An Exploration of the Question
‘What is Wisdom?’
With Particular Reference to Aspiration in Teaching:
A Practical-Philosophy Paradigm.

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ABSTRACT

In the progress of human lives, matters of choice and action are negotiated on a daily basis. The thesis takes this observation as its point of departure for a philosophical exploration of the question ‘What is wisdom?’. After consideration of particular challenges that can be associated with wisdom inquiry, the contextualisation of the wisdom question as a practical concern is further developed by attending to the field of education.

Here the wisdom question is investigated in a context where teaching is considered as an aspirational endeavour. The so-called problem of ‘the gap’ between aspiration and experienced reality in the practice of teaching is presented as a more specific context or point of reference for the exploration. A study of one teacher’s reflections is conducted in order to ascertain possibilities for informing the question of what it means to ‘be wise’ or ‘act wisely’ in an educational setting. The study involves ‘hermeneutic interviews’ and the philosophical approach of the research is articulated as a ‘Practical-Philosophy Paradigm’.

It is proposed that the wisdom question can be usefully explored by developing a ‘conversation’ which draws upon two primary sources in this process of contextualisation. These two sources consist of the theoretical-philosophical perspectives contained in the literature and the ‘voice’ of the teacher with specific or extensive experience of the relevant concerns. The thesis accordingly aims to contribute a formulation, or way of considering the wisdom question more carefully, based on the transdisciplinary implications of the theoretical perspectives and the richness of practitioner-derived knowledge.

This formulation, introduced in the opening chapter, proposes that wisdom is the balanced integration or ‘nexus’ of two contexts: a Context of Profundity where hermeneutical reflection is drawn towards the deeper meanings of human experience, and a Context of Practicality where wisdom is associated with the resolution of problems or the progress of human lives. The themes of profundity and practicality are found to be useful in the analyses of both the wisdom-related material in the literature and the teacher’s articulation of his approach.

In general, the wisdom question is encountered in the exploration as a challenge to learn a dynamic, creative and reflexive approach. For both the teacher and the researcher, the challenge is understood to be implicated in the deeper questions of the meaning of lived experience and in the practical concerns that accompany such experience.
# Table of Contents

Abstract ................................................................. i
Table of Contents ...................................................... ii
List of Tables and Illustrations ....................................... viii
Appendix ........................................................................ viii
Acknowledgements ........................................................ ix
Declaration ....................................................................... xi

**Chapter 1**  General Proposals for Exploring the Question of Wisdom:  
The Parameters of the Study ............................................. 1

Part A  Initiating the Contextualisation of the Question: Towards a  
Sense of the Question .................................................. 1

1.1 Addressing the Wisdom Question as the Nexus of Profundity and  
Practicality ................................................................. 1
1.2 A Question to be ‘Grounded’: The Problem of ‘the Gap’ .............. 3
1.3 Pursuing Wisdom as a Useful Philosophical Construct ............... 7
1.4 The Profundity of the Question of Wisdom and the Theory-Practice  
Relationship ............................................................. 14
1.5 The Language of the Theory-Practice Relationship .................. 18
1.6 Viewing the Question of Wisdom as a Question of Theoretical and  
Practical Dimensions: Two Examples from Ancient Primary  
Sources ................................................................. 24
1.7 Contemporary Descriptions of Wisdom and the Germaneness of the  
Themes (‘the theoretical’ and ‘the practical’, ‘profundity’ and  
‘practicality’) ......................................................... 26
1.8 The Need for Flexibility in Conceptualising Certain Aspects of  
Profound Questions .................................................... 32

Part B  Elements of Design: Scope, Structure, Aims, Methodology ..... 36

1.9 The Scope and Structure of the Thesis ................................ 36
1.10 Aims of the Thesis .................................................... 39
1.11 Methodology: The Practical-Philosophy Paradigm .................. 39
Chapter 2  The Wisdom Question and Method: Theoretical-Philosophical Dimensions of Exploring the Wisdom Question as a Highly Reflexive Text 55

2.1 Methodology and Wisdom Inquiry: A Reflexive Paradox 55
2.2 Responding Positively to the Paradox: Managing Reflexivity in Methodology 58
2.3 The Embedment of Method in Ontological and Epistemological ‘Commitments’ 64
2.4 The Epistemological Basis of Wisdom Inquiry: ‘What Kind of Knowledge Knows Wisdom?’ 66
2.5 ‘Knowing’ as a Process: The General Process-Orientiation of the Exploration 68
2.6 Relationality and the Process Orientation 74
2.7 The Process Orientation and Knowing as ‘Human Knowing’ 76
2.8 Approaching Knowledge of Wisdom as the ‘Conversation That We Are’ 79
2.9 The Thesis as ‘Philosophical Anthropology’ and ‘Philosophic Hermeneutics’ 83
2.9.1 The Exploration as Philosophical Anthropology 83
2.9.2 The Exploration and its Methodology as ‘Philosophic Hermeneutics’: Linking with Gadamer 84
2.10 The Hermeneutic Process of the ‘Opening Up of Possibilities’ in Wisdom Inquiry: ‘Transdisciplinary Conversation’ as an Initiative in Response to the ‘Priority of the Question’ .................................................. 95

2.10.1 Transdisciplinary Conversation ......................................................... 95

2.10.2 Conversation as a ‘Model’: A Philosophical Perspective .......... 100 Tracy and ‘Interpretation-as-Conversation’ .............................................. 102

2.10.3 Connecting ‘Interpretation-as-Conversation’ with the ‘Transdisciplinary Ethic’: The Attitudinal Dimension or ‘Practical Ethic’ of Allowing for Otherness .................................................. 105

The Radical Challenge of Allowing for Otherness as a ‘Relationship’: David Tacey ................................................................. 107

Allowing for Otherness as a ‘Practical Ethic’: The Human Context ................................................................. 109

Conversation as a ‘Search For Truth’ ....................................................... 112

2.10.4 The Scope and Function of Philosophic Hermeneutics in Turning to Multiple Perspectives: The Gadamerian Influence on the Rationale .................................................. 116

Chapter Conclusion ...................................................................................... 121

### Chapter 3 The Wisdom Question and the Real Settings of Human Lives: Towards a Case Study Through Exploration of the Human Context ...................................................................................... 123

**Introduction** ................................................................................................. 123

3.1 Towards a Conceptualisation of ‘Grounding’ the Wisdom Question in ‘a Concrete Case’: Some Preliminary Philosophical Reflections .................................................. 124

3.2 The ‘Voice’ of Pragmatic Sense in Relation to ‘Phronesis’ .................. 127

3.2.1 The ‘Practical’ Perspectives of ‘Pragmatic Sense’ and ‘Phronesis’ ................................................................. 132

3.2.2 Pragmatic Sense and a Question of Balance in (Over-) Emphases on Reason .................................................. 134

3.3 Another Perspective on Contextualising the Wisdom Question as a ‘Grounded’ or ‘Concrete’ Question: Heidegger’s Notion of ‘Facticity’ .................................................. 141
3.3.1 Theoretical and Practical Implications of Heidegger’s ‘Profound Voice’ .......................................................... 147

3.4 The Wisdom Question as Embodied in ‘the Practical’ .......................................................... 151

3.4.1 Usage of the Term ‘Perception’ .................................................................................. 152

3.4.2 Practicality as a ‘Moment of Perception’ .................................................................................. 158

3.5 The Setting of the Problem .................................................................................. 163

3.5.1 Stenhouse’s Articulation as a ‘Reference Point’ .......................................................... 163

3.5.2 Stenhouse’s Statement of the Problem .................................................................................. 163

3.5.3 Aspiration and the Notion of ‘the Gap’ .............................................................................. 164

3.5.4 The Notion of ‘the Gap’ in the Context of ‘Practice’ .................................................. 168

3.5.5 The Notion of ‘the Gap’ in the Context of Practice as ‘Experienced Reality’ .................. 169

There is evidence of support for a ‘critical realist’ epistemology in Stenhouse’s articulation of the problem . . . . . 169

The language of Stenhouse’s statement is consistent with the notion of a general or ‘ordinary everyday usage’ of terms . . . . . 171

3.5.6 The ‘Texture’ of Experienced Reality in the Context of the Problem .................. 175

3.6 ‘Experienced Reality’ as an Object of ‘Practical Philosophy’ and the Hermeneutic Interview .................................................................................. 175

3.6.1 ‘Experienced Reality’ and the Teacher as a ‘Contributing Voice’ in Wisdom Inquiry .................................................................................. 179

3.6.2 Approaching the Teacher in the Interviews as an ‘Informed Person’ .......................... 183

3.7 Accessing ‘Deeper Meanings’ in Wisdom Inquiry: The Teacher’s Voice as ‘Co-Investigator’ and ‘Storyteller’ .............. 187

3.8 Approaching the Experienced Person as ‘Storyteller’: Martha Nussbaum as a Second Example of a Philosopher Pursuing Deeper Meanings by Reflecting on the Scope of Human Experience .................................................. 191

3.8.1 Theoretical and Practical Implications of Nussbaum’s Philosophy .................. 196

3.9 Implications for the Hermeneutic Interview .................................................................................. 199

Chapter Conclusion .................................................................................. 201
Chapter 4    Case Study: Interview Texts and Analyses  .......... 203

Introduction .......................................................... 203
4.1 The Interviewed Practitioner and the Context ................. 204
4.2 The Focus Questions of the Interviews .......................... 206
4.3 Interview Text: Excerpt 1 ......................................... 207
4.4 Analysis: Towards Identification of ‘Aspiration’ as a Relevant
    Construct in John’s Practice ....................................... 211
4.5 Proposing an Aspiration: John’s Reflection on Stenhouse’s Statement 212
    Excerpt 2 ............................................................ 212
4.6 Analysis of Excerpt Two .......................................... 215
4.7 Introduction to Excerpt Three .................................... 219
    Excerpt 3 ............................................................ 220
4.8 Towards Understanding John’s Approach to ‘The Gap’ .......... 221
    Analysis Across the Excerpts ..................................... 221
4.9 Representing John’s Approach as an Overall Philosophical Position:
    The Category of ‘Synergism’ ....................................... 228
4.10 The Synergistic Approach as ‘Passion’ .......................... 234
4.11 John’s Approach as a Relationship Between ‘the Theoretic’ and
    ‘the Practical’ ...................................................... 237
4.12 Introduction to Excerpt 4 ......................................... 245
    Excerpt 4 ............................................................ 247
4.13 Analysis of Excerpt 4 .............................................. 250
4.14 The ‘Logos’ and ‘Pathos’ of Awareness in Aspirational Contexts:
    John’s ‘Existential Sensitivity’ .................................... 253
4.15 The ‘Existentially Sensitive’ Approach as ‘Vital Reason’ ....... 256
4.16 Towards Clarification of the Criteria for Existential Sensitivity:
    ‘Openness’ and ‘Awareness’ ....................................... 260
4.17 The Creative Balance: John’s Approach as the Pursuit of ‘Nexus’ 264
Chapter conclusion ...................................................... 272
List of Tables and Illustrations

List of Figures

Figure 1. A General or Condensed Model of Wisdom as ‘Nexus’ .............................. 2
Figure 2. Reflexive and Substantive Dimensions of the Thesis: A Case of the Practical-Philosophy Paradigm .................................................. 54
Figure 3. Fundamental Theoretical-Philosophical Orientations and Processes of the Exploration: (or, The Context of Profundity as Explored by the Thesis.) ................. 95

List of Tables

Table 1. Concise Renderings of Key Terms of the Theory-Practice Relationship .............. 23
Table 2 Indications of ‘What Matters’ to John as a Practising Teacher ........................ 211

Appendix

Appendix One Transcription Notation ................................................................. 332
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Declaration

I certify that the work contained in this thesis has not been previously submitted for a degree at any university and to the best of my knowledge and belief contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made.

Geoffrey Mervyn Arnold

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CHAPTER 1

General Proposals for Exploring the Question of Wisdom:
The Parameters of the Study.

Part A: Initiating the Contextualisation of the Question: Towards a Sense of the Question

1.1 Addressing the Wisdom Question as the Nexus of Profundity and Practicality

The present work pursues the nexus of profundity and practicality. The idea of ‘nexus’ involves a belief that there is a vital connection to be made. In the case of the present work, the connection being sought is a matter of locating an approach towards reflecting on the practices and problems of human lives.

This approach, in terms of the articulation of the thesis, is necessarily a theoretical presentation. Here it is the proposal of a way of thinking about practices and problems. Although the pathway of the progress of our lives is the actual negotiation of these practice and problems, the pathway of research is a matter of navigating an investigation of questions. The questions, in a sense, are implicated in the progress of our lives and one of the tasks of theory is to make them explicit.

The present work has been initiated and underpinned by the question ‘What is wisdom?’. The thesis presents the view that many problems and aspects of human living are matters which involve two inter-related contexts, namely, the Context of Profundity and the Context of Practicality. It is to be argued that our personal or collective ‘wisdom’ is the balanced integration between the way our lives operate within these two contexts.
Hence, the pursuit of 'nexus', in the present work, is the pursuit of 'wisdom'. Having referred to 'nexus' as 'balanced integration', it is important to acknowledge that 'balance' and 'integration' are terms which imply a recognition of how things relate or fit together. We describe or recognise many different things as 'well balanced' or 'integrated'. As examples we can refer to a certain attitude, ability, awareness, approach, response, decision, dialogue, process, set of attributes, mode of being. Hence, in more substantive or 'concrete' description, it can be said that 'nexus' can take many forms, or that we can make different kinds of sense of 'nexus'.

To pursue the question of wisdom as the nexus of profundity and practicality is to open up a particular line of inquiry into wisdom. In this line of inquiry, 'profundity' suggests that there is a dimension to wisdom which is subtle or intangible, something deep within or beyond the grasp of our comprehension. This dimension of wisdom can be expressed in diverse ways according to the orientation of the particular researcher or wisdom-seeker. For example, in
reflecting on the difficulty of researching wisdom, psychologist Robert Sternberg (1990) concluded:

Wisdom is about as elusive as psychological constructs get ... To understand wisdom fully and correctly probably requires more wisdom than any of us have. Thus, we cannot quite comprehend the nature of wisdom because of our own lack of it ... the recognition that total understanding will always elude us is itself a sign of wisdom. (p. 3)

To pursue wisdom as a matter of practicality is to suggest that there is a dimension to wisdom which requires a pragmatic view of our practices and problems. As much as we might envision the everyday experience of our lives as a profound matter or part of a ‘larger picture’ of meaning, we nevertheless generally view wisdom as somehow connected to practices and understandings which ‘work’ (rather than ‘don’t work’). The more uncertain or ill-defined we find situations or problems to be, the more wisdom we generally expect is needed for a resolution.

The field of teaching forms a particularly relevant context for the study of such types of situations and problems. As Schwab (1969) put it some time ago: “Almost every classroom episode is a stream of situations requiring discrimination of deliberative problems and decision thereon” (p. 22). More contemporary views are often particularly sensitive towards the uncertainties, changing contexts and increased complexity of the everyday work of teachers (Fullan, 2001; Hargreaves, 1994, 2003).

1.2 A Question to be ‘Grounded’: The Problem of ‘the Gap’

If one were to re-frame the ‘pragmatic dimension’ of wisdom previously referred to and refer to it instead as a ‘wisdom of practice’ (Schulman, 2004), one would expect such wisdom to be situationally embedded and meliorating the
educational endeavour within the practitioner's environment. Wherever or however wisdom is posited within this realm of human affairs referred to as 'practice', some observations remain relatively constant. One such observation is that complex and problematical situations set the conditions for exercising different kinds and levels of capabilities (Benner, 1984). The wisest kinds of responses in these conditions are the best possible ones (Cervero, 1992, pp. 91-2).

Louden (1991) argues that to understand teachers’ practice we need to understand background elements such as their expectations, intentions, hopes and dreams. In a sense, we would arrive too late upon the scene if we entirely reduced the understanding of practice to our observations of specific contexts of teachers’ work. Goodson (1992) has also argued that a more holistic view of teaching can reveal how practices are shaped by interactions involving specific contexts of teachers’ work and the broader contexts of teachers’ lives.

Here too, it is possible to find the practicality of teachers’ performances and the profundity of their human lives in mutual interaction. Goodson refers to “the intersection” of specific and broader contexts (p. 119). By this he means the intersection of the teacher’s work in the classroom with the teacher’s life history and the history of society. According to Goodson, studying these intersections allows for a more insightful view of practice, “thus illuminating the choices, contingencies and options open to the individual ...” (p. 119). Similarly, the reference of Louden (above) to “background elements” is not intended to suggest a set of separate factors disembodied from the practices they influence. The background is rather a fundamental part of the scene, as it were, but that part which (to extend the metaphor) is furthest from the viewer.

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1 The term 'pragmatic' is used here in its more common rather than technical, philosophical sense. A more specific, philosophical rendering of the term appears at a later stage of the thesis.
Within this field of teaching, the thesis makes particular reference to a problem it refers to as 'the gap between aspiration and experienced reality'. The setting of the problem is presented after a general discussion of the wisdom question, but an indication can be provided by a statement from Lawrence Stenhouse (1979): “I believe that our educational realities seldom conform to our educational intentions ... The central problem of curriculum study is the gap between our ideas and aspirations and our attempts to operationalise them” (p. 3).

In attending to this problem, the thesis does not treat the question of wisdom as being reducible to the expertise which performs or 'operationalises' effectively. In referring to the Context of Practicality, the thesis does not treat wisdom as something incidental to efficacy or expertise. The thesis does, however, refer to studies of expert performance and considers that insights into the wisdom question can be acquired from these studies. In other words, the thesis accepts that expert performance can manifest wisdom but does not follow the 'technicism' where "expertise substitutes itself" for wisdom (Inglis, 1989, p. 45).

Hence, the notion of 'grounding' the question here is not a matter of reducing the inquiry to a scrutiny of teachers' performances within classrooms. In viewing 'practice' as inextricably linked with the broader context of teachers' lives, the Context of Practicality takes on a wider view of the instrumental notion of 'what works'. In the narrow view, 'what works' is a more clinical matter of achieving expediency. This narrower notion of 'what works' is also "more amenable to the usual criteria for evaluating performance" (Butler, 1994, p. 10). In the wider view, there is a broader range of questions which a reflective teacher can address about 'what works' in her or his practice.
De Bono (1996) makes a similar point by distinguishing the question of wisdom from the question of cleverness. Cleverness he associates with a “function of intelligence” (p. 16) and knowing technically how to do things. Wisdom “is more about perspective” and how things “fit” within the functioning of our lives: “Cleverness is like a lens with a very sharp focus. Wisdom is more like a wide-angle lens” (p. 16). The present work does not dismiss the place of this ‘sharp focus’, cleverness or technical skill from the classroom, the exploration of the thesis or the wisdom question generally. However, the Context of Practicality ultimately involves the widest and fullest possible view of ‘what works’. In this deeper exploration of ‘what works’, there is a sense in which the Context of Practicality ultimately merges with the Context of Profundity. Hence, we arrive at one of the ways in which the present work can be described as the ‘pursuit of nexus’.

On the other hand, the ‘profundity’ referred to in the thesis does not require the wisdom question to be viewed as esoteric or amorphous, but it does require what Reid (1968) refers to as “extensive thinking ... [about] the long term meaning of ‘efficiency’ in teaching and education, the meaning of ... teaching itself, of education” (p. 21). ‘Profundity’ is treated as a term or theme which can, at times, refer the wisdom inquirer towards what seems to be irretrievably unclear and mysterious, but to substitute unnecessary mystification for ‘profundity’ or ‘wisdom’ is another matter.

Rather than reduce the key concepts or focus on certain overtones of terms, the pursuit of ‘nexus’ requires explicating a balanced approach to the formulation of the wisdom question. In this approach, the question of wisdom is a question which can be contextualised in a study of everyday practices and problems.
without such a ‘grounding’ necessarily eschewing what seems unfathomable about the question. Turning attention to the particular problem of the aspiration-reality gap is essentially a contextualisation of the question of wisdom. The balance being sought in addressing the wisdom question is also sought in the attention to the problem of the gap. It is also treated as a matter of studying both our explicit efforts involving aspirations and their deeper implications.

The idea of reflecting on human lives in terms of a Context of Profundity and a Context of Practicality is also a ‘heuristic’ in the sense that the thesis consults a wide range of literature and finds the idea to be useful in understanding connections among the sources that are explored. This ‘journey’ through the literature recognises that philosophy is a discipline which addresses certain kinds of profound questions (including ‘metaquestions’ such as ‘What is wisdom?’), but its fundamental or ‘base-level’ processes are also implicated in practical aspects of daily life: “Every day, every person is involved in crucial base-level activities: evaluating, describing, and predicting ordinary everyday affairs. In doing so they use indispensable conceptual tools ... a remarkably complex network of quantitative and temporal concepts”. (Hall, 2005, p. xvii)

As the literature is explored, Hall’s (2005) most recent philosophical work, entitled Practically Profound, provides the most explicit link to the ideas presently introduced.

1.3 Pursuing ‘Wisdom’ as a Useful Philosophical Construct

In presenting its work from the outset as ‘a proposal of a way of thinking’, the thesis addresses the question of wisdom as a philosophical project.
The particular form of its philosophising is elaborated in the methodological section of the thesis as a ‘Practical-Philosophy Paradigm’. As previously indicated, the term ‘practical’ orients us towards “the pathway of the progress of our lives” or the “negotiation of practices and problems”. The references to words such as ‘pathway’, ‘progress’ and ‘negotiation’ here are intended to reflect the orientation to be communicated by the term ‘practical’. The general sense of ‘practical’ as that which “gets things done” (Sandelands, 1990, p. 235) provides the colloquial sense of how we expect discussion of practical matters and questions to be orientated.

An ‘orientation’ is referred to because the word ‘practical’ is juxtaposed here with ‘philosophy’ and ‘philosophy’ is arguably not generally perceived as a practical matter. The label ‘Practical Philosophy’ implies that some philosophy is more practical than others, or conversely, less theoretical and abstract than others. In other words, some philosophy is more oriented towards having its subject matter attend to practices or deal with problems. We ordinarily expect any form of practical inquiry to be one which has, as the object of its attention, the address of practices and problems of human living. In the ‘Practical-Philosophy Paradigm’ of the present work, this practical orientation includes contextualising a philosophical question (in this case, ‘What is Wisdom?’) with particular reference to a specific problem (in this case, the gap between aspiration and experienced reality in the field of teaching). Hence, the work of the thesis itself provides an example of the use of this paradigm.

At several points in the thesis, special attention is directed to the word ‘practical’, but suffice to note here that the observations concerning ‘ordinary usage’ are fundamental to the intended sense of ‘practical’ in the label ‘Practical
Philosophy' and the thesis in general. There has been a debate in scholarly literature over the usage of the words 'practical' and 'theoretical' (Craig, 1996; Rajagopalan, 1998; Sandelands, 1990; Thomas, 1997). In educational philosophy, the contemporary renewal of interest in linking conceptions of 'practice' with Aristotelian terms, or more precisely, different versions of the meaning of Aristotelian terms, seems to have complicated the discussion in some respects (Carr, 1995; Squires, 2003). In the interests of circumventing any conceptual confusion, the common (or what is often referred to as 'ordinary') usage of words is generally presented as the initial and basic point of reference. However, the usefulness of ancient classifications of human abilities and endeavours is not excluded from the more detailed work of explicating fuller meanings and advancing discussion in the thesis. The methodology of the 'Practical-Philosophy Paradigm' recognises problems with the usage of both ordinary language and technical terms.

The pairing of the terms 'practical' and 'philosophy' requires the usefulness associated with what is 'practical' to be related to the theoretical thinking of philosophy. There is a sense in which philosophy can be described as "always abstract" (Passmore, 1980, p. 16). Philosophy also involves searching in a detached way for an expression of the "meanings of meanings" (Phenix, 1964) or what Vandenbarg (1990) describes as "a discursive, conceptualised, theoretical understanding" (p. 141). We can rationally approach the question 'What is wisdom?' as a question which solicits such a philosophical conceptualisation of wisdom. However, in the 'practical orientation' referred to above, it is necessary for the philosophical work to have a concern for the usefulness of what it is setting out to achieve.
The contextualisation of the inquiry in the thesis leads to the field of education and classroom teaching in particular, but the usefulness of exploring the wisdom question pertains to a much wider range of contexts. In their psychological studies of wisdom, Baltes and Staudinger (2000, pp. 122-136) note that wisdom is generally considered the pinnacle of human insight, and the territory of its inquiry can be expanded as far as this insight can make a contribution to human lives. Another psychologist, Gisela Labouvie-Vief (1990), writing within a philosophical-psychological context, has also written of the potential breadth of the theoretical and practical dimensions of wisdom inquiry:

Even while being a somewhat idealistic construct, however, wisdom is one of enormous heuristic significance. As I have argued ... wisdom is a construct of considerable analytic power and pertaining to many significant real-life adaptive criteria. (p. 79)

It is necessary to pause here for an important qualification to be brought to bear on this view towards the “enormous heuristic significance” and “considerable analytic power” of the wisdom construct. Referring analysis of human lives and specific human behaviours to a construct of wisdom (or vice versa) does not guarantee a beneficial result. For writers such as Donald Schon (1983), one of the most widely cited authors in the professional practice literature, our references to wisdom have too often become a hindrance to the disclosure of vital knowledge:

The difficulty is not that critics fail to recognise some professional performances as superior to others - on this point there is surprisingly general agreement - but that they cannot assimilate what they recognise to their dominant model of professional knowledge. So outstanding practitioners are not said to have more professional knowledge than others but more ‘wisdom’, ‘talent’, ‘intuition’ or ‘artistry’. Unfortunately, such terms as these serve not to open up inquiry but to close it off. They
are used as junk categories, attaching names to phenomena that elude conventional strategies of explanation. (p. 13)

The point to be focussed here is not whether Schön is advocating a wholesale dismissal of the term ‘wisdom’ as a ‘junk category’ for research purposes. Schön is cited here for his unequivocal argument against such terms being “used as junk categories” (italics added). The benefits of utilising the wisdom construct (to which Labouvie-Vief above and many like-minded researchers of wisdom refer) do not necessarily apply to its uncritical use.

If we consider his emphasis to be on the critical use of terms and constructs, Schön’s inclusion of the term “artistry” in the examples of terms used as “junk categories” is noteworthy. The ‘superior’ performances which Schön’s book sets outs out to illuminate are described throughout the book as ‘artistry’. Schön’s previous listing of ‘artistry’ as a ‘junk category’ and his objection to the appearance of terms such as ‘wisdom’ are objections to the rhetoric which distances us from understanding what he refers to as “the kinds of performance we most need to understand” (p. 13).

There is some allowance to make here for the context of Schön’s comments (pertaining to the field of professional practice) as compared to the much wider context of Labouvie-Vief’s reference to “real-life adaptive criteria”. However, in the full reading of these works there is also a considerable ‘contextual overlap’ in the object of both writers’ interests and their empirical approach. Labouvie-Vief relates the wisdom question to “the more mature problem-solver” (p. 70), “intellectual operations” (p. 76), “processes of reflection and critical evaluation” (p. 77) and an integrated “way of knowing” (p. 328). Schön’s work, entitled *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action*, describes
the “kinds of performance we most need to understand” as “the practice … we recognise as unusually competent” (p. 13). It is the “core of artistry” where ‘artistry’ is rendered as “an exercise in intelligence, a kind of knowing” (p. 13) which can be revealed by “evaluating experiments in problem-setting” (p. 133).

The view adopted by the thesis is that the “kinds of performance we most need to understand” (in and beyond the context of professional practice) are the kinds of performances which are wise. This view includes the recognition that the concept of wisdom can be used as a ‘junk category’ or it can be utilised to improve the quality of our discourse and performance. One of the contemporary problems of researching the historical and cultural expressions of the concept of ‘wisdom’ is that we often tend to use the term ornamentally or generically. Von Rad (1972), for example, refers to our contemporary usage of the word ‘wisdom’ as an “attractive code-name” and “a blanket covering [for] individual phenomena” (p. 8). This concern for the usage of the term ‘wisdom’ is not unlike the concern expressed in Schön’s comment. Von Rad claims that the attractiveness of the term often “disguises what stands behind it” (p. 8).

These reservations are supported by a current review of the usage of the term ‘wisdom’, for example, in Internet databases, indexes, catalogues of literature. Such a review reveals an extensive use in titles across a range of genres and literary works. The prestige or marketability of a term which has “always denoted or connoted high or elevated forms of behaviour … that are admired” (Birren & Fisher, 1990, p. 318) can be exploited for the purposes of promoting commercial interests or careers. Bourdieu (1991) questions the use of notions such as ‘wisdom’ within a much wider realm of self-interest. Drawing on Nietzsche, Bourdieu refers to notions such as ‘wisdom’, ‘truth’, ‘God’ (and others) being “monopolised” (p.
210-11). For Bourdieu, this is a matter of competitive strivings where humans link such notions with their own identities (Webb, Schirato, & Danaher, 2002, p. 12). It is necessary to note here that “for both Nietzsche and Bourdieu, there is no such thing as a purely disinterested act” (Webb, Schirato, & Danaher, 2002, p. 12).

In presenting any of these observations and viewpoints, the suggestion here is that we need to penetrate superficial usages, as far as possible, if the question of wisdom is to be substantively addressed and utilised for beneficial and practical purposes. To address the wisdom question substantively, the present work follows a pathway of inquiry which attends initially to the generality of the wisdom question and subsequently attends to increasingly specific contexts. One of the ways in which the process of inquiry can be described as ‘reflexive’ is the manner of its moving back and forth between the different conversations of this generality and specificity (Steier, 1991, p. 6). The pathway of inquiry is discussed more specifically in Section 1.9 and a schematic outline is subsequently presented in Figure 2 at the end of the chapter.

A first step in dealing with the generality has occurred in the framing of wisdom as the balanced integration of the Context of Profundity and the Context of Practicality. This step, in a structural sense, has set out the broadest theoretical-philosophical proposal and parameters of the thesis. To ‘close in’ on the question of wisdom in an orderly fashion, the notion of ‘profundity’ requires some preliminary discussion.
1.4 The Profundity of the Question of Wisdom and the Theory-Practice Relationship

If the concept of wisdom is to be utilised (for example in the field of education) a language which can render the profundity of the wisdom question more intelligible is required. For this purpose, the exploration turns to the language of the theory-practice relationship. However, prior to dealing with this matter of intelligibility, it is necessary to add some detail to the previous brief outline of ways in which the question of wisdom can be considered ‘profound’. The multi-dimensionality and profundity of wisdom receives continued and more specific attention in the thesis, but the observations made here can indicate the general contours of this notion of ‘profundity’.

It has previously been suggested that there is a profound dimension to the wisdom question in the sense that the term ‘profundity’ implies something “subtle or intangible, something deep within or beyond the grasp of our comprehension”. It was also noted that this profound dimension can be encountered in diverse ways. In the previously cited example, Sternberg refers to the “elusiveness” of the wisdom construct (Sternberg, 1990, p. 3). In other examples, contemporary inquirers report the question of wisdom variously as an encounter with paradox (Capra, 1988; Griffiths, 1989; Perrett, 1986), ultimate truth-seeking education (Ogilvie, 1998), and depth and expansion of understanding (Habermehl, 1995). As a theme for “revitalising Catholic schools and all schools with an explicit Christian ethic”, Treston (2001) reports wisdom as that which “nurture the whole human person living in harmony within creation” (p. 5). There is perhaps nothing surprising about the way such samples (of views towards wisdom) more or less follow and develop the basic connotations of wisdom as a profound construct.
However, to work out a confirmation here of this link between the categories ‘wisdom’ and ‘profundity’, we can turn towards dictionary definitions to establish the basic connotations of what it means to refer to something as ‘profound’.

‘Profundity’ is generally defined in terms of “intellectual depth”, “great insight or penetration into a subject”, “depth of learning, thought, meaning” (Oxford English Dictionary, 1989, p. 583).

From the dictionary reference and the previous examples of views towards wisdom, it is possible to draw some distinctions which bring out particular characteristics of the concept ‘profundity’. In the sample of views towards wisdom, a reader is referred to ‘paradox’, ‘ultimate truth’, ‘depth of understanding’ and ‘living in harmony within creation’, and in each case wisdom is presented as that which can always move something of ourselves towards a deeper reality. In this respect, the category ‘profundity’ subsumes or transcends the mechanistic sense of the term ‘complexity’. The term ‘complexity’ can direct attention to the plurality of parts pertaining to the question of wisdom and to the intricacy or interconnectedness of these parts. In other words, the ‘complexity’ of a question refers us to the structure of what can potentially be difficult to understand. The ‘profundity’ of a question, however, can refer to the relation between the complexity of the subject matter (in this case, the question of wisdom) and the depth of some processes of our being. In following the dictionary reference, these ‘processes’ could be elaborated by referring to terms such as ‘intellectual’, ‘insight’, ‘penetration’, ‘learning’ and ‘meaning’.

The inclusion of ‘learning’ (in the connotations provided by the dictionary) allows the consideration that the required depth of understanding might be demonstrated or anticipated. In other words, we can understand something to be
'profound' not only when aspects of the object of an inquiry (such as aspects of wisdom) are already within our intellectual grasp, but also when we become aware that the depth of understanding required is presently beyond our intellectual grasp. 'Profundity' in this sense is a category which implicates the relationship between what we know and what we do not know.

Several prominent philosophers and psychologists have also implicated something of this relationship in their characterisation of wisdom or the wise person: "The wisest is he who realises, like Socrates, that in respect of wisdom he is worthless" (Plato, Apology, 23B). From Whitehead (cited in Noble, 1995, p. 339) comes the aphorism: "Knowledge shrinks as wisdom grows". The developmental psychologist Eric Erikson (1964) associated wisdom with the older person's capacity to reconcile an understanding of his or her life (the known) with the uncertainty surrounding death (the unknown). Wisdom here is "a detached concern with life itself, in the face of death itself" (p. 133). Meacham (1990) describes wisdom as "an awareness of the fallibility of knowing" and the "striving for a balance between knowing and doubting" (p. 325).

The profundity of the wisdom question can also be argued on a cultural-historical basis. The concept of wisdom has a "culturally rich meaning and heritage" and the term 'wisdom' itself can be considered as "a product of cultural history" (Baltes & Staudinger, 2000, p. 122). Treston (2001) writes: "Every culture seems to have a wisdom tradition" (p. 12). Although there is a multidimensionality to the characterisation of wisdom as it appears in both foundational religious texts and wisdom-related secular texts (Hill, 1997), it has also been reported that there is "a nucleus of meaning that has been transmitted relatively
unchanged for at least eighty generations” (Csikszentmihalyi & Rathunde, 1990, p. 26).

To explicate this ‘nucleus of meaning’, works from a great number of sources and variety of disciplines need to be consulted (such as philosophy, religious studies, theology, spiritual writers, cultural anthropology, political science). If such a *magnum opus* of ‘wisdom’ were to be presented it would require ‘intellectual depth’, ‘great penetration into a subject’, ‘depth of learning’ (and the other basic connotations of the category ‘profundity’) in very considerable proportions.

Although we can anticipate diversity of expression in exploring these sources, the various descriptions of wisdom have commonly pointed to something greater than their immediate terms of reference (O’Murchu, 1997, p. 178). There is something of a timeless sense in which the diverse attempts to describe, frame or thematise the wisdom question point to its profundity. Some brief examples suffice to illustrate this diversity and the relevance of referring it to the category of ‘profundity’: the etymology of philosophy as ‘the love of wisdom’ and the Platonic conception of philosophy as beginning in a sense of ‘wonder’ suggest the necessity of the ‘depth of understanding’ associated with profundity. Reid (1968), following Plato, associates this ‘wonder’ with the revelation of mystery:

> The true sense of wonder ... lies in making it possible and even necessary to strike deeper roots ... wonder signifies that the world is profounder, more all-embracing and mysterious than the logic of everyday reason had taught us to believe. (p. 176)

We are also frequently reminded of the association of wisdom with mystery if we turn to religious studies, theology and spiritual writers.
Although there is a sense in which this category of ‘profundity’ can be viewed as always pertinent to the ultimate resolution of the wisdom question, it is not necessarily always useful. A case in point can be identified by further considering this present observation of the multi-dimensionality and multidisciplinarity of wisdom inquiry. On the positive front, it has been suggested that the profundity of the question can be suggested through the study of this rich cultural-historical heritage. On the other hand, the term ‘profundity’, as previously noted with the term ‘wisdom’ itself, can be used in unhelpful ways to support unnecessary mystification of the question of wisdom.

It has previously been mentioned that a language is required for the purposes of rendering the profundity of the wisdom question more intelligible, and that this question of intelligibility is particularly significant if the construct of wisdom is to be utilised. The pathway of inquiry now proposes and explores the general parameters of such an analytical framework.

1.5 The Language of the Theory-Practice Relationship

In many ways, approaching the wisdom question as a pursuit of the nexus of profundity and practicality takes up themes which parallel a more familiar topic, namely, the theory-practice nexus. In broad terms, the ‘nexus’ here is also the working out of a connection, integration or balanced relationship between the work of theory (or what is associated with ‘the theoretic’) and the work of practice (or what is associated with ‘the practical’). The idea of things being ‘theoretical’ or ‘practical’ is referred to in ordinary conversation, and we also have a familiarity with general references to ‘connecting’ theory and practice, or conversely the idea of a ‘gap’ between theory and practice.
The thesis makes use of this observation that the language of the theory-practice relationship generally provides a recognisable and accessible point of reference. However, in its reporting of the wisdom question in the terms of the theory-practice relationship, the thesis does not jettison the categories of ‘profundity’ and ‘practicality’. On the contrary, the language of the theory-practice relationship is used as a medium for formulating the question of wisdom as a matter of profundity and practicality. Although the present work supports the view that wisdom is a matter of balancing ‘the theoretic’ and ‘the practical’, it is necessary for some prior assumptions to be located. Some fundamental observations are necessary to establish how these two dimensions (‘the theoretic’ and ‘the practical’) are implicated in wisdom inquiry.

The posing of the wisdom question inevitably engages us in the dynamics which operate between theoretical and practical orientations. For example, when we ask and involve ourselves in the question ‘What is wisdom?’ we are, in one sense (which is fairly obvious), involving ourselves in a theoretical discourse. But if we are really interested in wisdom (which is a reasonable assumption of the question), we generally are looking for something ‘practical’, or of practical use, connected to our experience of the world and human action.

There can also be an implicit view or stance towards the theory-practice relationship here. The ways that we represent, explain, judge and understand a question can be governed by an implicit view of how theoretical and practical matters are related (Usher & Bryant, 1987, p. 209). To explicate this implicit view we might begin by asking questions about our reasons for exploring wisdom, or about what we expect from an exploration of the wisdom question. Is the purpose, for example, to construct a ‘Theory of Wisdom’ which can be ‘applied’ to the
sphere of activities we refer to as ‘practice’? To what extent can, or should, the way we try to live consist of the instantiation of theories?²

In discussions of the wisdom question, both historical and contemporary, we frequently encounter terms and categories which can suggest a theory-practice relationship. In paired formation, some of these terms or categories (such as ‘abstract’ and ‘concrete’; ‘philosophical’ and ‘pragmatic’; ‘inner’ and ‘outer’; etc.) correlate with meanings associated with ‘theoretical’ and ‘practical’, or are themselves the actual descriptors which we use to explain what we mean by ‘theoretical’ or ‘practical’. Theory or theoretical things, for example, are commonly considered to be more ‘abstract’ than the practical things which are viewed as more ‘concrete’.

The terms for discussing wisdom evidently vary from discourse to discourse, and the different kinds of sense we make of such terms can lead towards various ways of categorising them. However, the present focus is toward making use of the terms ‘theoretical’ and ‘practical’ as broad categories or themes to serve the formulation of the profundity-practicality nexus. Hence, the conceptualisation of the key terms (‘theory’, ‘practice’, ‘theoretical’, ‘practical’) is pivotal.

The variously rendered meanings of ‘theory’ and ‘practice’ in scholarly literature can require an in-depth discussion, but a general sense of how the words are used in ordinary language can provide an introductory sense of the notion “theory-practice nexus” as it is followed in the thesis. We commonly take ‘theory’ to mean “a general set of ideas through which we make sense of the world” (Eisner, 1985, p. 178) and ‘the theoretical’ to be comprised of what relates to this general

² The latter question is derived from the philosopher Bryan Magee’s (1997, pp. 56-57) discussion of assumptions about the relationship between what he refers to as ‘theory’ and ‘human activities’. 
sense of theory. ‘Practice’ is commonly taken to refer to a “specific activity or action” (Covey, 1989, p. 35).

Different versions of the overlap between these meanings of ‘theory’ and ‘practice’ (for example, where ‘making sense’ can be regarded as a specific activity), and differing conceptual approaches to the related terms (for example, ‘action’) can make for some complications (Dearden, 1984; Sandelands, 1990; Smythe, 1987). Nevertheless, in common usage of the terms, we are generally familiar with the meaning of expressions such as “that’s okay in theory” or “we need something more practical”. In other words, we generally find ourselves using the terms in the sense in which ‘theory’ (or ‘theoretical’) is distinct from ‘practice’ (or ‘practical’) and vice versa. The terms are also usually used in a distinct sense for the purposes of reporting research in the literature. This ‘distinct usage’ of the terms does not necessarily negate a recognition of the extent to which theory and practice can be “interactive and mutually enriching” (Usher & Bryant, 1987, p. 201).

Some frequently cited sources in the literature have sought to clarify the concepts ‘theoretical’ and ‘practical’, or ‘the theoretic’ and ‘the practical’, by way of drawing contrasts between them. The educational and professional practice literatures, for example, have generally treated Joseph Schwab’s “practical papers” (1969, 1971, 1973) as seminal works for interpreting teaching as a “practical art” (Carr, 1989, p. 5). Schwab (1969) distinguished “the practical” as a matter of “choice and action”, contrasting it to the way “the theoretic” focuses on “knowledge” (p. 2).

The present work finds this distinction useful for the purposes of inquiry and clarifying its terms of reference. Nevertheless, the sense in which we can
usefully refer to ‘theory’ as distinct from ‘practice’ (and *vice versa*) does not require us to jettison the views towards the interactive relationship mentioned above. On the contrary, the interrelationship of theory and practice is a ‘nexus’ question. It is a fundamental premise of the thesis that the ‘theory-practice nexus’ can inform the question of wisdom. Conversely, the problem referred to as the ‘theory-practice divide’ can amount to a challenge to our wisdom. The frequency of referring to ‘theory’ as distinct to ‘practice’ (and *vice versa*) in the thesis is for the purposes of inquiry and particularly for the sake of clarity in discussion.

Schwab’s contrast underscores the sense in which “the theoretic” and “the practical” are distinct but there is also a sense in which an interrelationship is apparent. His work reflects an awareness that we can, for example, refer to “choice and action” as embedded in “knowledge” (p. 2). Here again we find that the purpose of the inquirer and the context of discussion are the critical factors in determining how we can most appropriately use the terms “theoretical” and “practical” (Wallace, 1969).

