



DIALOGICAL WAYS OF BEING

THE BLESSINGS OF NOTHINGNESS

A phenomenological action research study of how openness manifests itself in
dialogical conversations

by

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UP UNTIL NOW, ABSOLUTELY EVERYTHING HAS BEEN
AND THE ONE WHO SPEAKS AND CONTINUES TO
SPEAK MAY ADD NOTHING AND DOESN'T BREAK DOWN
AND DISAPPEAR
NOT EVEN NOW AS THE ONE WHO SAYS NOTHING: HE DIES¹

Per Højholt, Punkter, 1971

¹ A Danish poem translated by the author of this text. The original text is. “OP TIL NU HAR ABSOLUT ALT VÆRET OG DEN SOM TALER OG FORTSÆTTER MED AT TALE ØGER MÅSKE INTET OG BRYDER HELLER IKKE SAMMEN OG FORSVINDER HELLER IKKE NU SOM DEN DER INTET SIGER: HAN DØR”



CV

I graduated with an MA. in History of Ideas and Modern Literature from Aarhus University in 2004. Since then, I have trained in systemic practice at Inpraxis and in narrative approach at Dispuk. In the period 2017-2019, I took a three-year therapeutic Open Dialogue training in London under the supervision of Professor Jaakko Seikkula. The first years of my professional life I worked in project and innovation management. Since 2011, I have worked in hospital and social psychiatry as a consultant and researcher. For the past 3 years I have also worked as a course leader on the Danish 2-year education in Open Dialogue, relationship and networking, and done various consulting work. My primary employment in recent years has been at the Skovvænget residential centre in the Capital Region of Denmark, which has financed the work on this thesis.

Summary

This thesis stems from an action research project, that took place at the housing and rehabilitation facility Skovvænget, which is a facility organised by the Capital Region of Copenhagen for adults with mental disorders and psychological vulnerability. The focal point of the study is the concept of 'ways of being' in dialogic situations, where openness is particularly apparent. The thesis address how to describe special dialogic qualities of 'ways of being'.

The idea of describing special dialogic dimensions of ways of being, is theoretically founded in the thinking of the philosophers respectively; Martin Heidegger, Emmanuel Lèvinas, Alphonso Lingis and Hannah Arendt. In all 4 cases, the perspectives on ways of being are linked to a late modern metaphysical look at the way openness unfolds. The four dimensions of dialogical ways of being thus contain a perception that immanent transcendence has its epicentre in the concept of 'nothingness'. The dissertation is subtitled "the blessings of nothingness", as the confrontation with nothingness holds both the possibility of perdition and freedom. Nothingness is described both as that which breaks with expectation and gives the freedom for something new meaningful to become apparent, and at the same time a break with the expected can be a disturbing thing introducing uncertainty.

The ambition of the thesis is to contribute with theoretical and practical descriptions in relation to the concept of 'open' in the therapeutic approach "Open Dialogue". The starting point for investigating the concept of dialogical ways of being is dialogues with residents of the residence Skovvænget. In the analysis of these dialogues, the idea of the importance of 'ways of being' in itself comes to light. Hopefully, this thesis's descriptions of four dimensions of dialogical ways of being, can contribute to the further development of the theory and practice around 'being in dialogue'.

Methodologically, the thesis is generally supported by the action research principles of a joint research process between fellow

researchers. This means that residents, employees at the residence together with the Ph.D.-student and the supervisor have been involved in discussing research design, discussing observations along the way and talking about future use of experiences and proposals for changes to practice.

My primary material for analysis has been field notes, interviews and dialogues with residents. The philosophical texts have been used to illuminate impressions from the dialogues and thus be discussion partners in relation to how to understand practice. This process has followed the mode of action research in relation to interaction between analysis and proposals for practice change. The dialogues with residents are analysed following the example of Max Van Manen's phenomenological writing, reading and analysis strategy. The thesis also contains a discussion with the existing literature on action research and the question is raised whether it is possible to carry out a study without defining and solving a problem.

The thesis also contains an auto-ethnographic track. In this track, elements of the Ph.D.-students own transformation are pursued through the research process. This is done partly out of curiosity in relation to what the study does to the researcher, as the theoretical starting point is that the researcher cannot be neutral and stand outside the study processes. Next, this track is also pursued because the approach to dialogues used at the residence, Open Dialogue, precisely also takes the reciprocity in the dialogic process for granted. It is hoped that this autoethnographic track can both say something about the inner dialogues along the way, the result of the investigation and give other researchers inspiration to do something similar.

In the dissertation's discussion of the literature that defines the field around the use of dialogues in a therapeutic context, Ivana Marková is particularly highlighted, who in the book *"The Dialogical Mind"* relates to the field of neurology's current attention to the fact that the brain is 'connected to all things'. Ivana thus describes an unbreakable unity of the alter-ego-world, and therefore the interaction as the

inevitable object of analysis. This thesis also takes this as a point of departure but will at the same time discuss that this unity in Ivana Markova's book should be understood only, in relation to a striving for knowledge. By looking at modes of being as the central category, it is not just cognitions that are the central dynamic. By linking the concept of 'openness' to 'ways of being' in themselves, it becomes clear that dialogues are not only about understanding (striving for knowledge).

This critical point in relation to the cognitive efforts that take place in dialogues also concerns the traditional focus on 'the role of language' in dialogues. In relation to 6 other central positions in the field, it is discussed how a look at the significance of 'dialogic ways of being' in itself, brings into light, other dimensions than the striving for knowledge. The connection between 'way of being', 'openness' and 'nothingness' is discussed in relation to what can be beneficial in experiencing oneself 'opened by the world'.

The thesis finally contains a discussion of the prevailing discourses for the dialogue's *raison d'être* in the way dialogues are perceived in mainstream textbooks and the general use of dialogues within Social Psychiatry.² Some historical stages of development are described in relation to which it is argued that adequate approaches to dialogues must be developed that accommodate individuals' autonomy, real self-determination and equality to a greater extent. An updated view of the meaning of 'ways of being' can hopefully be one of the elements a rethinking of the role of dialogue can take use of.

The thesis culminates in a hope that a focus on the importance of ways of being in itself can have an expanded meaning for the residents who live at Skovvænget. It is the idea that the practical implications of 'ways of being' and the 'openness of Open Dialogue' can be further developed at the place of residence. It is implicit in the dissertation's formulation of the four dimensions of dialogical ways of

² In Denmark the term Social Psychiatry is a notion for the social support you can have in public services outside the hospitals.

being, that they can be trained, so that practice in the future becomes more aware of giving space to these dimensions - so that more people can 'feel opened up by the world'.

This thesis is originally written in the Danish language. It was assessed positively for the doctoral degree in philosophy on the 24th of May 2024 after a public defence.

This translated English version of the thesis the references refer to the Danish versions of the literature when this is possible (see the bibliography for details). The translations in the thesis are made by this author.

Foreword

Now the dissertation starts. Or, when does a dissertation actually start? The question is impossible to answer because, in a way, I've been writing about the topics of the thesis for as long as I can remember. My interest in what it means to find meaning in existing in a thoroughly secularised world started earlier than I can remember. An actual starting point is lost in my own history. In the same way, it is not possible to say when the work on the thesis will end. The further development, dissemination and transformation of the content of the thesis will continue for a long time after the end of this text. In relation to the lack of a starting point and end point, one might think that the present 'now' is more identifiable as a fixed point. One might think that the point at which the author's written words and the reader's production of meaning meet can be maintained. But this thesis rests on the assumption that the present cannot be fixed. The idea that the present moment has the character of a point that can be described in terms of its permanent structure is fundamentally challenged along the way. The point of the present is that it is not 'something' - it is always in the process of becoming, which is why it cannot or should not be fixed. In the middle of the present is nothing. A nothingness that may possibly make sense when being is allowed to remain open. Therefore, it is a fundamental task to keep attention on the openness that has to do with being itself - in the same way that you can keep the water in a hole in the ice from freezing over. Metaphorically speaking, when the ice freezes, the meaning is no longer open, the interlocutor becomes superfluous, existence closes in and references are made to already formulated truths. I'm sceptical in relation to the fixed now. When the going gets tough, I think of the fixed now as temporary - but I prefer to look for the opening of existence, which fortunately presents itself all the time.

Although this text in this way is open and never finished, there are still a number of people who have been crucial for the thesis to materialize despite the above. After all, the thesis has been given this particular expression. I would like to take this opportunity to thank these people.

First and foremost, I would like to thank the residents at Skovvænget who have been involved in the dialogues that have enabled us to walk along a part of life's path together. Thank you for inspiring me to write about the dialogues we have had together and for willingly allowing me to write about them. You have opened my eyes to the question of ways of being and thus opened a new door on my path.

Unfortunately, one of the four dialogue partners I followed very closely passed away last year. You are missed and are often in my thoughts. You bring back memories of good times together.

A special thanks goes to another resident. The cover of the thesis is adorned by his painting. Thank you for allowing me to purchase the work and use it as the cover. I enjoy your paintings and our time together.

In the same way, I would like to thank the colleagues at Skovvænget who have shown me the confidence to work on the project during this period. I take the learning impressions from meetings with residents and colleagues with me in my heart. Thank you for helping to open new horizons for me.

Bo Christoffersen is head of Skovvænget. I would like to thank you for suggesting that I be employed at Skovvænget for the purpose of conducting research. It is visionary of you to insist on behalf of research that social psychiatric interventions should also be explored and described. It has been with an extraordinarily generous patience that you have given me a framework in which to conduct research.

Finn Thorbjørn Hansen has been my main supervisor. I thank you for giving my project a chance at Aalborg University and for being my tireless supervisor - even when there have been bumps along the way.

Jaakko Seikkula has been my co-supervisor. Thank you for supporting my research project all the way. Thank you for believing in me, listening to me and giving me kind criticism and encouraging words at crucial times.

Helle Alrø, as head of the Centre for Dialogue and Organisation at Aalborg University, helped approve my project in the research portfolio. Thank you for your always friendly behaviour towards me.

During my research time at Aalborg University, I have also been surrounded by a research environment consisting of Simon Berg, Sine Maria Herholdt-Lomholdt, Anete Mikkalla Camille Strand, Nanna Ruengkratok Lang, Poul Nørgård Dahl, Lise Korsholm Billund and Dennis Jim Frederiksen. Thank you all for creating a human-friendly environment at the *Centre for Dialogue and Organization* that has been conducive to developing the ideas in my project. Thank you for the laughter, the parties and the professional discussions.

As a colleague at Skovvænget throughout the project, Sofie Bratberg Jensen has been an important sparring partner. It has been a great pleasure to be able to discuss the hardships and pleasures of PhD life with you. Thank you for listening to a little bit of everything. I hope we can work together in the future.

As a unique co-reader and a philosophically astute observer of the text's wild and rightful errors, Christiane Mossin has been a particularly important support for me along the way. You have both thought along with me in relation to the content of the thesis and made suggestions for the form of the text, so that the reader can also be part of it. Thank you very much for that!

When it's hard times and good times, you are there. That is invaluable my friend, Peter Aaboe Sørensen. Thank you for being a role model professionally and privately. I look forward to our future together.

Two of my other role models in terms of thinking, philosophy and life are the late Hans Jørgen Thomsen and Hans-Jørgen Schanz, both experts and teachers in the History of Ideas. Thank you for giving me inner voices that remind me of freedom, contingency and metaphysical experiences in our time. I have discussed extensively with you and your texts along the way. Thank you for making a difference.

A final thanks you to my immediate family Karen, Erik, Natalie, dad, mum, sister, brother-in-law, and nephews. Despite a sometimes physically and mentally absent father, spouse, son, brother and uncle, 'who thinks about and writes about being in dialogue', you have given me space and love - so I could. A thank you to you Natalie is not enough.

Now this text must go on. I bow down and thank the above mentioned for showing me that being has a meaning. It needs to be explored further.

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INTRODUCTION

Thesis contribution and focus

This thesis is about dialogical ways of being. During the project, I found that the question of being in dialogues is important to the people I had dialogues with. Therefore, I chose to pursue the idea of ways of being to investigate whether something special can be said about dialogical ways of being.

This thesis' contribution to research therefore consists of describing four dimensions of dialogical being that can characterise dialogical situations. Describing how being itself has a meaning in dialogues is not common in research on dialogue and therapy. It is usually the role of language that is described.

Another contribution to the research is that being in the thesis is linked to the role that metaphysics can play in a postmodern or late modern perspective. In this way, the spiritual and spiritual nature of the human being is considered, which is typically not included in the traditional literature on working with social and psychological issues, where dialogue is used in the approach.

Exploring the question of being and openness contributes to the literature on the Open Dialogue approach. Within this specific literature, the focus is mostly on the role of language and dialogue in the therapeutic perspective. This dissertation contributes with new insights into understanding what can be inherent in the concept of openness when it is not causally linked to the role of language.

This thesis draws explicitly on philosophical thinking. It is not usual to let philosophical perspectives inspire dialogical practice so directly. I believe that the existing psychological theorising is not sufficient to address dialogical being in a metaphysical light. The preferred philosophical perspectives all start from a phenomenological analysis

of human being in the world in a different way than both typical therapeutic literature and psychological theories do. Thus, this thesis argues that other types of knowledge - such as philosophical knowledge - are needed to illuminate some of the things that happen when people are in dialogue with each other.

The issue of openness of being is important in the context of the Open Dialogue approach but is arguably applicable to all people.

Structure of the thesis

The thesis begins with a summary, a preface and an introduction. **The introduction tells the** story of how this thesis came to be - including how the focus of the thesis has been clarified along the way. The introduction also presents the theoretical landscape around the concept of dialogue that this dissertation relates to, a brief summary of the findings that have become apparent, and the structure and limitations of the dissertation.

Chapter 1 describes the first steps into the field of practice I am part of as an action researcher. Chapter 1 is also the chapter where the methodological reflections take place and where reflections on the researcher's personal development take place.

Chapter 2 describes the four dialogue processes that unfolded together with the four residents at the Skovvænget residential facility, which I have followed. Chapter 2 also contains an overall phenomenological analysis of and reflection on the dialogue processes, through which the question of the meaning of 'being' emerges.

Chapter 3 pursues four different philosophical descriptions of the importance of being in a dialogical situation. Key works from the philosophers Martin Heidegger, Emmanuel Lévinas, Alphonso Lingis and Hannah Arendt are read out, each of which identifies dimensions of dialogical ways of being that have consequences for the

understanding of the importance of being for theory formation in this new field and for therapeutic practice in this light.

Chapter 4 constitutes the concluding part of the text, in which the thesis' central ideas regarding the significance of “dialogical being” are discussed in relation to related positions. The importance of dialogical ways of being is discussed in relation to one of the crucial situations with a resident at the residential home. Similarities and differences in relation to ideas and descriptions by other dialogue theorists and practitioners are discussed.

Chapter 5 concludes the thesis with a critical reflection on the thesis, a follow-up on the personal perspective and a look at possible future practice development and research.

On the methodological level, the dissertation contains a combination of; the action research approach at the overall level of the dissertation, autoethnographic approaches in relation to the personal reflections, phenomenological analysis of the dialogue processes and philosophical readings of major works.

In terms of qualifying and unfolding the methodological approaches, this means that in chronological order through the text I study the theoretical landscape around the concept of dialogue in interaction-based theories such as literature studies, my own experiences as reading notes and experiences, the theory formations of action research, the contours of the context through historical reflections in the discourse in the field, the dialogue processes through wondering phenomenologically based reflections and philosophical texts as hermeneutic philosophical interpretations.

Thesis history - common interest in research

This thesis is the result of some conversations between Bo Christoffersen, head of the Skovvænget residential centre, and me, which took place in spring 2016. We had met on several occasions at

conferences and meetings where people interested in Open Dialogue were gathered. One day we agreed to have lunch at a local café.

During our conversations, it became clear that Skovvænget wanted to conduct research in connection with its commitment to working with the Open Dialogue approach, which at this point was already something the centre had been working with for several years. I remember that Bo expressed an ambition that research should also be conducted into the initiatives that are being implemented within the social initiatives.³ It was a pronounced wish that the research should contribute to maintaining and investigating what happens in connection with the Open Dialogue initiative at Skovvænget.

A research activity was initially formulated as part of learning more about the results of these efforts. Among a number of other initiatives, such as training courses, internal supervision, external supervision, peer training and theme days with both residents and staff, the research would also help to keep the focus on how the work with dialogical practice is progressing.

At this point, I had been looking for opportunities to immerse myself in research for some time. I was doing a 3-year therapeutic education in Open Dialogue, and I could see research as an opportunity to immerse myself more in what happens in dialogues. After many years of working life, I wanted to combine my previous studies at university with current studies that would also allow me to understand my current work practice on a different level than the fleeting daily work life allows.

Project description - for approval

The agreement was that I would be employed at Skovvænget - initially to describe the research project, establish contact with a university and a supervisor, and to work on a description of the

³ This is to counteract the fact that research is typically more systematic in the hospital sector - also when it comes to psychosocial issues.

research project that would be approved at an academic level in connection with admission to the university.

This initial phase took place while I took part in the daily work life and had an office at the Skovvænget residential centre. Thus, the specific design of the project's focus and form was also informed by the impressions and conversations I had with the residents and staff. During this phase, contact was established with Finn Thorbjørn Hansen, professor at the Department of Communication and Psychology at Aalborg University, who became the project's main supervisor. Finn Thorbjørn Hansen is affiliated with the Centre for Dialogue and Organisation and has for many years developed his own understanding of the phenomenology of wonder and has been interested in many forms of dialogue.⁴ During this phase, Professor Jaakko Seikkula also joined the project as a supervisor. At the time, Jaakko Seikkula was a professor at the University of Jyväskylä in Finland and has been a central figure in the development of the Open Dialogue approach since the 1980s. He has researched and described the therapeutic dimensions of dialogues for many years. Through an exchange between the residence's wishes, the counsellors' suggestions and my thoughts, a comprehensive project description of about 20 pages gradually took shape.

In the process of describing the research project, two crucial things became important. Firstly, the methodological form of the project was described as an action research project. This was partly because there is a strong tradition of using the action research approach at the Centre for Dialogue and Organisation, and partly because this research method seemed to be consistent with more voices being heard and me becoming a part of the activity at Skovvænget.

The second was finding the right focus for the content of the research. In the project description that was approved as a PhD project, the initial focus was on both dialogues and philosophical wonder. In addition, the project also included an ambition to study the

⁴ See also a more detailed presentation of Finn Thorbjørn Hansen's theoretical standpoint in the methodological chapter 1.

dialogue partners' individual networks in connection with the Open Dialogue approach and to include a study of the importance of the organisational context for the dialogical work.

In addition, there was also a built-in expectation in the project from the start that the PhD student's philosophical knowledge and interest would influence the data collection and analyses along the way. Through an academic interest in the phenomenological tradition following the German philosopher Martin Heidegger's philosophical confrontation with subject-object thinking and his reversal of the understanding of modern metaphysics from a vertical to a horizontal orientation, and the PhD student's experience of how this approach to the philosophy of language can be translated into various therapeutically orientated approaches, it was part of the conversations that this should be applied during the project.

The project description was approved at Aalborg University. Thus, the formal start at Aalborg University could take place on the 1st of February 2017. The project period was set at four years, as the project requires extended presence in practice during the project period.⁵

The project finds focus

According to the intentions of the project description, during the first part of the project, in-depth work was done on descriptions of residents' and employees' networks and the relationship to the dialogical conversations. Training on and the use of genograms and network maps were explored - including the possibilities of using specific network maps/descriptions in research to see how they change over time.

⁵ Along the way, it turned out that the Corona situation and personal challenges meant that the completion of the project was postponed.

Likewise, work was also done to screen and map the organisational context in organisations where dialogic work takes place. The tool ODES (Ziedonis, 2016) developed at the University of Massachusetts Medical School by Professor Doug Ziedonis, among others, was used in the organisations, the residential and day care facility Åkandehuset in Odsherred, the house Vista Balboa in Odense Municipality, the residential facility Fangelvej in Odense Municipality and the residential facility Skovvænget in the Capital Region. Screenings and feedback processes were carried out in all locations.

Gradually, however, the phenomenon of ways of being began to feature more and more in the project, as can be seen in the development of the thesis. Through the dialogue processes and their analysis, it became clear that the main focus of the project was to find productive philosophical and practical descriptions of the meaning of ways of being. This left less time and focus on network maps and the importance of the organisational context. These elements are thus not included in the thesis, but there is an extensive body of work and some interesting findings that could certainly be important to pursue further. It is possible to delve further into and process this research data.

As for the project's initial focus on also investigating the role that philosophical wonder phenomenology can play in relation to open dialogues, there was also a shift during the process, where the question of the importance of ways of being for dialogues became the central focal point. In the first half of the project period, wonder workshops were carried out, as developed by Finn Thorbjørn Hansen in a collaboration between the Thorupgård residence, organised under the City of Copenhagen, and Skovvænget, which was the project host for the activity.

A group of managers from the two centres participated in a full wondering process where they went through the phases of the wondering workshop facilitated by this PhD student and at the end of the process wrote an essay based on wondering about key experiences of being a manager in a residential centre. This wondering process and the subsequent essays are not directly

included in this thesis, although this also could be further explored in future studies.

As the project took a philosophical perspective from the question of the importance of being and ways of being in relation to openness in dialogical situations, the question of the philosophy of wonder was no longer as central. The methodological section explicitly addresses the kind of wonder approach developed by Finn Thorbjørn Hansen. It is argued that the phase in the process of wondering that is about "coming out into the open" corresponds very well with the openness associated with the concept of being. At the same time, a focus on the meaning of being in itself does not include the meaning of the phenomenon/cause in and of itself. In this sense, the project took a turn away from how dialogues in a wondering perspective can open up and lead to new actions (phronesis) or new understandings. The focus shifted to the question of what dialogues can lead to and the epistemological effort that always comes with being in dialogue.

A focus on the meaning of being in itself means that the purpose of wonder cannot be the phenomenon itself that is wondered about, but rather the very fact of wondering. See also the section on Hannah Arendt, where the Greek formulation of 'the admiration of wonder' is discussed, and in chapter 4, which reflects further on the meaning of wonder in relation to ways of being, nothingness and openness.

Thesis purpose

In the project's original description, it had a title that focused on it being a study of open dialogues and philosophical wondering as well as the dialogical practice of networking in two residential homes in light of the concepts of openness and context. More specifically, the purpose of the study was formulated in terms of how a dialogical and existential approach to network-oriented collaboration in residential homes can strengthen residents' interaction with relatives.

As shown above, the question of the importance of context and the influence of dialogues on the interaction with relatives slipped out of focus as the project data began to become clear. Similarly, the question of the importance of wonder became secondary.

Thus, considering the project's development, the research objective of the thesis can be reformulated in a two-part formula as follows:

"To investigate how openness manifests itself in dialogues that take place at Skovvænget".

"To contribute to a general qualification and development of what openness means in connection with the Open Dialogue approach through a focus on forms of being".

The theoretical landscape and key concepts of the thesis

In the following, I will place this thesis in a current research discussion of the importance of dialogue. I will describe some general elements of the current meaning of dialogue, which this thesis relates to. Next, I will present several positions that, in relation to the specific approach of Open Dialogue, are crucial discussion partners in the theoretical/philosophical arena to which this thesis belongs.⁶ Finally, I will present the landscape of central concepts that have become the most important key concepts of this thesis, namely the concepts of metaphysics, nothingness, being and openness. I will argue why these concepts describe the field that is important for the focus of this thesis.

⁶ At this point in the thesis, the "state of the art" of the field is presented - a description of the theoretical framework within which this thesis discusses and the current theoretical relevance of this study.

The concept of dialogue - historical highlights

The primary interest of this thesis is the importance of dialogic ways of being for dialogic situations. Therefore, it can be said that the thesis fundamentally relates to and revisits how we can understand what happens in dialogues. The central concept is thus dialogue. The question of what dialogue is, of course, has a long history - as different times ascribe different meanings to the concept and use the concept in different ways.

The root of the word is found in the Greek language via the meaning of the word 'dia-logos'.⁷ 'Dia' traditionally means 'via/through', and logos means 'word' in Greek. This means that dialogue can mean 'through language'. In Plato's work, we can see that the meaning of dialogue is linked to the Socratic search for truth. In Aristotle, the use of dialogue is linked to longer speeches and argumentative speeches. This feature of dialogues is also found in the Sophists, who primarily used dialogues as part of the art of persuasion. For the Roman Cicero, the role of dialogue was also central - the rhetorical field became his special interest. In his famous speeches, the rhetorical qualities of dialogue are linked to the political field.

In the Middle Ages, dialogues were often associated with the interpretation of moral issues, while in the Enlightenment, dialogue began to be associated with the emerging interest in the autonomous individual and descriptions of the often-conflicting emotional aspects of the benefits of freedom and autonomy. For the philosopher Hegel, dialogue is linked to the concept of dialectics, which points the concept in the direction of interest in the movement forward towards the coming of the spirit to itself, which is carried by the dialectical and historical process of dialogues. In Bakhtin, the question of openness is linked to the concept of dialogue - as a contrast to monologue and monopoly of power.⁸

⁷ The following section is inspired by the entry "dialogue" in "The Great Danish Dictionary" - written by Carsten Friis Johansen. <https://denstoredanske.lex.dk/dialog>

⁸ I will return to Bakhtin's understanding of the 'dialogue concept'.

Ivana Marková - updating the concept of dialogue

The concept of dialogue has had many meanings throughout history. One of the interesting things about the meaning of the concept in recent years is that it is linked to the question of what we understand by human consciousness. As certain branches of neuroscience reveal that the individual's consciousness is to be found in the relationship with other individuals and the world, the concept of dialogue becomes central to understanding the connection between people and the way we orient ourselves in the world.⁹ In other words, this has re-actualised the interest in dialogical interaction.

One of the leading researchers in this recent field of research is Ivana Marková (1938-), Emeritus Professor of Psychology at the University of Stirling and Professor in the Department of Social Psychology at the London School of Economics. In her groundbreaking 2016 book *'The Dialogical Mind'*, she describes how the dialogical turn emphasises that social relationships and dialogical interaction are crucial to how we make sense of life.

The new field of research is defined by the fact that the individual should not be studied in itself as an autonomous subject. The individual must always be examined in relation to the other or the other. Marková is a psychologist by background, but the research field of 'the dialogical mind' invites other research areas such as sociology, anthropology, philosophy and literary studies. Descriptions of the alter-ego unity can take many forms.

⁹ In her book *"The Dialogical Mind"*, Ivana Marková writes about the growing research interest in studying interaction and dialogue as follows: "There is a growing interest in social science in the study of "otherness", "alterity", "atrui", etc.; the "other" is referred to in various ways such as "strange", "alien", "different from me", "same as me", "mystery", "known unknown", etc. These terms already indicate that not only the "Other" and the "Others" are in the center of interest but also that there is an enormous number of ways in which the "otherness" can be theorised about and brought into practice (see e.g. Gillespie; 2006; Jovchelovitch, 2007; Rochat, 2009; Simão and Valsiner, 2007; Zittoun et. al, 2013.

In the following, I will present more precisely how Ivana Marková unfolds in her book that human consciousness is fundamentally connected to other consciousnesses - and that consciousness thus manifests itself in dialogical interaction.

In the book's preface, Marková begins by explaining her main argument in the book as follows: "Epistemology of daily thought, language and action does not stem from "neutral" information processing of the individual, but from the ethics of dialogicality" (Marková, 2016, p. preface page x). The main aim of the book is to investigate how this ethics of dialogicality, and thus consciousness, unfolds and how to conduct research in this field.

Marková believes that the renewed focus on dialogue in light of the dialogical turn, which is not only unfolding in the humanities and social sciences, should also be seen in the context of a wider societal movement. She says that characteristics of this broader movement are:

The main presupposition of dialogical perspectives is that the mind of the Self and the minds of Others are interdependent in and through sense-making and sense-creating of social realities, in interpretations of their past, experiencing the present and imagining the future. Such multifaceted social realities are situated in history and culture, and dialogical approaches study them in diverse fashions. (Marková, 2016, p. 1)

In other words, Marková describes a field of research that revolves around how this interdependence between the self and others takes place. Meaning making is not something the individual can create. Reality is the 'social realities' - and consciousness in this sense comes into being in the space or interaction between the self and the other or others. In short, the actualization of the concept of dialogue

is about the fact that it is through dialogues that consciousness comes into being.

The Dialogical Mind - content and conclusion

The book "*The Dialogical Mind*" consists of two parts. The first part of the book is entitled "*Superior and inferior thinking and knowing*". This part consists of a historical review of how the relationship between 'superior thinking', 'inferior thinking' and 'knowing' has been conceptualized over time.

This part of the book argues that the boundaries between the two forms of knowledge are in fact fluid and difficult to delineate, and that the form of thinking based on common sense is the most important for understanding the interaction between the self and the other. Often, common sense has been considered inferior to scientific knowledge, for example. The word 'sense' in the concept of 'common sense' is obviously about knowledge being connected to emotions. Emotions are often historically associated with the unstable, which belongs to the individual and not the world. Marková refers to the philosopher Francis Bacon (1561-1626) as follows: "His emphasis on observation, empirical method, on discoveries and his vision of the world in which humans invent and construct, led Bacon to conclude that the human senses are not the measure of things, senses as well as the mind reflect the perceiver and not the world" (Marková, 2016, p. 45).

Marková draws on philosopher Giambattista Vico's (1668-1744) interpretation of the concept of common sense. In short, Vico's point is that common sense is connected to action and the creation of history. Vico says that through common sense, man constructs the truth about the world in a discussion with Bacon, who is concerned with empiricism and observation as a starting point for truth. Vico says that the 'true' interpretation of the world lies in common perception, which is constantly created through human interaction.

"Vico characterised common sense as judgement without reflection, shared by an entire class, an entire people, an entire nation, or the whole human race" (Vico, 1744/1948 §142) (Marková, 2016, p. 49).

Marková follows Vico in saying that it is important to study human interaction if you want to see how the human world is created. People orientate themselves in the world and act in everyday situations based on common sense knowledge. They communicate and act based on common sense and not on specialised scientific 'superior' thinking. Marková concludes with the importance of studying relationships and dialogues:

These capacities underlie their sense-making and sense-creating, coping with their experience and inventing new ideas. Let us insist that these are good enough reasons why the study of these capacities should be the central focus of the human and social sciences including social psychology. These capacities develop and are maintained in and through dialogical interaction during historical and cultural processes. (Marková, 2016, p. 90)

The second part of the book is entitled: "*Dialogicality as epistemology of daily life and professional practices*". This part of the book explains how to study the interaction or interdependence between people and the world - considering the concept of common sense.

The main point of this section divides into two elements for Marková. Firstly, she does away with the idea of the separation between alter, ego and object - a reckoning with the distance between the knower and the world one knows something about. Marková states: "In interactional epistemologies, subjects or entities (e.g. knowers, individuals, elements, organisms) and objects that environ them (e.g. the known, contexts, *Umwelt*, environments) form irreducible ontological, that is, existential units" (Marková, 2016, p. 91). One must therefore study "alter, ego and object" as one unit.

The second part of the point of this section of the book is to present historical as well as current dialogical research methods that study alter, ego and object as interdependent entities. These are approaches that prioritise 'epistemic trust', 'epistemic responsibility' or 'the dialogical mind' as the object of analysis, respectively. Of course, alter, ego and object have independent features that can be studied separately. And it is important that: "The ethics of mutual interdependence of the Ego-Alter discussed earlier presupposes the acknowledgement of each party's freedom in thinking, decision-making and acting" (Marková, 2016, p. 123). But the point for Marková is that these features are created in an interactive process with the other elements of the unbreakable unit of which they are a part. Thus, the whole unit and its creation must be studied.

Concluding the second part of the book, Marková says that it is a consequence of her rejection of the ego-alter-object distance that certain axioms defining the unbreakable interdependence are applied in relation to appropriate research methods. For example, she says:

The Ego-Alter and the Ego-Alter-Object are interdependent in terms of dialogical thinking, communication and mutual action. Their fundamental features are imagination, intersubjectivity, the search for social recognition, trust and responsibility. These features are dynamic, multivoiced, open and unfinalisable, and they are in continuous tension. (Marková, 2016, p. 211)

Interaction as an overall perspective

Ivana Marková's book "*The Dialogical Mind*" opens a view of human consciousness based on the concept of 'common sense' and the unbreakable unity between ego alter object. She then points to research methods and approaches that can address this. In this

sense, this thesis is an extension of her view of the 'object of study' and of the methodological approach. The object of study is precisely a dialogical situation, and the method does not address the subject (ego) or object per se, but rather the interaction in the dialogical situation. As already mentioned, action research as a method is also interested in the interaction in the research process.

The central concept for this thesis is an interactional perspective on dialogical ways of being. Behaviours are by definition not bounded by the subject or the object. Markova's approach is also based on the fact that interaction and the daily ethics of dialogicality have an epistemological purpose, which means that her view of dialogues always includes a focus on what the dialogue makes the parties wiser about. The purpose of dialogues in her sense automatically includes a kind of knowledge endeavour.

Whether the question of dialogical being and the epistemological purpose of dialogues corresponds to the purpose of this thesis, I will return to in chapter 4.

Other parts of the theoretical landscape

Just as Ivana Marková's book "*The Dialogical Mind*" forms an important part of the theoretical landscape that this thesis stands on the back of and discusses with, there are several other positions that have influenced the development of the specific dialogical approach that Open Dialogue represents over many years.

In the following, I will briefly introduce 6 positions (represented by Jaakko Seikkula, Tom Andersen, Harlene Anderson, John Shotter, Daniel Stern and Mikhail Bakhtin), each of which mark important theoretical contributions to the theoretical field that this thesis speaks

into and relates to. I do this to clarify the conceptual context for this thesis.¹⁰

In this introductory part of the thesis, I will outline the respective positions in relation to their main aim regarding the *raison d'être* of dialogues. The form of the following short sections is to introduce the respective theorists and give a neutral account of their contributions to the understanding of dialogues and describe the purpose of dialogues and the rationale for this purpose.

In the final chapter of the thesis, I will return to other dimensions of these positions to discuss - considering the thesis findings - how my findings fit into the theoretical landscape.

Jaakko Seikkula

Since the early 1980s, Jaakko Seikkula (1953-), with his background as a psychologist and researcher, has been involved in developing family and social network-based approaches for people in severe crisis. As a professor at the University of Jyväskylä in Finland, he has worked for many years in research on psychiatric interventions. In the mid-1990s, he, along with other researchers and practitioners, found through journal studies and interviews that the effective elements of the treatment offered by the team around Tornio Hospital in North Lapland were what later became known as the 7 principles of the Open

¹⁰ Another person, philosopher Anders Lindseth, has also played an important role in the development of dialogical thinking. Anders Lindseth is known for being one of the first to develop "philosophical practice" in the Nordic countries. Anders Lindseth has worked with both Tom Andersen and Jaakko Seikkula, who participate in the international network for the treatment of psychosis and has thus been a philosophical sparring partner. Anders Lindseth has, among other things (Lindseth, 2011) explained dialogues as a movement between 'impression and expression' - see for example the article: "When we get sick on the path of life".

Dialogue approach.¹¹ Jaakko Seikkula has many publications behind him describing the workings of the Open Dialogue approach as well as many research publications. The following presentation is primarily based on the book "*Open Dialogue and Anticipations – Respecting Otherness in the Present Moment*" from 2014.

The purpose of dialogues is to open new dialogues so that change is possible and new language is created here and now

The rationale for this is that the very act of being in dialogical exchange is the way humans are alive - it is the way the individual becomes an individual. Therefore, this being in dialogic relation is the purpose of the dialogues.

Central to the book is the concept of the 'otherness of the other and the other' - concepts that reflect Jaakko's inspiration from the philosopher Emmanuel Lévinas. This expresses that dialogues are based on the fact that there is a separation in the relationship between people. The subject stands in an outsider position in relation to the Other, knowing that we do not fully know each other's background, stories and experience of the world. Dialogue is what reaches across the distance between people and opens for new dialogues, while the otherness remains.

Besides being inspired by the philosophical and literary ideas of Mikhail Bakhtin, Jaakko works in continuation of a psychological tradition, as a further development of psychodynamic, systemic and narrative-orientated family therapeutic thinking. Open Dialogue is based on a therapeutic idea that life crises can be related to the fact that people have been in life situations where they have not been in environments/networks that have been dialogically responsive.

¹¹ The seven principles are: 1. Rapid approach 2. Social network perspective 3. Flexibility and mobility 4. Professional responsibility. 5. Psychological continuity 6. Tolerance for uncertainty 7. Dialogism

Every encounter between people offers a new opportunity to open a dialogical space in the moment. On one condition: the other must be accepted both for then and for now, without reservation, for who he/she is, even if one cannot accept certain actions or views from the past. (Seikkula, Arnkil, 2014, p. 127)

Tom Andersen

For many years, psychiatrist Tom Andersen (1936-2007) was a driving force in the development of family therapy at the University of Tromsø in Northern Norway. He is particularly known for describing the idea of reflective processes and reflective teams. The idea of reflective processes was embedded in the idea of allowing all parties in a treatment situation to listen to each other and be allowed to speak. Reflections from the professional team take place in the same space as the family and network. The reflective team is typically placed in its own circle, next to the circle of family, network and other professionals. The following is based on the book "*The Reflecting Team – Dialogues and dialogues About the Dialogues* " by Tom Andersen from 2003. ¹²

The purpose of dialogues is to create a reflective space where you can hear yourself and others.

The rationale for this is that it is in the reflective space that people find out what is important to say to create meaning and thus become themselves.

The book unfolds how reflective processes play a role in therapeutic situations. Tom Andersen describes how he is inspired by some basic concepts in his therapy: such as 'differences that make a difference', 'distinctions', 'multiverse' and 'inner/outer dialogues'. These concepts all play a role in the conception of reflective processes that is

¹² The book was first published in 1994. It has been republished several times since then with additions by Tom Andersen.

presented. Reflections express a difference because they are uttered from a different position than the listener, reflections select/distinguish which elements to reflect on and which words to express this, reflections from multiple positions express a multiverse of meanings and reflections alternate between outer and inner voices.

Right now, my understanding is that a person will be in constant motion and actively and incessantly in dialogue partly with themselves through inner voices and partly with others through outer voices, and that the person is thus constantly in a process of creating and recreating meanings as well as themselves. (Andersen, 2003, p. 160)

Harlene Anderson

Drawing on explicitly postmodern thought, psychologist Harlene Anderson (1942-) is one of the key figures in the development of social constructivism in relation to the treatment of psychological crises.¹³ She is best known for developing collaborative practices within psychiatric systems with patients without the use of diagnoses - in a way where patients have a high degree of control over their treatment. Harlene is one of the founders of the Houston Galveston Institute in Texas, which for many years has been a focal point for the development of theory and practice in collaborative approaches to therapy. The following is based on the book. "*Conversation, Language, and Possibilities - a postmodern approach to therapy*" by Harlene Anderson from 1997.

The purpose of dialogues is to use language to create meaning.

¹³ Together with Kenneth Gergen and Sheila McNamee, among others.

The rationale is that language and meaning are created in a shared intersubjectivity. Meaning making is a crucial element in figuring out what to do.

