derrida and Brandom. Habermas is best known for his theory of *communicative rationality,* wherein he argues that rationality is tied to social interactions and dialogue. The point Habermas makes is that many of the collective actions that we undertake in our working lives are not communicative because they are aimed at achieving a particular outcome regardless of whether or not there is any shared understanding about the objective or the means by which it should be achieved. In other words, actions that are carried out in the professional sphere are invariably strategic, whereas those that are performed in the social/personal sphere can be communicative.[135] According to him, regardless of how much we enjoy our work, there is a distinct disconnection between our professional and personal/social lives.

A major reason for this gap is the degree of control we have over what we do in the two spheres: in the former, we generally do as we are required to, even if we do not agree with it, in the latter we generally follow our own interests and wishes. Accordingly, our day-to-day lives are played out in two distinct spheres; the social arena which comprise our interactions with family and society at large, and the professional and administrative sphere in which we work and interact with

---

[135] http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/habermas/

institutional authority. Hebermas refers to the former as the *life-world* and the latter as the *system.* The life-world is the everyday world that we share with others. This sphere is based on a tacit perception of shared meanings and understanding which enables us to perform actions that we know others will comprehend. In fact, day-to-day actions that we perform in the life-world are generally communicative in nature. In contrast, the system refers to common patterns of strategic action that serve the interests of institutions and organizations. Accordingly, system actions are essentially driven by money and power. To put it somewhat crudely, the system uses money and power to manipulate individuals to achieve its own aims. Clearly such actions are related to strategic actions, since they are aimed at achieving specific ends.

Hugh Baxter from the Department of philosophy from Yale University pointed out in his article, *System and life-world in Habermas's Theory of Communicative Action,* four stages in the development of Habermas's theory: 1) Its action-theoretical foundations in the notion of communicative action. 2) Habermas's construction of the concept of the life-world as the social background to communicative action. 3) His critical review of system-theoretical concepts. 4) His construction of a model of society that can integrate insights from both the action-theoretical and systems-theoretical approaches.[136] So what kind of relationship is there between the system and the life-world? Historically, the system arose from prevailing social conditions in the late nineteenth and twenty centuries. The system is therefore embedded in the life-world. This would not be a problem if were not for the fact that the system grows at the expense of the life-world, or in Habermas's words, *colonises* the life-world. The verb evokes images that are quite appropriate.

At a personal level, many people struggle to find the balance between their work and personal/social lives, and in most cases it is a losing battle because the former intrudes upon, invades and eventually takes over the latter. Actually, this has little to do with personal choice which supports the use of 'colonise' to describe it. Although there are those who would say that we are free to opt out of the rat race, the truth is that most of us are not. To understand how things come to be this way, one has to recognise the role that power and money play in the colonisation process.[137] These foster a self-interested rational attitude towards value

---

[136] H. Baxter (2007: 39).
[137] H. Baxter (2007: 47).

vrije Universiteit amsterdam

which makes people vulnerable to being manipulated. Those who hold power can thus exert undue influence on the decisions of stakeholders whilst bypassing consensus-oriented communication that is characteristic of the life-world. The life-world is thus devalued and becomes increasingly less important in the daily lives of people. The colonisation of the life-world results in several dysfunctions that are all too evident in modern-day professional life. In the workplace, this can manifest itself through a general sense of alienation from an organization, and a lack of shared meaning of its purpose and goals.

As a result the central problem of contemporary societies is not how order is maintained, but rather how to create conditions for what Habermas calls 'communicative action'. Understanding Habermas means understanding what he means by communication, and why he places such an emphasis on it. He believes that societies require integration, but like the neo-Marxists he believes societies are in crisis.[138] Systems are fully rationalized; the principles of rationalization are efficiency, calculability, predictability, and control. The point of such rationalization is to reduce the person to become part of the machinery by which the system does what it does; individual scope of action and decision are minimized, choices are strictly limited. In such an environmental system there is minimal possibility for people to talk to each other, much less to reach any common understandings, there is no room for communicative action. According to Habermas the life-world consists of communicative action, in which people try to reach a common understanding of everything. Communicative action alone has the ability to regenerate influence and value-commitments. The quantitative systems, media, money, and power, can express influence and commitments, but they cannot generate these qualities. Thus, as a crucial point, the legitimacy of the system depends on the life-world; it is a one-way direction of the life-world making possible the legitimacy of the system.[139]