In the common or ordinary sense where ‘theory’ generally refers to our thoughts and ideas, and ‘practice’ generally refers to our more concrete experiences, it has been noted above that the ‘theory-practice nexus’ implies some form of connection between the two. For example, there is ‘nexus’ when our thoughts are demonstrating their practicality in that they are experienced as ‘working’, or conversely what is ‘working’ develops our understanding (Covey, 1989).

There is, of course, also an oversimplification here for the sake of clarity in introducing the notion of ‘nexus’. The connection is not always as clear-cut or inarguable as the example implies. In the more complex description, ‘nexus’ refers
to connections which are worked out in diverse ways and often discovered by a route which is anything but direct (Kuhn, 1970). Because there is a complex of interacting dynamics involved, 'nexus' is often a matter of learning to 'find one's way', so to speak. In this sense, 'nexus' can also be viewed as a dialectical process where things coalesce rather than link together in readily identifiable patterns. In its most nebulous form, nexus is something we are always working out. The more complex, dynamic view of 'nexus' is contained within the work of the thesis as a whole.

In the following two sections, the discussion turns from examples of how theory and practice are implicated in the wisdom question to some examples of explicit associations. The first of these sections presents brief observations from two ancient but primary sources of wisdom inquiry. This is followed with some examples from contemporary sources. Before proceeding to these examples, the essential relevant descriptions of the key terms discussed above are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Concise Renderings of Key Terms of the Theory-Practice Relationship.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theory</td>
<td>A general set of ideas through which we make a sense of the world.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Eisner, 1985, p. 178)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practice</td>
<td>Specific activity or action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Covey, 1989, p. 35)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;The Theoretic&quot;</td>
<td>The discipline concerned with knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Schwab, 1969, p. 2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;The Practical&quot;</td>
<td>The discipline concerned with choice and action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Schwab, 1969, pp. 2-3)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1.6 Viewing the Question of Wisdom as a Question of Theoretical and Practical Dimensions: Two Examples from Ancient Primary Sources

An historical or contemporary survey of the literature addressing the wisdom question reveals that the terms ‘theoretical’ and ‘practical’ are also linked in explicit ways to the construct of wisdom itself. In his historical review of the topic of wisdom in western philosophy, Robinson (1990) posits the Platonic dialogues as “the earliest record of a sustained analysis of the concept of wisdom” (p. 14). In turning to the dialogues, we find that one of Socrates’ approaches to the wisdom question is linked explicitly with an esteem for the speculative or theoretical knowledge that philosophy pursued.

The basis on which wisdom was examined in the ancient texts (including the thought-forms, concepts and terms used) is not necessarily readily transferable to the language of contemporary discourse (Von Rad, 1972, p. 6). In other words, we cannot expect historical surveys to fit neatly into line with our present familiarity with the meanings of words. With this caveat, we can employ our familiarity with terms and categories (such as ‘theoretical’ and ‘practical’) and usefully include perspectives on the wisdom question from the ancient authors.

The Socratics’ view of wisdom requires a fuller discussion than is possible here, but it is relevant to note the facets of life which could be associated with, or guided by, wisdom. In this regard, Robinson (1990) makes a significant observation in noting how wisdom enters the Platonic dialogues: “The analysis proceeds from the recognition that the term itself is not univocal but customarily refers to quite different aspects of intellectual, moral, and ordinary life” (p. 14). Translated to the analytical framework of the present exploration, these “quite
different aspects” form relationships (such as a theory-practice relationship and ultimately a profundity-practicality relationship).

In reading discussions of wisdom, it is not always evident at first glance that anything but one or more elements of this relationship are being privileged or construed as ‘wisdom’. The emphasis on particular elements (such as Socrates’ emphasis on knowledge and virtue) does not necessarily equate to a dismissal of the connectionist view towards relationships. On the contrary, such discussions can reflect a profound grasp of insights into these relationships.

In the contemporary re-emergence of interest in the wisdom question, Aristotle’s reflections on ‘sophia’ (translated commonly as ‘theoretical wisdom’), and ‘phronesis’ (translated commonly as ‘practical wisdom’) often serve as salient points of reference for the discussion. ‘Sophia’ (σοφία) is also commonly translated as ‘philosophical wisdom’ or ‘contemplative wisdom’. Ross notes that ‘sophia’ in ordinary Greek, has a wider and more subtle range of meaning than we might gather from viewing the common translations of it. Nevertheless, the particular uses of ‘sophia’ in one of Aristotle’s fullest treatments of the wisdom question (‘Nicomachean Ethics’ Book 6) associate it with activity which is contemplative (‘theoretikos’).

Other translations of ‘phronesis’ (φρόνησις) include ‘practical reasoning’, ‘moral discernment’, ‘moral insight’ and ‘prudence’ (Noel, 1999, p. 273). The particular contemporary interest that has been shown in the Greek notion of ‘phronesis’ often follows Aristotelian and neo-Aristotelian views for addressing topics such as ‘practical reasoning’ (Garrison, 1999; Westberg, 1994), ‘practical reflection’ (Inglis, 1989), ‘personal practical knowledge’ and ‘professional practice’ (Beckett, 1996; Grundy, 1989).
As Aristotle defines it, 'phronesis' is "a true and reasoned state of capacity to act [italics added] with regard to the things that are good or bad for man (sic)" (Ross translation, 1984, 1140b5). The orientation of this 'phronesis' or 'practical wisdom' is towards action and this sits comfortably with the concern of what has been previously been referred to as 'the practical' and the 'Context of Practicality'. The terms are evidently not all interchangeable, but 'phronesis' does focus on activities and how we act in concrete situations. For Aristotle, the basis of the phronetic 'capacity to act' is that it is 'true' and 'reasoned'. The necessity (of the practical orientation) to have this true and reasoned basis is consistent with the necessity of practicality to 'be realistic' (as we use the latter expression in the vernacular sense).

1.7 Contemporary Descriptions of Wisdom and the Germaneness of the Themes ('the theoretical' and 'the practical', 'profundity' and 'practicality')

Before engaging the more complex views of 'nexus', some general contemporary descriptions of wisdom are presented. The purpose of presenting entries from dictionaries and the literature is not to define 'wisdom'. Although it is proposed that the entries are indicative of general or common conceptualisations of wisdom, the present purpose is to lay the platform of an analytical framework. To that end, it is necessary to note the germaneness of the principal terms of reference (profundity-practicality; theoretic-practical, nexus) being proposed for the exploration of the wisdom question.

It has been suggested above that theoretical and practical dimensions explicitly or implicitly pervade our discussions of wisdom, and that the same
observation can be applied to the way wisdom is generally conceptualised. Dictionary definitions commonly refer to ‘wisdom’ in terms of some cognates of ‘theory’ and ‘practice’, such as ‘thinking and acting’, ‘knowledge and experience’, and so on, or some connection between these cognates. For example, the initial entries for ‘wisdom’ in The Concise Oxford Dictionary (1990) read:

\[
\textit{wisdom}
\]

1. the state of being wise.
2. experience and knowledge together with the power of applying them critically or practically. (p. 1407)

The overall impression here is that wisdom is a state which brings certain things together, or conversely certain things come together to produce this state. An implication of theoretical and practical dimensions can be read from the proposed elements of wisdom (‘knowledge and experience’) and from the way these elements are applied (‘critically or practically’). ‘Nexus’ is suggested, in the first instance, by the coming ‘together’ of the elements, and then by the relationship being represented as one of effectual application (‘the power of applying’). There is a sense in which ‘wisdom’ here follows the traditional or linear model of the theory-practice relationship where theory is something to be ‘applied’ (Usher & Bryant, 1987, p. 202).

However, some overtones of a dialectical model are also evident in the process from which wisdom is constituted: Knowledge and experience combine with a propensity (the critical and practical ‘power’) and the synthesis or synergy of these elements constitutes ‘wisdom’, or ‘the state of being wise’.

The entry for ‘wise’ in the same dictionary (The Concise Oxford Dictionary) is consistent with the observation of cognates of ‘theory’ and ‘practice’ and their connections:
wise
1. having experiences and knowledge and judiciously applying them
2. (of an action, behaviour, etc) determined by or showing, or in harmony
   with such experiences and knowledge. (p. 1407)

A second dictionary reference can corroborate this general understanding of the
term ‘wisdom’ in ordinary language and the appearance of cognates of the terms
‘theory’ and ‘practice’. The entry for ‘wisdom’ in the Collins Concise Dictionary
(1989) reads:

wisdom
1. the ability or result of an ability to think and act utilising knowledge,
   experience, understanding, commonsense and insight.
2. accumulated knowledge or enlightenment. (p. 1368)

It is also notable here that the appearance of terms such as “insight” and
“enlightenment”, and “accumulated knowledge” can suggest the implication of
profundity, whilst practicality is implied by references to having an effective
‘ability’ or ‘result’.

The way ‘wisdom’ is rendered as a concept in scholarly literature also
suggests a connection between cognates of theory and practice, as well as
profundity and practicality. As an example of a philosopher’s definition of
wisdom, the following entry from the The Oxford Companion to Philosophy
(Kekes, 1995a) is presented. 3

Wisdom
A form of understanding that unites a reflective attitude with a practical
concern. The aim of the attitude is to understand the fundamental nature of
reality and its significance for living a good life. The object of the practical
concern is to form a reasonable conception of a good life, given the agents’

3 The definition provided by John Kekes here is consistent with the conceptualisation of wisdom he
character and circumstances, and to evaluate the situations in which they have to make decisions and act from its point of view. (p. 912)

Wisdom can be considered ‘profound’ here on the basis of its form, content and orientation. For Kekes, wisdom is essentially “a form of understanding”. This form of understanding can be acknowledged as profound because it has achieved a nexus or unity which stems from deeply seated aspects of one’s nature (as depicted by the description of the ‘attitude’ and ‘concern’). Wisdom has a theoretical-philosophical dimension (the ‘reflective attitude’ with metaphysical and ethical underpinnings) and a practical dimension (the ‘practical concern’). Kekes relates the content of wisdom’s understanding to profound matters (such as ‘the fundamental nature of reality’ and ‘living a good life’). However, the achievement of this nexus-based ‘understanding’ does not constitute a final resting-place for the elements involved: there is also an orientation to be maintained. The ‘agent’ of wisdom has understanding but also seeks to be further informed (regarding the ‘aim’ and ‘object’). The form and content of this achievement of unity can be described as ‘profound’ but the unity also orientates itself towards the profundity.

The practicality of the wisdom described by Kekes is explicit, and his ‘agent of wisdom’ is a person ‘on a mission’, so to speak. Wisdom operates here in a context where the ‘practical concern’ is to ‘evaluate the situations’, ‘make decisions’ and ‘act’. The nexus of elements constituting wisdom’s ‘understanding’ is purposive, directed towards its stated goals. Practicality is crucial here because the purposiveness of the ‘understanding’ demands its deployment. In other words, this is a wisdom to be used. The direction of what flows from the practical concern is evidence of practicality. The practical concern is required to be ‘reasonable’, suitably adjusted to a context (‘given the agent’s character and circumstances’) and
capable of operationalising the theoretical-philosophical dimension ('its point of view').

In the introductory section of the thesis, 'practicality' has been rendered as the adoption of a 'pragmatic view' where attention is directed towards developing "practices and understandings which 'work' rather than 'don't work'". Hence, practicality requires more than deployments or interventions (in this case, of an 'attitude' and 'concern'), but also a pragmatic view towards what is workable in these endeavours. So too, wisdom, for Kekes, is not only an attainment of understanding but also an enterprise where the intentionality of the agent is a salient feature. The agent's intent (as presented in the 'aim' and 'object') is pragmatic in the sense that it is an intent to make this enterprise fruitful.

Keke's account of wisdom as a unity of reflective and practical facets of living is also consistent with the notion of 'nexus' as integration and balance. There is no evidence of a privileging of the 'reflective attitude' or the 'practical concern'. In other words, there is no imbalance in the sense that one dimension is emphasised at the expense of the other.

The implication of the unity of profundity and practicality in Kekes' account is a nexus of elements or aspects, and refer to spheres of life which have already been observed in the ancient Greek references to wisdom. It has been previously noted that the Greek view of wisdom "customarily referred to quite different aspects of intellectual, moral and ordinary life" (Robinson, 1990, p. 14). Kekes' account also directs wisdom towards intellectual pursuits (such as the metaphysical interest in reality), moral endeavour (acting from the conception of the good life) and aspects of ordinary life (evaluating situations and making decisions from the context of the circumstances). In other works, such as Moral Wisdom and Good Lives, Kekes
(1995b) explicitly draws from Aristotle and Plato and the ‘virtue ethics tradition’ established by the Greek philosophers. Here Kekes’ definition of ‘moral wisdom’ conforms with the general parameters of a profundity-practicality relationship previously explained. Moral wisdom, he says, is “composed of a conception of a good life and the knowledge, evaluation and judgement required for living according to it” (p. 73).

In examining other accounts of wisdom, there are of course widely ranging variations on how profundity and practicality are implicated in different articulations or emphases. For example, in their summary of accounts of wisdom, Birren and Fisher (1990) are aware that certain writers stress what is ultimately transcendent whilst others focus more on the pragmatic fundamentals of daily living:

The concept wisdom contains within it a dimension that ranges, at one end, from religion and the belief that God alone possesses the ultimate wisdom to a more mundane view that practically minded administrators, leaders, business persons, and others can acquire the necessary experience and shrewdness in the conduct of daily affairs to be termed 'wise'. (p. 319)

In her philosophical-psychological paper ‘Wisdom as Integrated Thought’, Labouvie-Vief (1990) suggests that our various attempts to make wisdom an object of inquiry are underpinned by a common purpose. This common purpose suggests that our search for wisdom is governed by theoretical and practical conditions. Her study suggests that our search for wisdom has been, and is, a search for what connects the profundity and practicality of human lives:

Thus our present concerns with wisdom may bring to fruition an ancient hope – that of constructing a theory of human potentialities oriented by a normative view of transcendent ideals yet firmly grounded in the organic texture of life. (p. 79)
1.8 The Need for Flexibility in Conceptualising Certain Aspects of Profound Questions

Regardless of how we arrange or categorise 'the theoretical' or 'the practical', we find ourselves dealing with some limits when we explore the profundity of the wisdom question or 'nexus'. The discussion hitherto has suggested that a depth of understanding and insight can be required to grasp the connections between various facets or dimensions of human lives. 'Profundity', however, is also a term which allows for the full capacity of complex questions (such as the wisdom question) to resist or defy definitive explanation.

The term 'profundity' is also a sufficiently broad or 'open' category to cater for very different points of emphasis in relation to our efforts to discern how things connect. Some perspectives, for example, are likely to emphasise how things connect in inconsistent ways or else do not connect at all. Mansfield (2000), for instance, writes that our experience is "forever prone to surprising disjunctions" (p. 4). A sample of recurring terms in some of Foucault's works (1970, 1972) can support this emphasis: "disparate events", "rupture", "radical discontinuities", "displacement", "divisions", "dispersions", "shifts".4

What we begin to encounter here is the possibility of the exploration sometimes needing a more expansive and flexible conceptualisation of 'nexus' than the relatively simple ideas of 'connect' (as opposed to 'disconnect') previously discussed. The apparent flux of variables or the myriad of factors we can associate with human living can point out a need to be flexible in our thinking. In reflecting on the processes of learning and education generally, there is also a need to be

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4 The point here concerns the capacity of the category 'profundity' to allow an open yet critical stance in inquiry. The authors cited are mentioned only as examples of how another view, particular emphasis or perspective can be brought to the question of 'nexus'. Any association with the so-called label 'postmodern theorists' is not the intended point of focus.
flexible in conceptualising how we grasp or articulate what we learn (Eisner, 1992, p. 209). Rather than shun the encounters with complexity or profundity, the pursuit of nexus can attempt to acquaint itself with some of the intricacies resulting from complexity and profundity.

Examples of ‘challenges’ referred to above (such as “surprising disjunctions”) can require a flexible view towards what is entailed in tracking down the ‘nexus’. Here one might expect wisdom (or the integration of nexus) to entail the recognition of the discrete nature of things, the fluidity of situations and what is not ‘connectable’. In the pursuit of ‘nexus’, the theme of ‘profundity’ is aimed at penetrating the over-simplifications of what it means to ‘connect’. (In the pursuit of nexus, the thematising work of ‘profundity’ can also ‘keep us on our toes’ philosophically, so to speak.) In the general sense, however, ‘nexus’ remains a term which denotes some form of connection, link or bond.

Referring to ‘profundity’ can imply the openness to deepen or extend the horizons of our thinking, yet ‘profundity’ is also an uncompromising category when it comes to the integrity of what is acquired: In the sense that not everything is ‘profound’, profundity is not a category of ‘anything goes’. If challenges to our received notions are admitted, it is because profundity is more fully realised through a process of new questions being raised (Gadamer, 1991).

A passive flagging of the term ‘profundity’ does not, in itself, necessarily take us very far towards an understanding of the connections we generally refer to as ‘nexus’. However, the thematic usage of the category ‘profundity’ is another matter. The positive functions of themes are discussed at a later stage and it is sufficient to note here that “theme is the needfulness or desire to make sense” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 88). Whether we notice that ‘nexus’ is a matter which is complex,
diverse, inconsistent or even chaotic, the theme of ‘profundity’ implies that we may be required to consider the questions involved at this more careful level. Wiggins (1993) articulates the sort of challenge being referred to here: “We have to bring to consciousness and thoughtfully examine our deep seated habit of seeking superficially correct answers to uniform questions” (p. 46).

One of the problems of referring to ultimate frames of reference or ultimate terms is that we encounter limits when our description seeks a high level of clarity and a substantive accounting. It has previously been mentioned that the thesis views the terms ‘theory’ and ‘practice’ (or correlates such as ‘theoretic’ and ‘practical’) as generally providing a more tangible and concrete frame of reference, and makes a point of using them for the purpose of making discussion of the wisdom question more intelligible. Although the purpose of recruiting the terms is to facilitate a degree of clarity, some philosophers have always suggested that one of the lessons of wisdom and doing philosophy is an appreciation of the limits of seeking clarity (Reid, 1968, p. 11; Wittgenstein, 1967).

At the end of Tractatus, Wittgenstein (1974) analogises the use of language to a ladder: we use the ladder to escape from the pit into which the use of language has previously misled us. Once we have escaped, the ladder is discarded. Exploring the wisdom question may ultimately be like this in some respects. We turn to themes, conceptual schema and terms such as ‘theoretical’ and ‘practical’ to formulate an intelligible account, but ultimately the profundity of the wisdom question always transcends the account.

One of the important distinctions to be noted in turning to terms such as ‘theory’ and ‘practice’ (or their correlates) involves an awareness of what is necessary for the purposes of discussion. The separation of the terms is also a
matter of clarity and the purposes of inquiry, rather than a matter of indiscriminately subscribing to a dualistic conception of the theory-practice relationship. All theorising, for example, is a form of practice, and any practice can be said to embody an inherent theory (Argyris, 1982), but we generally refer to ‘theory’ and ‘practice’ as if separate. In the thesis, the distinct use and analysis of concepts is considered to be a function of disciplined inquiry (Jaeger, 1988). However, in the final analysis, Reid (1968) provides a reminder that is essential: “One of the perennial curses of thought is the making separate of what is only distinguishable” (p. 82).

The most fundamental premise of the thesis is that wisdom ultimately consists of the balanced integration of two inter-related contexts, namely the Context of Profundity and the Context of Practicality. The germaneness of the ‘nexus of profundity and practicality’ has been proposed, and certain parallels with the theory-practice nexus have been noted.

However, although there are commonalities between the themes of ‘profundity-practicality’ and ‘theoretic-practical’, there are also some fundamental differences. For example, when the judicious, prudent behaviours referred to in the above accounts of wisdom are considered profound, profundity is linked to the practical aspects of wisdom. Hence, what can be associated with ‘profundity’ does not necessarily always refer to ‘the theoretic’ or ‘the philosophic’. In other words, if there are parallels between the profundity-practicality nexus and the theory-practice nexus, they are not complete or fixed.

In each case, the similarities and differences noted in comparing any of the terms are a shifting set of similarities and differences. For example, when we note a particular distinction between ‘theory’ and ‘practice’, we are noting a particular
1.9 The Scope and Structure of the Thesis

As an initial or provisional address of the wisdom question, the proposals presented thus far establish only some of the contours which form the design and analytical framework of the thesis. The adoption of the notion or theme of the ‘nexus of profundity and practicality’ has set the overall orientation for exploring the wisdom question in the thesis. At a more substantive level, the pathway of inquiry views the wisdom question through the lens of the theory-practice relationship. The most fundamental proposal at this level is that the wisdom question can be usefully viewed as a question hinged by theoretical and practical aspects. To track the nexus of profundity and practicality, the essential position of
the thesis is that we require a balance of theoretical (e.g. philosophical) and practical orientations (e.g. personal and collective efficacy).

These proposals, and moreover the wisdom question itself, need to be delimited for the purposes of research. The way that this objective is achieved is closely connected to the question of how we contextualise wisdom as an object for inquiry. This fundamental aspect of wisdom inquiry is critical because it determines the treatment of the question. Hence, the focus on methodological considerations in Chapter Two includes a rationale for the contextualisation of the wisdom question in the thesis.

For the purpose of signalling the direction of the thesis and indicating the general parameters in which the project is couched, a brief outline of this contextualisation is provided here. To bring the wisdom question into the focus required for disciplined inquiry, the rationale presents an orderly arrangement of contexts for reflecting on wisdom. The arrangement also indicates the pathway of the inquiry more specifically. These contexts range from the generality of inquiring after ‘wisdom’ as a broad philosophical construct to the specificity of inquiring after wisdom in relation to particular aspects of human experience. Some of these contexts have been referred to at different stages of the preliminary discussions above. For the sake of clarity, an overview of their arrangement is presented below:

After discussion of the assumptions and pre-suppositions (or ‘pre-texts’) that are inevitably brought to wisdom inquiry, the rationale de-limits the wisdom question to the context of “what matters” to us. The reference to “what matters” is subsequently de-limited to the context of human aspiration. This context is further de-limited by turning attention to the specific problem of the gap between human
aspiration and experienced realities. The rationale then situates the problem in the context of education, and signals the intention to include studies of specific perspectives on the problem as derived from interviews with an experienced classroom teacher. The educational context is accordingly approached from a teaching perspective, with a particular consideration of the problem in relation to ideas of reflective practice derived from the professional practice literature. The focusing of the 'teaching perspective' is facilitated by turning to a particular statement of the problem by curriculum theorist Lawrence Stenhouse (1979).

To review this statement: There is, Stenhouse claimed, a problem for teachers of "a gap between our ideas and aspirations and our attempts to operationalise them" (p. 3). Stenhouse (1979) considered the problem to be "the central problem of curriculum study" (p. 3). It is a problem he described as "real" and "frustrating" for teachers, and one which is revealed by "close critical scrutiny of their own classrooms" (p. 3). Stenhouse's full statement is presented in Section 3.5.2, and subsequently discussed in detail.

Considered a seemingly intractable problem of education, the 'gap' is not an isolated problem but also engages the broader context of the lived world. It is a ubiquitous problem which ultimately challenges our capacity to develop wisdom, personally and professionally, individually and collectively. Although we tend to refer to relatively specific contexts when frustrated with aspirations, the problem of the gap is always also a human problem.

Whilst the pathway of inquiry approaches this increasing level of specificity or 'situated-ness', reductionism is countered by the emphasis placed on seeking connections, integration and balance with the broader contexts of the wisdom question. The task of exploring the wisdom question is admittedly a far
more complex one when this approach is attempted. The orderliness of a logical arrangement of contexts for reflecting on the question of wisdom can mask the sense in which these contexts are in a continual state of tension. For example, the specific context of classroom teaching is demanding and teachers are often enmeshed in the tension between dealing with matters expediently and reflecting on their own teaching as an evolving human practice (Beckett, 1996).

1.10 The Aims of the Thesis

Although several references to the direction and aim of the thesis have been made in the above discussion, the following statement provides a concise synthesis.

The aims of the thesis are to offer:

1) A paradigm (or way of thinking) for exploring and discussing wisdom.
2) An example of the use of this paradigm in an educational context.

Further clarification of the aims is included in the following elaboration of the methodology.

1.11 Methodology: The Practical-Philosophy Paradigm

1.11.1 The Notion of a ‘Practical-Philosophy Paradigm’

The discussion of this section is a brief synthesis of the notion of a ‘Practical-Philosophy Paradigm’; the methodology is further detailed in subsequent sections and other related sections of the thesis. Chapter 2 considers methodology in relation to the wisdom question as a particular kind of question. Discussion of the Practical-Philosophy Paradigm in this present section begins with a review of the essential features of the previously-mentioned notions of ‘practical’ and
practical philosophy'. This is followed by an outline of the conception of 'philosophy' as it applies to the methodology of the thesis. The final part of the section outlines the notion of 'paradigm'.

It has previously been noted that the thesis is essentially a philosophical project and the form of its philosophising has been described as a ‘Practical-Philosophy Paradigm’. Two features of the ‘practical’ aspect of the paradigm have already been referred to: Firstly, the philosophical work requires an orientation towards particular practices (in this case, teaching) and/or a problem (in this case, the gap between teachers’ aspirations and experienced realities). Philosophy which is ‘more practical’ has already been rendered as that which speaks to ‘the negotiation of these practices and problems’ and ‘the progress of human lives’. Secondly, the practical aspect requires an awareness of the usefulness of the philosophical work (such as where the work is concerned with utilising the construct of wisdom).

‘Philosophy’ and ‘philosophising’ have previously been referred to as the development of “a discursive, conceptualised, theoretical understanding” (Vandenberg, 1990, p. 141) and an attempt to express the “meanings of meanings” (Phenix, 1964).

Following Phenix, the work of philosophy is not merely to articulate the superficial sense of a question or the ‘immediacy’ whereby a question is found to be intelligible. In Chapter 2, the observation that the text ‘What is wisdom?’ already means something to us is taken to be more significant than we ordinarily might imagine. However, if we follow Phenix’s view of philosophy as the attempt to express the ‘meanings of meanings’, doing philosophy requires something more conscious and penetrative than accepting things at face value. We could cut the
philosophy of the present inquiry short by referring only to a dictionary or briefly outlining what we mean when we refer to 'wisdom' in ordinary language. In her study of wisdom, Schaeffer (1999) provides an example of how we can be taken to the 'deeper' (or 'philosophical') level when she poses the question "Is what is called 'wisdom' actually wisdom?" (p. 649). At its deepest level, the 'meaning of meanings' refers us to the possibilities of an ultimate-type meaning of wisdom (what is wisdom ultimately?).

In the thesis, expressing or making 'meaning' refers to a process which is "multi-dimensional and multi-layered ... a process of insightful invention, discovery or disclosure" (Van Manen, 1990, pp. 178-79). Van Manen's description of making 'meaning' suggests that the singular sense in which we refer to 'meaning' can be unhelpful. If we are to refer to a 'process' of making-meaning, it is a process which takes diverse forms. The understandings which arise from making meaning are multi-dimensional and multi-layered and can evolve in a multi-modal process (of 'invention', 'discovery', 'disclosure').

Although the thesis retains these descriptions to present its conception of 'philosophy', it also accepts that "the nature and function of philosophy is itself a kind of philosophical problem" (Reid, 1968, p. 3). Reid (1968) argues that "There is no universally agreed field, or subject matter or method, in philosophy" (p. 3). Philosophers do, however, commonly refer to the subject matter and 'method' of philosophy, but what is expressed is often some sense of general parameters rather than substantive agreement. Mautner's (2000) dictionary of philosophy, for instance, reports that "The method of philosophy is rational inquiry" (p. 423). We can speak more specifically of content and method when we discuss varieties of
philosophy but even here we find change over time and differing views of what should be included, excluded or recovered.

A starting place for understanding ‘philosophy’ is reflection on our own encounters with the experiences, problems and questions which have most seriously challenged us to think. In other words, we may need to participate in philosophy in order to grasp or realise its character: “The difficulty is that philosophy can be better explained by doing it than by trying to describe it. It is in part a way of dealing with questions, as well as an attempt to resolve certain problems ...” (Kelly, Popkin & Stroll, 1981, p. xv).

The point here concerning “a way of dealing with questions” is significant because we commonly expect philosophy to involve not only thinking but also thinking which aims itself towards providing a way of thinking. We might say here that that philosophy does the work of ‘contextualising’ questions or ‘putting things into a perspective’: “... the philosopher has attempted to work out some general, systematic, coherent and consistent picture of all that we know and think” (Kelly, Popkin & Stroll, 1981, p. xv). Within the variety of accounts of philosophy are many which would reduce the descriptions here (of the work of the philosopher) to certain applications. There are wide and narrow versions of what counts as ‘philosophy’ and ‘philosophising’ (Teichman & Evans, 1991, p. 230), and each version might be described as a ‘philosophy of philosophy’.

Consideration of what counts as ‘philosophy’ in scholarship can bring out some further essential features of the notion of ‘doing philosophy’ in the thesis. In the introduction to his “Philosophy of Teaching”, John Passmore (1980, pp. 3-4) also notes that philosophy lacks an explicit identification in the educational literature. Commentaries on education, he observes, are loosely described as
'philosophical'. Nevertheless, it is evident that "philosophy has so far established its right to be regarded as a systematic discipline as to be taught in universities as such" (p. 3). Although it has established this right, Passmore goes on to observe that philosophy "has never wholly lost that older, popular, meaning which permits anyone to call himself [sic] a philosopher who engages in general reflections about human life and human affairs" (p. 3). Although Passmore is observing a certain overlap here between the reflectiveness of 'philosophy' as an academic discipline and the reflectiveness associated with 'popular' notions of philosophy, he is also aware of significant differences: rather than equate 'popular' notions of philosophy (and a 'philosopher') with the philosophy which is accepted as an academic discipline, he is referring us to a common feature. This consists of what he considers is not 'wholly lost', namely, a reflective orientation to questions of 'human life' and its 'human affairs':

One of the more debatable aspects of this disciplined reflectiveness is the way its requirement for rationality is viewed. We can, for instance, view the differing conceptions of rationality as ideological or constituted by different fundamental human interests (Habermas, 1972). Nevertheless, in the scholarly claim of 'doing philosophy', a defensible claim to rationality is normative: as previously indicated "The method of philosophy is rational inquiry" (Mautner, 2000, p. 423). Prominent philosophers have maintained, often in markedly different ways, that the idea of a 'method' peculiar to philosophy is problematical (Gadamer, 1991; Popper, 1959). Although Popper points out that "the rational discussion" of philosophy is "not characteristic of philosophy alone", he reports 'philosophising' as a matter of the "critical examination of questions and problems" (Popper, 1959, pp. 15-16).
Some connecting of references can now provide a language for a generalisation concerning the conception of 'philosophy' in the thesis: the reflection and discipline of scholarly philosophy (Passmore, 1980) attempts to express "the meanings of meanings" (Phenix, 1964) through the development of "a discursive, conceptualised, theoretical understanding" (Vandenberg, 1990, p. 141).

In drawing more specifically from these observations, the conception of philosophy as a meaning-making endeavour can now be subjected to three criteria. The depth previously implied by Phenix's reference to 'meanings of meanings' and by Van Manen's reference to a multi-modal exploratory process is now required to be disciplined, reflective and rational. Notwithstanding the vast body of literature which addresses each of these three criteria or characteristics, some further brief observations can suggest some general requirements of discipline, reflectiveness and rationality here.

'Discipline' (Criterion One): Discipline and the Conception of 'Philosophy'

The notion of 'discipline' here is also not peculiar to philosophical inquiry. Describing social research methods, Berger (1963, p. 16) provides a view of disciplined inquiry as orderly, structured, systematic and committed to working and staying within a strictly defined frame of reference. Schulman (1988, p. 3), asking "What is the role of research methodology in educational research?" and "How can we tell proper from improper uses of research methods?", claims "we must turn to a central concept in educational research methodology - disciplined inquiry" (p. 3). In disciplined inquiry, Schulman suggests that there is a demonstration of control of reasoning, logical processes and reporting which can be readily scrutinised.
The thesis finds these descriptions to be adequate to its notion of 'discipline' but it is necessary to add some further qualifications. Although there often may be no hard and fast distinction among notions of 'discipline' in different types of research, it does not necessarily follow that one can give a straightforward definition of discipline and proceed to transfer it uncritically around quite different domains or stages of research. Discipline enjoins and mediates among other characteristics of a particular approach to inquiry. In the present case, the particular approach is a philosophical and exploratory work, and the relevant 'discipline' in inquiry is a philosophical and exploratory discipline.

The qualification is also important if 'disciplined inquiry' is not to be viewed stereotypically. Schulman (1988) also makes the important point that definitions of disciplined inquiry can "be misconstrued to imply that the appropriate application of research methods in education always leads to a sterile, ritualised, and narrowly conceived form of investigation" (pp. 4-5). Beyond the stereotypical view of 'discipline' as rigid adherence to strictly defined orderliness and procedure, it also takes discipline to meet the demands of highly challenging questions for flexible, innovative and creative reflection (Nadler, Hibino & Farrell, 1995).

Exploratory paradigms, particularly as directed to the wisdom question, have certain needs and goals. Some of the goals Neuman (1994) associates with exploratory research include: the generation of "ideas, tentative theories and conjectures", the formulation of questions and the development of "a sense of direction for future research" (p. 19). The needs and goals do not necessarily dismiss the requirements referred to above (such as order, structure, system) but can lead to less rigid stances towards viewing the requirements.
The thesis accepts science as useful to its aims but does not treat science as the complete embodiment of disciplined inquiry (Gadamer, 1991). When the thesis uses structures (such as tabulations, categories, models) and references to empirical studies, the purpose is not to claim ‘definitive-ness’. The purpose is rather to support a disciplined effort towards its stated aim of offering “a paradigm (or way of thinking) for exploring and discussing wisdom”. In using structures, such as categories for instance, the methodology is not attempting to be empirical in the realist sense of accounting for ‘how things are’: “Philosophy has knowledge to offer, to be sure, but knowledge concerning ways of thinking and talking about the world, not knowledge concerning the world itself - that should be left to science” (Passmore, 1980, p. 12).

The thesis accepts that a practical philosophical approach can include scientific work, but in both the ‘Context of Profundity’ and the Context of Practicality the question of wisdom is viewed as a matter which ultimately suggests the limits of structured ‘answers’. Without the understanding that the structures and interviews reported in the thesis are being utilised in a given philosophical context, they can appear to be ‘uneven’ from a scientific stand-point (such as that which requires predictive and consistent correlation with reproducible experimentation).

Because there is a relationship among the key terms associated with the conception of ‘philosophy’ here (such as meaning-making, discipline, reflection, rationality), the notion of ‘discipline’ can be further understood from a reading of the methodology section in full.
Rationality (Criterion Two): Rationality and the Conception of ‘Philosophy’

The practical-philosophy paradigm requires the enterprise being described here as ‘philosophical’, including its rationality, to include inquiry into practical matters. In this respect, there is something to add to the sense of rationality purveyed by rendering philosophy as “discursive, conceptualised, theoretical understanding” (Vandenberg, 1990, p. 141). Ultimately, the measure of a practical philosophy is its capacity to facilitate progress or improvement in a field of practice. We can validly speak of rationality in terms of the development of theory, but a practical philosophy has the capacity to enhance the position of the practitioner in the moment of decision-making. Referring to “the bringing together of theory and practice” in the field of teaching, Grundy (1989) observes that: “It is still ... the practitioner who must decide ... what action will constitute ‘the Good’” (p. 95).

The rationality of the Practical-Philosophy Paradigm does not necessarily reduce to what is referred to as ‘practical rationality’ (Morgan, 1993) or ‘practical reasoning’ (Audi, 1989; Miller, 1999). Practical rationality is often reported as a means-to-ends form of reasoning (Dewey, 1979; Fenstermacher, 1987), although there are different conceptions of ‘means’ and ‘ends’ and the ‘means-ends’ relation (Pendlebury, 1990). The quite different accounts of practical rationality can make for difficulties in introducing it as a construct relevant to the rationality of what has been referred to here as a ‘practical-philosophy paradigm’. Nevertheless, it is clear that some accounts of practical rationality run closely with the practical dimension of such philosophical work, particularly when viewed from the perspective of aims. Miller (1999) for instance describes practical rationality thus:

It is reasoning which has as its point action. This is not to say that the conclusion of a piece of practical reasoning is necessarily an action, as
opposed to a proposition. Perhaps the conclusion of a piece of practical reasoning is a proposition to the effect that the agent ought to perform such and such an action. (p. 313)

The thesis assumes that there is a form of rationality which involves thinking or deliberation about what to do. In teaching, for example, this rationality involves reasoning about what to do in the classroom (Pendlebury, 1990, p. 171). Notwithstanding the profundity of this phenomenon, the thesis generally refers to this reasoning in terms of the practical aspect of doing ‘practical philosophy’ and the Context of Practicality.

Leaving aside, for the moment, the detail of issues concerning practical rationality, some general features of the notion of rationality in the thesis can be outlined. Rationality, considered ‘practical’ or otherwise, can be said to derive its quality (that is, ‘quality’ in the normative sense of a degree of excellence) or its meaning from information, and its processing of information. Van Dalen (1979), for example, refers to the rationality of teachers’ problem-solving as an information-based process of “deriving meaning” by looking for “relationships between facts and facts, explanations and explanations, and facts and explanations” (p. 171). The importance of facts and explanations here can suggest the importance of rationality taking the form of informed reasoning.

In the Context of Profundity, the search for deepening understandings of rationality becomes reflexive in the sense that reasoning is questioned by reasoning. Our different attitudes or perspectives towards rationality ultimately raise (epistemological) questions about the knowability of things and (metaphysical) questions about our view of reality (Brubacher, 1950, p. 90). Rationality is also ultimately embedded in the question of our humanity. The possibility that our understanding of this humanity points beyond itself for its completion is a condition
for the theologians having something to say about rationality (Macquarrie, 1967, p. 23). As far as the conception of rationality requires a formulation, it is also a (hermeneutical) question of interpretation, one which Woolgar (1988) notes opens up "a potential vortex" of further questions (p. 17). The 'vortex' is not avoided in the thesis, but the range of exploration involved is de-limited.

In the interests of brevity in this subsection, the conception of rationality (applicable to the notion of 'philosophy' in the thesis) is indicated by two guiding principles. Firstly, Bertrand Russell (1948) has proposed that: "Perfect rationality consists not in believing what is true but in attaching to every proposition a degree of belief corresponding to its degree of credibility" (p. 397). Secondly, a claim to rationality can be questioned for what Vandenberg (1990) refers to as its "cognitive warrant" (p. 4). 'Cognitive warrant' suggests that some claims are more defensible than others and that defensibility is required for credibility.

Reflectiveness (Criterion Three): Reflectivity and the Conception of Philosophy

Not all forms of thinking or rationality are 'philosophical'. Insomuch as philosophical thinking is different, it is broadly viewed as reflective thinking. The difference may be described as the tenor, form or quality of thinking involved. However, if the body of research literature is taken as a whole, the thinking that is distinctively 'reflective' is not clearly defined (McLaughlin, 1999). In The Oxford Companion to Philosophy (1995), the initial definition of 'philosophy' is "thinking about thinking" (p. 666). Although metacognition (or thinking about thinking) is not necessarily always distinctively philosophical or reflective, the definition does allow for the inadequacy of referring indiscriminately to 'thinking'.
The more detailed definition which follows this initial definition (in the same source) associates the ‘reflective thought’ of philosophy with thinking which follows certain directions:

Philosophy is ... reflective thought about particular kinds of thinking ... Philosophy is rationally critical thinking, of a more or less systematic kind about the general nature of the world (metaphysics or theory of existence), the justification of belief (epistemology or theory of knowledge), and the conduct of life (ethics or theory of value). (p. 666)

It can be noted that the definition can be used to support or imply the three criteria of discipline (thinking of a ‘systematic kind’), rationality (‘rationally critical thinking’) and reflectiveness (‘reflective thought’). However, the definition might also suggest that it is easier to refer substantively to the direction than to the process of the philosophical reflection which marks philosophy. Notwithstanding exceptions (such as formal or symbolic logic), the thinking which serves or becomes what we refer to as ‘philosophical reflection’ may be something we can only describe rather than fully explain (Wittgenstein, 1967).

There are different versions of the term ‘reflection’ (Newman, 1999) but present purposes require a brief synthesis of the notion of reflection as far it characterises the idea of ‘doing philosophy’ in the thesis. Here ‘philosophical reflection’ is treated as a broad term for a multi-modal process by which some uniquely human capacities are exercised. These are capacities for second-order thinking and for probing the deeper questions of life. The reference here to ‘philosophical reflection’, rather than the broad construct of ‘reflection’, is significant in the sense that not all reflection is ‘philosophical’. References to teaching, for example, as ‘reflective practice’, do not necessarily imply a wholly philosophical reflection.

50
The notions of 'reflection', 'philosophical reflection' and teaching as 'reflective practice' are dealt with in greater detail in the thesis.

*The 'Paradigm' of the Practical Philosophy*

The term 'paradigm' is used here in a relatively ordinary sense, suggesting an approach which fits a pattern, model or conception of a way of operating. There are varieties of definitions of the term but the general idea of an 'approach' is a useful starting point for clarifying the use of the term in the label 'Practical-Philosophy Paradigm'.

The term acquired a more heightened or popular status following its use by the philosopher of science Thomas Kuhn (1970) in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. In a postscript to his own work, Kuhn acknowledges that "in much of the book the term 'paradigm' is used in two different senses" (p. 175). Critics have suggested that the book in fact uses a multiplicity of different senses for the term. It is not necessary to critique Kuhn's work here, but it is relevant to note that Kuhn's work has resulted in the term 'paradigm' being commonly used in discussions of the meaning of 'methodology', and that this association generally suggests that "a paradigm ... means a basic orientation to theory and research" (Neuman, 1994, p. 57).

In the thesis, the term 'paradigm' essentially refers to an approach to, or 'way of thinking' about, the wisdom question, its exploration, and its contextualisation.

The aims of the thesis indicate not only that a paradigm is being used, but also that the work sets out to present a paradigm for exploring the wisdom question. In the educational context referred to, the paradigm provides a philosophical way of
exploring educational practices and problems. Because the scope of the thesis is necessarily limited, the work attends to only some aspects of the wisdom question and only some aspects of a particular problem in the educational context. In other words, there are discussed and undiscussed aspects of the wisdom question, teaching practices and the problem of 'the gap' reported by Stenhouse. By consciously presenting a paradigm and demonstrating its use, the aim is to contribute a way of approaching not only the discussed aspects but also many undiscussed aspects.