In the book, Harlene takes on the task of exploring how postmodern theory can relate to collaborative practice in therapy and psychology. This movement is undertaken as a rejection of a modern form of therapy in which psychological disorders, like physical ailments, can be explained in straightforward causal terms. In the modern worldview, the idea that a disorder has a certain unambiguous cause thrives.

According to the postmodern approach, psychological disorders do not have a single true cause. It does away with a causal understanding altogether. It rejects the autonomous self, the idea that words correspond to things in the real world unambiguously and the belief in essential fundamental truths. Among other things, this challenges the role of the professional as an expert. Harlene's approach is that the therapist, instead of being an expert, is a dialogue partner.

In conversations, reality is constructed and reconstructed. Through stories and retellings, reality is created as language: "Language is generative, gives order and meaning to our lives and our world, and functions as a form of social participation" (Anderson, 1997, p. 3). Thus, the book unfolds how such narratives work in the therapeutic field within a postmodern theoretical framework.

Through conversation we form and reform our life experiences and events; we create our meanings and understandings; and we construct and reconstruct our realities and ourselves. Some conversations enhance possibility; others diminish it. When possibilities is enhanced, we have a sense of self-agency, a sense that we can take the necessary action to address what concerns or troubles us: our dilemmas, problems, pains, and frustrations, and to accomplish what we want: our ambitions, hopes intentions and actions. (Anderson, 1997, p. XVII)

John Shotter

Early in his academic career, the psychologist John Shotter (1937-2016) wrote the book, *"Images of Man in Psychological Research"* (1975). In it, he makes it clear that within the British context in which he works, there is a need for more adequate conceptions of man than those arising from a scientific view of man as a finite entity.

As a professor at the University of New Hampshire in England and as a visitor and supervisor in many specific therapeutic contexts, he developed methods over many years to study and understand the human being in motion - on the way to finding a path. Shotter's thinking is based on describing the human situation par excellence, as being in a flow of activity in constant unfolding

Shotter is one of the main figures in social constructivism, and at the same time, with his view of the body's significance, he also attaches importance to what lies outside of language. For him, this means that the body is part of the social practices that affect us - and that give us clues about how to orientate ourselves in the world. The following points are a continuation of a book from Shotter's late period: "Bevægelige verdener – prospective begreber til situerede sociale undersøgelser (Danish title) *Moving Worlds - Prospective Concepts for Situated Social Inquiry*" (my translation) from 2015.¹⁴

The purpose of dialogues is to create clarity and orientation in relation to the situation you are in and the opportunities for joint action that present themselves.

The rationale for this is that intersubjectivity can provide clarity and awareness in terms of 'how to move on'.

¹⁴ This book exists only in a Danish version.

The idea of intersubjectivity as a condition for subjectivity is radically conceived by John Shotter. Through the presence of the other, you may find your way forward in life. Therefore, the emphasis in his way of thinking is on describing how to be attentive to the shared being, which is expressed through the key concepts of 'joint action', 'getting it' or 'joint thinking'. The point is to explore how the encounter between people takes place in practice and how attention to the other's expression can create the possibility for joint action. This view of the relational as fundamental also rests on the notion that it describes the way we find our way in life.

Thus, our real need in many of the confused situations we are confronted with is not a need for explanations, but a need to gain an articulated awareness of 'how we are positioned' in the situation in our current environment and what options there are for us to take our next steps. In other words, it is not about solving problems, but about gaining orientation. (Shotter, 2015, p. 19)

Daniel Stern

As an American psychiatrist, Daniel Stern (1934-2012) became famous when he published the book "*The Interpersonal World of the Infant*" in 1985, because he challenged the theory of the passive infant who is primarily moulded/filled up by the mother. Stern uses video recordings and other experiments to show that the child is very active in the relationship. According to Stern, the reciprocal nature of relationship building has consequences for how we understand human development, for the methods we can use to investigate this, and it has therapeutic consequences.

As a professor at the University of Geneva in Switzerland, he published the book "*The Present Moment - in psychotherapy and everyday life*" in 2004. In it, he describes the architecture of the present moment and

how the present moment has the potential to reveal the truths of the psyche, the social state of the self and the experience of being a self, which for Stern is a precondition for therapeutic growth and change. The following is based on the book *"The present Moment - in psychotherapy and everyday life"*.

The purpose of dialogues is to carry the shared experience of 'The present moment' into a meaning in the therapeutic situation.

The rationale is that 'The present moment' is the transformative moment that can create growth and change for the self.

In other words, it is to Stern's credit in the current development and research in the understanding of therapy - where he builds on neurophysiological studies - that he identifies the idea of the present moment as the central theoretical and therapeutic focal point. He describes the human experience of 'the present moment' as consisting of discrete moments of approximately 10 seconds duration. These moments are intersubjective in nature and thus not only contain intentional elements but are dependent on the other and the other's part in these moments. The point for Stern is that the potential for change in the therapeutic situation lies in these moments rather than in how these moments are put into language. The idea is, among other things, that there is an emotional attunement in relation to others that is more important than whatever linguistic expression a given experience may find. He writes about protecting "The present Moment" from the past and the future.

The central idea about moments of change is this: During these moments a "real experience" emerges, somewhat unexpectedly. This experience happens between two (or more) people. It is about their relationship. It occurs in a very short period of time that is experienced as now. That now is a present moment with duration in which a micro-drama, an emotional story, about their relationship unfolds. This jointly lived experience is mentally

shared, in the sense that each person intuitively partakes in the experience of the other. (Stern, 2004, p. 22)

Mikhail Bakhtin

As shown above, the notion of the role of dialogue in the Open Dialogue approach draws primarily on social constructivist thought when it comes to a theoretical basis for the significance of languaging in open dialogues. At the same time, however, the perception of dialogue as a crucial constitutive feature of the human condition rests on the importance that literary theorist and philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin (1895-1975) attached to the concept of dialogism. His basic idea is that dialogues are open and that they open up.

Jaakko Seikkula, in particular, often refers to Bakhtin in relation to his understanding of the role of dialogue (Seikkula 2008 and 2014). Bakhtin's interpretation of the dialogues in the novels of Fyodor Dostoevsky (1821-1888) inspires practitioners and theorists in this field. Bakhtin's analysis of these dialogues, which he presents in his 1984 book *"Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics"*, provides an understanding of dialogue that is central to the theoretical landscape. In an article entitled *"Authoring the hero"* in the book *"Mikhail Bakhtin - creation of prosaics"* from 1990, researchers Gary Saul Morson and Caryl Emerson clarify the following characteristics of Bakhtin's understanding of Dostoevsky's dialogues: that they never end (unfinalisable), that truth is dialogic, that they contain a surplus, that they unfold creatively and unpredictably and are controlled by events as opposed to plots. But also, for Tom Andersen, Harlene Andersen and John Shotter, Bakhtin is a crucial reference point in relation to the open character of dialogues.

Since Bakhtin is thus a crucial background figure within the part of the theory formation and research on the role of dialogue that this thesis relates to, in the following I will introduce key elements in a broader description of Bakhtin's thinking - with the specific aim of explaining the

overall significance of dialogism for working with dialogues in Open Dialogue and other dialogic practices.¹⁵ As with the other positions, I will return to Bakhtin in the final chapter of the thesis in a more discursive form.

Bakhtin's background

Bakhtin lived and wrote at a time when the oppressive regime in Russia - during the revolution, World War II and later the Soviet Union's regime - did not like his theories, which meant that he had to live many years in exile (e.g. in Kazakhstan).¹⁶ This, combined with the fact that there was little awareness in Western academic circles of the oppressed Russian intellectuals in those years, meant that Bakhtin first became known in Western Europe in the 1960s, when his work on Rabelais' novels was translated into English with the title "*Rabelais and His World: carnevale and grotesque*". In the 1980s, Bakhtin's work on Dostoevsky's novels was translated with the title "*Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics: polyphony*". It is here that he develops his very famous thoughts on the polyphonic orchestration of voices in the novel.

Overall, it can be said that the concept of dialogism is a kind of umbrella term for Bakhtin, which ultimately embodies an understanding that human utterances are created in a dialogical space where the meaning of other voices resonates and basically turns the subject's becoming itself into a dialogical relationship. I will come back to this. In order to pinpoint what Bakhtin is trying to express with the concept of dialogism, I will present three of his key concepts: polyphony, heteroglossia and carnivalesque.

¹⁵ I have not been able to find a text that explains in a straightforward and general way why Bakhtin is a key figure for the field in relation to the perception of the nature of dialogues.

¹⁶ The following interpretation is based on the book "Dialogism" by Michael Holquist 2002.

Polyphony

Polyphony is a term that borrows its meaning from the world of music. Here it means music where different melody lines are played simultaneously without (as we are used to) one authoritative melodic voice to which the others harmonise. The point is that the parallel melodies together create a common expression that expresses the priority of neither one voice nor the other.

Bakhtin applies this polyphonic principle in his analyses of Dostoevsky's short stories. In these short stories, Bakhtin finds that the characters' voices are expressions of autonomous and independent voices that are not unified in relation to an overall authoritative perspective:

A plurality of independent and unmerged voices and consciousnesses, a genuine polyphony of fully valid voices is in fact the chief characteristics of Dostoevsky's novels. What unfolds in his works is not a multitude of characters and fates in a single objective world, illuminated by a single authorial consciousness; rather a plurality of consciousnesses, with equal rights and each with its own world, combined but are not merged in the unity of the event. Dostoevsky's major heroes are, by the very nature of his creative design not only objects of authorial discourse but also subjects of their own directly signifying discourse. (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 6)

Bakhtin understands the concept of polyphonic voices that do not coalesce under the authority of a heroic voice as opposed to monological constructed dialogues. He argues that Dostoevsky breaks with a monological narrative in that the voices/characters are not controlled from a unified place and express the narrative voice's unifying view of the world. In a polyphonic work, each voice has its own unique and separate consciousness and expresses its particular

approach to the world from its unique place. As Bakhtin puts it, when the world is viewed from a single authoritative consciousness, dialogues become monological, whereas the separate independent voices in a polyphony are an expression of dialogism.

For now, we can note that the voices that express themselves as independent, separate voices express themselves in relation to what or whom they express themselves in relation to. The dialogical principle is - as we will come back to - in connection with the perception of polyphony, deeply subjective and at the same time precisely formulated in resonance with the other voices resonating in the dialogical space.

Heteroglossary

As we have just seen, the concept of polyphony is developed in relation to analyses of specific short stories - it is thus linked to a stylistic genre analysis for Bakhtin. For Bakhtin, the concept of heteroglossia relates more to general concrete language use. Bakhtin develops the idea of plurality in the polyphonic sense in relation to the ordinary language spoken between people.

Heteroglossia is related to Bakhtin's concept of polyglossia, which he uses to emphasise that all people speak several languages in some way. This applies in relation to specific national languages - that is, speaking several separate languages. He points out that the idea of national languages is built on the myth of unique special isolated languages with special linguistic rules and unique grammars, which is a relatively recent European invention, where national literature has been invented/written since the 19th century.

According to Bakhtin, polyglossia breaks with the myth of isolated, particularly homogeneous national languages. He wants to point out that the separation of languages cannot be maintained, as other foreign languages always speak into the national language. Every

language has a dialogue with other foreign languages. We cannot use languages in isolated separate entities.

Languages, like polyphonic voices, are always in a tense relationship with other languages. This phenomenon is particularly evident in countries where people are multilingual and where national geography does not define the language spoken in the country. Bakhtin himself grew up in areas, such as Vilnius in Lithuania, where he spoke Russian, German and Polish. The point is that the different languages are in a dialogical relationship with each other.

While polyglossia refers to the spoken language, the term heteroglossia refers to the inner language. Heteroglossia describes how language is also dialogical in relation to inner language. This means that the inner voices are also influenced by the context in which you speak. For example, our use of language is deeply influenced by the group we are speaking with. If you're in a public office, for example, your inner voices are shaped by this context. Thus, the language of the context influences the way the inner voices are expressed. Heteroglossia is linked to dialogism, so that all voices are expressed in relation to polyphony.

Carnival

We have seen that the idea of polyphony stems from the possibilities of the short story, and that the idea of heteroglossia is about the concrete external and internal use of language. The concept of carnivalesque inspires Bakhtin to further develop his understanding of dialogism to include the human physical community.

Carnival is something we primarily know about from medieval celebrations with parades and processions, where the usual societal codes and hierarchies are turned upside down and rules are temporarily suspended in colourful, popular, unbridled festivities. The

fool can play king, religious role models can be ridiculed, the poor can be rich, the ungifted can rule over the gifted, etc.

Bakhtin is concerned with existing truths and the normal order being challenged in the form of carnival. Laughter temporarily undermines the seriousness of the ordinary order. The point is that the ordinary form of society is contrasted by other possibilities for social order. In this way, the concept of carnival also relates to the dialogical principle, in that the existing order could be different, and that the existing order is in a dialogical relationship with other orders. The other orders play a part in the current order, so to speak. Dialogism in relation to the carnivalesque principle indicates that for Bakhtin, dialogism also concerns the social relations of people.¹⁷

In summary, we can say that Bakhtin develops the concept of dialogism through the sub-concepts of polyphony, heteroglossia and carnivalesque. These concepts, through literary genre analysis, analysis of ordinary language use and studies of sociality, together provide a picture of dialogism as a way in which people talk together as separate independent consciousnesses with awareness of the other and the specific other. Dialogism thus indicates a **way of being**, as a way of using language. We see that the subject exists only in its dialogical relationship with the other and the specific other, always considering the context and the other in the unique utterances of inner and outer voices. In this sense, the subject is to be understood as 'answerability' - and the place where dialogues opens and open.

This concludes this section, which has placed the concept of dialogue in a historical, conceptual and current research context. We have seen in Ivana Marková that dialogue has been re-actualised considering neuroscience's discovery of consciousness as a relational phenomenon. This view of Ego-Alter-Object as an unbreakable unity has both therapeutic and research implications. In Jaakko Seikkula,

¹⁷ Bakhtin further argues that even though the tradition of the medieval carnival was suppressed in the Renaissance by the existing order, the spirit of the carnival survives through the short story as a literary genre. Through satire, for example, the short story can both favor the existing order but also challenge it.

Tom Andersen, Harlene Anderson, John Shotter, Daniel Stern and Mikhail Bakhtin - all of whom share a view of dialogue as an interactional concept - we have seen different emphases on the purpose and rationale of dialogue. This landscape forms the theoretical basis for this thesis.

Key concepts - an optic, a field that describes human's dislocated reality

Throughout the thesis, it becomes increasingly clear that the question of dialogical being and dialogical ways of being plays a role in human situations where there is a certain vulnerability and uncertainty, and where a need for togetherness and potential for orientation in life is not necessarily self-evident. Dialogues are situations where we can simultaneously feel safe and at home, but at the same time it can be exactly where we feel that we are sufficiently 'dislocated' from our usual being, so that reality is experienced as new and different.

In other words, in dialogical situations we often encounter the unpredictability and sometimes difficult or unbearable weight of life. At the same time, dialogues can also contain the experience of relief, lightness and shared sustainment. The dialogical space is the place of vulnerability and fragility as well as the place of edification and blessing.¹⁸

In these dialogical situations, which apply both in ordinary everyday situations and in life's crisis-like situations, there are special concepts that define the corners and dimensions of the field we are talking about. There are special circumstances and a special lens through which this part of life can be viewed. In my view, this applies to all people - both in crisis situations and in other phases of life's trials. In

¹⁸ Of course, there are also dialogues that take place in the terrain of certainty and predictability. Firstly, it is not these dialogues that are of primary interest in this thesis, and secondly, there is often no reason to engage in dialogue if everything is clear in advance.

the following, I will briefly outline the contours of this terrain of vulnerability and life potential - by putting some words to the key concepts of the terrain. With these chosen key concepts, I build on the existing Open Dialogue literature and deviate from it. When it comes to the central meaning of 'openness', I am in line with the theorisation of the field but highlight some different aspects and qualities of openness than the existing literature. In my perspective, the concepts of 'being', 'metaphysics' and 'nothingness' become visible.

These aspects emerge, among other things, because I use the phenomenological approach to the material - whereas traditional literature is typically based on the strict (social) constructivist approach.

As we have seen above, the focal point of dialogic ways of being is the **openness** associated with **dialogue**. By definition, openness signals a place that is indeterminate. The concept of **being** embodies this being able to be in the opened indeterminate situation.

Being able to be in openness also includes **metaphysics in the** sense that something happens to the dialogue partners that each of them cannot control. The concept of metaphysics here is based on an understanding of the human being as subjected to a simultaneity of upholding, contingency and nothingness/annihilation.

In this sense, metaphysics is associated with the concept of **nothingness**, which first and foremost signals that metaphysics does not appear as a positively filled otherness. The presence of the other in our lives does not come with essential messages and clarity, which at first may seem disturbing, but at the same time is what opens the human being and gives human spirituality a chance.

The concepts: dialogue, openness, being, metaphysics and nothingness outline the realm of 'being in existence' that this thesis deals with.

Limitations of the thesis

This study is based on the Skovvænget residence and the dialogical space of the dialogue processes. The material is based on interactions and conversations with these particular residents, employees and managers at this place. Meetings and conversations have taken place with this researcher, who has personal limitations and prerequisites.

The importance of the context for the dialogues that form the data basis for the analysis is only slightly touched upon - which means that the analysis of the dialogue space is limited to what happens in direct contact between people. The study does not touch on the structural and societal conditions that also influence the conditions for dialogue. Sociological or other structural views on the conditions that form the context for the human encounter are not included.

Similarly, the dialogues are predominantly based on conversations between two or three participants, which is why the issue of networks and the participation of multiple individuals in the conversations' impact on the dialogues is not directly addressed.

Another limitation lies in the selection of philosophical positions that are included in the philosophical elucidation of the importance of ways of being in dialogical situations. Other philosophical, sociological, literary or psychological positions could have been included, whereby other dimensions of dialogical being would certainly emerge. Thus, the four dimensions that are central to this thesis are a limited unfolding of dimensions of being.

This means that the scope of this study's results is in principle tied to these dialogues in this place with these people. Whether the points are transferable to other dialogues in other contexts will depend on a dialogue with other dialogue partners and possibly further research.

At the same time, it is argued that the more general efforts to develop the Open Dialogue approach in relation to the meaning of 'openness' considering the dimensions of being can also be valid in other contexts.

Chapter 1: ACTION RESEARCH AND THE BEGINNING OF THE JOURNEY INTO THE FIELD

Existing action research - different traditions

Today, action research is the term for a broad field of research that, since its origins in the USA in the 1940s and 1950s, has many branches internationally and in Scandinavia. The historical development - which also includes a pragmatic direction inspired by John Dewey (1859-1952) and an anthropological variant developed by William Foote Whyte (1914-2000) - has led to action research being practised through a number of different methods with different emphasis on content (Frimann, 2012). However, common to the current versions of the approach is that they share the founder of action research, Kurt Lewin's (1890-1947) starting point in a rejection of a positivist view of knowledge production, where the researcher perceives himself as an independent part of the research process.

Social psychologist Kurt Lewin has provided the traditional definition of action research, which reads: "An approach to research based on a collective problem-solving strategy between researchers and participants to solve a problem and generate new knowledge" (Frimann, 2012). The emphasis is on research being a collaborative process where the researcher is an active part of the research process - researching with the participants - rather than adhering to a positivist ideal of taking a neutral independent observing and descriptive role.

Lewin worked on the basis that humans cannot be understood as free-floating autonomous individuals. Lewin had a sociological starting point and believed that people should be understood as part of a social field

and that the individual's embedded situation in organisations and other social structures is crucial to understanding and changing local practices. This starting point obviously has an impact on how the role of the researcher is perceived differently than in the natural sciences, where knowledge ontologically lies positively out there ready to be appropriated by the neutral researcher via an objectifying method. Action research is rooted in a view of the researcher as deeply connected to the practices, structures and co-researchers with whom they collaborate. This element in the origins of action research is also about transcending a divide between academic knowledge and practice knowledge. By taking the researcher's and co-researchers' lived experiences, descriptions and dialogues about these experiences as the research project progresses, it is hoped to get close to a knowledge production that is primarily relevant to practice and secondarily to the academic audience.

Another common characteristic of action research, articulated in a recent handbook on action research, is that "action research links action and reflection, theory and practice, together with the goal of finding practical solutions to people's pressing problems and more generally to help individuals and communities flourish" (Reason, 2021).

Action research is thus directed towards action - but based on a concept of action that cannot be separated from reflection - just as theory does not exist independently of practice. This means that reflection takes place as a reflection on one's own participation in the shared practice, and that theory must be connected to the practice being researched. Another common element of the different traditions of action research, which is explicit in the above definitions, is the fundamental desire to change and solve problems, which I will come back to.

According to Søren Frimann, the goal of action research can be described through the following 6 characteristics:¹⁹ 1. Investigation cannot be separated from action. Theory and practice are integrated. 2. Knowledge is created together. Researcher and participants have one voice each. 3. Creating change, developing theory and knowledge about the change at the same time. 4. Reflection on and participation in change-orientated actions in a field of practice. 5. Validity is assessed by whether knowledge and actions solve the participants' problems and lead to increased control over their own situation. 6. To empower, liberate and democratise

Even with different emphases in the traditions that develop over time - sociologically or anthropologically oriented - the desire to change in communities is at the centre, along with the idea that change leads to a greater degree of democratisation and emancipation. In other words, action research is born with a social ambition, with an attention to the structural conditions of the individual and an ideal of emancipation.

At this overall level, this action research project subscribes to the broader tradition that sees action research as part of a democratic process concerned with creating useful practice-based knowledge in a change perspective, and where the participation of different actors with different competences is a defining element (Reason, 2021, p. 19).²⁰

Within the Scandinavian tradition of action research in the 1970s, a distinction emerges in action research between two basic directions, namely *the critical (utopian)* and *the dialogical* direction (Duus, 2019). While the critical utopian direction draws on critical theory as an extension of the Frankfurt School's critique of capitalism and contains

¹⁹ According to a presentation at the PhD course at AAU on 20 November 2018 or see a similar approach to action research in Søren Frimann 2019, "Action research in the perspective of becoming: The significance of reflexive dialogue": (1) Constructing a problem/wish for change; (2) Seeking knowledge about the problem/wish for; (3) Planning action; (4) Taking the first action; (5) Evaluating the action; (6) Adjusting the plan and (7) Taking new actions.

²⁰ See also Alrø & Hansen (2017). "*Its Messy and magic*" page 3. Dialogical action research - In a practice-oriented perspective.

a desire for a radically different society, the dialogical direction instead draws on an idea (often as an extension of Habermas' thoughts on a *domination-free conversation*) that supporting dialogical and communicative processes where all voices are heard can create a better working life (Frimann, 2012). Thus, the dialogical direction does not have an ideal of redemption or radical change, but rather an idea of improvement - in the democratic sense of allowing more voices to be heard.

My research project is linked to the dialogical direction in that the overall action research approach is about allowing all voices in and around the organisation to be heard in the development of practice on site.

The standpoint of this research project in relation to the application of the dialogical direction of action research and the belief that it constitutes a contribution to the democratic development of society is a more pragmatic interpretation of such potential for improvement. Any improvement of working life that can be attributed to an effect of this action research project can only be assessed by the parties involved in relation to their subjective perception of improvement - in relation to an idea of their local and context-dependent appropriateness - rather than a general/universal idea of 'working life' or 'societal' improvement or a greater degree of mastery-free communication.²¹ That the local context-dependent idea of improvement may have a more general point is another matter entirely, to be decided in dialogue with other contexts.

²¹ In this respect, I follow Richard Rorty's pragmatic concept of truth in his discussion with Jürgen Habermas. In short, Rorty's concept of truth is that the justification for any improvement is about practical expediency rather than universal validity. For an extended discussion between Jürgen Habermas and Richard Rorty - see "*Debating the state of Philosophy*", Habermas, Rorty and Kolakowski (ed. Niznik & Sanders) 1996.

Inadequacies in existing action research

In the unfolding of this research project, a particular paradox became visible. Since my central research question is how openness is a part of the dialogues I investigate together with the dialogue partners, I became increasingly aware of the purpose of action research, which aims to solve problems. It became increasingly difficult to reconcile the project with the fact that the problem must be described and solved - either at the start of the project or during the process.

As we have seen above, across the traditions of action research, there is a focus on solving problems - to create a change for the better in society. In my project, however, there is - so to speak - not a problem to solve. Rather, the project's epistemological interest is about becoming part of the field in which the openness of the dialogues will show itself. This means that the task of formulating the problem, let alone solving the problem concretely, turns out to be incongruent with the nature of the project. In other words, from a methodological point of view, it became a question in the organisation of the project whether it is possible to imagine a perspective on action research where the task is not to formulate the problem or solve it.

As we have seen in the introduction, the project is organised as an action research project in the sense that the researcher participates in the research process, shares the analyses with the organisation and continues the process based on feedback from the organisation in an interaction between practice and theory. This means that from a scientific theoretical point of view in relation to how knowledge is created and the intimate link between action, reflection, theory and practice is crucial to the project's research process, the project stands on the solid ground of action research.

But in relation to action research's idea of formulating and solving a problem, my question to the tradition was whether it is possible to imagine a form of action research that will not formulate or solve problems. Is it possible to imagine action research that is radically

ignorant in relation to a problem horizon? Is it possible to be on the road without knowing what to solve, change or improve?

In my exploration of the tradition of action research, I was inspired to discuss some openings of the field formulated by one of the current leading researchers in the field, Olav Eikeland (1955-2023).

New directions in action research - showing things, self-reflection and examination of the self

In the following, I will address two elements from Olav Eikekland's chapter 8 entitled, "*The horizons of action research - an attempt to look beyond the tip of your own nose*" from the 1995 book, *Research in Action/Forskning og Handling*. These are the elements of 'showing things' and 'self-reflection'. I will hold these ideas up against the action research approach in my research project. Next, I will discuss these concepts in the light of the thesis' focus on the relation of dialogues to the concept of openness and finally, I will include Olav Eikeland's article, "*Phrônêsis, Aristotle and Action Research*" from 2006 in a critical discussion in the light of the concept of Openness.

Olav Eikeland's article on the historical horizons of action research has two main sections. In the first section, he describes developments in philosophical thinking, empirical social research, current action research and organisational and management philosophy. In the second section, he describes three traditions of education in the history of ideas that have characterised the period from antiquity to the present day. These are the theoretical, the practical and the dialogical traditions of education.

The idea of pointing out development features in the 4 tracks of thinking and theory formation is to "show how the methodical - or if you like, the dialogical - thinking through and making visible one's own practice and experience is gaining an increasingly central place" (Eikeland, 1995, p. 233). The idea of linking the second section's

review of educational traditions to these developments is to point out that there is a partially overlooked dialogical educational tradition that is primarily expressed in Plato and Aristotle but is also found in Cicero and Seneca. And it is Olav Eikeland's opinion that - considering the need for the influence of educational traditions - in recent years there has been an increasing need to further develop dialogical action research.

In the dialogical education tradition, the point is also that it has an epistemological focus, in such a way that there is no distinction between theoretical insight and personal experience formation. In this respect, the formation process and the research process are equated. Unlike the other two educational traditions (the theoretical and the practical), which both contain a notion of insight as a kind of imitation of positive images, personal experience formation in the dialogical educational tradition is concerned with the fact that the intimate interaction with an issue and a dialogical reflection on this results in both practical experience and knowledge at the same time - and not separately (Eikeland, 1995, p. 247).

In continuation of the above, Olav Eikeland's point is that the dialogical education tradition and dialogically oriented action research - which he argues that there is currently more and more room for - point to an 'immanent critique' of their own practice. This is also what he describes as an increased focus on accounting for one's own methodology within action research. This means both that the research process itself is dialogical and that it is part of the research task to explicitly account for and make visible this research process (Eikeland, 1995, p. 233). But this of course raises the question, how do you do that? It is in this context that Eikeland uses Wittgenstein's expression about 'showing things' (Eikeland, 1995, p. 234). Eikeland says that the art of action research is to show things that show themselves (Eikeland, 1995, p. 234). This means that the way the research is presented must be open about the process, actions and changes that have occurred along the way. These movements must be shown, so to speak. Eikeland imagines that the dialectical process, which is also the process of research, must be part of the presentation of the research. This is

where the concept of self-reflection takes on an interesting meaning. Self-reflection can be said to be a conscious critical examination of the lived experiences that the researcher and the parties involved in the project go through.

In my thesis, an autoethnographic element is part of the introductory parts of the thesis in order to enter the field so that the thread of self-reflection can be pursued in the thesis. In this section, which also serves as a description of finding one's role as a researcher in the organisation, the aim is precisely to 'show those experiences' in the form of self-reflection. As experiences that are presented openly so that the reader can follow the process. The description of the experiences also includes other people's perspectives on the same process. I have interviewed colleagues about the process of getting into the role of researcher.

In this sense, Olav Eikeland opens self-reflection as a way of doing action research without formulating or solving problems.

Phrónêsis - investigating the self as anàmnêse

In the text "*Phrónêsis; Aristotle and Action Research*" by Olav Eikeland from 2006, he is on a similar errand to his thoughts in the previously mentioned text "*Aksjonsforskningens horisonter - et forsøk på å se lenger enn til sin egen nesetipp/ The horizons of action research - an attempt to see beyond the tip of one's own nose*", from 1995, regarding the intimate and inseparable connection between gaining knowledge and personal experience in dialogical action research. Eikeland argues that it is precisely in intimate contact with the case that, in an epistemological sense, one both gains insight and gains experience. This simultaneity of insight and experience is a connection Olav Eikeland elaborates on in the text about the Aristotelian concept of Phrónêsis. In the text, he explains how Aristotle does not simply associate the phrónêsis with a practical, active endeavour. He argues thoroughly that for Aristotle there is no separation between the practical performance of research and the insight associated with the

personal experience of carrying out this activity in a research context (Eikeland, 2006, p. 18).

For Eikeland, it is important to carefully account for the intimate connection between wisdom and personal experience in the Aristotelian concept of *Phrônêsis*, because he will argue that the dialogical education tradition and dialogical action research bear witness to this intimate connection. In this way, he will contrast dialogical action research with theoretical and practical action research. His claim is that theoretical and practical action research is based on a dichotomy where the ideal of research is to imitate an already existing positivity (Eikeland, 1995, p. 247).

I think however, that Aristotle's project was to rationalise the everyday situation he was confronted with, where rhetoric was dominant, with support from the analytical and epistemic efforts of philosophy, and his discussion of *phronesis* was part of that. (Eikeland, 2006, p. 18)

He would reserve dialogical action research to stand for an approach where the ideal is rather *anamnêsis* or remembrance in Plato's sense and "cognition of cause and self, go together" (Eikeland, 1995, p. 247). He has an interesting analysis of the practical/rhetorical education tradition turning into its opposite as formalism and nationalism in the same way that Adorno & Horkheimer state that the Enlightenment turns into its opposite, namely barbarism in the 20th century (Eikeland, 1995, p. 244).

The point here is that an action research approach that emphasises cognition as *anamnêsis*, which thus links the interest in cognition to the case together with an investigation of the self and does not operate with imitation as an ideal, can be read as a different way of seeing a development path for action research than the path of problem solving. By linking *phrônêsis* to the investigation of the formation process of the

self, one can avoid letting the research process be controlled by the formulation of the problem. Positively formulated, I read both the idea of 'showing things', the concept of 'self-reflection' and 'investigation of the self' as openings within the action research tradition of being open in the research process. A development of action research that is hinted at within the tradition's own ranks.

Developing a phenomenological action research approach

Now, however, I want to take the question of being open in a research process - without an ambition to formulate a problem and solve it - seriously and go a step further. I am not yet completely satisfied in terms of finding a research approach that is in line with my project's desire to investigate openness in an open way.

In the following, I will turn to the phenomenological tradition, where there is also inspiration to be found in relation to a clarification and supplement to traditional action research. In my work of analysing my concrete observations and experiences in the field and conducting analyses of the specific dialogue processes, I became aware of the method of analysis that the phenomenologist Max van Manen (1942-) has developed over many years.

In the following, in continuation of the above reflections on new paths within the ranks of action research itself, where an emphasis on the concepts of 'showing things', 'self-reflection' and 'investigation of the self' emerged more clearly than in usual presentations of the action research mode, I will further connect to parts of Max van Manen's way of conducting phenomenological research. Thus, I will link methodological features relating to concrete analyses of experiences and the formulation of research texts to the more general approach to the process of action research in an attempt to get even closer to the idea of being open in the research process itself - to focus on how openness shows itself in the dialogues I investigate.

From meaning to method - writing and reading what matters

In his 1997 article "*From Meaning to Method*", Max van Manen describes his phenomenological approach to working with the linguistic formulations inherent in the texts that for him form the basis of research in the humanities.

Van Manen starts from a distinction between a thematic interest in texts versus focusing on what he calls the expressive dimensions of a text. He points out that there is a major shift from dwelling on 'What does the text speak about' to 'How does the text speak' (Manen, M, 1997, p. 345). When you are concerned with the expressive aspects of a text - what Van Manen calls the Mantic meanings - you can recognise how the text might affect the reader. Van Manen describes it as a phenomenological endeavour to detect the 'reverberation' of the text. It is this reverberation - which Max van Manen develops in continuation of Gaston Bachelard (1884-1962), Martin Heidegger (1889-1976), Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908-1961) and Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1951) - that the researcher should focus on. For Manen, this happens as a rebellion against the dominant view that analysis is about producing thematic readings.

It is important to point out that for Max Van Manen, the phenomenological practice consists of writing and reading (analysing) based on lived experience. It is not the case that experiences, like positive data, exist in themselves independently of the person analysing them. The reason for being concerned with the Mantic pictorial expression of the text is that in the encounter with the text - the encounter consists of both writing the text and processing its impressions in an analysis - the crucial dimensions will emerge, which the researcher must dwell on and investigate further. The phenomena that emerge, emerges precisely in the encounter with the text. The phenomena do not exist in themselves independently of the person to whom they appear, and at the same time it is not the researcher who constructs them.

The above is, of course, in line with dominant ideas within the philosophical tradition we know as phenomenology, as it emerged in a showdown with modern subject-object thinking and the positivist version of it.

According to Max van Manen, one must be aware that the phenomenological work of investigating how the text creates an effect in the reader is not always a conscious cognitive work - he refers to phenomenological work as both discursive and nondiscursive (Manen, 1997, p. 345). This means that the impression the text may make can also be a bodily sensation - he even talks about the possibility of a 'non-discursive understanding' (Manen, 1997, p. 345). To access these impressions, the reader/researcher must make use of their intuitive abilities.

For Max van Manen, phenomenological research is also about 'seeing' dimensions of everyday experience that we usually overlook because we are not concerned with the intuitive emotional ways, we encounter the world/text.

Essential elements of a good phenomenological text

Max van Manen writes his article to create space for a phenomenological research practice that is concerned with the way texts make an impression on the reader. For him, this is a way of being a researcher that involves a different way of finding the important findings. The important findings represent an access to crucial insights. But it is not a method that can be described as a recipe:

So the expectations is not to arrive at a recipe, a foolproof set of techniques and know-hows that are guaranteed to produce repeatable scientific results; rather, we hope to become

sensitive to some of the principles that may guide our inquiry.
(Manen, 1997, p. 346)

This also implies that Max van Manen is concerned with practice before method. It is not the method that can tell the researcher how to approach practice. Practice must first make an impression and create meaning, so to speak, so that this meaning can then be analysed. The method cannot guarantee correct access to an undisputed truth. Practice and the work of writing and reading this practice informs the methodological approach (Manen, 1997, p. 346).

So, you can't start with the method. However, in the article, Max van Manen describes 5 specific elements that can characterise a good phenomenological text. By consciously working with these elements in the production of the texts' expression of experience, the researcher can support the phenomenological dimensions to emerge.

In the following, these elements will be briefly presented.

The first element Max van Manen lists is that the text must be based on '*Lived Thoroughness*' (a lived experience). This means that the description of the phenomenon must be placed in a concrete life world - so that the reader can recognise the experience in principle (Manen, 1997, p. 355). The description must allow the reader to think of situations in her own life where the phenomenon also applies.

The second element is called '*Evocation*'. This dimension of a phenomenological text is about making the phenomenon visible and clear to the reader. Max van Manen emphasises that a clear and vivid way of appearing to the reader means that reflexive processes such as wonder, questions and a desire to understand what is being said in the text can occur in the reader (Manen, 1997, p. 354).

The third element is called '*Intensification*' and involves using language such as literary devices to poeticise particular expressions or give special emphasis to individual statements by repeating or

offering alliterations that create focus. The purpose of this literary device is to allow the many layers of dimensions and meanings of a phenomenon to become visible in the text. The multiple meanings of the phenomenon also allow the reader to explore the ambiguity of their own potential experiences with the phenomenon.

A fourth element that Max van Manen identifies as a crucial element in a phenomenological text is what he calls the '*Tone*' (tone - in the sense of aural expression) of the text. By clarifying the tone of the text, he means that the text should speak to us - that the reader can clearly hear the text speak. The tone can evoke a deeper experience of the phenomenon in the reader, which relates to a non-cognitive way in which the text makes an impression. The idea is that the reader can discover a way in which a phenomenon in an ordinary everyday experience of the same comes to one - by itself, so to speak - outside of our cognitive experience of it (Manen, 1997, p. 359).

The fifth and final element Max van Manen points to, he calls '*Epiphany*' (epiphanic power - a revelatory effect). He says that the tone of the text aims to reveal a transformative epiphanic experience to the reader that connects them to the meaning of life itself. Such an experience can be particularly powerful because it can touch the reader's fundamental experience of being - he calls such an epiphanic experience a 'phenomenological reverberation' (Manen, 1997, p. 364).

Such an epiphanic experience summarises very well the overall intention of the phenomenological approach for Max van Manen. The researcher must open the possibility for the reader to enter a different relationship with their own being. The reader can access a pre-discursive experience of being that is not usually available to the intellectual/academic endeavour.

A phenomenological look at action research

We have now seen how Max van Manen's phenomenological approach can complement my use of action research. I have followed Olav Eikeland's contribution to the development of action research and thus have gained a special focus on how to work with 'showing things', 'self-reflection' and this working with 'examination of the self' as a formative process.

In addition, Max van Manen emphasises that the researcher's own process is about connecting with how the text/experience creates an impression with a view to a changed experience of existence. We have seen that the encounter with a text - whether it is the researcher as a reader or the reader of the researcher's text - is about spotting something that cannot be seen without having a sharp focus on the non-discursive phenomenological saturation of the text.

We can therefore add to the broader view of action research, where the focus is not on formulating problems or solving them - what I would call 'research without a specific goal' - that the phenomenological position of research is also about creating openness to 'wonder' and 'encounter with the phenomenon'. For Max van Manen, the encounter with the phenomenon is at the centre of his focus. Openness in this sense is about being open to how the phenomenon shows itself in a kind of intuitive seeing. The purpose of doing phenomenological research is to be able to connect with phenomena that will show how everyday life contains previously unseen dimensions. It is the opening of the transformative dimension in relation to the experience of these experiences that Max van Manen is 'going for', so to speak.