Before going any further, and in order to sum up Habermas's philosophy, I should say that one does not have to use any particular technique or approach. All that is needed is the possibility of engaging in genuine dialogue with those who have an influence in the issue under consideration. This needs an environment that is free from power, politics and other constraints that come in the way of open,

---

[138] http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/habermas/
[139] http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/habermas/

vrije Universiteit amsterdam

honest discussion. Although it seems impossible to create such an environment at organizational level, it is quite possible to approximate it on smaller scale, i.e. in a one-on-one interaction or even a workgroup discussion. The importance of this, as exactly in the case of a Socratic meeting, seems crucial for develop genuine commitments, which are possible only when people's concerns and aspirations are heard, acknowledged and acted upon.   And this is possible only via communicative or open dialogue.

From Knowledge to Wisdom

"Regarding practical wisdom we shall get at the truth by considering who are the people we credit with it."(Aristotle, NE, 1140a25)

In order to answer to my question of what kind of knowledge developed in the participants the Socratic dialogue, the core of my nine practitioners were in agreement about the *practical wisdom*. Therefore, it seems relevant as a final inquiry, to briefly jump within the field of Phronesis. In *The Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle describes three approaches to knowledge. In Greek, the three are Episteme, Technè and Phronesis. Thus Aristotle classified knowledge in three different types: Episteme as a scientific knowledge, Technè as the art of skills and crafts, and Phronesis as a practical wisdom.[140] Since this section concerns the acknowledgement of practical wisdom, how does Aristotle describe it?

Phronesis, which means Practical wisdom, involves deliberation that is based on values, concerned with practical judgement, and informed by reflection. This is something Socrates understood well. Wisdom involves awareness that with every revelation comes concealment and with every seemingly objective claim comes an unstated and unacknowledged personal and collective emotional involvement. Wisdom has enjoyed an inverted history; while it seemed to have been pre-eminent in ancient thought, it has, as civilizations has progressed, slipped away from the collective consciousness and been replaced by more technical concerns with

---

[140] http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/aristotle-ethics/#StaPoiPraRea

vrije Universiteit amsterdam

objectivities, control, prediction and outcomes. Recently, perhaps in the wake of repeated warnings about the limits of experts and their expertise, and coupled with our continuing experience of social, economic, and environmental uncertainties, wisdom has begun to enjoy a revival as a subject in management and organizational studies. As to say, the need for a call for practical wisdom to penetrate throughout practice has arisen, and it takes its cue from everyday experiences. As already mentioned within the introduction, in retracing differences and similarities between my practitioners, an interesting point regards the fact that all of them seem very close to the *Balance Theory of Wisdom* of Robert Sternberg.

According to Sternberg, wisdom is not just about maximizing one's own or someone else's self-interest, but about balancing various self-interests with the interests of others, and of other aspects of the context in which one lives. Wisdom also involves creativity, in that the wise solution to a problem may be far from obvious.[141] Therefore according to him, wisdom is not just about maximizing one's own or someone else's self-interest, rather it is about balancing various self-interests with the interests of others. Sternberg has made the point that analytic intelligence needs to be enhanced by practical intelligence, which relates to the capability to solve problems. The problems we face in a world of complexity and uncertainty are wicked rather than rational-analytic. Today's managers need to be more than proficient in their ability to flexibly and creatively adapt to and transform the rapidly changing complex systems they work in. The nature of intelligence and knowledge enables us to manage projects within a controllable environment of limited complexity and low uncertainty. Emotional intelligence and management knowledge are required when dealing with increasingly complex project environments. However, it seems that in order to be able to provide management in higher complex and uncertain project environments, leaders and managers need additional skills and wisdom to help discover meaning and to help create a new and valuable environment through jointly making sense of what we do and do not understand. In fact, according to my practitioners they need to share responsibility and leadership when creating an open space in which all the participants through meaningful communication based on listening and striving for mutual understanding will reach both consensus and practical wisdom.