1.12 Reflexive and Substantive Dimensions of the Methodology

The reflexive dimension of the methodology is essentially that facet of the exploration which focuses on developing a way of thinking about the question itself rather than the substantive 'answer'. The notion of 'reflexivity' receives extended attention at various stages of the thesis. Apart from the reflexive dimension of the methodology, the thesis provides considerable attention to the argument that the question of wisdom itself is highly 'reflexive'. In other words, wisdom is ultimately viewed as a question that requires turning from responses to reflect again on the question. Some researchers have gone as far as reporting the construct of wisdom as "the art of questioning" (Arlin, 1990, p. 231) and "self-conscious knowing" (Schaeffer, 1999, p. 641).

The substantive dimension of the methodology is that facet of the exploration which explicitly leads to postulations or conclusions about the object of inquiry, namely, wisdom. Whereas the reflexive dimension is more concerned with saying something about the question, the substantive dimension entails a more direct response.
The thesis assumes that both dimensions are essential to the exploration of wisdom. Figure 2 (at the end of the present chapter) represents the particular way that the thesis responds to the reflexive and substantive requirements of the construct of wisdom.

Chapter Conclusion

Although there are thematic references to 'conversation' throughout the present work, there is a sense in which the metaphor of a 'journey' is also useful for conceptualising the general orientation of the thesis as a project in philosophy. As it explores the literature and the field of teaching, the thesis represents a search for meaning where the 'traveller' or 'pilgrim' intends to venture, discover what one can 'see' and create a way of becoming more familiar with it.

In 'journeying', the thesis makes many 'arrivals' and 'departures', sometimes returning to 're-visit' a source after having established the possibility of proposing another 'connecting route'. Although a traveller can always carefully 'unpack' certain items, a 'journey' does not necessarily involve preoccupation with a linear approach to a 'destination': it can, rather, involve combining different kinds of approaches, weave in and out of various locations and comprise a 'mode of travel' which remains purpose-oriented rather than exclusively destination-oriented.

The present chapter has set out the general parameters in which the project is couched: the initial 'sense of the question', the language appropriated for the themes and contextualisation of the question, provisional definitions for positing wisdom as an object of inquiry, matters of scope and structure, conceptualisations of philosophy, aims and the general approach of the exploration as a 'Practical-Philosophy Paradigm'. An awareness of the integral relation between these general
parameters and methodological considerations has been indicated by the concluding references to the `reflexive’ and `substantive’ dimensions of the proposed pathway of inquiry. Chapter 2 consists of a further and particular attention to the methodological considerations underpinning the project.

![Figure 2. Reflexive and Substantive Dimensions of the Thesis: A Case of the Practical-Philosophy Paradigm.](image-url)
CHAPTER 2

The Wisdom Question and Method: Theoretical-Philosophical Dimensions of Exploring the Wisdom Question as a Highly Reflexive Text.

2.1 Methodology and Wisdom Inquiry: A Reflexive Paradox

'Methodology' here refers not only to methods (or specific procedural features of an inquiry) but also to the dynamics (such as theories, ideas, presuppositions) which frame and differentiate these methods (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000, pp. 44-45). The meaning used for the term 'research' has previously been outlined as a matter of 'disciplined inquiry'.

There is a reflexive paradox to be recognised in the question of what constitutes wisdom inquiry, and in particular the choice of a method on the basis of its soundness or quality in disclosing wisdom. This matter of 'the basis' and the 'choice of method' is referred to in this section as 'the methodological question'. The paradox is referred to as 'reflexive' because the question can be perpetually worked back and forth (in a reflexive relation) between the putative domain of wisdom (which includes the matter of how we go about things) and methodology (as a matter of how we go about wisdom inquiry).

If a methodology is to be adopted at all, this going 'back and forth' can require containment. The thesis also does not set out to enjoin the debate over the various methodological issues of reflexive paradoxes, such as self-reference, recursiveness and circularity. Such issues are more fully explored in the literature
which deals with reflexivity generally (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Steier, 1991; Woolgar, 1988). The paradox is discussed here only as far as is necessary:

1) for a logical approach to recognise it (within the paradigm of 'philosophy' and 'disciplined inquiry' previously elaborated) and

2) to respond to its methodological implications for the purposes of the thesis.

The meaning of the term 'paradox' in philosophical contexts takes on various forms (Mautner, 2000, p. 408; Sparkes, 1991, p. 96), but here it is used to posit the methodological question within a certain line of reasoning. In this reasoning, 'paradox' implies that the question ultimately leads logical thinking to an impasse which becomes self-referring and meaningless unless it “challenges fresh thinking and prompts new questions” (Packer, 1988, p. 491).

The paradox can be recognised by reflecting on the above definition of 'methodology' in relation to previous descriptions of wisdom as an object of inquiry. In the definition, 'method' consists of the 'specific procedural features of an inquiry'. As 'procedure', method implies a choice of a certain way of doing something, and the soundness or quality of the choice is informed by what the definition of 'methodology' refers to as “the dynamics (such as theories, ideas and propositions) which frame and differentiate these methods” (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000, pp. 44-45).

Wisdom, too, has such a theoretical dimension, at least according to the putative assertions previously drawn from dictionaries and scholars. This theoretical dimension has previously been described in terms of the dynamics (such as the implicit or explicit theories, ideas, propositions) which inform and interact with the practical concern for soundness or quality in choosing ways of doing things (Kekes,
1995). In this context, the methodological question can be viewed as a paradox, or kind of wisdom question itself.

The reflexive paradox is an encounter with the embeddedness of the object of inquiry (wisdom) in the very dynamics which are engaged for the purposes of resolving the methodological question. A conceptual approach to the paradox (focusing on the key terms of ‘dynamics’, ‘wisdom’ and a definition of ‘methodology’) has been used above, but the paradox is not merely verbal. As a logical form of response to procedural questions, methodology entails a process. In this ‘process’ perspective, methodology stems from the questioning and reflection which supports an understanding or choice of methods. The reflexive paradox emerges from the observation that such a process (of questioning, reflection, understanding, choice) engages the very dynamics which commonly lie at the core of how wisdom is ontologically represented. It has previously been noted that wisdom is represented as the exemplar of such dynamics as questioning, reflecting, understanding and choosing (Birren & Fisher, 1990; Kekes, 1995).

Wisdom pertains to the quality and soundness of the way these dynamics interact in lives (or the processes of our being), but the reflexive paradox under present discussion pertains to the quality and soundness of method in wisdom inquiry. Nevertheless, the difficulties involved here are recognised as part of the general reflexivity of the wisdom question which brings a focus from responses back to the question itself.
2.2 Responding Positively to the Paradox: Managing Reflexivity in Methodology

Rather than avoid the difficulties, the thesis aims to avoid trivialising the paradoxical dimensions of wisdom inquiry, including the paradox of the methodological question. Although it does not remain uncommon to observe that “reflexive problems are [often] ignored as if they were merely irritating details that could be forgotten about” (Lawson, 1985, pp. 9-10), it is the challenge of such problems which continues to surface questions about the very foundations of method. The purpose of reflexively oriented thinking is to provide rigorous levels of questioning, new questions, as well as reflection on those aspects of the questioning process itself which might otherwise be left as unexamined tools encoded in methods (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 235; Webb, Schirato & Danaher, 2002, p. 77).

In his study of paradoxes, Handy (1995) suggests that: “Paradox does not have to be resolved – only managed ... Framing the confusion is the first step to doing something about it” (p. 22). The themes of profundity and practicality can be useful here. Because the ‘confusion’ Handy refers to is viewed by the thesis as a moment which can invite reflection in the Context of Profundity, it is treated as a phenomenon which can lead to new questions, insights and challenges. The ‘containment’ of reflexivity previously referred to is treated as a matter in the Context of Practicality.

In the Context of Practicality, methodology (as a ‘-logy’ denoting a ‘theory of’) is a theory, embodied in a canon of inquiry or set of principles which is operationalised for the purpose of effecting progress with research. Choice of method is a practical matter in the sense that it is consistent with the generic
concern for what ‘works’ in the Context of Practicality: As a way of proceeding or
doing something, a method is as effective as its instrumentality in serving given
purposes.

In the Context of Profundity, methodology (as a ‘-logy’ derived from the
Greek ‘logos’) raises profound questions about method and principle.5 The
previously mentioned impasse, or recognition that reflexive paradoxes cannot be
eliminated, can raise such profound questions. Reflexivity is commonly associated
with a shift in the frame of thinking, an attempt to “move us outward” (Steier, 1991,
p. 9) towards “an expansion of understanding” (Gergen & Gergen, 1991, p. 79;
Steier, 1991). This movement of thought processes does not travel along the
superficial surfaces of questions.

There is a sense here in which reflexivity can be considered as a form of
learning, and the ‘shift in frame of thinking’ or ‘expansion of understanding’, at its
meta-level, can require revising or learning about the very conception of
‘methodology’. Reflexivity here counters the reduction of the concept
(‘methodology’) to the technical concern for a repertoire and an accomplished
performance in the use of specified methods. A repertoire becomes instead
something which can also facilitate a deeper level of reflection and level of
learning.

This is not to argue that a systematic attention to method (or procedural
knowledge and skills) necessarily operates at the expense of the process by which
more profound understandings of wisdom inquiry are reached. On the contrary, a
focus on instrumental concerns is essential to the notion of ‘practicality’ followed
by the thesis. However, the reference to ‘learning’ is to suggest that reflexivity can

5 The Oxford Companion to Philosophy (1995) advises that ‘logos’ signifies “the source of ... giving
an account” or “the rational, intelligible principle, structure or order which pervades something” (p.
511).
press against the boundaries of our thinking about method. In other words, the
dynamic character of reflexivity is to be distinguished here from the expedient form
of pragmatism which incurs (albeit cleverly) a change to choice or use of method
by relying on an established set of technical competencies.

In the Context of Profundity, a shift or change is ‘profound’ in the sense
that it pertains more fully to “the close relation between questioning and
understanding” (Gadamer, 1991, p. 374). Examples here include the opening of
deeper questioning which seeks to throw light on how methodology is related to the
object of inquiry, or perhaps going further by gaining insight into the very turn to
method itself (Gadamer, 1991; Weinsheimer, 1985). In short, the thesis conceives
reflexivity as a way of generating possibilities for deeper reflection and insight.
Whether referring to the engagement of ‘reflexive paradoxes’ (Lawson, 1985),
‘reflexive methodologies’ (Gergen & Gergen, 1991) or reflexivity generally, the
role of questions (or being a questioner) is the central dynamic of the ‘shift in frame
of thinking’.

Such observations or premises can indicate reasons for upholding
reflexivity (including its encounters with paradox) in the methodological
considerations of wisdom inquiry. Kleinsasser (2000), for example, advocates the
“prizing” of reflexivity for the “dynamic” and “creative” dimensions it brings to
inquiry (p. 155). She argues that reflexivity gives research “its pulse” (p. 155). In
aiming to supply this ‘pulse’, it is necessary for reflexivity to interpolate the present
inquiry process at several points.

It is also acknowledged here that, in some cases, paradoxes and the attempt
to incorporate reflexivity in inquiry can produce an unnecessary complexity.
Reading the works of Wittgenstein (particularly noting the change which makes for
the common reference to the ‘later Wittgenstein’) can provide an arguable case for avoiding certain paradoxes and reflexive problems. Hacker (1995) observes that even among ‘Wittgensteinians’, there is “extensive ... disagreement over the interpretation and application of [Wittgenstein’s] ideas” (p. 917). Hence, the reference to ‘arguable’ here is more than a recognition of what can be argued on a credible or cogent basis for avoiding certain paradoxes: it also recognises the variety of views towards the work and methodological stance of the latter Wittgenstein.

For instance, on the one hand, Wittgenstein’s name commonly appears in discussions of the main contributors to the surfacing of reflexivity in divergent fields (Lawson, 1985), particularly in relation to the central role of language in all inquiry. On the other hand, Wittgenstein is also commonly viewed as a philosopher whose intellectual life was so deeply affected by encounters with reflexive paradoxes that he came to eschew ‘scientific’ explanations of language in philosophy, determining to avoid their “ontological mires” (Moore, 2000, p. 214). Wittgenstein, however, is not cited here for the purpose of critique regarding his work or its issues. The purpose is rather to qualify the position of the thesis in upholding paradoxical forms of reflexivity in its exploration of the wisdom question.

Wittgenstein’s view of method in philosophy was also radically altered by the paradoxes and reflexive problems of philosophising. His work continues to contribute to the heightened awareness of a pervasive reflexive paradox in research: all our claims about the world are couched in language, but to explicate this observation is to do so within language (Moore, 2000). However, for Wittgenstein, there was a concern that we can reach a point in philosophical inquiry which allows
reflexivity to “lead our attention into paradoxical ontologies and away from the one place where solutions and clear understandings will be found” (Moore, 2000, p. 214). In Wittgenstein’s (1967) words:

Here we come up against a remarkable and characteristic phenomenon in philosophical investigation: the difficulty - I might say - is not that of finding the solution, but rather that of recognising as the solution something that looks as if it were only preliminary to it ... The difficulty here is: to stop. (p. 314)

The thesis does not ‘stop’ here, but treats reflexivity as a pause in the proceedings of inquiry, and acknowledges that what surfaces from reflexivity can require management. This view follows Lawson’s (1985) principle that the paradoxical form of reflexivity (such as the logic which requires the methodology of wisdom inquiry to be self-referring) “cannot be eliminated, but neither can it be allowed to paralyse inquiry or destroy meaning” (p. 125).

The ‘management’ here is a matter of exploring possibilities for meaning-making within a context of disciplined inquiry which also requires the containment of reflexivity. Viewed as a balance, this management requires paying attention to (or ‘respecting’) the particular reflexive demands of the wisdom question (such as can be logically made on the methodological question) without skewing the line or overall purpose of the inquiry. ‘Methodology’ refers us to that relation between ideas and methods which forms the basis for the forward momentum (or ‘procedure’) of an inquiry. ‘Reflexivity’ (as previously noted in its general definition) leads to a ‘turning back’, or the possibility for reflection on the wisdom question to derive meaning from the circularity of the researcher’s questioning. Because wisdom is viewed in the thesis as a highly reflexive construct, the methodological
question (in the context of ‘disciplined inquiry’ previously outlined) is treated as an open-ended question with practical requirements.

In pursuing ‘nexus’, the practical necessity of adopting methods in rational inquiry does not extricate wisdom inquiry from the radical challenge of such reflexivity. It is “conventional wisdom” which shuns this challenge by inscribing some kind of legitimation upon the adoption of methods on the basis of perceived status or what sits comfortably with accepted practice (Usher, 1998, p. 30). Paradoxicality, in this sense of the radical challenge of reflexivity, is a collision\(^6\) (with conventional wisdom) rather than an impasse.

Eastern philosophies and ‘schools’, Zen Buddhism in particular, are commonly viewed as salient examples of the embrace of paradoxicality, and the turn to paradoxical expression (such as in the use of koans) is not only explicit but often considered essential, if wisdom is to be an object of discourse at all. What is embraced may loosely be referred to as the ‘special force’ of paradoxicality, and this primarily refers to an existential experience. Carter (1998), referring to the ‘realisation’ of Zen, writes: “Paradoxicality is the form of expression that most nearly captures the process” (p. 309). Notwithstanding the variations among philosophers of Eastern wisdom traditions (including those within the Zen Buddhist tradition), an emphasis on the inseparability of what is ontologically and methodologically significant is often a key feature of the writings.

The eastern traditions, of course, are not the exclusive source of examples for these observations. If explicit paradoxical expression features less commonly in...

\(^6\) The reference to ‘collision’ here can include something more radical than the abandonment of particular methods or a paradigm. In the Context of Profundity, methodology is not just a clinical or technical matter, and what is referred to here as the ‘radical challenge’ of paradoxicality to ‘conventional wisdom’ can take on a more personal or ‘existential’ form (Babcock, 1995, p. 237). Paradoxicality can be unsettling, and encounters with it are ‘existential’ to the point that doing philosophy “becomes an intellectual quest that is also a quest for being” (Vandenberg, 1990, p. 151).
the writings of other wisdom traditions, it does not follow that it is necessarily less
significant to the normative basis of the particular tradition (such as the intellectual
and existential challenge of their ethical, metaphysical and epistemological views).

Western philosophers' biographies can also suggest how the cognitive
perplexity (or 'aporia') of reflexivity, and philosophical grappling generally, can
produce the experience of a personal sense of conflict. Wittgenstein holds his place
as an example here. In considering the Context of Profundity here, it is perhaps
worth noting MacIntyre's (1982) view here that it is sometimes through conflict,
and only through conflict, that learning can take place.

2.3 The Embedment of Method in Ontological and Epistemological
‗Commitments‘

An assumption of the present work is that the question of method or 'how
to proceed' never stands alone. For instance, as Usher (1998) points out, "methods
are embedded in commitments to particular versions of the world (an ontology) and
ways of knowing that world (an epistemology). These commitments are always
held by the researcher, mostly tacitly" (p. 13). The references to reflexivity in the
previous sections would support Usher's view: a paradox observed there involved
recognising that both the object of inquiry (wisdom) and the process of exploring it
are embedded in what was broadly referred to as 'dynamics' (such as thoughts,
ideas, theories, propositions, experiences).

Ontology and epistemology, in wisdom inquiry, have a particular
significance in the sense that wisdom is also commonly associated with 'versions of
the world' and 'ways of knowing'. For example, the previously mentioned
definitions of wisdom have referred to wisdom as an interaction of "knowledge and
experience" (The Concise Oxford Dictionary, 1990, p. 1407). Scholarly renderings of wisdom included knowledge of "the nature of reality" and "a reasonable conception of a good life" (Kekes, 1995, p. 912). In relation to these examples, epistemology pertains more to the references to 'knowledge' and the formulation of 'conceptions' which are 'reasonable'; ontology pertains more to the references to 'experience' and 'reality'. These are matters which can ultimately challenge the depth of our understanding in the Context of Profundity.

Such observations can suggest that the 'commitments' (to borrow Usher's term) are not inconsequential to wisdom inquiry and are implicated in three interrelated aspects of wisdom inquiry:

1) the general subject matter of wisdom,
2) the methodology of exploring wisdom,
3) the final product or outcome of reporting on the wisdom question.

In the following section, the objective is to explicate relevant essential features of these 'commitments'. This explication is a brief synthesis, and the interrelationship of the three aspects mentioned above requires the thesis as a whole to reflect the principal philosophical ideas and propositions. Chapter Three also works from the basis that the question 'What is Wisdom?' is a text which is embedded in a 'pre-text' (Scott, 2000, p. 18). A 'pre-text' can be thought of as everything we bring to the asking of a question (Usher, 1997). Examples of what can be included in a 'pre-text' are ideas or thought processes commonly associated with labels such as 'presuppositions', 'attitudes', 'expectations', 'assumptions', 'intuition' and 'biases'. The discussion in the following section, however, works out premises (or 'commitments') in a methodological context, attending to the epistemological features prior to the ontological ones.
The epistemological discussion utilises a particular focus question. This focus question is drawn from Schaeffer’s (1999) analysis of Aristotle’s treatment of the wisdom question. The question Schaeffer poses is “What kind of knowledge knows wisdom?” (p. 644). Schaeffer’s question is considered here for its relevance to assumptions or decisions which can shape a methodology and interpenetrate the process of developing a wisdom construct.

For the sake of order in inquiry, the question can be treated as a moment of reflection anterior to the choice of method for wisdom research. In other words, there is a logical sense in which consideration of Schaeffer’s question precedes the substantive address of the wisdom question itself. However, there is also a reflexive (and ultimately paradoxical) sense where the address of Schaeffer’s question is constitutive of wisdom inquiry. In this latter (‘reflexive’) sense, there is a recognition that we have to know something about what stands before us in order to choose a method (Scott, 2000).

2.4 The Epistemological Basis of Wisdom Inquiry: ‘What Kind of Knowledge Knows Wisdom?’

The reasoning here begins with some general reflections on the relationship among research, methodology and epistemology. ‘Epistemology’ is referred to as “the branch of philosophy which inquires into theories of knowledge, such as its nature, possibility, scope and general basis” (Hamlyn, 1995, p. 242). Hence, Schaeffer’s question can be treated as a question about the epistemological character of wisdom inquiry.

Usher (1998) summarises the general relevance of epistemology to research thus:
Epistemology traditionally has been concerned with what distinguishes different kinds of knowledge claims ... Now any research, in the natural or social sciences, makes knowledge claims and for that reason alone is implicated in epistemological questions. It could be argued that all research is based on an epistemology even though this is not always made explicit - in fact most of the time the epistemology that underlies a particular piece of research is taken for granted. (Scott & Usher, 1998, p. 11)

A philosophical approach to particular knowledge-claims can begin with a consideration of key words. Schaeffer's question, as with knowledge claims in general, can also assume or require some position in relation to the meaning of references to terms such as 'knowledge' or 'knows' (particularly if it is presupposed that there is a 'kind of knowledge' which 'knows' wisdom). There is no attempt here to delve at length into the extensive and in-depth attention provided in historical works of epistemology to this question of knowledge or, as White (2000) enunciates it, "the question of what is for someone to 'know' that something is so" (p. 174). However, as far as Schaeffer's question can be considered a question pertaining to the methodological basis of wisdom inquiry (as acceptance of Usher's view above would allow), some attention to its key terms can be warranted.

For epistemology, the salient terms of Schaeffer's question are 'knowledge' and 'knowing', and in a methodological context the relevant consideration is how this ('knowledge', 'knowing') is to occur. The present concern is therefore for what might broadly be referred to as the 'knowing-process' or the operative 'knowledge-gathering perspective'. Schaeffer's question, as a 'what' question (what knowledge?), does not explicitly refer to a process. However, as a question of the means of gaining access to wisdom, it can be read as implying or leading to the methodological ('how to') question. This is the question
of how to approach the study of wisdom. It is reflexive when it entails focusing on wisdom as a question and, as suggested above, it is also epistemological when it focuses on assumptions about the knowing process. In following Usher’s comments above, these would be the assumptions which underpin the activity of inquiring after wisdom.

2.5 ‘Knowing’ as a Process: The General Process-Orientation of the Exploration

In relation to the methodological orientation of the thesis, the inseparability of the terms (‘knowing’ and ‘process’) in the expression ‘knowing-process’ is of particular significance. The linking to a ‘process’ conceptuality can be useful if what is referred to as ‘knowing’ is not to be reified as a monolithic, uncontextualised object, but rather represented as multi-modal, ontologically relational to what is known and not to be taken-for-granted in terms of what yields to explanation.

This latter representation initiates the possibility of a more profound consideration of Schaeffer’s question than is possible with a rigid conceptualisation. In the thesis, a ‘process-orientation’ requires a flexibility in conceptualising how we grasp or try to describe and name what we learn (Eisner, 1992, p. 209). Writing with a view towards educational implications in an earlier work, Eisner (1985) refers to the etymology of the term ‘cognition’ to develop a sense of the profundity, or what he refers to as the ‘scope and richness’ (p. 98), of the knowing process:

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7 Indications of the Context of Profundity as it pertains to the knowing-process can be noted from Eisner’s work here.
The term cognitive originally meant the process through which the organism becomes aware of the environment. *The Dictionary of Psychology* offers this definition: 'A generic term used to designate all the processes involved in knowing. It begins with immediate awareness of objects in perception and extends to all forms of reasoning.' (p. 98)

Eisner (1985) goes on to suggest something of what he means by 'scope and richness':

Many of the most productive modes of thought are non-verbal and illogical. These modes operate in visual, auditory, metaphoric, synesthetic ways and utilise forms of conception and expression that far exceed the limits of logically prescribed criteria or discursive or mathematical forms of thinking. (pp. 98-99)

The flexibility can be emphasised for a number of reasons, such as avoiding the fragmentation of the knowing process (Habermas, 1972) and the narrowing of what counts as ‘legitimate’ knowledge (Marcel, 1951). However, in the context of the present discussion, the flexibility of a process orientation is a matter of relating terms such as ‘knowing’ and ‘knowledge’ to the object of Schaeffer’s question, namely, wisdom.

There are three aspects of what might be referred to as the ‘knowledge-gathering perspective’ being linked here: wisdom as an object of inquiry, flexibility of mind and approach (such as Eisner refers to) and a process orientation. The flexibility to which Eisner refers is a flexibility in conceptualising how we ‘know’ in the sense of grasping or understanding, and how we use language to refer to what we are learning in this process of grasping.

In the present context of inquiry, it is a flexibility required in response to what has previously been noted as the ‘elusiveness’ of the wisdom construct (Baltes & Staudinger, 2000; Sternberg, 1990), its paradoxes and challenges as an object of
inquiry: From a methodological standpoint, a process orientation can be viewed as a strategy for equipping the study of the wisdom question with flexibility. This linkage among wisdom as an object of inquiry, flexibility and a process orientation can be carried over to the contextual study of the wisdom question, such as in the specific contexts of human aspiration and educational settings.

There is a broad range of literature from which a process conceptuality can be derived. Although a survey is not necessary for present purposes, some examples can suggest the scope of what is generally referred to as 'process philosophy' (Hartshorne 1976; Whitehead, 1929) and the extensiveness of its historical background. The essential relevant features of the particular process orientation of the thesis will follow the examples.

If the range of philosophies which have emphasised or relied on some notion of 'process' were to be surveyed, it would require an exercise in retrieval from distant times and geographies. Examples of ancient western sources include some of the natural philosophies of the Pre-Socratics (where Heraclitus proposing that 'all things flow' makes its customary appearance), dimensions of Plato (such as in Theaetetus) and Aristotle (such as in Physics).

The reference to 'dimensions' here is necessary because, although Plato and Aristotle provide important contributions to process thinking, the same authors can be cited to counter-balance an over-emphasis on process. For instance, as set out in the Phaedo and Republic, Platos's 'Forms' (or 'Ideas') essentially refer to what is perfect and unchanging rather than what is developmental and dynamic. When considered in the fuller framework of "The Theory of Forms", there is a process-like dimension in the sense that the explication of the theory as a whole refers to different levels or states of human experience. In this context, knowledge
is something which is developed, but the Forms *per se* are not ‘processual’ (in the sense of representing a process conceptuality). There are differing views in relation to the coherence of the philosophical structure of Plato’s works, but a Platonic ‘Form’ or ‘Idea’ generally refers to what is absolute and fixed.

Although there is some useful material for developing a process conceptuality in these ancient sources, it is material which can require a lengthier discussion of particular contexts and details (such as the methodological purpose of setting out differing views and the ascription of process thinking to particular speakers or philosophers). As with the more contemporary sources, a detailed consideration of the material in its different sections and contexts can be required to determine where the contours of thought run more closely with process thinking. In some cases it can be more precise to distinguish what represents ‘process-like’ thinking from what is more salient as ‘process philosophy’. For instance, a process is not necessarily always being referred to when Plato or Aristotle refer to a change in state.

Ancient eastern views, such as associated with Gautoma (Buddhism) of India and Laotse (Taoism) of China, are also sometimes cited in contemporary western philosophical texts (Harrison-Barbet, 2001) as sources of process-oriented insights. One way that the process orientation of eastern philosophies is represented is by way of contrast with primary examples of western ‘dualistic’, ‘mechanistic’ or ‘reductionistic’ thinking, such as Descartes’ separation of mind and matter, Galileo’s mechanistic world view, and Russell’s ‘atomic facts’ and ‘atomic propositions’ (Griffiths, 1992). Cartesianism and other ‘foundational’ rationalities have been subjected to extensive criticism (Bernstein, 1996; Capra, 1989; Ryle, 1949; Wittgenstein, 1967), and this trend, in part, explains the renewed
interest in eastern philosophies. However, the process orientations of eastern thinkers attract an attention which is also part of a broader trans-cultural context of questioning and dialogue. This dialogue includes comparative scholarship and a general questioning of disciplinary boundaries.

Developments in several scientific disciplines, particularly since the rise of quantum physics in the 1930s, can provide a relevant example of this 'questioning of boundaries'. In the wake of post-atomic quantum theory, physicists have reported that their revised descriptions of reality find a general coherence when complemented by eastern 'process' philosophies (Bohm & Edwards, 1991; Capra, 1975). 'General coherence' here is an expression used by Bohm for the meaning-making challenge of his work as a physicist and its surprising discoveries:

For the sake of general coherence, I think that we do have to make the assumption that whatever we know or think about is part of a more fundamental and broader reality ... Whatever we know of the world, there is always more. We find things that we didn't know about, and we find things that contradict what we already know. (cited in Vardey, 1995, pp. 78-79)

Bohm's reference to a 'general coherence' expresses a concern for studying the interactiveness of things at a less rather than more reducible level, and it is this shift in focus from studying objects to studying relationships which finds common ground with ancient eastern process thinking. Physicist Fritjof Capra's (1975) The Tao of Physics, for example, is a seminal work for following the consonance between the 'flow of energy' theme of Taoism and Quantum Theory's re-definition of matter as a 'flux of energy'. The need to refer to subatomic particles in terms of their "interaction with other systems" also involved expressing an interconnectedness which incorporates the observer, or more precisely the
Examples of the 'east-west dialogue' or trans-disciplinary studies can suggest trends towards process-oriented thinking, but there is also a shift in epistemologies to note: a more heightened awareness that what we think (including what we conceptualise or count as 'knowing' or 'knowledge') can be profoundly determined by how we participate in the process of attributing meaning and status to things. This awareness pertains not only to reflection on our 'knowing' (as the term is used in common usage) but also to that 'wider knowing' which more fully recognises an interdependence of the variables and factors (Bateson, 1979).

There is some overlap between this latter sense of knowing (or 'wider knowing') and what has previously been noted in meanings attributed to the term 'wisdom'. It is, for example, a 'knowing' with an expansive or enabling capacity for facilitating understanding of particulars (such as the 'micro-context' of what pertains to a particular situation) within a broader scale of considerations (such as the macro-context of what pertains to 'life'). Keke's (1995) definition of 'wisdom' as a "form of understanding" can be recalled here to illustrate the point: the "agent" has an "aim ... to evaluate situations" whilst coming "to form a reasonable conception of a good life" and "understand the fundamental nature of reality" (p. 912).

The process is reciprocal in the sense that the understanding of Keke’s 'agent' is represented as working not only from theory (developing understandings about 'reality' and 'the good life') to practice (where the agent is able to 'act from its point of view'), but also from practice to theory (where 'given the agent’s character and circumstances... the object ... is to form a reasonable conception of a
good life’). In this representation, the basis of knowing (or ‘the kind of knowledge which knows wisdom’) has an expansive capacity to develop understandings in the shifting contexts of human experience. The thesis is also philosophically inclined towards viewing the kind of knowledge which knows wisdom as that which frames ‘living’ and ‘learning’ as mutually inclusive experiences or priorities. This ‘knowing’ or ‘knowledge’ would emphasise the understanding which Franklin (1995) refers to as “a continual interplay between specific and general considerations” (p. 2).

2.6 Relationality and the Process Orientation

The process-orientation also requires an emphasis on relationality among categories of philosophical thought. For example, the reference to a ‘kind of knowledge’ (in Schaeffer’s question) might at first glance appear to refer to a fixed or universal philosophical category, not necessarily related to wisdom in any way beyond the indication of a domain-specific prescription (such as a particular epistemology, methodology, canon of inquiry or field of research) for locating another fixed and isolated category (wisdom). In a ‘process’, however, things belong together in the sense that they are within the process rather than separated from it: the inclusiveness of things relating, interacting or cohering is often necessary to generate and sustain a process.

Given that philosophy deals with ideas, concepts and propositions, it is commonly necessary for a disciplined inquiry to treat terms (such as ‘knowledge’, ‘knows’, ‘wisdom’) separately, but from a process perspective “the knower and the known are interrelated and interconnected” (Thayer-Bacon, 1993, p. 323). In reading printed texts, the way we relate to the text is “the meaning we achieve”
(Sauter, 1995, p. 11). At a more specific linguistic level, the relationality of the words (including their similarities and differences) is the 'structural' basis from which the meaning is derived (Saussure, 1959). The 'process perspective' is essentially concerned with the level of awareness that a process is involved, and in doing philosophy this awareness includes the relationality of key terms and philosophical categories.

In its wider perspective, the process orientation recognises that this relationality (as a structural feature of the varied contexts in which knowing occurs) may be prone to disjunctions, disruptions and all kinds of contingencies, but these dynamics can be included within particular descriptions of a process. The duration of a process can absorb and rely on many changes, and the way that a particular process is represented in description can be a matter of depth or fullness of perspective. In other words, what we count as 'all part of the process' is often not exact or quantifiable, but an interpretive or 'qualitative' reading of things.

Things (otherwise referred to by terms such as 'phenomena', 'events', 'happenings', 'considerations' and 'ideas') are contextualised by the way they are associated with a process, and what at one point is viewed as disparate or distinct is at another point treated as a relation. Things, for example, are discussed for their 'influence' or 'purpose', events are 'significant' or 'historical', individuals have 'lives', 'relationships' and 'biographies'. Relational terms are used to characterise as well as contextualise: an action is described as 'helpful' (to something), a tool is 'effective' (for something), a person is 'contributing' (towards something).

Relationality is not necessarily always expressed by 'positive' descriptors or 'conjunctive' terms (in the broad rather than technical sense of 'conjunctive')
where things are somehow joined or connected. The mix of dynamics\(^8\) constituting
a process can also include such ‘disjunctive’ relations as conflict, distancing or
dissonance (between things). In short, there is a multitude of relational terms or
things that can be included in the description of a process.

Hence, the ‘workings of a process’ are discussed or recognised in the
relational terms which refer to how things stand with regard to other things, and this
can include a wide range of matters such as their sequence, consequence, timing,
limit, usefulness, deviation, complexity, appropriateness or relevance. In
describing the dynamics or existence of a process, it is not necessary to refer
exclusively to ‘how things stand with regard to other things’ as a relationship or as
a unity. A process conceptuality can pertain to the full range of human experience,
including what is encountered as its “surprising disjunctions” (Mansfield, 2000, p.
6), “ambiguities and pluralities” (Tracey, 1994), “chaos and instability” (Gleick,

2.7 The Process Orientation and ‘Knowing’ as ‘Human Knowing’

There are classical frameworks and models\(^9\) which can assist reflection on
the complexity of processes (including their apparent or inherent contradictions),
but a process orientation can entail more than the conceptual challenge of

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\(^8\) Expressions such as a ‘mix of dynamics’ are based on the idea that a process is not necessarily
reducible to a set of relations that can be readily named by categories or the use of formalisms such as
‘modal logic’. The process orientation towards ‘the kind of knowledge which knows wisdom’ is
‘practical’ in the sense that the knowledge pursued by the thesis is concerned with being wise or
acting wisely, rather than wisdom as an abstraction. In responding to Schaeffer’s question by
emphasising flexibility or ‘fluidness’ of thinking, the assumption is that the Contexts of Profundity
and Practicality require dealing with real life situations which are highly complex, fluid and dynamic.
The thesis follows the observation of wisdom researchers that the understanding or performance (or
wisdom) which ‘works’ in such situations is often elusive to the categorial thinking of procedural
formalism (Arlin, 1999; Csikszentmihalyi & Rathunde, 1990; Sternberg, 1990). Where categories and
structures are used in the thesis, it is generally for the sake of clarity in writing rather than an
ontological subscription to the use of rigid designations.

\(^9\) Hegel’s ‘dialectic’ or Whitehead’s metaphysics are examples of what is being referred to here as
‘classical frameworks and models’.
understanding processes. A process orientation can also entail a preparedness to participate in a process (Rogers, 1977, pp. 132-159).

In other words, there can be an existential dimension to ‘doing philosophy’, particularly when the object of inquiry pertains to human lives and what people can find most significant about their lives (Vandenberg, 1990, p. 151). The term ‘existential’ is used here in the broad sense of the “irreducibility of the subjective, personal dimension of human life” (Baldwin, 1995, p. 257). In the present context, it is a term for underscoring the sense in which the wisdom question ultimately requires something more than an intellectual exercise. The wisdom question is a question of ‘being’ in the sense that it pertains to ‘being wise’ or ‘acting wisely’, and in existentialist terms our understanding of the many things we designate as ‘being’ is itself a matter of our ‘mode of being’ (Heidegger, 1923/1999, p. 5). This reference to ‘mode of being’, or way of being in the world, is useful for reminding us that ‘knowing’ is always our own knowing, embodied in persons and all that it means to be living as a person.

‘Mode of being’ is present in the asking of a question and the character of inquiry as “the behaviour of a questioner” (Heidegger, 1962, p. 24). In this line of Heideggerian thinking, mode of being is particularly relevant to doing philosophy on matters which people find to be critical or vital to the progress of their lives. ‘Mode of being’, as either a dimension of inquiry or an object of inquiry, is not something which can be frozen in time, but a process which runs its course in time (Heidegger, p. 456). We understand (or ‘know’) what we understand at a time, but we can also recognise the sense in which ‘understanding comes in time’. ‘Mode of being’ also entails attitudes, and attitudes towards the limitations of our understanding (temporal or otherwise) have been posited by some theorists as the
The defining characteristic of wise people (Hartshorne, 1987; Meacham, 1990). The process orientation presented here requires a recognition of the limits of viewing theory (or a theory of wisdom) as a source of knowledge which can respond adequately to questions of practice. In dealing with the uncertain or ill-defined problems of real life, practitioners do not report a separation of thinking from doing or theory from practice, but a kind of knowing (variously described in terms such as ‘experiential’, ‘intuitive’, ‘practical’) which is more tacit, contextually specific and “typically unspecifiable in regulative terms” (Beckett, 1996, p. 139). There is, however, a movement of thought involved, and efforts towards developing an ‘epistemology of practice’ in the professional practice literature represent the attempt to understand it (Carr, 1989; Schön, 1983, 1987).

Since movement entails change, the process orientation can take a particular interest in ‘changeableness’ as a condition of what occurs in processes (Rogers, 1977, p. 27). An ontologically grounded theory of process (or ‘process conceptuality’) can posit ‘change’ as one of the conditions necessary to processes, but ‘changeableness’ is an openness to change, and hence the person “in process … is always in process of becoming” (Rogers, 1972, p. 27). For such reasons, researchers with a process orientation can find it a risky endeavour to assume a sense of completeness or certitude from elaborate theoretical formulations. Stenhouse (1979, p. 71), for example, referring to “the utility of large scale theories”, suggested that “the more logically satisfying they are, the less likely they are to be adequate” (p. 71).

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10 There are extensive additional supporting perspectives on these attitudes towards limitations, or the “consideration of what one does know within the context of what one does not know” (Meacham, 1990, p. 183). Some prominent examples include: Socrates’ insistences on the limitations of his knowledge of wisdom, the emphases on humility in spiritual traditions and theological perspectives on wisdom, and the reliance on the concept of ‘the unconscious’ in psychoanalytic theory.
2.8 Approaching Knowledge of Wisdom as the ‘Conversation That We Are’

In presenting the process orientation of the thesis, the discussion has thus far followed Usher’s premise that the use of methods (or moreover, the very idea of ‘Method’) is embedded in epistemological and ontological “commitments” (Scott & Usher, 1998, p. 13). This premise has been treated as highly pertinent to wisdom research, or in the present context to a reflexive consideration of the wisdom question. In other words, a concern with wisdom as an object of inquiry can require Usher’s premise to be underscored. The implication being followed (particularly for ‘doing philosophy’), having noted researchers’ accounts of the ‘elusiveness of the wisdom construct’, is a requirement to reflect at length on the question (for example as a ‘text’), as opposed to dashing into the search for a resolution. In doing so, the process orientation accepts that ‘the kind of knowledge which knows wisdom’ is animated by the complex and often tacit dimensions of being human.

The process orientation here is not beholden to a particular school of thought or methodology, but does derive some of its essential features (or ‘commitments’) from Gadamer’s (1975/1991) ‘Truth and Method’. Bernstein’s (1996) critique of Gadamer’s ‘practical philosophy’ articulates some of the reasons why Gadamer is important here:

Gadamer focuses on the ‘happening’ of understanding ... [and] argues that the modern obsession with Method has distorted and concealed the ontological character of understanding ... [He] opens the way to a more historically situated, nonalgorithmic, flexible understanding of human rationality. (p. xi)
Gadamer also proposes that we can deepen our understanding by recognising its historicity and the implications involved. For Gadamer (1991), our humanity is dominated by its finitude, and knowing (as a process of “coming to an understanding”) is like a “conversation” which we allow to guide us (p. 385). This latter aspect is significant to what the process orientation of thesis views as the genuineness of our attempts to ‘know’: Here the effort is directed towards being guided by what is to be understood rather than any fixation on ‘conducting’ the conversation (Bernstein, 1996, p. 162). In following these aspects of Gadamer’s philosophy, ‘knowing’ is essentially a matter of “the conversation that we are” (1982, p. xxiii).

‘Conversation’ is a useful metaphor for maintaining a conception of ‘knowing’ which does not ignore the relation to what is not known. As a process, ‘knowing’ is that which occurs in relation to what is already known and what is not known (Gadamer, 1991), and in many contexts (of theory and practice) what is not known can be the more significant dimension (Sultmann & Burton, 1993, p. 13). The relevance of the relation itself to the theoretical and practical facets of ‘the conversation that we are’ involves the profundity of how we learn, as Butler (1996) indicates:

A useful way to think about human agency is to consider that at any moment the person stands in the present between the known past and the unknown future. The task is to learn from the metamorphosis of unknown to known that takes place in the present actions. This metamorphosis (Kerwin, 1993) takes place in different forms:

- exposing the unknown knowns
- transforming unknowns into knowns
- revealing the unknown unknowns.

The possibility of these transformations does not mean that they are perceived. (p. 269)
In a 'process-orientation', the context or categories with which 'knowing' is relational (such as 'living', 'learning', 'wisdom', 'education') remain open to dialogical engagement. A 'knowing' which is changing and developing can be difficult to define, and descriptions of wisdom vary according to sources, languages, vocabularies and different cultural perspectives (Coleman, 2001, p. 31). The process orientation enjoins itself to these varieties of relationships, insights and contextual demands.

The rationale here for keeping the discussion of wisdom (and 'the kind of knowledge which knows wisdom') open to on-going discussion is consistent with the 'epistemological commitments' previously presented: our 'knowing' is always a human knowing, contextually and biographically embedded in the movement of lives, and subject to a mix of dynamics involving culture, gender and individuals. Rather than encapsulating 'knowledge' (or its relation to 'wisdom') in a theoretical framework (a 'house of knowledge' as it were), the process orientation anticipates that tracking the 'nexus' ultimately requires recognising a need for on-going conversation.

'On-going conversation' is also an implication of the general sense in which the process orientation approaches the concept of 'knowledge'. From the process perspective, we do not carry around knowledge like a pocketful of buttons (Vandenberg, 1990, p. 239). In particular, any 'kind of knowledge which knows wisdom' can be viewed as ultimately too profound and too practical to be mustered into, contained and read from books. There are, for example, contingencies and sensibilities to be acknowledged if 'the kind of knowledge which knows wisdom' refers to a process embedded within the historicity of human lives and the ways that the progress of these lives are negotiated.
On-going conversation is required because wisdom pertains to what cannot be readily anticipated, ‘variables’ such as the sensibilities and contingencies of human experience, and conversely, theorising wisdom is subject to such variables. Given that ‘the kind of knowledge which knows wisdom’ necessarily pertains to the kaleidoscope of lived experience (or what philosophers refer to as the ‘lived world’), including the practical nature of its challenges, theorising wisdom “is grounded in the epistemological and practical tangles and contradictions we seek to explain and resolve” (Brookfield, 1995, p. 185).