However, this means that even with this addition to action research, I am still not satisfied in terms of finding an approach that meets the desire to be open in an investigation of how openness shows itself in dialogues. I believe that the concept of intentionality, which has been

central from the birth of phenomenology, is also present in Max van Manen's approach.²² This means that the emphasis in this kind of phenomenology is on the meaning that 'reverberation' produces. The effect of the text and the attention to the transformative process that what is revealed can bring about is what is important in this approach. But this is not really the task of my research project.

In other words, I follow Max van Manen's conscious work with the texts and follow the part of the approach that creates space for the fact that the important thing in working with the experiences/texts is that they create impressions. I also believe that his idea that the phenomenological encounter is about our way of being is a very important addition to the action research perspective. In terms of formulating an approach to research without a specific goal - being on the path of research without knowing where you are going - I am not satisfied. I am still concerned with exploring how the path of research - which I call "the how of phenomenology" - and the focus of research - which I call "the what of phenomenology" - both primarily serve openness. I am not concerned with being able to describe a given phenomenon that manifests itself in openness or with the resonance the phenomenon may give. I am concerned with being able to be open enough in my research approach to openly investigate openness. My emphasis is, so to speak, on the person experiencing the openness - and to a lesser extent on the phenomenon.

However, Professor of Applied Philosophy and philosopher of wonder Finn Thorbjørn Hansen has a well-developed perspective on Socratic-inspired phenomenological action research, which is also concerned with maintaining wonder throughout a research project in the sense of not arriving at solutions.²³ His approach emphasises the

²² This is of course an external criticism of Max van Manen - the concept of intentionality is an implicit premise of his approach.

²³ Thorbjørn-Hansen's position has been developed under inspiration from many philosophers and phenomenologists such as Søren Kierkegaard, Martin Buber, Jan Patocka, Jean Luc Marion - but also Max Van Manen's phenomenology has inspired Finn Thorbjørn Hansen.

fundamental mysteriousness of the phenomenon. For several years, Finn Thorbjørn Hansen has worked with so-called 'wonder workshops' as a model for working consciously with the different phases of wonder - also in relation to research work.

Thorbjørn Hansen, has an emphasis on being in wonder because:

In wonder, we experience it as being under the impression of something unfathomable and deeply mysterious, yet strangely recognisable. The moment of wonder is a delicate and fragile moment that is suddenly gone again when your reflective consciousness is directed towards it, but at the same time you are often left with the reverberations of having experienced something important, something wonderful that has spoken to you on a spiritual level. It is as if we were in touch or dialogue with something we have longed for. (Hansen, 2016, p. 108)

We can see that the emphasis in this approach is on how the mystery has spoken to you on a spiritual level and the reverberations of this. In the wonder workshop, which I have been trained in, it's about, among other things, resonating with how this appeal of the enigmatic (the mystery of existence) can possibly have a meaning. However, the approach makes the point that real wondering does not provide answers - the mystery is not to be solved through a knowledge-orientated approach, so to speak.

Thorbjørn Hansen thinks along the lines of the apophatic tradition, which insists on the importance of dimensions in life that cannot be stated, and already in his PhD thesis from 2002 he explains that his concept of wonder is based on a negative ontology. Thus, his approach is reminiscent of what I have described above as my ambition to be 'on the path of research without having a goal' - without believing that words can describe the phenomena we encounter. This also implies that research in this sense is not about finding answers.

In the article "*Writing your way towards the enigmatic via the four corners of wonder*" (Hansen, 2022) it is also clarified how the wonder-based research perspective in this version relates to a categorisation/periodisation of 3 different phases in the development history of phenomenology.

In this article, the phenomenology of Edmund Husserl is first linked to a cognitive process in relation to the intentional horizon of consciousness as a knowledge-seeking wonder. Next, wonder is described by Martin Heidegger as a wonder of "that-ness". A wonder about the very existence of language and the self. According to Thorbjørn Hansen, Heideggerian wonder is expressed through an existential form of reflection.²⁴ The third moment in the development of the phenomenological tradition in relation to wonder is represented by Jean-Luc Marion. For Marion, wonder is about giving something from the phenomenon. Thorbjørn Hansen calls it a 'wonder of giving'. Marion's expression 'the saturated phenomenon' refers to the fact that this third phase in the development of phenomenology is concerned with an excess of meaning that flows from the phenomenon when it is in itself.

Thorbjørn Hansen sees his own phenomenological position as linked to the third phase of phenomenology - as an apophatically inspired mystery-oriented pre-ontological approach to phenomenological investigation.

In other words, my desire for a research approach that does not want something specific - but is perhaps rather interested in the indefinite - is in a certain sense similar to Thorbjørn Hansen's approach insofar as it shares the view that the phenomenon cannot or should not be linguistically fathomed. However, I would like to point out that the

²⁴ In Chapter 3, I will return to this interpretation of Heidegger's phenomenological endeavour as an existential concern that is focused on the mystery of at-ness. Through a reading of *Being and Time*, I will argue that there is another interpretation of Heidegger's concern in relation to what the phenomenological analysis of the structure of *Dasein* is about.

emphasis in the research approaches is nevertheless different. Thorbjørn Hansen's approach is fundamentally directed towards and basically concerned with the phenomenon. The wonder is turned towards what meaning the phenomenon gives and what the wonder opens up. Thorbjørn Hansen talks about being in a kind of silent dialogue with the phenomenon - you experience a longing for the beautiful, true or good. In other words, the Thorbjørn Hansenian wonder-based phenomenological action research has an emphasis on the mysteries/phenomena/love that flows from the deep and generous phenomenon (Hansen, 2022, p. 74). We can already see from the title of the article "*Writing towards the mysterious via the four corners of wonder*" that the emphasis is on reaching out towards the mysterious - with an awareness that the phenomenon cannot be fathomed.

Method and phenomenon

My approach is not in that sense directed towards the phenomenon. Rather, my wonder is concerned with the openness in which the phenomenon might appear. In other words, my emphasis is not on the phenomena, but rather on shedding light on how wonder has to do with a way of being human. My emphasis in the phenomenological perspective is directed towards the open way in which humans exist. My approach is therefore related to Thorbjørn-Hansen's approach, but it has a different focus of interest.

The question of whether you can be radically open on the path of action research without being guided by a specific purpose is therefore still valid? In other words, is it possible to imagine a phenomenological action research approach with a different concept of intentionality? Can we imagine a phenomenological encounter where the emphasis is on the open itself, and not on what it opens up? Can I find a perspective for phenomenological action research where the emphasis is on how openness shows itself as the opening itself, and only secondarily orientates itself by what it opens up? Can

these considerations apply to both the research approach and the subject I am investigating?

What is interesting in this thesis is that openness and the dialogical concerns both the methodological level and the content level. I realise that there is - and must be - a distinction between the methodology and my analysis of the content. However, I am inspired by the openness that is the focal point of the dialogical practice I am investigating - and see how it can also affect the part of the methodological basis of action research that is about dialogue. This is why I ask the question of whether it is possible to be open in the study without deciding what the problem is.

At the same time, I want to follow the general movement in action research at the overall level - in the sense that I alternate between being investigative together with my co-investigators and subsequently presenting it to the organisation, which then provides a direction for further work. This also applies to an alternation between practice, theory and philosophy. The movement goes between sensory presence in practice and the inclusion of various forms of illuminating knowledge that is fed back into practice. And so on and so forth.

In relation to the movement in action research, this also means that in the following, I take my own observations as my starting point and include the autoethnographic dimension in the reflexive movement.

Arriving in the field - the first steps as an action researcher

This part of the thesis is about taking the first steps in the field as an action researcher in my organisation. At the same time as this start of my PhD project, I graduated as an Open Dialogue therapist, which was the end of a 3-year training programme. Thus, from January 2015 to December 2017, I was in training on the 3-year Open Dialogue

programme, which took place in London under the supervision of Professor Jaakko Seikkula.

From January 2016, I changed jobs and began the action research process by working at my current workplace, which is a public residential centre with 24-hour staffing for adults with various mental health challenges. The following experiences stem from my encounter with the new workplace. However, some of these experiences also became part of the practice and reflections that were part of the final part of the programme.

The purpose of this part of the thesis is to shed light on the first steps in action research. I will explore my initial experiences when I entered the field. These experiences in the organisation and the discovery of my own role in this process form the basis of the thesis. It is my way of putting practice before theory. I will let my experiences guide my theoretical/philosophical view.

I am employed at a residential centre for the mentally ill in order to write a PhD thesis. As part of my employment, I participate in concrete dialogical conversations and the daily organisational life at my workplace. I have my workplace at the centre of interest and from the beginning I have my daily life in the environment in a broad sense as a place of experience. These conversations and my further observations and interviews constitute my 'research data'. In this sense, I am consciously placed in a role as part of what I am researching. My training in the 3-year Open Dialogue programme gives me the formal access to participate in these dialogical conversations. And I bring some of my observations and meeting experiences to the programme - for example, in a supervision context.

A key element of the training course was to create reflection and awareness of how my experiences in the field as an open dialogue facilitator and researcher were perceived. A few reflections from my three-year programme are thus woven into this text to help me see what the crucial experiences in my first steps in the organisation were and how these were experienced. I want to clarify how, during the

research process, I realise that I as a researcher am part of the process I am investigating. In other words, I realise that I need to be more conscious of my role in the research process. This track in the thesis, which is about self-reflection, is something I want to hold on to and return to explicitly at the end of the thesis.

This should be seen as part of the action research credo of making explicit and examining the pre-understandings that characterise the researcher's entry into the process. It is important to try to bring these out as part of the scientific work, cf. Olav Eikeland's Aristotle-inspired concept of 'habitus validity' (Eikeland, 2006) as part of developing praxis knowledge through self-reflexivity. But how to conduct this study? How can I, from a theoretical and methodological point of view, examine my experiences and include the reflection on these? I have chosen the auto-ethnographic method for this.

The structure of this text is as follows. In the next section, I argue why I use autoethnography and present the method. I then give an overview of key events from my initial process as background for the study. Then I give some examples from the workplace in a more narrative prose style. In the final section, I discuss some of the reflections that this text has caused - both in terms of learning from the educational process and the implications for my thesis.

Why autoethnography - presentation of the method

One way to approach a study of researchers' own experiences is by using the method of autoethnography. Autoethnography has historically developed theoretically and practically as an extension of specific ethnographic studies. In the traditional ethnographic research tradition, the researcher is distanced from the culture being studied, whereas autoethnography suggests that the researcher works with themselves in relation to the social group or culture being studied. Thus, it can be said that auto-ethnography stems from the fact that there is a connection between the researcher and the culture the

researcher is a part of - and that this connection should also be investigated. Autoethnographic methodology is thus a way for the researcher to clarify personal experiences in order to describe the experiences or assumptions the researcher faces in a social group or culture (Ellis, 2004, pp. 31-34).

Another way to explain autoethnography is to look at the word itself. The word 'auto' indicates that alongside the ethnographic, there is also a focus on the person who has the research interest, and the second part 'ethnography' indicates the interest in the culture in which the research is conducted. Autoethnographic methodology has emerged as an attempt to develop a sensitivity and awareness of how these two dimensions interact. In my case, I illuminate both my subjective assumptions/experiences and the work of the action research project - by being part of the development of the practice itself and giving focus to the organisation - the ethnography of this specific culture.

The autoethnographic perspective did not originate from the phenomenological approach described above. The autoethnographic method has a different theoretical starting point than the phenomenological one and wants to be able to describe a field, some cultural conditions or in my case my own experiences.

The approach was chosen to make my own experiences the object of investigation. The point of this is that my experiences become one of my starting points - together with the other initial practice experiences and the experiences from the specific dialogue processes described in chapter 2 - to further investigate how openness manifests itself in the dialogues. I would like to highlight some of the elements that I take with me into the research process.

When I joined my workplace as an employee with the specific task of being a part of the dialogue conversations, I immediately became interested in the culture I was becoming a part of. I will later give some descriptions of personal experiences of becoming part of this culture. I will then analyse these experiences considering my personal

circumstances and describe what it was like to share these experiences with the culture I work in.

Autoethnography is a way for a researcher to explore own personal experiences and use them in an academic context. By writing about one's own experiences with a given phenomenon or problem area, autoethnography can help make the researcher's starting point and development clear to the reader and the researcher themselves. One reason to describe and analyse the concrete experiences in an autoethnographic method is that the writing process can make elements of experience clear that the researcher would otherwise not have noticed. Another reason why autoethnography is useful is that it can help highlight norms or trends that would not be seen if you as a reader have not been part of a particular social group or context being researched.

Autoethnography is a mix between doing autobiography and doing ethnographic work that: "As a method, autoethnography combines characteristics of autobiography and ethnography. When writing an autobiography, an author retroactively and selectively writes about past experiences" (Ellis, 2011, p. 3).

Autoethnography is thus a working method designed to emphasise the investigator's own experience with a given research object. As Ellis et al. say: "When researchers do autoethnography, they retrospectively and selectively write about epiphanies that stem from, or are made possible by, being part of a culture and/or by possessing a particular cultural identity" (Ellis, 2011, p. 3).

In terms of epistemology, the idea of doing autoethnographic research is based on a fundamental critique of the possible objectivity of the research perspective. In my view, the attention to developing new ways of doing research stems from the same critique that phenomenologists developed in the early 1900s in relation to the

increasing positivist approach within the research community.²⁵ Inherent in the critique of subject-object thinking is an attempt to think of ways of doing research that take for granted that the researcher can never position herself outside of what she is investigating. I would further argue that the theoretical basis for the establishment of the researcher's role already contains the idea of a rebellion against the alienated researcher - as an epistemological break with modernity that is more in line with postmodern thought. As alienation is a central idea in these reflections, I return to this element at the end of this section.

Critique of autoethnography

A recurring objection to autoethnographic methodology - one often repeated by the more positivist researchers - is that the results will always remain subjective stories that have little or no transferability to other situations, cultures or people. In relation to this criticism, I believe that the connection to phenomenological thinking is under-reported in the current literature on autoethnography. It can be argued that by using the method to: "(...) Selectively write about epiphanies." (Ellis, 2011, p. 3), you will thus relate to common phenomena that very often connect to shared experiences in a group, culture or organisation.

In my case, for example, I would argue that when I look back on 5 years of experience of becoming part of the culture at my workplace, these experiences will also be relevant to others in this culture - at this workplace. This is because the phenomena can to some extent be assumed to be a phenomenon that more people take part in at this place.

²⁵ I am thinking here of the movement and criticism from phenomenologists such as Husserl, Heidegger and later more hermeneutically orientated philosophers such as Gadamer against neo-Kantianism, which thrived in the so-called Marburger School, of which Ernst Cassirer was one of the most prominent figures.

When I read my notes and when I write the stories of my epiphanies or recount important events, conversations and situations, I will thus touch on elements of the stories that are not only my experiences, but they can also be considered shared phenomena. The argument is that these experiences come from being in relation to this culture and the people in it. You can even think of these phenomena as dialogical in nature - in the sense that they arise in interaction between people and in a particular situation. In relation to the action research method, I therefore also presented the key observations to my colleagues. In this way, we have jointly explored how this is also about shared phenomena.

Overall, the autoethnographic part opens my personal way into the field by pointing out some phenomena, thus creating an introduction to my workplace for the reader. Finally, it is also the case that the literature on how to use autoethnography suggests combining this approach with other research methods, which is consistent with the fact that I will be using other methods in other parts of this thesis that explore further from other perspectives:

Auto ethnographers must not only use their methodological tools and research literature to analyse experience but must also consider other ways to examine similar epiphanies; they must use personal experience to illustrate facets of cultural experience, and, in so doing, make characteristics of a culture familiar for insiders and outsiders. (Ellis, 2011, p. 3) ²⁶

²⁶ At the time this part of the thesis was written, the publication: "*What is autoethnography?*" by Bengt Karlson and Trude Klevan had not yet been published. It more explicitly links to the personal experiential competences that are also studied.

The context of the experience

In the following, I draw on several different experiences. My involvement and actions at work can be summarised as consisting of the following types of contexts:

- Participating in various forms of dialogical conversations - either as a reflective part or as a facilitator of the meeting.
- Participation in regular organisational life i.e. staff meetings, joint staff and resident meetings, lunch situations, ad hoc meetings, etc.
- Through the specific role of researcher through presentations of research, interviews, teaching and organising workshops with feedback on preliminary observations.
- Specific interviews and informal conversations - for example, I interviewed the manager of my workplace and a colleague about their experience of my first time at work and I have discussed the research with colleagues on an ongoing basis.

The examination of my experiences is thus based on a combination of notes I wrote along the way from specific conversations, tutorials, workshops, interviews, observations, videos, etc. Secondly, I have examined notable experiences that still stick with me - for example from conversations with colleagues. I've worked my way through this material and then written through parts of it as narratives - focusing on the 'epiphanic' moments that seem to carry the most important information. Several times along the way, the reading and writing brought new insights or reconnected me with the actual bodily and being experiences in the experience. This of course means that much has been left out in the process of going through the various notes. I have chosen to focus on some central key examples/experiences.

The early days - being 'the new guy'

When I got the chance to participate in the Open Dialogue training, I was happy because it realised my wish to be more involved in the daily practice of dialogues in psychiatry than I was in my previous job as a development consultant. Shortly afterwards, I discussed a possible job change with my current boss. He offered me the opportunity to work at the facility - initially with the wording: "to research what happens when we work with open dialogues in the organisation". This coincided with some changes in my workplace at the time. So, the timing felt right and we agreed on the position at the centre.

This was in early January 2016, and I remember that after the employment papers were sorted and my employment was announced in the organisation, I asked my new boss, 'what was the reaction'? I was curious about the reaction in the organization because it was somewhere in my consciousness that my job was/is dependent on the reception and co-operation between me and my colleagues - both as a researcher and as a colleague. In retrospect, I realise that the theme of 'belonging or not belonging' was probably already in play at some level. My boss said, "Yes, they seemed excited and want you to start as soon as possible"!

Looking at my notes from when I started, I can see that my thoughts before I started revolved around questions like; "What is it like to work with long-term relationships in a social psychiatric centre where some residents have lived there for 10 years or more"? "How will colleagues and residents see me?" As a dialogue partner and/or as a researcher, and what will that do to my work?" "I feel completely new and naked without the healthcare training that the others have". "Will the 3-year training cause curiosity or resistance from my new colleagues who typically have the Danish two-year training or no training in Open

Dialogue"?²⁷ I had a feeling that it should be possible to have time to talk to and create dialogical spaces for our residents at the residence, as you are together 24 hours a day - sometimes for many years. I thought that the culture could be good, so to speak, in terms of dialogical processes. With my experience from hospital psychiatry, where short courses create time pressure and difficult opportunities for building relationships, I thought there must be plenty of time in a residential centre. At the same time, I was filled with personal concerns and considerations: "Can I contribute to the development of Open Dialogue in this organisation at all, and can I find out how to research in this way after a number of years away from the university".

I feel sorry for you

One of the events that made the biggest impression on me from the first phase of work was one day when one of my colleagues asked if she could speak to me in my office. She said she wanted to meet with me to see what I was going to do in the organisation. We met in my office. During the conversation, she questioned me about my prerequisites for joining the organisation. She then told me that she felt sorry for me that I had to work and do research at this place. "It's going to be an uphill battle for you to do this," she said as she left my office. I don't think she said this with any bad intentions, but it left me curious and a little concerned about what this meant in terms of the term 'uphill'? Is there resistance on the ground and where should I expect it to come from? Was it a warning to me as an individual or related to my role in the organisation?

²⁷ One of the differences between the 3-year Open Dialogue program and the Danish program is that it takes place in England and has a specific therapeutic aim. The Danish Open Dialogue program is based on the program that took place in Tromsø and does not have a direct therapeutic aim.

They could ask me how I'm doing

Another event that still sticks with me from the first phase at my workplace is a conversation with a resident. We were walking together one day around the residence grounds when there was a sports activity for all residents and staff. This conversation followed a period of other meetings I had attended where the resident had some serious problems with his digestive system. Because of this, the staff carried out a systematic inspection of the quantity and quality of his faeces for an extended period of time. While we were talking about what music we usually listen to, I asked how he felt about the conversations he had with my other colleagues. He smiled and said, *"It's like being in a B-movie where you see the same scene over and over again. I know exactly what they are going to say before they say anything"*. This statement made a big impression on me. Over the next few minutes, my mind was occupied with thinking about what it would be like if someone said the same thing repeatedly several times a day to me. I told him that I would be very frustrated with this kind of conversation and asked if he had an idea of what they could say instead. He then quietly said, *"They could ask me how I am doing"*.

This statement still sticks with me. I thought about how we, as professionals, sometimes forget to think about how we enter conversations when performing a professional task. I started thinking about whether there are necessary preconditions to consider before people even want to have dialogues with us. I wondered in what way these conditions for talking together might be different in a residential setting than dialogues in other contexts? Who are 'us and them' in this context? It seemed sad that he felt like he was in a bad B-movie where the lines are written in advance, but on the other hand, the story also points to a possible way forward. You can start our conversations by asking, "How are you doing?"

You look like an Alien

The first time I had to bring a video recording for supervision in my training programme, I recorded a network meeting on video with one of our residents, where her daughter and some of the professional network were also present. The assignment for the programme was to focus on a section of the recording where I was particularly interested in something I did as a facilitator of this network meeting. I was new to this type of supervision, but understood that I had to choose specific clips, subtitle them and prepare to talk about what my interest in this clip was. I arrived at the supervision nervous and excited to learn from this.

I remember very little from the supervision, except for one comment that came at the very end from the head supervisor of the supervision session. He said that what appeared to him in the video clip was not something from the content of the conversations or anything I did or said as a meeting facilitator. Just by looking at the video, he got an impression of: *"You look like an alien that fell from the sky"*. This observation hit me right in the gut. He explained that he didn't comment on how I worked in the dialogue, but to him I looked like an alien who didn't really belong to the group. In the reflection that followed, I was very moved by that comment. I felt that what he was pointing to in the video was that I wasn't an integral part of the conversation - neither integrated with my colleagues nor in relation to the resident or their network. And that worried me because I know from the Open Dialogue mindset that the person in question invites the people who are important to them.

On a theoretical level, I felt that he pointed out that I was not a natural part of this work. On a professional level, I felt that I was not a natural part of my group of colleagues. But also on a personal level, it plays into a more fundamental theme in my life of belonging or not belonging to a group of people - whether in the schoolyard, at work or in the wider community. In this way, I became extra aware of this fundamental theme in every person's life - but also aware of how there is an intricate

interplay between the different levels of 'belonging'. I return to this theme through a description of going from 'alien' to being a settler.

What did you belong to in your family?

In the work with my own family stories and personal background that we did in the 3-year programme, I brought up this theme of belonging and not belonging. Through conversations and reflections, things were brought up about my own role in my family. I came to a deeper understanding of what was talked about in my family and what was not talked about. I realised how I often place myself in groups according to certain patterns. I feel that I have found words for some of the ways I go into conversations and what I automatically look for, and thus also for what I don't see.

Part of the stories about this also have to do with a theme of not wanting to belong 'too much' in a certain group. I think this is closely related to a deep-seated need for freedom to position myself as I prefer. This may possibly have to do with a strong desire to free myself from some of the ties to my mother, which I have often felt too tight. After the supervision interview, I realised that there is something fundamental at stake for me around the theme of belonging or not belonging to someone or a group. To put it simply, it led me to realise that I often don't want to belong to any particular group because I associate it with being trapped.²⁸ Looking back, I can see that in my professional life I have moved to new groups over time - perhaps to ensure that I don't belong too much to any particular group.

In this respect, the training programme served as a reflection on the theme of 'belonging or not belonging' and gave me both personal and professional insights into the theme. At the same time, it gave me new ideas about what this 'way of entering conversations' might look like for

²⁸ This theme became visible after the initial anxiety of 'not belonging' had faded.

others and what I can do to work on entering dialogues. It created an awareness of belonging in the workplace and settling into the researcher role.

Bringing new thinking into the organisation

In preparation for the final seminar of the programme in December 2017, we were asked to present our overall reflections on the programme. The preparation for this was divided in two. Firstly, I decided to concentrate on the theme of belonging/not belonging and present my reflections and experiences on that theme in the course. My idea was then to ask the group to participate in a workshop for reflections on that theme that I could use in further work on the thesis. The second preparation for this was that I asked one of my colleagues and my manager about their experience of 'me entering the workplace'.

Two interviews - colleague and boss

From the first interview, I am left with two key points. One is that my manager tells me that it is intentional on his part that I have a different role than the other employees in the organisation, and that in that sense I have deliberately been given a foreign role in the organisation. He explains that his idea is that there is a need in the organisation for the structure of job functions to reflect a desire for more collaboration between people with different professional backgrounds. This is part of a move to break away from the idea that the only important work is done in the intimacy between the contact person and the resident. There is a broader focus on collaboration between people and that this can be supported by colleagues with different skills, backgrounds and organisational positions.

This point gave me a new understanding regarding my sense of belonging or not belonging. So, there is a structural reason from management to create other roles/positions within the organisation. I see this as a support for me. And I connect it to my personal history of

being in groups where I try to take advantage of being the stranger who asks questions differently.

From the second interview, I emphasise two elements here. One is that I am perceived as someone who believes so deeply in the dialogical approach and the potential positives of this for our residents that the research project becomes generally credible. This supports me in being in my outsider position - in a way where I stick to my values knowing that the practice I am working with is underpinned by my belief in the work.

The other thing I take away is that I seem too invisible in the workplace. My colleague expresses a desire for more visibility in the daily life at work. He says that I could join the staff on a regular shift - and that by doing this I could become more visible to my colleagues and the residents. This expression of being too invisible first of all makes me want to join my colleagues more in the daily routines - I hope it's a way of saying; "Can you be more a part of us". The other side of this is that it also points out the more difficult dimension of not belonging - in the sense that he says I'm not part of the group. So, it makes me think about other ways of connecting to the group.

New reflections on being a stranger

Reviewing the extensive material from my presentation and the 'feedback' of my thoughts on 'belonging and not belonging' at the final seminar of the programme, new dimensions of its importance for my role in the organisation emerge again. I spend my time presenting the key discoveries about how important the theme of belonging seems to be to me. Being part of this process and through the comments from the group, it became clear that more appropriate words than 'belonging and not belonging' could be to describe a change from being an 'alien' to being a 'settler'. This way of formulating the theme captured a different way of thinking about the theme, which thus also describes my development as an action researcher in the first steps in the field.

The reflections from colleagues on the programme were:

- What actions can you imagine would be different about being an 'alien' and being a 'settler' respectively.
- It looks like you are describing a movement rather than a fixed position.
- If you're settling down as a 'settler', how do you connect to the landscape/context?
- A settler is also a pioneer, looking for land and opportunities to create a life without being tied down.
- We all experience being foreign/alien - we know the feeling - this is also part of professional work.
- What is disturbing to you about being an 'alien'?
- Are you a traveller - taking a detour?

Final reflections on the first steps in the field

I have now described my professional and personal start at work in action research - my initial epiphanic experiences based on some key examples from my workplace. Analysing this material brings me to a reformulation of the theme of 'belonging and not belonging', which has been brought into play in relation to some colleagues from work and those I trained with. From these reflections, the experience of a transformation from an 'alien to a settler' emerges particularly clearly.

But what does this teach me about the starting point of my thesis and the action research process? Where have the reflections taken me and what does it mean for doing my research and the way I see my own role in this?

I think the overall realisation can be expressed through the question: "How can I expect to meet openness in the organisation if I am not open to myself"? I think that working to understand my own

preconceptions has given me many new ways of being the stranger in the organisation. The word settler works better for me because it creates a movement/openness in relation to the term 'alien'. It gives me a way of thinking and connecting that is more focused on how to navigate the landscape as a settler rather than a more fixed role where I am defined as an 'alien'.

The way the research must proceed will have a focus on both the openness I am investigating and my own part in this process. The observations I come up with along the way can better occur based on a dialogical process where I am also willing to change my own assumptions and change myself in the process.

Being a 'settler' also means that I bring the strangeness that comes with being new to the landscape to my research role. In the case of the resident who says that "*they could ask me how I am*" and many similar situations, I have realised that there is a systematic need for us to share our own strangeness as a precondition for having conversations at all. This, that I am 'the newcomer' in the situation, is now a positive. Thus, the strangeness of the newcomer becomes a symbol of something valuable instead of something to get rid of. Based on the perception that we all share the feeling of being foreign in some dimensions and that this is also a key element for our residents, this is an important element to bring into the research process.

The contours of the field unfold

After an autoethnographic study of my initial experiences in the field, which led to an awareness of the meaning of being a 'settler', the study has thus made me aware of the importance of a dialogical view of the research process and that the experience of strangeness is an important element in the dialogues. Now I want to turn to how else to describe the context that makes up the field I am investigating. The field in which the dialogues take place.

During my first experiences of conversations with residents and colleagues, as well as through other observations in the workplace, it became increasingly clear that certain understandings of professional work are particularly strong in this field. As a 'newcomer', I was particularly aware of the obvious things that are self-evident to my colleagues who have worked in the context for a long time and who also have the usual health professional training to work here.²⁹ These self-evident things only become clear to me by asking the obvious (which is why they are not told). I began to question these assumptions and observe how practice unfolds in relation to the purpose of the dialogues. But I also went searching in the textbooks that health professionals are trained in, and I sought out historical and actual descriptions of the work in social psychiatry.

By observing the work, participating in the conversations and becoming familiar with the work-related structures such as documentation systems and other record-keeping requirements, which also characterise the way the professional work unfolds, it became crucial for me to describe some of these professional truisms. For example, I was particularly interested in the resident who, in the professional meeting, felt that the healthcare professional's task of keeping an eye on his faeces made the dialogues feel as if they had been written in advance. I went in search of the traditions in the social psychiatric context that could be part of the explanation for the way professionalism unfolds.

That's why I initially went in search of how to describe crucial elements of the history that social psychiatry has undergone. In doing so, I would like to take the reader on the trail of the crucial development steps that characterise today's work within this work context.

²⁹ In contrast to a health professional education such as a Social and Healthcare Assistant, Nurse or Psychologist, my educational background is an MA in History of Ideas and Modern Literature, after which I also have training in systemic, narrative and dialogical approaches in a therapeutic context.

The purpose of the following text is to be able to discuss the current perceptions of the role of dialogue in the collaboration between the professional and the citizen, as it is particularly this part of the professional work that interests me in this thesis. To do this, I will present an overview of how different perceptions of the role of dialogue are also linked to a historical development of the understanding of dialogue and the relationship of authority in rehabilitation work in the mental health sector.

The idea of this section is thus to provide a brief outline of the historical background of ideas in order to talk about the role of dialogue today. The purpose is to provide an opportunity to consider the historical circumstances to which current perceptions of dialogue are linked. Once the overall movements in the understanding of the role of dialogue that have taken place over the past 60 years or so have been reviewed, it is discussed how this affects professional work today - and thus the question of what the meaning of dialogue is.

The role of dialogue in social psychiatry - some historical highlights

The development of social psychiatry since the 1960s, both internationally and nationally, obviously has a wide-ranging history, which of course cannot be fully unfolded here. In the following, I will take a look at the history of social psychiatry to make it possible to see how the different phases contain very different understandings of the role of dialogue. This makes it possible to point out and discuss some of the understandings that are at stake in today's "mainstream" social psychiatry - which also applies to the place where the action research takes place.

I use the term Social Psychiatry as a collective term for the social interventions and factors that play a role in people's mental state (ODS, 2023). This use of the term explicitly draws on a humanistic

understanding of human life, where social circumstances are important elements of a person's mental wellbeing. However, in our modern science-oriented age, where welfare societies also consider it a public task to counteract social and mental exclusion, a humanistic view often contrasts or complements the biomedical disease model's understanding of human life. According to the biomedical model, mental illnesses are primarily an expression of a chemical imbalance in the brain (ODS, 2023).

The historical emergence and development of social psychiatry since the late 1960s can be roughly divided into three phases. The District Psychiatric Phase, the Social Professional Phase and the Scientific Phase (Pontoppidan, 2019, p. 31). From around 1970 to 1994, the District Psychiatric Phase was primarily concerned with decentralising treatment options. They wanted to move treatment out of hospitals and try to take care of citizens in a local environment. In the Social Professional phase, from around 1994 to 2000, emphasis is placed on the development of independent social work methods based on the assumption that social circumstances are important for people's mental states and that this insight can be translated into professional interventions that match this.

The Scientific Phase, from around 2000 to the present day, focuses on demonstrating the rational effects of interventions - primarily via evidence-based, scientifically accepted methods. At the same time as the social discourse talks about the knowledge society and the welfare society as an efficient production apparatus with a focus on cost-effectiveness, there is great pressure for social psychiatric interventions to become evidence based. In this phase, a contradiction is often reinforced between the methods for studying the practice of social interventions that are accepted by researchers based on a medical, individualised approach to mental illness and a humanistic, socially oriented approach (Pontoppidan, 2019, p. 56). This can be seen, for example, as a medical perspective on recovery as 'clinical recovery' does not necessarily correspond with the concept of 'personal recovery'. One of the fathers of the definition of recovery, the

American psychologist William A. Anthony, refers to both the personal experience and clinical recovery (Anthony, 1993).

As key professional concepts in relation to the overall phasing of the development of social psychiatry in Denmark, social work has been developed under the inspiration of the ideas behind rehabilitation and recovery. Since the 1960s, but especially in the 1980s, it was primarily the American user movement that inspired the orientation towards rehabilitation and recovery in the approach to working with psychosocial issues in social psychiatry in Denmark.

Changing the approach to working with rehabilitation

If we now turn our attention to how the above three phases translate into concrete day-to-day work in the social initiatives, the crucial change for work practice in relation to the understanding of rehabilitation and recovery is that the work in social psychiatry is now beginning to focus on the fact that it is actually possible to recover from mental illness. Until rehabilitation and recovery are placed at the centre of the work, the approach in both psychiatry and the more socially oriented initiatives is broadly characterised by the idea that mental illness is a chronic condition. Accordingly, treatment efforts are characterised by care and stabilising care. What is new in relation to both the rehabilitation and recovery perspectives is that interventions are beginning to be based on research and personal accounts that indicate that a large proportion of people affected by mental illness can recover fully or partially. In the recovery-oriented approach, one of the key words is therefore that the approach to working with mentally challenged people should be characterised by optimism and carried by hope (Jensen, 2006, p. 93).

New ways of working and new understandings of the role of dialogue

When the focus is on the fact that recovery is possible, the need to rethink work practices from a perspective that aims for recovery as part of the rehabilitation process appears. The starting point here is that mental illness can be a temporary condition or linked to a difficult life situation that can change for the better. This can be seen, for example, in the White Paper for Rehabilitation from 2004, where rehabilitation is defined in terms of orienting towards a meaningful independent life, and where the work is aimed at more dimensions in the citizen's life than just the disease-oriented (Marselisborg Centre, 2004). The question is therefore what such a working practice, based on the citizen's need for meaningfulness and autonomy, looks like. The major shift in the fundamental dynamic between the professional and the citizen is now that the professional's work must support a change for the citizen. Whereas in an earlier period - to put it simply - the aim was to support the citizen to maintain, live with or stabilise their situation, the new rehabilitation and recovery paradigm contains an idea that the citizen can change. The idea of change often implies a notion of progress for the better. Therefore, the question then becomes who decides whether the citizen's change - the citizen's progress - is on the right path?

Authority in relation to a change paradigm

Before the rehabilitation and recovery perspective becomes central to the approach in social psychiatry, the relationship between the citizen and the professional can roughly be characterised as authoritarian in the sense that the professional's professionalism dictates a certain knowledge of the citizen's condition and (often missing) development perspective. This provides a self-confidence in relation to what you can and should do in the relationship with the citizen, and therefore what the role of dialogue is. The professional task is to act on the basis of certain knowledge. It is taken for granted that the professional can

unambiguously gain knowledge about what is wrong through observation and analysis. In this context, dialogue is therefore about the professional convincing, explaining and standing by the facts via absolute authority to ensure stability and order. The new thing that historically characterises the relationship between citizen and professional in relation to working with rehabilitation and recovery is that the work is viewed from a change perspective.

The professional task is now characterised by a 'collaboration' with the citizen based on professional knowledge. The collaboration is based on a dialogue that is about facilitating the collaboration where the necessary change takes place. The keywords signalling this type of collaboration are typically 'patient involvement', 'user involvement' and 'patient as partner'. The question is, however, what happens to the authority in the 'rehabilitation paradigm' in healthcare work?

Change and professionalism

When the goal of collaboration becomes change towards improvement, an important part of the focal point of the collaboration between patient and healthcare professional becomes figuring out what the next step in this change is. What does a collaboration look like that is solely focused on figuring out what the most appropriate improvement is? What characterises the dynamics of a collaboration where it is a given that the outcome of both parties' efforts will be an improvement? What does it mean for the professional gaze that the task is to 'spot the next step of improvement'? How does the healthcare professional talk to the patient when goal setting is typically assessed in terms of whether the predefined goals are achieved, or whether goals are formulated that relate to some often-general rehabilitation goals? Goal setting can be perceived as a 'must-task' - which can mean that both the citizen and the professional view the task as a demand from the outside world that must be met before collaboration can begin. This means that the collaboration can take on the character

of a kind of pseudo-work, as something you do to satisfy the system's requirements to predict what the desired change will look like.

However, as previously mentioned, experiences from the first phases of the action research project provide examples of how residents feel that healthcare professionals know in advance what results they are looking for - regardless of the dialogue. The documentation work in relation to the pre-determined objectives of the rehabilitative efforts characterises the dialogue and places the weight of authority clearly with the healthcare professionals.

Authoritarian co-operation

One issue in relation to the collaboration paradigm in rehabilitation is that there is a risk that the authoritarian understanding of the professional's role can undermine the professional role, meaning that the professional knowledge about rehabilitation and recovery comes to anticipate the outcome of the specific collaboration. Sometimes the health professional education programmes' dissemination of knowledge about recovery, rehabilitation and the corresponding collaboration methods becomes the starting point that reassures the professional about what the collaboration will result in.

In other words, knowledge about how rehabilitation should unfold and the clinical yardstick for recovery can predefine the outcome of the collaborative process between the resident and the healthcare professional. If the professional knows before meeting a citizen what would be good for her in her rehabilitation process, for example, that it would be good for a resident to get a driving licence to visit her children, this can get in the way of listening to what the citizen says. As a result, you may miss important dimensions in a conversation because you have already decided in advance what would be professionally beneficial to help the resident with. Thus, in an everyday life where things must be done quickly, authority can get in the way of real collaboration, where you jointly find a goal that makes sense for the

individual's autonomy and is meaningful. Thus, good intentions and professional perspectives can sneak an authoritarian imbalance into a relationship without the professional really wanting it.

Dialogue and collaboration

However, if we take a closer look at the prerequisites for rehabilitation as it was conceived in relation to the autonomy of the individual in the White Paper, we must therefore ask a more fundamental question: is the way in which the dialogues unfold good enough to identify the citizen's personal needs? Are we close enough to the meaning-making process that is at the centre of the citizen's own needs? Are we familiar enough with the form of collaboration where the aim is for the citizen to find their voice in a collaboration. A collaboration that, by definition, you don't know the outcome in advance.