141

http://ebooks.cambridge.org/chapter.jsf?bid=CBO9780511509612&cid=CBO978051150961
2A015

As a result, in order to extend my final critical reflection on the idea that Socratic dialogue is an important tool for measure business performance, it seems to me that once again the aim of this method is about moving people along in a direction they want to go in. It is not coercion or manipulation, rather it is a means to help people see the world around them, and how they think about it, more clearly. But, how actually does this have to do with the improvement of making-profit of an organization? In fact according to two of the nine practitioners, Artur Massana, and Hans Bolten, within the Nelson/Heckman tradition the Socratic dialogue cannot be a basic tool for organizations because it is not results- driven, and organizations want results, rather, it can be understood as a tool box for managers and leaders to increase communication skills.[142] Although the technique we universally refer to as the Socratic method is extraordinary in many respects, assessing the Socratic dialogue as a significant tool for increasing business performance seems difficult to imagine. His ultimate purpose seems to have been to create a dynamic exchange that leads the participants through a learning process. Thus, for my own part, I will continue to believe that Socratic method is the best form of philosophical tool that an organization can use in order to guide participants discovery as a part of genuine collaborative empiricism, in which the capability to grasp a sense of practical wisdom will help participants to improve their quality of life.

"Knowledge is of the past, wisdom is of the future." (Vernon Cooper)

I tried to show the relevance of *practical wisdom* as an important result of developing management and organizational systems based on knowledge and wisdom rather than data and information. Through the ideas of three different thinkers, I explored firstly, how professional practitioners think in action. Secondly, I showed that the main difference between the development of Socratic dialogue in the Netherlands and in Italy consists of the fact that the first one is actually intrinsically related to the work of system, rather the second one is still a way of restoring people life. Thus in order to understand the tension and the difference between these two systems, the philosophy of J. Habermas has been a crucial tool for understanding. As a result, to evaluate the extent of practical wisdom as a fundamental aim of the Socratic dialogue, the balance theory of wisdom of R. Sternberg has shown how through wisdom people can create the

---

[142] A. Massana (interview: 2016).

future rather than just grasp the present and the past. But achieving wisdom is not easy. People must build a proper balance between interpersonal and extra personal consensus, and connect with their souls – something that machines will never possess. However, in retracing the deep sense of the Socratic dialogue within an organization, I discovered that despite fact that the technique we universally refer to as the Socratic method is extraordinary in many respects, assessing that the Socratic dialogue can be a significant tool for increasing business performance still seems difficult to imagine. Rather, through engaging in *human capital* this method encapsulates the participants firstly, in high communication and secondly, drives them within a free space of deep reflection.

CHAPTER SIX

Conclusion

This thesis explored the question of how it is possible to connect, or to sell philosophy to organizations. The Socratic dialogue has been considered as the main philosophical instrument that makes this connection possible. I have tried to highlight the belief that through the art of the Socratic dialogue, an organization can achieve the important skill to deal with and investigate the common good or the general well-being of the group. This approach has allowed me to develop a knowledge based on the importance of practical wisdom within organizational research. Therefore, the field of organizational behaviour has been considered a broad area of management that studies how people act in organizations. Managers and leaders can use theories and knowledge of organizational behaviour to improve management practices for effectively working with employees to attain organizational goals. In fact, it has been shown that the most successful organizations make the best use of their employees' talent and capacities. As a result, I believe that an inextricable link between philosophy, organizations and the Socratic model does exist, and that an organization can achieve a better reflection on moral action through this model.

In order to develop this inquiry, I have not chosen a specific interpretation of the Socratic method, rather I have explored within the limits of my sources and literatures, the meaningful range of this method. In order to grasp the real, tested Socratic dialogue and not just rely on the theories presented in literature, I decided to interview contemporary practitioners. Hence, through these interviews made for the improvement of this thesis, I have taken into consideration the work done by contemporary philosopher practitioners that are involved in both Socratic dialogue and philosophical counselling. The impressive and stimulating work of these practitioners, has allowed me to come closer both to the Socratic method, and to organizational conduct. In addition, through their experiences I could establish how the Socratic dialogue has been developed in the Netherlands, and in Italy.

From the perspective of a student of Philosophy of Management and Organization, I am aware of the importance of human behaviour in organizations that can be typically examined at different levels i.e. individual behaviour, group behaviour, and collective behaviour across the organization and with different issues. Thus, studying organization-wide behaviour helps explain how organizations structure work and power relationships, and how they develop a sense of healthy competition, within economical and social contexts. However, it seems difficult to understand behaviour without understanding the thought, assumptions, feelings and attributes of a situation that precede behaviour and its consequences.