The dialogical implications of references to human knowing as the “conversation that we are” (Gadamer, 1982, p. xxiii) can remain one-sided without a gender conscious acknowledgement of the ‘voices’ of being human. In upholding “women’s ways of knowing” (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger & Tarule, 1986), feminist perspectives attend to the voice of women as dialogic participants in the ‘conversations’ referred to above. There are varieties of feminist epistemologies (Hekman, 1997) but the general concern for the limiting functions of norms established by males (Gilligan, 1982) can be aligned with the essential features of the process orientation presented above. The synergies which constitute human communication as an on-going process ultimately rely on active participation, and the central concern of feminist theory has been with the inclusiveness of humanity’s voices being ‘heard’.

In epistemology and wisdom inquiry, feminist writings (or what might be more generally referred to as ‘feminisms’) have been concerned to re-dress the (‘logos’) bias of the ‘conversation of being human’. By revealing the “feminine principle” (French, 1985) which emphasises a sensitivity to the (‘sophia’) quality of things, Aristotle’s human being (the ‘rational animal’) is required to locate its more
“personal voice” (Belenky, et al., 1986). What has previously been referred to as the ‘sensibilities’ involved in the process of human thinking is often emphasised in these feminist perspectives: “What a knower brings to the knowing and how a knower relates to the knowing is as important as the knowing itself” (Thayer-Bacon, 1993, p. 323).

2.9 The Thesis as ‘Philosophical Anthropology’ and ‘Philosophic Hermeneutics’

2.9.1 The Exploration as Philosophical Anthropology

In emphasising the human context of inquiring after the wisdom question, the thesis and its process orientation contextualise wisdom from the standpoint of a philosophical anthropology, or more specifically a philosophy concerned with humanity and its potentialities. This interest in human potentiality has previously been referred to (in the opening paragraphs of the thesis) as “a matter of locating ... a way of thinking about the progress of lives”. Philosophical anthropology, as a field of philosophy, has a variety of interests and emphases (Harrison-Barbet, 2001, p. 404) but in referring the process orientation to “the conversation that we are” (Gadamer, 1982, p. xxiii), the interest in wisdom generally lies in the concern for what this conversation ‘can be’. In the present work, this is a matter of the profundity and practicality of ‘the conversation of being human’. As a field of philosophy, it involves, as Kant’s Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View (1798/1996) would have it, studies of not only what we make of ourselves as humans, but also what we can or should make of ourselves.

The discussion of the ‘kind of knowledge which knows wisdom’ has acknowledged that the meeting place (or ‘condition’) for the profundity and
practicality of the ‘conversation’ is ontological in the sense that Gadamer (1991) has reported the process: human persons are “finite beings” (p. 357) who are always ‘becoming’” (p. 312). Philosophical anthropology is necessarily connected with questions of what it means to refer to our ‘humanity’, and the discussion of Schaeffer’s epistemological question in terms of the ‘process orientation’ (with its ontological, dialogical, existential and gender-related dimensions) is an example of this necessity.

Nevertheless, the general direction of the thesis (as an ‘exploration’) or its approach (as a methodology) does not focus on the discipline of “fundamental ontology” (Heidegger, 1927/1962) nor the task of grappling with the apparent inexplicability of “the human condition” (Arendt, 1958). The exploration mainly follows or ‘tracks’ the wisdom question along the lines of human potentiality, as reflected in the direction or approach previously signalled. Examples of this ‘signalling’ include references to wisdom (as ‘being wise’ or ‘acting wisely’), knowing (as a process embedded in the historicity of human lives) and the intention to follow a line of inquiry towards aspiration and education (as particular contexts of the wisdom question where humans pursue their potentialities).

2.9.2 The Exploration and its Methodology as ‘Philosophic Hermeneutics’:

Linking with Gadamer

In noting that the analysis and interpretation of texts, or hermeneutics, is now extended to ‘texts’ other than printed ones (Kroll, 1988; Packer, 1985), Vandenberg (1990) drawing from Dilthey and Gadamer, suggests ways in which the language of science is inadequate to the philosopher’s concern with the deeper or most profound level of understanding of human lives: “It is completely
unscientific to refer to the comedy and tragedy of human life. This is precisely why Dilthey claimed that the methodology of the natural sciences is inappropriate for the study of human beings” (p. 146).

The point can be extended to include concepts such ‘wisdom’, and ‘aspiration’ and ‘education’, although the extent to which it applies to each concept is arguable (and to ‘education’ in particular it remains the subject of seemingly endless debate). Nevertheless, such concepts pertain to vital aspects of human lives. ‘Wisdom’, for example, has traditionally been linked with ‘the good life’, ‘aspiration’ has its etymological links with the breath which indicates life or human hope, and ‘education’ has been linked with “that which adds to the meaning of experience and which increases ability to direct the course of subsequent experience” (Dewey, 1968, p. 76).

Gadamer’s work is again important here because of the particular emphases he places on philosophic hermeneutics as a response to the question or problem of the limits of method in interpreting human experience (or what has previously been referred to as ‘the lived world’, and above as ‘vital aspects of human lives’). Drawing from Heidegger, Gadamer argues that the limits of method are ontological in the sense that, in the attempt to understand and interpret experience, our ‘being’ always leaves more to understand and interpret (Weinsheimer, 1985, p. 12). In other words, our being surpasses the limits of our attempts to contain experience in an ‘interpretation’ or ‘understanding’. This is because it is our historicity which makes experience possible: “Thus experience is experience of human finitude” (Gadamer, 1991, p. 357).

As a necessary corollary to such thinking, Gadamer (1991) concedes that philosophic hermeneutics is limited, but its limit or ‘horizon’ moves with an
openness to the movement of questions in the “hermeneutical situation” (p. 362). Its ‘discipline’, in other words, follows “the close relation between questioning and understanding” (p. 374) rather than a fixation on securing a definitive or ‘methodic knowledge’: “Hermeneutic reflection is limited to opening up new possibilities for knowledge which would not be perceived without it” (Gadamer, 1976, p. 130).

By asserting “that to have a method is already to have an interpretation” (Faulconer & Williams, 1985, p. 1185), Gadamer is able to shift the starting point of thinking about the rationality of methods (Bernstein, 1996). In other words, his concern is that we underrate the profundity of what methods aim to study, or conversely, overrate the practicality of relying on method to understand what there is to be known.

Hence, philosophic hermeneutics for Gadamer is essentially an attentiveness: “this is hermeneutics: to let what seems far and alienated speak again” (Gadamer, 1979, pp. 151-152). The attentiveness is directed towards the profound sense in which our theorising always falls behind our experience, rather than stands before or over it (Van Manen, 1990, p. 15). Gadamer, following Heidegger again, also seeks to show how the “forestructures” of the interpreter (such as our prejudgements and prejudices) are implicated in an interpretive act (1991, p. 265). Philosophic hermeneutics, then, if “informed by an authentic hermeneutical attitude”, is attentive to a process or “fusion of horizons” (p. 306) whereby we are led by what is both alien and familiar (Gadamer, 1991, p. 306).

The term ‘hermeneutics’ is used in different senses (Gallagher, 1992) but in the present work Gadamer is the primary source of insights for determining the
hermeneutic approach to the question of wisdom.\textsuperscript{11} Philosophic hermeneutics pertains to the methodology of the thesis in the sense that it informs and operationalises the interpretative work of studying the wisdom question. In this approach, wisdom is posited as a ‘text’ and the task of hermeneutics is to explore it.

What Gadamer (1991) refers to as “genuine hermeneutic experience” (p. 471) is essentially an openness to things, but such experience is not limited to doing philosophy or interpreting printed texts (Weinsheimer, 1985, p. 63). In other words, the ‘genuine hermeneutic experience’ pertains not only to what has previously been outlined as ‘the theoretic’: it also penetrates and “shapes our practical lives” (Bernstein, 1996, p. 141).\textsuperscript{12} For Gadamer (as for Heidegger and Wittgenstein before him), it is necessary to rehabilitate accounts of human understanding which privilege our capacity to grasp ‘the theoretic’: human understanding is rooted in human agency, and this agency is ‘practical’ in the sense that it essentially is a matter of using our abilities as humans.

Hence, in following Gadamer, there is an “inextricable connection of the theoretical and the practical” (Bernstein, 1996, p. 141) in all kinds of hermeneutics, including philosophic hermeneutics. The implication (which becomes one of the fundamental theses of Truth and Method) is that “hermeneutic understanding ... is not a purely disinterested theoretical activity” (Bernstein, 1996, p. 141). There is a particular significance to note here in relation to wisdom and wisdom inquiry as a ‘genuine hermeneutical experience’. It has been noted earlier that accounts of

\textsuperscript{11} The reliance on Gadamer here is not intended to imply that all of Gadamer’s philosophy is espoused or considered relevant to the exploration.

\textsuperscript{12} It may be recalled that the thesis has previously rendered ‘the theoretic’ as that which focuses on knowledge, in the sense where the term ‘knowledge’ conventionally or paradigmatically is assumed to contrast the focus of ‘the practical’ on matters of choice and action (Sehwaub, 1969, p. 2). As previously indicated, such contrasting of the terms is useful for the purposes of clarity in discussion, but it is the context of discussion which otherwise determines how their relationship is represented.
wisdom also implicate a connection (or ‘nexus’) of ‘the theoretical and the practical’, but the ‘inextricable connection’ Gadamer has in mind occurs at an ontological level for all human understanding. Bernstein (1996) reports Gadamer’s ontological characterisation of human understanding thus: “we are essentially beings constituted by and engaged in interpretive understanding” (p. 137).

The blending of terms here (‘interpretive understanding’) is also characteristic of the way Gadamer articulates the ‘inextricable connection’. At the ontological level of Gadamer’s (1991) philosophy, ‘understanding’ and ‘interpretation’ are not ‘theoretical terms’ to be divided off from ‘application’ as a ‘practical term’. To begin with, “understanding is already interpretation” (p. 396) because “understanding occurs in interpreting” (p. 389). Hence Gadamer writes: “Understanding and interpretation are ultimately the same thing” (p. 388). Moreover, “application does not mean first understanding ... and then applying it to a concrete case. It is the very understanding” (p. 341). In sum, Gadamer does not see “three independent activities to be relegated to three different subdisciplines ... They are all moments of the single process of understanding” (Bernstein, 1996, p. 145). This blending of the language or terms used to discuss the theory-practice relationship is another feature of Gadamer’s attempt to rehabilitate accounts of human understanding which privilege ‘the theoretic’. Rather than preclude the moment of application from the process of understanding, Gadamer moves the

13 It may be recalled here from the discussion in Chapter 1, that within the dualistic distinction of the traditional model of the theory-practice relationship, theory (as the knowledge represented by the categories of ‘understanding’ or ‘interpretation’) is required to be ‘applied’ to practice (Usher & Bryant, 1987). Hence, ‘application’ is generally viewed as the ‘practical’ moment. With Gadamer, the term ‘application’ retains a practical connotation, but this does mean that he leaves the traditional dichotomy between ‘the theoretic’ and ‘the practical’ untouched. On the contrary, by highlighting “the positive practical character of hermeneutic understanding” (Gadamer, 1991), he allows for a dialectical interplay where it now becomes possible for ‘the theoretic’ to be something that is reviewed through ‘the practical’ (Usher & Bryant, 1987, p. 201).
account of understanding towards the ‘inextricable connection’ of what is

In the Gadamerian perspective, it is the quality of the various connections
between what the present work thematises as ‘the theoretic’ and ‘the practical’
which makes hermeneutic experience more or less ‘genuine’, and the work of
philosophic hermeneutics more or less ‘authentic’. Given these emphases or
perspectives, it is perhaps not surprising that Gadamer retrieves Aristotle’s analysis
of ‘phronesis’ (practical wisdom) in his explication of the “genuine hermeneutical
experience” which is informed by “authentic hermeneutical attitudes” (Bernstein,
1996, p. 139). However, “Aristotle is introduced only insofar as it helps to
illuminate the hermeneutical phenomenon” (Bernstein, 1996, p. 150).

Nevertheless, Gadamer (1991, p. 355, 357) refers to “the experienced person” (and
later “the truly experienced person”) as one who has engaged a process which
resembles what we might commonly associate with wisdom:

The experienced person proves to be ... someone ... who, because of the
many experiences he [sic] has had, and the knowledge he has drawn from
them, is particularly well equipped to have new experiences and to learn
from them. (p. 355)

The ‘inextricable connection’ or dialectical dimension of this process does not go
unnoticed in Bernstein’s (1996) summary: “Gadamer seeks to show us that
authentic hermeneutical understanding becomes integral to our very being and
transforms what we are in the process of becoming” (p. 150).

When following this line of Gadamer’s thinking, the ultimate task of
hermeneutics is not far removed from what Chapter One has presented as the
pursuit of ‘wisdom’. The pursuit here can refer to Gadamer in both the more
specific sense of ‘hermeneutics’ being a scholarly endeavour (as ‘philosophic
hermeneutics') and the general sense of 'hermeneutics' as a matter of human understanding (as the universality of hermeneutical practice). As Gadamer's (1991) own account demonstrates, the hermeneutical understanding or 'knowledge' of his 'truly experienced person' has much in common with the practical wisdom (phronesis) of Aristotle's wise person (phronimos). Gadamer's process orientation towards 'knowledge' and the 'experienced person' is also congruent with the emphases of dictionary definitions and scholars' accounts of wisdom in Chapter One.¹⁴

The essential relevance of Gadamer to the thesis, however, does not lie in the fact that he expresses a view towards the topic of wisdom (in his version of 'phronesis' or 'the phronimos'): It is, rather, his emphasis on philosophic hermeneutics as a response to the question of method in exploring the lived world. From a hermeneutical perspective, this 'lived world' includes our experience of printed and non-printed texts. In the present work, the wisdom question is the 'text' to be explored.

From a methodological perspective, Gadamer's 'philosophic hermeneutics' is relevant primarily because it is a philosophical rather than purely scientific response to the question of method.¹⁵ Although Gadamer primarily refers to the ontological basis of the 'hermeneutic phenomenon' (p. 369), his work addresses the 'knowing process' in the fuller sense that it is a philosophy of how we derive meaning from our efforts to understand things.

¹⁴ It may be recalled here that these references explicitly rendered 'wisdom' as a blending of experience and knowledge.
¹⁵ The 'question of method' here is the question of how to explore the wisdom question. It is a question which can logically accompany or follow Schaeffer's question ('What kind of knowledge knows wisdom?').
The ‘truth’ of this meaning is philosophically contextualised as a process of knowing or understanding. Philosophic hermeneutics is not intended to displace scientific method or knowledge. Referring to ‘Truth and Method’, Bernstein (1996) writes:

Gadamer tells us that it was not his aim to play off Method against Truth, but rather to show that there is 'an entirely different notion of knowledge and truth' which is not exhausted by the achievements of scientific method and which is available to us through hermeneutical understanding. (p. 151)

Hence, philosophic hermeneutics is not only a ‘response’ to the question of method. It also entails a discipline in the process of meaning-making. The term ‘discipline’ is used here because it is not a ‘method’ in the scientific sense of ‘method’, but rather a way of doing philosophy.16 It has previously been noted that “there is no universally agreed ... method in philosophy” and that “the nature and function of philosophy is itself a kind of philosophical problem” (Reid, 1968, p. 3). The Gadamerian ideas and principles (hitherto described as ‘features’ or ‘commitments’) of ‘philosophic hermeneutics’ can be viewed as a more particular version of ‘doing philosophy’ than was indicated by the general parameters presented in Chapter One.

As observed in the initial discussion of philosophy in Chapter One, when philosophy is discussed in terms of ‘method’, it is generally framed as “rational inquiry” (Mautner, 2000, p. 423). In following Gadamer, the rationality referred to as ‘philosophic hermeneutics’ is essentially a matter of a critical, reflective inquiry which interprets printed texts and the lived world as a non-printed text, recognising

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16 Bernstein (1996) notes Gadamer’s defence against critics who pre-suppose a view towards ‘method’ or ‘rationality’ in the reading of his work: “After all, Gadamer explicitly tells us that his first and last concern is philosophy” (p. 160).
the inevitability of preconceptions (or 'pre-texts') whilst attempting to open up new insights (or 'horizons'). It is a process committed to what Gadamer (1991) refers as "the priority of the question" where "what the tool of method does not achieve, must - and effectively can - be achieved by a discipline of questioning and research" (pp. 446, 447).

The three core elements or principles to be highlighted in this following of Gadamer's hermeneutics are:

1) Knowledge has the logical structure of a question-response relationship and the 'priority of the question' creates the dynamic process which makes this knowledge possible (Gadamer, 1991, pp. 362-379; Weinsheimer, 1985).

2) Interpretation is a virtual dialogue within this process (Gadamer, 1991, pp. 362-369; Mautner, 2000, p. 215).

3) Our interpretation can be authentic by making the best reflective use of the forestructures or "horizon" from which we inevitably begin (Honderich, 1995, p. 303).

There is also a second-order characteristic of philosophic hermeneutics: In its reflexive function, "hermeneutics raises prior and more fundamental questions about the very nature of language, meaning, communication and understanding" (Packer, 1988, p. 293). Hence, in the thesis, philosophic hermeneutics is also a way of responding to the challenge of viewing the wisdom question as a highly reflexive text. It involves, to use Gadamer's (1991) terms, an "art" for encountering and engaging "the hermeneutic priority of the question" (p. 362). Philosphic hermeneutics can therefore be appropriated for the exploration of the wisdom question on the basis of a number of reasons.
In reporting philosophic hermeneutics as an approach or discipline which is appropriate for the pursuit of the wisdom question, there are also some features of the 'philosophic' dimension of Gadamer's hermeneutics to associate more specifically with the themes of the present work. The Contexts of Profundity and Practicality, for example, are implicated in the purposes to which Gadamer (1991) commits philosophic hermeneutics: "What man [sic] needs is not just the persistent posing of ultimate questions, but the sense of what is feasible, what is possible, what is correct here and now" (p. xxxviii).

Three more specific examples of Gadamer's awareness that there is a dimension of profundity to the work of philosophic hermeneutics are provided below. (The examples, from the work of Gadamer's interlocuter Joel Weinsheimer, may also be added to what has previously rendered as 'commitments'):

- The work of exploring the lived world, "however rigorous and extensive its methodical deployment, cannot of itself exhaust what is to be known" (Weinsheimer, 1985, p. 6).

- "Our being, effected by the whole of our history, essentially far surpasses the knowledge of itself: In brief, we are more than we know" (Weinsheimer, 1985, p. 13).

- "The fact that we are ... makes each kind of knowledge possible to some degree but at the same time precludes its complete fulfilment ... the understanding of being remains a perpetually unfinished task" (Weinsheimer, 1985, p. 12).

In the sense that philosophy is always theoretical, Gadamer's work (as 'philosophy') is necessarily theoretical. However, some philosophies are more

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17 Gadamer's commitment or awareness here goes to the heart of long-held views about the sense of wonder which makes it possible to 'do philosophy'. Plato, for example, considered that philosophy "begins in wonder and goes on in wonder" (Reid, 1968, p. 176). There is also a sense of practicality implied by Gadamer's awareness or acceptance of what "cannot of itself be exhausted" and what "surpasses" us as "a perpetually unfinished task" (Weinsheimer, 1985, pp. 6, 12).
'practical' than others in the sense that they address the mutual interaction of our understanding and our practical lives (or 'praxis'). Gadamer’s work, however, is referred to as a ‘practical philosophy’ (Butler, 1992; Dobrosavljev, 2002) not only for his emphasis on the practical (or ‘praxeological’) character of human understanding. As Bernstein (1996) observes:

The approach that pervades so much of Gadamer’s thinking and helps to give it unified perspective, his practical moral orientation, is directed toward reminding us, and calling us back to, an understanding of what it means to be finite historical beings who are always ‘on the way’ and who must assume personal responsibility for our decisions and choices. (p. 166)

In summary, Gadamer is the primary source from which the conception of 'hermeneutics' in the thesis is derived, and by which it sets out to function, particularly in relation to the more specific category of 'philosophic hermeneutics'. It has also been suggested that the essential relevant features of Gadamer’s philosophy may be viewed as epistemological and ontological ‘commitments’ which underpin the methodology. Whereas the rubric ‘philosophical anthropology’ is concerned with contextualising the wisdom question as a question pertaining to human living and its potentialities, the turn to hermeneutics is concerned with the interpretive or meaning-making process of informing this anthropological context. Some of the essential considerations of the chapter thus far, in respect to methodology and orientation, are represented in Figure 3.
Wisdom as a Perpetually Reflexive Question/Transcendent Mystery

**REFLEXIVITY**
(assuming the value of learning about wisdom as a question)

**INTERDISCIPLINARITY**
(assuming wisdom to be a multidisciplinary construct)

**PHILOSOPHICAL ANTHROPOLOGY**
(Contextualising wisdom as a question/theory of human potentialities)

**PHILOSOPHIC HERMENEUTICS**
(Interpreting/making meaning of "what is wisdom?" as a text of human lives)

**Figure 3.** Fundamental Theoretical-Philosophical Orientations and Processes of the Exploration: (or, The Context of Profundity as Explored by the Thesis.)

### 2.10 The Hermeneutic Process of the ‘Opening Up of Possibilities’ in Wisdom Inquiry: ‘Transdisciplinary Conversation’ as an Initiative in Response to the ‘Priority of the Question’

#### 2.10.1 Transdisciplinary Conversation

The present section (2.10) presents a rationale for the place of ‘Transdisciplinary Conversation’ in wisdom research and the present exploration as a ‘Practical-Philosophy Paradigm’. ‘Transdisciplinarity’ is a term which is defined and conceptualised in a variety of ways. However, two salient features of the historical usage of the term are particularly relevant to the adaptation which the present section refers to as ‘transdisciplinary conversation’. Expressed as undertakings of a ‘transdisciplinary approach’, these two features involve:

a) Viewing ‘disciplines’ as “particular domains of experience” (Sussex, 1984, p. 60)
b) Drawing from different disciplines and going beyond disciplinary boundaries (Scholz & Marks, 2001, p. 237).

These two undertakings are also strategies for mobilising bodies of knowledge for the particular requirements of questions or problems. In the present work, ‘transdisciplinary conversation’ is an appropriation of these strategies for the dialogic interests of its process orientation. The appropriation here essentially involves furnishing philosophical discussion with the wherewithal for interpreting the wisdom question at a more informed level.

It is this ‘interpretive purpose’ which retains the fundamental place of philosophic hermeneutics in the exploration. ‘Transdisciplinary conversation’ can be viewed as a contextualising term designating the kind of discourse which makes a concerted effort to pursue questions and problems without retreating from boundaries. This observation is both philosophically and hermeneutically significant.

Philosophically, transdisciplinarity (and the more specific construct of ‘transdisciplinary conversation’) is an expression of certain principles of inquiry and qualities of thought. Principles, such as laid out in article form in the Charter adopted by The First World Congress of Transdisciplinarity (1994), are ‘philosophical’ in the sense that they are abstractions (Dewey, 1979, p. 20) worked out for the purpose of indicating what is compatible between matters of theory and matters of practice. As ‘theory’, principles serve defining and characterising purposes, aiming to inform of such things as commitments, goals, values and what is compatible with their scope or vision. Principles “become concrete only in the consequences which result from their application” (Dewey, 1979, p. 20). Whether
referred to as a ‘theory’ or a ‘practice’, transdisciplinarity remains connected to certain principles and expresses certain qualities of thought.

The principles and essential qualities of thought which transdisciplinary conversation aims to embody are contained within the discussion of the present rationale, but two aspects are particularly relevant from a philosophical and hermeneutical perspective.

Firstly, as the prefix ‘trans’ ('going across and beyond') can indicate, ‘transdisciplinary conversation’ aims to give itself over to a topic in as open a fashion as possible. ‘Openness’ here refers to a movement in thought processes which is responsive to questions and the need to question. This is not only the intuitive or universal movement which Gadamer (1991) finds theoretically necessary, on an ontological basis, for explicating “hermeneutical consciousness” (p. 362). When Gadamer also refers to “the hermeneutic priority of the question”, it is not just a matter of the importance of questions to human understanding or interpretation. It is also an openness that can be described as “a willingness to follow the question wherever it may lead” (Tracy, 1994, pp. 18-28). It is, in other words, also a practical matter of the purposive prioritising of questions.

Secondly, ‘transdisciplinary conversation’ is catholic in the sense that ‘catholic’ denotes an orientation (rather than a religious persuasion), an orientation which common conversation embodies when it provides opportunities for different voices to be ‘heard’. The ‘orientation’ here is based on a concern for how the subject matter affects or is applicable to many people rather than few people. It requires the inclusiveness referred to above as an observable dynamic of many common conversations. In writings on transdisciplinarity, the concern for ‘many people rather than few’ is philosophically reflected in seminal works which have set
out to define the basis of transdisciplinary approaches. 'The Charter of Transdisciplinarity' (Editorial Committee, First World Congress of Transdisciplinarity, Arrabida, Portugal 1994) provides an example here:

**Article 13:** The transdisciplinary ethic rejects any attitude that refuses dialogue and discussion, regardless of whether the origin of this attitude is ideological, scientistic, religious, economic, political or philosophical. Shared knowledge should lead to a shared understanding based on an absolute respect for the collective and individual differences united by our common life on one and the same Earth.

As with the reasoning to be described in an ensuing section as 'synergistic', 'transdisciplinary conversation' can be referred to as part of a more specific focus on the 'process orientation' previously outlined. It can also be viewed as a particular functional or methodological dimension of the overall interpretive process of the present work. As with the use of the process orientation and philosophic hermeneutics, transdisciplinary conversation is also presented here as a response to the particular challenges of exploring the wisdom question. The assumption is that, in order to track the question of wisdom for its profundity and practicality, the exploratory process benefits from seeking to be more widely informed and by drawing its intellectual support from a variety of sources.

The 'conversation', however, is not only a way of bringing different kinds of perspectives together as a necessary condition for a more profound consideration of the wisdom question. Ultimately, wisdom is a topic which can involve posing questions about the limits of knowledge (Baltes & Staudinger, 2000, p. 135) and only a process which can sustain the reflexivity of the wisdom question is 'informing'.
Transdisciplinarity itself has been associated with the particular requirements of a range of highly challenging questions and problems. It is advocated in a variety of contemporary contexts such as “the emergence of the information society” (Haberli, 2001, p. 8), “increasing complexity” (Klein, 2001, p. 40), “new types of problems” (Oetliker, 2001, p. 25), “the place of people in our knowledge” (Gibbons and Nowotny, 2001, p. 75) and “new forms of cognitive and organisational alliances” (Becker, Jahn, Hummel, Stiess & Wehling, 2001, p. 152). In these and other contexts, transdisciplinarity requires different kinds of perspectives to be discussed or debated.

In more far-reaching proposals, transdisciplinarity is posited as an imperative matter of human communication, a centrepiece of the dialogic response which is necessary to meet critical, global concerns for a “new collective intelligence and creative stewardship” (Kleiber, 2001, p. 47). Kleiber (2001, p. 55), for example, makes the following claim for transdisciplinarity: “Indeed, it is a sine qua non condition [or essential pre-requisite] underpinning the proper functioning of the agora in a complex world.” Gibbons and Nowotny (2001) also propose that the old Greek term ‘agora’ (which refers to the market place used for meetings in ancient Athens) can be a model for creating the appropriate structures in which transdisciplinarity can be developed as a “new mode of knowledge production” (p. 67).

The various claims associated with transdisciplinarity may be more or less arguable, but the present focus is limited to its rationale and particular aspects which are applicable to wisdom inquiry. It is clear that transdisciplinarity is an integral part of efforts to generate a discourse appropriate to the task of managing complexity in a world of expanding fields of knowledge (Klein, 2001, p. 36). This
discourse also seeks to be appropriate or responsive to the increased recognition of
inter-relationships among phenomena (Klein, 2001, p. 40). Transdisciplinarity can
act like a forum for expressions and interpretations which seek their own
improvement through dialogue and a preparedness to approach the full spectrum of
human thinking as a wellspring of ‘conversation’.

Hence, in the present work, ‘transdisciplinary conversation’ is proposed as
an initiative in parallel to the scientific view of transdisciplinarity as an “initiative
in theory and methodology” (Smoliner, 2001, p. 270) which “integrates different
types of knowledge” (Scholz & Marks, 2001, p. 238). Rather than following the
problem-solving or scientific ‘action-research’ models which are frequently
associated with transdisciplinarity, the present proposal is grounded in a model of
‘conversation’ derived primarily from the hermeneutics of Gadamer. As previously
observed, Gadamer explicates our knowing or understanding as a virtual dialogue
with the logical structure of a question-response relationship.

2.10.2 Conversation as a ‘Model’: A Philosophical Perspective

For the sake of clarity, it can be useful to distinguish two senses in which
the phenomenon of conversation is a ‘model’ in the thesis. Firstly, as previously
observed, conversation provides a model for reflecting on what it means to ‘know’,
‘understand’ or ‘interpret’ (Gadamer, 1991). The dynamic character of language
usage as “the medium of understanding” (Palmer, 1988, p. 9) is the fundamental
condition which allows the phenomenon of conversation to be such a model for
hermeneutics. As things become organised, for example, into the “discursive
formation” we count as ‘knowledge’ (Foucault, 1969/1972), numerous influences
come into play but our ability to interact linguistically remains pervasive.
Conversation is viewed as a ‘model’ because of the ways we commonly use this ability. In conversation or a genuine dialogue, we do many things: we explore possibilities (Tracy, 1994), try not to talk at cross purposes (Gadamer, 1991, p. 367), allow the subject matter to be developed (Gadamer, 1991, p. 367) and generally interact with ‘the other’ (Tracy, 1994, p. 20). Hence, in this first sense of ‘conversation as model’, conversation is like a metaphor or analogy for the way we come to ‘understand’, ‘interpret’ or engage what has previously been referred to as the ‘knowing process’.

Secondly, as the previous references to the dialogic character of transdisciplinarity indicate, ‘conversation’ can be a model for the conduct of transdisciplinarity. Here it is not only possible to have a ‘transdisciplinary conversation’ concerning wisdom, but it can also be useful to view transdisciplinarity through the ‘lens’ of conversation.

In the present work, ‘transdisciplinary conversation’ involves both these senses of ‘conversation as model’: firstly, there is the hermeneutical sense which refers to the phenomenon of ‘conversation’ as a model for reflecting on the interpretive process of exploring the wisdom question, and secondly, there is discussion. ‘Discussion’ here is primarily the ‘discussion’ in writing which involves an interaction with other texts. In the transdisciplinary context, this requires the inclusion of texts from different disciplines and fields. (The thesis as a whole, or as a ‘Practical-Philosophy Paradigm’, also includes the ‘actual discussion’ of interviewing a person for the purposes of studying the perspectives of an experienced teacher, but this facet of the exploration is presented at a later stage.)
Several of the key ideas associated with the notion of 'conversation' here are concisely reflected in the hermeneutics of the theologian David Tracy (1994):

To understand is to interpret. To interpret is to converse ... We converse with one another. We can also converse with texts. If we read well, then we are conversing with the text. We inquire. We question. We converse. Just as there is no purely autonomous text, so too there is no purely passive reader. There is only that interaction named conversation. (pp. 19, 21)

Tracy (1994) also writes that "interpretation, on the model of conversation, is a complex phenomenon ... grounded in questioning itself" (p. 28). As with Gadamer (to whom Tracy acknowledges an indebtedness), 'interpretation' here can be closely linked with wisdom: "The skills used in every act of interpretation are analogous to those used in moments of phronesis or practical wisdom that teach us how to act in a concrete situation" (Tracy, 1994, p. 22). These skills are 'grounded in questioning' because they include such things as judging, deliberating, and choosing appropriate responses (p. 9). In other words, we are (wittingly or unwittingly) attending to a question when we operationalise such skills, and as we interact with the question we can find ourselves interacting with ensuing questions. Although the process may be guided by a central question, our responding and interacting does not necessarily deal with one question at a time in a linear fashion.

The interacting or going back-and-forth is not an autonomous text or 'conversation': the skills are derived from past experiences and are carried forward into new experiences. The conversation is, in a profound and practical way, always 'inter-textual' in the sense that "Interpretation is a life long project for any
individual ... and to be ‘experienced’ is to have become a good interpreter” (Tracy, 1994, pp. 8, 9).

Because conversation requires attention to the other, “we must allow for difference and otherness” (Tracy, 1994, p. 20) in a genuine dialogue. This is another reason why conversation can be useful as a model for transdisciplinarity. Tracy does not specifically refer to transdisciplinarity, but he is concerned with how we respond to profound questions when “we find ourselves ... with a plurality of interpretations and methods” (p. 112). The model of interpretation-as-conversation is a way of recognising difference and otherness as necessary conditions in the experience of the interpreter (p. 21). In other words, difference and otherness provide genuine possibilities for exploration. Moreover, the explorations made possible by allowing for difference and otherness are vital to the process of becoming an “experienced interpreter” (Tracy, 1994, p. 9).

This attention to ‘difference and otherness’ is not only theoretically or methodologically significant to the argument for opening up wisdom inquiry to ‘transdisciplinary conversation’; it is also practically and existentially significant to a concern with human potentialities: “Interpretations matter ... Practice itself is often as good or bad as the interpretation it uses and ultimately is” (Tracy, 1994, pp. 7,10). Interpretation, in this sense, is the practical matter of how well we have learned to allow for, and respond to, what is different or ‘other’ in our experience of the world.

The reference here to ‘what is different or other’ is primarily an expression pertaining to open possibilities rather than any dualistic philosophy. ‘Otherness’ is a term which can mark a contrast, point out a difference or suggest an alternative. Particular usages or applications of the term do not necessarily reflect a
philosophical standpoint: sharp and dualistic distinctions, for example, between the
Contexts of Profundity and Practicality do not reflect the ‘process orientation’ of
the present work. It is the discursive, theoretical understanding which separates and
schematises the categories necessary for ‘making its case’. Tracy, however, is
primarily referring to a hermeneutic understanding in a broader and more flexible
context (interpretation-as-conversation) where recognising ‘otherness’ is integral to
the interpretive act whereby understanding takes place. Moreover, his “good
interpreter” (p.16) or “experienced interpreter” (p. 9) leaves open the possibility of
other interpretations and puts “pre-understanding [assumptions] at risk” (p. 16) by
“exploring possibilities suggested by others, including those others we call texts”
(p. 19).

Wisdom inquiry, as a matter concerned with the interpretive process and
what it means to be a ‘good’ or ‘experienced’ interpreter, must make its own
allowances for ‘otherness’. To recall Gadamer’s emphasis on engaging ‘the
hermeneutic priority of the question’, it is the question of wisdom which, in a sense,
ultimately leads the inquirer into the exploration of other possibilities. Otherness,
in Gadamerian terms, is a “horizon” which makes understanding (or “the fusion of
horizons”) possible, and horizons are opened up by questions (Gadamer, 1991, p.
299).

Transdisciplinary conversation not only recognises other possibilities for
interpretation but also explores them. As previously indicated, transdisciplinarity
views disciplines as “particular domains of experience” (Sussex, 1984, p. 60), and
proceeds by drawing from and going beyond disciplinary boundaries (Scholz &
Marks, 2001, p. 237). As ‘conversation’, it avails itself of a wide spectrum of
thinking, and as ‘on-going conversation’ it leaves open the possibility of other interpretations.

2.10.3 Connecting ‘Interpretation-as-Conversation’ with the ‘Transdisciplinary Ethic’: The Attitudinal Dimension or ‘Practical Ethic’ of Allowing for Otherness

Having proposed the essential undertakings and principles of transdisciplinary conversation as well as its philosophical modelling (on the notion of ‘interpretation-as-conversation’), it is now possible to observe an ethical dimension running through all these aspects and ultimately presenting a radical challenge to wisdom inquiry itself.

The philosophical reference to ‘otherness’ is a cornerstone which sets up a relationship between the various aspects of the present rationale for transdisciplinary conversation. In brief review of these aspects: as a methodological undertaking, transdisciplinarity crosses boundaries by its explorations into and beyond ‘other’ disciplines as domains of experience. In crossing boundaries it can engage a conversation which is ‘open’ to questions and ‘catholic’ in its willingness to include other voices. Transdisciplinarity in the present work, as a mode of interpretation modelled on conversation, recognises what is ‘different or other’. From the perspective of philosophic hermeneutics, this recognition is integral to the interpretive act and provides the possibility of becoming an “experienced interpreter” (Tracy, 1994).

The rationale for identifying an ‘ethical dimension’ and ‘radical challenge’ here can begin with a closer view towards the meanings associated with ‘otherness’. ‘Otherness’ has previously been referred to as a term which can mark
a contrast, point out a difference or suggest an alternative. It has been noted that that there are variations in the purpose and context of usage. In some instances, the meaning is relatively straightforward, such as where transdisciplinarity refers to different disciplines as ‘other’ domains of experience. In other instances, the context is more ‘philosophical’ and hermeneutically challenging because it pertains to an understanding or appreciation of ‘what is other’.

Hence, the present work recognises a variety of meanings for ‘what is other’ and proposes the purpose and context of usage as the guide in each case. Otherness is not only that which immediately “transcends the horizon of our understanding” (Unno, 1998, p. 33), but also that which we perceive to be in some way ‘different’ or ‘unique’ (Buber, 1965). For Buber, otherness is most profound when it is an existential ‘encounter’ (‘I-Thou’) rather than a theoretical category or thing (‘I-It’). It is, for example, ‘otherness’ which can require the empathy to experience a person or group “from the other side” (Buber, 1965, p. xix). Given that virtually anything (including ourselves) can be viewed or experienced as an ‘encounter’, ‘otherness’ is a term which floats with the context (a ‘floating signifier’). In the existential context (such as Buber’s ‘I-Thou’ encounter refers to), conversation or ‘dialogue’ can have a much broader and deeper significance than in the common meaning of people meeting and informally being ‘conversational’.

Whereas ‘otherness’ in the Context of Profundity can require a challenge to any limit imposed on its meaning, the Context of Practicality can require a more determinative approach to the meanings of terms, beginning with the recognition that “every word ‘comes into play’ within the definite context in which it is spoken and understood” (Gadamer, 1977, p. 57). Practicality can require a relatively adequate rendering and interpretation of words for a given purpose or concrete
situation. In the present case, profundity can require the ‘philosophical’ recognition of a paradox: ‘otherness’ extends to what is beyond boundaries, including the parameters of any definition of ‘otherness’ and the parameters of what is referred to above as a ‘definite context’. In terms of practicality, we aim for a deployment of terms where “the words we find capture our intending” (Gadamer, 1977, p. 56) and ‘speak’ the meaning. In terms of profundity, ‘otherness’ is what can ‘speak’ to us or what can present the ever new ‘horizons’ which Gadamer’s ‘experienced interpreter’ has learned to engage as a kind of dialogue.

The Radical Challenge of Allowing for Otherness as a ‘Relationship’: David Tacey

The work of David Tacey (not to be confused with the references above to David Tracy) provides examples of both particular and profound meanings for the term ‘otherness’. Tacey’s work (1995) situates his reflections on ‘otherness’ in an Australian context, arguing that “the various kinds of otherness” have been constructed by what is perceived as an “intrusion” upon consciousness (p. 203). Examples from his discussion of what many Australians have commonly perceived as ‘otherness’ include the landscape, migrants, Aborigines, women, homosexuals and Asia (p. 116). For Tacey, these are perceptions of ‘otherness’, but at a deeper and more profound level ‘otherness’ is not a matter which can be defined by any perceived lines of psychological or cultural estrangement. On the contrary, otherness is ultimately a larger matter of human potentialities in the sense that it refers to what we can recognise as both profound and necessary to engage: “The other is complex, awesome, subtle, many-sided, and must be entered into relationship with” (p. 113).
Tacey also maintains that wisdom has to do with this relationship (p. 183), but to be responsive or even to admit it “can require a fundamental shift in the locus of identity, so that what we care about, and what we regard as belonging to ourselves, is radically broadened so as to accommodate a far greater span or portion of reality” (p.152). The ‘relationship’ Tacey is referring to is, in a sense fitting to the Context of Profundity, the exploration of wisdom. To support this view, Keke’s (1995) philosophical definition of wisdom can be recalled for its emphasis on a “reflective attitude” which aims to “understand the fundamental nature of reality and its significance for living a good life” (p. 912). The ‘reflective attitude’ is not essentially an interest in understanding reality and its ethical significance within a purely theoretical framework. In a recall of the relevant words from the definition, it is united with a “practical concern” to “make decisions and act” from the “point of view” or the “form of understanding” which the reflective attitude is developing (p. 912).

There is also an attitude underpinning the ‘relationship’ Tacey refers to. Its ethical dimension is implied in the reference to “what we care about”, and the “fundamental shift” that can be required for it is described in terms of a “broadening” of “what we regard as belonging to ourselves” (p. 152). In other words, the relationship is ‘ecological’ in the sense that ‘ecology’ pertains to what is organically linked and what is termed “deep ecology” (Naess, 1993) pertains to the asking of “deeper and deeper questions” about these links (Carnegie, 2000, p. 62).

If the ‘broadening’ of ‘what we regard as belonging to ourselves’ becomes deeply connected to ‘what we care about’, the ‘relationship’ Tacey refers to is that more profound sense of ‘conversation’ or ‘dialogue’ which the other writers are underscoring. From a Gadamerian perspective on wisdom inquiry, for instance, the
'relationship' can be viewed as an aiming for a fuller engagement of "the conversation that we are" (Gadamer, 1982, p. xxiii).

These are of course philosophical, reflexive and hermeneutical perspectives rather than substantive, procedural observations of conversation or transdisciplinarity. Their sense in terms of supporting a 'rationale' for transdisciplinary conversation is essentially a matter of how widely transdisciplinarity is to extend its conception of 'knowledge' (or the 'knowing process') in relation to 'wisdom' as an object of inquiry. The wisdom question, as previously observed in the discussion of 'epistemological commitments', can place exceptional reflexive demands on the notion of 'knowledge of wisdom'. Hence, wisdom inquiry can require an exploration which is adaptable to the particular epistemological and methodological challenges which arise from the subject matter of the 'conversation'.

Allowing for Otherness as a 'Practical Ethic': The Human Context

One of the challenges in exploring the question of wisdom, particularly for its active sense of 'being wise' or 'acting wisely', is that the sought after knowledge pertains to the mode of being or activity of a 'person'. In other words, it involves knowledge of a living being with thoughts, feelings and attitudes. 'Subjectivity', as a construct representing the multi-dimensionality of what it means to be a human being (Mansfield, 2000, p. 11), cannot account for what is essentially 'human' without leaving the question open to the 'relationship' referred to by Tacey.