In other words, what does dialogue look like in collaboration where authority lies between the partners in the conversation? How do you avoid the perspective of co-involvement leading to the citizen being involved in something given in advance? What does collaboration look like when the professional does not have the upper hand, has the answer to the right form of collaboration and knows the optimal outcome of a conversation in advance?

In the same way that professional education and understanding through healthcare education is constantly being developed through new discoveries in areas such as rehabilitation and medicine, professional knowledge about the possibilities of dialogue should also be further developed. If you want to maintain the White Paper's view of the citizen's freedom and autonomy, you must also develop your work with dialogue in a way that supports this.

Social psychiatry today - philosophical perspectives behind the dominant practice

We have seen above that in the historical development of social psychiatry, a scientific paradigm and a humanistic paradigm - for example, in the perception of the concept of recovery - break down and thus influence the perception of the role of dialogue in professional work. We have highlighted that the White Paper's starting point for working with rehabilitation and recovery requires a thorough rethinking of the form of collaboration, so that authority is shared between the dialogue parties.

It is furthermore my contention that the scientific approach also dominates the approach to interventions in the social psychiatric context, so that dialogues come to function as a tool to steer towards what we already know is good and right. Therefore, in the following, I will zoom out from the specific dialogue at a residential facility and the specific historical development of social psychiatry to look at how the larger changes in the history of thinking can also provide some pieces to describe the self-evident notions that characterise the way the role of dialogue functions in mainstream practice.

Modern thinking

In philosophy, modern times are defined as an extension of the Enlightenment's development of subject autonomy. The modern era from around 1750 is characterised by scientific and technological progress, secularisation of the political field and the rise of capitalism. In philosophical terms, the modern era is based on the subject establishing itself as sovereign in relation to gaining dominion over the world around it. What is new is that the perception of how the subject should act is formulated independently of religious and fateful reasons.

This implies an empirical ideal of knowledge, where empiricism is the way perception becomes analysable data for the subject. This positivist ideal of science has greatly influenced modern man's understanding of his role in the world and still characterises the way we approach the world today - which is evident in the prevailing knowledge paradigm in universities. The objectifying approach to the world influences the professional understandings that thrive in my field of work, i.e. the social psychiatric, the therapeutic and the psychiatric.

This approach to the world can be described as analysing and, above all, understanding the world around us to act. Within this way of thinking, the subject must use reason to analyse sensory data (empirical data) and thus find the correct understanding of the (positive) matter, to find the true understanding and provide the basis for the correct action.

This perception of the relation between man and world is very strongly guiding the professional approach in my field of work. Specifically, this means that many people take for granted that dialogical meetings are basically about understanding the other person while focusing on an action perspective. Put simply, this translates into a one-sided focus on diagnoses, analyses and recognition. In my work context, this means 'finding the right psychosocial rehabilitative intervention'. In short, this means that the dialogical conversations are very much characterised by a focus on understanding to document and motivate the "right" intervention. This means that the task of understanding is to analyse the other person's expression as a representation of a positive reality. In this sense, the concrete expressions are due to 'the way reality is necessarily expressed'. In other words, expressions have a cause.

This kind of representational and causal logic creeps into the work at the social psychiatric centre when employees are concerned with understanding the other person in order to identify the right rehabilitative intervention. If you begin to see behaviour as an expression of an underlying illness, you are precisely translating the

impressions you get from the residents into an underlying positive truth (cause).

If one is certain that the surface (the expressions, symptoms or behaviour) one experience as a professional must be translated in relation to an underlying truth that already exists in a positive sense and is ready to be understood by the professional's keen insight before the meeting, you risk looking for how behaviour and symptoms fit a picture instead of being concerned with what you experience in a meeting. This way of being in contact can be very alienating for residents in a care home. They may experience being 'looked past' or 'overlooked'.

The dominance of understanding

In other words, there is a dominant perception that the professional task is to understand the other person so we can act - because we need to document and ensure that rehabilitation is progressing. This focus on understanding as the 'core process' means that both residents and staff at the facility focus all their attention on what could also be called the 'outcome of dialogues' - understanding, action or content descriptions. It is often the case that both the 'system's' self-confidence in setting the organisational and professional framework that says 'we know what the right rehabilitation is, can become so dominant that the residents own voice is hard to be heard. The focus on understanding as the paramount professional task is in other words very dominant.

The idea that understanding is central to the purpose of dialogue does not only come from a modern scientific positivist view of science. It also permeates the work context that employees are part of - both the organisational context (e.g., quality measurements and structure) and the larger context, such as societal values and municipal demands for measurable goals. This means that the environment also makes

demands that have a strong influence on what happens in the actual conversations.³⁰

In my opinion, the reason why social psychiatry is concerned with understanding behaviour as an expression of diagnoses and describing symptoms in medical terms is because they are certain that they can translate certain expressions into an underlying meaning that exists in advance. A meaning - in the sense of pathological disease - that it is the professional's job to understand based on a correct description.

The textbook - the solid practice of understanding

The positivist approach to mental illness, where illness is an objective entity that exists in an absolute sense out there, has of course been challenged from in several ways. The subject-object thinking has been challenged by, among other things, hermeneutic philosophy, such as that of philosopher Hans Georg Gadamer (1900-2002). One person who has been inspired by Gadamer's phenomenological hermeneutics is psychiatric nurse and professor Jan Kåre Hummelvoll (1948-). He has written one of the field's dominant textbooks, *"Whole - not piecemeal and divided"*, which has been published in its 7th edition and is used in healthcare programmes such as the Social and Healthcare Assistant programme and the Nursing programme in Denmark. In this book, he draws on the concept of recognition from Gadamer and writes his book in a conscious rebellion against the objectification of the other party in psychiatric work, which is precisely what the modern scientifically inspired approach ends up with in his view. He writes his book in what he calls a humanistic perspective and an existentialist tradition (Hummelvoll, 2013, p. 27, 144 and 196).

³⁰ As previously stated, my analytical gaze falls primarily on the relationship in a conversational situation and not on the other structures that are also significant. This is one of the limitations of this thesis.

Nevertheless, it is clear in his application of hermeneutics that the primary focus of the dialogue is on cognition and insight in relation to understanding the other. His approach is problem-oriented because the aim of the dialogical situation is to come to a correct understanding of the problem - albeit not, as in the objectification tradition, by relying on one's own authority. Instead, the ideal is to put yourself on the other person's situation.

In the book, the concept of dialogue is inspired by the dialectical tradition of Plato (427-347 BC), Martin Buber (1878-1965) and thus by the modern hermeneutic variant of the mutuality of the understanding process formulated by Hans Georg Gadamer (1900-2002).³¹ The concept of dialogue in the textbook aims to describe the world in a hermeneutic sense as the other person in the relationship perceives it. The ideal is to be able to see the world as it appears to the other person. This also means that the professional task for Hummelvoll is about understanding and acting.

The professional work can even be described in the form of a task template that demonstrates this. Hummelvoll presents a 4-phase model, so that the professional task consists of a process that has the following elements in it:

- 1) Understand the problem from the patient's descriptions
- 2) Ensure patient self-awareness of the problem
- 3) Suggest a professional action that will help solve the problem

³¹ There are, of course, several interpretations of Gadamer's philosophy - including positions that do not focus on the common in the sense of an ideal of horizon fusion. However, this is not the place to unfold these positions. The point here is that Hummelvoll refers to a hermeneutic Gadamer position, which he applies with a strong focus on language as a source of knowledge.

4) Ensure patient co-operation on this.³²

From this we can see that language is also perceived in this tradition as statements that reveal a reality - cognition works its way through language. This means that the emphasis in the concept of dialogue in this interpretation of the hermeneutic approach is also on the epistemological effort - in the sense of understanding the problem and self-knowledge for the other party in the dialogue. This approach thus counter-intentionally repeats the notion that the other party's perception of reality exists as a truth that can be uncovered. Now in an interpretive process that in its own self-understanding avoids making one person's perspective controlling the other's - but which in the way the textbook describes the process and in the way this approach is practiced in the context where the dialogues unfold, comes to unfold very solidly - as a new and more 'humanistic' way of understanding the other's world and acting accordingly. When this approach is further supported in the work context by the structural requirements to work purposefully and document the correct effort, it becomes a dominant approach that can end with the resident saying: "They could also ask me how I'm doing".

Through the presentation of the above working model, which contains a perception of the purpose of dialogue, we have seen a type of robust recognition practice that is an actual version of a form of dialogical interaction with an explicit purpose. The model explicitly focuses on understanding the other person's reality, framing and activating the appropriate action in relation to the disease description. This thesis discusses whether there should be a specific epistemological focus in the dialogical situation.

The question of the role of dialogue now arises considering the historical context, where we could see that the authority relationship is often on the side of the professionals when talking about 'the patient

³² My abbreviated version of the phases of collaboration. See Hummelvoll 2013 for a more extensive description of this approach. Especially chapter 16, pages 557-559, which describes the phases of the conversation with the patient.

as a partner'. The problem is that even in the more humanistic, hermeneutically inspired approaches, the way they are practised can hide the idea that it is possible to understand the other person's perception of the world in a straightforward manner. In other words, the dialectic of recognition can hide an inequality in the dialogical situation.

Therefore, this thesis wants to rethink the role of dialogue on terms that do not undermine the White Paper's ideal of autonomy and self-determination for those we want to talk to about their lives. In other words, we need to explore and develop the concept of dialogue on current terms, where the openness between the interlocutors is mutual and where the very purpose of dialogue is to open without controlling. We can think that we are in a historical phase where the *raison d'être* of dialogue can be reformulated in the light of a truly shared authority.

In the next chapter, we take a closer look at several dialogue processes that have taken place at the residential setting. Through a phenomenological analysis of these dialogues, we will look at what is important to the dialogue partners. We are interested in how openness manifests itself in dialogues.

Chapter 2: PRACTICE DIALOGUE PROCESSES

Lessons learnt from practice

As we have seen in Chapter 1, I spent the first part of the project being part of the field. I spent the first months being present, settling in and generally observing what was happening in the organisation and what was happening to me. I participated in regular organisational life - for example, morning coordination, organisational meetings, and joint meetings for staff and residents. I was introduced to colleagues and residents by the management and was given the opportunity to talk about myself and how I was going to be a part of life at the workplace in the coming years in an action researcher role. I explained that I would be around in everyday life to observe, and that I wanted to talk to residents and colleagues. An introduction programme was created for me, and I threw myself into life as an employee at the place - with the specific task of investigating how openness manifests itself in the dialogues that unfold at the place.

Gradually, my research project also fit in an academic framework – so that I could enrolled and start at university as a PhD student. I therefore announced to colleagues and residents in the organisation that I was interested in collaborating in the sense of having co-investigators at the residence. I also offered myself for ad hoc conversations in the organisation when needed. As a result, some residents and colleagues showed interest in the project, and I participated in several different dialogues in the early days.

Between colleagues, residents, and management, we gradually discussed which dialogues with residents it would be good to make a specific part of the research project as longer processes I could investigate in particular. Some dialogues with residents developed

organically - and thus became part of the research. Others arose from discussions with colleagues who were interested in being part of the project. Together, we asked selected residents (including those for whom my colleagues were the contact person) if they wanted to participate in the project. Thus, several dialogue processes began in this part of the project.

In the following part of the thesis, I have selected four of these dialogical processes that stood out particularly clearly during the time when I was collecting data for the project. By going through my memories, analysing my notes and listening to recorded conversations, I have chosen to write through my experiences from four events from the dialogical processes that still 'stick with me'. In line with Max van Manen's idea of the 'transformative epiphany', I have written through the texts to find the experiences that have made a particularly clear impression on me.

The 4 programmes are all different. The courses have varied in length and the dialogues have unfolded under different circumstances. During each course, the participants in the dialogues explored together how we should approach the situation. This applies to both the way of talking together and the context of the dialogues. The context varied from sitting in a meeting room, meeting in the residents' apartment, going for a walk or doing something together in connection with the dialogues.

In some processes, the same people have been present in each of the dialogues, while in other processes it has varied from time to time. In one case, it was my colleague who experienced a special moment that I write about. I explain the individual circumstances of each dialogue.

The description of the 4 processes is structured so that I begin by telling something about the overall process. Then I describe a particular event in the process, which is presented in a prose narrative. Each description ends with some reflections on the specific experience.

Anders – a walk in the woods

I quickly got to know Anders at the residence. When I was new to the centre, he was one of the first residents who, on one of my first visits to the communal café where we eat together, came up to me and shook my hand and asked who I was. Every time we saw each other after that, Anders greeted me. When we passed each other outside on the paths or inside the café during meals or community meetings, we always said hello to each other. These greetings almost always involved Anders taking my hand, holding on to my shoulder and saying, 'You're all right Bjarne, how are you? I liked Anders and found him to be a warm and interesting person – I had the impression that liked me.

The relationship developed over time, and we often sat next to each other during meals. We would talk about anything and everything - for example, what films Anders had recently seen or other things we had experienced. We gradually got to know each other a little when I talked about my children and Anders told stories from his past.

When I started to find out which dialogues I would be particularly interested in, it was therefore natural for me to ask Anders if I could be with him in a more defined process to include him in the research project. I explained that the research process consisted of us continuing the dialogues we had already started together. I remember that he somewhat cautiously signed a consent form and said that we could do that. We agreed that we could have a dialogue together with Anders' contact person at the residence. I sensed that Anders was not 'readily' enthusiastic about what we were about to do and was unsure what it entailed. In my opinion, it helped that Anders' contact person, who had been close to him for many years, was involved in the conversations, and that Anders also thought that 'I was good enough'.

Together with the contact person and Anders, we discussed how we should approach the conversations - and we agreed to try out different formats that would be suitable. I remember we had a conversation in Anders' apartment where we listened to some Led Zeppelin rock music

that Anders put on his stereo. Anders was proud that he had experienced Led Zeppelin at a concert in Copenhagen many years ago. It was nice to sit in the apartment and listen to music together, but at the same time the experience was characterised by uncertainty about what “the deal” was - in the sense of why were we even together? The conversation was characterised by the fact that the contact person and Anders were used to talking to each other, and my experience was that they were in a way retelling things to me that they had talked about or experienced together before. Therefore, the question after this meeting was, how did we find a way to talk together in a common way?

Our next dialogue took place during a trip together, which was a walk to a café in the local city center. The three of us drank coffee together and ate cake. The walk to the café took on the character of a hike to reach our goal. Along the way, I wondered how we could look for elements in the dialogue that could be characterised as openness. It didn't seem easy. At the café, practical things were important in the dialogue, such as who would order coffee and cakes and how we could pay. The fact that the price of the coffee was quite high was also a factor. My experience was that we were looking for a way to talk to each other, but that the dialogue was still influenced by the fact that Anders' contact person and Anders were used to talking in their own way and that I was a stranger. It felt awkward to let the conversation flow and I felt that the conversation was still characterised by uncertainty about what was common and repetitions of previous stories.

For a long time, Anders repeatedly asked me if I wanted to go to the cinema or something similar. We talked about it being something we both liked, and we ended up going together to an entertainment park called Dyrehavsbakken to see Ørkenes sønner/Sons of the Desert with the show "En fez i en hornlygte/A fez in a lantern". We drove from the residence in my car to Bakken and had a beer together at a nearby restaurant before the show. The show itself was fun to watch together - we laughed out loud next to each other. It was nice, we hadn't done that before. Overall, it was a good experience at Dyrehavsbakken,

where we each bought a Sons of the Desert fez during the interval, which we had great fun wearing and taking pictures of together. Both before the show and in the car on the way home, I tried to talk about and ask about new things that could lead the dialogue in new directions. But my experience was still, even though we were away from the context of the residence, that Anders usually slipped into already told stories in the dialogue or kept silent when I was looking for dialogical openings in the conversation.

After the trip to Dyrehavsbakken, I agreed with Anders that we could go for some walks together later. My thought was that maybe we could create dialogues that were more open and freer in private. Dialogues where there might be a safer atmosphere and less repetition in the dialogue. Anders had his own daily walks and we agreed that he would take me along and show me his different routes. We also talked about how we both needed exercise to look after our weight and general health.

Thus, over the next period, we went for several walks together and I got to know his normal route quite well. At one point, we walked a slightly longer route through a wooded area one day. It is an experience from this trip that stands out for me.

How did you feel about your colleague?

It was a summer afternoon. Anders and I had agreed over lunch to go for a walk at around 14.00. After lunch, Anders took his normal afternoon nap, and it was agreed that I would be at his apartment door at 14.00. When I arrived at the apartment, he was already standing in front of the apartment and told me, slightly frustrated, that he had spent time looking for me in the café. Anders was often on time for appointments and impatient to get going. We talked about how hot it was and we went to the café to drink some water. Since the weather was nice, we talked about going for a slightly longer walk than usual. He knew another route that went through the forest - so

the trees would protect us a bit from the sun. As we started walking, Anders talked - as he often did - about how I had gained weight and that "it would be good for me to do the walk". He punched me lightly on the stomach and smiled at me.

As on previous trips, the dialogue on the trip was characterised by Anders telling the same stories that I now knew well and also spent a lot of energy asking me what I thought he should do. He asked whether I thought he should take an afternoon nap or not, go to the cinema tomorrow or not, drink more water or not and he asked whether I thought he should come for the mail in the shared administration tomorrow at 09.30. Anders was in charge of the daily mail delivery at the residence. I replied that we could talk about what suited him in terms of sleeping after lunch etc. But Anders didn't want to do that. It seemed like he would rather have an answer from me. As usual, Anders walks a little faster than me and is usually a few steps ahead of me on the route. This also makes it difficult to have a dialogue with him. I think about how I can spot elements in our dialogue that can be described as open. What can I do to open up our dialogue? My thoughts revolve around the frustration of experiencing a lack of openness in the dialogue, even though we actually enjoy going for walks together.

But then, after we've been walking for about an hour and are getting a bit tired and thirsty, Anders starts talking about experiences from his younger years working for the postal service. His story changes character in my ears. He starts talking about a particular experience at work where something special happened that made him stop and hesitate to share. I hadn't heard about this before and thought that maybe we had reached a point where the dialogue could be more open between us.

It was scorching hot at this point in the forest, even though the trees shielded the sun a little, and I could feel the sweat running down my back from having to keep up with Anders' pace. I took the opportunity to ask if we could make a small stop so I could catch my breath and

catch up with Anders. He agreed - so we stopped in the middle of the forest path.

Then I asked him about what I perceived as a possible opening in our dialogue: "How did you feel about your colleague who did that to you?". Anders looked me straight in the eye, his gaze both intense and flickering. He held my arm in a firm grip, thought for a moment and said: **"What am I supposed to say now, Bjarne?"**

This last sentence stands out very strongly in my mind and now, with the benefit of hindsight, the words are still embedded in my body and memory. Anders and I went for several walks together after that day. But my dialogue process - as far as the focus of this thesis is concerned - I understand under the heading of this sentence.

I see the sentence as emblematic of dialogues that remain in a kind of mechanical structure. It proved difficult for me to listen and speak in a way that kept the dialogue process open between Anders and me. It was as if the openness could never really happen, even though we enjoyed our walks and dialogues. Often the dialogues were characterized by a sense of duty - as if the shared exchange in the dialogue just 'had to be carried out' in its already agreed sequence.

In chapter 1, I described a dominant perception within the social psychiatric context, where the role of dialogue is still perceived as action-focused, problem-describing and problem-solving. In my opinion, my dialogue with Anders was very much characterised by the idea that the purpose of the dialogue was for me to give Anders the right action-oriented and behaviour-regulating answers. In my experience, our dialogue was characterised by the fact that authority was given in advance on my side of the relationship. The dialogue should result in a correct decoding of Anders' needs, as if they were already given in advance in a way where my professional task was to understand and explain them on Anders' behalf. Our focus was primarily on the outcome of our exchange – in terms of what should I do.

When Anders asked me: "What am I supposed to say, Bjarne?", I got the impression that Anders thought there was something right to say that I already knew the answer to. As a result, I couldn't really see any places in our dialogue where we were open to each other - where openness stood between us.

Anton - around the residence

Another dialogue process I established as a defined dialogue process within the research framework was with Anton. The process with him stems from a situation at the beginning of my time at the residence, where I was invited into an ad hoc dialogue. It was Anton's contact person who one day asked if I wanted to come along. There was to be a meeting where a doctor would come to the centre and check Anton. Anton's contact person would be present at the meeting, and I was asked if I wanted to come along to experience such a meeting where 'the doctor is there'. We talked about how I could pay special attention to Anton's voice/person during the meeting. The contact person asked Anton if I could join the meeting - Anton agreed.

At this meeting, I saw that the doctor and the contact person, who has a background as a nurse, communicated with each other in Anton's apartment about Anton's health situation - without addressing Anton. They clarified some health-related topics between each other, without Anton's being asked much. During the meeting, I noticed several times that Anton tried to join the conversation from his bed, but that he was cut off with short answers that did not lead to an actual dialogue.

This meeting made me particularly interested in following up on how Anton experiences his dialogues with the staff at the residence. Therefore, over the next few days, I started trying to get in touch with Anton. An opportunity presented itself after a while, when we had only exchanged pleasantries. One day, a joint activity was organised at the residence, where residents and staff had to walk around the residence as many times as possible within a certain time frame. I took the

opportunity and asked Anton if we should walk together. He agreed, and the following excerpt of our dialogue comes from this walk around the terrain.

How are your dialogues at the residence?

Both Anton's contact person and I had been present during last week's visit from Anton's GP. It was on this occasion that it was agreed that one way to monitor the functioning of Anton's digestive system was to measure the circumference of his stomach, which Anton was willing to do. Another way to monitor the health aspects of digestion was to describe the contents of Anton's faeces. This was done by Anton and the staff noting the colour and consistency of the stool in the toilet in a chart on Anton's desk for a period. This means that three times a day, the staff make sure that notes are made in the chart.

A while after the meeting with the doctor, I went for a longer walk with Anton. We walked at the same slow pace and gradually started a dialogue. I was inspired by the good weather and talked about the bright light now that the summer sun was starting to show itself. Anton said that light is also colour.

This walk was also my first real conversation with Anton. I had a good feeling that Anton and I were starting to get to know each other a little and that a familiarity was beginning to develop. During the walk, the dialogue evolved to be about colours in relation to painting and music - both of which Anton loves to practice, look at and listen to.

Anton talked about how he is particularly interested in the fact that colours can be so strong that they can seem hyper-realistic. We talked about how sometimes paintings are extra real compared to what we usually see. Then we were both quiet for a while. There were several of the others who were walking around the residence that overtook us. I wondered in my head if they thought it was special that Anton and I were quiet together.

I asked at one point how Anton perceives the conversations he has here at the centre. He said: **"It's like being in a bad B-movie that you've seen so many times. The lines are always the same"**, after which he laughed his characteristic slightly giggly and teeth-gnashing laugh. "How do you feel about those conversations?", I asked. "They could just ask me how I'm doing," he replied.

Anton and I have subsequently had several dialogues. We have talked several times about Anton's perception of the colours he works with in his own paintings. Together, we've wondered what hyper-realism might be. Anton himself has suggested that perhaps the word super-realistic is more appropriate. He has read something by the Danish painter Kurt Trampedach, who has written about this, and later in our dialogues he began to associate it with experiences of particular intensity. Anton has drawn inspiration from the Buddhist tradition, where special experiences are sometimes associated with a special light. This³³ has been particularly inspiring for me to talk about and relate to the colours of the painting.

But the particular 'epiphanic transformative' impression for me was the sentence that stood out to me, that the dialogues at the shelter seem to Anton like B-movie lines written in advance. I wonder what it must be like for Anton to be in a bad B-movie. It seems as if the dialogue - as in the process with Anders - was characterised by observation and focus on results.

It sounds like the conversations for Anton are running in circles. It seems unsatisfactory. What does he mean when he says that you can just ask him how he's doing? Is it difficult for healthcare professionals to keep listening for something new that makes an impression during conversations? Is it difficult to be open with Anton when the purpose is, in a sense, to oversee something healthcare-related? It sounds as if the professionalism around checking bowel measurements gets in

³³ This is also considering the thesis' later reflections on the meaningfulness of nothingness,

the way of being with Anton without expecting anything in particular. Is it difficult not to let the professional healthcare task 'come first'?

It sounds like Anton would like a different type of dialogue, where you ask him personally and don't only let the dialogue be controlled by what needs to be checked. Does it make sense to let the task drive the dialogue instead of letting the personal meeting show what's important to talk about? It's as if the dialogue only sticks to repetition of the same routine and observation of the other person's clinical picture. I see this as an example of how, as a professional, you can let your professional perspective block what is said in a situation and the openness that can be experienced in a dialogue.

As previously described, the context plays a role in what the professional gaze sees - in this case, a specific somatic challenge for Anton. The focus is on understanding, and the task is that language is a tool of cognition that carries knowledge. It seems that this also characterises the experience of the dialogue.

At the very least, I can say that the example points to something in the dialogue that doesn't satisfy Anton. And in this dialogue process, I once again confirm that openness in the dialogues was nowhere to be seen.

Peter - conversation over a cup of coffee

The third dialogical process I have selected is a process where I, together with Peter's long-term contact person Dorte, set out to investigate what might happen if we walked into Peter's office with a cup of coffee. During my work in the field, I made a good connection with Peter's contact person. We had some common professional interests in relation to the nature of dialogues. We talked about doing research together in relation to the action research project, and we ended up asking Peter if he wanted to have some meetings with us. We asked Peter because Dorte said he can be difficult to work with at

times, but also because she wanted to explore whether we could have Open Dialogue meetings with him.

In the beginning, the resident, Peter, was not very willing to participate in the meetings, even though he had agreed to a process where I was a part of the conversations he was offered at the residence. In practical terms, this meant that Dorte, Peter's contact person, and I knocked on the residents' door, after which Peter would decide from time to time whether we could come in. In her daily interactions with Peter, Dorte talked to him about our appointments and prepared him for the planned conversations. Still, at first it seemed as if the appointments took him by surprise when we knocked on the door.

I remember my first day in this relationship, when Dorte and I stood outside Peter's apartment on a Tuesday spring morning with a pot of coffee in hand and three cups and knocked on the door. I experienced that he almost reluctantly let us into his home, after he sleepily standing with his duvet in front of him had carefully considered whether it was a good idea to let us in. We first looked for a place to sit in his messy apartment and asked where we should sit. He pointed out seats for us around his coffee table. Peter sat on a sofa with a duvet over him and we sat in two armchairs.

While we were in his apartment, we all drank coffee, listened to music and talked very little - it was mainly Dorte and I talking about everyday things. We talked about what we had done over the weekend or what the rest of the day would be about. Peter sat without saying much, slightly immersed in what seemed like his own thoughts for the 45 minutes or so the conversation lasted. I remember that together we tried to think of the titles of the music tracks that streamed out of the radio's FM band. Dorte and I talked about when and under what circumstances we had previously heard those tracks. Peter interjected once and mentioned a music festival many years ago where he had heard good music. There was also some talk about some hardback books on the windowsill. Peter explained that he had done an internship with a bookbinder many years ago. He said that the books in the window were good quality

books, but he didn't want to talk more about it. At the end of the meeting, we asked if we could come back later. He replied slowly and a little disengaged: "yes, I guess you can".

The next few times we knocked on the door with coffee pots and cups in our hands, it was much the same. Most of the time was spent with Dorte and I talking about generalities, while Peter participated sporadically and somewhat reluctantly. When it seemed appropriate to end the conversation over coffee, we always asked Peter if he wanted to visit again. His answer gradually evolved into a standard routine response of "yeah, okay".

On the way out the door

This kind of conversation continued over several months until one day. We had had a conversation, as they usually evolved - or just didn't evolve - where we again talked about anything and everything. I thought it was another one of those days where we didn't really know if Peter liked our company, but just tolerated it.

When we thought it was time to leave, Dorte and I got up from the table to leave. As we were heading out the door, Peter suddenly reached out to us with his arm and said: **"When are you coming back - you're welcome to come back"**. He kind of leaned forward on the sofa as he said it towards us, who were halfway out of his apartment. Peter stood up from the sofa as he took a few steps towards us. It gave me the feeling that he was trying to hold on to us with his words and body. I turned around in the doorway and looked into his questioning eyes. It was as if we were now looking at each other differently.

We then talked a bit about when we could meet again. It was immediately clear to me that something new was happening between us. Right then and there, our mutual behaviour pattern changed

compared to the normal routine farewell. It was my impression that Peter's way of approaching me opened a new type of connection for the next time we would meet. I left the meeting with a different experience of parting than at the previous meetings. I don't know what Peter thought after the meeting, but I wondered what Peter's questioning look meant and that maybe next time something different could happen in our meeting. Afterwards, I remember talking to Dorte about how we had a feeling of being filled with energy.

For me, this moment was a crucial turning point in the way the routine of the dialogical process evolved.³⁴ To me, this change of routine was a breakthrough that suggested possible new ways of working together. This process suddenly showed a glimpse of what openness can be in dialogic relationships.

It suggests that from then on Peter sees new possibilities in our interaction. To me, there is a richness of information in this process in relation to what openings in mutual dialogues can be about. Considering this narrative of togetherness over time, I want to draw out some dimensions of the concept of contact in relation to what characterised the dialogue in this professional relationship.

Coffee chatter as a type of conversation

Firstly, I want to emphasise the nature of the type of conversation we had together. The model for the conversation we had can be said to be the 'coffee chatter conversation' - the type of non-committal small talk you typically have in the kitchen over a cup of coffee, where everything and nothing can be said. A conversation characterised by the fact that it's not so important what is said, but rather **that it is** said. A conversation where the sound of the conversation may be perceived more as a 'buzz of sounds' than as a messenger of information, and where the focus is not so much on the content of what is being said, but where the buzz of voices signals an

³⁴ After this turning point, Peter was able to take part in socializing in new ways.

awareness that we are together. Where the sound of the voice expresses 'here I am' and 'we are here together'. Where it's not about 'I want this or that' or 'what should we do?'³⁵ For example, when we talked about places we had heard specific music tracks or what books were on the windowsill, it was more important that we shared these stories in the same room than what we understood in those stories or what they meant in relation to the content of our meeting. It was the very act of talking and the sound of the voices in the room that characterised our meeting and the interaction we had.

The conversation and the way we were in the conversation can thus be said to create awareness of each other's presence, without initially connecting us in a way that aims to understand each other. Our purpose in that meeting was not to talk about what we could help Peter with - about how we could describe his problems, formulate his wishes for the future or agree on rehabilitative measures. We weren't aiming to have a specific purpose for the meeting. That day in his apartment was more about **being** together. You could say that our togetherness was characterised more by a focus on each of us being able to be with our strangeness than on what we said or did. Perhaps it was our way of making space for our strangeness that was important? I think the example from the programme indicates that we left each other alone but focused on being together.

One way to look at what happens in this kind of togetherness is that the important thing is **that** we are together rather than what this togetherness should lead to. Perhaps the way the togetherness unfolds even indicates that the focal point of the conversation is that there is a radical separation and strangeness between us that is at the centre of our togetherness and our ethical differences. And that it is important that we share this strangeness together.

³⁵ This refers to an expression Lévinas uses in an interview about his philosophy in a summarizing retrospective. He says that his philosophy can be described as a way of saying 'here I am!' As a simple way of expressing that the face of the other is present as an enquiry and demands a response. But first and foremost, the face shows itself as pure presentation.

Different understandings

That day in Peter's apartment, we weren't talking to each other in the sense that conversations focus on the common ground between us. Our voices, each talking about music and personal experiences with music, did not have a common focus. We weren't talking to document Peter's behaviour or symptoms in a common language. We didn't talk to learn more about how Peter's diagnosis is currently unfolding. Our focus was not on prioritising which rehabilitation efforts to work on right now. Dorte and I didn't have a professional conversation about how we could motivate Peter to work on his rehabilitation goals. We were not focused on whether our meeting could result in documentation of concrete actions.

Rather, we were interested in the different understandings that emerged, for example, when Peter talked about his time as an apprentice bookbinder. We listened with interest without demanding an explanation about what his experience of it might have been or why he might be talking about it. We didn't ask about Peter's experience of going to a music festival - but we listened attentively to what he had to say. I listened to Dorte's story about going to choir at the weekend and mainly focussed on the fact that I don't know what it means to her. I didn't need to find out what it meant to her - but it seemed important that I listened to the fact that it meant something to her. In that way, we were actively present together to listen to and be present with each other's strangeness. We experienced a space like that together.

Attention to the unknown and silence

The things we talked about were not intended to invoke recognition - in the sense of 'yes, I know about that too'. For example, when we talked about doing an internship with a bookbinder or what we had done at the weekend, the focus was on 'where is there something in what is being said that is foreign to me, and how can I keep my attention on it - without thinking I can understand it'. I can listen or say

something from my own background of experience without having to understand what it means. I can even use the unfamiliarity as a guide for my attention. I can wonder what it could possibly mean to the others without expecting that I will figure it out. I can also focus my attention on the way others are in the interaction and think that the way they are could be one of the ways in which the strangeness shows up - let me dwell on it and take it in without understanding it.

Our time together was also characterised by silence - periods where we said nothing. We were more concerned with giving the silence a space and letting our own thoughts or lack of thoughts unfold in their own right. Perhaps you could say that by directing our attention to the silence, we gave space to the strangeness between us. We didn't know what was going on with the others while we were silent together. The point is not that we come to know what's going on with each other - but rather that as the silence fills the space, we become aware of each other as different from ourselves. At the same time, silence allows us to embrace difference and give it value.

Separation in togetherness

The separation between Peter, Dorte and I was evident in that we talked about our own experiences without commenting or demanding answers from each other. The various statements stood with their own reverberations in the room. Our time together was also characterised by a desire to be together, listen to each other and enjoy each other's company. When Peter or Dorte broke in and said something, I tried more to listen to the way they said it, what movement they made and what impression it made on me than I tried to understand their statements. In this way, the separation between us was clear in the meeting.

When I saw him reaching out to us and our time together at the farewell, I didn't ask him why he suddenly wanted us to come back. Nor did I analyse what this might mean for what we need to do to help his rehabilitation. I focused rather on my own experience of our

time together in the situation than on what he was thinking. I was looking forward to our next meeting and was excited to see how this meeting would unfold. In this way, our time together was characterised by a non-committal commitment to each other's company. We were more focused on the fact **that** we would meet again than on what that meeting would lead to. The community we had together was important because the focus was on the togetherness.

The process indicates that along the way it gradually became clear to me that it was about how we as professionals were present in the relationship rather than what we said and did. In this way, the example shows that sometimes in professional relationships it is more about focusing on the different ways you can be in relation to the other person - understood as contact with the stranger - than about what the content of the conversation/interaction can be.

Anne - a day of turmoil

This fourth and final selected dialogical process stems from a workshop I held at the residence, where my project's preliminary observations were presented to residents and colleagues for discussion and feedback. During this workshop, I presented some of my thoughts about being the stranger and/or newcomer in a context, and how this element can also play a role in contexts of dialogue. I presented these thoughts in general and through some examples from my dialogues - including the above-mentioned dialogical process three with Peter.

During the workshop, one of my colleagues shared an experience she had with one of the residents at the centre. At the workshop, she shared a situation that for her was about not needing to talk to each other. She talked about a crucial experience where there was a need to be quiet together.

I was very interested in her description of being with the resident and subsequently asked her if I could interview her about her experience and if it could become part of the thesis. Methodologically, my colleague thus became a co-investigator in the action research project. My colleague agreed to this, and we arranged to have plenty of time to talk about her experience and record her story digitally. The following is a transcription of parts of this interview.

Is there anything we need to talk about

I was working a double shift that day.

I remember Anne was very upset because we were about to have a networking meeting where her daughter was going to attend. It was a day where Anne had been loud outspoken and angry. She can sometimes be very outwardly reactive. She walked around the area with no facial expressions. Those of us who were on day shift that day had registered that she was feeling unwell. When she walked into the common space in the café, we could see in her face that she was very angry.

It was the day before the networking meeting and Anne couldn't be by herself. I think she was so afraid of being alone - that's why she was pacing back and forth. It was obvious because she was pacing back and forth, back and forth and being very aggressive and changing her behaviour from being sad to shouting loudly and being aggressive.

I remember that at one point she went home. It was in the evening at about 7.00 pm after dinner in the café. I realised I knew her; I was her contact person and had a special relationship with her. I realised that it wasn't because Anne was angry - it was because she was sad. I sensed that she was scared because she was going to see her daughter the next day. I think that affected her a lot because her daughter means so much to her.

Then I followed her towards her apartment. Anne walked much faster. When I got to the flat a few minutes later, I realised the door wasn't fully closed and I knocked. She didn't answer, but I could see through the crack in the door that she was already lying on her bed - so I opened the door wider and went in. She looked up when I came in, waved me in and kind of said with her head that it was ok for me to come in, then put her head back down on the bed. She looked so powerless and frail there on the bed.

I enter the room and kneel on the floor next to her bed and ask if there's anything we need to talk about. I say, "Can we talk?" and she refuses to talk. I say: "Is it because of tomorrow, or is it because your daughter is coming to visit?" "Are you scared?" Anne just shakes her head in response - and then she closes her eyes. I then hold her hand and she hold on to my hand very tightly. **Although Anne clearly doesn't want to talk, I perceive the situation as an invitation - I sit down completely on the floor... and then I get very quiet, then I say nothing more.**

I don't know how long we stayed there. As we sit there, I run my hand over her hair. Then it's just quiet, occasionally she opens her eyes and looks at me, then she closes her eyes again - and just stays there. We stay there together.

Finally, when maybe 15 minutes have passed, she squeezes my hand and says: "You can go now". I said OK, and then I left. It was a very powerful experience, and it was the experience of a very clear moment when she said I could leave. I stood up and didn't say anything else. It was as if it was both turbulent and peaceful - it was as if we had been in something together. It was as if Anne and I had experienced something important and powerful together. I could be myself in the situation and was very affected by what had happened when I left. Something important had happened.

She stayed in her apartment. She didn't go out again that day.

The next day we have the network meeting with her daughter, where Anne stays throughout the whole meeting.

Reflections from my colleague

Anne looked sad when I walked into her room that day. I have seen that Anne sometimes Skypes with her daughter. When she does this, I can see that Anne is looking at herself. So, she knows that she doesn't think she looks good for her daughter. I think it might have something to do with Anne being anxious.

The experience is still with me now 1 year after it happened. It was one of the most intense experiences in my working life. I experienced the situation very intensely. It was as if a lion needed love. All I did was stroke her hair and she held on to me.

I could feel that my hand could protect her. In my stomach, I was sure that I shouldn't say anything. The peaceful silence was very strong. She responded with body language. She was inviting me not to say anything. I just had to be there for the time we were together. I wanted to hug her. When she held my hand, she gave me permission to hold her and protect her.

I had the experience of time stopping and time being frozen. It was very intense. I don't realise how long I stayed there. I just had intense contact with her. It was nice to be there - peaceful and calm.

I'm often told I'm too fast by Anne. Here it was different. It has influenced the way I am going forward. I will never forget it! It was an important experience for me in relation to the way we work and what we do at work. It was a bit of an aha moment for me. After this, I always get down on my knees to show her that 'I'm here' to avoid a power perspective.