By moving my research from the traditional philosophy of Nelson and Heckman, who have lead me to reflect on basic economic and organization questions, I tackled the main question of this inquiry: *How is the Socratic Dialogue practiced within organizational context in the Netherlands and in Italy? What it can be learned from the knowledge of these two contexts?* The first step was to retrace and investigate who Socrates was and how he developed his method, despite the lack of literature written by Socrates. However within the first chapter, the main features of Socratic dialogue divided into question strategy, maieutic method, and Elenchos were discussed. Through this section I acknowledged that in the discussion of the Socratic dialogue the aim is to uncover a useful method for ensuring more reflective decision, which involves active participation of individuals on the receiving end of change.

Then within the second chapter, I focused my attention on three of the nine practitioners. I pointed out the newest evolutions or features of the application of the Socratic dialogue today. However, since this chapter had more of a theoretical approach, it really provided a foundation for the practical interviews in the third and fourth chapters. There are many important questions and issues that literature or theories cannot deeply grasp, which is why it was so crucial to get the opinions of practitioners who have practical experience of the dialogue in motion. This is the reason why the third and four chapters are dealing with the interviews, to better understand some critical issues, and especially understand the commercialization of Socratic dialogue.

Within the third chapter, which covers how the Socratic dialogue has been developed in the Netherlands, the following points have been established: firstly, how it is possible to sell philosophy to organizations; secondly, what the goals and ambitions of the Socratic dialogue within an organization are; thirdly, through the experiences of two of my nine practitioners I established some critical sides of the Socratic dialogue; and lastly I communicated the strengths and weaknesses of this method. As a result, through the real experience of my practitioners (particularly the Dutch practitioners), I reached the conclusion that in the Netherlands the Socratic dialogue is used as a philosophical tool to make a deep analysis of the identity of organizations and businesses. As such it is clearly part of what Habermas called the System-world. The Socratic dialogue in the Netherlands clearly connects to the mental systems of employees within all sectors of organizations.

The fourth chapter has shown the 'commercialization' of the Socratic dialogue within the Italian field. I took into consideration the philosophical projects of two female practitioners, who have shown me how the Socratic dialogue can still remain authentic, despite the changes and innovations within technological modern society. Researching the use of the Socratic dialogue in Italy has revealed the importance of the dialogue as an instrument to rejuvenate the work ethic of all the citizens, and move them away from the globalized market. This means that I have considered the Italian approach as a kind of counter culture that wants to try to develop its own 'outside' organization that moves people's interests far away from the globalized market, and rather tries to deal with what really matters in our life, using the dialogue as a guide. However the final part of the chapter, which debated if through the Socratic method participants will eventually hide feelings, has brought me back again to the general idea that my practitioners had about the balance between Pathos and Logos. As the capability that led people to better achieve the beauty of experiencing life, it has shown that through a healthy balance between rationality and feelings, participants can grasp the deep core of the Socratic method and therefore understand even the important resources of *Tacit Knowledge*. This means that in order to understand the different forms that knowledge can exist in, and thereby distinguishing between various types of knowledge, it has been considered an essential step for knowledge management and organizations. In fact, it has been shown that within a Socratic dialogue a participant can grasp both explicit and implicit knowledge. However, this statement

vrije Universiteit amsterdam

led me to the last chapter which questioned what kind of knowledge arises from the Socratic dialogue.

The last chapter opened with the theory of D. Schön, detailing how professionals think in action. Schön's philosophy has shown how reflective practice is about awareness of the knowledge we use, how we use it and how we can improve our action in real time. It is about how our minds work and how we use and create theories in practical situations. It is about invisible, and visible, tacit, and explicit, blindness and sight. It has been seen that reflective practice is about flexibility, adaptation, and effectiveness. However in order to define the main distinction between the development of Socratic dialogue both in the Netherlands and in Italy, the philosophy of J. Habermas has helped us to distinguish and understand this investigation. In order to reflect on the interpretation of the Socratic dialogue as phenomena between the world of system, and the world of life, the contemporary sociologist and philosopher J. Habermas has made me aware that through his theory of communicative action, our modern society can hope for a change in perspective. According to him, systems are fully rationalized, with the principles of rationalization being efficiency, calculability, predictability, and control.