Some questions are, in a sense, resolved 'humanly' rather than in theory (Rogers, 1977). Theory aims for understanding, and in the present work the
understanding of wisdom has been designated as a ‘knowing process’. It has previously been noted that some theory or philosophy is more practical than others. ‘Practical philosophy’ has a ‘practical epistemology’ in the sense that its work retains sight of this ‘human context’: the wisdom question, for instance, is viewed as being ‘humanly’ resolved in the choices and decisions of the person being wise or acting wisely.

Before turning to consider more specifically the implications here in a transdisciplinary context, a general epistemological and methodological point regarding this ‘human context’ can be noted from Aristotle’s reflections on wisdom inquiry. In opening his account of ‘phronesis’ (in Book 6 of Ethics), Aristotle’s attention to the human context is immediate: “Regarding practical wisdom [phronesis] we shall get at the truth by considering who are the persons we credit with it” (1140a25). At an earlier point, Aristotle has introduced his inquiry as an investigation of “things noble and just” and noted that such things exhibit great “diversity and uncertainty” (Ethics, Book 1, 1094b15). Accordingly, he considers it necessary to adjust the reasoning and the conception of the discussion or inquiry itself to accommodate the kinds of subject-matter involved:

Our statement of the case will be adequate, if it be made with all such clearness as the subject-matter admits; for it would be wrong to expect the same degree of accuracy in all reasonings ... we must be content to indicate the truth roughly. (Aristotle, Ethics, Book 1, 1094b10, 20)

In Aristotle’s epistemology here, the adjustments are necessary not simply because there is an ethical dimension to the subject matter (‘things noble and just’) but also because he recognises that the knowledge of the wise person is not knowledge that can be disconnected from the person.
It is not, however, the treatment of its subject matter which provides the first indication of an ethical dimension to conversation, but rather the manner of its 'allowance for otherness'. Before partners in a conversation can be reasonable about the subject matter, certain fundamental attitudes such as the respect "to hear without distortion what the other has to say" (Dunne, 1993, p. 24) are necessary. In other words, the genuine practice of conversation can require a 'practical ethic' or overall 'ethos' which is not necessarily reducible to a prescriptive formulation of theoretical principles. Even the prescriptive tone of Article 13 (of the Charter of Transdisciplinarity previously cited where "the transdisciplinary ethic rejects any attitude that refuses dialogue" and requires a "respect" based on what we have in common as humans) pertains to necessary conditions for a dialogue to be initiated.

In that sense, the 'practical ethic' is ontological or existential before it is 'deontological'. Deontology, as a setting out to theorise what is right, is compatible with the 'transdisciplinary ethic' and can become a salient characteristic of transdisciplinary conversation itself. However, the 'practical ethic' is not regulated by deontology in the sense that it recognises that the response to otherness can require flexible and perceptive qualities which cannot be contained in a set of theoretical principles.

As much as the wisdom question ultimately requires this 'practical ethic', transdisciplinarity does present a specific set of guiding principles for the manner of its own conduct. In relation to the 'human context', Articles 1 and 2 of the Charter of Transdisciplinarity are particularly relevant:
Article 1: Any attempt to reduce the human being by formally defining what a human being is and subjecting the human being to reductive analyses within a framework of formal structures, no matter what they are, is incompatible with the transdisciplinary vision.

Article 2: The recognition of the existence of different levels of reality governed by different types of logic is inherent in the transdisciplinary attitude. Any attempt to reduce reality to a single level governed by a single form of logic does not lie within the scope of transdisciplinarity. (Editorial Committee, First World Congress of Transdisciplinarity, Arribida, Portugal, 1994)

Conversation as a ‘Search for Truth’

As a process, everyday conversation is not necessarily “a straightforward harmonious one” (How, 1995, p. 56), but as a genuine interaction it nonetheless retains a fundamentally positive character: “Conversation, in its primary form, is an opening up of possibilities in the search for truth” (Tracey, 1994, p. 20). This positive character and reference to ‘truth’ is a pursuit of knowledge in the sense that can be aligned with previously explicated notions such as the ‘knowing process’, ‘Gadamer’s hermeneutics’, ‘genuine hermeneutic experience’, and the view of hermeneutic reflection as “opening up new possibilities for knowledge” (Weinsheimer, 1985, p. 1).

In the transdisciplinary context, it is necessary to consider what one source can say to another about such matters. There is, in other words, a correlative dimension to the work of transdisciplinarity. Conversation also contains this correlative dimension when it ‘allows for difference and otherness’ (Tracy, 1994, p. 20). At some level, such a conversation implicitly or explicitly relies on what Tracy (1994) refers to as “similarity-in-difference”: the recognition not only of “the other as other” and “the different as different” but also of “the different as
possible" (p. 20). By ‘other’ and ‘different’, Tracy is essentially referring to ‘other interpretations’ and ‘different interpretations’. The reference to ‘the different as possible’ is where the preposition ‘in’ (similarity-in-difference) can be underscored: “To recognise possibility is to sense some similarity to what we have already experienced or understood” (p. 20).

This hermeneutical notion of ‘similarity-in-difference’ can provide a useful philosophical context for reflecting on transdisciplinary conversation as a methodological response to the profound and radical challenge of ‘otherness’. Tracy’s attention to conversation treats it as an exploration in understanding and characterises the human “search for truth” (p. 20) as a process centred on interpretation. This is a process whereby we recognise possibilities rather than uphold boundaries. We recognise the possibility of learning something from different sources, and proceed by making connections among “different domains of experience” (Sussex, 1984, p. 60). (As previously noted, transdisciplinarity is essentially concerned with ‘mobilising bodies of knowledge’ by viewing disciplines as different ‘domains of experience’.). In this sense, ‘similarity-in-difference’ is a heuristic which can add further support to Gadamer’s hermeneutics and his own emphasis on human understanding as a ‘fusion of horizons’.

Rather than ‘locking in’ on what each participant has to say, the interaction of such conversation is an exchange, and exchange requires putting something at risk. To put an interpretation at risk is to allow it to be questioned: “When no question other than our own is allowed, then conversation is impossible” (Tracy, 1994, p. 18). If participants act as though their current knowledge, experience or understanding encompasses the subject matter, then what is “already experienced or
understood” becomes a fixed boundary, and ‘conversation’ is reduced to verbalisation or monologue.

Tracy’s use of the hyphenated form ‘dia-logue’ (p. 18) to emphasise “the willingness to follow the question wherever it may go” (p. 18) would seem particularly pertinent to the wisdom question in the light of what has been previously noted regarding its reflexivity and paradoxicality in relation to knowledge claims. The prefix ‘dia’ (Greek: through, between, across, by) can be highlighted to reflect the mutuality of genuine dialogue and the exploratory emphasis of Tracy’s hermeneutics. Both of these emphases also reflect essential features of the model of ‘conversation’ and the fundamental concern of transdisciplinarity to go ‘across and beyond’.

Having proposed ‘transdisciplinary conversation’ as an initiative in methodology for wisdom inquiry, it is necessary for the notion of ‘initiative’ to be viewed within the context of the overall ‘process philosophy’ of the thesis. Rather than knower and object being separated with the former ‘discovering’ the latter by methodological means, the philosophic-hermeneutical process-oriented approach to the wisdom question (previously outlined) does not set out to separate ‘knowledge’ from what animates it (Gadamer, 1991, p. 461). As previously noted from Aristotle’s discussion of how ‘we shall get at the truth’ regarding wisdom, certain types of inquiry can make it necessary to accord primacy to a ‘human context’, and ‘knowledge of wisdom’ presents a particular case here. The present work has accepted the profound reflexivity of the wisdom question as the primary reason for ‘knowledge of wisdom’ to be ultimately a matter requiring more conversation and more interpretation. Initiatives help in this process rather than steer it to a conclusion.
In the process orientation and the model of conversation, the exploration of wisdom is a ‘search for truth’ but not one which reifies either truth or wisdom as an ‘end product’ of extracting and systemising perspectives from different sources. There is, in other words, no aggregate of material to extract systematically from bodies of knowledge and posit as the ‘resolution’ of the wisdom question. Examples of such ‘material’ would include the principles, maxims and norms which Schulman (1986) refers to as the ‘propositional knowledge’ which can be drawn from research and “the accumulated wisdom of practice” (p. 11). Whether or not the process-oriented model of conversation is followed, there is always something more than we can say about the wisdom question and the sources explored for its knowledge. Hence, even after systematic inquiry, the ‘search for truth’ never completely discloses the Context of Profundity.

Although particularly significant to wisdom inquiry, these observations (of conversation as a ‘search for truth’) also have a more general hermeneutical basis: For practical purposes, the resolution of questions takes place when they are counted as having been ‘answered’ and the practicality of everyday conversations does not generally require truthful responses to questions to be met with ‘philosophical’ analysis. ‘Resolution’ here amounts to questions being addressed satisfactorily according to the parameters we associate with their asking. From a philosophical perspective, however, even straightforward replies to the simplest everyday questions (‘resolved’, for example by a simple ‘Yes’ or ‘No’) can take on ‘more truth’ when understanding anything further that can be related to the question or answer. The difference between the ‘practical’ and ‘philosophical’ examples here is essentially one of interpretive context. Wisdom inquiry is also a
conversation or 'search for truth' where the interpretive context governs what we mean by 'truth'.

As Tracy (1994) suggests, conversation is a complex of elements and relationships, and whatever aspect we choose to emphasise (including truth) remains ontologically grounded in the dynamic interaction which is 'the conversation':

Method, theory and explanation can aid every conversation... but none can replace the conversation itself ... Explanation and understanding, method and truth, theory and common sense, concept and symbol – all are partners in the complex discourse that is the dialogue of our day. Try to turn them against one another if you must, but they will find one another again. (p. 46)

2.10.4 The Scope and Function of Philosophic Hermeneutics in Turning to Multiple Perspectives: The Gadamerian Influence on the Rationale

The purpose of the present subsection is briefly to review and extend the rationale for transdisciplinary conversation in terms of its appropriation of Gadamer's hermeneutics. Gadamer's philosophy, and his particular emphasis on 'the priority of the question', have provided the hermeneutical basis from which the rationale has proceeded to propose transdisciplinary conversation as a methodological initiative for wisdom inquiry. In this sense, the rationale is hinged by a Gadamerian mode of reflection. Profundity, in this mode of reflection, is a matter which can require the sense of questioning which admits to a dependence on the new 'horizons'. From this hermeneutical basis, transdisciplinary conversation can be understood as a response to the need for multiple perspectives.

As previously noted, one of the points of departure for Gadamer's conception of philosophic hermeneutics is the idea that some of the most profound
things which human beings can understand or accomplish retain a certain irreducible quality. They are ultimately matters of ‘truth’ in a broader and more reflexive sense than can be represented by the methodologism (or over-reliance on procedural formalism) which assumes that they are arbitrary and manipulable (Gadamer, 1977, p. 4). Gadamer does not dispute that the various canons of inquiry broadly referred to as ‘science’ can make a significant contribution to our understanding of these profound matters, but he does contest the extent to which science can claim a “methodological control” over the human contexts which determine our understanding and experience (Gadamer, 1977, p. 19; Linge, 1977, p. xvii).

The essential relevant feature of Gadamer’s line of thinking here involves what he refers to as the “scope” of philosophic hermeneutics (1977, p. 18–68). It is necessary, however, to clarify the Gadamerian context of this reference to ‘scope’. There are some connotations of the term ‘scope’ which are unhelpful to a process orientation, and in particular to the process orientation of Gadamer’s version of philosophic hermeneutics. For instance, the term ‘scope’ can imply a more or less fixed horizon of possibilities, and in this bounded context research is viewed as a concern for piecing together what otherwise remains loose or fragmentary within the fixed horizon. With Gadamer, however, “horizons” can move from moment to moment (1991, p. 304). His emphasis is not directed towards what it is possible to ‘reconstruct’ in research, but rather is more concerned with hermeneutical understanding as an on-going ‘mediation’ between what is familiar to us and what is alien.

Hence, in following Gadamer, philosophic hermeneutics is concerned with opening up the scope of the hermeneutical dimension of human thinking. Since
Gadamer emphasises this hermeneutical dimension as an ontological feature of our mode of being, the Gadamerian context for discussing the term ‘scope’ focuses on possibilities for the ‘thing itself’ (‘die Sache selbst’) to ‘speak’ to us (1991, p. 72). These are possibilities which arise from the movement and agency of our understanding. In other words, ‘scope’ refers to what is given by the “genuine hermeneutical experience” (Gadamer, 1991, p. 138) as much as what is limited at any moment by its range of vision. It includes a sense of opportunity because the ‘givenness’ essentially refers us to new possibilities to interpret, reflect and extend the horizons of our understanding.

In this emphasis on ‘scope’, there are again significant parallels with the thematisation of the wisdom question in the present work. The Context of Profundity is also fundamentally a matter of scope. Here again the term ‘scope’ can refer not only to limits but also to what enlarges, deepens or extends beyond present limits. Things are not generally considered ‘profound’ simply because there is a limit of some sort involved. We encounter limits in many things, but to refer to something as ‘profound’ requires some sense or judgement of scope. In other words, profundity is a matter of how something stands before us or how we find ourselves involved with it. As with the ‘scope’ of philosophic hermeneutics, the reference to things ‘profound’ (or the ‘Context of Profundity’) can implicate matters of interpretation, reflection and the extension of ‘horizons’.

Moreover, when Gadamer (1977) insists that human understanding is ultimately not only a cognitive phenomenon but also an ontological and existential one, philosophic hermeneutics is placed on a footing which is both broad and deep (p. 18). Philosophic hermeneutics reaches towards “the whole of our experience” of the world (p. 13), and in doing so it can invite multiple perspectives and more
than one discipline or field of study into its own reflective process. As a methodological feature of the present work, this generation and usage of multiple perspectives, to be associated with the scope and function of philosophic hermeneutics, is from here on referred to as “the principle of multiple perspectives” (Greene, 1972, pp. 275-284; Vandenberg, 1990, p. 146).

Although philosophic hermeneutics can pursue the fundamental ontological conditions which allow for all human understanding to be viewed as ‘profound’ (Gadamer, 1977), it can also approach the phenomenon of human understanding with a discriminating sense of profundity. When, as previously noted, Gadamer relies on the ‘practical’ Aristotelian concepts of ‘praxis’ and ‘phronesis’ (in order to suggest how understanding, interpretation and application can be ontologically inseparable), he is also expressing a concern for the quality of the way we approach things. ‘Quality’ is referred to here not only in the descriptive sense pertaining to characteristics or attributes, but also in the normative sense of questioning how well a process is being conducted.

Following on from Heidegger, Gadamer seeks to illuminate the profundity of the fact that we can understand anything at all, but what is being referred to here as the ‘discriminating sense of profundity’ or the ‘concern for quality’ is based on the premise that the universality of human understanding is not one kind of understanding. Gadamerian expressions, such as ‘authentic understanding’ and the ‘genuine hermeneutical experience’, suggest the qualitative nature of Gadamer’s concern with understanding and experience (Bernstein, 1996, p. 138).

Although not ‘normative’ in the stricter sense of providing fixed criteria for making judgements of what constitutes an ‘authentic’ or ‘profound’ understanding, there are nonetheless some universal qualities which Gadamer
identifies with the formative processes of such authenticity or genuineness (How, 1995, p. 65). For example, if Bernstein’s (1996) critique of Gadamer’s works is followed, the key words of Gadamer’s analyses of “genuine dialogue” include: “mutuality”, “sharing”, “respect”, “equality” and “freedom” (p. 190).

In relation to the ‘concern for quality’, the function of hermeneutics in the present work is to pursue the kinds of understanding which are the more rather than the less profound forms and qualities of understanding. Here the references to ‘scope’ and ‘function’ become closely linked: “Philosophic hermeneutics takes as its task the opening up of the hermeneutical dimension in its full scope” (Gadamer, 1977, p. 18).

This ‘opening up’ can ultimately require a preparedness to cross boundaries among disciplines rather than stand back from sources of new perspectives or more profound levels of understanding: “The principle of hermeneutics simply means that we should try to understand everything that can be understood” (Gadamer, 1977, p. 31). Although there are contrary views towards the scope of hermeneutics (Habermas, 1988), its function is realised when “opening up new possibilities for knowledge which would not be perceived without it” (Gadamer, 1976, p. 130). These ‘new possibilities’ are not necessarily possibilities of one kind of knowledge, and ultimately not necessarily limited to domains of knowledge which are institutionally recognised.

Wisdom, in particular, can be viewed as a topic which pertains to the boundaries of a disciplinary area or body of knowledge. For instance, the ‘practical knowledge’ associated with wisdom, and previously outlined in terms of an inherence in matters of “choice and action” (Schwab, 1969), is frequently accepted as a complex of artistic, intuitive processes which are often contextually dependent
and more dynamic than can be adequately described within the framework of a particular discipline (Butler, 1996; Schön, 1983, 1987).

For some, such observations might be sufficient for 'wisdom' to be viewed as an entirely problematical category, or at least one to be contained by a strong contextualism, such as can be supplied for example by 'action research' methodologies. For others, 'the problem' is more of a question of "wisdom in the university" (Barnett, 1994, p. 147), and the tensions that can exist therein between matters of profundity and practicality.

Barnett (1994), for instance, argues that there has been an over-emphasis on the instrumental aspects of university management and that a narrowing version of "competence" has predominated "ways of knowing" (p. 25) or what is counted as ways of knowing. He considers such developments to have been an impoverishment of an attribute to be prized in scholarship, namely, the propensity for "grasping of a range of different possibilities, seeing things under different aspects" (p. 148).

Chapter Conclusion

The present chapter has also countered narrowing tendencies in considering the relationship of methodological questions to the question of 'What kind of knowledge knows wisdom?'. There is a sense in which the wisdom question is 'respected' here as a particular kind of question. In the pursuit of 'nexus', the chapter has acknowledged the 'reflexive paradox' of the wisdom question as a profound challenge, yet argued for a methodological responsiveness that neither trivialises paradoxicality nor allows it to preclude the process of deepening reflection.
Several epistemological and ontological ‘commitments’ of this approach have been posted in adopting a ‘process orientation’ as a response to the question of ‘the kind of knowledge that knows wisdom’. After proposing criteria in order to describe the form of this ‘process orientation’ in the thesis, the chapter has framed the philosophical discipline of the project more specifically as an exercise in ‘Philosophical Anthropology’ and ‘Philosophic Hermeneutics’, linking the latter with Gadamer’s work in particular.

The methodological consideration of being responsive to the particular challenges of the wisdom question has proposed ‘transdisciplinary conversation’ as an initiative or innovative approach to wisdom inquiry, and as an extension of the primarily philosophical stance of the thesis. In the concluding sections of the chapter, the discussion has supported the use of multiple perspectives and upheld ‘conversation’ as a metaphor and model for wisdom inquiry. It has also been proposed that the wisdom question is ultimately a profound and practical question of “the conversation that we are” (Gadamer, 1982, p. xxiii).

In Chapter 3, this ‘human context’ is further explored with a view towards the field of education, a more specific contextualisation of the wisdom question and the inclusion of a case study approach within the Practical-Philosophy Paradigm.
CHAPTER 3


Introduction

In Chapters Three and Four, the exploration develops a more specific contextualisation of the wisdom question and focuses the question in relation to a particular field and problem.

As indicated by the general parameters set out in Chapter One, this contextualisation includes particular reference to a problem it refers to as 'the gap between aspiration and experienced reality'. The problem is essentially approached as a 'reference point' (or 'practical example') for situating the wisdom question within an area of substantive human concern. In other words, 'the gap' represents a human context for exploring the wisdom question.

Some comparisons can facilitate the signalling of the general direction to be explored in Chapters Three and Four of the thesis. Whereas Chapters One and Two of the thesis have inquired after possibilities for approaching an understanding of wisdom, Chapters Three and Four take up these possibilities. Chapters One and Two have approached the wisdom question by reflecting initially on what sort of question is being posed: what is it that pertains to an exploration of the wisdom question? Wisdom, it has been proposed, is a question of profundity and practicality, a question of human living and many aspects or things of human living such as knowledge, experience, attitude, ethics, values and the progress of human lives. Chapters Three and Four bring a focus to the question in human living.
The broader focus of the previous chapters has attended primarily to reflexive and theoretical-philosophical dimensions of the wisdom question: Chapters Three and Four probe further and more directly into the human context by inquiring after a specific case. The ‘case’ here pertains to the human context in the ‘actual’ (or ‘real life’) sense of interviewing a person and studying specific instances of the person’s reflection and practice. These instances generally pertain to the field of education.

In sum, Chapters Three and Four are less ‘epistemologically concerned’ with what wisdom is a question ‘of’, and more ‘ontologically concerned’ with what wisdom can be a question ‘in’. Whereas the former pertains to the ‘knowing process’ of wisdom inquiry, the latter pertains to the grounding of the wisdom question in ‘the concrete case’.

The notions of ‘grounding’ and ‘the concrete case’ will be illuminated by the problem-setting sections dealing with ‘the gap’, but initially indicated by briefly attending to two philosophical designations: namely, Heidegger’s (1923/1999) reference to ‘facticity’ (or more precisely, ‘the facticity of our being’) and Schwab’s (1969) reference to ‘the practical’.

3.1 Towards a Conceptualisation of ‘Grounding’ the Wisdom Question in ‘a Concrete Case’: Some Preliminary Philosophical Reflections

The implications of what is meant by ‘grounding’ and ‘a concrete case’ are significant in terms of what has previously been referred to as the “ontological commitments” of research (Usher, 1998, p. 13). As the exploration advances towards the field of education, there is also a more particular relevance to “the
ontological stance, agency and structure" of conducting interviews (Scott & Usher, 1999, p. 113).

The notion of 'grounding' the wisdom question here in 'a concrete case' is also ontologically and reflexively significant to the process of formulating a wisdom construct. In other words, when wisdom inquiry posits the wisdom question in some connection to the world and human lives, it has already responded, 'said something' or 'started looking'. The very notion of 'grounding' in 'a concrete case' implicates a 'hermeneutic': ideas and assumptions regarding what 'is' and the meaning of the operative terms (as can be pursued by such questions as "What is being 'grounded'?" "What is 'grounding'?").

Rather than jettison the reflexivity which the exploration hitherto has accepted as a necessary accompaniment to wisdom inquiry, the direction to be followed here involves integrating it with the process of turning attention to 'the field'. Hence, the turn towards 'the concrete' or 'a concrete case' is not approached as an autonomous or radically separate pathway in the exploration. To reflect on what it means to contextualise the wisdom question in concreto is to engage the wisdom question reflexively, and to proceed along this path towards the substantive realm of a particular practitioner's "hermeneutic experience" (Gadamer, 1991, pp. 346-362) is to be reflexive.

The preservation of this reflexivity is essentially a matter of preventing the attention to practical matters from collapsing the inquiry into a pursuit after a narrow form of practicality. Although some writers maintain that reflexivity, as some type of "bending back" of understanding to previous experiences, is inherent to all practices (Bryant, 1998, p. 113; Gergen, 1985), the form of reflexivity to be 'preserved' here is more deliberative. It entails a more conscious return to
philosophical reflection on the matters under discussion in the interviews. As
previously indicated, it also adopts the value of the 'pause' for returning to the
question of wisdom in order to say something further about it.

In the interviews, the purpose of retaining such reflexivity is to open up
and explore the hermeneutic dimension of the practitioner's experience in the field
of education. The focus of reflexivity here is directed to the practitioner as a
meaning-maker in the sense that 'meaning-making' has previously been
represented as an interpretive or knowing process (Gadamer, 1991).

Notwithstanding this 'preservation', the shift in focus towards the actual
practice of a particular practitioner requires a 'practical' orientation insofar as the
question of wisdom is explored on more pragmatic grounds. In the most immediate
sense of the word 'pragmatism', a practitioner's voice in the conversation can be
'pragmatic' in pointing out consequences, particularities, contingencies and
contextually dependent aspects of practice (Dewey, 1979). In relation to the themes
of the present work, the 'pragmatic voice' resonates with the 'voice' of practicality
when it reclaims a place for 'practice-to-theory' perspectives, perspectives which
are derived from practice and can inform theory of what is suited to certain
contexts, people, purposes and interests (Hargreaves, 1994, p. 12).

The 'pragmatic voice' can also be essential to a more profound
conversation (Bernstein, 1996). In a dialectical relationship between theory and
practice (where theory informs practice and practice informs theory), pragmatism
can point to the limits of theory and its notions of 'grounding' questions. Hence,
Rorty writes that pragmatism "means resisting the urge to substitute theoria for
phronesis" (quoted in Bernstein, 1996, p. 203). Rather than abandoning theory,
Rorty (as with Nietzsche in earlier times) writes of the abandonment of
“metaphysical comfort” in the tendency of theory to reify concepts (Bernstein, 1996, p. 201).

This is not the ‘pragmatism’ of shallow concern for ‘what works’, but the ‘pragmatic sense’ which can ‘check’ the pretensions of theory and what is counted as ‘profound’. The ‘checking’ is not necessarily limited to finding fault with theory. Pragmatists of the type being referred to here take account of theory and ‘check’ it in a number of ways. These ‘ways’ or pragmatic endeavours are often essential to the progress of a topic as a field of inquiry (Sternberg, 1990, p. ix), the formulation of theory and the development of research paradigms (Kuhn, 1970). Such pragmatists, for example, can be the most willing agents when it comes to translating theory into organised action (Woodward, 1987, p. 22), experimenting with theory (Dewey, 1968, p. 271), initiating and planning changes to theory (Woodward, 1987, p. 23) or mediating and reconciling disparate elements of theory in relation to personal matters and sensibilities (James, 1975, p. 43).

3.2 The ‘Voice’ of ‘Pragmatic Sense’ in Relation to ‘Phronesis’

‘Pragmatic sense’ is viewed here as one of the sought-after ‘voices’ of the interviewed practitioner, but it is not a label for any account from practitioners which has “a ring of everyday practicality” (Connelly & Claudin, 1988, p. 119). The ‘sought-after voice’ of pragmatic sense is not necessarily identified with ostensibly ‘pragmatic’ behaviour, professing ‘pragmatists’ or the putative ‘practical’ disposition of practitioners. It is, rather, a practical-orientated voice which necessarily enjoins (and sometimes interrupts) the conversation of wisdom inquiry for the purposes of informing or shaping its direction. ‘Pragmatic sense’ is, in other words, a ‘consulting voice’ in the conversation, advising it from a
practitioner’s perspective and providing it with a view towards what theory otherwise does not take into account.

The ‘voice’ of pragmatic sense is not averse to reasoning, and in this sense the ‘practical orientation’ is harmonious with the orientation of ‘phronesis’ (practical wisdom) and the ‘phronimos’ (the person with practical wisdom). In particular, it is the insightfulness of pragmatic sense which distinguishes it from narrower versions of pragmatism or practicality. ‘Insight’ here involves an extended “apprehension of relations” (Lonergan, 1957/1973, p. x). The apprehension extends beyond any tendency to view matters (such as work, discussion, objects or events) in terms of immediate consequences. This ‘extended’ requirement for insight accords with the direction of discussion in the literature which focuses on ‘phronesis’ as something more than an ability to understand the situation-at-hand (Dunne, 1993; Noel, 1999; Schuchman, 1980).

In relation to Aristotle’s definition of phronesis, pragmatic sense can be regarded as a sense of practicality which either supports phronesis or arises out of phronesis. The Aristotelian definition of ‘phronesis’ previously indicated from Ross’s (1984) translation of ‘Nichomachean Ethics’ referred to “a true and reasoned capacity to act with regard to the things that are good or bad for man [sic]” (1140b5). Whereas phronesis necessarily denotes ‘wisdom’ (insofar as it is translated and discussed as ‘practical wisdom’), ‘pragmatic sense’ can be thought of as the practicality required for phronesis or expressed by phronesis.

As a sense of practicality, pragmatic sense is insightful in a practical way. In his discussion of the practicality of teachers in dealing with changes in educational policy, Hargreaves (1994) provides substantive suggestions of what can be associated here with the terms ‘insightful’ and ‘practical’:
At the heart of change for most teachers is the issue of whether it is practical [emphasis in original] ... Judging changes by their practicality seems, on the surface, to amount to measuring abstract theories against the tough test of harsh reality. There is more to it than this, though ... practicality among teachers is the distillation of complex and potent combinations of purpose, politics and workplace constraints ... To ask teachers whether a new method is practical is therefore to ask much more than whether it works. It is also to ask whether it fits the context, whether it suits the person, whether it is in tune with their purposes, and whether it helps or harms their interests. (p. 12)

To clarify further the relation of the terms ‘pragmatic sense’ and ‘phronesis’, it is necessary to note that the common translation of ‘phronesis’ as ‘practical wisdom’ is not the only translation. In her account of the varieties of phronesis, Noel (1999) observes:

The often-used definition of ‘phronesis’ ... is from Ross’s translation of the ‘Nichomachean Ethics’ ... The term ‘phronesis’, though, has been translated with a number of different phrases in the attempt to capture the full meaning of the term. Translations have included, among others, practical reasoning, practical wisdom, moral discernment, moral insight, and prudence. (pp. 273-274)

After noting that the different translations can be used to emphasise different aspects of phronesis, Noel refers to “the basic interpretation of phronesis” (p. 274) as a matter of choice and action:

Phronesis is one piece of Aristotle’s comprehensive writings on the ethics of human action. In particular, it addresses the ways that people act in everyday situations. It deals with human action in terms of practical situations by looking at the question ‘What should I do in this situation?’ (p. 274)

In this account, phronesis (as ‘practical wisdom’) is the concept which deals with the question of wisdom in a ‘grounded’ or ‘situated’ form. It is
'grounded' in the sense that it "addresses the way that people act" in terms of "everyday situations" and "practical questions" (Noel, 1999, p. 274). The question becomes 'situated' when phronesis becomes a matter of 'What should I do in this situation?'

Although it can be problematical to refer to phronesis as 'holistic' (given the way that Aristotle separates sophia as 'theoretical' or 'philosophic' wisdom from the practical character of phronesis), phronesis nevertheless both "addresses" and "deals with" the question of what to do in concrete situations (Noel, 1999, p. 274). When Aristotle claims that phronesis is an "intellectual virtue" and "the most characteristic function of the man [sic] of practical wisdom is to deliberate well" (1140b25), he is not referring to a 'capacity to act' which is patchy in any sense. 'Phronesis' is a multifaceted, comprehensive and highly developed capacity, and the people who are accredited with it by Aristotle embody all the attributes required to “aim at and hit the best thing attainable to man [sic] by action” (Aristotle, 1141b9-14).

'Pragmatic sense' is, by comparison, a more specific term than 'phronesis'. It is more specific in that it refers to that aspect of reflection or decision-making which requires the sense of practicality or practical insight indicated above. The practitioner who must decide a particular practical question ('What should I do in this situation?') may require, amongst other things, 'pragmatic sense' in order to embody the 'capacity to act' of Aristotelian phronesis. As a much wider term of reference, 'phronesis' requires all of the collective abilities which Aristotle finds to be embodied and evinced by the consistent, deliberative and prudent action of a phronimos (Arnold, 1997, p. 59).
In other words, whereas 'pragmatic sense' can enable wise action or be an
enabling factor, phronesis necessarily produces wise action. As indicated above,
the phronimos has a 'capacity' which is a capacity 'to act'. 'Pragmatic sense',
however, cannot always afford such an uncompromising teleological claim and its
'achievement' varies with the situation and the particular demands of the situation.
Phronesis, on the other hand, always requires an actual 'capacity to act' and its
action is a culmination or 'telos' of the practitioner's abilities (Hofmann, 2002, p.
137). When faced with the concrete requirements of any complex situation, the
phronimos retains all of the 'capacity', from the address through to the finished
action:

Practical wisdom (phronesis), according to Aristotle, differs from
theoretical wisdom (scientia) by an insistence on action. Practical wisdom
includes judgement, understanding, and insight, but must result in
appropriate action. (Halverson & Gomez, 2001, p. 2)

The voice of 'pragmatic sense' is considered important to the process of
'grounding' in the present work because it involves the conversation of wisdom
inquiry in a moment of reflection which resonates with the practical character of
'phronesis' without isolating the ordinary experience of practitioners. In other
words, 'pragmatic sense' can be harmonious with the kind of insight, deliberation
and practical orientation Aristotle associates with phronesis, but the practitioner is
not required to be a 'phronimos', 'be wise' or bring a 'phronetic voice' to the
conversation when reflecting on experience. This view towards the inclusion of the
practitioner's voice is considered to be consistent with the notions of 'process',
'conversation' and the 'human context' upheld previously in the exploration.
3.2.1 The ‘Practical’ Perspectives of ‘Pragmatic Sense’ and Phronesis

Although phronesis makes the greater claim on understanding past and present situations, pragmatic sense is also derived from the variety of situations which form the ‘experience’ of the practitioner (Elbaz, 1983, p. 110; Noel, 1999, p. 283). Its ‘insight’ can heighten awareness “that something happens when you pass from the abstract to the concrete, that complicates the situation” (James, 1975, p. 43), and can offer a certain kind of perspective on this ‘something’. This ‘insight’ is the kind of perspective which can be broadly associated with the expression or notion of ‘speaking from experience’.

The kind of perspective which the ‘pragmatic sense’ can contribute to the conversation can also be linked with a number of constructs which appear in the literature devoted to professional practice, philosophy, educational and psychological theory, teacher education, and practical theology. Examples here include: ‘practical professional knowledge’ (John, 2002), ‘personal practical knowledge’ (Butler, 1994; Elbaz, 1983), ‘practical reasoning’ (Dewey, 1979; Garrison, 1999; Miller, 1999; Pendlebury, 1993; Westberg, 1994), ‘practical rationality’ (Morgan, 1993) and ‘practical intelligence’ (Haig, 1990; Sternberg, 1986).

The ‘pragmatic grounds’ of exploration in wisdom inquiry can ultimately be the most challenging ones, particularly when inquiry takes into account the previously indicated emphases which theories and definitions of wisdom commonly place on “living a good life” (Kekes, 1995, p. 912). In this moral context, practicality is not wholly represented by the putatively ‘practical’ questions that practitioners can put to theorists (such as ‘Is this practicable?’ and ‘What difference will it make?’). Such practical or pragmatic questions, in other words, are not
necessarily separable from the existential challenge of ‘living a good life’ and what
has previously been referred to as the “practical ethic” (Schwab, 1969).

The terms “practical ethic” (Schwab, 1969; Stenhouse, 1983) and
“practicality ethic” (Doyle & Ponder, 1978; Hargreaves, 1994, p. 12) can be utilised
for substantive or reflexive purposes. In the substantive context, the terms refer to
reasoning which is directed towards the ethical consequences of actions (Adelman,
1989, p. 175). For example, Adelman makes mention of teachers deciding what
access to knowledge will be allowed to students in order to complete a task and
what criteria will be used to evaluate student performance. These substantive
matters are viewed as “ethical” because “work in these areas impinges on the lives
of others” (p. 175).

In the reflexive context, the focus is directed to the way we perceive ‘the
practical’, including the practicality which is perceived as ‘being practical’. With
regard to the professional practice literature, Aristotelian ‘phronesis’ remains an
important concept here in both contexts because it is viewed as offering a
framework for capturing the process of perceiving and understanding ‘the practical’
(Beckett, 1996; Dunne, 1993; Fenstermacher, 1986; Halverson & Gomez, 2001;
Noel, 1999). Phronesis, in other words, is proposed in the literature as a concept
which is useful for both actual teaching actions (the substantive context) and
reflection on teaching as a practice (the reflexive context).

In observing that discussions of ‘phronesis’ in the literature are apt to treat
it as the concept which “deals with human action in terms of practical situations”
(Noel, 1999, p. 274), an important reflexive question arises: What is the basis of
Aristotle’s own conception of phronesis? Notwithstanding the observation that
much is made in the literature of the contextualist nature of ‘phronesis’, Aristotle’s
discussion of the concept is couched within some very general assumptions of what it means to be ethical and what it means to be a human being. The reference to ‘contextualist nature’ here involves the characterisation of phronesis as a kind of knowing which is “flexible, adaptive, creative” (Halverson & Gomez, 2001, p. 2), requiring a “sensitivity to concrete instances” (Reed, 2003, p. 3).

Although Aristotle makes mention of the “indefiniteness or indeterminacy of the practical” (Nussbaum, 1991, p. 303), the ‘rational voice’ is a salient theme of his contribution to wisdom inquiry and philosophy: practical wisdom, for example, is defined as a capacity which is “reasoned”; and Aristotle’s view of the human being as ‘the rational animal’ is based on the notion that rationality is “the function of man [sic]” (Aristotle, Ethics, 1098a1-15). Moreover, according to Aristotle (Ethics, Book 1), “the good life” for human beings is the life of reason lived with “excellence” and this state of excellence is a “virtue” (arête) in itself (Ethics, 1098a5-20).

3.2.2 Pragmatic Sense and a Question of Balance in (Over-)Emphases on Reason

There is a question here of the emphasis to be placed on reasoning in pursuing the question of wisdom, and more specifically in referring the wisdom question to the more ‘grounded’ context of the practitioner’s experience. The proposal of ‘pragmatic sense’ is based on the notion that teachers are continually engaged in a process of interacting with specific situations and practicality in these situations can be variously described (for example, as a ‘rational’, ‘intuitive’, ‘perceptual’ matter) according to the particular and changing requirements of the circumstances. In this view, the study of pragmatic sense can require a description
tailored to the individual and his or her personal construction of practicality in these circumstances.

In more generic terms, 'pragmatic sense' is a category pertaining to the suggestion that practitioners develop a certain quality to their thinking or a certain ability within their general approach to practical affairs. This quality might be described as 'sensible', or even 'reasonable', without it necessarily always being well described as a capacity for 'reasoning'. In other words, 'pragmatic sense' pertains not only to the capacity for reasoning that can be associated with a professional practice but also to the abilities and processes whereby the practitioner's 'knowing' can be alternatively described. Examples of such 'alternative' descriptions include the understanding of certain 'knowing' abilities and processes as 'tacit' (Olson, 1992, p. 46), "artistic" (Schön, 1983, p. 49), "accumulated" (Schulman, 1986, p. 11), "integrated" (Goodson, 1992), instinctive or "organic" (Labouvie-Vief, 1990).

Hence, the reference to the 'pragmatic grounds' of the exploration includes a view towards the limiting aspects of insisting on "a capacity to act" which is necessarily "reasoned" at all times. Teaching, for instance, can require the "hot action" (Eraut, 1985, p. 128) of dealing with uncertain and ill-defined problems which often leave "no time at all to reflect ... the pressure for action is immediate, and to hesitate is to lose" (Eraut, 1985, p. 128). These 'limiting aspects' of emphasising reasoning can be similarly applied to Kekes' (1995) definition of wisdom where an "agent" is concerned to "act from the point of view" of a "reasonable conception of a good life" (p. 912).

If Keke's definition is understood to emphasise the rationality which forms and supports a 'point of view', it is necessary to observe that the definition
articulates a broad conception of ‘wisdom’, whereas ‘hot action’ is a relatively specific reference to ‘situated’ moments of classroom teaching. ‘Hot action’ can, however, be ‘reasonable’ and is not necessarily unrelated to a carefully reasoned point of view. Nevertheless, the reference to ‘hot action’ is made as an example of how ‘the practical’ (and the ‘pragmatic sense’ that might be associated with practicality in dealing with ‘hot’ matters of choice and action) can involve demands that are radically different from the demands of, or emphasis on, ‘reasoning’ that is associated with the formation of a ‘point of view’ and ‘the theoretic’ (Schwab, 1969).

In referring to different ‘demands’ here, the diversity of the contexts of practice is acknowledged. The extent to which reasoning is perceived to be involved in practice may depend on any number of complex factors, such as what situations or moments of practice are viewed as being causally related and how the accounting for “units” of practice is conceptually approached (Beckett, 1996, p. 147). For example, as indicated above, moments of ‘hot action’ are not necessarily moments of practice which are devoid of any rational cognition, but locating this reasoning can rely on “a better clarification of the episode of practice” (Beckett, 1996, p. 147). In short, the claim for emphasising reasoning may be more or less arguable in different contexts.18

Pragmatic sense, as a sought after voice in the conversation of wisdom inquiry, is but one aspect of the practitioner’s contribution, or one possibility in exploring the ‘grounded context’ of a practitioner’s experience. As with phronesis, pragmatic sense includes a willingness to make an allowance for the contingent

18 The attention to reasoning is being approached here as a matter of emphasis and recognising variation in contexts of practice. This approach is not essentially concerned with estimating the overall extent to which reasoning is actually involved (or not involved) in the active life of a practitioner.
conditions of practice. However, it is also proposed here that this is the allowance
which can include the ‘existential challenge’ of situations where the mode of
response given to present demands is not necessarily captured by the term
‘reasoned’. In this proposal, there is a ‘practical allowance’: a necessity to be
engaged or “throw” oneself into the “flux of practice” (Beckett, 1996, p. 135) and
“to swim with the change, observing what one can along the way” (Mitchell, 1998,
p. 307).

The professional practice literature argues that different conceptions of the
theory-practice relationship are deeply implicated in these matters of teaching. For
example, there is the assertion that one of the “familiar theory-practice tensions” of
beginning teachers is their over-reliance on the notion that “theory” can be “applied
to” practice (Carr, 1989, p. 14). Gilroy (1989) reports this tension as one of the
“disturbing features” of classroom life as it is experienced by beginning teachers (p.
109). The development of pragmatic sense can be thought of here as a
characteristic of the way such beginning teachers would make progress in
negotiating such tensions.

In following the direction of the present discussion, ‘grounding’ the
wisdom question ultimately requires an acknowledgement of the sense in which
there is no ‘phronesis-based theory’ when it comes to certain contingent conditions
of being “a practitioner who must decide ... what action will constitute ‘the Good’”
(Grundy, 1989, p. 95). Without this acknowledgement, the teleological concern of
Kekes’ (1995) “agent” to act from “the point of view” of a “conception of a good
life” could, in some respects, be self-defeating (p. 912). Haddock (2002) articulates
this aspect of the theory-practice relationship with regard for implications in the
moral context:
A preoccupation with moral justification in fact casts us off from one possible form of moral life, where conduct is grounded by unreflective attachments. We cannot accept a settled mode of life because we see moral conduct as the application of considered criteria in our pursuit of our conceptions of the good life or in our observance of conventions. In this scheme of things, the self-conscious formulation of abstract principles or ideals is a prerequisite for conduct... Even if we are confident that we can defend a particular stance in theoretical terms, we are still left with the problem of responding to infinitely variable circumstances. We end up in the lamentable position of knowing what to think but not what to do. (p. 22)

To some extent, the basis of this view towards the limits of applying theory to practice accords with what Nietzsche (1991) refers to as “the illogical necessity” (p. 28). Nietzsche asserts that “much good proceeds from the illogical” (p. 28). In Human, All-Too-Human, Nietzsche (1878/1991) reports the grounds of our everyday experience, including many of the most common or basic manifestations of our humanity (such as laughing, playing, dreaming and storytelling) as suggestions of the non-rational character of much of our existence. Nietzsche argues that “from time to time” we need to recover our “original illogical relationship with all things” (p. 28).