Other reflections

The situation above would prove to be decisive for the further course of the thesis. After interviewing my colleague and co-investigator, listening to her story, reading, and being influenced by her story, it was very clear to me that this was a very special and crucial way in which openness in a dialogue manifested itself.

It made a special impression on me that it was Anne who 'showed the way' in relation to her needs. In her refusal to talk and in her direct instruction to my colleague to be quiet with her, there is great strength. Anne insists that there is a need for 'you to be here with me'. Anne's action indicates that the key category for dialogue here is togetherness - more than it is linguistic exchange and recognition that is needed.

This led me to notice the role that the way of being in dialogues plays. After talking to my colleague and listening to the story and thus 'feeling' what particularly impressed me, it was this 'being together' that stood out. It surprised me because it was probably more my expectation that something special was said or done. At this point, I expected openness to show up as something - as something linguistic or a clear change in action or understanding.

In this sense, I was back to my question from chapter 1 about the 'how of the phenomenon' and the 'what of the phenomenon'. Thus, when studying openness, in this epiphanic moment, I saw 'the how of the phenomenon' rather than the 'what'. Where my colleague had expected a dialogue with Anne, there was instead 'being together'.

The important thing here is not what is being talked about, nor is it about an awareness of what it is that they have in common or share in the experience. Rather, it's that they are together with their own experience without any endeavour to find out about the other's experience.

In this sense, they can be together with their own strangeness - or you could say that they are not together over anything specific, they are just together.

It occurred to me that openness here points to a dimension of being - how we are present in dialogues, not what we say or do in dialogues. This led me to think about whether one can characterise a particular form of dialogical being. And does this have anything to do with openness in Open Dialogue? Are there philosophers who thematise being in relation to a dialogical encounter and a togetherness about nothing?

Overall reflections on the dialogue process

In the following, I will look at the 4 dialogical processes I have presented in the previous section. Can I deduce anything across these? Is there a development to be found? I will pick up on the elements that have become clear in the individual dialogues and see where this leads my continued interest in relation to the issue of openness in dialogues.

In the same way as being on the path of action research without having a specific goal, I have left the process of selecting which dialogical processes could be included in the project open. In other words, I have not had specific inclusion criteria that determined which processes might look most interesting in advance. I have not ensured a form of diversification of dialogue typologies or resident typologies - for example in relation to gender, age, diagnosis, or short/long processes. I have let the selection take place in a dialogue with colleagues and residents, as described in each case. I have pursued the opportunities that arose around me, whether a resident has approached me, a colleague has asked me, or I have pursued an opportunity. I clarified whether residents or colleagues wanted to be involved in the project and subsequently investigated how the process could develop in practice.

On the methodological level of working with the texts, I have analytically applied the 5 elements that Max van Manen wrote about in the text *"From Meaning to Method"* - namely: *'Lived Thoroughness'*, *'Evocation'*, *'Tone'* and *'Epiphany'* in the way I have worked with the texts.

By working with the central texts in the four dialogical processes, different emphases on the first four elements have emerged. In some places, it is the *'tone'*, as in the situation with Anne, or *'lived thoroughness'*, as with Anders, for example, that has opened the reading. However, I see the 5th element, *'epiphanic transformativity'*, as the primary way in which I realise what has had the strongest impact on me through the writing and reading.

By reading the texts from the inside, I have discovered the epiphanic when there is a particularly strong transformative dimension inside me in relation to the encounter with the text/experience. This means that I simultaneously write the texts towards the epiphanic and discover the epiphanic by writing the texts.

This way, these statements stand out particularly clearly:

1. *"What do you want me to say Bjarne?"*
2. *"It's like being in a bad B-movie that you've seen many times. The lines are always the same."*
3. *"You're welcome to come back."*
4. *"Even though Anne clearly doesn't want to talk, I perceive the situation as an invitation - I sit down on the floor... and then I get really quiet, then I say nothing more".*

In my experience, the first two processes are examples of how difficult it is to open up in the dialogical process. In the first process, I experience a kind of opening in the moment when Anders grabs my

arm at that special moment when I think something new might come up. But in the next moment, when Anders asks me what to say, my surprise is not about what could be said, but rather about what could not be said. My surprise was that, from Anders' point of view, the process was not mutual. Anders may have wanted to say something new but turned to me to find the right expression.

Similarly, in dialogue course number two, there was an openness to say something about how the dialogues unfold at the residence. However, the statement points to a particular closedness that characterises the way Anton is met in the dialogues. A particularly precise way in which Anton puts words to the inability of and in the dialogues.

In the dialogical process number 3, however, a change occurs during a longer process, where my surprise is that Peter suddenly takes a different approach to wanting us to come back. He expresses himself with his body. And my analysis of the process indicates that he has gradually experienced that he can be present in the dialogues in his own way. He has experienced that we can be with him without him having to do anything.

In the fourth dialogue, the surprising event is that Anne clearly shows that she needs togetherness more than she needs conversation. What is surprising in the perception of this dialogical situation is that dialogue can also be about a way of being.

If I initially look across the four dialogical processes, is there something about openness having to do with the expectation of the situation being disturbed and something different happening? The expectation is shaken, so to speak. In all four dialogues, interest is focused on specific moments when something unexpected happens. These are moments when my attention becomes particularly intense and something different from the expected happens. You could say that the grip on the world that allows me in one moment to have a certain expectation for the next moment loses its hold on the world for a while.

However, in the first two processes, the situation (the temporarily loosened grip on the world) does not lead to me experiencing an open mutual dialogical process - while in the last two processes it leads to a mutual process that primarily points in the direction of something indeterminate. In the third process, it leads to us being able to meet again - in a different way where openness can 'come about' because we can be indeterminate together. In the fourth process, the situation shows that Anne and my colleague were together in the indeterminate. The situation did not require clarification of what was happening in their way of being together - the very act of being together was sufficient.

In other words, the four programmes point to the fact that epiphanic transformative moments have several dimensions. They have something to do with releasing a certain grip on the world. They have something to do with sharing something indeterminate. They can include a focus on being together about being alien to each other. Finally, it has been shown that open moments can have something to do with a form of being. You could say that the 'how' and 'what' of the phenomenon somehow coincide in a focus on 'being'. The epiphanic transformation becomes about how to open - via a dimension of being.

The analysis of my dialogical processes leads me to take an interest in how I can further explore the perspective on the importance of being open in relation to something indeterminate. To find other perspectives on the importance of this dimension for human encounters understood as a form of being, I have turned to philosophy. I now set out to find philosophers who have something to say about openness, being, the indeterminate, metaphysics, nothingness and the unknown.

CHAPTER 3: PHILOSOPHICAL REFLECTIONS

Martin Heidegger and Being - Being in Openness and the Metaphysical Event

As we have seen, my analysis of the four dialogues comes together in an attention to how the dialogue partners are together. It turns out that there is an important aspect of the dialogues that is about being together. In addition to what we say to each other, do together or think in our heads, the way we are together emerges in my dialogues as an important element that I will explore and unfold further in the following. The question is, how can we understand the importance of ways of being in the dialogue situation?

As explained in the introduction to this thesis, the development of the thoughts along the way consists of an interaction between experiences from concrete situations in practice and theoretical and philosophical reflections on these. The purpose of the theoretical and philosophical reflections is to examine whether they can unfold the experiences in new ways that can bring the experiences back enriched for further study and unfolding in practice. This chapter 3 thus pursues the question of the significance of ways of being that came out of the overall analyses in chapter 2. Where does it make sense to find inspiration for how to describe ways of being?

If we turn to philosophy, nowhere in the history of modern philosophy is the preoccupation with being more central than with the German philosopher Martin Heidegger (1889-1976). In his main philosophical work *Sein und Zeit* from 1927, the central concept of 'being' is already

stated in the title of the work. This work still stands as one of the most important philosophical works of the 20th century, as it introduces ways of thinking that are seminal for how we can talk about the meaning of being today.

Martin Heidegger's collected works are considerably more comprehensive than his main work *Being and Time*. In the following, however, I will allow myself to dwell exclusively on the main work, as his descriptions and analyses of the phenomena 'being', 'existence', 'being-in-the-world', 'dasein', 'openness', 'being opened', 'anxiety', 'freedom' and 'nothingness' are directly relevant in relation to the illumination of my dialogue processes.³⁶ In relation to my specific purpose in continuation of chapter 2, I will primarily delve into the part of *Being and Time* labelled § 40, as the central formulations here raise the question of openness and being in a very precise way. But before I jump straight into a reading of this section, a few introductory words are needed to explain the nature of the work "*Being and Time*".

Giving a brief introduction to the monstrous, original, ambitious and deeply distinctive work *Being and Time* is a difficult task, as many a philosophy teacher or textbook author has said. However, some introductory markings can indicate what the intention of the work is and how the central themes are treated.³⁷

³⁶ In doing so, I also want to clarify that I do not relate to the development of Martin Heidegger's later philosophy. I do not want to deal with the much-discussed reversal (Kehre) in Heidegger. The understanding of the meaning of being in *Being and Time* provides me with rich descriptions to illuminate my dialogical processes. There is also evidence in *Being and Time* that the meaningfulness of being also has a metaphysical dimension that is important in my thesis.

³⁷ In this regard, I rely on the excellent postscript to the first edition of the Danish edition of *Being and Time* (2007), written by philosopher Thomas Schwartz Wentzer. The postscript was also published in a separate edition in 2015. In this thesis, Thomas Schwartz Wentzer's text is referred to with the page numbers where the postscript follows the first publication of the Danish edition in 2007.

The methodology of the work and the way of philosophising

First and foremost, it is worth noting that the overall purpose of the book is to examine and rethink what it means for something to be. In relation to such an investigation, it is worth noting one of his main methodological approaches in the way he examines selected phenomena, namely that he does not want to think anything new or change anything with his analyses. He wants to observe and philosophise about how phenomena unfold in everyday practice - in other words, in the way we in this case already exist in our ordinary being present in the world (Wentzer, 2007, p. 529). In other words, he is not trying to point out how we should be in the world - a better way of being. This point is important in relation to the fact that Heidegger refers to his observations about the being he investigates as the rediscovery of knowledge that has been forgotten in a historical process. In the book, Heidegger explains that since Plato in Greek times (427-348 BC) and René Descartes in modern times (1596-1650), conceptions of what it means for something to 'be', have blocked how it also 'is' that something 'is'. These views have turned being into something being - and thus turned the way being is into something fixable - something in an ontological sense positively being - a something with a substance. Heidegger observes that the way being is, is not fixable, but he describes it instead as an opening underway. We will return to this later.

But why bother with how something is at all? This is because Heidegger's central concern is how man exists in the world at all. In relation to the investigation of this, he believes that the philosophy of his time has turned human being into a being among other beings. For him, there is thus a connection between the question of the perception of what something 'is', and the perception of what a human being 'is'.

However, you can have a broad interest in what something actually is. What is a tree, a sofa, a sign, love, freedom or a sister? The most common approach to studying these elements is to relate to the *what* of these different elements - that is, to begin to characterise, categorise and determine their content. However, Heidegger will instead focus on

the *how* of the elements - that is, how something comes into being (Wentzer, 2007, p. 487). In this book, then, he specifically addresses how human being comes into being when it is not a fixable being. He wants to explore *how* human being exists - as an opening towards the future.

He does this through the central question of the meaning of being. In other words, when Heidegger asks the question of the meaning of being, it is because he methodically - so to speak - wants to observe 'being in function' in the conviction that it will show its meaning there in its unfolding in practice. This meaning unfolds not as a being that can be understood as a being among other beings, but rather as a practice in the making.

One final point to realise at the outset about the purpose of *Being and Time* and the way it is written is that Heidegger does not engage in philosophy that is about producing answers. Heidegger's view is that philosophy is about asking questions. In this work, it is about formulating how the question of human being can be reformulated in a time when the meaning of being has been forgotten. In a way, this means that you should not read the work with the expectation that it will provide answers to what being is.³⁸ You should read the work because it shows how human being unfolds. And it does so as a questioning relationship with the world. The human being in its 'how' is - so to speak - a questioning relationship with the world. A questioning with the possibility to stop and the freedom to question our own relationship to the world. We'll come back to that too.

³⁸ The work contains though no definitions of man's place in the universe or guidance for living a meaningful life.

The structure of Being and Time

As mentioned, "*Being and Time*" is formulated through a different view of the ontological status of being than Heidegger realises in his own time. In the years before the work was written, Heidegger concentrated on readings and lectures on the philosophy of Aristotle (384-322 BC). One of the crucial points in these readings is that Aristotelian philosophy, according to Heidegger, rests on the ideal that being is to be finished - that is, the movement of being has come to an end. For Heidegger, this is because Aristotle confuses human being with the being of physics.

The ontological determinations that are supposed to indicate the way practice is, are modelled on an ideal of a supreme realisation, as completeness that poorly fits the otherwise presented process character, as the concrete analysis of human practice has repeatedly pointed out. (Wentzer, 2007, p. 522)

For Heidegger, the idea of being as a supreme being in finitude is mirrored in medieval philosophy via a basic structure in the relationship between the human world and the divine world, which for Heidegger is problematic in relation to the analysis of human being in practice. The problem in this distinction between the two worlds (the two-world doctrine) - that is, between a human order and a higher order of a different rank - is that philosophy must use representative categories for the understanding of its own life that seem foreign to experience.

Christian theology and the philosophical 'speculation' under its influence, and the anthropology that always accompanies such contexts, speak in borrowed categories that are foreign to its region of being. (Wentzer, 2007, p. 522)

For Heidegger, *Being and Time* is written to describe human being in a showdown with the two-world doctrine and the accompanying transcendental metaphysics. Philosophical speculation - the analysis of the unfolding of being - must speak in familiar categories that are rooted in everyday life and recognisable to the ordinary world of experience.

Heidegger uses the term 'Dasein' to denote the particular being of the human being. This term emphasises that Heidegger's interest lies in how human being exists in the world - that is, as a concrete 'there-being' in a specific place with its particular expression. He uses the term 'Dasein' to investigate the conditions of the beingness and world-relations of concrete human being - understood as structural conditions. He is thus not interested in man as a psychological, anthropological, biological or chemical matter. The term 'Dasein' can be translated as presence, which I subsequently use in this text. Presence also emphasises the purpose of the book in terms of understanding how the presence that is specific to humans applies to the presence of all humans in the world.

The introductory part of "*Being and Time*" comprises paragraphs 1-9, in which he explains the purpose of the book (the necessary repetition of the question of being) and the book's approach (its peculiar phenomenological method).

The next part of the book, paragraphs 9-44, is about describing the orientational framework within which the presence unfolds its understanding of being. Here, concepts such as 'being-in-the-world', 'being-present', 'present', 'presence as situatedness', 'presence as understanding', 'home falling', 'thrownness', 'actuality', 'irregularity', 'being-presence as care', 'basic anxiety', 'openness' and 'truth' are introduced as the orientation framework within which dasein/presence must be understood.

These are all key provisions of Heidegger's idiosyncratic conceptual apparatus. To summarise, it can be said that the aim of describing this orientation framework for the human understanding of being is to

develop a conceptual apparatus and an understanding that is practice oriented. An understanding that is concerned with the unfolding of concrete experience-based descriptions of the human world. This is written in a rebellion against the cognitive-theoretical description that comes with the subject-object relationship, which is an extension of Descartes' way of describing the human world (Wentzer, 2007, p. 528).

Heidegger's analysis points out that man's original relationship to the world is that of being thrown into the world and is thus always already in an understanding with the world before we begin to relate to it. We are thus also grounded in the world before we relate to it. Initially, the world is available to us in our understanding practice of dealing with the world. But the moment we relate to the functionality of a hammer in our hand or the blackboard as a physical object that constitutes an element in a lecture situation, for example, we can have an existing relationship with the world.

At the same time, the common everyday way of being is an alternation between being in actuality and inauthenticity. In our inauthentic being, which we can fall into, we take up residence in 'das Man', as 'man' is, for example, when we talk in linguistic clichés about everything and nothing and behave like the anonymous man does. At the same time, in the next moment we can be in actuality, where we are confronted with our own self and the anxiety-provoking freedom of taking a stand against the world. Heidegger characterises this questioning relationship to the world that is presence as a relationship characterised by care, which means that taking a stand in freedom and truth is an expression of this care. For the purposes of this thesis, it is central that the presence in anxiety is at the same time in a fundamental sense opened by the world. We will come back to this.

The last paragraphs of the book, 45-83, are generally about the relationship between presence and temporality - thus introducing the second part of the work's title concerning the meaning of time. *Being and Time* was submitted before the last part of the work was finalised because the manuscript was to be used to assess Heidegger's suitability as a professor. This meant that the ambition to unfold

existence on the premises of temporality was not finally realised. In fact, the final part of the book was never finished, even though Heidegger later resumed the theme of the meaning of temporality.

However, two things are crucial in this last part of the book in relation to this thesis. Firstly, the specification of 'being to death', which becomes an important provision in what Heidegger calls fundamental ontology. Being to death indicates that the possibility of death is part of every moment. In this way, presence is stretched between thrownness and annihilation (death), which for Heidegger happens in a kind of simultaneity. That is, he does away with a linear conception of time (past, present and future) in which the past is imagined to be distant and the future is not present in favour of the absolutely present present tense. For Heidegger, the present exists with a view to the future (a draft). The future thus has priority in the temporal structure of presence.

Being to death thus also has to do with the concept of authenticity, as the commitment in fear and freedom that death is part of every moment (even though death is indeterminate, unknown and the same for everyone) gives your own individual expression its weight and importance. Timeliness is what structures the structure of human being - for Heidegger in a showdown with a primacy of presence and the present. Presence is always directed towards the future. In relation to this dissertation's focus on the meaningfulness of ways of being, the analysis of being in relation to temporality contributes to the fact that being to death indicates that the draft of the future is also a confrontation with the indeterminacy of death. An authentic stance in freedom characterises the way of being present as something that is not yet determined.

For Heidegger, presence in the present is not an ideal of presence. By focusing on the future as the horizon of presence, Heidegger also believes he is saying something crucial about the way humans experience being. This brings him closer to unfolding the 'how' of presence in practice and maintains his rebellion against the theoretical content-orientated world relationship as the primary one. The future-

orientation of presence points to the incompleteness or the becoming of being.

Basic anxiety as a particularly excellent openness of presence

With the above identification of the purpose of *Being and Time*, and introductory descriptions of the structure of the book, I will move on to a reading of an absolutely central paragraph for this thesis. As we recall, a starting point for this thesis was to explore what it might mean to refer to dialogues as open. What can we associate with the concept of “open” in dialogues, so to speak? How does openness manifest itself? With these questions as a guide - while keeping the research process open - the phenomenological analysis of the concrete dialogue processes meant that my gaze was directed towards what role “ways of being” can play in relation to the dialogical situation.

In the central paragraph 40, Heidegger comes to show something quite crucial about the relationship between openness and presence. He basically shows that presence (i.e., man's way of being in the world) has a form of being that **exists as openness**. To me, this formulation is extremely interesting and relevant to this thesis. But before I unfold the scope of this statement for my focus on ways of being in dialogues, I will explore the entire paragraph 40.

As the title suggests, this section focuses on the fact that anxiety is a basic situatedness that opens up presence to a particularly high degree. As previously stated, for Heidegger, situatedness means both that we are always already connected to the world and that this can be in a particular mood. Secondly, it states that openness belongs to presence (Heidegger, 2007, p. 213). I will pursue this particular understanding of openness in this section.

The question Heidegger wants to answer in this paragraph is in what way anxiety is a particularly excellent localisation (Heidegger, 2007, p. 214). Throughout the paragraph, he develops a general idea that presence can be placed in front of itself, but also that presence can flee from itself. A turning away (escape from oneself) must be

understood in the context of the previously presented idea of reversion, as an interaction between actuality and irregularity. In the confrontation with oneself, the presence is held within the anxiety and fundamentally opens up being. The turning away (the reversion to an inauthentic "one") is in this sense to be understood as a turning away from the opened (Heidegger, 2007, p. 214).

Therefore, Heidegger asks in the text:

How is the presence in anxiety brought before itself through its own being, so that the being that is opened through it can be phenomenologically determined as such, or the same determination can be adequately prepared. (Heidegger, 2007, p. 214)

So, it is especially in the mood of anxiety that the possibility of the presence being placed in front of you is found. This is where being opens up. But at the same time, the point is that presence also contains a 'knowing of being' that can lead to an escape from oneself (into oneself), an escape he here also describes as being at the perceived world (Heidegger, 2007, p. 214).

In other words, Heidegger describes that the 'way of being-can' of presence contains both these modes of being. And it is also his point that it is precisely because presence contains this double possibility that the escape into closedness is based on the possibility of being opened. He says:

Only insofar as presence is ontologically and essentially brought before itself through its inherent openness at all, can presence escape itself. (Heidegger, 2007, p. 214)

Therefore, it cannot be said that openness is prior to or a causal and temporal precondition for what openness leads to. We can only state that the way being unfolds is in an interaction between openness and turning away in the perception of the world. One mode cannot be imagined without the other.

When Heidegger goes further in paragraph 40, he links anxiety to the dangerous concepts of 'nowhere' (Nichts) and to the confrontation with the world itself. The special thing about anxiety is - as we also know that Heidegger read in Søren Kierkegaard (1813-1855) in the book "*The Concept of Angest*" from 1844 - that anxiety does not know what it is afraid of (Heidegger, 2007, p. 216). This element of anxiety is now linked to the experience of pure presence, where the world is experienced as open as such. That is, in the pure openness, which is Heidegger's expression of the encounter with the world in this mode of being, there is also the encounter with nothing. And it is this encounter that is potentially dangerous because it is already present, but without signalling where it comes from or what it brings.

It is thus a central notion in Heidegger's analysis of anxiety's distinctive openness of presence that pure presence is always already the confrontation with the world in its fullness, but also in relation to a dangerous indeterminacy characterised by a loss of familiarity with the world - in 'pure openness'.

Heidegger thus states that "What anxiety is anxious about is the world as such" (Heidegger, 2007, p. 216). It is in the always already thrownness of presence into the world, that the loss of the world in openness is both a loss of the world's definiteness in its present enterprise and a possibility in being free to freedom, that anxiety is a particularly excellent openness (Heidegger, 2007, p. 217). Paradoxically, this means that openness holds the possibility of grasping the world in freedom, but often in its mode of being it becomes a turning away and escape from itself, as a fear of the world as such. In the openness of anxiety, the world as such is indeterminate and thus characterised by intruding with its lack of meaningfulness (everyday

familiarity breaks down), but there the world is also originally and directly the world as world (Heidegger, 2007, p. 217).

What does paragraph 40 have to say in the further reflections on the importance of 'ways of being'?

In conclusion, in relation to paragraph 40, it can be said that the basic figure of thought in relation to an interaction between a being in actuality and irregularity, as a confrontation with oneself and an escape from oneself is played out, as a phenomenological analysis of anxiety, as an excellent opening of presence.

In relation to my dissertation's focus on characterising ways of being and their openness in the context of the dialogical situation, there are now a number of elements to include in the analysis. As we have seen, there is an openness of presence that is about the encounter with the world. This encounter is characterised by a loss of meaning, which we also saw in the analysis of the dialogue processes. Where something special happened in the decisive moments of the dialogues, there was a break and loss of the expected grip on the world - a meaning that disappeared. Heidegger describes this as the encounter with the indeterminate - as the encounter with nothingness in pure opened presence.

With Heidegger's paragraph 40, we can also say that the being in presence in this openness is crucial. In the interplay between being in actuality and irregularity, it is crucial that being when it means to be opened by the the world does not disappear in the closedness and escape from itself and thus the world. This is not an imperative for Heidegger - in the sense of an idea one should pursue or something like that. For Heidegger, it is - as suggested earlier - related to the forgetting of being, as the preoccupation with being as a fixable being blocks this simultaneous presence as becoming and possibility. As we saw, the very purpose of "*Being and Time*" was to uncover how the special presence that Dasein is unfolds.

This means that we can include in the analysis that the presence in anxiety is particularly open to the world and that this is a way of being present that risks disappearing in a preoccupation with the encounter with the world as something specific being - either one or the other. If we have a one-dimensional perception of Dasein's encounter with the world, we risk covering or closing off the openness of the world in pure presence, which Heidegger's analysis points out is a crucial mode for Dasein's way of being at all. In other words, if Dasein is obscured by a gaze on the world's determinacy, humans risk distorting their fundamental way of being in the world and thus losing being in openness altogether.

Dasein unfolded as a questioning relationship with the world in freedom is of fundamental importance to humans. Pure questioning cannot be characterised by an answer that hides from oneself, because the pure being opened by world is then lost sight of, and this can be difficult for people to live with.

Openness, metaphysics and psychological well-being

The question of the importance of Dasein being opened by the world can also be linked to a broader understanding of the meaning of the metaphysical dimension in Heidegger's thinking. The idea of being in pure openness also describes his analysis of the notion that it is precisely the world that opens Dasein. We are in openness, so to speak, the moment we are in the world - and it is the world that opens Dasein. This also implies that openness is not caused by the subject's will or something that presence can accelerate. Openness is a dimension of the way Dasein exists at all.

This also means that this structure for the way of Dasein describes an idea that means that in the encounter with the world something important for Dasein takes place. Herein lies Heidegger's

understanding of the meaning of the metaphysical.³⁹ For Heidegger, in confrontation with oneself in the being opened in freedom, the freedom of the opening itself implies that the world intervenes in the being of Dasein, and that the possibility of the future that is thereby opened up is something that takes place quite structurally. In other words, the world opens for a rupture to take place, and Dasein is set free in the encounter with nothing. This 'break with the world' (expectability), which the world itself 'stands for', is the metaphysical event for Heidegger. But what is crucial here is that in forgetting being and falling back to 'man' and 'irregularity', we can risk not making this break and confrontation with nothingness and itself. In our one-sided focus on being, as something being, we can close off this opened being in pure presence and possibility. In the preoccupation with the 'what' of the world, we can forget the 'how' of the world. The metaphysical event is what gives Dasein a being in pure possibility.

The importance of Dasein being opened by the world in relation to dialogues

I have now argued that experiencing your own presence in the openness of the world is central because in this break with meaningfulness there is a metaphysical event that 'frees Dasein to freedom'. A freedom in possibility that can disappear in the oblivion of being, so that Dasein is not opened. This metaphysical event is also important because the world wants something with presence - namely to open it to the world and itself. This brings me to the point of being able to link the openness of Dasein with a perspective on dialogues and being in dialogues.

My starting point is - in continuation of the above - that there is a crucial aspect of openness and being in the way humans exist at all. Experiencing oneself in openness is a crucial aspect of being. My

³⁹ Of course, this aspect is further developed in the book "*What is Metaphysics*", which is Heidegger's inaugural lecture as a professor.

argument is that this dimension of Dasein can and should be taken care of in the dialogical situation. However, it can both be taken care of and risk being overlooked. There can be a closure and thus an impossibility of the open being.

If we take for granted that every person (with their Dasein) in a dialogical situation needs to **experience themselves in their openness** and that they risk never being in their openness to the world, we can ask ourselves how this can be promoted or inhibited in a dialogical situation. We can also ask if this element has anything to do with an openness of Dasein in dialogues?

If we look at my dialogue processes, I will say that an attention to this aspect primarily has to do with an attention to '**not doing**' and a focus on '**future possibility**' rather than the presence in the present tense. The element of 'not doing' has to do with the fact that too much doing and saying typically brings the focus of being to the 'what' of the world and thus a closedness. In Heidegger's words, in a dialogical situation, when searching for the right linguistic expression or the correct understanding, there is a risk of going for closedness or finitude. The being of Dasein risks being closed rather than open.

Focusing on this aspect can therefore first and foremost be about **doing less** - reminding oneself that the world's opening of Dasein happens by itself, so to speak. At worst, the subjective imagination and action can 'get in the way' of the openness because it closes the openness. Therefore, an awareness of this aspect can lead to an awareness of how, by doing less in the terms of understanding and action. I can in other words create space for the other's being in openness. Can I also be aware that my own being **is not only characterised by purposefulness and closure** (looking for an answer) in a turning away from the world and myself - and thus create the possibility for the other's experience of their being in openness? Can I lean into the fact that the formation of meaning is not final and absolute, but rather always contains an aspect of becoming through openness? Can we **train the ability to be in pure presence as part**

of the work of being in dialogues and thereby increase the possibility of the other's presence in openness?

These are the basic practical questions we can take away from Heidegger's philosophy.

Emmanuel Lévinas and Being - ethical being in accountability to the metaphysical relation to infinity

Introduction

In my philosophical pursuit of the question of the particular characteristics of human being in a dialogical context, the interest in this section falls on the philosopher Emmanuel Lévinas. In this section, where the main focus is on Emmanuel Lévinas' main work "*Totality and Infinity*" originally from 1961, I will show that Lévinas has another dimension to add to how we can understand what characterises the dialogical form of being. With his philosophical characterisation of the basic ethical relationship in the encounter with the other, Lévinas shows that the obligation to give the other an answer to the 'intrusion of the same' is fundamentally defined by the separation between people.

Lévinas presents a different perspective on the notion of being in a dialogical situation, highlighting other dimensions than those that became evident in relation to 'letting the world be',⁴⁰ as we have just seen in the work of Martin Heidegger. As we will see in this philosophical part of the thesis with the 4 sub-sections, each section adds a new dimension to how to describe ways of being in dialogical situations. Each dimension is thought of from its own independent perspective, but together they complement each other in an overall picture, which I will discuss at the end of the philosophical part.

It is clear that the four philosophers Martin Heidegger, Emmanuel Lévinas, Alphonso Lingis and Hannah Arendt have each developed their own independent philosophical position and even in several cases develop their philosophy in a confrontation with their teachers, as is the case with Lévinas' relationship with Martin Heidegger and Hannah Arendt's relationship with Martin Heidegger. At the same time,

⁴⁰ The world will let the metaphysical event happen when we don't do too much.

however, it is my view that there are several similarities across the four positions.

Firstly, they have in common that they are concerned with describing man's (Daseins) being in the world. In addition, my reading of the four philosophers also rests on the premise that they all think in continuation of a rebellion against transcendental metaphysics in the classical sense. They are all interested in an immanent transcendence in their ongoing interest in the metaphysical dimensions of the way life is experienced. When the idea of representation of a higher order is abandoned, they all think that the human being stands in the encounter with nothingness. Thus, although Lévinas sees his version of phenomenology as a rebellion against Martin Heidegger's thinking, Lévinas' idea of the radical Other of the Other follows in the footsteps of Heidegger's rebellion against classical metaphysics. For Lévinas, it is thus also about letting being be. But for Lévinas, the focal point is the being that is contained in the otherness of the other. For Lévinas, one must let Otherness be in its strangeness as infinity to avoid violating the concrete other – that is what Lévinas names making the other the same. As Simon Critchley puts it: 'If the other gets lost in the crowd, then their transcendence vanishes' (Critchley, 2002, p. 26). For Lévinas, Otherness - the strangeness that we encounter as Nothingness - is also what creates the possibility of an ethical response to the other's intrusion in my sphere.

In this section, I begin by explaining how Lévinas begins his intellectual career. I then identify the main ideas of his philosophy, focusing on his work "*Totality and Infinity*" and how it is relevant to the understanding of dialogical ways of being. Finally, I will argue how these ideas can have a bearing on the perception of human being in dialogical situations. These elements will, as I said, follow on from and complement how Heidegger's perspective informs us about this.

The philosophical starting point

Emmanuel Lévinas (1906-1995) was influenced by the thought of Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) in his philosophical training. As early as 1923, while at the University of Strasbourg, he studied Husserl's work in depth. He received his philosophy degree with a thesis on Husserl's "*Logical Investigations*". Early on, however, he develops a critical view of Husserl, criticising his idea of intersubjectivity for lacking an idea of something metaphysical. Lévinas says that Husserl's notion that one can put oneself in the other's place by constituting the other in myself and myself in the other falls short when analysing an actual encounter with the other's face. In his doctoral thesis entitled "*The Theory of Intuition in Husserl's Phenomenology*", the criticism of Husserl is carried all the way through, stating that Husserl's philosophy comes from an intellectualisation and idealisation of life. Lévinas says of Husserl's philosophy: "This is an act in which we consider life in all its concreteness but no longer live it" (Critchley, 2002, p. 9). You could say that Lévinas is one of the philosophers who perceives Husserl's transcendental ego as an ego that is closed in on itself and its ideas. An ego that paradoxically echoes Immanuel Kant's subject as a subject that is identical to its object. According to Lévinas' interpretation of Husserl's phenomenology, the concrete other is always already the other, and the other is always already me. According to Lévinas, there is no radical outside in Husserl's thinking. It remains an intellectual relation to how life is lived, but not a philosophy based on an interest in how life is actually lived.

Lévinas develops his own theory of the encounter with the face of the other - as his big idea. His basic point is - in relation to Husserl - that we sense something metaphysical in the encounter with the face of the other. It is in the encounter with the face of the other that the radically different meets us. That is, the other is not in me as something familiar. The other embodies a radical transcendence - something that is totally foreign to me. Metaphysically formulated, Lévinas says that exteriority strikes interiority and leaves me with an impression of strangeness that demands a response from the position of interiority, but which also

testifies to the humanity of the other. Lévinas is famous for associating the encounter with the Otherness of the face with a commandment that 'thou shalt not kill me'. The otherness of the other's face is what reveals the humanity of the other, which in essence also points to its inviolability. Paradoxically, it is thus not the recognisability of the encounter with the other's face that gives rise to a commandment that one must not kill. Lévinas' great and original idea is thus that it is the intrusion of the metaphysical strangeness of the other into the self that constitutes being in the world - as an ethical way of being in the world.

The big idea - formulated as the meaning of the face

Lévinas is a phenomenologist in the sense that his entire work is in a way based on a phenomenological analysis of the actual encounter with the face of the other. This also means that it can be difficult to account for the development of Lévinas' philosophy, because in a sense everything revolves around and returns to 'his big idea' of the meaning of the other's face. The recurring point (the Archimedes point in his thinking) is the concrete analysis of how the experience of the encounter with the other is experienced.

He realises that his philosophy must be based on the fact that the intrusion of exteriority always bears witness to a safeguarding of the inviolability of the other - and that the response to the intrusion of the Other calls for must also include the unthinkable. The unthinkable here is the strangeness of the Other, which we cannot understand precisely because it is foreign to us. Lévinas insists that the metaphysical has a meaning - but a meaning that is also about the nothingness that strangeness reveals. What we cannot see or understand, but which is the infinity we reach out for.

Breakthrough in the main work *Totality and Infinity*

Lévinas gradually distanced himself from Husserl's philosophy and became interested in one of Husserl's students, Martin Heidegger. In the years 1928-29, he spent time at the University of Freiburg and attended Heidegger's first lectures as Husserl's successor. One of the things that initially fascinates Lévinas about Heidegger's thinking is that he sees Heidegger as a philosopher who does not start with an idealistic intellectual conception of life, but rather starts with his analysis of Dasein. In the fundamental analysis in his main work "*Being and Time*", Lévinas sees a philosophy unfold that is concerned with being from the perspective of how life is actually lived.⁴¹

However, Lévinas gradually develops his own independent thinking as an extension of his analysis of the meaningfulness of the face and thus comes to explicitly distance himself from Heidegger's philosophy. In his first major work from 1961, "*Totality and Infinity*", Lévinas connects his analysis of the encounter with the face with a rejection of all forms of ontology based on understanding, correlation, symmetry, reciprocity, similarity and recognisability (Critchley, 2002, p. 13). He believes that ontological relations, when based on understanding, involve a totalisation that risks turning the Other into the same. The basic idea is that the face of the other exposes itself and thus constitutes a dimension that transcends my own image of the other in me. If this dimension is made the same in an allegory of recognition, you risk overlooking the other in your own image of the other. Lévinas' view is that one cannot put oneself in the stranger in the place of the other, as this would require putting oneself in the place of God - outside the relation to the concrete other (Critchley, 2002, p. 15).

The work "*Totality and Infinity*" can therefore be read as a rebellion against Martin Heidegger's philosophy. Lévinas describes Heidegger's philosophy as violent, as the preoccupation with the being of being -

⁴¹ This presentation is based on the historical notes on Lévinas' biography called "A Disparate Inventory" at the beginning of *The Cambridge Companion to Lévinas*, (2002).

and as we have previously seen in "*Being and Time*" as a 'happening'⁴² with us in the encounter with the world and the other - comes to overlook the concrete other. In short, Lévinas accuses Heidegger of making the other the same in a process of totalisation.⁴³

For Lévinas, Heidegger is so deeply rooted in the terminology of ontology that a consequence of the philosophy of being is that the other completely disappears. In other words, according to Lévinas, the metaphysical event is not transcendent in Heidegger. This is what Lévinas wants to avoid by describing the beginning of all philosophy as ethics. The first thing we encounter in the world is the Other with its transcendent intrusion into our world. An intrusion that demands an answer and characterises our being. But the intrusion requires an answer that does not presuppose a recognisability in the otherness of the other - and our being is marked by this intrusion without us knowing with certainty what it is about the other that might concern us.

Lévinas formulates the difference towards Heidegger's philosophy of being and the other as follows:

The primacy of Heideggerian ontology is not a truism that claims that 'in order to recognise being, one must have understood the being of being'. But to assert the primacy of Dasein over being is already to make a statement about the essence of philosophy. To place the relation to someone who is a being (the ethical relation) under the relation to the being of Dasein, which is

⁴² The metaphysical event.

⁴³ I ignore here the historical circumstances of Heidegger's involvement in the Nazi regime from joining the Nazi party and taking over the rectorship of the University and stick to the philosophical arguments for Lévinas' critique. For Lévinas, Heidegger's actions and their consequences for the Jews cannot be separated from his philosophy. Lévinas himself is Jewish and, after obtaining French citizenship, was drafted to serve in the French army. He was captured in the war against the Germans and was held captive in a military prison camp near Magdeburg, where he performed forced labour. In the camp, prisoners were segregated so that Jews were isolated. Lévinas survived the war, but much of his Jewish family died in the German concentration camps.

impersonal and which allows being to be grasped and mastered (a relation of knowledge), is to place justice under freedom. (Lévinas, 1996, p. 36)

For Lévinas, the ethical is thus closely linked to putting freedom first. It is the freedom that the infinity and unattainability of the other in this sense ensures. By making the concrete presence and intrusion of the other into the world of the same primary, Lévinas can preserve the freedom to respond in freedom and ensure the freedom of the other in response.

Lévinas describes Heidegger's philosophy as a philosophy of power - impersonal and inhuman:

Ontology as first philosophy is a philosophy of power. It leads to the state and the non-violence of totality without taking into account the violence that this non-violence feeds on and which is manifested in the tyranny of the state. The truth that should reconcile people exists here anonymously. Universality appears as something impersonal, and there is also a form of inhumanity. (Lévinas, 1996, p. 37)

And later he writes "Ontology becomes an ontology of nature, an impersonal fertility, a generous mother without a face, the womb of particular beings, the inexhaustible substance of things" (Lévinas, 1996, p. 37). He links Heidegger's philosophy to the face without the personal expression, when ontology becomes the encounter with the world as pure matter. For Lévinas, it is precisely the particular personal expression of the face that is the primordial situation of human being.