The point of such rationalization is to reduce the person to part of the machinery by which the system does what it does; individual scope of action and decision are minimized and choices are limited. In such an environmental system there is minimal possibility for people to talk to each other, much less to reach any common understandings, so there is no room for communicative action. Thus, through the idea of *communicative action* he believes in the ability to regenerate and influence modern society. However, the last part of this thesis, as mentioned above explored what kind of knowledge developed in the participants the Socratic dialogue. Thus, since the core of my nine practitioners were in agreement regarding *practical wisdom*, the balance theory of wisdom of R. Sternberg has shown how through wisdom people can create the future rather than just grasp the present and the past. However achieving wisdom is not easy; people must build a proper balance between interpersonal and extra personal consensus, and connect with their own souls.

Although the belief that the Socratic method drives peoples to devote their days to thinking about life's big questions or organizational questions, at the same time, it cannot be considered useful for making profit as such. In the development of this thesis, I have understood how profit making can be ambiguous, based on the relationship between organizational activities in pursuit of profit and human capital. The Socratic dialogue, by searching for hidden assumptions or hypotheses for any apparent *given,* tells us that things are not always what they seem to be, that the truth may not be in conventional wisdom, that matters of fact need to be transcendent to discover the facts of the matter. The nature of this method is intrinsically related to *change;* and in a dynamic and democratic society such as ours, inquiry should be welcomed. Without change a society will stagnate; and the energies of its citizens may turn inward, destructively. It was Socrates' failure to recognize the claims of a convention-based stability because of his intoxicated, monomaniacal thirst for inquiry that led finally and inevitably to his trial and death.

The wisest man of his time was blind to the human requirement of habit and tradition, of having a past. He failed to heed the traditional wisdom of his culture to avoid excess, and he was cut down.

Consequently, in order to reach the end of this thesis, I believe that a proper education of the citizen, especially the young, must begin with a firm grounding in the nature and values of our culture. Without teaching societal 'rules' and 'norms', we handicap all individuals, and threaten the continuity of the society. In the same way, an organization that is connected to this method, will generate critical thinking and strong employees, who differ widely in their ideas, values, and life-style. Thus, through the dialogue, this method is really the externalization of thinking through the interaction of a group of people. A person in a management position can use the Socratic method to persuade, secure support, encourage an active followership, and develop followers for better efficiency. However in the wrong hands, the Socratic method it can be a dangerous tool. Apparently, every Socratic meetings suffers from a hefty dose of group thinking. Everyone agrees with each other too much. Everyone runs the risk of going into group thinking when they are surrounded too much by ideas that agree with theirs, or just the same ideas over and over again. Ideology gives people a consistent lens for understanding across disciplines and domains. Strong participants, armed with ideology, thus will be the most confident and agile in navigating discussion. As a result, the Socratic method appears in this conclusion a fragile method, because

only the best practitioner can maintain a healthy learning environment, and this may affects profit-decision-making.

<u>Annex Questioning</u>

The following are questions to my practitioners for the improvement of this thesis:

1) Please can you briefly present yourself, and the course of your study/research?

2) My thesis is an effort to connect philosophy to organization, therefore will focus on the importance of the Socratic Dialogue. How helpful is the Socratic dialogue for a company? And for what exactly?

3) In retracing the history of the Socratic dialogue, are you aware about who in the modern age have reformulated the Socratic dialogue?

4) What are the goals/ambitions of the Socratic dialogue within an organization?

5) How far an organization can apply the Socratic dialogue today?

6) What are the weaknesses and the strengths of the Socratic dialogue within an organization?

7) What kind of knowledge can develop the Socratic dialogue within the participants?

8) Since the Socratic dialogue is a kind of rational and methodical tool, does this involves the separation to human feelings/passions?

9) Can the profit earn from ethics?

10) Let us imagine that you have finish a kind of section/meeting with a client, what will be then a good ending?