Rather than dismiss the value of logic and reasoning, the task projected by Nietzsche and others is one of re-conceptualisation. As Foucault (1984) asks: “What is this reason that we use? ... What are its limits, and what are its dangers? How can we exist as rational beings, fortunately committed to practising a rationality that is unfortunately criss-crossed by intrinsic dangers” (p. 19). These writers see that, in negotiating our practical lives, we are contingently situated and their different attempts to re-conceptualise reasoning are aimed at expanding the discussion of rationality or challenging it to address such observations. With
Nietzsche, rationality (in the form of self-reflection and critical analysis) is indeed important to the formation of authentic individuals (p. 157), but it is necessary for it to be grounded by the understanding that it is in “illogical relationship” that we can locate our desire to strive for logic (p. 28).

As important as it might be to expand the discussion of ‘reasoning’ beyond the limits of what is presupposed by Aristotle’s notion of the human being as ‘the rational animal’ (or moreover, beyond the limitations of Hellenism), it can also be necessary to observe how discussions of rationality can be determined by their purpose. Nietzsche’s comments, for example, are concerned with human life as a totality, but the ordinary or pre-philosophical conception of ‘reasoning’ that begins with the language of the classroom or the staffroom has its own currency (Vandenberg, 1990, p. 141). If Foucault’s question is contextualised as ‘What is this reasoning that teachers use?’, the response of teachers is more likely to be expressed as a pragmatic concern than a quest for wisdom.

The professional practice literature often upholds these ‘pragmatic grounds’ of the practitioner’s reflection. Cervero (1992), for example, writes: “Professionals reason toward the goal of wise action, rather than describe what it is” (p. 92). Although Cervero’s comment relies on the label ‘wise’ being separated from the things professionals do describe, it does nonetheless suggest the general sense in which the term ‘professional’ is marked by the practicality of practitioners’ reflection. It is this practicality which gives people a measure of confidence in a practitioner and his or her practice.

The literature also upholds a view of professional practice which includes the “complexity, uncertainty, instability, uniqueness and value conflicts” of practice (Schön, 1983, p. 14). Schön has been one of the mostly widely cited authors in the
professional practice literature over the past 20 years. His emphasis on the pragmatic grounds of practice is mainly concerned with conveying a sense of what it is like to be a 'reflective practitioner'. This view of the professional practitioner is not essentially concerned with "the image of solid professional competence" (Schön, 1983, p. 43) which accompanies professionals who "opt for the high ground" (p. 43) and "choose to confine themselves to a narrowly technical practice" (p. 43). Rather, it generally stresses a more palpable sense of practice and its 'situation-by-situation' demands:

There are those who choose the swampy lowlands. They deliberately involve themselves in messy but crucially important problems and, when asked to describe their methods of inquiry, they speak of experience, trial and error, intuition, and muddling through. (p. 43)

In this view, the grounds on which practice is conducted include elements often belied by the image of the competent practitioner as a 'professional': elements such as frustration, unwanted interruptions, uncertainties, lack of reflexivity, management problems and stress (Fullan, 1982; Hargreaves, 1994).

As far as 'the gap' contextualises the wisdom question in such concerns with practice, it does not require specifically instrumental questions of expediency, competency or expertise to predominate: as the pursuit of 'nexus' ventures towards an 'experiential world' of 'the human context' there is a sense in which the wisdom question draws exploration closer to a person than to technical analyses of situations. In other words, the dialogical engagement of a practitioner working 'in the field' does not gear the exploration into management theory and practice, but retains the hermeneutical grounds previously worked for pursuing wisdom as a question which can have a "character of its own" (Inglis, 1989, p. 44).
3.3 Another Perspective on Contextualising the Wisdom Question as a 'Grounded' or 'Concrete' Question: Heidegger's Notion of 'Facticity'

With regard to the Context of Profundity, Heidegger's 'voice' enters the conversation here to remind that it can be misleading to treat questions as 'texts' which are not in an actual world until we 'ground' them: questions emerge from, and reflect our being, and "facticity" is the term which designates "the character of the being of our own Dasein" (Heidegger, 1923/1999, p. 5).

An English translation of the German word 'Dasein' is 'being there' (Macquarrie & Robinson, 1973, p. 27) or 'there to-be' ('Da-sein'), and in the argument which follows we are indeed 'there' and 'there to-be' at all times of the process of inquiring after wisdom. The philosophical implications here are essentially a matter of the depth or profundity of the notion of 'grounding' and the meaning of 'a concrete case'.

In following Heidegger's line of thinking concerning 'facticity', there is no easy separation of 'the concrete' from 'the human'. We are instead, as inquirers, always involved in a relationship among ourselves as questioners, our questions and what we find questionable. This dynamic relationship necessarily occurs in some context of ontological significance: involvement with our surroundings, an area of activity or concern, an occurrence of an event, or some form of awareness or 'mode of engagement' constituting what we might refer to as our experiential world. In other words, with Heidegger we can find our questions already connected to the 'concrete' or 'practical' circumstances of human life. The connection is the way we are "already placed in relation" to things "before we can reflect upon them" (How, 1995, p. 9).
‘Dasein’ is Heidegger’s (1962) hermeneutic point of entry to this connection: "This entity which each of us is himself [sic] and which includes inquiring as one of the possibilities of its being, we shall denote by the term ‘Dasein’” (p. 27). It is also the term he uses to allow other questions to stand in the midst of that condition he designates as "being-in-the-world” (p. 27), and which in more common parlance might be referred to as our ‘humanity’ or ‘human-ness’.19

According to Heidegger, we constitute our inquiries and are constituted by our inquiries: “we are ‘thrown’ into the world as beings who understand and interpret” (Bernstein, 1996, p. 113). The locus of inquiry is not essentially governed by a ‘grounding’ technique but is rather derived from the “inherited meanings that compose the ‘hermeneutical situation’ in which present thinking stands” (Linge, 1977, p. xlviii). Heidegger’s *Being and Time* (1962) is the attempt to penetrate this level of ‘humanisation of’ our inquiries, and the emphasis on ‘Dasein’ develops the sense where “it is not we who grasp being but being that grasps us” (Linge, 1977, p. liii).

“Factual Dasein” is Heidegger’s (1923/1999) more specific expression for calling attention to that aspect of Dasein which “cannot be calculated and worked out in advance … but rather is in each case the definite and decisive possibility of concrete facticity” (p. 15). ‘Facticity’ here refers to what might otherwise be loosely referred to as ‘a given’, something definite and decisive, but nonetheless connected to the contingent conditions of ‘being-in-the-world’. As such, facticity is considered an important term for Heidegger’s “existential analytic” of human

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19 Heidegger’s avoidance of the more familiar concepts is a feature of his own ‘phenomenological’ approach where he is attempting “to recover the experience of being that lies concealed behind the dominant modes of Western thought” (Linge, 1977, p. xlvi). It is, in other words, an approach which seeks “the discovery of the primordial” (Pinar & Reynolds, 1992, p. 50).
experience “because it establishes a necessary grounding for all of our actions” (Solomon, 2000, p. 192).

The ‘facticity’ of our being is also described as Heidegger’s term for “that aspect of human existence that is defined by the situations in which we find ourselves” (Solomon, 2000, p. 192). Hence, it designates a ‘concrete’ aspect of being-in-the-world in the sense that it pertains to our life in a world which sets certain limits as well as certain possibilities before us. The notion of a ‘situation’ here can include a physical setting (such as where the teacher is ‘in a classroom’ or ‘in interview’) without any exclusion of those contextual characteristics that might generally be referred to as the ‘prevailing conditions’, ‘state of affairs’ or ‘circumstances’ (such as where the teacher is a beginning teacher and is meeting with a class for the first time, or the teacher is an experienced teacher and is in interview with a researcher).

For Heidegger, the entity (‘Dasein’) who asks, or responds to, the question ‘What is being?’ already has ‘a situation’, the situation of ‘being-in-the-world’ (Heidegger, 1962, p. 24). This situation is ‘concrete’ in the sense that “Dasein is constituted by the fact that it is in the world and belongs to it’ (Mansfield, 2000, p. 23). This concreteness is not Descartes’ separation of a ‘self’ from an external world, but is rather an embodiment: “Existence is never an ‘object’, but rather being – it is there only insofar as in each case a living [being] ‘is’ it” (Heidegger, 1923/1999, p. 15).

‘Facticity’ designates the specific context of this general fact: “More precisely, this expression ['facticity'] means: in each case this Dasein in its being there for a while at the particular time” (Heidegger, 1923/1999, p. 5). There is a definiteness (“this Dasein”) and particularity (“the particular time”) to observe here.
This definiteness and particularity inhere in what Heidegger refers to as the “how of our being” (p. 5). The expression ‘how of our being’ is a short form of reference to ‘facticity’, and aligns with Heidegger’s initial rendering of facticity as “the character of the being of our own Dasein” (p. 5).

There is also an idiosyncratic dimension to facticity in its signification of this definiteness and particularity: Dasein is “in each case our own” (p. 5). The specific context or concrete case of facticity is the “particular today of Dasein, its being today for a while” (p. 38). When Heidegger associates limitations (such as human mortality) and possibilities (such as authenticity) with the “temporal particularity” of facticity (p. 5), he is not referring to characteristics of human existence as generalities. He is rather concerned with the mode or “manner of being” of one’s “factual life” (p. 5).

The focus of Heidegger’s thinking here is directed towards what is concrete in the sense that “concreteness” is “the immediacy and fullness of what is uniquely individual, of what is an actual situation” (Thompson, 1997, p. 222; see also Whitehead, 1929/1957). Situations, however, are not permanent. Dasein is always “projecting” itself into the future and is always a “being-on-the-way” (p. 13) to another situation or “definite and concrete possibility of concrete facticity” (p. 15). Hence, when Heidegger discusses “the phenomenal sphere of facticity” he emphasises that it is time which makes facticity possible (p. 25). Temporality, in other words, is the condition of phenomenality.

It is the distinguishing feature of Dasein to be able to choose possible ways of being, and this includes being able to free itself from certain situations, but Dasein is also always “embodied in material, social and historical contexts” (Mautner, 2000, p. 242). Although Dasein is both the “projecting” being and the
“thrown” being, the “concrete wholeness” of Dasein is a unity (Murray, 1978, p. 90). Heidegger’s (1962) concern is “to interpret the primordial whole of factical Dasein” (p. 486), and he “starts with the concretion of factically thrown existence itself in order to unveil temporality as that which primordially makes such existence possible” (p. 486).

In upholding the ‘ontic’ or literal sense where the term ‘Dasein’ refers to our ‘being there’ (as he emphasises when using the hyphenated form ‘Da-sein’), Heidegger (1962) points out that our being opens up the grounds for asking questions, and asking questions can open up the grounds for our being:

Ontically, of course, Dasein is not only close to us – even that which is closest: We are it, each of us, we ourselves ... Inquiry itself is the behaviour of a questioner, and therefore an entity, and as such has its own character of being. (pp. 26, 36)

With respect to this unity, talk of ‘grounding questions’ can comprise a philosophical metonymy: the substitution of one aspect of a context or expression (‘grounding a question’) for the whole context (Dasein conducting inquiry). Although philosophical interpretation cannot recognise or understand the ‘whole context’ of Dasein, Heidegger’s (1923/1999) concern is with the tendency to deny or ignore it (pp. 45-50). Philosophical interpretation takes on a “universalising” direction in its attention to “the totality”, but its point of departure is necessarily a temporal moment “in the concrete” (pp. 46-47).

To engage the question ‘What is wisdom?’ is also to have ‘a situation’ of being in the world and ‘facticity’ is an applicable term for designating the fundamental ontological context in which wisdom inquiry as ‘conversation’ takes place. The reference to ‘conversation’ here includes the conversation of the thesis.
as a whole (as an instance of philosophical exploration), and the conversation of each interview with the practitioner (as an instance of ‘actual discussion’).

Wisdom inquiry, in the view adopted here, ultimately requires the notions of ‘grounding’ and ‘concrete’ to remain open to questions pertaining to the “fullness ... of what is an actual situation” (Thompson, 1997, p. 222; see also Whitehead, 1929/1957). In the present work, this involves an encounter with ‘factual dasein’ in two ways. Firstly, the exploration is essentially concerned with the wisdom question as a practical matter of ‘being wise’ or ‘acting wisely’. Secondly, the exploration ventures this concern ‘into the field’ to bring a practitioner’s voice to the conversation. In this way, the question of ‘being wise’ or ‘how to be’ is enjoined to the “concrete facticity” which Heidegger refers to (above) as the “how of being” (pp. 5, 15).

Although the use of Heideggerian terms can allow scope for a play on words, the reference to ‘how of being’ (“facticity”) here carries important conceptual, methodological and ethical implications (Heidegger, 1923/1999). The question of ‘how to be’ in a situation is essentially a question of practicality, subsuming such practical matters of conduct as ‘what to do’ and ‘how to go about it’. The question of the ‘how of being’ pertains to the fuller view of what it means to be in a ‘situation’, what it means to be indissolubly linked to the world, a Dasein with a “manner of being” (p. 5) which is “in each case our own” (p. 11). For Heidegger, this ‘manner of being’ includes the possibility of inquiring not only after a prescription of ‘how to be’ but also after the very basis of what determines the question of ‘how to be’.

Heidegger’s (1923/1999) voice in the conversation concerning what is ‘concrete’ retains that reflexive dimension of the wisdom question which keeps the
question 'open' to the origins of its own questioning. For example, the emphasis of facticity on immediacy, where factical dasein is "in each case our own present" (p. 24), preserves the on-goingness of the wisdom conversation in its connection to a world where situations change. In this connection, 'being wise' or 'acting wisely' is generally not a theoretical problem of defining the term 'wisdom'. It is rather a 'question of being' in the sense that it requires a person to 'be wise' or 'act wisely'.

In Heideggarian language, the question remains 'open' because factical Dasein lives finitely in "temporal particularity" (Heidegger, 1923/1999, p. 5), always being-in-the-world in concrete situations "for a while" (p. 38), but never as something which by definition can be captured in advance:

... as what Dasein happens to encounter itself ... is in each case the definite and decisive possibility of concrete facticity. The more we succeed in bringing facticity hermeneutically into our grasp and into concepts, the more transparent this possibility becomes. At 'the same time', however, it is of itself something which uses itself up. As Dasein's historical possibility which is in each case definite and for a while at the particular time, existence has as such already been ruined when one works with the idea that it can be made present in advance for philosophical curiosity to get a picture of it. (1923/1999, p. 15)

3.3.1 Theoretical and Practical Implications of Heidegger's 'Profound Voice'

Although Heidegger's own use of language has been the subject of considerable criticism (Carnap, 1932; Ryle, 1978), there is a purpose to observe in the resistance of his "fundamental ontology" to the notion that our concepts and traditional philosophical categories can "get a picture" of "concrete facticity" or "what Dasein happens to encounter" (1923/1999, p. 15). The purpose is to be receptive to a deeper understanding of being and its 'concrete' basis in facticity. Heidegger's concern is that the meaning of 'facticity' gets cut to the measure of the
historical development of categorial forms and the philosophical assumptions underpinning these categories, thereby obstructing the view towards the "beings-which-are-there" (p. 21).

Heidegger's claim is that we cannot avoid the need for a deeper understanding of what lies beyond our notions. As with Gadamer's hermeneutic principle of 'the priority of the question', Heidegger proposes that this 'deeper understanding' is facilitated by a careful posing of questions and a thoughtful responsiveness to renewed questioning. This may not be the only way to achieve 'deeper understanding', but Heidegger wants to suggest what can be necessary in order to confront any trivialisation of the word 'is'. Moreover, the 'necessity' here can also be a matter of challenging unquestioned ways of doing things. Both Heidegger (1962) and Gadamer (1991) refer to the process of challenging taken-for-granted ideas and actions as the development of "authenticity".

Heidegger does not explicitly explore the question 'What is wisdom?' (or 'Was ist weisheit?'), but this view towards authenticity as a 'mode of being' accords with the thematisation of wisdom as a process involving profundity and practicality. From a Heideggarian perspective, the essential task of authenticity is to "think things through in terms of their meaning for our own unique existence ... and test the validity of its assumptions in truly personal terms" (Bonnett, 2001, p. 25). As a process, there is a sense here in which authenticity also becomes 'education':

Heidegger saw learning as a highly demanding and participatory affair ... learners submit themselves to the demands and rigour of thinking – to listen to what calls to be thought from out of the unique learning situation in which they are involved [emphasis in original]. (Bonnett, 2001, p. 24)
Rather than saddle the thesis with Heidegger’s terminology, the exploration approaches his thinking as a ‘voice’ which emphasises the connection of thinking to the world of lived experience. From this perspective, the notion of ‘grounding the wisdom question’ is an on-going concern to preserve the dynamism of the relationship between thought, language and the world. It involves an awareness that the term ‘wisdom’ can, in some contexts of usage, actually preclude the sort of understanding (‘verstehen’) which Heidegger associates with the “disclosure” or “unconcealment” of human lifeworlds (Van Manen, 1977, p. 215).

Notwithstanding certain differences in thought and method, Heidegger’s general emphasis here (on this awareness of “the dynamism of the relationship between thought, language and the world”) can be supported by a number of other philosophers. Wittgenstein, for example, emphasises both the infinite uses of language in thinking and dealing with the world, and the extent to which we are nevertheless limited (or “betwitched” as he puts it) by the nature of “factual language” (1967, para. 25). We necessarily engage language for practical purposes in the processes of thinking and communicating which he refers to as “language games”, and yet we “run up against the limits of language” whenever we think deeply about “the astonishment that anything exists” (Wittgenstein, 1967, par.7; see also Murray, 1978, p. 80). In sum, he emphasises the matters of profundity and practicality inherent in the dynamism of the thought-language-world relationship itself.

Another example of a philosopher who presents a very dynamic view of the thought-language-world relationship is Nietzsche (1878/1991):

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26 The view towards this ‘dynamism’ can be supported from a plentitude of sources. For reasons of economy, the few examples posted here focus on particular aspects of this dynamism, rather than a detailed elaboration of the complexities involved. The essential point or purpose is to take care with the use of the term ‘wisdom’ and the sense in which it can collapse into a complete abstraction.
... all our doing and knowing is not a succession of facts ... but a continuous flux ... Through words and concepts we are still continually misled into imagining things as being simpler than they are, separate from one another, indivisible, each existing in and for itself. A philosophical mythology lies concealed in language which breaks out again every moment, however, however careful one may be otherwise. (p. 306)

In the context of the present inquiry as a pursuit of 'nexus', Nietzsche allows a heightened awareness of how the term 'wisdom' can operate as a conceptual shorthand for various aspects of our experience which otherwise can elude adequate description. We are, in other words, not necessarily 'capturing experiences' or what we find to be 'concrete' simply because we find a term (such as 'wisdom') to be applicable and appropriate it for our purposes.

In noting that Aristotle turns the wisdom question to questions of "wonder and being" rather than "simply facts or things to be known", Schaeffer (1999) also reflects on the interpretive and evaluative underpinnings of the thought-language-world relationship:

Is what is called wisdom actually wisdom? The answer to the question is more complex than a simple yes or no. The problem is not that we call the wrong thing wisdom; the problem is that when we call something wisdom, we separate wisdom in speech, providing a separate label, which gives the false impression of 'knowing' wisdom. The best antidote to this pitfall is to preserve the dynamic quality of wisdom, the coming into being of wisdom. (p. 649)

It is necessary to recognise that consulting the philosophical literature, and Heidegger in particular, generally invites a more profound consideration of the relevant notions here (such as 'grounding' and 'concrete'). The recognition is essentially one of "contextualised humanity" (Pinar & Reynolds, 1992, p. 51) in the sense that it explicitly treats the wisdom question as a question which is
circumscribed by our humanity. There is, in other words, a consciously held assumption in Chapters 3 and 4 of the thesis that our humanity is as much 'the concrete case' as any description of a specific situation which might be articulated for the sake of 'grounding' the wisdom question.

In the sections which follow, other 'voices' or other ways of speaking about the wisdom question are brought to the conversation. Included in these other ways of speaking are the more 'ordinary language' descriptions of matters relevant to the wisdom question. There is, for example, the contextualisation of the wisdom question in the terms of Stenhouse's (1979) attention to the field of education and what he refers to as the “central problem” of “the gap between aspiration and practice” (p. 3). There is also the language of the actual discussion with the practitioner in the interviews. Rather than jettison the philosophers’ thoughts at these points, the exploration adapts its own language to the particular context of language usage.

3.4 The Wisdom Question as Embodied in ‘the Practical’

In terms of the ‘pursuit of nexus’, Chapters Three and Four of the thesis attend to the profundity and practicality of the wisdom question as it is embodied in what has previously been referred to as ‘the practical’. ‘The practical’ has previously been described as those matters of ‘choice and action’ by which a human being negotiates the progress of his or her life (Schwab, 1969). These matters of ‘choice and action’ are not worked out in a vacuum but emerge in the course of experience and are shaped by the social and historical context of that experience (Dewey, 1968).
'The Practical', in other words, involves much more than the procedures of deciding 'what to do' and enacting it. As a matter of choice and action, 'the practical' pertains to the dynamic interaction or dialectical interchange between the practitioner (or 'person') and practice situations (Usher & Bryant, 1987, p. 206). In this sense, 'the practical' is not only a matter of practicality in negotiating these situations but also a profound matter of 'being human'. One way of elucidating how such situations are always 'human' has previously been indicated with reference to the Heideggerian terms of 'Dasein' and 'concrete facticity'.

As a moment of choice and action, the situation of dealing with 'the practical' is also a moment of perception. As complex as the decision-making process can be, there is a fundamental sense whereby dealing with a situation, as a matter of practicality, involves addressing the situation as it is perceived at the time. From Heidegger's ontological perspective, however, this 'addressing' is as much an involvement in the situation as it is a concern directed at the situation. In other words, when it comes to actual situations, there is no separation between "matters of choice and action" (Schwab, 1969, p. 2) and "a person's perception [which] puts them in a position to make decisions and choices which are right for them" (Langford, 1989, p. 30).

3.4.1 Usage of the Term 'Perception'

In the present work, 'perception' refers to an understanding, perspective or way of viewing which might be described in ordinary language terms as 'the situation as we find it' or 'the situation we find ourselves in'. Hence, the usage of the term 'perception' here can extend beyond the empirical or physiological connotations associated with information processing models. Whereas the latter are
generally limited to a close alignment with sense perception, the ordinary language
uses of the terms ‘perceive’ and ‘perception’ are often more flexible, taking in both
possibilities for intuitive awareness (as in ‘perceiving this to be the case’) and
possibilities for revisionary thought (as in a ‘change in perception’).

In some contexts of usage, the term ‘perception’ effects a judgement of
value (in respect to the epistemological and ontological status of what a person
claims to ‘perceive’) which remains unacknowledged. As a philosophical term,
‘perception’ is often limited to spatiotemporal and ‘factual’ frames of reference,
such as where it is defined as “the extraction and use of information about one’s
environment” (Dretske, 1995, p. 652). The broadest philosophical and
psychological usages of the term require the person’s ability to be discerning and
insightful in his or her judgements (Nussbaum, 1991). In such deployments,
‘perception’ is a word used to presuppose or confirm epistemological and
ontological positions: ‘information’ is extracted by perception, facts are ‘perceived’
and insightfulness is the perception which ‘sees’.

The attention to the term ‘perception’ here, and the implied or assumed
judgments of using it, are made necessary by the way the exploration of the wisdom
question can logically require judgments to be opened up for discussion. As
previously indicated, the term ‘wisdom’ itself refers to judgement and decision par
excellence, and particular emphasis has been placed on the reflexive challenge that
exploration of the wisdom question can present to the epistemological and
ontological commitments of disciplined inquiry. Hence, the care with the term
‘perception’ is perforce dependent on approaching the wisdom question as a
question requiring a particular care with judgements. Because judgements, as
guides or directions for behaviour (Rachlin, 1989, p. 44), are bound up with matters
of choice and action ('the practical'), the 'care' is a care with the way these matters are often referred to as 'perceived'.

Definitions of 'wise' also commonly point towards some significant role for judgment and perception in matters of choice and action. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary* (1989), for example, being "wise" requires "sound judgement" and an "ability to perceive" which is oriented towards practicality:

**wise:** Having or exercising sound judgement or discernment; capable of judging truly concerning what is right or fitting, and disposed to act accordingly; having the ability to perceive and adopt the best means for accomplishing an end; characterised by good sense and prudence. (*The Oxford English Dictionary*, 1989, p. 423)

It can also be noted here that the definition implies that both judgment and perception are a part of the process (of being wise) rather than the complete process (Rachlin, 1989, p. 44).

The present work acknowledges that the meaning of the term 'perception' is determined by context and purpose of usage. The above definition, for example, supports a notion of perception which relies on an object-oriented and achievement-oriented context: perception is an "ability to perceive" something ("the best means") for the purpose of achieving something ("accomplishing an end"). The present work reserves the term 'perceptiveness' for this exclusive association with 'ability' or 'insight', and generally uses the term 'perception' within a context which retains possibilities for questioning or challenging claims to have 'perceived'.

In this latter context, the term 'perception' can be used to refer to situations and conceptions of things where there is a person or 'subjective context' in mind. Whereas the 'ability' of the former context implies a certain or infallible
claim to some insight (for example, into the means which is “the best means”), the focus on ‘the person’ in the latter context allows perception to be framed as either an enabling or a limiting factor in dealing with ‘the practical’. In other words, perception in this latter context of usage can be approached as either a positive or a negative influence in dealing with practical matters. The point of retaining possibilities for ‘questioning and challenging’ perceptions is a matter of supporting the critical awareness which allows for another possibility in the conversation of wisdom inquiry, namely, the possibility of revising perceptions.

This latter context of usage of the term does not fall outside the range of conventional applications, including those where the purpose of using the term is to discuss matters of choice and action (or more broadly, matters of human potentiality). The following example is derived from the self-efficacy literature: “Looking at a problem or situation from a different perspective can so alter one’s perception of it that the apparently impossible problem becomes readily solvable or even no longer a problem at all” (Nadler & Hibino, 1995, p. 261).

In this example, perception is not essentially a matter of ‘what’: what is attended to, or what a person knows. Perception is instead primarily a matter of ‘how’: how things are attended to, the individual’s mode of understanding, the willingness or unwillingness to be flexible. The person can become salient in the discussion when perception is “one’s perception” (p. 261) but this does not necessarily detract from the possibility of perception being ‘insightful’ (perceiving well).

Perception, however, is not exclusively associated with insightfulness here: when it comes to the situations, problems and challenges of human existence, a person is always perceiving but not necessarily perceiving well. The ‘perception’
which does include the ability to be insightful, and is oriented towards achieving a sense of resolution regarding "the apparently impossible problem", is the perception which is seeing (or "looking") differently, reflexively shifting its standpoint (or "perspective") for perceiving (Nadler & Hibino, 1995, p. 261).

Rather than subordinating the term 'perception' to the status of terms associated with being wise (such as 'insight', 'sound judgement', 'good sense'), this approach can be directed at opening up the 'meaning-space' of the achievement-oriented context, allowing a more profound and rigorous consideration of claims concerning 'the best means for accomplishing an end' (or claims concerning the Context of Practicality). If there is to be an emphasis on 'ability' or 'achievement' in this approach to using the term 'perception', it is the ability to "alter" perception so that the "apparently impossible" can become "solvable" or "no longer a problem at all" (Nadler & Hibino, 1995, p. 261). Perception, in this approach to using the term, remains nonetheless a necessary and vital part of the process of dealing with 'the practical'.

This approach accords with (without necessarily being beholden to) several strands or 'schools' of thought in philosophy and psychology. For example, Humanistic (Maslow, 1968; Rogers, 1980) and Gestalt psychology (Perls, 1973), the self-efficacy theorists (Bandura, 1982; Covey, 1989) and the philosophical or psychological literature which leans towards an existential-analytic position (Bugental, 1981; Heidegger, 1962) have emphasised how the way we become aware of situations can be intimately linked with the larger context of questions associated with the realisation of human potentialities. There are differences in emphases and the theoretical tenets adopted by the various writers in these different fields: constructivism, for example, would direct attention to the mind, whilst social
constructionism would stress the effects of social interaction. However, the common thread is that the concept of ‘perception’ is approached with the person’s mode of being posited as the primary consideration.

The professional practice literature has also drawn from the philosophical and psychological literature using this approach in order to explain how teaching and learning can be positively or negatively influenced by perception. For example, explanations of the “Ladder of Inference” by Argyris (1982), Schôn (1983), and Butler (1996) refer to the psychological notion of a “perception filter” where perception is filtered through beliefs and values. The quality of teaching and learning is accordingly limited or enhanced by the way perception acts as “a filter between the reflective practitioner (Schôn, 1983) and the performance” (Butler, 1996, p. 275). Professional development is generally viewed by these writers in terms of broadening the focus beyond accumulating technical knowledge to reflecting on the assumptions, values and artistry of teaching.

As a person’s perception, the term ‘perception’ also carries with it the implication of our uniqueness as human beings and the uniqueness of the individual as the “persipient person” (Klein, 1970, p. 88). In the moment of perception, the relationship of the person to the actual situation is a unique relationship (as first explicated by Kant). From a process perspective, however, the ‘moment’ or relationship is a ‘becoming’: perception here is essentially an “energy event” (Pittenger, 1976, p. 5) in the organisation of the relationship, and “this ordering must be adjusted or simply confirmed from moment to moment” (Bloechl, 1998, p. 1).
3.4.2 Practicality as a 'Moment of Perception' 

The term 'practicality' itself is used as an expression of a person's "perception of potential consequences" or "sense of practical merit" in relation to 'what works' or 'doesn't work' (Doyle & Ponder, 1978, p. 6). Although the literature cited in the previous section would suggest that these perceptions determine decisions and choices, and that such perceptions can be 'outcome-determinative' in that causal sense, the question of wisdom is nevertheless not necessarily reducible to the functions of perception.

Practitioners, for example, can shift perspective and change perceptions of the purpose of their practices over time (Langford, 1989, p. 31). In this 'professional wisdom' context, practicality is not only about perceiving the functional and strategic means of handling a particular situation but is also a matter of "illuminating the choices, contingencies and options open to the individual" (Goodson, 1992, pp. 115-119).

As a 'wisdom context' or wisdom inquiry, examples of questions a researcher or professional practitioner can ask about 'practicality' here include:

- What elicits the perception of practicality? (Doyle & Ponder, 1978, p. 6)
- How am I learning what my ends and purposes are? (MacIntyre, 1982)
- What story do I find myself a part of? (MacIntyre, 1982, p. 206)
- How do I become aware of the way roles or problems in practice are framed? (Schön, 1983, p. 309)
- What formations of praxis (or interaction between principles and patterns of behaviour) are perceived as the ultimate guardians of my professional responsibilities? (Butler, 1994, p. 1; Covey, 1989, p. 48; Ramsden, 1992).
The assumption here is that wisdom or being wise is not a matter of ‘fluking it’, but a more complex, demanding and profound concern with matters of choice and action (‘the practical’). To follow the first of the above examples: in their empirical studies of wisdom, psychologists Baltes and Staudinger (2000) refer to these shifts in perspective and elicitations of new perceptions as “antecedent factors and mediating processes for the acquisition of wisdom-related knowledge and skills across the life span” (p. 125). Although psychological studies of wisdom emphasise different aspects of human interaction with matters of choice and action (according to psychological categories such as ‘cognition’, ‘affect’, and ‘volition’), psychological research commonly renders the wisdom construct in some relation to the multi-dimensionality of the human being (Kunzmann & Baltes, 2003; Orwell & Perlmutter, 1990; Pascual-Leone, 1990).

Birren and Fisher (1990, p. 321), reporting on psychological studies of wisdom, suggest that wisdom is generally viewed as “a blending of cognitive, affective and conative elements” (p. 321) or intellectual, emotional and volitional elements. In their own definition, “wisdom is a balance between the opposing valences of intense emotion and detachment, action and inaction, and knowledge and doubts” (p. 326). This balance or integration of elements is a practical matter in the sense that it develops “with experience” and “in response to life’s tasks and problems” (p. 326). The idea that wisdom pertains to broader qualities of a human being than the individual’s intellectual resources is not uncommon in philosophical discussions of wisdom. Dewey, for example, “saw practical wisdom as involving passion, imagination, and the emergent creation of sustaining values” (Garrison, 1999, p. 324).
The assumption here that wisdom and ‘the practical’ pertains to the “whole person” may be particularly significant in the context of teaching where the “practice situation” can “make extensive calls upon the personality, experience, preferences, talents, skills, ideas, attitudes, values and beliefs of each individual” (Nias, 1989, pp. 25-26). Teaching, for example, has been characterised as complex and intense (Connell, 1985, p. 70), a moral enterprise (Olson 1992, p. 9), emancipation with the oppressed (Freire, 1982, p. 25), ethical caring (Noddings, 1992), a creative encounter (Rogers, 1983), the provision of effective self-direction (Dewey, 1990) and the enabling of “deeper, subtler and wiser visions of the world” (Murdoch, 1992, p. 330). In short, teaching involves “a complex amalgam of interrelated kinds of achievement” (McLaughlin, 1999, p. 10).

In arguing for more sustained attention to ‘phronesis’ as a unifying ideal for teaching and teacher training, McLaughlin (1999) provides the following list of qualities for the purpose of indicating what is meant by the teacher bringing his or her “whole being” as a person in relation to students: humility, courage, impartiality, open-mindedness, empathy, enthusiasm, judgement, imagination, patience, self-knowledge, warmth and humour (p. 21). McLaughlin (1999) does not present the list as exhaustive, but rather as indicative of “the broader aspects of personhood” (p. 21), and indicative of what can be considered in discussions of “the sorts of qualities needed by teachers in the task of teaching as a whole” (p. 21).

The case here for a more holistic view of ‘the practical’ and practitioners’ perceptions of practicality can also implicate practitioners’ perceptions of their own lives. Heidegger can be recalled here for suggesting an ontological basis for this claim. For Heidegger (1962), a perception of practicality is made possible by a more fundamental orientation which he describes as a form of self-understanding:
Dasein understands itself in terms of "the world" and "the way the world is understood is ... reflected back ontologically on the way in which Dasein itself gets interpreted" (pp. 36-37). In other words, a person's perceptions of situations are integral with some understanding of being a person.

As previously outlined, the exploration of the wisdom question approaches 'understanding' with a process orientation. Since the process perspective considers "all things ... as occurring in a mutual co-conditioning" (Oliver, 1998, p. 225), the 'perception' of practicality involves both possibilities and limits. The possibilities essentially refer to our capacity to create our own experience of 'the practical' and the limits refer to the sense in which this capacity is circumscribed by the 'givens' (or 'concrete facticity') of any particular situation.

Whereas previous sections have contextualised the wisdom question in broad terms as a profound and practical question, the present section has anticipated the importance of recognising that the gathering of perspectives and the construction of meaning involves perceptions. Hence, the brief synthesis of ideas concerning perceptions of 'the practical' has indicated relevant general theoretical-philosophical aspects of approaching the field of teaching for the purposes of exploring matters of choice and action.

The following section begins to explore these aspects in a more specific context leading to a study of a teacher's aspirations and experiences. As the more specific context is entered, the general ideas outlined thus far concerning 'the practical' are germane to the direction of the exploration and to the notion of practicality as a profound dimension of the wisdom question.

Hence, in approaching the field of education, practicality is considered to be profoundly 'praxeological' in the sense that it is determined by factors of
understanding and factors of practical concern, functioning as an interpenetration: the teacher's 'praxis'. 'Factors of understanding' here include interpretive conditions (for example, teachers' perceptions of their own situations) and factors of practical concern include practical commitments (for example, teachers' beliefs, values and ideas of how to 'handle' situations).

In deference to such complexities of wisdom inquiry, the direction of the thesis here continues to resist a one-dimensional view of 'the practical': the meaning of the term 'practical' is not limited to the sense in which it contrasts the focus of 'the theoretic' on matters of knowledge (Schwab, 1969). Rather than a dualism to uphold, there is a shift in focus or emphasis to acknowledge in the movement towards 'nexus' in present direction of the exploration. In associating 'the theoretic' with 'matters of knowledge' and the practical with 'matters of choice and action', it is necessary to stress that there are many contexts where philosophical distinctions often refer to what is distinguishable rather than what is separable (Reid, 1968, p. 82). The attention given to a person working in the field of education provides the study with the possibility of exploring practitioner-derived knowledge as it is embedded in matters of choice and action.

The educational context is entered with the intention of including a voice 'from the field' in the philosophic and transdisciplinary conversation of the thesis. For this purpose, the particular practical-philosophy paradigm of the present work incorporates a case study approach which is designed to illuminate aspects of the understanding and practice of one experienced teacher (or 'experienced interpreter') in relation to the matters explored by the thesis.
3.5 The Setting of the Problem

3.5.1 Stenhouse's Articulation as a 'Reference Point'

The setting of the problem in the field of education follows the articulation of Lawrence Stenhouse. For Stenhouse (1979), “the gap” was perceived as a perennial problem of education and seemingly ubiquitous in the lives of classroom teachers (p. 3). His theory of teacher development or idea of “teachers as researchers” was essentially motivated by his own aspiration to contribute a practical way of viewing the problem (p. 3). The way forward, in his view, was to be achieved through teachers’ systematic study of their own classrooms and deliberative reflection on practice (Carr, 1989, p. 149). In order to follow the present pathway of exploration, however, it is not necessary to focus primarily on Stenhouse’s perceptions and ideas. It is, rather, his articulation which sets a key point of reference for the ‘conversation’ of the exploration.

3.5.2 Stenhouse's Statement of the Problem

The focus or reference point for setting the problem is derived from the following statement:

I believe that our educational realities seldom conform to our educational intentions ... The central problem of curriculum study is the gap between our ideas and aspirations and our attempts to operationalise them ... So many seem elated by the discussion of educational ideas: so few are encouraged by close scrutiny of their own classrooms. The gap between aspiration and practice is a real and frustrating one. (Stenhouse, 1979, p. 3)
3.5.3 Aspiration and the Notion of ‘the Gap’

The prefacing of the above statement has suggested that it is not necessary to accept Stenhouse’s perceptions or ideas in order to find his articulation useful within the model of ‘conversation’ adopted by the thesis. The most significant and pressing questions of education can be articulated in different ways, and different kinds of sense can be made of Stenhouse’s own reference to ‘the gap’ as ‘the central problem’. ‘The gap’, for example, can be discussed in terms of how to improve the quality of teaching or it can be approached as a concern for educational theory and its relationship to practice (Carr, 1989).

In following the model of conversation, the articulation of a complex problem can vary and the purpose of a problem-setting statement is not necessarily a matter of achieving ‘definitive-ness’. It is, rather, primarily a matter of the dynamics of a useful conversation. As disciplined inquiry, ‘useful conversation’ can require points of reference. These points of reference are retained as long as they are useful to the exploratory nature of the conversation and its purposes.

In approaching the gap, the purpose of the conversation involves not only a more specific contextualisation of the wisdom question in relation to ‘the practical’, but also a fuller engagement of the wisdom question as a question which can require the inclusion of “practical studies” (Smythe, 1987, pp35-44). “Practical studies” is referred to here in the ‘fieldwork’ sense of familiarisation with actual situations, people and their concerns (with the latter being particularly relevant to the notion of ‘the gap’). For the present study, the problem-setting statement is, in a sense, the translation of the wisdom question into a wisdom-related problem or context. In other words, the philosophical or ‘reflexive text’ of the wisdom
question is brought into an interaction with the concrete or ‘substantive text’ of practice and its concerns for acting wisely.

This ‘translation’ or grounding of the question in a practical concern does not jettison the theoretical-philosophical interest of the exploration. Philosophy, and the model of conversation in particular, can share the purposes or goals of “exploratory research” such as the generation of ideas, the development of tentative theories, the formulation of questions for further inquiry and the development of a sense of direction for future research (Neuman, 1994, p. 19). For the Practical-Philosophy Paradigm, however, the generation of these dynamics requires attending not only to the ideas of theorists but also to the voice of practitioners.

The ‘voice of practitioners’ can be particularly significant not only to the notion of ‘the gap’ as an experiential concern, but also to the notion of ‘aspiration’. There is a scarcity of literature which attends to teacher aspiration in a direct or explicit fashion, and the topic has largely been overpassed by the interest in related concerns (such as goals, motivation, intentionality, needs, and attitude). As a teaching concern, aspiration may also have been overpassed by a putative view that it is an individual, personal matter rather than a question worthy of more collective consideration.21 The present work nevertheless considers it necessary to acknowledge the sense in which the word ‘aspiration’, by ordinary definition or common understanding, connotes a distinctively individual and personal concern. Attending to a ‘practitioner’s voice’ is viewed here as a way of giving substance to this consideration.

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21 This proposition is included in the researcher’s study of teacher aspiration in a previous philosophical thesis (Arnold, 1997), and is also derived from a consideration of the developmental progress of fields of inquiry: ‘developmental’ here refers to what is, or is not, occurring at certain stages, such as the early stage where ideas are being formulated and paradigms are being set (Kuhn, 1970; Sternberg, 1990). Otto’s (1986) study of ‘teacher stress’, at a time when the topic was largely ignored, informed the consideration here of how the neglect of a topic can be related to what teachers have counted as ‘personal’ and ‘individual’.
Hence, the interviews with a teacher are approached with a certain dictionary rendering of aspiration in mind, but it is the teacher’s articulation that is relied on for bringing into view the hermeneutical dimension of what it means for an educator ‘to aspire’. The ‘ordinary definition’ meaning is derived from the Concise Oxford Dictionary (1990) where ‘aspiration’ is rendered as an “earnest desire” (p. 68), and the substantive references to aspiration are reported as the teacher’s ‘perceived aspiration’. It is the teacher’s ‘perceived aspiration’ and perceptions of ‘the gap’ which the conversation seeks to clarify. Whereas the overall conversation of the thesis is concerned with thematic reflection on the wisdom question, the interviews are initially concerned with the practitioner’s articulation of the ‘aspirational horizon’: the standpoint from which the gap is viewed and from which an educator’s approach can be viewed as a matter of choice and action.

In drawing attention to the teacher’s perceptions, the purpose remains one of making ‘the gap’ a reference point rather than a central theme of the work carried on by the interview discussions and conversation of the thesis. The purpose is not one where the gap’ is approached as an issue to be adequately addressed or ‘resolved’ by the philosophical perspectives that find a place in the conversation. However, a disclosure of the perceptions and viewpoints which guide the teacher’s practice is required. In setting out to disclose the teacher’s approach to ‘the gap’, the overall conversation of the thesis does aim to illuminate some of the ways in which an aspiration can be vitally connected with, or embedded in, the practical concerns of a human life.