A common reckoning with classical metaphysics

However, at the same time, Lévinas' philosophy can also be seen as deeply dependent on Heidegger's thinking. Lévinas also subscribes to a rebellion against classical metaphysics (the two-world doctrine). His thinking continues to work in a rebellion against the idea that one world represents, so to speak, the other world (whereby the intellectual labour becomes decoding the logic between one world and the other world). Lévinas insists that the metaphysical is precisely defined by its infinity and unattainability.

Although Lévinas is fundamentally interested in the significance of the metaphysical (exteriority) for the ethical response to the presence of the other, he will not make the recognisability of the hereafter the ideal of metaphysical longing. For Lévinas, the infinity of metaphysical striving is precisely what makes it worth pursuing. If Lévinas, with his preoccupation with radical transcendence, can still be said to think within the philosophy of immanence, it is because in the concrete everyday encounter with the face of the other, the intrusion of exteriority into interiority is accommodated here and now and as an ordinary experience. The absolute other is always present in the same - but as strangeness. This means that relationships with the other are characterised by a metaphysical in-between way of being.

To be "put into question"

Another characteristic of the philosophy Lévinas unfolds in "*Totality and Infinity*" is that the intrusion of the other into the self also puts the ego 'into question'.⁴⁴ It is Simon Critchley who distinctly emphasises this dimension in his description of the encounter with the other. The intrusion of exteriority into interiority thus contains a dimension in which

⁴⁴ I have yet to find an adequate Danish translation of the English expression "to be put into question". I have not found a Danish expression that announces the neutral description of being "put into question" by the other without giving the expression a negative or positive connotation.

the face with its enquiry from the stranger also gives rise to an experience of not being quite sure what the starting point for your own response should be.

'To be put into question' gives words to the experience that the mere presence of the other brings uncertainty or lack of certainty in the perception of my own situation. There may be a moment of shock at being seen by the other - a shock that translates into me having to question what I bring to the table and what may be the basis of my response in the ethical situation. This uncertainty, aroused by the presence of the other person in my interior with strangeness and demands for a response, gives rise to hesitation and reflection, among other things.⁴⁵ This is thus also a dimension that characterises my being in the dialogical situation, which I will return to in the summary of the practical implications of the philosophy Lévinas unfolds in relation to manoeuvring possibilities in the dialogical situation. It is also a dimension that adds crucial insights to the overall question of this thesis, about how to describe being in relation to openness.

Philosophy on its own terms - strangeness and nothingness as the centre of togetherness

In the above, I have explained how Lévinas philosophically formulates his own position in relation to Husserl and Heidegger. And I have shown how the concrete phenomenological analysis of the face has very concrete consequences for the unfolding of the ideas in the main work *"Totality and Infinity"*.

I now turn to the significance of this philosophical perspective in terms of how to describe dimensions of dialogical being that are important for

⁴⁵ This dimension of openness, uncertainty and hesitation seems to be overlooked in the literature on Lévinas and the way Lévinas is applied to therapeutic practice in the literature on Open Dialogue. This may also help to explain why it can be scary to be open in relation to the other. Being "put into question" can be scary - and a normal behavior to avoid this can be to stick to your safe knowledge that can be maintained by ignoring the other.

describing the encounter with the other. His thinking has concrete implications for how we perceive the specific other and others we encounter.

Lévinas always returns to the fact that it is the strangeness of the other that prevents us from risking overlooking the other and totalising the other. What is crucial in the ethical encounter with the other is the obligation to respond. And it is a condition of the encounter with the other that my own certainty in my position is challenged, in what, by paraphrasing the Danish theologian K. E. Løgstrup's formula, could be called 'the ethical challenge'. In what follows, I will therefore continue to think about how I can see that Lévinas's thoughts on what constitutes our togetherness with others can mean in the concrete dialogical being. How can an awareness of these dimensions affect a way of being?

Following Lévinas, we can see that the important thing about being together is that we encounter the strangeness of the other and a demand for a response to this. But as I said, it is not the recognisability of this response for the other that is at the centre of being together. The task in a relationship cannot be to find the right understanding of the other. If we do this, we risk turning the other person into the same. In other words, we should be more concerned with what it means to reach for infinity than with the understandings that being together leads to. Perhaps the way in which togetherness can unfold even indicates - in accordance with Lévinas' thoughts - that the focal point of the conversation is that there is a radical separation and strangeness between us, which is the centre of our togetherness and our ethical exchange (Lévinas, 1996, p. 103).

What is at the centre between us is precisely the foreign (the strangeness). For Lévinas, the foreign cannot be defined in terms of content. The foreign is related to what we, by definition, hide when something is visible to the other. In this way, the hidden constitutes our togetherness. For Lévinas, this togetherness expresses our ethical obligation to the facial expression of the other. We have a responsibility

to the other, which is about the obligation to give the other a response. But we cannot pretend that this response is a sign that we understand the other person. The ethical aspect is that we are obliged to respond to the other person's facial call in a dialogical exchange. In other words, the interaction and conversation that takes place when we meet each other is characterised by us giving each other responses. The point is, however, that these responses thrive best by not having a purpose - in the sense of an ideal of a shared expression.

Lévinas was fundamentally sceptical of any kind of dialectical thinking because dialectics implies that we can recognise the antithesis of synthesis. Lévinas sees any dialectic as an attempt to make the other the same. Likewise, Lévinas' thinking is the opposite of 'rule ethics' - that is, a form of ethics that aims to find or follow certain rules for the encounter between people at all times. In Lévinas' eyes, rule-based ethics is an attempt to place legality above the encounter with the concrete other person, which is characterised by the fact that we fundamentally do not know what to do – but we can nevertheless respond.

Lévinas uses the concept of 'the infinite' in the other as an expression of an endeavour to meet the other - as an attempt to reach out for the infinity of the other (Lévinas, 1996, p. 193). This means that the unknown (infinity) of the other is both something we are interested in coming into contact with - but that it also remains unknown. It is possible to strive for and orientate yourself towards what you do not know in the other person's history and experience and at the same time let it be.

The purpose of being together is not to create shared recognisability - in the sense of "yes, I know that well". Instead, you can focus your attention on the places in the interaction with the other person where there is something in what is being said that is foreign to me, and on how I can keep my attention on it - without thinking I can understand it. I can listen or say something from my own background of experience without having to understand what it means to the other person. I can

even use the foreign (strangeness) as a guide for my attention. I can wonder what it might mean to the other person without expecting that I will find out. I can also focus my attention on the way the others are in the interaction and think; the way they are could be one of the ways the strangeness shows itself - let me dwell on it and take it in without understanding it.

When Lévinas talks about the encounter with the face of the other as an ethical calling, he is also saying that there is something about the other that we cannot see. But what we cannot see is also significant (Lévinas, 1996, p. 191). Even if something remains alien to our consciousness, it can have a meaning in a relationship. The connection to this strangeness may even be what allows the other to experience being present with their own strangeness.

Lévinas' understanding of a radical separation between people contains a metaphysical longing for the strangeness of the other. One could say that when we encounter the infinity of the other, we discover separation. For Lévinas, the separation between people is maintained in every relationship - even if understanding and intimacy between people develop over time. The separation between people means that the strangeness is constitutive of our togetherness because the other always shows itself in a way where the very unattainability of the other remains an important part of the relationship. In other words, for Lévinas, human relations are characterised both by the insurmountable strangeness of the other, which is about separation, and by the ethical responsibility of reaching out to the stranger - with the awareness that it is, by definition, strange (Lévinas, 1996, p. 143). For Lévinas, this longing also means that we are ethically connected to each other. Both the radical separation and the ethical connectedness must be considered in relation to the understanding of human encounters.

The question of strangeness is therefore directly related to ways of being in the interaction. Philosophically put, a question about the being that characterises one's presence is revealed in the encounter with

strangeness. If we follow Lévinas' idea that there is always an element of taking care of the other's freedom to develop on their own terms, as something that is about togetherness, the question becomes what such togetherness looks like where strangeness is crucial.

What is important in this togetherness in order to accommodate the infinity of the other and thus the freedom to unfold on their own terms? What does the togetherness look like that - according to Lévinas - is a prerequisite for being able to have a dialogical exchange with each other despite or because of the radical separation? Can we imagine dimensions of ways of being together that are important prerequisites for being able to talk meaningfully about what might be appropriate to do? Is it possible to shift the focus from the importance of the subject to the other's intrusion into my world - and thus perceive my starting point in the dialogical situation as a focus on the other, where the strangeness is a productive force?

Alienation and community in dialogue situations

In other words, when we pay attention to the way we are present in a togetherness of strangeness - also in professional work - we can see a togetherness that is about ethics. In this sense, togetherness is about increasing the possibility of being connected to each other with strangeness and separation as the centre of togetherness. In Levinas's sense, this togetherness can be understood as the experience of a common humanity. In practice, this means that by addressing the strangeness of the other, as that which we do not understand, we can achieve a joy in a shared being that is significant for the other's and our own freedom. In this mutual enjoyment, there is a deep experience of community.

By being together, you can experience that the common understanding grows, while a shared experience of the strangeness also grows. In a way, being in practice alternates between being in the domain of understanding and in the domain of strangeness. The domain of

understanding is about using your mind, while in the domain of strangeness you have to focus on your way of being in the interaction. You can practice observing when your presence is driven by a desire to understand and when it is driven by a desire being as community.

Lévinas' metaphysics is an ethics where nothingness hides in strangeness, and infinity opens up the ethical event in the encounter with the other.

Significance for ways of being

In the points below, I have summarised what Lévinas' philosophy means for the shaping of 'being in dialogical situations'.⁴⁶

- Connecting with the strangeness of the other in an ethical obligation to respond to the other's enquiry despite the radical separation.
- Connecting to the metaphysical dimension of the strangeness of the Other without trying to understand it.
- That my being is characterised by the other's intrusion - I am "put into question". I must be able to manoeuvre in a feeling that the basis for my response is uncertain.
- That you can consciously work with the fact that openness always has something to do with concealment.
- To let the other be when responding to the other's presence as resonance.
- Consciously directing your attention to what you don't understand in the other person in a way that does not aim to understand with your mind in the dialogue situation, because this is the most important thing for the other person to be able to unfold in freedom.

⁴⁶ These dimensions can be translated to address concrete didactic implications for ways of being in dialogical encounters, which I will come back to in the conclusion of the philosophical section of the thesis.

- That the focus is about 'being with the stranger' - to ensure the freedom of the other.

Alphonso Lingis - Dialogical being as shared being

Introduction

In the previous section, the focus was on Emmanuel Lévinas, on the ethical response based on 'separation' and 'strangeness'. The unique contribution to philosophy that Lévinas makes in his work "*Totality and Infinity*" is an understanding of man's being in the world as 'the same' that is constituted by an intrusion of 'the foreign'.

In relation to a reading of Lévinas that examines how this basic constitution can have an impact on the relational and dialogical conversation situation, the decisive factor is the ethical obligation to provide a response to the intrusion. A response that, in honouring the strangeness of the other, reaches out to the infinity of the other. In other words, the basic condition in relation to the dialogical starting point is the separation and the experience of the other's strangeness. Although we have seen that in the analysis of the ethical condition there is also a connectedness in the very act of giving an answer, for Lévinas it is crucial that the separation is what constitutes a defence against the violence that can potentially lie in the 'same' overwriting the 'other'.

In what follows, I will turn to another philosopher, Alphonso Lingis (1933-), who is deeply rooted in the phenomenological tradition of Husserl, Heidegger, Lévinas and Merleau-Ponty, among others, and at the same time has developed his own unique perspective on human being.

A paradoxical and original idea of commonness as nothingness

Alphonso Lingis is an American philosopher and professor emeritus at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh. Philosophically, he can be characterised as a post-existentialist phenomenologist. Alongside the philosophical part of his work as a professor of philosophy, his original

work consists of diverse descriptions based on concrete encounters with people he has met on his countless journeys around the world. These descriptions are in part anthropologically inspired narratives (often supported by photographic expressions), but Lingis always maintains that the unique specific encounter gives rise to special descriptions of the particular encounter.

Philosophically, Lingis is specialised in the French phenomenological tradition. He studied philosophy at the University of Lueven in Belgium. Here he wrote his doctoral thesis on Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Jean Paul Sartre. He is also recognised as an expert on Lévinas' philosophy and is known for having translated Lévinas' two main works "*Totality and Infinity*" and "*Otherwise than Being*" (*Autrement qu'être ou au-delà de l'essence*) from the original French into English.

In his own philosophy, Lingis can be read as an extension of Lévinas' thinking. He continues to work with the ideas of the ethical dimension of and relation to the otherness of the Other. As mentioned, Lévinas emphasises the strangeness of the other to an extent that many in the literature on Lévinas' insist that the separation between self and other makes the distance between people so radical that there is no connection at all.

Lingis, however, places the emphasis elsewhere, on what connects people rather than what separates us. He is fundamentally concerned that in all human encounters - across cultural boundaries and horizons of experience - a commonality can potentially be experienced. However, this commonality is not characterised by commonality through concrete experiences or linguistic expressions. For Lingis, the concrete encounter provides an opportunity to experience a commonality in glimpses - which I will refer to in the following as common being. According to Lingis, it is not in the concrete expression of the individual beings that the commonality lies. The commonality does not lie in the specific form the individual being may take. Rather, the commonality lies in the fact that by being human - and thus part of nature - we share common conditions of being. For Lingis, these common conditions of being, which can be experienced in glimpses

across all the differences between people, characterise a community that all people take part in.

His paradoxical attempt to characterise the common is that commonality is best described as a nothingness because it cannot be determined positively - it does not manifest itself as positive expressions that in uniformity and commonality can describe a 'something' that is common. It is the nothingness that we share and that we can experience in the other - in glimpses. The surprising and deeply original aspect of Lingi's phenomenological analysis of the encounter with the other is that we can experience a deep human community through the glimpse into the other's nothingness. We encounter each other's nothingness - understood as each other's strangeness and vulnerability as a human condition - glimpsed in our interaction.

A thought-provoking book - two types of communities

The book "*The Community of Those Who have Nothing in Common*" is based on the general observation that all people take part in two kinds of communities - the 'rational community' and the 'other community'. These two communities are explained in the first chapter of the book. In addition, the book consists of a series of essays ("the intruder", "faces, idols, fetishes", "the murmur of the world", "the elemental that faces", "carrion body carrion utterance", "community in death"), each of which explores experiences of the encounter with the other, where the 'other community' becomes particularly clear.

In the following, I will first clarify how Lingis understands the two communities. Then I will highlight points from Lingi's essay on "*The elemental that faces*" to explore the idea of the second community. This chapter concludes - like the previous two chapters - with reflections on what this philosophical perspective might mean for the way 'being' can be described in the dialogical situation.

The rational community

Lingi's description of the 'rational community' is about everyone being representatives of humanity, so to speak. In the rational community, it's about learning through education and training to say the right thing and behave correctly in the right situation. There is always something that is the rationally correct thing to say or do in a particular situation. This is what all individuals of the human species should do if they analyse the situation and correctly understand what is at stake in the situation. You learn through education and training of the intellect to analyse and understand to say and do as you rationally should.

The rational community in the modern sense is an offshoot of the Enlightenment, where the idea of human rights and the rational individual is described (Nealon, 2014, p. 132).⁴⁷ The human being described in human rights is precisely the rational common human being - in the sense that the conception of the human being and its associated rights apply to all people at all times. A society is defined precisely by the exchange of information, resources and services in the rational community. The rational community is based on an idea of commonality, equality, interchangeability, recognition and representation in behaviour and actions between people. This means that I recognise the other's expression and action precisely because this other is a representative of the rational behaviour that anyone else in the same situation should do or say. In this sense, it is a virtue to be able to be replaced by another representative who would also say the correct thing.

The rational community is based on the notion that human behaviour, like other kinds of 'matter', behaves predictably. If you consider humans as a piece of nature like other animals in the light of a scientific view, they should behave according to empirical laws. Science can recognise these laws and the role of philosophy is to provide

⁴⁷ The following is based on Jeffrey Nealon's interpretation of Lingis in the text "*On the Community and Those who have Nothing in Common*" in the book "*Itinerant Philosophy*" - on Alphonso Lingis.

justifications for the rational procedures (Lingis, 1994, p. 2)"Philosophy seeks to give reasons for the rational procedures, elaborates theories of the relationship between rational thought and reality, seeks reasons to believe in rational thought" (Lingis, 1994, p. 3).

The other community

Lingis argues that we also take part in another type of human community, the 'other community', which is not characterised by recognisability. This is the community he describes as the community of nothing. It is a community that is precisely not constituted by the common recognisable rational expressions of behaviour. It is a community that is barely linguistic. It is a community where we glimpse the other's parades (representation) fall, and where vulnerability and the face reveal an abyss of death and horror.

Community happens when the other necessarily meets you face-to-face by challenging and interrupting the common discourse:

The other community forms when one recognises, in the face of the other, an imperative. An imperative that not only contests the common discourse and community from which he or she is excluded, but everything one has or sets out to build in common with him or her. (Lingis, 1994, p. 10-11)

In this encounter, it is not possible to unambiguously read the facial expression that testifies to fear and death when it is indeterminate and does not - so to speak - show up to the community with the right representation - or is just changing on its way to becoming something else. When we catch a glimpse of this community, we are at the mercy of the other and at our own mercy - not knowing how to respond. This is the moment when I cannot avoid exposing myself to the other's judgement and competition with the other.

Lingis believes that in particularly vulnerable situations, such as at the deathbed, in erotic extremes or when meeting people from a completely different culture, it is particularly clear that we experience being part of a community that is not the rational community. This can be in the sexual act, in the conversation with the dying or in the encounter with the person in a culture where you have no chance of deciphering the meaning of the expression. Here, he suggests that it makes no sense to maintain the rational expression. In these situations, it is particularly evident that the guard drops and people are at each other's mercy without the rational impulse to say the right thing. When sitting at the deathbed, for example, it is not crucial what you say, but rather that you talk to each other and are thus together about nothing (Lingis, 1994, p. 155).

Lingis describes what happens when rational discourse is interrupted by the intrusion of the other (the stranger). We can see that we discover the fragility and strangeness of the other in our exposure to each other:

It is with the nakedness of one's eyes that one exposes oneself to the other, with one's hand arrested in their grip on things and turned now to the other, open-handed, and with the disarmed frailty of one's voice troubled with the voice of another.
(Lingis, 1994, p. 11)

What is interesting in Lingi's analysis of the two communities is that the community of nothing (the other community) will not allow itself to be absorbed or subsumed into the rational community. The other community interrupts, irritates and creates problems for the rational community. Lingis says that the other community is a kind of doubling or shadow of the rational community. He calls the other community a community before, below or beyond the rational community. Lingis says: "Before the rational community there was the encounter with the other" (Lingis, 1994, p. 10).

In other words, 'the other community' is in a way folded into the 'rational community', which means that from within the given laws and rules of rational society, you are confronted with the other without knowing how to respond adequately. There may be situations where we realise that we cannot find the answer we should give as a representative of rationality. We may find ourselves being reminded that the most important thing is that we are together in a community about nothing - and not so important what we say or do (Nealon, 2014, p. 133). The essential thing is that you are the one saying something and being present, not what you say or do (Lingis, 1994, p. 107).

The elemental - the courage to meet the other

The idea of the other community - as a kind of doubling or shadow of the rational community - can be illuminated through another part of the book "*The community of those who have nothing in common*". In the essay entitled "*The elemental that faces*", Lingis unfolds ideas about the elemental that flanks and explains how it can be experienced to be part of the other community, and what elements of a phenomenological analysis of being in the world this has to do with.

The section opens with a reference to the fact that it takes a special kind of courage to sit next to a dying person. Lingis notes that the virtue 'courage' is considered to be one of the cardinal virtues, and that being a congenial interlocutor requires courage in general (Lingis, 1994, p. 107). The courage required in relation to being with another at the end of life is about being confronted in some way with the limits of the power of language. Lingis talks about the experience of feeling that there is nothing right to say in such situations. On the one hand, you can be sure that you must be right there in this last part of life with the other person - but at the same time feel that it is more important that you say something than what you say. If you are sitting next to the dying person, the content of the words - so to speak - falls short in favour of saying anything at all.

For Lingis, this phenomenon expresses that in this kind of community (the other community), the other does not expect a rational response where the essential thing is what you say. Instead, it is other elements that the interaction calls for - as Lingis puts it:

That your hand and your voice extend to her in accompaniment to the nowhere she is drifting on to, that the warmth and the tone of your voice come to her as her own breath gives way, and that the light of your eyes meet hers that are turned to where there is nothing to see. (Lingis, 1994, p. 109)

As mentioned, in the rational community, it is about speaking as a representative of the common discourse. But in this case, where the common is nothing, being together is about the other person feeling the outstretched hand, hearing the voice, hearing the warm tone of the voice and the light of the eyes meeting. Thus, at the limit of language, it is not silence that occurs - for Lingis it is an injunction to speak in the sense of being present and thereby witnessing 'the elemental' that shows itself in speech.

A different beginning

Now, one could say that this extreme situation, which unfolds at the very end of life, testifies to the end of language, since it coincides with the end of life. But paradoxically, Lingis argues that this encounter with the elementary can also be said to be a more general description of a different beginning of communication - a beginning other than the rational. What is special about a beginning of communication that starts in the other community, so to speak, is that it starts in an experience that it is important 'that I say something'.

The importance of saying something is therefore linked to the fact that this 'saying' reveals the elementary, but at the same time an experience that it is important that it is me who says it. In the concrete

encounter with the other person, it is precisely this, that 'I' say something that means something to the other person, and it is the experience of being me who says it that is crucial to my own experience of being me. Lingis talks about finding oneself in the encounter with the elemental (as opposed to being the interchangeable one in the rational community) - "we find ourselves in the light" (Lingis, 1994, p. 123).

Lingis goes even further to talk about how one can be alienated from being part of the other community's elemental community (alienation from the elements). For Lingis, the experience of being alien in relation to feeling at home also has to do with being 'in touch with the elemental'.⁴⁸ You can get lost in trying to live as 'you' do - for example, when encountering a new type of community where you are a newcomer. But since there is another beginning possible in the other community, you can reach out to the other:

Sometimes when we go, we find ourselves immediately at home and resolve to stay here, even if we have no work there, know no one, and even do not know their language. But in most cases, we have to appeal to others to make ourselves at home. We appeal to the others to help us be at home in the desert, in the rain forest, in the tropics, in the tundra, and in the ocean. (Lingis, 1994, p. 118)

The elemental - a further development of a sensually orientated phenomenology

Lingis's descriptions of the meaning of the elemental rest on an independent and original proposal for what he calls "a phenomenology of the saying that occurs when the one faces the other with the light and warmth and carnal substance of his or her face" (Lingis, 1994, pp.

⁴⁸ I will return to the relationship between being at home and being an alien at the end of this thesis. I will relate it to my own experience of being an alien, which I described in chapter 2.

122-123). This formulation is in a way programmatic for the way Lingis sees his contribution to a further development of the phenomenological description of human being in the world.

This is not the place for a lengthy investigation of Lingis' relationship to Husserl, Heidegger, Lèvinas and Merleau-Ponty. Throughout his work, Lingis is explicitly and implicitly in discussion with his predecessors. In this essay on the elementary, Lingis engages in a discussion with Heidegger's idea of authenticity. He criticises Heidegger for wanting to take on the burden of the other. Levinas' mention of 'the elemental', Lingis sees as a step towards describing 'a phenomenology of sensibility' - a trace in Lèvinas that Lingis develops further. According to Lingis, one must go beyond imagining an individual or structural sensibility to describe our being in the world.

What is special about the way Lingis describes being in the elemental is that in a way we are nature and in that sense we are elemental ourselves. We are earth, air and light and thus have no relationship with these dimensions. Our life is sustained by these elements. Lingis puts it this way:

We do not relate to the light, the earth, the air, and the warmth only with our individual sensibility and sensuality. We communicate to one another the light our eyes know, the ground that sustains our postures, and the air and the warmth with which we speak. We face one another as condensations of earth, light, air and warmth and orient one another in the elemental in a primary communication. (Lingis, 1994, p. 122)

We can see that Lingis perceives the encounter with the other as a primary situation in which we share the light, air and heat we speak with in a simultaneity - because we are simply condensations of earth, light, air and heat. Lingis is concerned with describing this elemental being together as a transcendence of a phenomenology that is still concerned with individual sensibility in relation to describing the encounter with the world as an encounter determined by geometric

dimensions (things). He says that light, heat and earth are not a substance (thing) that can be viewed from different angles.

For Lingis, the essence of being human in this sense is that we are sustained by the very fact that we are part of the nature we live in. In the elemental, we are present so that the world cannot be possessed. We find ourselves and obviously identify ourselves in a world of things, but at the same time we live in the elemental where we are nature and are sustained as part of it. He states: "For us earthlings, the ground is pure depth for support, supported by nothing which support all things in their places" (Lingis, 1994, p. 123).

We see here that the concept of 'nothing' - and remember the overall title of the book about the community of nothing - is central to sustaining our being in the world. Since we earthlings are made up of light, air and warmth, we also, in Lingi's perspective, enjoy this sustenance of life - the enjoyment of being present - in the same way as the rest of nature. We encounter this sustenance through the encounter with the other and: "it is before the face of another that our enjoyment becomes our own. Our own to give" (Lingis, 1994, p. 127). That is, for Lingis, it is through the presence of the other in my world that I come to be present as myself and my enjoyment becomes my own.

If we return to be sitting by the side of the dying, we can now formulate more precisely what is at stake in relation to the common being in the encounter with the elemental. Lingis concludes his essay on the elemental as follows:

What the face of the other asks for is not the inauthentic and inauthenticating solitude with which I substitute my skills for his⁴⁹ take over her tasks for her, view the forms and the landscape for him, formulate the answers to the questions in her stead. He does not seek his or her contentment in the content that will satisfy his needs and wants, which I can supply from my place

⁴⁹ Here we see Lingis' critique of Heidegger.

and my resources and with my skills - the contentment which, when he has been displaced by me and disburdened of his own task, will leave him only the weight and death of the inorganic. In seeking the support of my upright stand on the earth, the agile luminousness that shines in my eyes, the warmth in my hands, the ardor in my face, and the spirituality in my breath, the other seeks the pleasure that is enjoyment in, involution and the dying in, the elemental. The other seeks the contact and the accompaniment. (Lingis, 1994, p. 132)

That is, the other person does not expect a response where the answer is the essential. The crucial thing we can have the courage to do is to reach out and give the other person is the sharing of the support of the earth and nothingness. My posture, the light in my eyes or the warmth of my voice is what we share but cannot own or control. Sharing our community of being carried upwards through a common participation in the elemental - and an enjoyment of life - is what connection and community can be about.

Dialogue behaviour in the light of the other community and the elemental

In the previous section, we have reviewed how Lingis describes the two types of communities and seen that the elemental thing we encounter in the face of the other holds the possibility of beginning the communication within ourselves. We have seen that the second communion is about sharing the experience of being sustained by the earth and nothingness - that I am the light in my eyes, the air and warmth in my hands. We have mentioned that Lingis bases his descriptions on a 'phenomenology of the saying',⁵⁰ where the starting point is that humans are nature on a par with animals and the world. In

⁵⁰ It is difficult to find a good Danish translation of the expression "the saying". In "the saying", the expression remains a verb, which is the point to avoid substantiation.

this way, he breaks with an individual sensibility and a structurally orientated phenomenology.⁵¹

In the following, I turn to what more concrete implications Lingis' perspective on the other community can have in relation to the dialogical situation. For me, the interesting thing about dialogical ways of being is that it is a commonness that we can actively share. Here Lingis offers a different perspective than Heidegger and L  vinas. This means that in a concrete dialogical situation, there is the possibility of experiencing a community. It matters for the dialogical encounter between two or more people that we can experience being part of the other community. It can create the beginning of a new communication based on an experience of being me. An awareness of the other community in the encounter with the elemental can reduce the risk of getting lost like an 'alien' on earth, not reaching out to the other. Sharing the experience of being together about nothing can provide the experience of being held up - my (posture) is possible because I am held up by the ground and nothing.

In other words, Lingis' philosophy is about the common nothingness. If these insights are to be translated so that they can mean something in relation to dialogical ways of being, they can be summarised as follows:

- The importance of sharing the experience of being human (sharing) - you can feel this community in the way you are present in a space.
- That you can work on your behaviour in relation to 'spotting' the other person's vulnerability and your own vulnerability.
- That you can work with the fact that it's not so important what you say - but that you are present and share the togetherness of the basics by saying something.
- That you can train your awareness of the humanity of others - glimpses into the cracks of rationality.

⁵¹ With individual sensibility and structurally orientated phenomenology, Lingis refers to Heidegger and Husserl.

- You can actively do something to share the experience of communion of nothingness.
- You can focus on 'here-and-now' togetherness with glimpses into each other's hidden vulnerabilities.
- You can work to stop letting the representative lines block the cracks into rationality.
- You can work consciously with the elementary dimensions - light, air, heat and earth.

Hannah Arendt - dialogical being as thinking

In the previous section, explaining Alphonso Lingis' idea of 'the other community' and '*The elemental that faces*', the crucial dimension in relation to dialogical situations was the possibility of being together. According to Lingis, human being in a dialogical situation includes the possibility of being together in a community of nothing - where some specific elements meet one.

The special attention to how this can have an impact in the specific dialogical situation is thus about the fact that in the way being unfolds, there is a potential in experiencing being together in this 'other community'. It is my contention that this can be an important dimension to be aware of when people are together in general, and that this awareness of something that takes place just by being together can also apply to being together in contexts that we otherwise primarily think of as professional help conversations - for example at a residential centre.

In the following, I will turn to the fourth and final philosopher in relation to putting into words elements of human being that can have an impact on the dialogical situation. - This is Hannah Arendt's (1906-1975) work "*The Life of the Mind*". I believe that the four dimensions - in the four respective sections - complement each other in their diversity. In a concluding section, I will return to discuss the similarities and differences between the four positions. For now, however, the point is that this fourth dimension adds a dimension that neither Heidegger, Lévinas nor Lingis unfolds, but which in its diversity together with the other dimensions can provide a multidimensional view of how being and ways of being are a crucial dimension in the dialogical situation.⁵²

⁵² Of course, it is possible to imagine other perspectives on the importance of beings for the dialogical situation than the four that this thesis points to. Hopefully, other research can bring further nuances to this field.

Man is thinking

This section is based on the work "*The Life of the Mind*" by Hannah Arendt. In her last work, "*The Life of the Mind*"⁵³, she makes the peculiar point that all human beings are characterised by a spirituality in which the ability to think, will and judge is central. In this section, I will focus on the spiritual dimension that unfolds in Part 1 of the book, which is about thinking, because this dimension is explicitly linked to ways of being in dialogical situations. Arendt argues that a unique characteristic of the human way of being in the world is that man is a thinking being.

What this entails more precisely will be unfolded in what follows - including the crucial point that thinking requires withdrawal into contemplativity (and 'solitude') in 'nothingness' - which paradoxically for Arendt is a place where we are more in contact with the world and the other than in the ordinary presence in a world of phenomena.

In other words, this section will open the work "*The Life of the Mind*" in terms of the spiritual significance of thinking for humans. It will explain how this spiritual dimension of the human being is formulated in continuation of a break with what Arendt calls the two-world theory and a reversal of the metaphysical hierarchy in favour of surface value. The central part of the section explains what Arendt understands by the terms 'de-sensing' and 'transformation'. At the end of the section, as in the previous three sections, it reflects on the more practical implications of the question of the meaningfulness of thinking for being.

⁵³ Published in English under the title "*The Life of the Mind*" in 1977-1978 and in Danish in 2019 under the title "Åndens Liv/Life of the Spirit" from which I will quote and refer to in the following.

Back to philosophy of existence

Before we move on to the actual work "*The Life of the Mind*", I would like to make a few remarks about Hannah Arendt's background and work. This is to make it clear that we should not simply read her as a political theorist in the sense that her work should only be read with a view to understanding the acting and political human being. The current perception of Arendt is that she has contributed to political theory in the context of a strong analysis of the role that action plays in the human condition. In particular, her work from 1958 "*The Human Condition*" - published in Danish in 2005 under the title "Menneskets vilkår" - in which she develops her tripartite division of man's active life into the categories of labour, production and action, has meant that Arendt is primarily read as a political theorist. Arendt's point in this regard is that the action perspective is underemphasised in relation to perceiving man as working. In other words, there is a widespread reception-historical tradition of reading her texts as a contribution to an understanding of the political/social - which also applies to readings of the work "*Life of the Mind*". In this section, however, the main argument is that "*The Life of the Mind*" can be read in its own right, as an attempt to say something original about human being in a more existential philosophical perspective.⁵⁴ The starting point for Arendt is that there is no causal connection between man's spiritual unconditioned being in the world as a thinking individual and his being as a doer. Arendt

⁵⁴ This is not the place for a more comprehensive argument that Arendt's entire work can be read with a view to her chronological last work, namely "*The Life of the Mind*". A reading that, so to speak, indicates that Arendt, from her early philosophical studies in Marburg, Heidelberg and Berlin, had a primary interest in a philosophical description of man's being in the world as a spiritual being, where the concepts of beginning (natality), freedom, love, thinking, surface, nothingness, invisibility, withdrawal, language as unspeakability, etc. are key concepts. In "*The Life of the Mind*" Arendt makes much of the fact that there is no causal connection between the description of the contemplative man's being and the activity of the acting man. It is not the case that thinking (will and judgement) necessarily leads to action. Thinking is a quality, independent of its connection with action (or a particular privileged understanding). This means that Arendt's texts on politics and society can be read as analyses of how the acting human being (*vita active*) differs from the spiritual human being who thinks (*vita contemplativa*).

says: "indeed, there is no more obvious or more radical contradiction than that between thinking and acting" (Arendt, 2019, p. 106).

Historical backdrop

Hannah Arendt is a German/American philosopher and writer. Because of her Jewish background, she had to flee Germany in 1933 when the Nazis took power. Arendt first fled to Paris, but when she was imprisoned by the French along with other Jews, she managed to escape all the way to America, where she lived for the rest of her life. Arendt made a living writing for various journals during her early years in America, but eventually made a living teaching and researching at several American universities - the last many years at Columbia University in New York.⁵⁵

Arendt primarily taught political theory and related topics in sociology. She became known to the public for her journalistic work, which included attending the 1961 indictment trials of Nazi Erich Eichmann in Jerusalem and writing about it under the title "*Eichmann in Jerusalem - A Report on the Banality of Evil*" (originally published in *The New Yorker* magazine). This publication attracted a lot of attention because Arendt described Eichmann as an ordinary bureaucrat whose greatest crime, in Arendt's eyes, was that he did not think for himself, but seemingly just followed orders. Many - including the Jewish community, for whom Arendt was working at the time - wanted Eichmann to be identified with extreme essential evil. However, Arendt's focus was not on an essential evil in analysing Eichmann, but instead on the fact that Eichmann demonstrated an inability and unwillingness to engage in the basic human activity of thinking and

⁵⁵ This section is based on the introduction to the book "The Life of the Mind" entitled "*For Freedom - Introduction to Hannah Arendt's book on the life of the Mind*" - by Hans-Jørgen Schanz", which outlines Hannah Arendt's life circumstances, among other things. I refer to the page numbers Schanz has written in the introduction in the first edition of *The Life of the Mind*.

applying conscience. It was here, according to Arendt, that Eichmann revealed his particular form of evil - a notion that became known as the 'banality of evil'. Arendt's analysis of Eichmann made her publicly known. Subsequently, her main theoretical works were considered to be '*The Origins of Totalitarianism*' and '*The Human Condition*', in which she gives a historical account of how European totalitarian movements flourished as barbarism in the 20th century and describes how human activities in relation to the political can be understood.

Based on Arendt's own history - including the barbarity of the Second World War and the experience of being stateless upon her arrival in the United States - it is not surprising that Arendt remained preoccupied throughout her writings with exploring how to create societies in which human beings retain their dignity and in which each individual can freely carry their own voice into the political field. Her contribution to the understanding of the significance of the political participation of the acting human being in freedom for the formation of society is quite original.

Philosophically well-versed talent

In other words, it's not surprising that Arendt is best known to the public as a political theorist and social commentator. What is less well known, however, is that she had a background as a thoroughly trained philosopher and a lifelong interest in reading and interpreting classical Greek philosophy. At a very young age, Arendt already mastered both Latin and Greek - something she had learnt during her theology and philosophy studies in Marburg. She studied philosophy with Martin Heidegger, who not only began a long-lasting love affair with her, but also considered her to be one of the most gifted students he had ever had. Arendt wrote a philosophical dissertation on the concept of love in Augustine under the guidance of the philosopher Karl Jasper, and through her studies in Berlin, Marburg and Freiburg, she was also extremely well versed in the philosophical and theological trends of the time. Phenomenology and the philosophy of existence and its

relationship to the philosophical tradition were her home turf, so to speak.⁵⁶ She thus had an in-depth knowledge of the philosophical tradition - a philosophical starting point that, as far as I can see, she remained in constant dialogue with throughout her life.⁵⁷

Back to the starting point

When, towards the end of her life, she began the work that was published after her death in 1975 with the title "*Life of the Mind*", it is clear that she was fundamentally grappling with the philosophical assumptions of phenomenology, among others, and thus with the proposal for a description of human being in the world that lies therein. In this book, she in a way moves back to her philosophical starting point by setting out to describe the opposite of man's active life, namely his spiritual contemplative life, which she divides into thinking, willing and judging. I believe that her reflections on the role that the spiritual dimension of human life plays in describing man's being in the world have been part of Arendt's thoughts throughout her life and work. When Arendt dies, she has prepared the publication and the chapters on thinking and willing, whereas she has not made much progress with the chapter on judgement. It is her editor and literary executor Mary McCarthy who finalises the text for publication.

In the following, the key points of the book "*The Life of the Mind*" will be outlined insofar as they are important for understanding how thinking is a key concept in relation to dialogical being. This dimension of her philosophy is, to my mind, underexplored. What is original about

⁵⁶ This is also evident in the detailed sections on the history of ideas in "*The Life of the Mind*", where she takes on Aristotle, Kant and Heidegger, among others.

⁵⁷ Although in the introduction to "*The Life of the Spirit*" Arendt flirts with the idea that she does not consider herself a philosopher, I believe that her political theory is connected to a fundamental philosophical analysis of man's being in the world. "*The Life of the Mind*" can be read as Arendt's attempt to clarify her particular philosophical analysis of man's being in the modern world. This is done through an in-depth philosophical discussion with Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, Kant, Husserl and Heidegger, among others.

her work is that she describes thinking as a constitutive feature of being human at all. In addition, she describes thinking as a spiritual contemplative occupation - characterised by withdrawal, de-sensing, silent and invisible dialogue between I and me. Thinking is about something fundamentally different from realisation and truth: meaning. These two basic features of the book are highly original. It is my contention that inherent in this analysis of thinking as a constitutive feature is that if man is prevented from thinking in seclusion, he risks losing his humanity. I will come back to this. First, let's follow how Arendt develops her work in relation to describing the role of thinking in general.