Further Reading

In the exact order in which they have been interviewed my contemporary practitioner's philosopher are:

1)	*Vander Lemes*: architect and PMD in ESADE Business School. Philosophy-junkie, idea constructor and *learnaholic.* Vander enjoy helping people turning their visions into reality. He have been living in San Paulo, Munich and Barcelona. He is into pragmatism, creativity, networking, philosophy, architecture, mountain bike, languages, travel and drawing. He believe in hard work, in collective thinking in examined life.

2)	*Erik Boers:* cofounder and owner of the *New Trivium*. During his studies in philosophy at Free University of Amsterdam he, together with several lectures, set up the programme Philosophy of Management and Organisation. In order to gain practical experience he joined a large multinational organization in 1989 and he stepped into a medium-sized training consultancy. Since1997 he has focused on the facilitation of reflective conversations in organizations.

3)	*Kristof Van Rossem:* studied science of religion and philosophy in Leuven, Amsterdam and Uppsala. He works as a trainer in practical philosophy in different organizational settings. He is engaged in adult education and teaches teachers at European High school Brussels and at the University of Leuven. His philosophical interests that have resulted in publications are philosophy of education, humour, practical philosophy, Socratic dialogue, rhetoric and women philosophers.

4)	*Artur Massana:* he is an MBA in ESADE business school and analytic philosopher. He soon realized that he could understand complex problems, devise creative solutions and communicate them to others through inspired way. He learned to do it in the College of Architects of Catalonia as a Managing Director and Head of new projects and innovation. His main interest is based on Persuasive

Management, and he designed and taught courses in strategy and human resources at the Esade and analytic philosophy at the Autonomus University of Barcelona.

5) *Nadia Bray:* professor of history of philosophy and researcher of history of medieval philosophy According to her, learning the theories from the books is not sufficient. Her project sees the Socratic method, as an important instrument against the diseases of Capitalism and Globalization.

6) *Minke Tromp:* she is already possessed a sense of philosophical practice even before starting the Master in PMO. After the master she starts to be interested in how can a manager be useful for organizations. Through her agency for applied philosophy, she assists individuals and businesses in reflection. Her work applied the philosophy as a tool for organizational development. She can work as a speaker, facilitator, trainer, workshop leader and teacher.

7) *Hans Bolten:* he is work as facilitator of Socratic dialogue and as a management trainer in profit and non-profit organizations in the Netherlands, Belgium and Germany. He trains philosophers and non-philosophers to facilitate Socratic dialogues in the Netherlands and abroad. In recent years he has developed and implemented integrity-programmes for the Dutch Tax Department. He is currently training managers from the Department to facilitate Socratic Dialogues within organizations.

8) *Van Paridon:* she has been marketing managers for fifteen years in several organizations. Then she decide to come across philosophy, and she started to work as a philosopher into organizations, in which she opened a training course in Socratic dialogue. Currently teacher of philosophy and ambassador for the Socratic dialogue and ethics in organizations, education and society.

9) *Ada Fiore:* graduated in philosophy in the University of Salento, she started immediately to teach philosophy and motivated students to a different and alternative philosophical approach that distances them from the general *stunning* due to the big brothers impact. She became a mayor of the city, and with the first

project she opened a philosophical desk for all the citizens. Faithful to her partner, philosophy, she become mentor to a new city, imagine in this precious manual 'Kalopolis', the realization of a better world, can exist if everyone behave with responsibility.

References

● Aristotle, *Etica Nicomachea*, trad. Italiano di L. Caiani, Torino, 1996.

● Baxter Hugh, *System and Life-World in Habermas's Theory of Communicative Action*, Yale University, 2007.

● Boers Erik, *About our Duty to use the Socratic Dialogue in Business Organization*, Boom Amsterdam, 2009.

● Boers Erik, *Interview* Eindhoven 17.05.2016.

● Bolten Hans, *Interview* Amsterdam 30.05.2016.

● Bolten Hans, *Managers Develop Moral Accountability: the Impact of Socratic Dialogue, Reason in Practice* vol. 1, n. 3, 2001.

● Bray Nadia, *Interview* Amsterdam/Lecce 26.05.2016.

● Candiotto Laura, *Socratic Dialogue: a comparison between ancient and contemporary method*, Encyclopedia of educational philosophy and theory, Cà Foscari University of Venice, 2013.

● Casula Consuelo, *Harmony: a Tool in Effective Communicaion*, Italy, 2005.