Although the psychological literature has defined ‘aspiration’ within the context of its own purposes in studying certain behaviours (Brady, 1983, p. 44), the exploratory-philosophical approach of the present work is essentially concerned with
the generation of useful 'conversation'. Here, as implied above, 'aspiration' is understood in the hermeneutical phenomenological sense of a "thing" to be reflectively grasped for its "special significance" to, and in, the life of a person (Van Manen, 1990, p. 32). An aspiration is something that is intimately linked with the life of a human being, as indicated both by the etymology which explains much of its alternative rendering as 'breathing', and by the 'ordinary language' sense in which the usage of the term 'aspiration' connotes the intended direction of a person's hopes and energies.

The problem Stenhouse refers to is conveyed in relatively ordinary language and suggests a palpable sense of the challenges taken up by teachers in their everyday work. "The gap" is reported as "real and frustrating", a problem of "practice" (p. 3) and not at all remote from the immediate concerns of classroom teachers. It is also represented as a problem which can be manifest at the more reflective level of teachers' "scrutiny of their own classrooms" (p. 3).

The sense of immediacy or difficulty conveyed by Stenhouse's statement is not directed to a specific situation but rather to the practical nature of teachers' work. Although the exploration does invite a teacher to reflect on the 'situated sense' of questions (that is, as pertaining to 'the field' or workplace), it also recognises the sense in which "the situations of practice are not problems to be solved but problematic situations characterised by uncertainty, disorder and indeterminancy" (Schön, 1983, pp. 15-16).

Accordingly, the notion of 'the gap' as a 'problem' here can require a certain approach towards understanding these particular problematical situations: namely, an approach which places these particular situations within the broader context of teachers' professional practice (Tripp, 1993, p. 3). In this approach, the
practice referred to as ‘teaching’ is assumed to be too complex and varied to speak of ‘the gap’ as a problem to be resolved only by focussing on techniques for relieving the immediate pressures and demands of classroom situations. The narrow practicality of viewing the problem as entirely a matter of pinpointing such techniques requires a different view of ‘teaching’ from what is adopted here.

3.5.4 The Notion of ‘the Gap’ in the Context of ‘Practice’

In referring here to teaching as a ‘practice’, the term ‘practice’ is used in the general context which applies to the activity of teachers. This ‘ordinary language’ usage of the term does not make it necessary for the conception of ‘practice’ to be caught in a dualism where teaching is viewed as some kind of phenomenon to be kept separate from the ‘theory’ of its informing ideas and principles. It is, however, a usage which requires the ordinary recognition that “teaching ... is after all something one does” (Squires, 2003, p. 2). As previously indicated, ‘theory’ and ‘practice’ are terms for which we can render a general meaning, but the context and purpose of usage can require more specific consideration once the terms are entered into discussion.

In Stenhouse’s statement, ‘practice’ is activity or action (“attempts to operationalises”) viewed from a critical and experiential standpoint. The ‘critical’ dimension is implicit to the very notion of ‘the gap’: Stenhouse assumes an evaluative stance (“educational realities seldom conform to our educational intentions”) and finds the problem to be “real” on the basis of self-critical inquiry on the part of teachers (“close scrutiny of their own classrooms”). In viewing ‘practice’ from this critical standpoint, ‘the gap’ is essentially represented as a problem of experience: Stenhouse is lamenting a perceived lack of coherence or
consistency (realities which do not “conform”) in an experiential world (of “intentions”, “ideas and aspirations”, “classrooms” and a “gap” which is “frustrating”).

In both the problem-setting statement and the broader context of his writings, Stenhouse’s notion of ‘practice’ accords with Winch’s (1996) version:

Practice is what teachers, lecturers, pupils and students have direct experience of; it is practice that structures the character of teaching and learning and it is in the context of practice that enjoyment and success or the lack of it are encountered. (p. 86)

3.5.5 The Notion of ‘The Gap’ in the Context of Practice as ‘Experienced Reality’

Having noted that criteria such as ‘coherence’ and ‘consistency’ are implicated in Stenhouse’s notion of what is ‘real’, and how his notion of ‘practice’ assumes an experiential world of ‘classrooms’ and ‘educational realities’, it is now possible to observe two key philosophical underpinnings of his statement:

a) There is evidence of support for a ‘critical realist’ epistemology in Stenhouse’s articulation of the problem.

‘Realism’, as a philosophical term, generally indicates an orientation which is amenable to the drawing of certain distinctions between “what the world is really like” (Chalmers, 1984, p. 146) and what we otherwise believe or feel it to be: “To assert that something is somehow mind-independent is to move in the realist direction: to deny it is to move in the opposite direction” (Oxford Companion to Philosophy, 1994, p. 746). Stenhouse’s implicit assumption of philosophical realism is evidenced by his tendency to view practice as a matter of “educational realities” which can, in some sense, concretely stand over against the “intentions”, “ideas” and “aspirations” of teachers (p. 3).
Stenhouse’s view of practice, however, is not predicated on a simplistic notion of ‘the real world’. His statement refers to a plurality ("educational realities"), and the problem itself is described as “real” only after references have been made to a judgement on his part (“I believe that”) and teachers’ critical evaluations (“close scrutiny of their own classrooms”). In other words, ‘practice’ presents more realities than can be captured by the uncritical eye of casual or routine observation. For Stenhouse, these realities are disclosed when the direct experience of classroom life is combined with a deliberative, interpretive effort which scrutinises this experience.

This latter ‘critical’ dimension of Stenhouse’s realism is fundamental to the way he approaches the setting of the problem, and the way that he responds to it in the wider context of his work. The emphasis placed on the critical review of practice is, for him, a matter of the experience of ‘practice’ being further understood or revised by an approach which is sufficiently reflexive to recognise that aspiration itself is inextricably linked to the same processes of review and change:

I am inclined to believe that the key quality needed in a school, if development is to take place, is reflexiveness: a capacity to review critically and reflectively its own processes and practices ... The improvement of teaching is not the linear process of the pursuit of obvious goals. It is about the growth of understanding and skill of teachers which constitute their resource in meeting new situations which make old aspirations inappropriate or unattainable. (Stenhouse, 1980, pp. 176, 244)

Stenhouse’s epistemology here does not rest with the ‘naive realism’ which assumes that realities in some sense exist ‘out there’ (to be known by the encounters of direct experience) and ‘down there’ (to be known or ‘tracked’ by the investigative effort of teacher inquiry). It does, rather, assume that “teachers are
taken into account as conscious, self-conscious beings in their own reflections on their practice” (Vandenberg, 1990, p. 141). In his “teacher-as-researcher” model of professional development, “the teacher becomes a conscious artist” and his or her inquiry counts as research to the extent that it is “conscientiously self-critical” (Stenhouse, 1980, pp. 109,110). For Stenhouse, it is important for teachers to “conduct scrutiny [not only] of their own classrooms” but also of the interpretive production of their findings.

Hence, Stenhouse’s statement adopts a critical realist epistemology in the sense that:

Critical realism stresses the fact that while there may be multiple interpretations of the world, there is nevertheless the possibility of deciding between less or more adequate interpretations of it. As Janice Soskice points out, we can refer to the world without claiming unrevisable or exhaustive description of it (1985, p. 141). Critical realists do not deny the possibility of objective knowledge, but do claim that all our knowledge of the world must pass through the filter of our human interpretation of our experience. (Hobson & Edwards, 1997, pp. 39-40)

b) The language of Stenhouse’s statement is consistent with the notion of a general or ‘ordinary everyday usage’ of terms.

When Stenhouse (1979) refers to “educational realities”, “a central problem”, and what is “real and frustrating” (p. 3), his concern is not directed towards satisfying any technical requirements of a philosophical discourse. His focus is rather a matter of conveying an ‘experiential context’ or more palpable sense of the challenges of classroom life, a view towards what “teachers must deal in” (p. 6) or what is common to the “agency of teaching and learning” (p. 2).

Stenhouse assumes or implies a general familiarity on the part of teachers when it comes to such description: ‘the gap’ is apparently an ubiquitous problem,
and the experiential world of the classroom teacher is apparently familiar with it, not necessarily as a theorisation but rather as those elements or aspects of teaching which can be frustrating. Stenhouse (1979) considers the gap is a familiar problem in the first instance because we have all experienced frustration and failure at some level or in some context. Commenting on those aspects of education where it can seem as though "we cannot put our policies into practice" (p. 2), Stenhouse writes: "We should not regard this as a failure peculiar to schools and teachers. We have only to look around us to confirm that it is part of the human lot" (pp. 2-3).

Although Stenhouse's 'teacher-as-researcher' model of professional development advocates teachers' systematic study of their own classrooms, the statement of the problem itself is nevertheless 'prephilosophical' in respect to these two interrelated observations, namely, the assumption of a general familiarity with the problem on the part of teachers and the use of language which reflects this assumed familiarity. Vandenberg (1990) suggests the kinds of activity which distinguish a more philosophical discourse in education from a 'prephilosophical' one:

Regardless of the sophistication involved, the interpretation of pedagogy that begins with the language of the staff room and makes the implicit understanding explicit by conceptualizing it is a fundamental way of doing philosophy of education. It involves hermeneutical processes when the experiential, prephilosophical insights become articulated in a vocabulary that allows them to be interrelated; to be compared to meanings articulated by other practitioners; to be substantiated by evidence, elaboration and argument; and to be more truthful. (p. 141)

In considering Stenhouse's statement to be prephilosophical as it enters the conversation of the present work, it is necessary to acknowledge and reiterate that the purpose and direction of Stenhouse's thought is to invite teachers to engage in
disciplined study of their practice. This disciplined study is approached as a matter of “research that is interested in interpretation or theory rather than mere brute facts” (Stenhouse, 1981, p. 108). The ‘theory’ of interest here is that which can be “related directly to educational practice” (p. 108). For example, when ‘theory’ is derived from the wider domain of educational research, Stenhouse emphasises its relationship to “the teacher’s study of his [sic] home case” (p. 110), and in this practical orientation “using research means doing research” (p. 110).

Hence, Stenhouse’s basic argument here follows the critical realist epistemology: in general, ‘reality’ or ‘realities’ (as he uses the terms in generic and specific contexts) cannot be adequately understood until there is a “persistence of inquiry” and “research into the content of experience” (Stenhouse, 1980, pp. 103-104). His epistemology recognises different levels of understanding (and misunderstanding) practice in terms of what is ‘real’. These ‘realities’ are made accessible to discussion when research “faces real situations with their full multivariate complexity” (p. 106). As previously indicated, the problem-setting statement itself also implies that the perception of ‘the gap’ and what is ‘real’ can be understood more adequately by teachers facing the challenge of a ‘critical scrutiny’ of classroom life.

Hence, the Stenhousian notion of a ‘gap’ which is ‘real’ concerns teachers’ experience of practice (“attempts to operationalises”) and their understanding of the realities of this practice (“their own classrooms”). The more developed understanding or what Stenhouse (1980) later refers to as the teacher’s “growth in understanding” (p. 244) can also be aligned with the view towards resolution of the problem: “The gap can only be closed by adopting a research and development
approach to one's teaching, whether alone or in a group of co-operating teachers” (1979, p. 3).

In referring to 'experienced reality', the present work allows for the revisability of what otherwise can appear to be absolute and unquestioned when the term 'reality' is used. The clarifying or qualifying role of the term 'experience' in its juxtaposition with the term 'reality' is considered consistent with the implicit epistemology or 'critical realist' character of Stenhouse's approach, as outlined above. The use of the term 'experience' here also retains the linguistic or 'ordinary language' character of the problem-setting statement: “In its ordinary everyday usage, experience connotes familiarity with some matter of practical concern, based on repeated past acquaintance or performance, often under a variety of circumstances” (Hagar, 1999, p. 66).

Hence, 'experienced reality' is a matter of perception in the sense that the term 'perception' has previously been approached as “taking in both possibilities for intuitive awareness (as in ‘perceiving this to be the case’) and possibilities for revisionary thought (as in ‘a change in perception’)”. As a matter of perception, 'experienced reality' is a construct which can be useful for certain dialogic purposes, such as listening to practitioners' descriptions of their practice and inviting reflection on this lived experience.

In this descriptive (or 'phenomenological') and interpretive (or 'hermeneutic') context, experienced reality is the lived experience of practice as it is reported or narrated by a person (Van Manen, 1990). The point of referring to 'experienced reality', however, is not to stake out an epistemological or metaphysical claim to some abstract conception of 'reality' but rather to make allowance for the different kinds of sense that a conversation can make of the way...
that a person experiences and understands his or her practice as “real” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 183).

3.5.6 The ‘Texture’ of Experienced Reality in the Context of the Problem

Although there is a scarcity of literature which directly and explicitly addresses teachers’ aspirations, the notion of ‘the gap’ as a perennial problem in the field of education can be approached by following or drawing from the discussions within a range of related studies. Examples include: school effectiveness research (Swann, 1998), the theory-practice divide in education (Carr, 1995; Klein, 1992), teacher stress (Kyriacou, 2001; Otto, 1986), intentionality in research on teaching (Noel, 1993), innovative school research (Leat, 1999), teacher motivation and job satisfaction research (Davis & Wilson, 2000), the pursuit of school ethos (Donnelly, 2000), resistance to change and innovation in education (Fullan, 1991; Hargreaves, 1994) and teaching as a vocation (Hansen, 1994).

In these areas of study, it is not uncommon for descriptions of teaching and classroom life to include ‘first-hand’ types of accounts of experience. Experience, in such first-hand accounts, has “an immediate, felt, aesthetic quality” (Crosby, 1995, p. 11; see also Dewey, 1979). The ‘aesthetic’ dimension can be described in psychological terms as the person’s “engagement of a phenomenal field” (Ryckman, 1993, p. 403) or the person’s ‘experiencing’ in the sense of ‘playing out’ the scenes of life situations. In this context, “aesthetics is not about the nature of beauty, but rather involves the study of our attempts to create quality” (Sherman & Webb, 1988, p. 26). An account of the ‘experienced reality’ of teaching provides a sense of what it is like to be the maker of such attempts and an ‘experiencer’ of teaching.
Teaching, in this context of articulating the ‘texture’ of experience or practice, can be viewed as a “psychosocial drama” which commonly disrupts the ‘application’ of theory to practice:

It is important to realize that philosophical prescriptions painstakingly derived from impeccably developed rationales are going to be contradicted daily in the real world of practice. Teaching learning transactions are, after all, dynamic interactions – psychosocial dramas in which unforeseen eventualities, serendipitous circumstances, and individual idiosyncrasies constantly distort our neatly planned visions of how our learning groups should function. (Brookfield, 1986, p. 294)

Fullan (1982) provides an example of how this contingent nature of teaching can be vividly described in the context of the gap and in terms of the ‘felt sense’ of what is experienced by teachers:

... uncertainty and guilt about whether what they are doing has any value, the isolated joys of reaching individual students, the lack of reflexivity on either an individual or a collective basis, the perennial frustration of lack of time and unwanted interruptions, the complexity of the teaching act in a crowded classroom with management problems, interacting with one or more students while others are waiting, and the unpredictability of a well-planned lesson falling flat, an unplanned lesson connecting, and so on. (p. 110)

In his account of Love and Despair in Teaching, Liston (2000) proposes that the very nature of teaching can give rise to certain difficult dilemmas where “emotionally and intellectually the risks are great” (p. 93). These “dilemmas of teaching” (p. 93), in his view, are generally not well understood and for the explanation of this situation he submits what he describes as a “phenomenological exploration” of “teaching’s terrain” (p. 83). The particular dilemma he focuses on involves the vulnerability of teachers to a sense of “pain and rejection” which is made possible only by qualities that can be associated with “good teaching”, such
as “a love of inquiry”, a “love of the learning enterprise” and a commitment to the “hope and promise” of education (p. 82).

Two key points derived from Liston’s articulation are germane to the notion of ‘experienced reality’ in the present context of exploration. The first is essentially an assumption or premise, and also a phenomenological matter in the sense that it pertains to the fundamental parameters of participating in the field of education as a teacher: “Teaching occurs on affective and cognitive terrain; it is emotional and intellectual work. In teaching we work on and through our emotions and ideas to engage students in a process called learning” (Liston, 2000, p. 81). For Liston, the dilemmas of teaching have their roots in these fundamental or critical parameters of the nature of teaching.

The second key point is derived from Liston’s articulation of how “rich narrative accounts” (as presented, for example, in literary, autobiographical and journalistic accounts of teaching) can, to some extent, “illuminate the cracks and crevices” as well as the “connecting aspects” of classroom life (p. 82). In contrast to the “arid and unrealistically analytical air” (p. 83) of many academic accounts of teaching, accounts which make provision for the relationship between “teaching’s terrain” and the “passion to teach” (p. 84) have the possibility of creating an awareness of “the core of the person and endeavour” (p. 83). The ‘key point’ is that this person-specific or person-oriented awareness can be associated with what has previously been referred to as the ‘human context’ of wisdom inquiry, and moreover the sort of understanding (or ‘practical knowledge’) which ‘phronesis’ embodies.
3.6 ‘Experienced Reality’ as an Object of ‘Practical Philosophy’ and the Hermeneutic Interview

The idea of bringing this ‘person-oriented awareness’ to the study of the wisdom question is ‘hermeneutical’ in the sense that it is bound up with fundamental questions of meaning-making, such as how to interpret the experience of living in the world. In philosophic hermeneutics, however, it is not sufficient to observe that an idea is hermeneutical: a ‘hermeneutic’, or understanding of how the idea makes interpretation possible, is required (Heidegger, 1923/1999, p. 12). On the model of conversation, a ‘hermeneutic’ for bringing a ‘person-oriented awareness’ into wisdom inquiry is also an opening to question further in the direction of the human contexts which call for thinking about the wisdom question in the first place (Gadamer, 1977).

Aspects of such a hermeneutic can be derived from the attentions of previous sections, such as the considerations of knowing as human knowing (Sections 2.7 and 2.8), the radical challenge and practical ethic of allowing for ‘otherness’ (Section 2.10.3) and the ‘grounding’ of the wisdom question in a ‘mode of being’ or ‘Dasein’ (Section 3.3). The present concern is to continue to address this ‘hermeneutic’, firstly by considering the voice of ‘the person’ in the context of referring to the general experience of teaching, and secondly by addressing the more specific matter of interviewing a teacher. Accordingly, attention is turned to relevant philosophical underpinnings, such as the interpretation to be brought to certain aspects of the relation between teaching and the wisdom question, what it means to be a ‘teacher’ and how the teacher is to be approached in the interviews as a meaning-maker.
3.6.1 'Experienced Reality' and the Teacher as a 'Contributing Voice' in Wisdom Inquiry

Previous subsections have noted that participants in the field of education are people, and that the 'voice' of these participants can inform the way we understand their activities and the way we understand them as people. This 'voice' includes a qualitative dimension in the sense that it results from the sensibilities of experience and the person (or the 'experiencing person'). In other words, the 'experienced reality' of the teacher is always a person's experience, and his or her articulation of it occurs only through the sensibilities of being a person and being involved in the pedagogic situations referred to as 'teaching' (Rogers, 1977). This summation (of the previous section) is hermeneutically significant in terms of turning attention towards a practitioner and proposing the turn as an instance of the 'person-oriented awareness' considered useful for inquiring after phronesis.

In this proposal, expressions of the 'felt sense' or 'texture' of experience can provide a distinctive perspective on teaching, and human action more generally, as a practical engagement (Nussbaum, 1991). It is necessary here to retain the sense in which the word 'practical' implies a view towards what is 'realistic', or in other words, what is actually done in practice rather than in theory, and what is in the nature of practice as it is experienced by practitioners. A 'practical philosophy' in this respect recognises that practice (or 'experienced reality') has an organic quality, "a kind of subsoil which ... cannot simply be made the object of analysis but must rather be lived through" (Dunne, 1993, p. 4).

Nevertheless, different ways of thinking about difficult issues are opened up to view when teachers talk about practice and their own lives (Freeman, 2000, p. 75; Goodson, 1992). In this respect, the attention towards a practitioner and the notion
of 'experienced reality' is another way of enabling the exploration to carry forward the 'principle of multiple perspectives' (as previously indicated). The metaphor or model of conversation is again the guide here: conversation, as an elicitation of the thoughts of different people, requires a laying open of the subject matter to the possibility that participants, by speaking in their own "voice", are going to shed new light on what has already been said (Dunne, 1993, p. 21; Gadamer, 1991).

The purpose of the interviews with a practising teacher is tied to this concern for "openness of reflection and vision" in wisdom inquiry (Barnett, 1994, p. 151). When experience is given a 'voice', the hermeneutic understanding which is necessary for practice can be regarded prospectively in relation to the reflection and scope of the conversation and its facilitation (Gadamer, 1991). In other words, the kinds of human experience which 'make us think' are also the ones to which we can orient ourselves when seeking a more profound level of conversation. More specifically, when teachers talk about teaching they are talking about a "thoughtful action" (Van Manen, 1990, p. 128), an activity to which thought has been given and from which thought can be called into question. Stenhouse's (1979) statement of 'the gap' can be approached as an invitation to view the experience of teaching and "educational realities" (p. 3) in this context.

This context is a 'wisdom inquiry context' in the sense that it pertains to questions of how one has lived and thought. It is 'philosophical' in that it treats 'teaching' as the kind of reflexive concern that is germane to reflective enquiry: teaching is a matter of living and thinking, and a matter to be re-visited by reflective questioning. Winter (1989) has described this process as "a dialectic between analytical opening up and practical closure" (p. 196) where teaching, in particular, is often the kind of experience that cannot be wholly pre-meditated but must be decided
upon. The thematisation of the present work would suggest that this is another way of saying that teaching calls for wisdom.\textsuperscript{22} Winter (1989) suggests teaching involves thought and action with certain requirements:

The basis of judgments is 'good enough' for someone's practical purposes at this moment [the Context of Practicality], but always open to question later, and thus to the suggestion that various other interpretations might have been made, equally compatible with the never quite complete evidence on which they were made at the time [the Context of Profundity].

The approach to teaching that Winter is describing can be considered as one which falls within the general understanding of teaching as a 'reflective practice' or the teacher as a 'reflective practitioner' (Butler, 1996; Schön, 1983).

However, the thematisation which suggests that a profundity-practicality relationship is implicated in the nature of teaching can require a view "beyond the reflective teacher" (McLaughlin, 1999, p. 9). The view 'beyond' here is essentially a matter of the limitations of thematising the experience of teaching in terms of 'reflective practice'. Although there is widespread acceptance in the educational literature of the 'teacher-as-reflective practitioner' model (or more precisely, a conceptualisation of teaching which posits teacher reflectivity in a central place), there are also a number of writers who point to the potential limitations of focusing on reflection (Calderhead, 1989, p. 45; McLaughlin, 1999; Newman, 1999).

McLaughlin (1999), for instance, suggests that there is an emphasis on

\textsuperscript{22} The proposed link here between teaching as 'living and thinking' and the question of wisdom is given further consideration when the thesis (at a later stage) attends to the philosophy of Jose Ortega Gasset (1961). Ortega's philosophy of 'vital reason' proposes that it is necessary to consider life (\textit{vita} in Latin) and reason together. The connection of Ortega's work to the wisdom question is then observed when the psychologist Pascual-Leone considers how "vital reason is concerned with the person as a concrete evolving totality – a totality that extends into the future and the possible of a person [emphasis in the original]" (Pascual-Leone, 1990, p. 244). For Pascual-Leone, "wisdom deals with \textit{vital reason} [emphasis in the original]" (p. 244).
reflectivity in conceptions of teaching that can obscure the view towards “the sorts of qualities needed by teachers in the task of teaching as a whole [emphasis added]” (p. 21). His examples of the more widely ranging (albeit arguably related) qualities are drawn from the philosopher William Hare’s (1993) work (What Makes a Good Teacher) and include humility, courage, impartiality, open-mindedness, empathy, enthusiasm, judgement, and imagination (p. 21).

The thematisation of the present work also requires a recognition of the multimodal nature of teaching, the “broader personal qualities” and “complex amalgam of interrelated kinds of achievement” that can be necessary to consider a person as a ‘teacher’ (McLaughlin, 1999, pp. 11, 21). Nevertheless, there is a rational process implied in the notion of ‘reflection’, and teaching itself is viewed, at least in part, as a “rational practice” (Dunne, 1993, p. 2). The hermeneutical significance of interviewing an experienced teacher is drawn from an acknowledgement of this rationality, but teaching is also approached here as a matter involving a wide range of qualities and propensities and, as far as these can be identified as the ‘broader personal qualities’ or ‘inter-related kinds of achievement’ McLaughlin refers to, they are not necessarily limited to the act of instruction.

Teaching, in this respect, is not one kind of ‘experience’ isolated from others but is rather the interplay of many possible kinds of experiences, such as planning, instructing, evaluating, negotiating, adapting, confronting, interpreting, motivating, counselling and so on. The content of the ‘experienced reality’ of the teacher can be thought of here as the junction or disjunction of such possible kinds of experiences. As an educator, a teacher is a person who encounters these possibilities as matters of choice and action, and responds with a view towards the best interests of his or her students.
3.6.2 Approaching the Teacher in the Interviews as an ‘Informed’ Person

The inclusion of interviews within the philosophical paradigm of the present work is based on the assumption that a teacher, by virtue of his or her social function in an actual practice, is an ‘informed’ participant in the conversation. ‘Informed’ here essentially refers to a regard for the teacher’s voice and the prospects for directing attention to aspects of experience and human beings that are not otherwise recognised in theoretical discourse. The ‘regard’ involves an acknowledgement that “the way teachers process information as a basis of their practical judgments” is, in an existential rather than a formal sense, a way of doing “practical philosophy” (Elliott, 1991, p. 45).

Teaching, in other words, is not viewed as atheoretical or merely ‘instrumental’ when there is a recognition of the many facets of its hermeneutic understanding, such as mentioned above in the way the teacher (qua teacher) thinks, assesses and selects from possibilities for practice (Usher & Bryant, 1987, p. 202; Winter, 1989, p. 196). Hence, the assumption of the teacher as ‘informed’ is not necessarily derived from any reference to formal qualifications, but is rather more closely connected to the experience of teaching as a context for wisdom inquiry.

The assumption itself can be supported by the previous attentions to ‘pragmatic insight’ and the broader reflective capacities of teachers attested to by the professional practice literature, such as ‘practical rationality’, the ‘practical ethic’ and the ‘practicality ethic’ (as referred to in Chapter Two). Stenhouse’s (1980) own notion of ‘teacher-as-researcher’ is compatible with the epistemological assumption of the teacher as ‘informed’ here, as are the other seminal works in the ‘epistemology of practice’ previously referred to, such as Schwab’s interpretation
of teaching as a ‘practical discipline’ and Schön’s interpretation of the teacher as ‘the reflective practitioner’.

Included in these attentions of the literature are some allied constructs pertaining to the intellectual dimension of teachers’ work. “Personal Practical Knowledge” is regarded as the teacher’s “knowledge and understanding attained through lived experience” (Butler, 1994, p. 225). There is also ‘phronesis’ itself which is variously reported but nevertheless generally interpreted from Aristotle’s definition in Nichomachean Ethics. It can be recalled here that Aristotle reports phronesis as “a true and reasoned capacity to act with regard to the things that are good or bad for man [sic]” (Ethics, 114065). Although the general emphasis is practical (a ‘capacity to act’), there is also an intellectual dimension (the capacity is a ‘reasoned capacity’).23 The sense in which teachers are viewed as ‘informed’ is also implied in the way that practitioners are approached for the generation of theory. Examples here include the attention of the action research movement towards the notions of “practitioner theory” and “practitioner-derived knowledge” (Elliott, 1991).

The assumption, in other words, can be supported by attending to the nature of practice and the sense in which ‘theory’ is already implicated in practice. In the language of empirical researchers, teaching is not necessarily represented by an “espoused theory” but rather by a “theory-in-use” (Argyris, 1983).24 Teaching is essentially a practice, and as a practice it embodies an ‘operative theory’ which

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23 As previously indicated, the concern of this literature often follows the reference of Aristotle to the “phromimos” being “able to deliberate well”. Hence, the professional practice literature commonly represents ‘phronesis’ as a “professional wisdom” emerging from workplace actions and judgments (Beckett, 1999, p. 272).

24 When translating this distinction to a philosopher’s language, it might be said that teaching is not an abstraction (such as a Platonic or Hegelian ‘idea’) which can exist prior to and independently of an actual pedagogical process, but is rather a “concrete concept” or “realised thought” (Feuerbach, 1843/1986).
these empirical researchers claim to be able to distinguish from other forms of ‘theory’, such as ‘formal theory’ or idealised images of teachers’ work. Hence, when the teacher approaches reflective inquiry of any sort it is always from the perspective of one who has experience of “concrete pedagogical practices” and what has previously been referred to as “praxis” (Elliott, 1991, p. 15).

The teacher’s perspective or understanding is also ‘praxeological’ in the sense that this experience can require theory to be reviewed through practice (Usher & Bryant, 1987). For instance, the practitioner can say that ‘experience forced a re-think’: ideas and notions which support an educational theory and the motivation to ‘apply’ it sometimes must be thought about differently after an episode of practice. In other words, experience here is an instigator of renewed questioning and the term ‘experienced’ can be applied to a person who is familiar with this practical form of reflexivity. Hence, ‘experienced reality’ in the present work is a construct which can invite a praxeological perspective and a contextualisation of the wisdom question underpinned by a regard for the dialectic of ‘the theoretic’ and ‘the practical’.

As philosophic hermeneutics, this approach or ‘praxeological perspective’ also opens the theorising of the wisdom question to a more unified and flexible view of what is involved in a practice. This is because teaching, and the process of revision and adjustments which ameliorate its performance, can now be viewed as a “praxis” which is constituted and shaped by the hermeneutic understanding of “the reflective practitioner” (Butler, 1994, p. 222). The ‘unity’ and ‘flexibility’ are a matter of enriching and renewing the conversation: When a conversation turns to the teacher’s ‘voice of experience’, the interpretations given are, in a sense, interpretations of human ideas and practice post-factum. The conversation connects
the abstract, conceptual work of philosophy (the ‘pre-factum’ sense or context of its work) with the voice of a person working in a field where ideas must be applied or examined in situ (Dunne, 1993, p. 3: Elliott, 1991, p. 16).

‘Experienced reality’, as a tensed expression, can allow an opening in the conversation for the kind of question which asks ‘Having had (such and such) experience, what is your interpretation?’. This ‘post-factum context’ of interpretation not only allows a different kind of sense to be made of theoretical constructs (such as ‘aspiration’ and ‘wisdom’), but also allows philosophical reflection more scope for viewing what is involved in human practice in actu. A teacher’s ‘voice’ here is ‘contributing’ not just in relation to what theory ‘misses’ or can more readily avoid, but also to the process where theory is “problematised” in order for a more profound consideration of the subject matter to take place (Scott & Usher, 1999, p. 22).

Hence, a practitioner’s ‘experienced reality’ is not a kind of ‘researcher’s recourse’ for ‘filling in the blanks’ of theory as much as it is an opening for exploration in the hermeneutic conversation of wisdom inquiry itself. In their philosophical examination of what is “very real to informants” and the case for including it in research because it is experienced as “so real”, Scott and Usher (1999) caution against a ‘too easy’ approach to the notion of a ‘voice’:

Interpretation is not a matter of the world being whatever we want it to be ... To take unadulterated voices as givens, as a presence, an authorising centre, as valid because they are unadulterated voices, is to forget that any voice is both an interpretation and itself in need of interpretation. (pp. 17-18, 25)
In this sense of what can be called a ‘voice’, the present work accordingly approaches all voices in the conversation of its exploration, including its own philosophical text, as prima facie reflections in the course of wisdom inquiry.

3.7 Accessing ‘Deeper Meanings’ in Wisdom Inquiry: The Teacher’s Voice as ‘Co-Investigator’ and ‘Storyteller’

A variety of methodologies, approaches and techniques have been used in attempts to garner the distinctive contribution of the ‘teacher’s voice’: examples include narrative inquiry (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Josselson & Lieblich, 1993), folkloristic inquiry (Hamer, 1999), critical incident frameworks (Tripp, 1993), educational life history (Cremin, 1976; Goodson, 1992), life cycle research (Huberman, 1992), action research (Elliott, 1991) and ethnographic and case study approaches (Yin, 1993).

The primary mode of access to the ‘teacher’s voice’ in the present work is “the hermeneutic interview” (Van Manen, 1990), an approach which entails “an interpretive conversation wherein both partners self-reflectively orient themselves to the interpersonal or collective ground that brings the significance of the phenomenological question into view” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 99). Van Manen uses the term ‘phenomenological’ in a broad sense here and the “phenomenological question” can pertain to an “object, topic or notion” (p. 98). When addressing these concerns and reflecting on his or her experience, “the interviewee becomes the co-investigator of the study” (p. 98). This regard for the interviewee accords with the previously indicated regard for the teacher as a ‘reflective practitioner’, an interpreter of practice, and a person occupied by the hermeneutic task of understanding the ‘experienced reality’ of her or his praxis.
The task here, however, is not necessarily simply a matter of identifying certain positive or impressive aspects of this reflective practice, 'extricating the wisdom', as it were, from practitioner or 'first-hand' accounts of experience in the field. If the wisdom question is thought of as a question of how the threads of the 'wisdom of practice' intermingle in the fabric of teaching experience with the 'organic' threads of the conditions and circumstances of practice, then there is a sense in which a unity already presides over what teachers have to say about their work (Merleau-Ponty, 1968). The term 'unity' in this context of usage can be thought of as a 'dialectic', a recognition that the reflecting teacher stands in the midst of "a significant whole", namely, his or her own life and its "story" (Gadamer, 1991, p. 68).

In other words, wisdom can be thought of as something which is worked out 'through' experience (the 'ups and downs') rather than given only 'in' certain performances (the 'selected highlights'). Notwithstanding the value of studying the putatively more laudable performances of 'experts' or 'exemplars', it is also possible for first-hand accounts to inform wisdom research from the other direction, namely, from an approach that depicts the ways that practice can be experienced as something more confronting or more fragile in its relation to desired outcomes (Nussbaum, 1991). In this latter approach, the effort to listen well to 'the teacher's voice' is not unlike the hermeneutic effort required to grasp the full import of storytelling (Hamer, 1999, p. 363).

For many philosophers and educational researchers, this view towards the range of human experience is compelling in terms of the challenge it can present to 'conventional' or 'received' wisdom (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Nussbaum, 1991). The 'view' here considers that there is something important to be learned...
from attending to different kinds of experience, including those that seem to impinge
upon the natural human desire for things to 'go well'. 'Conventional wisdom' can
suggest that this natural desire is fulfilled by focusing on human agency, the power
that humans have to effect choices and direct their own affairs. This focus on
'agency' is often particularly concerned with the continuity of efficacious thought
and action. Other writers, however, suggest the potential value of experiences which
seem to be at variance with these projections towards 'agreeable' experience.

With Gadamer (1991), for example, "experience is experience of human
finitude. The truly experienced person is the one who has taken this to heart, who
knows that he [or she] is master neither of time nor the future" (p. 357). Although
the preferred kind of experience, and moreover the preferred kind of 'wisdom', can
be that which conforms to expectation or predefined limits, Gadamer reminds us of
the profound sense in which "experience worthy of the name" can also refer to what
is "painful and disagreeable" (p. 356). For Gadamer (1991), this is not just semantic
analysis of the word 'experience' (erfahrung in German); it is also ontology:
"Experience in this sense ... does not mean that we are being especially pessimistic,
but can be seen directly from its nature" (p. 356).

The 'nature' of experience Gadamer refers to is that which ultimately can
require the person articulating it to be thought of as a story-teller. When Gadamer
(1991) says that "genuine experience is experience of one's historicity" (p. 357), he
is suggesting that experience is not only a matter of what is encountered but also a
matter of how we find ourselves to be human in what is encountered. Experience, in
other words, is not 'what happened' but what happened to make it 'an experience'.

An 'experience' in this sense is never quite what one expects, and this is
why Gadamer considers that "the experienced person acquires a new openness to
new experiences” (p. 357). The experienced person also gains the sense of ‘historicity’ rendered above as ‘finding oneself to be human’. In Gadamer’s words, this is a process whereby “experience teaches us to acknowledge the real” (p. 357). This sense of ‘historicity’ and learning to ‘acknowledge the real’ includes the insight that we are finite and limited beings:

Experience as a whole is not something anyone can be spared. Rather experience in this sense inevitably involves many disappointments of one’s expectations and only thus is experience acquired ... Experience in this sense belongs to the historical nature of man [sic]. (Gadamer, 1991, p. 356)

Another philosopher who adopts this general perspective or approach is to be briefly considered here as a second example of how inquiry can pursue deeper meanings by characterising human beings as ‘story-tellers’. Her work indicates possibilities for deepening an inquiry by attending to the play of meanings (or ‘story’) involved in the way we think about different kinds of human experiences. It is a work that includes attention to the wisdom construct with a particular interest in the Aristotelian version. This interest pursues the implications of Aristotle’s view (as she distinguishes it from Plato’s) where “the person of practical wisdom ... does not attempt to take up a stand outside of the conditions of human life, but bases his or her judgement on long and broad experience of these conditions” (Nussbaum, 1991, p. 290).
3.8 Approaching the Experienced Person as ‘Storyteller’: Martha Nussbaum as a Second Example of a Philosopher Pursuing Deeper Meanings by Reflecting on the Scope of Human Experience

Martha Nussbaum (1991) explores what she refers to as “the fragility of the good human life” as a way of deepening her inquiry after the ‘excellence contained in human lives’. Her focus on ‘fragility’ (or The Fragility of Goodness as indicated by the title of the particular work to be presently discussed) has a philosophical basis in ideas similar to those proposed here for attending to ‘the gap’. There is, for example, her suggestion that there is much to learn from reflection on the scope of life experiences. She proceeds to explore various “activities and relationships” (such as friendship, love, political activity and attachments to property or possessions) that are “vulnerable to reversal” in the sense that they are “open to chance” for “the person who stakes his or her good to them” (p. 6).

Hence, the above reference to ‘scope’ includes those experiences which do not seem to lend themselves to the direction intended by the more concerted forms of human effort. For Nussbaum, it is important for the philosopher to recognise these experiences, as a matter of both “philosophical style” and substantive “responsiveness” to the practical concerns of human lives (p. 394). Hence, she explores the question of excellence not only for its pertinence to the practical nature of everyday living (the Context of Practicality) but also in the larger philosophical context of thematic reflection on experience (the Context of Profundity).

‘Fragility’ is approached by Nussbaum as a matter of recognising that certain elements can make it problematical to follow any conception of “a good life” (p. 1), and that these elements are commonplace in human experience. In other words, a ‘good life’ is something to be lived and this means that it is subject to
whatever can arise in future experience: the person aspiring to lead a 'good life' cannot seal him or herself off from the world. 'Fragility', in this context, is a theme in the pursuit of a particular line of inquiry. Its purpose or emphasis is not to assert dogmatically that goodness is so tenuous that it can 'fall apart' at any time. It is, rather, a matter of proposing the worthwhileness of exploring certain tensions that can accompany reflection on excellence and what it means to live a 'good life'.

The willingness to explore the full range of human experience is central to Nussbaum’s approach. She argues that such a willingness can open up inquiry to disparities between the theories which ostensibly guide “a rational human life” (p. 7) and “the everyday facts of lived practical reason” (p. 5). It is in such kinds of inquiry and reflection that Nussbaum locates possibilities for accessing deeper meanings of questions regarding what constitutes a human ‘excellence’ such as wisdom.

She is critical of assumptions “dominant [in]... our Anglo-American philosophical tradition” that philosophy, and an “ethical text” in particular, should not “make its appeal to the emotions, feelings, and sensory responses” (p. 15). Her attention to the scope of human experiences is closely linked here with what she refers to as the “nature of the search for wisdom” and the question of “what parts of the person does [or] should it engage, and how are these interrelated?” (p. 16).

When Nussbaum considers the “fragility of goodness”, the elements of fragility are not interpreted as separable elements of human ethical experience but as those dynamics which we discuss by using terms such as “chance”, “vicissitude”, “dilemma” or “contingency” (pp. 1-21). She shares common ground with Gadamer here in the sense that her concern is to extend the view towards excellence beyond the common pragmatic interest in achieving a continuous and predictable efficacy. For Nussbaum, conceptions of excellence are too often completely reduced to an
interest in developing a “rational self-sufficiency” (p. 3) which can be relied upon to ‘get it right’ in practical situations.

The concern of Nussbaum here is not to dismiss the value of efficacy or practicality in human lives: it is rather a concern to examine critically the notion of a rationality that is wholly self-contained, autonomous of the experiences which might otherwise prove disruptive of it. More specifically, her argument is with the appeal such a notion can hold and with the motives involved in human pursuits of absolute control. She accordingly follows lines of questioning designed to stimulate reflection on the rich and varied possibilities of human lives: the ‘fragility of goodness’ where wisdom is to be acquired (pp. 290-317).

Nussbaum fully acknowledges the natural concern of practitioners for the efficacy of practice and her theme of ‘fragility’ retains the importance of a purposeful attention to the improvement of performance. In the broad sense of wanting to ‘get it right’ in dealing with situations, human beings prefer to be ‘practical’: that is a general premise. Nussbaum, however, is more concerned with complex and subtle particularities, the ‘fragility’ whereby the negotiation of our practical lives is not a passive process but is rather always ‘our story’, the telling of which is animated by the things that matter to us and the experiences involved (pp. 12-18).

In this approach, the questions and subject matter to be explored are complex. For instance, a concern to ‘get it right’ or an interest in the delivery of solutions can take different forms and be motivated by different attitudes and values (pp. 13-16). As previously indicated, one way of dealing with such complexity is to make use of themes. The theme of ‘fragility’ is built on the premise that the appraisal of things as ‘right’, ‘good’, ‘excellent’ or ‘wise’ is a matter that concerns
people and their lives. Moreover, Nussbaum is asserting that such appraisals can be profoundly affected by the unforeseen experiences of such lives, and she finds this realism necessary for developing a rationality that is more "humanly rational" (p. 15).

As a theme, 'fragility' works to heighten the awareness of human tendencies to avoid elements of uncertainty, instability and unpredictability. Nussbaum considers that these tendencies can often be associated with a calculated interest in keeping future experience bounded and fixed within a limited set of possibilities (pp. 51-79). In upholding the importance of questioning this interest, Nussbaum is not denying the contexts where it is necessary to calculate, minimise or avoid risk: considerable harm to oneself or others would be incurred without the practical sense that attends to certain risks. Nussbaum, however, is questioning the extent to which reality can be rationally planned or 'ordered', and she is also questioning the interest in this ordering as it motivates attempts to insulate experience from any threat to itself.

Her approach involves exploring the tension between this interest in keeping experience bounded and the interest in excellence as a question of growth, maturity and the nurturing of human potentialities. 'Excellence' or 'the good life' remains a question of how human beings think and act well but it also is necessarily a question of past experience and the course of future experience. Here Nussbaum (as previously observed with Gadamer) considers that it becomes a question of 'wisdom' in the Aristotelian sense where it requires the 'practical knowledge' of phronesis (pp. 297-306).