The two-world theory - a confrontation with a metaphysical fallacy

Arendt begins her work by stating that humans - like all other phenomena - coincide in their being with their appearance. This appearance is destined to be perceived by others. This also means that we always appear to several people. The multiplicity of observers of the individual's appearance/self-presentation is what Arendt calls plurality⁵⁸ : "Nothing that is, exists - insofar as it appears - for itself (in the singular); everything that is, is destined to be perceived by someone or other. Not man, but men inhabit this planet. Plurality is the law of the earth" (Arendt, 2019, p. 59).

Here we already see the work's insistence on the importance of the other for the appearance of the self. Arendt says that the world is the place of human appearance - an appearance that she compares to the actor's performance. The actor's appearance is dependent on a stage to appear on and some fellow actors and spectators to whom the expression can unfold (Arendt, 2019, p. 61). At the same time, Arendt

⁵⁸ Arendt's idea of plurality challenges the idea of the singularity of identity - identity as something that the individual can have power over. Identity is created in relationships for Arendt.

characterises man's familiarity with the world we live in. In an implicit discussion with Heidegger's idea of thrownness, Arendt argues that we are at home in the world:

We are, however, of this world and not merely in it; we too are phenomena by virtue of coming and going, appearing and disappearing; and although we come from nothing, we arrive fully equipped to deal with whatever appears to us and take part in the play of the world. (Arendt, 2019, p. 62)

Arendt's idea that we appear to each other through our actions also lies in the formulation about managing the world's games. Language and action are what show us as who we are - something we are born into the world to be able to do. The world is ready to receive us - appearance as a phenomenon is socially conditioned.

When Arendt says that appearance coincides with being, it is also related to her explicit rejection of the two-world theory - what she calls a metaphysical fallacy. The two-world theory is about the ancient distinction between true being on the one hand and mere phenomena on the other. This way of thinking, which finds its most striking expression in Plato's cave parable, is based on the idea that beyond the immediate perceptibility of phenomena there is a more real supersensible reality.

The sensual is fleeting and false, while the supersensible is eternal and true. The sensual is of a lower order than the higher order of the supersensible. This is an old idea that runs through most of the history of philosophy; that there must be a truth behind the phenomena. Arendt further points out that "the philosophical tradition has transformed the foundation from which something arises into the cause that produces it, and then has attributed to this producing agent a higher degree of reality than is given to what can be seen with the naked eye" (Arendt, 2019, p. 64).

In contrast, Arendt fundamentally rejects the idea of two worlds of different orders. Here she follows Nietzsche when she concisely notes: "What is dead" is not only the localisation of such "eternal truths", but also the distinction itself." Arendt argues that man always lives in a world of appearances that never reveals anything behind these appearances. Man cannot 'live among causes'. This is partly important in relation to her enterprise, which we will come to shortly, of describing a spiritual invisible occupation as a withdrawal from the world - a withdrawal that is not about leaving the world of appearances in favour of another or higher order. But it is initially formulated in relation to a discussion of (mere) phenomenality and (true) being. Arendt argues that the idea of the revelation of a true supersensible world is based on a fallacy because:

....The truth is that phenomena not only never reveal by themselves what underlies them, but also, generally speaking, they never only reveal; they also conceal something: no thing, no side of a thing, shows itself without actively concealing the others. They reveal while at the same time they protect by revealing, and as for what lies beneath, this protection is perhaps even their most important function. (Arendt, 2019, p. 64)

The value of the surface

Arendt's rejection of the two-world theory leads her to argue for a reversal and reformulation of the traditional metaphysical hierarchy between surface (skin) and essence (depth). Her basic view is that any phenomenon that dissolves reveals a new phenomenon. It is not the case that the ground (cause) of the phenomenon appears behind the skin of the phenomenon. For Arendt, there is no sphere beyond the phenomena (a sphere to which the spirit can retreat), to which man has access. Every observation is, so to speak, bound to an appearance.

This leads to the idea that the special character and meaningfulness of phenomena lies in their surface. The way phenomena appear is what you as a scientist, or what you in ordinary life should dwell on (Arendt, 2019, p. 65). One cannot (cf. the metaphysical fallacy) find behind the phenomena at all. Arendt thus argues that it is in the surface that the specificity of things resides. She uses an analogy to biology, where it is true that the internal organs of animals are all similar - the interior is identical and non-specific from animal to animal.⁵⁹ Similarly, human identity cannot be discerned through the internal organs. Arendt describes what happens when a phenomenon dissolves:

But what then appears under a deceptive surface is not an inner self, a real phenomenon, unchanging and reliable in its presence. The uncovering reveals a deception; it does not reveal anything really salient. An "inner self", if it exists at all, appears neither to the inner nor to the outer sense, since none of the inner data possesses stable, relatively enduring properties which, being possible to recognise and identify, characterise the individual phenomenon. (Arendt, 2019, p. 77)

So, it is in the superficial uniqueness of the human touch that the uniqueness of humans is found. In this sense, man is a superficial appearance in a world of other appearances. The interesting thing for Arendt is thus "not what something 'is' but rather how it appears" (Arendt, 2019, p. 67). This means that Arendt's rebellion against the metaphysical hierarchy and the metaphysical fallacy first and foremost leads to a special attention to the 'superficial' expression of phenomena, because it is in the specificity of expression that the individual's distinctiveness lies.

⁵⁹ In these passages, Arendt relies on the research of a zoologist and biologist named Adolf Portmann.

The place of nothingness

Secondly, this rejection of the traditional metaphysical notion leads to her reflections on where you are when you think. Her original idea is that since there is no higher sphere to which one can retreat - a so-called second order - there is, so to speak, a nothingness in the centre of phenomena.⁶⁰ Man comes into life from nothingness, so to speak, and disappears back into nothingness when we die. But precisely in the spiritual activity we engage in when we think, we are also in what Arendt describes as a nothingness. Arendt refers to the French poet Paul Valéry when she seeks the answer to where am I when I think - the answer is nowhere (Arendt, 2019, p. 221). This means that Arendt's concept of metaphysics - in the confrontation with the two-world theory - is closely linked to a notion of a nothingness that the spirit resides in as it unfolds the activity of thinking. I will come back to a more detailed unfolding of what lies in this 'kind of metaphysics' in the discussion with the other three positions. But for now it is enough to add Arendt's own distinction between forms of nothingness. Arendt says of the nothingness of thinking in relation to the nothingness of birth and death: "And since this nowhere is in no way identical with the double nowhere from which we suddenly appear at birth and to which we almost as suddenly disappear at death, it can only be conceived as the Void" (Arendt, 2019, p. 224).

⁶⁰ In "The Life of the Mind", Arendt reflects at length on Greek philosophy's idea of wonder (thaumazein) as the initiator of thought under the heading "*What makes us think*" in part 1, section 3. What characterises the Greek view is an admiring wonder at the harmonious, beautiful order that lies behind the appearance of phenomena. Through Arendt's analysis, it is clear that she is analysing the phenomenality of thinking on modern terms, which is why her idea that there is no sphere to which the spirit can retreat is also crucial here. In other words, wonder can be a catalyst for thinking, but it does not rest on an underlying order of judgement. Along with the phenomena, metaphysically speaking, there is only a nothingness that is not particularly beautiful or orderly. This (double) order is lost sight of in the modern.

Withdrawal of the Spirit - a double transformation

As I said, I will come back to discuss Arendt's idea of 'nowhere' and 'void' and its relation to metaphysics. But in the following, let's take a closer look at what Arendt writes about the basic mode of thinking. What is the movement of the spirit in relation to the activity of thinking? And why is the activity of the spirit as thinking crucial for Arendt and for her description of human being in the world?

Tranquillity and activity - staying nowhere and the meaning-making of conscience

The following is a summary of Arendt's overall basic ideas about thinking.⁶¹ Thinking is an activity that generally involves man thinking about the real events of the world/phenomenality - in the sense of phenomena that have made sensory impressions. Thinking is a spiritual activity for Arendt because human spirituality is the dimension of the human being that makes him withdraw from the world in contemplativity and be at rest - a place where the senses are at peace. Spirituality is in a way larger than the individual, which Arendt signals by the spirit reflecting on, questioning and connecting with contexts that are larger than and beyond the individual. The individual retreats to nowhere, which is characterised by a loss of reality and a lack of ground underfoot.

⁶¹ Arendt develops her own nuances and concepts for the current modern expression and significance of thinking through a history of ideas of the history of "thinking" from Greek philosophy to the present day. There is not space in this thesis to unfold this entire fascinating reading of the history of thought and the crucial discussions Arendt has with, for example, Aristotle, Socrates (Plato), Augustine, Don Scotus, Kant, Hegel, Nietzsche, Husserl, Heidegger and Wittgenstein, although these idiosyncratic readings are crucial. In this section, a condensation of the overall figure of thought that Arendt develops is made. I would like to use my space to discuss a central notion of (de)sensing and transformation, which is based on the rejection of the two-world theory and an independent interpretation of phenomenology.

But at the same time as a certain spiritual peace nowhere, Arendt describes thinking as an activity - an activity because in thinking there is an inner invisible dialogue between I and me. Arendt describes that it is the conscience (common sense) that, free from the sensory influence of phenomena, reflects to find meaning in life. In withdrawal, the individual is split between I and me, which is why the inner dialogue is a kind of dialectical movement between these two poles. After the inner movement of conscience, the individual reconnects with the world, which is sociality, and in this connection the individual becomes one again. For Arendt, reconnecting and becoming one again is about finding linguistic expression in an address to the other. In other words, the presence of the other as a receiver in the relationship is crucial for the inner dialogue to find its expression and become one again. In other words, for Arendt, thinking as an activity is also a movement in fragmentation and solitude,⁶² which is linked to the movement finding its way back to sociality.

The overall figure of thinking is thus characterised by a) a break with coherence (stop and think in freedom),⁶³ b) an inner invisible dialogue (thinking is only visible externally as absence of mind) and c) feedback to sociality and the sensory impressions of phenomena (conscience finds its expression). Arendt further characterises thinking as the only activity that only needs itself and as an activity that has itself as its purpose.⁶⁴

Furthermore, the thinking self is only conscious of its thinking as long as the activity continues, and nothing comes out of thinking (let alone a causal connection to action). "Thinking may possibly clarify the particular things given to the senses in such a way that the spirit is able

⁶² Arendt distinguishes between solitude and loneliness. Solitude relates to the space of thinking where one has the company of oneself (and thus has a positive connotation).

⁶³ Arendt refers to Socrates who, when thinking, stops and falls into himself when he hits the brakes.

⁶⁴ Arendt points out that thinking can possibly be said to prepare the spirit for the other activities of willing and judgement - but without a causal connection. See *Life of the Spirit* - page 112.

to relate to them" (Arendt, 2019, p. 112). Arendt goes to great lengths to clarify Kant's distinction between consciousness' pursuit of cognition and reason's formation of meaning. Arendt links thinking to the domain of reason, which is about meaning-making and tirelessly points out that much confusion about the meaningfulness of thinking arises when one confuses the desire for knowledge and truth with the desire for thinking for thinking's own sake as an endeavour of meaning and a pure exercise of conscience.

De-sensing and transforming

However, if we - after this general identification of the movement/ground figure of thinking - take a closer look at what exactly happens in the withdrawal of thinking, we can zoom in on Arendt's formulations about the phenomenality of thinking. On the one hand, it is precisely the spirit's ability to withdraw from phenomena that is crucial to the movement of thinking. At the same time, it is the ability of the spirit to make the absent present that is crucial for Arendt. It is formulated as follows: "Every activity of the spirit rests on the ability of the spirit to make present that which is absent to the senses" (Arendt, 2019, p. 111).

For Arendt, the more technical description of this activity is, in the first instance, that the object of perception becomes an image of this object, and that there is a sensing involved. This imaging detaches the phenomenon from perception in the appropriation of the spirit. After the memory, the spirit forms an image of the phenomenon that is different from the phenomenon. The spirit then grasps this image/imagination and connects it to the memory. The spirit selects "that from the storehouse of the memory which arouses its interest sufficiently to induce concentration" (Arendt, 2019, p. 112). Herein lies - through the linking of the image to the memory - the next stage of a desensitisation/transformation. Central to this two-part movement is that in both the appropriation and the connection to memory lies the

freedom of the spirit. There is no necessity in imaging or in remembering. Arendt says:

Thus, the object of thought is different from the remembered image, just as this image is different from the visible sensory object of which it is the mere representation. It is because of this double transformation that thinking "in reality goes still further", beyond the sphere of all possible conceptions, "as when our reason proclaims the infinity of numbers, which no vision in the thought of concrete things has yet comprehended", or "teaches us that even the smallest bodies can be infinitely divided". The power of imagination, therefore, which transforms a visible object into an invisible image ready to be stored in the spirit, is the indispensable condition for the spirit to be supplied with suitable objects of thought; but these objects of thought arise only when the spirit actively and consciously remembers, recalls and selects from the storehouse of memory that which arouses its interest sufficiently to induce concentration. (Arendt, 2019, p. 112)

We can see here that in the process of thinking, the object is freed from sensation and made into a suitable object of thought. At the same time, the spirit is thereby extra present, so that through the intervention of conscience we can relate to things in a concrete way. In the spirit's appropriation and presence of the phenomena as an object of thought, there is also a detachment from the space in which the object is perceived, because in its withdrawal the spirit is precisely nowhere. There is a decisive freedom in the spirit's selection from the storehouse of memory - so that the return to sociality contains an unpredictability and the decisive beginning - the new (natality) is born. The new does not materialise without the intervention of the spirit.

Dialogic ways of being in light of the life of the spirit as de-sensing, transformation and the importance of thinking

I have argued above that Arendt has an existential philosophical purpose in her book "*Life of the Mind*" in the sense that she analyses man's spiritual being in the world from a perspective where thinking as withdrawal to nowhere in contemplativity is a constitutive feature. I have analysed how, for Arendt, this is linked to a rejection of the two-world theory and a focus on the value of the surface. Inside 'the machinery of thinking' there is a two-part process of de-sensing, imaging and remembering.

The point for Arendt is that the ability to think is crucial to being human at all. One of the distinctive characteristics of being human lies in having this inner dialogue between I and me. The conscience needs to be able to withdraw from the sensory bombardment of the moment in order to freely retrieve from memory what makes sense in the specific case. However, this movement of the spirit can be prevented if there is no possibility to withdraw and return in freedom. Man can lose the life of the spirit - without thinking.

Arendt begins "*Life of the Mind*" by asking the question of what made Eichmann's evil banal. In this last work by Arendt, you could say in simple terms that she answers her own question by saying that Eichmann does not think. He does not think - so to speak - about what he did in the service of the system.⁶⁵ This means that there may be situations where the spiritual dimension of man's being in the world is not expressed. There can be contexts where the essence of the spirit

⁶⁵ Whether it was the design of the Nazi regime/society or an inner reluctance or inability to reflect on their actions is, of course, a larger and interesting question that is beyond the scope of this thesis.

is not respected.⁶⁶ So-called good intentions and a one-sided focus on the action perspective risk displacing the sense that people in their being need to be able to withdraw - and return on their own terms.

The dialogical situation

The mode of thinking suggests that the precondition of thinking has something to do with sociality, as there must be both a possibility to withdraw from the specific context of the dialogue - and there must be a sociality (in this case, the other) to which to address your expression. In addition, thinking is also social in the sense that - as mentioned earlier - one is paradoxically more social in the sense of 'out with things and the other' in the seclusion of thinking than in the aural dialogue.

For the dialogical situation, which this thesis is particularly interested in, this points to an awareness of 'being able to withdraw' and 'being able to address someone'. These are basically simple prerequisites for the possibility of thinking, but they are vital for all humans - if we do not want to risk being exposed to totalisation processes⁶⁷ and becoming stupid. Therefore, we must ensure that people are given space to withdraw and think - and be present for the expression of thinking to be expressed in the social event.

This can have some more didactic implications. We can practice giving each other space to think, which is why it has something to do with dialogical practice. If we give each other space to think, we also increase the possibility that the social bond between people increases. The claim in the context of this thesis is that an increased focus on the dimension of being will sharpen the focus on human spirituality.

⁶⁶ In a peer-reviewed article, "*Contact between strangers*" in the book "*Kontakt i professionelle relationer*" published by Ålborg Universitetsforlag in 2020, I have explained how the context of a residential centre for the mentally ill can also potentially be a place where residents' space for thinking can be difficult.

⁶⁷ In her 1951 work "*The origins of Totalitarianism*" (published in 2019), Hannah Arendt links evil to the societal historical processes of the barbaric 20th century.

If I translate the philosophical points of this section into some didactic points of attention that are relevant to the dialogical situation, they are as follows:

- It's important to give each other space to think - so that the silent lonely dialogue between 'I and me' can take place.
- It's important to be aware of whether my way of being allows the other person to withdraw from the dialogue into the nowhere of thinking.
- It is important that my way of being allows the other to come back from de-sensning, transforming and remembering to freely and unpredictably give me an expression.
- It is important that my reception of the term does not predefine the predictability of the other.
- It is important that the reception of the other person's expression recognises the superficial value of the expression.
- The other person in the relationship has silent dialogues that are important in their own right.
- Presence can bring the spirit of the other and my own spirit to life.
- Languageing also involves being in community without expressing anything common.

Four dimensions of being - similarities, differences and significance

In this section, I will summarise what the four philosophical sections have contributed individually and collectively. Thus, I will summarise what the four dimensions individually and together have to say in relation to the description of the meaningfulness of being and at the same time link it to the key concept of openness, which is the starting point for this thesis. After this, I will discuss how the four philosophical positions - represented in the four selected major works - contain both some common starting points and some fundamental contradictions. Next, the differences and similarities between the four positions in relation to the key concepts of metaphysics, nothingness and being are described. Finally, this section concludes with some reflections on why the dimension of being linked to openness itself is important according to the four philosophical positions. The question of why a focus on being in itself - regardless of the fact that dialogues also focus on cognition, language and the potential for change in an action perspective - can be important for participants in a dialogue is posed at the end.

At this point in the dissertation, we have seen how the research project emerged from an interest in the importance of openness and wonder in relation to the Open Dialogue approach. In the beginning, we followed how the theme of belonging or being an 'outsider' was both part of the action researcher's own history and a central part of entering an organisation like the new one. Through the methodological reflections, the question was asked whether it is possible to be on the road without a goal. This question was central to being on the way in the research process as well as to the specific conversations the action researcher was part of. The next step in the thesis was to select and take part in conversations with four of the centre's residents over a longer period. The analysis of these four processes led, among other things, to an awareness that this 'being together' in the conversations

emerged as an essential element - making the category of 'being' the primary interest for the rest of the thesis.

Following on from this, we have just discussed four philosophers who all have something to say in relation to how the dimension of being is significant. From each philosophical perspective, the question of man's being in the world looks slightly different. The four distinct dimensions of being in the world that emerge as a result of reading the four main works place emphasis in different places and have their own *raison d'être*. But common to the dimensions is that they have a sense of the importance of being 'in itself' in a dialogical situation.

Being itself - as more than a precursor to understanding and action

The fact that it was the dimension of being that was decisive emerged clearly as a phenomenon in the analysis of the dialogue processes. Therefore, the question of the importance of being for dialogues and for human existence guided the philosophical perspectives of the dissertation.⁶⁸ Thus, the focus of the thesis also moved from a focus on openness to the potential for change - whether this expresses itself as shared linguistic understanding or action - to a focus on openness to being itself - regardless of what the dialogical situation may lead to (for example change, action, understanding or improved situation). This implies a different view of the dialogical situation itself, when the focus of the dialogue is not on the purpose of the dialogue - in the sense of a linguisticization/recognition process (cf. the inspiration from constructivism) of and in a change,⁶⁹ but instead on the meaning of

⁶⁸ Other philosophical, anthropological or similar perspectives could of course be included. This should be done in future studies.

⁶⁹ The most dominant literature within the Open Dialogue tradition, as we saw in the introduction with Harlene Anderson, John Shotter, Jaakko Seikkula, Mikhail Bakhtin, Daniel Stern and others, primarily focuses on a common linguistic construction of a future with potential for change.

being and being together in the dialogue itself. This changed focus led to a look at the dialogical situation, where being in itself can be important.

In other words, the interest in exploring philosophical perspectives has pursued a form of philosophy where dialogical situations are not primarily about an intelligible (epistemological) process. A focus on being-in-itself in dialogical situations provides the opportunity to describe the meaningfulness of being in dialogues in itself. In addition, linking this kind of being in dialogical situations to the concept of openness reveals other dimensions of dialogue than those that arise from the idea of dialogue as an epistemological producer - as linguisticization in relation to a potential for change in an action perspective. In this thesis, four possible dimensions of being in dialogues are pointed out.

Four dimensions - similarity, complementarity and usability

The four dimensions of the meaningfulness of being that have emerged in the interpretation of "*Being and Time*" by Martin Heidegger, "*Totality and Infinity*" by Emmanuel Lévinas, "*The Community of those who have nothing in Common*" by Alphonso Lingis and "*The Life of the Mind*" by Hannah Arendt can be briefly formulated in a philosophical perspective as follows:

Heidegger: The world happens to us when we experience ourselves opened by being.

Lévinas: In the ethical obligation to respond to the other, we reach for the infinity of the other, thereby simultaneously experiencing the crucial importance of the relationship and avoiding transcending the otherness of the other.

Lingis: In the strangeness we share in dialogical situations, there is also a communion of nothingness that emphasises commonality and the shared elements of a bodily community.

Arendt: In the withdrawal in a dialogical situation lies the fulfilment of the human need for spiritual being and thus the possibility of thinking and the birth of the new.

As we have seen in the summarising parts of each of the four philosophical sections, I believe that the four philosophical perspectives' preoccupation with man's being in the world each directs special attention to a practical didactic aspect of the dialogue situation. The participants in dialogues can practice noticing and giving meaning to these practical aspects. In a short version, the four philosophical perspectives in my interpretation can lead to an awareness of the following didactic points:

Heidegger: Do not do - and perceive.

Lévinas: Maintain awareness of the strangeness/infinity of the other in response to the intrusion of the other into the same.

Lingis: Try to share the experience of sharing nothing.

Arendt: Allow the other and yourself to retreat into the space of conscience.

It is a given that the four philosophers did not have the dialogical situation directly in mind in their works. In that sense, dialogue is not an explicit theme in their philosophy. Therefore, it is through my reading of the four's preoccupation with man's being in the world that the connection between being and dialogues arises. Through my residents' reference to the independent importance of being, I thus establish a connection in this thesis between the fact that being itself is significant and the quality of the dialogical situation.

How there is evidence for interpreting the philosophical works in the direction of the importance of the dimension of being is argued in the individual sections. However, how the four dimensions fit together and/or contradict each other has not yet been coherently reflected upon. The question of how the importance of being in the four

dimensions may complement or contradict each other must now be addressed.

In this regard, it is important to emphasise at the outset that it is not crucial to the thesis' points regarding the independent meaning of being that the four dimensions together create a perfect unified whole. It is not the case that all dimensions must be equally considered and present simultaneously and in harmony. Firstly, there are certainly elements of the meaning of being that are not contained in the four positions that could also be important. Secondly, I believe that some of the four dimensions may be more or less in the foreground in specific dialogue situations.⁷⁰

This means that you can, for example, weight the experience of sharing the community of nothing in the dialogue without weighting the possibility of withdrawal - etc. in relation to a combination of the other elements. How and to what extent the individual dimensions stand out in relation to each other will depend on the specific dialogue situation and the dialogue partners. As we will see later in the analysis of a particular dialogue situation, all four dimensions can be important simultaneously, even if they do not blend harmoniously into a symmetrical whole.

Philosophical differences

On a philosophical level, the four philosophical perspectives disagree with each other. It is already made clear that Lévinas formulates his philosophy in a direct confrontation with Heidegger - primarily in relation to *"Being and Time"*. Lévinas believes that Heidegger displaces the 'other' through philosophy's focus on the unfolding of being. This is precisely why Lévinas challenges Heidegger by saying that the first philosophy should be ethics - and not being. Lévinas

⁷⁰ Perhaps the four characteristics of dialogical being should be imagined so that together they describe and span a 3-dimensional description. This figure can be more or less symmetrically unfolded.

directly sees Heidegger's philosophy as the risk of doing violence to the other and his own philosophy as a kind of guarantee to avoid this violence. Similarly, Lingis' philosophical position, as expressed in "*The Community of Those who have nothing in common*", can be read as a commentary in opposition to Lévinas' way of thinking phenomenology. Lingis makes little effort to discuss his position in relation to other philosophers in "*The Community of those who have nothing in common*". However, for example, in the work "*The Imperative*" from 1998, Lingis clarifies his position more explicitly philosophically.

Through his philosophy, Lingis wants to demonstrate the idea that humans, to a much greater extent than we normally realise, are to be understood as reactions to sensations of the world in a broad sense. That is, everything we are surrounded by, such as nature, animals and other people, are to be understood as 'imperatives' that largely regulate our emotional life and presence in the world:

We awaken immersed in plenum. Feelings spreads into a tangible medium and into warmth or cold. Smell drifts in a dank or scented space. Hearing stirs in the bustle of the day or rustling of the night. The eyes open and are flooded by the light or find themselves adrift in darkness. The look that springs forth is sustained by the radiance or the dark. The sensuous elements are not there as a multiplicity that has to be collected or as data that have to be identified, but as depths without surfaces or boundaries. (Lingis, 1998, p. 13)

Lingis thus represents a radical view of man's existence in the world, as an integral part of the greater nature or ecological context. Perhaps one could even say with him that man exists only in a reaction or interaction with nature - and perhaps even regulated by our surroundings. Understood in this way, his philosophy is in one sense about avoiding disruption to this ecology.

For Arendt, her suggestion that a crucial feature of man's way of being in the world is as a thinking being also contains an explicit distance to

Heidegger's philosophy.⁷¹ Arendt agrees with Heidegger that thinking does not lead to anything, and thus is not a form of cognition. Arendt directly quotes Heidegger as the very first thing in the book *"The Life of the Mind"* as follows:

"Thinking does not lead to knowledge like the sciences

Thinking doesn't bring any useful life wisdom

Thinking doesn't solve any of the world's mysteries

*Thinking doesn't give us any immediate power to act"*⁷²

However, by placing thinking, as a matter of de-sensing and remembering, as a central constitutive determination of human being at all, she challenges Heidegger's notion of the independent unfolding of being. Arendt reverses Heidegger's focus on being until death to her own focus on birth and beginning. By making human thinking central, Arendt can be said to make the shared world of the social a crucial dimension of human ways of being in the world (Arendt, 2019, p. 43).

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⁷¹ We know that Arendt continued to relate to Heidegger's philosophy throughout her life. In her speech for Heidegger's 80th birthday, for example, we can see that she constantly reflects on the philosophy of being, which on the one hand she is deeply dependent on and inspired by and at the same time has as one of the main opponents in her own philosophy. See *Slagmark - Journal for the History of Ideas* number 37 - pages 39-50.

⁷² Arendt takes the quote from Heidegger's work *"What does thinking mean"* - page 150.

⁷³ Hans-Jørgen Schanz points out in the preface to *"The Life of the Mind"* that this 'common world' that people have together can be read as an alternative to Heidegger's 'In der Welt Sein' as 'Mitsein'. See *Life of the Mind* - page 18.

Philosophical diversity and consequence for contributions to the dimensions of being

The question for this thesis must now be whether Heidegger's idea of the 'being happens' and Lévinas' thoughts on the 'otherness of the other' - since they originate from different approaches - are mutually exclusive? Similarly, one might ask whether Hannah Arendt's idealistic focus on 'thinking and spirituality' can go hand in hand with Lingis's idea of 'community of the elemental' with its preoccupation with the embodied focus? Is it even possible to use such ideas in conjunction with each other? What is the significance of the fact that they are apparently incommensurable? Can we deny that they can have a meaning in the same situation? Or what is the consequence of their difference?

My answer is that the dimensions can be seen to complement each other, knowing that they are not intended to be consistent with each other. Since they all want to describe how the human being is important in itself, they can, through my reading, be made to talk to each other - despite their disagreements. Despite the fact that they may not agree to 'being in the same boat', interpretations - with the awareness of mutual differences - can bring them into conversation with each other. Thus, for example, both a 'commonality of nothingness/elements' and 'withdrawal into contemplation' can play a role in a dialogical situation.

A common thread through a rejection of the two-world theory and a reformulation of the metaphysical

One of the reasons why the four positions can be brought into dialogue with each other is that they can be said to agree on Arendt's formulations of the rebellion against the two-world theory. Historically speaking, it was Heidegger who formulated an early confrontation with

classical metaphysics in the 20th century.⁷⁴ Heidegger's great achievement in this context is, so to speak, that metaphysics 'moves into the world'. "*Being and Time*" is in this sense Heidegger's showdown with the transcendental character of metaphysics.

For Heidegger, metaphysics no longer unfolds within the notion of a supreme being. In a sense, metaphysics moves into the human being, as the 'open', which is the place where being is given voice, is not a place beyond the human sphere, which is possible if you start from a doubling of the world. It is precisely in the human being that being unfolds. This means that from Heidegger onwards, we can speak of immanent transcendence, which in Arendt's words in her discussion against Plato means that there is no sphere beyond the human sphere to retreat to to decode the eternal meaning of phenomena. The renunciation of the doubling of the world, which was the figure of the two-world theory, means that human experience is always connected to the sensory impact of phenomena.

We remember that Arendt's formulation was that behind the appearance of phenomena there is always a new phenomenon. Metaphysics in the sense of 'the extra-meaning of the world that man does not create' is something that belongs, so to speak, to this world. The meaning that the event of metaphysics can have is of course dependent on the people who populate the world, but the world comes with more meaning than that which humans create.⁷⁵ According to Heidegger, this is a common metaphysical experience - the metaphysical experience is 'that' this happens, but that experience cannot be definitively decoded. A distinction must be made between the meanings man can attach to a metaphysical event and the fact that the metaphysical happens to man.

⁷⁴ Heidegger thinks in continuation of Nietzsche's confrontation with metaphysics. This is not the place for a discussion of the relationship between Nietzsche and Heidegger. However, in relation to this thesis' point about the meaning of being, it can be noted that Nietzsche retains a stronger concept of the subject than Heidegger.

⁷⁵ In this sense, the disenchantment brought about by secularisation can, in Heidegger's perspective, through his reinterpretation of the role of metaphysics, also include a re-enchantment of the experience of being in the world. Now on immanent terms.

This kind of confrontation with the two-world theory and the doubling of the world is, as I see it, the starting point for the way Heidegger, Levinas, Lingis and Arendt describe human being in the world. By extension, they share the notion of immanent transcendence, where the concept of transcendence describes the extra-meaning the world brings - as a transcendence of the meaning and significance that humans themselves can produce.

For Lévinas, this way of thinking is expressed through his concept of the 'infinite'. According to Lévinas, by reaching out to the other in the ethical response to the other's intrusion into the same - we also reach out to an infinity that contains a strangeness that is never recognised. But it is precisely the intervention of infinity that makes the response contain an extra-meaning that is crucial to the other.

For Lingis, the encounter with the stranger, with whom we have nothing in common, is also about the fact that the encounter and the commonality as an encounter can contain an extra-meaning that is crucial, but which is not recognised. The encounter with the stranger on a beach in Bangladesh, for example, can have a metaphysical extra-meaning - a decisive meaning that is not about the specific commonality of the situation.

For Arendt, the extra-meaning takes place through the process that takes place in the thinking space, where sensations and memory images are created in temporary freedom for the senses. The extra-meaning certainly influences and, in a certain sense, is accommodated in the expression that may come after contemplation, when the return to sociality takes place. But the extra-meaning itself - the metaphysical - cannot be seen or recognised.

Thus, we can observe a common starting point and a common way of thinking in relation to a break with the two-world theory, which means that the four positions can be brought to talk together in relation to their respective descriptions of the crucial dimensions of human being in the world. In the following, I will explore the key concepts of metaphysics,

nothingness and being. By analysing how the four philosophers relate to these concepts, we can further differentiate between the differences and similarities between them. I take each concept one by one and describe the four philosophers' perception of it to clarify how each philosopher emphasises it.

The metaphysical

In this overview of what the metaphysical means for each philosopher, it is not, as in a previous section, about what metaphysics means at all. The four philosophers think within the framework of metaphysics being about extra-meaning in a form of immanent transcendence. The following is a reflection on where, more precisely, the metaphysical event takes place for the four.

1. For Heidegger, the metaphysical is about the happening of being for humans.
2. For Lévinas, the metaphysical takes place in the response to the strangeness of the other.
3. At Lingis, the metaphysical takes place when people share nothingness.
4. For Arendt, the metaphysical takes place when man is in the inner dialogue between I and me.

Nothingness and blessing

This thesis is subtitled "*The Blessing of Nothingness*". This is because, on a theoretical level, a common feature of the four philosophical positions is that the experience of the metaphysical event has to do with nothingness. This is related to the common understanding that the metaphysical event itself is not to be understood. The most significant thing about the metaphysical event is this, 'that it happens'. What

meaning the metaphysical event can give rise to is another question that must be taken in the other context. But the very experience of the metaphysical event happening has to do with nothingness for the four.

In a more practical sense, this means that the concept of nothingness has to do with a break with the familiar. As we saw in the analysis of the four dialogues, the experience of something particularly intense and important was associated with a sudden break with the expectation of what should happen. That is, before a change or a new meaning can occur, there is a break with the familiar, which also involves a 'hesitation before something else becomes apparent'. In this sense, nothingness is associated with a blessing in the sense that the blessing is about letting go of the surroundings and that the surroundings let go for a while. The experience of letting go of the grip of the familiar and letting something else - which is initially evident as a release - assert itself can be experienced as a lightness - or formulated differently as a 'blessing'.

The break and freedom

When Heidegger talks about the 'happening of being' or later in his philosophy talks about the 'the light of being'/'das Licht des seins'; when Lévinas talks about 'exteriority' breaking into 'interiority' with the characteristics of infinity; when Lingis talks about meeting 'the other community' in a loss of rationality, and when Arendt talks about the 'space of conscience' being characterised by 'de-sensing', they are all talking about a loss of or break with the familiar. In this rupture lies a blessing because it is associated with freedom. When being happens, in the ethical response, in a shared being and in the space of conscience, there is the possibility of freedom from all positions.

The experience of breaking away from the familiar is also characterised for all of them by an 'encounter with nothingness'. It is in the confrontation with nothingness that the break with the familiar takes place. In other words, nothingness is both a blessed hesitation and the

possibility of freedom (the opening of being, the infinity of response, shared being and the possibility of thinking the new). This blessing is only possible as long as the encounter with nothingness keeps being open.

While the four philosophers share a phenomenological observation of the importance of nothingness in this sense, there is also a difference in terms of the context in which nothingness appears:

1. For Heidegger, the experience of nothingness is linked to the meaning of anxiety.
2. For Lévinas, the experience of nothingness has to do with reaching for infinity.
3. For Lingis, the experience of nothingness is linked to sharing 'the commonness'.
4. For Arendt, the experience of nothingness is linked to being in the nowhere that is the space of thinking.

Being and openness - the importance of being

We have seen above that the four philosophers share a common starting point in relation to the concepts of metaphysics and the meaning of nothingness, while the concepts play a different role in the way they are expressed in the four philosophers' analyses. This means that you can read the four in the context of each other and at the same time have a nuanced view of how their differences are reflected in their analyses of the role of being for a description of human being in the world.

Therefore, by distinguishing between an academic philosophical level in reading the positions of the four philosophers and a level of practical

meaning, one can respect their differences and disagreements, while at the same time the fourfold dimensioning of being can have an impact on the perception of concrete dialogical situations.

This brings us to a crucial question for this thesis: what the connection between openness and being is? By asking what is the benefit of 'being open' from the positions of the four, we can come closer to addressing the Open Dialogue approach's concept of openness. By linking the concepts of openness and being together considering the four philosophers' contributions on the meaning of being, I will in the following clarify how this - after the four sections reviewing the philosophers' particular understanding of the dimension of being - looks from the four positions.

It is precisely by viewing openness with the importance of the dimension of being that new elements become visible in relation to why a dialogical process can be beneficial for people in general and thus also for so-called mentally ill people. On a theoretical level, it is hoped that this thesis can contribute to the understanding of what is meant by the term 'open' in Open Dialogue. It addresses how an independent focus on being open can be important for the dialogue partners. When the role of dialogue is not directly linked to a cognitive process or action endeavour, other dimensions of the role of dialogue become apparent.

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On a practical level, the points made in this thesis can expand a repertoire in relation to ways of being.

For Heidegger, being - without doing - is important because 'Dasein' experiences itself opened so that happening (the metaphysical event) can happen. What is special about the way Heidegger relates being to

⁷⁶ Towards the end of the thesis, it becomes clear that the literature within the Open Dialogue approach has a lot to say about how the concept of dialogue can be understood, whereas less is written about what openness means. Since this thesis was brought to the conclusion through the dialogue processes that the dimension of being is crucial, it sheds new and different light on the concept of openness. In this light, the concept is not linked to an endeavour of cognition.

openness is that 'Dasein' is opened by something else and that the experience of being opened is crucial for 'Dasein' not to 'escape from itself'. In a more straightforward formulation, this experience of being opened is crucial for being oneself. The dialogical situation, where attention is paid to openness in being itself, can support this.

For Lévinas, being as a response is important because it makes people open to the otherness of the other. For all participants in a dialogical process, it is crucial that the response contains the infinity of the other and oneself. This preserves the dimension of human being that is not comprehensible, dialogue partners are not finally illuminated by the others' will to understand, and the individual retains the freedom to be in an enjoying relationship with the world. The dialogical situation can allow for a being together that gives the response this quality.

In Longis works, being in the community of nothing with others is important because it opens up the possibility of sharing some elementary relationships between people. Being able to reach out and take part in this, for example, that the dialogue partner has its 'posture'/its support from the ground provides a common 'community' that is life-giving. In the dialogical situation, there is the possibility of a shared being, which can provide a crucial sense of belonging.

For Arendt, being as contemplation is important because it opens the rest and freedom of the spirit to find its way back to sociality based on personal memory. That is, man needs to be able to withdraw from the dialogical situation to find his own way to return to the social space. The possibility to have this space of withdrawal of conscience is essential to being a human being at all. The dialogical situation can support the possibility of being able to withdraw from it.

By comparing the four philosophical perspectives on dialogical being, we have now seen how they think from a common starting point in terms of the importance of metaphysics in a disenchanted and re-enchanted world. At the same time, we have seen that their different points in relation to 'opening being through nothingness' as a potential

and function expands the understanding of what can happen in the dialogical space.

We will now move on to the perspective and discussion chapter of this thesis. Here we will look at how the formulations around dialogical ways of being place themselves in relation to other related positions. We will return to some of the positions presented in the introduction of this thesis to highlight other elements of them that can be brought into play in relation to a discussion of ways of being. In addition, in light of the four dimensions of dialogical being, we will return to one of the situations in chapter 2 in the dialogical processes. We will see how the four dimensions can be said to apply in this particular situation. Finally, we will take a critical look at the thesis and see what further perspectives it points to.

Chapter 4: THESIS FINDINGS IN RELATION TO RELATED PERSPECTIVES ON BEING OPEN IN DIALOGUE

Philosophical perspective - language

In chapter 3, we saw that by using philosophical perspectives to illuminate aspects of dialogical being, the question of openness in dialogues took on new meanings. Some meanings that, precisely because they are philosophical phenomenological interpretations of being and not conceived in relation to a psychological or therapeutic context, can add something new to the therapeutic context. By isolating dialogical being from a more cognitive/epistemological approach to dialogues, where language and different forms of action are not central to the *raison d'être* of the dialogue, the importance of being and being together emerges.