● Fiore Ada, *Interview* Amsterdam/Corigliano D'Otranto 02.06.2016.

● Gibson Kevin, *Ethics and Business, an Introduction*, Cambridge University Press, 2007.

● Goleman Daniel, *Emotional Intelligence*, the 10th Anniversary Edition, Bandam Dell, New York, 1995.

● Goleman Daniel, *Social Intelligence, The New Science of Human Relationship*, Rizzoli, 2006.

vrije Universiteit amsterdam

● Hadot Pierre, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, Blackwell Publishing Ltd, USA, 1995.

● Janning Finn, *Philosophy for Everyday Life,* Journal of Philosophy of Life, vol. 5, n. 1, 2015.

● K. Doring, *The Student of Socrates*, Cambridge Companions Online, Cambridge Univerity Press, pp 22-47, 2002.

● Kessels Jos, Boers Erik, Mostert Pieter, *Free Space, Field guide to Conversations,* Boom Amsterdam 2008.

● Kessels Jos, Boers Erik, Mostert Pieter, *Free Space, Philosophy in Organizations*, Boom Amsterdam, 2004.

● Kessels Jos, *The Case of the Shared Values, an Example of Socratic Dilaogue,* Springer, 1997.

● Le Bon Tim, *Interview with Jos Delnoij*, Practical Philosophy, vol. 2.3, November 2011.

● Lemes Vander, *Interview* Amsterdam/ Bern 15.05.2016.

● Mark McPherran, *The Religion of Socrates*, University Park, The Pennylvania State University Press, 1996.

● Massana Artur, *Interview* Amsterdam/Barcelona 26.05.2016.

● Nussbaum Martha, *Capacità Personale e Democrazia Sociale*, G.F. Zanetti, Reggio Emilia, 2003.

● Nussbaum Martha, *Cultivating Humanity and World Citizenship*, University of Chicago, Forum of Higher Education, 2007.

● Paul Richard & Elder Linda, *The Art of Socratic Questioning, Based on Critical Thinking Concepts and Tools*, The Foundation of Critical Thinking, 2006.

● Plato & Xenophon, *Socratic Discourses*, London J. M. Dent &Sons Ltd, 1910.

● Plato, *Apology*, trans G.M.A. Grube, Cooper pp 17-36.

● Plato, *Euthyphro*, trans Rosamond Kent Sprague, Cooper pp 639-664.

● Plato, *Gorgias*, trans Donald J. Zehl, Cooper pp 791-869.

● Plato, *Republic*, trans G.M.A. Grube, rev. C.D.C. Reeve, Cooper pp 971-1223.

● Polanyi Michael, Prosh H, *Meaning*, University of Chicago, 1975.

● Polanyi Michael, *The Tacit Dimension*, Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd, Great Britain, 1967.

● R. Cross, *Socrates: The Man and his Mission*, Freeport, Libraries Press, 1970.

● Richard Bett, *Socratic Ignorance*, Cambridge Companions Online, Cambridge University Press, pp 215-236, 2016.

● **Schön** Donald, *The Reflective Practitioner, How Professionals Think in Action*, Basic Books, United State of America, 1983.

● Sternberg Robert, *Intelligence and Wisdom*, Cambridge University Press, 2000.

● Sternberg Robert, *Wisdom, Intelligence and Creativity Synthesized*, Cambridge University Press, 2003.

● Stone Abraham D, *On the Teaching of Virtue in Plato's Meno and the Nature of Philosophical Authority*, May 2, 2010.

● Tromp Minke*, Interview* Amsterdam 30.05.2016.

● Van Rossem Kristof, *Filosofische Praktijken*, VFP, Filosofie jrg.16, n.1, 2006.

● Van Rossem Kristof, *Filosofische Praktijken, What is a Socratic Dialogue*, Filosofie Jrg 16, n. 1, 2006.

● Van Rossem Kristof, *Meeting Socrates, How to do Socratic Consultations*, Philosophical Practice, 9.1: 1344-51, March 2014.

● Whiteley Rick, *Using the Socratic Method and Bloom's Taxonomy of the Cognitive Domain to Enhance Online Discussion, Critical Thinking, and Student Learning*, Development in Business Simulation and Experential learning, vol. 33, 2006.

vrije Universiteit amsterdam