It is clear that in practice, dialogical situations usually consist of both explicit linguistic and being elements.⁷⁷ It is not the purpose of this dissertation to opt for dialogues without language and speech. As a rule, we speak together at the same time as we **are** together. This means that the language engine, where we say enough to each other to ensure that we are together and listening to each other and where the conversation contains just enough recognition for us to continue the conversation, is always going on. But the point of this thesis is that the language engine is going on at the same time as the 'being-

⁷⁷ As we saw in the dialogue sessions, there are dialogical situations without language. There are also therapeutic approaches that are concerned with silence and presence. However, I am not familiar with approaches within a therapeutic framework that describe the meaning of being from a philosophical and metaphysical perspective.

together' takes place. In other words, while language is 'working away', being and thus the way of being plays a role. The importance of this role is often overlooked because the mainstream perception in therapeutic contexts often centres on the potential of language.

In the same way, we also know that the silent dialogical being can be carried by language, as we see described by Hannah Arendt in *The Life of the Mind*. She points out that the inner dialogue also takes place in language. However, this does not make the point about the importance of the openness of dialogical being any less important, because the 'happening' or 'sharing of the elements' takes place anyway. Sometimes the blessing of the nothingness of being even risks being interrupted/stopped in an over-emphasis on the role of language and the endeavour of cognition.

Openness in Open Dialogue

In other words, it is the claim of this thesis that it contributes to the description of how openness plays a role in dialogic situations in general and specifically in relation to Open Dialogue. There are many descriptions of how the linguistic dimension works in the literature on the role of dialogue in therapeutic contexts, but as far as I know, there are no independent descriptions of what openness means in itself.

In the following, I set out to cross-read the literature in a creative way in relation to Open Dialogue to extract meanings of what openness in traditional literature is connected to. I have primarily read Jaakko Seikkula's last two books (Seikkula, 2008 and 2014). In addition, I include the article "*The Key Elements of dialogic practise in Open Dialogue: Fidelity Criteria*" (Olson et al. 2014) because this text is used in relation to practice descriptions, for example in teaching contexts in

the field.⁷⁸ By presenting the current thinking in the literature about the importance of openness in the Open Dialogue approach, the intention is to create a basis for discussing this thesis' contribution to the field.

Openness in literature:⁷⁹

- Openness to including the people you're talking about in the conversation.
- Openness to including the social network in the conversations.
- Reflect openly in front of the network on what the professionals are thinking.
- Openness to the type of conversation that is appropriate - for example, in relation to the family's culture.
- Openness to the place where conversations can be held and the way the conversation unfolds.
- See dialogues as conversations that initiate and open up new conversations.
- Seeing the purpose of dialogues as opening up new perspectives in the unfinished conversations.
- Openness to not knowing the meaning of the other person's expression.
- Openness in terms of not expecting certain answers.
- Open and trusting that new meanings will emerge.
- Openness to a polyphonic expression of voices.
- Openness to the fact that the other person's expression can make an impression.
- Open and listening to expressions that seem foreign.
- Openness about the role partners take in the dialogue.

⁷⁸ The article "*The Key Elements of dialogic practise in Open Dialogue: Fidelity Criteria*" was written in collaboration between Mary Olson, Doug Ziedonis and Jaakko Seikkula. It represents an attempt to describe some elements that describe and give examples of the way of working in dialogic conversations. The idea of the article is that if you follow these 12 key elements, there is a certain 'fidelity' (methodological credibility) to the approach.

⁷⁹ This list does not pretend to be exhaustive.

- Openness to being quiet.
- Openness about what kind of help might prove beneficial.
- Openness to non-verbal expressions - for example, bodily expressions.
- Openness to what topic to talk about.
- Openness about who to invite to a dialogue.
- Openness to diverse cultural expressions.
- Openness to the rhythm and prosody of expression.

The above list demonstrates that openness can relate to many dimensions of dialogue- and relationship-oriented work. The literature does not always refer specifically to openness in these contexts, but it is my contention that they relate to openness in different ways. These attentions to openness fall into different groupings such as: relation to others, the content of a dialogue, the way the dialogue is conducted, the organisation of the dialogue, the intention of the dialogue and the different types of language of dialogue.

Openness in itself

According to the list above, it appears that there is no traditional reference to the nature of ways of being. There is no focus on what characterises the way you are. It could be argued that, for example, it talks about being listening and responsive. However, it is my contention that this type of characterisation is about being responsive to the other person and the linguistic expression. It is a characteristic that relates to what you want to achieve by listening and not the listening itself. Thus, as far as I can see, there is no independent attention to the being in the situation that is in itself and not for something else.

Openness and metaphysics

Secondly, it is my contention that the existing literature lacks a look at what this thesis refers to as the metaphysical aspects of being in dialogue. Since the part of the dialogical practices that concerns this thesis originates from a postmodern way of thinking that is formulated in a rebellion against modern scientifically based metaphysics, this is not surprising. However, it is the claim - in continuation of the analysis of the dialogue processes in chapter 2 - that being together in itself contains elements that the residents find important. It is also the point that these elements have to do with metaphysical additional meanings in dialogical being. They are elements that have nothing to do with the controllability of human life. They are elements that relate to the unpredictability of life! These elements and their metaphysical value are parcelled out in chapter 3.

In short, it is the point of this thesis to have contributed to descriptions of openness in dialogical ways of being that support and expand what can be understood by the term 'open' in relation to Open Dialogue, as a blessing of being in nothingness.

Discussion with the literature in light of findings

Returning to the positions introduced in the introductory, we can now revisit them to discuss how this kind of metaphysical blessings of nothingness in the context of dialogical being can be understood in relation to a deeper look at the respective positions. The question now is: are there elements of the 6 positions that touch on the meaning of being itself? In other words, are there elements of the previously mentioned positions that define the field this thesis speaks into that are close to the findings of this thesis? The purpose of the following discussions is to place the findings of this thesis in this context.

Jaakko Seikkula - Otherness and bodily presence

Especially in the 2014 book *'Open Dialogue in Relational Practice - Respect for Otherness in the Moment'*, Jaakko is increasingly concerned with other dimensions of dialogical situations than the linguistic/narrative (constructionist) ones. In this book, the formulation of the 'otherness of the other', inspired by Lévinas, is very central. The idea is a radical acknowledgement of the other - based on the idea that the other has a different understanding than the others in a conversation. "The goal is not to create a unanimous understanding of the problem as a basis for an action plan" (Seikkula, Arnkil, 2014, p. 115).

In recent years, Jaakko has also had a growing interest in the importance of the body in the way we interact and communicate. A major research project involves measuring the reactions of the brain and body during conversations (Kykyri, 2017). In a brand-new book, which has only been published in Finnish, Jaakko goes further in exploring the importance of embodiment when he explores the idea of 'embodied sharing'. In short, the idea is to share with your conversation partners what happens in your body as part of the dialogue.⁸⁰ In this sense, Jaakko Seikkula has an eye for movements in conversations other than language.

In relation to my view of **dialogical ways of being**, I supplement the idea of 'otherness' and 'corporeality' with a metaphysical dimension that both keeps thinking grounded in the postmodern break with modern thinking and makes the attention to nothingness practically applicable. On a theoretical level, it is about openness going through nothingness - before language and the formation of meaning find their form. There must be a breakdown and displacement of the existing meaning, and this happens, among other things, when openness focuses on ways of being and not understanding. On a practical level,

⁸⁰ Knowledge about Jaakko Seikkula's upcoming book comes from a presentation he made at an international conference in Rome on 3 October 2023.

it's about actively drawing attention to what we don't know. You can share the nothingness. The facilitating role is about keeping meaning-making open. Metaphorically speaking, a meeting facilitator's task in this regard is to 'keep the water open so the ice doesn't freeze'.

In other words, a focus on being in dialogues in itself - and not with the intention of a change that happens linguistically - creates space for a sense of openness, where this experience of being opened has a quality in itself.

Tom Andersen - breath (breathing)

From early on in Tom Andersen's work, he was aware of the importance of the body in dialogue situations. Among other things, he worked closely with a physiotherapist named Gudrun Øvreberg (Andersen, 2021, pp. 61-63). Through this collaboration, he became aware of the importance of breathing and thus the interaction between bodies in dialogue situations. Gudrun Øvreberg was interested in the connection between tension in the body, breathing and relaxation.

Tom Andersen worked on how these elements could be part of the therapeutic work in dialogues. It's about using your intuition and sensing how to move forward or pause in dialogues. In this way, it can be said that Tom Andersen, through inspiration from physiotherapy, can be said to be aware of the importance of the body - but also of the exchange the body has with the outside world. This makes me think that the importance of breathing is a neighbouring concept in relation to my preoccupation with the importance of ways of being.

From my perspective, breath can be thought of as sharing a common breath (atunement), as something that is linked to being. A breath we have together - or that is attuned to each other - speaks to the situation in dialogical work that we intuitively know that something happens to us in togetherness. We can use Heidegger's expression that the world happens to us. My point in this context is that this happening is a

metaphysical event that takes place not because a meaning is to be expressed later (for example in a reflection), but that it takes place for its own meaning. We are opened to the world in this shared being.

Harlene Anderson - 'not knowing'

The idea of 'not knowing' is central to the postmodern Harlene Anderson. This idea has inspired and clarified the starting point for much of the dialogical thinking and practice in this field. "Not knowing" is about the individual dialogue partners being aware that they are not experts on what is true for the others. The concept of "not knowing" should also make dialogue partners aware of the intentions they may have in offering words to describe the situation and consider how statements can be presented in the dialogue so that the interlocutor does not have to agree or be convinced of the accuracy of these statements.

However, since Harlene comes from a constructivist school of philosophy, the idea of 'not knowing' is closely related to the notion that the purpose of dialogues is to make meaning together. That is, the purpose of dialogic conversations is to create meaning knowing that we cannot know what makes sense to the other or the other parties in a dialogue.

In terms of my look at **dialogical ways of being**, I can see that the idea of not knowing corresponds very well with the dialogical ways of being unfolded in this thesis. Not-knowing corresponds very well with the 'blessing of nothingness', which is not about understanding but about openness.

According to my approach to dialogical being, I believe that the idea of 'not knowing' is complemented by a look at the four metaphysical dimensions of being in itself. That is, for me, being in 'not knowing' is not a precursor to 'the linguistic construction'. The perspective of this thesis expands the concept so that 'not knowing' is not replaced by a commonly created meaning, but rather points out that the common 'not

knowing' - the empty transcendence that affects openness - is nothingness.

In a way, 'not knowing' does not diminish through a conversation because we become wiser about the other's perspective in the joint language creation. Dialogue beings carry the 'blessings of nothingness' all the way through the linguistic creation. This is good because in the shared being there is an openness that has value in itself.

John Shotter - 'joint action

In John Shotter's most inspiring work, we find a key concept that he calls 'joint action'. Related to this is a parallel concept called 'compassionate thinking' ('thinking with'). In these two concepts, I also see a family resemblance to my thoughts on dialogical ways of being.

⁸¹

The starting point for Shotter's thinking is that there is no overall plan that the evolution of life can follow. It is neither a plan that science can identify, nor a plan that the individual is tasked with figuring out. Thinking is based on describing the human situation par excellence, as being in a flow of activity that is constantly unfolding. We are not at a distance from a stable world that can be analysed as problems that can be solved or correctly understood by seeing through an underlying order. The key word for Shotter is to be able to "orientate" among the possible courses of action that become visible in a shared dialogical process.

⁸¹ I follow the way Shotter unfolds these concepts in the book published in danish 'Bevægelige verdener - prospective begreber til situerede sociale undersøgelser'/'Moving worlds - prospective concepts for situated social enquiry' from 2015 - respectively 'Joint action' p. 71-76 and 'participation thinking' p. 99-103).

To orientate oneself in a flow of activity, 'joint action' and 'compassionate thinking' are important to Shotter. Shotter defines joint action as:

..... the creation in the responsive interaction of all the events and activities going on in a situation at a given moment, that is, of an emergent sequence of distinct changes (or differentiations) of certain dynamically shifting forms, each having its unique 'shape' which, although invisible, is nevertheless felt in the same way by all participants involved in the ongoing interaction. (Shotter, 2015, p. 71)

Here we can see the way in which Shotter suggests that acts of responsiveness in a given situation always involve a shared togetherness in being. In a parallel way, we can say that the concept of 'thinking with' indicates a shared being. Shotter states: "In general, 'being as thinking with' ("togetherness" speaking, thinking, acting, perceiving, etc.) is a dynamic form of reflexive interaction that involves coming into living contact with the living being of others, with their utterances, with their bodily expressions, their words, their "works" (Shotter, 2015, p. 102).

It is interesting that in Shotter's terminology above, compassionate thinking (thinking with) is linked to togetherness. As we see, the idea is that the given situation of togetherness is fundamentally dialogical, which means that when we are together, we will always include the others - and in this sense we act together.

In relation to my view of the **dialogical ways of being**, my findings suggest that we should add a metaphysical dimension to the encounter between people that the way of being can make room for (the blessing of nothingness). But I also want to challenge Shotter's implicit idea that the purpose of dialogues is to come to clarity about orientation and action possibilities. The main interest of Shotter's view on dialogues is

to come to orientation. You can read Shotter's works in this in the sense that orientation will almost automatically (physicalistic) become clear through dialogues. The landscape you stand in becomes clear - directions and the way forward become clear.

Adding that dialogues are also about openness as a blessing of interconnectedness, I want to point out that a focus on the task of coming to clarity about possibilities for action can block being without purpose.

That is, from my perspective, 'joint action' and 'with-ness thinking' may well characterise shared being. My attention is drawn to the fact that there is an importance to the very act of being together in openness that must not be overlooked in favour of achieving orientation.

Daniel Stern 'presensing'

Stern's position in relation to his formulation of "the present moment" is also interesting in relation to my view of dialogical ways of being. I share his preoccupation with the moment without its direction towards understanding and languaging. It is thought-provoking to me that he describes what happens in the 'here-and-now' moment as languageless. That is, a shared being in the moment and what happens in the moment is basically not something we have access to an understanding of. In this sense, in my focus on ways of being, I share a preoccupation with something crucial taking place in the present moment that the dialogue partners have no control over, but which is significant.

At the same time, I do not believe that the purpose of the shared 'presensing' is a shared experience determined by content - I believe that the common ground lies in nothingness. I also believe that the openness of 'the here-and-now-moment' is best achieved by not wanting - that is, by letting it happen. In other words, 'the present moment' is not just about carrying this moment forward to its meaning in the linguistic process, as Stern would like. 'Presensing' itself in the

interaction is central from my perspective. That is, the very act of taking part in the 'here and now' can be beneficial - without knowing what it leads to or will mean.

A footnote in Bakhtin⁸² - from simultaneity to transgression

Michael Holquist, who for decades has been one of the leading Bakhtin scholars, in his book *Dialogism - Bakhtin and his World* (2002) presents a comprehensive reading and perspective on Bakhtin's work. He does this based on a single footnote in Bakhtin's essay *The Forms of Time and the Chronotope in the novel The Age of the Chronotope* (2006). We will come back to this footnote.

What follows is Holquist's perspective on Bakhtin's body of work. By presenting this reading of Bakhtin, I want to delve a further layer into the understandings of the role of dialogue on which much of the literature on Open Dialogue is based. In this section, I want to explain how Bakhtin's description of the role of dialogue in the encounter between people points to an often-overlooked confrontation with the role of metaphysics in language. Next, I will suggest that this discussion of the role of metaphysics in the context of this thesis gives rise to a reconsideration of the role of language in relation to metaphysics. This consideration is in a sense an extension of Bakhtin, but also partly in opposition to his perspective on the role of dialogue.

By following this reading of Bakhtin and seeing how a reckoning with metaphysics and the role of language unfolds, I come close to some of the points this thesis has made about the importance of modes of being in relation to openness and nothingness. In other words, I believe that through the term 'shared blindness' Bakhtin comes stumblingly close to points such as those I have made about the four modes of being - though without Bakhtin taking the full step.

In his text, Holquist identifies the relationship between 'pattern' and 'event' as an overall main theme in Bakhtin's work. The theme relates to a perception of the importance of relationships in general. For Bakhtin, this relates to how we can evaluate the repetition of events.

⁸² On 2 May 2016, Michael Holquist gave a lecture at NYU Jordan Center for the Advanced Study of Russia. The lecture is available on youtube:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G14IMVkVehw&t=29s>

Holquist poses the question of how to perceive and relate to the relationship between repeated events and potential patterns in these events.

According to Holquist's analysis, the central challenge Bakhtin sets himself is a way of rethinking the age-old philosophical question of how 'the one' and 'the manifold' are connected in a modern age. How can there be a simultaneity in time and place between separate entities; namely things, ideas and people? How can society consist of separate entities in a simultaneity? For Bakhtin, the concept of 'dialogue' itself contains the relationship between the 'one' and the 'manifold'. For Bakhtin, the concept of dialogue becomes the prism par excellence through which he analyses the relationship between 'the one' and 'the manifold'.

In this sense, Bakhtin's work can be read as an attempt to find tools to describe how to understand a unity between the 'one' and the 'multiple' in time and place, as his starting point is that individuals exist in their own distinct time and in their own sovereign place.

Holquist goes on to explore how Bakhtin, through his writing, comes to describe the unity between 'the one' and 'the manifold' as a question of architecture. Architecture understood as the connection between two separate structures - namely the self and the other person/the other. Bakhtin sees dialogue (language) as the way to establish this connection. According to Holquist, dialogue is what creates meaning in this architecture. In other words, language is the connection that makes the relationship between the 'one' and the 'manifold' meaningful.

According to Holquist, Bakhtin explains the question of how to understand this architecture - as a unity between entities separated by time and place that are connected in dialogue - as a rebellion against

the Kantian definitions of time and place.⁸³ It is at this point that Holquist refers to the footnote mentioned above. The footnote reads in its entirety as follows:

In the 'Transcendental Aesthetics' (one of the main sections of the Critique of Pure Reason), Kant defines space and time as necessary forms for all cognition, from the most elementary sensory perceptions and conceptions. We accept Kant's assessment of the importance of these forms in the process of cognition, but unlike Kant, we do not understand them as 'transcendental', but as forms of an extremely real reality. We will try to uncover the role of these forms in the concrete artistic process of cognition (artistic vision) in the novel genre. (Bakhtin, 2006, p. 14)

We see here that it is precisely the question of transcendence in the work by Emmanuel Kant⁸⁴ Bakhtin addresses. A crucial dimension of Kant's epistemology is rejected in a footnote. Bakhtin signals that for him, the forms of reality must be analysed on the basis of an ontology

⁸³ The relationship between Kant's philosophy and Bakhtin's understanding of the role of dialogue is a big question, complicated by the fact that the discussion with Kant is often conducted with some of Kant's heirs in what is called Neo-Kantianism. In this section, I follow Michael Holquist's interpretation of this relationship. Bakhtin's contemporary intellectual environment was largely inspired by neo-Kantianism from Marburg (e.g. Hermann Cohen). It was students of Cohen, among others, that Bakhtin discussed with.

⁸⁴ As I said, it is neo-Kantians that Bakhtin is discussing with in his own time. I write Kant in these contexts because it is the Kantian categories that Holquist discusses in relation to. How the relationship between Kant and the neo-Kantians (e.g. Herman Cohen) relates more precisely is a larger discussion that cannot be accommodated here. What is crucial is Holquist's use of the word transgression rather than simultaneity between two spheres. Transgression describes that the transgression, in a relational sense, occurs within a mutual order (via the chronotope). The discussion of whether this differentiation frames Kant's own difference between experience and the transcendental is not pursued here.

that does not operate with a connection (unity) between 'the one' and 'the manifold' as a simultaneity based on transcendence.

In other words, Bakhtin is concerned with analysing synchronicity between 'the one' and 'the manifold' on immanent premises. In Kant's philosophical system, transcendence means 'that which in the transcendental category lies beyond experience'.⁸⁵ Time and space are precisely universal (transcendental) forms of perception that individuals are forced to use to create order in what otherwise appears to be a chaotic experience of events. For Kant, then, time and space are precisely the kind of tools that cognition must utilise - as a way to create a unity between events and patterns. That is, the transcendental character of time and space in relation to knowledge and its generalisable and coherent representations, according to Bakhtin, comes before the immediate physical perceptions that give the individual immediate and specific impressions. For Kant, thinking consists of making judgements. Judgements are about how to find meaning in representations and consist in a simultaneity of concept and thing in a unity.

According to Holquist, the unity between concept and thing in Kant's work arises as a synthesis that is a function of the mind's interplay with the unity between representation (which by definition consists of patterns) and things (which by definition are experienced by intuition). For Kant, understanding is what creates a connection between the transcendental forms of time and place and the concrete physical immediacy. The connection is not in the objects themselves or in the conceptualisation of the objects - the connection is established through understanding.

According to Holquist, Kant's epistemological architecture of simultaneity (synchronicity) repeats a familiar philosophical figure of thought, as we know it from the ancient universe of Plato in his attempt to account for the connection between the pattern that must

⁸⁵ In the following, the word transcendence refers to the transcendence between this order and the order beyond. The word transcendental in Kant's terminology refers to the categorical order beyond.

characterise the idea of a chair and the actual chair.

Transgression (transgredience)

Bakhtin's attempt to describe architecture without using transcendental categories or modes of perception seeks another way to describe synchronicity between 'patterns' and 'events'. Bakhtin wants to find descriptions for perception that correspond to 'the self's experience of a self' and descriptions that correspond to 'the self's experience of the other' and 'the other'. Bakhtin's proposal is to think within an architecture characterised by 'transgredience' as opposed to transcendental philosophy.

To understand Bakhtin's use of the term 'transgredience', it is important to understand that the starting point for Bakhtin's understanding of the self is that the self is characterised by answerability. The self is dialogically grounded and comes into being as answerability. The self's answerability is based on its own experiences.

The idea of using the term 'transgredience' is related to Bakhtin's notion of the importance of the 'chronotope' in language. The chronotope - a concept Bakhtin elaborates in the context of literary analyses of the nature of language (Bakhtin, 2006) - constitutes the very access to meaning and meaning-making for Bakhtin. The point is that in the chronotope, time and space are not transcendental entities. In his presentation of the meaning of the chronotope, Bakhtin, according to Holquist, plays out a different conception of the dialogue's relationship with the 'third'. In Kant, the perception of the relationship of the mind and dialogue to the 'third' is about the unity between subject, concept and object - as a unity between perception and the transcendental categories and forms of perception of time and space.

Through the metaphor of 'transgredience', Bakhtin wants to point out that what is present to the self, but which the self cannot see, is just as physically present in a non-transcendent way in the other. In Bakhtin's analysis of two people encountering each other, it is about each person

negotiating their unique conditions of being in a dialogical process. Each person is outside the other physically, but also outside of what is visible to the other - from their unique position in space and time. Therein lies the principle of dialogism for Bakhtin. The otherness of the other, the specificity of the other is invisible to the subject and vice versa.

My blindness is merely another index of the uniqueness of my place and existence. What I cannot see behind my back is really there. It is really transgredient to my present position in time and space, and the same is true for my partner in the conversation. What is behind his back, is transgredient to his unique place and existence. We share a positional or special blindness, insofar as we both at the time we meet, cannot perceive certain aspects of the space we meet. But this does not mean that what we cannot see is not real, since we share the same ontological class as those things that we can see. What is invisible to me exist for my partner and he cannot see what is visible for me. (Holquist, 2016) ⁸⁶

For Bakhtin, the crucial category is the chronotope's possibility of transgression, because this figure does not intend to simultaneise two different ontological levels - the immanent and the transcendent - but signals that we are together in this blindness. Whereas Kant's 'schema' focuses on 'time' and 'space' being outside of experience (transcendental), Bakhtin is concerned with seeing the chronotope as a figure/architecture in language, where unique experiences for the individual are both specific because of place and location, but they also share an immanent ontology.

⁸⁶ Michael Holquist gave a lecture at the NYU Jordan Center for the Advanced Study of Russia on 2 May 2016. The lecture is available on youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G14IMVkvVehw&t=29s>

The world is there for both of us, and therefore not outside our experience. It is not transcendental. It is available to our examination and thought. The key point is that unlike transcendence that dreams of unifying two aspects of reality that are defined precisely by their incompatibility - transgression envisions elements that are capable of being included in an architectonic, because they share the same ontology.⁸⁷

Crucially, in a footnote, Bakhtin breaks with the Kantian-inspired notion of the architecture of cognition. By introducing the concept of transgression, Bakhtin draws attention to the fact that dialogue between people is the medium that immanently enables a simultaneity of unique specific experiences. By linking the concepts of time and place to the specificity of the subject (in the sense that only this individual has these experiences here and now), the immanent space of dialogue between people becomes the place where meaning and significance take place in an exchange and investigation (language) of these different experiences.

It is also Bakhtin's point that interlocutors are dependent on voicing these experiences to another - in this sense, the subject becomes itself by voicing to the other - meaning that the subject only exists in its exchange with the other. We share the world we explore, even if we are blind to ourselves and blind to elements of the other. The formation of meaning lies in the exchange of dialogue in the relationship. This is made possible by experiencing a world that is shared on an ontological level.

The fact that things are not present does not mean that they exist in a totally different reality. We can through dialogizing thought create a simultaneity between things that are transgredient to us

⁸⁷ Michael Holquist gave a lecture at the NYU Jordan Center for the Advanced Study of Russia on 2 May 2016. The lecture is available on youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G14IMVkVehw&t=29s>

because they participate with us in the dialogue of the world we share. (Holquist, 2016)⁸⁸

The term 'shared blindness' is interesting to me because it can be said to relate to the idea that the opening of being is in the light of nothingness. In other words, what we are open to in the dialogical situation is also what we only know as blindness. In the traditional reading of Bakhtin, it is of course the view that the dialogical process is precisely about making blindness, what I myself cannot see, more recognisable. Dialogues can have the effect that the response from the other, who sees what I cannot see, puts me in contact with what is mine, but which is outside my point of view.

But a reading that follows on from Michael Holquist and takes it a step further can dwell on the fact that blindness is shared, and that this blindness moves along, even if something becomes clearer as the dialogue develops. One can imagine that 'shared blindness' is a condition of being together. Perhaps it is precisely the fact that we can share this condition in our being that makes the blessing of nothingness an interactional concept. Perhaps it is a basic condition to be able to accommodate the blindness together that is the opening in being together. Perhaps the description of dialogical ways of being is an expression that can accommodate that blindness is ok and not something to be transcended.

With the terms 'shared blindness' and 'transgression', Bakhtin may be formulating precisely the dimension of dialogical togetherness, that we synchronise the fact that we are held in nothingness. Perhaps he is on the trail of a dimension of being that does not primarily rest on an epistemological basis. In my interpretation of this concept - and in continuation of Michael Holquist's analysis - this footnote brings Bakhtin close to an awareness of a fundamental condition of human

⁸⁸ Michael Holquist gave a lecture at the NYU Jordan Center for the Advanced Study of Russia on 2 May 2016. The lecture is available on youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G14IMVkVehw&t=29s>

being, which is about being exposed to the indefinite character of being.

Revisiting the dialogue situation with Anne - unease in the face of the blessings of nothingness

In the following, we now return to the situation from the dialogical processes with Anne. The idea is - towards the end of this thesis - to revisit this sequence from the process in the light of the philosophically formulated dimensions of dialogical ways of being we have seen in the four philosophers. I want to investigate whether new elements become visible when viewed in the prism of the four dimensions?

We remember that the situation was about a day when my colleague/co-researcher goes into Anne's apartment to ask if Anne wants to have a conversation. Anne declines, but at the same time invites my colleague to kneel next to the bed where Anne is lying.

As the situation unfolds, the two are together in an intense silence for about 15 minutes. They hold hands while my colleague strikes Anne's hair. Anne's eyes are mostly closed, but occasionally she looks up at my colleague. The interaction ends - or the dialogue situation dissolves - when Anne says: 'you can leave now'. My colleague then walks out of the apartment.

First and foremost, I dwell on the fact that the two people are holding hands. Their bodies are connected, and they can feel each other directly. With Alphonso Lingis, you could say that sensuality is present on a very concrete level. His thoughts on 'the elemental that faces' could mean that Anne in her situation needs the sensory presence of my colleague. Anne may be able to sense the uprightness of existence in my colleague. She looks up and perhaps sees the light in my colleague's eyes. They share that the light is shining. In other words, they take part in 'the community of those who have nothing in common' in the sense that it is the very act of sharing and being together that is central. It's not something they each do to each other. It happens

through being together. They both have the courage to be in a situation where language is not enough.

Secondly, I see in the situation 'the ethical dialogical response' to the intrusion of each other's strangeness into the same. When my colleague enters the apartment, she breaks into Anne's interior in a physical and metaphysical sense. And Anne, from her (exalted) position, invites my colleague to take care of her. Anne also breaks into my colleague's interiority. She also breaks my colleague's notion of 'having a conversation' - the expectation is broken. In their interaction, they reach out to each other's infinity and let each other be strangers to each other. In a Levinask's sense, there is clearly an ethical gap between the two because they give each other answers and take care of each other's infinity in this metaphysical moment.

Thirdly, it is clear that in the situation they each have the opportunity to withdraw into themselves to think in Arendt's interpretation of the concept. The whole situation can be said to have the character of being together 'for themselves'. The starting point is unusual in the sense that the inner dialogue is primary - instead of the outer dialogue as it usually is. Both Anne and my colleague are primarily in the space of conscience, where I and I have the freedom to be. The outer language doesn't get in the way, so to speak, of allowing the spirit to rest and find the right memory that can give meaning to the situation. In other words, after this togetherness, each of them has to figure out how they want to step back into the dialogical space of togetherness. They have been in the space of nothingness, where they have been at peace with themselves. In this dialogical situation, we can say, with Arendt, that the spiritual dimension has found its place in both parties. We don't know what exactly was going on in the thinking space of the two parties - other than that they were in the space together.⁸⁹

⁸⁹ We know from interviewing my colleague that this situation was transformative for her way of perceiving her way of working. But this is her post-rationalisation, where the situation has taken on a meaning - Arendt would say that the will has led her to this action. But this did not come as a causal extension of having been in the space of thinking. The point is that the situation itself was experienced as valuable.

If we look at the situation through the **Heideggerian prism** presented in chapter 3, we can see that the situation is characterised by the fact that the two parties in the dialogue did not try to create a change in each other. It is extremely clear that they were just 'not doing' so that the world can happen to them. The moment contained a respect for the fact that it is through man's openness to the world that the blessing of nothingness and the metaphysical event took place. The particularly privileged openness of fear and anxiety was allowed to fade away. In this sense, we can imagine that existence is brought before itself without hiding itself. The experience of openness had its own independent meaning.

Dimensions of being in context

Thus, the above analysis of the dialogical situation in which Anne asked my colleague to be with her has shown that all four dimensions can be said to characterise the dialogical being in this case. The four dimensions can be said to apply simultaneously.

The degree to which one or the other dimension was more or less prominent is not decisive. In this respect, as previously mentioned, you can imagine the dimensions in a three-dimensional sense - so that it will be perceived differently depending on where you stand in the three-dimensional expanse.

Nor do I see the dimensions unfolding sequentially. They are evident in relation to the specific situation and can be characteristic for shorter or longer periods. This also means that they do not have to be present to a certain extent in relation to each other for the situation to be said to be dialogic.

The point of trying to describe dimensions of dialogical ways of being is to draw attention to them. If the desire for dialogical togetherness comes from dialogue partners, and that this implies that there is value in the very act of being together, awareness of this can support staying in this openness.

We have now seen how the philosophical perspective has shed light on a concrete dialogical situation. We can see how new dimensions of being together become visible in this way. By spotting important dimensions of dialogical being, we can hopefully contribute to helping those we are in conversation with. It is my hope that the contribution of this thesis can open the door to bringing this perspective into practice and theorising about practice.

Chapter 5: CLOSING WITH A CRITICAL LOOK AT THE DISSERTATION

Other research perspectives

As mentioned in the introduction of the thesis, the scope of this study is limited by the fact that it focuses on the interactive space of dialogue - primarily in the form of one-to-one dialogues. This means that other structures are not considered. It would be interesting to look at the influence of organisational or societal factors on dialogical ways of being, for example.

This could also include sociological, psychological, anthropological or other philosophical perspectives to see how the question of ways of being might be different than it is in this text. Overall, it is interesting to bring structural ways of thinking into interaction with existential ways of looking at the dialogical perspective.

For example, it would be interesting to explore the similarities and differences between different forms of existentially orientated therapeutic practice. For example, Emmy Van Deurzen's current development of existential psychotherapy or earlier versions of approaches inspired by Medard Boss could be explored. In the last years of Heidegger's life, the psychiatrist Medard Boss made great efforts to support the transfer of Heidegger's thoughts into a

psychiatric/therapeutic universe (Deurzens, 2012 and Heidegger, 2001, in the book Zollikon Seminars).⁹⁰

A broader scope, where a greater degree of the network and more people in dialogues are included in the analysis could also possibly make a difference to the understanding of dialogic being. If a greater degree of external polyphony was included in a study, it might make other dimensions of dialogical being visible.

Likewise, it would be interesting to return to the question of changes in citizens' network maps over time and the organisational analysis/screening. As previously mentioned, there is material to do this in continuation of the elements that have not been included in this thesis. It could also be interesting to link these analyses to the question of dialogical being.

"Dialogical Mind - more than cognition

As is clear at this point, one of the main points of this thesis is that attention to the dimension of being shows that togetherness is not just about cognition (epistemological considerations).

If we keep in mind that being together in dialogue has an essential quality in itself. And if we note that the experience of being open, of taking care of the other by reaching out to infinity, of being together about nothing and being able to withdraw in the service of the spirit

⁹⁰ A preliminary reading of these positions shows that for both Boss and Deurzen, it is important to identify a landscape of significant factors that the therapeutic enquiry must relate to - whether these are structures directly related to the analysis of the one or more current versions of life/death, experiences of loss or basic assumptions and values etc. That is, this kind of existential approach relies on the knowledge that specific factors are important orientation points for any life. These factors mark areas that need special attention from the therapist. In this way, Open Dialogue differs in that there is no a priori knowledge or dimensions of areas of life that are of particular value, which should guide the landscape of questioning to be uncovered.

has a crucial quality in the experience of being, we can see that being in dialogue has a quality that has nothing to do with epistemological endeavour.

With this in mind, if we look back to one of the theoretical starting points of this thesis, Ivana Marková's book *Dialogical Mind*, we can add another dimension to the analysis of the alter-ego object unit. The contribution of this thesis to the theoretical framework of understanding is that dialogues can also be studied in terms of the meaning of being in dialogue - without seeing the meaning as an effort to learn more about the self, the other or the world. This being together in dialogue opens a way of being in the world. Hopefully, this perspective can be included in the future study of dialogue.

Return to practice

As prescribed by the action research method, and as described in my methodological section, this entire research process has consisted of an interaction between own experiences in dialogues, presentation in plenary for co-researchers and return to practice. The identification of the themes; strangeness, nothingness, open being has thus been continuously discussed with residents, colleagues and management.

Through workshop days, future teaching and similar activities, it is hoped to work further with this thesis' findings on the importance of dialogical ways of being. The attention to the importance of being in dialogues stems from practice. It will, of course, be interesting to return to ordinary everyday practice with these dimensions in mind.

Dialogue and wonder

As stated in the introduction to this dissertation, there was also an initial interest in investigating whether wonder can add new metaphysical dimensions to the dialogical practice.

Through the study of the nature of wonder, which took place, among other things, through my training in relation to conducting wonder courses with Professor Finn Thorbjørn Hansen and through literature studies, I am convinced that wonder in relation to dialogical practice is important in relation to letting go of the predictable. Wondering can loosen the rigidity of concepts and bring people out into the open. Where the break with the ordinary takes place, the wondering form can be a good way to relate. The wondering approach can maintain openness in the situation.

The focus of this thesis turned out to be 'where man is opened by the world'. I have tried to keep the focus on this openness - and the importance of this in itself to exist.

Thus, other dimensions of the movements of wonder - e.g. in the direction of insight into virtues or the preoccupation with the importance of reverberation is not within the focus of this thesis. In relation to the metaphysical dimensions associated with wonder, this thesis dwells on the metaphysical dimension of 'being opened'. To this end, the concept of the 'blessings of nothingness' has become central, indicating that the additional meaning that arises from the potential opening of new horizons (in the clearing) is only known as additional meaning in the dialogical being. That is, there is no focus on what meaning or formulation this additional meaning can acquire through the movement of wonder.

Being open - new horizons

As described at the beginning of this thesis via the autoethnographic method, it has also been my interest to describe my personal development through this thesis as well as the professional presentation of the content of the thesis.

In the chapter where I write about my first steps into the field for this action research project, I use my initial ideas about entering the field together with the concrete experiences that were part of the early days to examine what happens to me. To this end, I link some experiences from my training programme with this look at my personal movement.

The basic reflection was on the question of 'belonging and not belonging' - formulated through the conceptual pair 'Alien and Settler'. Through reflection and dialogue with my colleagues, the residents at the residence, the management and fellow students on the programme in London, I got a more nuanced view of being 'the alien' or experiencing oneself as an alien. For example, I was offered the term 'Settler', which gave me a different experience of coming to terms with having a different organisational location and a different professional background at work. The idea of being a settler offers a nuance in the direction of 'not just being alien and ostracised', but instead finding your way to connect to the resources of the area and its residents.

In addition to the concrete movement in relation to the meaning of foreignness (alienness), it was also reflections from some residents at the residence who spoke at a theme day about how they recognised being foreign that gave me a look at foreignness as something we always carry with us.

Following my own upbringing and family background, I found a way of being a stranger that had something conciliatory about it, insofar as it is shared by a common human experience and is an interactional phenomenon. In the context of my research, they also gave me the courage to go further in the investigation of the impact of strangeness on the dialogical situations. Also, because I could recognise the potential of seeing strangeness as a condition of human experience.

After the philosophical studies of Heidegger, Lévinas, Lingis and Arendt, I now have some new reflections on the meaning of

foreignness that make me rethink my personal journey through the research process.

Being in openness as dialogue

I think the decisive movement for me is that the focus on the importance of being in itself has led to an awareness that the openness associated with being is also a dialogical place. This means that it is perhaps precisely at the point where I can experience strangeness in a relationship that I share the experience of being a stranger with another or several others.

In the dialogical encounter, I am confronted with my own and the other's strangeness. It strikes me - in the words of Lévinas - as infinity. But it is togetherness when nothingness and anxiety - in Heidegger's words - voices me. I experience a shared sensuous 'commonnes' by reaching out for the other's 'posture' - in the words of Lingis. In the space of conscience, where my spirituality thrives in the dialogue between I and me, I am closer to the other than in general - in the words of Arendt.

This means that I have gained a different perspective on being with others, and that in the 'blessings of nothingness' lies the possibility of an experience of being in my openness and thus carrying strangeness differently into the future. It feels ok.

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