As a theoretical concern it also becomes a fuller and richer question than otherwise can be implied by definitions or abstractions of 'excellence' and
'goodness': Nussbaum’s turn to ‘phronesis’ is a way of emphasising that the goodness or excellence of “the good life” is not separable from human lives (pp. 292-293). In other words, goodness or excellence comes with a ‘story to tell’ when viewed from the experience-oriented perspective of phronesis. The term ‘story’ here can again be approached either literally (as actual narration of a ‘history’) or metaphorically (as the historicity of ‘the good life’).

As previously observed, ‘phronesis’ is a concept that can be used to emphasise the limitations of abstract and universal renderings of philosophical questions. When applying this emphasis, questions such as ‘What is wisdom?’ or ‘What is a ‘good life’?’ can require an adaptive and flexible form of thinking which can work between universality (such as general ethical principles) and particularity (such as the distinctive requirements of a certain situation). In short, ‘phronesis’ does not take the context as given. Nussbaum (1991) accordingly observes that Aristotelian phronesis “asks for the cultivation of imagination and responsiveness” (p. 371).

Hence, a ‘phronetic approach’ to concepts associated with wisdom, such as ‘excellence’ or the ‘good life’, is one which resists finding one category (‘good’ or ‘life’) as ontologically prior to another: the ‘good life’ Nussbaum refers to is a life “lived well” (p. 8), and a life ‘lived well’ can be a matter of any or all of what has already been lived (past experiences), is being lived (present experiences) or is yet to be lived (future experiences). Given this view towards complexity and depth in questions of human excellences, Nussbaum is particularly critical of the “superficiality” which assumes that there is “a neutral philosophical style” capable of equally and impartially assessing human lives (p. 391).
3.8.1 Theoretical and Practical Implications of Nussbaum’s Philosophy

The question of excellence is also treated by Nussbaum as a question which we understand more fully when we address the standpoint of our inquiry, such as the assumptions we have developed about what is or is not within our control (p. 5). For Nussbaum, these assumptions are matters that go to the very heart of human ethical thought but they are often overpassed in the haste to proceed towards the explanation and stratagem of practical situations. Nussbaum suggests that this haste conceals important lines of questioning from view, such as those that relate to “the complexity, the indeterminacy, the sheer difficulty of actual human deliberation” (p. 14).

Recovering elements of ancient Greek philosophy and culture, Nussbaum’s study of ‘fragility’ takes a particular interest in notions of ‘luck’ and ‘tragedy’: the sorts of concepts that are consequential to human thinking yet ultimately remain beyond the explanatory reach of system, logic and schematic forms of reasoning. She argues for an ethical dimension of excellence which inheres in “the vulnerability of the good life” and in the response to factors seemingly outside the control of the person aspiring to live this “good life” (p. 318).

There is, in other words, a place in her work for upholding an aspiration to ‘the good life’ which is ‘transcendental’ in the sense that it generally cannot be reduced to the satisfaction of predefined goals.25 Nussbaum’s approach is not unlike Gadamer’s in that her understanding of ‘what works’ in a human life [the Context of Practicality] is ultimately inseparable from those elements of experience

25 The thinking and wording here have benefited from Grundy’s critique (1989) of a “technological consciousness” that she considers to be “one of the inherent problems of the concept of professionalism” (p. 80). The particular sentence from which the present work borrows reads as follows: “Technological consciousness seeks to avoid questions about ‘the Good’ by reducing action to predefined behaviour, substituting finite goals for transcendental aspirations and replacing judgment for skill” (p. 95).
whereby humans encounter what Gadamer (1991) refers to as the “limits of planning reason” (p. 357) [the Context of Profundity].

In following this approach, Nussbaum allows the motivated qualities of the person aiming to lead a good life to be viewed in a different light from what otherwise can be the case when the starting-point for inquiry is given to normative claims. For Nussbaum, it is also a matter of ‘wisdom’ to be more tolerant of the way that seemingly disparate experiences can inform the search for wisdom. This view towards the scope of human experience is linked with the Aristotelian view that wisdom requires a responsiveness to the individual contexts of situations (p. 371).

For Nussbaum (1991), this responsiveness begins with a tolerance of the ontological features she associates with ‘the fragility of goodness’, such as the uncertainty and ambiguity which she finds to be commonplace in human deliberation. For the person who lives the ‘good life’ or aspires to it, these complexities are not negotiated by reliance on “theoretical solutions” but rather by “practical intuitions” (Nussbaum, 1991, p. 27).

The distinction between ‘theoretical solutions’ and ‘practical intuitions’ is essentially a matter of Nussbaum’s qualified “commitment to proceed in an Aristotelian way” (p. 11). When referring to ‘theoretical solutions’, Nussbaum has in mind the emphasis that is sometimes placed on upholding the consistency and unrevisability of principles or ‘moral laws’. The reference to ‘practical intuitions’ is more concerned with the experience where the well-intending person feels something else, such as a need to improvise between espoused principles and an

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26 The terms associated with ‘theoretical solutions’ here (such as ‘consistency’, ‘unrevisability’ and ‘moral laws’) might appear to imply a critical stance towards Kantian ethics in particular, or moreover, normative ethical theory in general. Nussbaum, however, is not essentially concerned with the content of such theories but rather with the experience of situations and how it feels to be in them. The primary focus, in other words, is given to the ‘experienced reality’.
actual situation (p. 31). 'Practical intuitions' can therefore be more closely aligned with the above-mentioned responsiveness which Aristotle finds necessary to become a person of practical wisdom.

Nussbaum's claim is that these practical intuitions are better articulated when we remember the sense in which the actual experience of situations and practical intuition is like a story (pp. 12-19). The claim is not necessarily one where the articulation, or the 'deeper meanings' of the relevant questions, literally require a story. As previously mentioned, it includes the metaphorical or anological sense where the articulation is recognised as story-like. The reference to 'story-like' here accords with the hermeneutical approach where inquiry after the meaning of 'the good' is co-terminous with inquiry after the meaning of life, such as Gadamer's perspectives would suggest. Nussbaum's claim is thus similar to Gadamer's (1991) emphasis on the importance of recognising how "genuine experience" can be thought of as "experience of one's historicity" (p. 357), and "the conversation that we are" (1982, p. xxiii).

The exploratory approach of Nussbaum extends beyond reliance on traditional philosophical texts. Her willingness to include literary works such as the Greek tragedies is aimed not only at understanding "the aspirations we have for ourselves as human agents" (p. 2), but also at the "practical rationality" of those "intuitions and responses" (p. 15) which otherwise seem to defy explanation. In commentary, Freeman (2000) describes Nussbaum's work as epitomic of a movement towards "theory beyond theory" (p. 71) or the "opening up those dimensions of thought and feeling that theoretical discourse, in its customary forms, cannot readily accommodate" (p. 75).
For Nussbaum, the distinctive contribution to inquiry of keeping in view those ‘felt’ or ‘textured’ and ‘fragile’ aspects of experience (which are commonly not associated with ‘the theoretic’) includes the challenge it presents to the characteristic emphases of the traditional model of the theory-practice relationship, such as the emphasis on the application of theory to practice: “A tragedy does not display the dilemmas of its characters as pre-articulated: it shows them searching for the morally salient: and it forces us as interpreters to be similarly active” (p. 14).

Hence, Nussbaum goes on to study poems and tragedies “as Plato studied them: as ethical reflections in their own right” (p.13) and as a way of bringing “certain themes and questions” (p. 14) to her own exploration of practical wisdom:

I shall regard them [tragedies] as creations of the wise, as works of distinction to which a culture looked for insight ... they are unlikely to conceal from view the vulnerability of human lives to fortune, the mutability of our circumstances and our passions, the existence of conflicts among our commitments. (Nussbaum, 1991, p. 13)

3.9 Implications for the Hermeneutic Interview

Although the present work does not include such literary studies, it does acknowledge the sense in which the teacher is always a ‘storyteller’ when reflecting on his or her experience of practice. The notion of ‘storyteller’ here does not require the teacher to provide an explicit narrative in recounting a teaching career or particular situations, but it does recognise the hermeneutical relevance of the ‘story’ to an interview which explores aspirations, ‘the gap’ and personal matters of experience. This ‘hermeneutical relevance’, or analogous sense in which reflection on practice is ‘storytelling’, can be indicated by the responsibility of communicating a version of actual practice or ‘experienced reality’. Hamer (1999) indicates the responsibility for the ‘explicit’ storyteller:
Through stories, the meaning of events are shaped and reshaped, envisioned and revisioned as the storyteller mediates between a traditional story and his or her audience, often combining different stories into a new story, in order to make a point that the teller believes is important for the audience to hear. (p. 363)

Hence, when experience is discussed in the context of the ‘gap’, the essential research interest here is the hermeneutical matter of what motivates and determines the point of view of the practitioner rather than what might otherwise be referred to as the ‘empirical’, ‘objective’ or ‘historical’ truth of his or her practice (Crossan, 1998). As philosophy, the purpose of referring to ‘experienced reality’ is not to define the experience or practice of the interviewed teacher. It is, rather, a matter of reflecting on experience and maintaining an ‘interpretive conversation’:

The art of the researcher in the hermeneutic interview is to keep the question (of the meaning of the phenomenon) open ... So a conversation is structured as a triad. There is a conversational relation between the speakers, and the speakers are involved in a conversational relation with the notion or phenomenon that keeps the personal relation of the conversation intact ... So by setting up situations conducive to collaborative hermeneutic conversations, the researcher can mobilise participants to reflect on their experiences ... in order to determine the deeper meanings or themes of these experiences. (Van Manen, 1990, p. 98)

Accordingly, the purpose of using designations such as ‘experienced reality’ or ‘practice’ here is essentially dialogic and is ultimately aimed at orienting reflection towards the themes of profundity and practicality. As previously emphasised in relation to the construct of ‘wisdom’, the terms ‘aspiration’ and ‘experienced reality’ can require a reflexive, qualitative and open-ended approach. The positing of a ‘priority of the question’ over the terms that it relates has been an essential hermeneutical principle of the thesis (Gadamer, 1991).
Van Manen’s view of the hermeneutic interview accords with Gadamer’s emphasis on this ‘priority of the question’, thereby allowing the dialogue to recognise the limits of any particular use of language. In his approach to conversation as a ‘hermeneutic interview’, Van Manen (1990) is sustaining the ‘priority of the question’ by upholding a central place for thematisation and intersubjective reflection (or reflection ‘between’ the participants):

The conversation has a hermeneutic thrust: it is oriented to sense making and interpreting the notion that drives or stimulates the conversation. It is for this reason that the collaborative quality of the conversation lends itself especially well to the task of reflecting on the themes of the notion or the phenomenon under study. (p. 98)

Chapter Conclusion

Reflecting on access to deeper meanings in philosophical inquiry, Merleau-Ponty’s (1968) observations are germane to the considerations of the present chapter: “The questions are within our life, within our history: they are born there, they die there, if they have found a response, more often than not they are transformed there” (p. 105).

The present chapter has accordingly worked towards developing a view of the wisdom question as a question that is profoundly implicated in the process and progress of human lives, yet also applicable to a more specific and concrete sense of ‘real time’. ‘Real time’ here is a term for expressing a more palpable sense of the question. In other words, the advancement of the exploration towards this sense of ‘real time’ is a matter where the Practical-Philosophy Paradigm attends to actual situations, in real settings, with the direct involvement of human beings in the conversation. The ‘advancement’ can also be viewed as a preparation for a case study approach to the wisdom question.
Hence, the present chapter has considered how an approach to wisdom inquiry can be more ‘grounded’, the kind of ‘pragmatic sense’ that is a sought after voice in interviewing a teacher, the role of ‘perception’ in situations and the ‘conversation’, the setting of a perceived ‘problem’ as a context for wisdom inquiry, the notion of a ‘gap’ between teacher aspiration and experienced reality as a perceived problem or reference point for contextualising wisdom inquiry, the inclusion of a teacher’s perspectives as an ‘informed voice’ in the conversation, and the notion of a ‘hermeneutic interview’ as it relates to a treatment of the teacher’s ‘voice’ as a ‘co-investigator’ and ‘storyteller’. In the following chapter, the exploration advances directly ‘into the field’, introducing the interviewed practitioner and presenting contextual details of the interviews. The chapter subsequently proceeds to present interview excerpts and analyses.
Chapter 4

Case Study: Interview Texts and Analyses

Introduction

The present chapter deals primarily with data obtained from interviews. Its overall direction and analytical approach are shaped by the hermeneutical philosophy outlined in the previous chapters. Hence, it is necessary to view the present chapter as a pathway of exploration that is determined by a philosophical context, namely, all of that which has hitherto comprised the ‘philosophy’ of the thesis.

In other words, the interviews have been approached as an opening in the conversation made possible by the ‘pre-text’ of all of the previous chapters: the general parameters of Chapter One, the methodology and theoretical-philosophical dimensions of Chapters Two and Three. The purpose of interviewing a teacher therefore accords with the attentions of a Practical-Philosophy Paradigm, the general methodological theme of ‘conversation’, and the contextualisation of the wisdom question which makes particular reference to aspiration and experience.

The rationale guiding the process of interviews and analyses has been set out in the attentions of the previous chapters to matters of general parameters, methodology and the theoretical-philosophical consideration of ‘the gap’. In adopting the case study approach of dealing with a “real-life context” (Yin, 1994, p. 13) or ‘bounded context’ (Merriam, 1998, p. 12), the present chapter accordingly follows and adapts the general features of case studies: intensive analyses of excerpts, drawing from various disciplines, reflexivity, acceptance of multiple realities whilst addressing particularities, and a concern for depth in understanding processes of experience rather than ‘ends’ (Merriam, 1998). The approach of the
present chapter also retains the orientation towards viewing the capacity of philosophy to be “practically profound” in applications to human thought, experiences and “arenas of everyday concern” (Hall, 2005, p. 312).

4.1 The Interviewed Practitioner and the Context

The interviewee has previously been referred to as the ‘experienced practitioner’ and is here referred to by the pseudonym of ‘John’. For reasons of confidentiality, certain details of John’s practice and his experience in the field of teaching are not identified, such as the name of the school of his current practice, staff and student names, previous localities of employment, precise designations of positions and specific autobiographical information.

John is a senior teacher and administrator in a regional Catholic high school. The school has a student population in excess of 400 and a staff population in excess of 70, including more than 30 teachers and 40 supporting and auxiliary staff.

John’s particular area of expertise in teaching pertains to religious studies. In tertiary institutions, this area or discipline is aligned with studies designated as ‘Philosophy of Religion’, ‘Religious Studies’, and ‘Studies in Religion’. His qualifications include a Masters Degree in Education and a Doctorate of Education. Having taught in several different localities, including both metropolitan and rural districts, John’s breadth of teaching experience is extensive. In his current capacity, John is required to contribute to policy development, provide advice to the school principal, formulate and operationalise curricula, and facilitate the reflection of school staff in areas of educational, religious and ethical development.

The selection of John as a research participant followed advices and suggestions from people familiar with his involvement in university and school
contexts. These advices and suggestions represented John as an experienced, reflective and articulate practitioner, capable of raising questions, provoking thought and committing to the completion of a lengthy project. Although the research design process did not involve the formulation of selection criteria, the attributes associated with John were considered to be particularly suitable to the nature of the research project, enhancement of the prospects for realising its aims and dealing with a very complex topic. Hence, the singularity of focus on one teacher can be viewed as a particular form of adaptation to theoretical and methodological issues (as discussed in Chapter 2).

Prior to commencement of the case study, ethical clearance was sought and obtained from Central Queensland University. The written request for ethical clearance included an undertaking to provide John with a draft of the thesis for his approval before submission of the thesis. To ensure that John's thoughts and intents had been represented accurately, John was also provided with draft materials throughout the research process. These materials included transcripts of the interview excerpts used, and drafts of the analyses. The research accordingly relied on the consent and satisfaction of the participant as the imperative consideration at all stages. On all occasions of sharing these materials, John expressed his approval and remained a fully co-operative and supportive research participant.

Prior to arrangement of the interviews, the interviewer had met John on only two occasions: the first occurring in the course of the interviewer attending the school for purposes unrelated to the research project, and the second occurring outside the school at a school-related function. Although there was mention of the university studies being undertaken by both men, the interaction on each occasion was relatively brief (approximately 10-15 minutes) and the course of conversation
also attended to other topics unrelated to these interests. On this basis of such
limited contact, John can be described as an acquaintance of the researcher at the
stage of initiating arrangements for the interviews. The process of seeking consent
from John for his participation in the project and subsequently arranging an initial
interview schedule consisted of brief E-mail exchanges and one face-to-face meeting.

12 semi-structured interviews were conducted over a period of 18 months in
quiet home settings of the interviewer and interviewee. The timeframe allowed the
interviews to be engaged in a manner where both participants did not feel pressured
by time to hasten or finish the process. An ample period of one and a half hours was
allotted for each interview meeting and discussions invariably consumed this full
allotment of time. The interview data were recorded on audiotapes and excerpts
were transcribed. After each interview, the tapes were replayed and detailed notes
were filed.

There was evidence of open and relaxed self-expression in the meetings.
Discussion flowed, both parties expressed enjoyment of the process, and the
collaborative nature of the interviewer-interviewee relationship was exhibited in the
willingness to participate in serious reflection on the subject-matter. The
interviewee frequently volunteered time for further meetings and participation in the
project. Although the interviews began with the interviewer providing a general
indication of intentions, the semi-structured approach allowed flexibility and the
kind of dialogic relations upheld in the previous chapter.

4.2 The Focus Questions of the Interviews

The rationale for approaching the interviews has been discussed in the
previous chapter along with the methodological dimensions of the 'Hermeneutic
Interview'. Specific areas to be prioritised have also been outlined in relation to Stenhouse's statement of 'the gap'. The foci or central research concern of the interviews can be further identified by the following two questions:

1) How does an experienced practitioner approach the problem of 'the gap' between aspiration and experienced reality in the practice of teaching?27

2) What can be learned from this approach for the purposes of informing philosophical reflection on the question of wisdom?

4.3 Interview Text: Excerpt 128

The initial interview with John began with some general discussion of teaching, including curricular and pedagogical areas of his involvement with religious studies in schools. At this stage, there was no explicit mention of 'aspiration' but John was familiar with the general parameters of the research project and certain comments from him were relevant to the overall orientation of his pedagogy:

- "One of the things I really like seeing is the lights come on, and all of a sudden they realise, it is okay to question."

- "I guess in my teaching, especially with the more mature kids, say Year 12s, I would very very often be giving them, not giving them but exposing them to, a way of thinking that is very different to what they have been taught to think in the past."

27 It is assumed here that the reference to 'the gap' is derived from Stenhouse's statement (Section 3.5.2).

28 I = Interviewer, J = 'John'. The 'Transcription Notation' appears in Appendix One.
"If you just play it safe and you always give kids the accepted, dominant view they’re never going to learn anything: they learn the dominant view but they can learn that from Grade One."

"I think that one of my duties as a teacher of Year 12 is to open their minds up to these dissenting readings, to these dissenting voices which are just as valid as the accepted readings."

The initial explicit reference to ‘aspiration’ and its contextualisation in terms of teaching took the following form:

I: I want to start probing this question of aspiration. I don’t actually have a structured set of questions; I just have some ‘opener’ questions. One of them would be “What’s the thing you most like to talk about?... So if we sat down to have a two or three hour conversation, and said ‘Pick a topic, that’s all yours’ (pause).

J: Ah! There probably would be two fairly equal ones. One would be my grandson.

I: Ah huh.

J: Um, and the other would probably be scripture. So that’s my two passions.

I: Can you tell me why?

(John mentions the ‘endearing’ qualities of his grandson here).

J: Scripture. I love scripture. Not so much for meditation, but simply for the intellectual rigour and the intellectual challenge of trying to work out what it’s about. And I just love reading it and reading about it.
I: What about in relation to school? Say we had that same conversation that was going to last a few hours, and the topic had to be somehow related to school or your work?

J: I guess for me the burning issue (pause) in school ( ). For me, the burning issue is, "What does it mean to say, 'This is a Catholic school?'

I: And that's a topic that you feel most passionate about?

J: Yeah.

I: Any reason why you think that is so important to you?

J: Um, Yes. Because I think that if we interpret it the wrong way, I mean very narrowly, all we do is promote and prolong sectarianism.

I: Ah. Hum.

I: When you go into the classroom, are there things there that, you know, you tell yourself before you go in, or you keep reminding yourself, that becomes a part of (Pause)

J: I have a little mantra that I say to myself as I walk through the door: 'Make me an instrument of your peace' ( ). It doesn't matter what the subject-matter is, but 'Make me an instrument of your peace'. And I find that that helps with the way I relate to the kids.

I: So there are certain things that you could say are beacons around which you construct your teaching performance ...
J: The aspiration I think is the ideal, um (pause) which you can never attain. You never ever reach an ideal, you can never attain an ideal, you only aim for it, can only aspire to it ... I know how I would like a Catholic school to be run. But there's no such school, and never will be.

In the next interview, John was asked if he could clarify further what he meant by his reference to a sense in which an aspiration is like an 'ideal' which cannot be attained.

J: What I meant was I'm not going to worry about whether you can reach an ideal or not.

I: Hmm.

J: What I'm getting at there is that, if you like, the perfect way, the way to strive for, (Pause) is when it becomes (Pause) I was going to say 'innate' but that means inborn, um, when it becomes almost instinct to do the wise thing, when it becomes instinctive, um, then you are not concerned about 'Does this measure up to a theory?' [or] 'How do I put this theory into action?'

I: Hmm.

J: You don't get caught up in that. You just do it, because acting wisely has become instinctive, and that's what we should all be aiming to do. So that's what I mean when I say the ideal: that's what we should be trying to do. But I don't think I do that.

I: Is that mystical in some ways, a mystical sort of ( )?
J: It's mystical but it's also very natural. If you think about a good mother with little kids. They [mothers] don't have to read the books about how to raise a child. See what I'm getting at? With some people it just comes natural. The right decisions are made.

I: Yes.

J: And that, that's wisdom, when it comes naturally.

4.4 Analysis: Towards Identification of 'Aspiration' as a Relevant Construct in John's Practice

The above interview text indicates certain aspects of John's interests and espoused ideas concerning teaching without necessarily providing sufficient data to allow any 'aspiration' to be definitively identified or stated. References to such interests and espoused ideas, however, can indicate the elements or areas which are relevant to the question of 'what matters' to John as a practising teacher. These elements or possible areas of relevance are indicated in Table 2.

Table 2. Indications of 'What Matters' to John as a Practising Teacher.

- The pedagogic concern with having students questioning and thinking in ways that do not necessarily reflect accepted or dominant views.
- The reference to scripture and a human being (grandson) as "passions".
- The "passionate" concern with the identity or meaning of 'This is a Catholic school'.
- The reference to a mantra implying the value of engendering peace.
- The notion that there is a transcendental dimension of aspirations or an aspect to aspirations (an "ideal") which cannot be attained.
4.5 Proposing an Aspiration: John’s Reflection on Stenhouse’s Statement

In a subsequent interview, an attempt was made to clarify John’s understanding of aspiration. As indicated in the above excerpt, the initial discussion has referred to the category of ‘aspiration’ in a very general philosophical or pedagogical context. The excerpt provided below involves a more ‘contextualised’ approach where John’s understanding of aspiration is discussed in relation to Stenhouse’s statement. In this excerpt, an interview has begun with John being handed a copy of the statement as it is presented in Section 3.5.2.

On this first occasion of John’s reading of Stenhouse’s statement, he provides the following response:

Excerpt 2

I: This is the part here (indicating Section 3.5.2 of the thesis), ‘The Setting of the Problem’...

J: (Silence while John reads). (Pause after reading). The bit there about “the gap between our ideas and aspirations and our attempts to operationalise them” is really interesting, because, um, the ideas and the aspirations - that’s me. But the operationalising – that’s me and the students. That’s the students*.

I: Hmm.

J: So, perhaps where the gap is, if there is a gap, it’s the gap between the teacher and the students. It’s not a gap between ideas and operations. It’s [rather] a personal thing*.

I: Hmm. Hmm.
J: Now, if the teacher is imposing on the students, then there will always be 'the gap'. But if the teacher is not imposing his views, then there is not a gap. Does that make sense to you?

I: Hmm. Hmm.

J: So I guess I'm lucky in the subjects that I teach, um, because the subjects I teach aren't content-driven. I don't know how a maths teacher would cope with that.

I: Yes. That could be, um, a critical point.

J: Hmm. But when you're teaching ideas about faith and belief, um (pause), you can't impose, you can't impose*. Ethically you can't impose, morally you can't impose, psychologically you can't impose anywhere.

I: Hmm.

J: You can't make anyone believe anything. Um, so maybe there's an advantage in the subjects that I teach. ( ) Teachers become unstuck I think when they don't understand what the aim of their subject is.

I: Hmm.

J: I mean they try to impose ideas and beliefs. Then you have a huge gap, um, and you can't operationalise. And teachers get very upset then.

At a later stage of the interview John is asked if he could clarify how he sees aspiration in relation to his own teaching:

213
J: I really think my aspiration as a teacher, aspiration itself is a very interesting word. It’s all about the spirit, um, what sort of spirit you want your students to breathe and to live in*. Um (Pause). And to me, it is really that they think for themselves and that they learn to make good judgements about what is valuable*, and (pause) sometimes you’ve got to be fairly directive with that, um, and at other times you have to be fairly free with it ... Sometimes you have to do a little bit of imposing on them.

I: When we talk about these things you have, probably, a re-interpretation of the conventional (pause).

J: Yes, if you asked me, for example, to define 'aspiration', in terms of my 'vocation' if you like, or you know what I do in terms of teaching*, to me it would be 'Seek first the Kingdom of God'*.

I: Hmm.

J: That's the aspiration, um, or 'Seek first the Kingdom of Heaven'*

I: Ah, hmm.

J: Now that should be, I think, the aspiration for a teacher. What sort of society would God want to be running? ( ) Um, a society that wasn’t boundaried, um, a society with love, I don’t mean sloppy love. Um.
I: How would you consider it an aspiration?

J: Well, that is the aspiration.

I: Would it be a desire, an earnest desire?

J: A passion*.

I: A passion.

J: It’s a passion. That’s the way I would define it. It’s passionate about ‘Seek first the Kingdom of God’ and, ah, then whatever else (pause) follows on from there*... So I think that, that’s what it’s about. I mean, who’s this? (Pointing to copy of problem-setting statement) Stenhouse?

I: Stenhouse, yes.

J: Maybe he would have been better off saying: The central problem of curriculum study is the belief of many teachers that they have the obligation to impose wisdom and learning on students, and, and their brand of truth on students, and they feel a failure if they don’t, whereas I think that we need to encourage kids to find truth for themselves, and to find out that there are many metaphors for truth.

4.6 Analysis of Excerpt Two

From this interview, two text units can be identified as making explicit and substantive reference to John’s perception of aspiration in his teaching.

The first of these two key text units is: “I really think my aspiration as a teacher is ... all about what sort of spirit you want your students to breathe and live in. And to me, it is really that they think for themselves and that they learn to make
good judgements about what is valuable.” The proposed abridgement of this text unit renders John’s perceived aspiration as:

‘A spirit whereby students learn to think for themselves and make good judgements about what is valuable.’

The second key text unit is: “Yes, if you asked me, for example, to define aspiration, in terms of my vocation if you like, or you know what I do in terms of teaching, to me it would be ‘Seek first the Kingdom of God’. That’s the aspiration ... ‘Seek first the Kingdom of God.’” The proposed abridgement of this text unit renders John’s perceived aspiration here as:

‘Seek first the Kingdom of God’.

Both the first and the second key text units share certain contextual features which are significant to the hermeneutical process of understanding John’s view towards aspiration in his teaching. ‘Contextual features’ here refers to points of analysis drawn from the excerpts but not necessarily located in the two key text units. From a philosophical perspective, the context shared by both units is ‘axiological’ in the sense that an understanding of how John approaches the subject-matter can require a concern with values.

There is, for instance, the emphasis or importance John places on valuing a student-centred approach. This value of student-centredness, or more generally the valuing of a person-centred approach, is reflected in the text leading up to the first key unit: ‘the gap’ is interpreted as a gap between human beings (“it’s a personal thing”), ‘operationalising’ is conceived as an inter-subjective relation (“that’s me and the students”), and the problem is rendered in terms of how the teacher respects or does not respect students (“you can’t impose”).
In the text which accompanies the second key unit, this valuing of a person-centred approach is again implied as John begins to explain the reference to ‘Kingdom of Heaven’. The initial reference to ‘kingdom’ takes the form “Kingdom of God”, but John immediately re-states it as “Kingdom of Heaven” and subsequently uses the form ‘Kingdom of Heaven’ again as he begins to explain the meaning. There is no evidence of any interest on John’s part in using either term ‘kingdom’ or ‘heaven’ in a cosmological or supranaturalist sense.⁴⁹ In other words, John does not appear to be referring here to something that ‘lies yonder’ in any physical sense (such as a distant realm of the cosmos) or suprahistorical-metaphysical sense (such as a post-earthly experience wholly transcendent of facticity). The stance or orientation is rather one which eschews this general line of thinking (“I’m not talking about the afterlife”; “that’s boring”). When John then refers to “God”, the focus on people is retained by the repetition of the word ‘society’, the concern for valuing inclusivity (“a society that wasn’t boundaried”) and the quality of relations therein (“a society with love”).

Asked to clarify how ‘Seek first the Kingdom of Heaven’ can be considered as an aspiration, John points towards the personal nature of his perceived aspiration by rendering it as a “passion”. The terms ‘Kingdom of God’ and ‘Kingdom of Heaven’ seem to be used as interchangeable expressions, and John reverts to the former when he comes to “define” his aspiration as a matter of what he is “passionate about”. Aspiration, for John, is also a person-centred concern in the sense that he selects personal terms (“my vocation”; “a passion”) to frame how he would ‘define’ it.

⁴⁹ Mautner’s Dictionary of Philosophy (2000) defines ‘supranaturalism’ as “a doctrine which assumes the existence of supernatural entities” (p. 550). There are complex philosophical and theological issues here, such as those surrounding the meaning of the term ‘supernatural’, but for present purposes it is considered sufficient to observe the general tenor of John’s use of language.
As with the reference to ‘Kingdom of Heaven’, the terms which John associates with aspiration (‘vocation’, ‘spirit’ and ‘passion’) are used with direct reference to practical concerns. ‘Vocation’ is closely linked with practice, or in John’s words “what I do in terms of teaching”. Similarly, the term ‘spirit’ is not used to denote something esoteric. John views aspiration as being “all about the spirit”, and this spirit is a matter of how a person lives. Rather than being something abstract or removed from experience, spirit pertains to what “you want your students to breathe and live in”. It involves the practical reasoning whereby students can “think for themselves” and “learn to make good judgments”. The use of the words ‘passion’ and ‘passionate’ is also oriented towards practice. For John, aspiration is ‘a passion’ and being ‘passionate’ is fundamental to the central role of aspiration in practice. This ‘central role’ is implied by the last line of the excerpt: “It’s passionate ... then whatever else follows on from there”.

By referring to the ‘two key text units’ above, it is possible to consider substantive propositions of what John counts as an ‘aspiration’ in his own practice. In this sense, the two text units include a self-identification of perceived aspiration. The first text unit begins with the words “I really think my aspiration as a teacher is”. Having mentioned that it is “all about ... what sort of spirit you want”, the proposal is further clarified, beginning with words which again suggest this sense of self-identification: “And to me it is really that ...”. The proposal of his aspiration as a matter of ‘spirit’ is then clarified as wanting students to “think for themselves and make good judgements about what is valuable”.

The second key text unit also includes a number of references pertaining to this sense of explicit self-identification of a perceived aspiration: “If you asked me
... to define”; “to me it would be”; “that’s the aspiration”. In this second text unit, the substantive proposition is “Seek first the Kingdom of Heaven”.

Hence, the abridgements of the two key text units can be approached as two substantive propositions of perceived aspiration:

**Proposition One:** John aspires to a spirit whereby students learn to think for themselves and make good judgements about what is valuable.

**Proposition Two:** John aspires to ‘Seek first the Kingdom of Heaven’.

John is not necessarily proposing two different aspirations here. In other words, it is possible that the reference to thinking and the making of good judgements is synonymous with the reference to seeking the kind of society that is associated with the kingdom.

### 4.7 Introduction to Excerpt Three

Excerpt Three is essentially a clarification occurring within the context of the hermeneutic interview as a collaborative process. It is a clarification by the aspirant ‘John’ and the interviewer to say that the two proposed aspirations are not necessarily different, but can be approached as a matter of language and context, or two different ways of saying the same thing.

On this basis, **Proposition One** (“Students learn to think for themselves and good judgements about what is valuable”) can be posited as a statement to focus on when it is necessary to discuss John’s perceived aspiration in a concise form. In discussing ‘the gap’, and later the implications for reflecting on the wisdom question, Proposition One is treated as a philosophical statement which can represent John’s perceived aspiration.
In this brief excerpt, John is presented with the written text of the two propositions (above) of his perceived aspiration. The interviewer subsequently proposes a clarification and seeks a confirmation of how John regards the identification of his perceived aspiration.

Excerpt 3

I: My, um, suggestion looking at that was, that one way of framing it would be to say that one of the propositions was more philosophical, it was a more philosophical context, that’s the one where it says “John aspires to a spirit whereby students learn to think for themselves make good judgements about what is valuable”,

J: Hmm. Hmm.

I: whereas this [other] one might be considered a more theological context. They’re not necessarily different things; they’re different ways of saying more or less the same thing, one in a philosophical context and one in a theological context.

J: Yes, exactly.

I: Does that sound okay to you?

J: Yes. Yes.

I: All right, okay.
Towards Understanding John’s Approach to ‘The Gap’

Analysis Across the Excerpts

In the previous three excerpts, the discussion has generally focused on the category of ‘aspiration’, but the reference to Stenhouse’s statement as a context for considering aspiration has also included some explicit attention to the notion of ‘the gap’. Some comments from John concerning aspiration also imply a view or approach towards ‘the gap’. In Excerpt One, for example, John suggests that there is a sense in which an aspiration is an “ideal” and, in this respect, he does not approach practice as a matter of realising or fulfilling his aspiration: “The aspiration I think is the ideal which you never attain ... I’m not going to worry about whether you can reach an ideal or not”.

In Excerpt Two, John reflects on Stenhouse’s statement and talks more explicitly about ‘the gap’. As the analysis has indicated, ‘the gap’ is approached here as a matter of inter-subjective relations, and at one point John claims that “if the teacher is not imposing his views, then there is not a gap”. Qualifying this view with reference to its subject specific context, John implies that there are important connections between curriculum and pedagogy when it comes to the notion of a ‘gap’: “Teachers come unstuck I think when they don’t understand what the aim of their subject is”.

In Excerpts One and Two, John is not dismissing the category of ‘aspiration’ or the notion of ‘the gap’ as irrelevant to his practice and teaching experience. For instance, when John refers to aspiration as “the ideal” which he is “not going to worry about”, he is reflecting on ‘the gap’ within a limited context. The context, as his later comments in the excerpt confirm, is one where he is reflecting on a particular sense in which aspirations can be considered as aiming
towards an “ideal” or a “perfect way” which “you can never attain”. He is, in other words, referring to what Chapter 3 has described as a ‘transcendental’ dimension of aspiration.

The context of John’s reference to unattainability is significant here. His approach is not to “get caught up” or “worry about” the transcendental aspect of aspiration by reducing it to questions such as “Does this measure up...?”. In other words, John considers that trying to get an ideal under control doesn’t work. He recognises the sense in which the ideal, qua ideal, is something existing only as an idea for him. Unattainability is recognised as a matter of practicality, but the ideal is not jettisoned for the sake of reducing the aspiration to a finite or ‘reachable’ goal.

John talks instead about aspiration and the ideal in the existentialist terms of a “passionate” and “personal” choice which emphasises a mode of being or “way to strive for”. Hence, the context or point of John’s references to ‘the ideal’ is a matter of his articulation of aspiration as a personal-process, a ‘striving for’ what matters to him rather than a ‘going at’ it. John is aware of the limitations of directing effort at ‘the perfect way’ and yet he consciously chooses it as ‘the way to strive for’.

The distinction here is not mere semantics: John speaks of aspiration as a way of being engaged, a valuing of the process whereby meaning is derived from the aspiration itself. His choice of the term ‘vocation’ as a frame of reference “to define aspiration” can suggest this ascription of value to the aspiring process itself. As Hansen (1994) notes, in his study of Teaching and the Sense of Vocation, the term ‘vocation’ (Latin root, vocare, ‘to call’) generally implies that a person “knows something about him or herself, something important, valuable, and worth acting upon” (p. 267).
John uses several terms which can be aligned with this notion of vocation (or ‘calling’) and its implication of self-realised value. Examples include his references to teaching as a matter of “duties”, “passion”, “spirit” and “Seek first the kingdom of God/Heaven”. These are terms which generally convey an inclination, and in the context of John’s usage they can suggest “the strong and persistent inclination” Hansen (1994) associates with the “sense of vocation” as a realisation of “personal meaning” (p. 266).

In Hansen’s description, the sense of vocation is underpinned by a vocational “stance” which approaches teaching as a way “to contribute to and engage with the world” (p. 267). The vocational stance involves “the person’s sense of agency” and “assumes human striving itself to be worthwhile” (p. 267). Both this sense of agency and worthwhile striving are implied in the first key text unit [“If you asked me, for example, to define aspiration, in terms of my vocation if you like, or you know what I do in terms of teaching, to me it would be ‘Seek first the Kingdom of God’.”] A “sense of agency” is suggested by the action-oriented understanding of ‘vocation’ (“what I do in terms of teaching”), and worthwhile striving is suggested by the expression used to define the aspiration (“Seek first the Kingdom of God”).

For John, value is yielded not only at certain stages or moments of practice because “the right decisions are made”. Value is also perceived as being yielded in a more encompassing way, extending beyond the practical utility of the ‘right decision’ to the personal sense in which the right decision is associated with a mode of being that is “very natural”, like a “good mother with little kids”. In Excerpt Two, the valuing process also encompasses the “sort of spirit you want your students to breathe and live in”. The words “breathe and live in” here can suggest that John is intimately linking his aspiring-valuing process with the valuing process whereby
students can “think for themselves” and “make good judgements about what is valuable”.

If John’s reference to striving for ‘the perfect way’ or ‘the ideal’ in Excerpt One is considered in the light of the emphasis he places on ‘spirit’ and valuing people in Excerpt Two, the process-orientation of his aspiration is underscored. John is choosing a fluid process of relationality (“operationalising - that’s me and the students”), organicism (“it’s also very natural”), and unforced results (“you can’t impose anywhere; you can’t make anyone believe anything”). The idea of the aspiration as ‘the ideal’ or ‘perfect way’ is constitutive of the process, informing “what we should be trying to do”, as well as energising and inspiring John to be “passionate”.

The aspiration, at first glance, appears to be articulated as a ‘telos’, a striving towards an optimal state of being where “acting wisely has become instinctive”, but the comments accompanying the proposal of ‘the ideal’ suggest that John actually finds the teleological position to be inadequate for practice. John refers to aspiration without concern for reaching any ‘state’, ‘the ideal’ is not presented as an endpoint and the general focus is given to a mode of practice rather than a method of achieving success.

A description of John’s striving, in terms of an overall philosophical position, requires the care to consider the apparent circularity of his account of aspiration and ‘the gap’. With respect to the sense in which the labelling of a

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30 It is acknowledged that the term ‘teleological’, derived from the Greek word ‘telos’, is variously defined. The present usage is mindful of the means-to-end implications of the term as it is commonly used. According to The Oxford Companion to Philosophy (1994): “Teleological explanations attempt to account for things and features by appeal to their contributions to optimal states” (p. 868). The connotation of means-to-end thinking is common but it is not a necessary emphasis. John’s comments could sit more comfortably with the broadest sense of ‘teleology’ where the term can be used to characterise the practitioner as ‘purposive’ in a fashion that transcends the means-to-end framework (Midgley, 1992, p. 10).
teacher’s approach can truncate the meaning of his or her aspiration, the present analysis considers the necessity of taking into account the multi-faceted, complex and encompassing nature of John’s process-oriented, aspiring-valuing perspective. Hence, the ‘circularity’ referred to here is more than an inclusiveness regarding, on the one hand, John’s apparent insistence on retaining a firm footing in the practical affairs of his experienced reality, and on the other hand, his embrace of transcendent ideals.

In his discussion of ‘circularity’, O’Neill (1981) contrasts “simple and linear one-way causal explanations” with explanations which function as if “reality is essentially circular”, thereby presenting propositions which are “interaffecting” (p. 79). Although circular argument in formal logic can be “guilty of begging the question” (Mautner, 2000, p. 95), O’Neill is referring to circularity in a broader context where the question of whether reality is “best expressed” as “essentially circular” is a “legitimate matter for philosophical debate” (p. 79). He refers to “circular processes” (p. 78) in doing philosophy where “the matters to which the ideas refer are seldom discrete and generally tend to serve as merely different aspects of a total and interrelated process” (p. 78).

In the present case, the appearance of this latter general ‘circularity’ in certain contexts of analysing the excerpts is suggested as a feature of John’s articulation rather than as an identification of a metaphysical ‘position’. When John, for example, says that the aspiration is “the ideal”, he is not necessarily concerned with adopting this ideal as a metaphysical stance nor is there evidence of any interest in pursuing it as a metaphysical question. ‘The ideal’ and ‘the kingdom’ are articulated by John as values he projects onto his experience (the ideal is something John “strives for”; the kingdom is something to “seek first”), and also as imaginative
or creative ideas supporting an extension of experience and an openness to experience (the kingdom is not “boundaried”; “Seek first the Kingdom of God, and then whatever else follows on from there”).

The psychological literature can supply useful constructs and frameworks for analysing the creative-imaginative or transcendent dimension of aspirations. The consideration of John’s articulation as a matter of extension and openness to experience here accords with the general tenor of ‘humanistic psychology’ (Schneider, Bugental & Pierson, 2001) and with Rogers’ (1977, pp. 347, 359) description of creativity in particular. In his “person-centred” and “non-directive” therapeutical and educational theory, Rogers (1977) emphasised “the urge which is evident in all organic and human life - to expand, extend, become autonomous, develop, mature – this tendency ... exists in every individual, and awaits only the proper conditions to be released and expressed” (p. 35).

Hence, Rogers (1977) describes “openness to experience” as a fundamental condition for “constructive creativity” (p. 353), and the “mainspring of creativity” itself as “man’s [sic] tendency to actualise himself and become his potentialities” (p. 351). “Extensionality” is presented as a criterion of this openness to experience and is described as “the opposite of psychological defensiveness, when to protect the organization of the self, certain experiences are prevented from coming into awareness except in distorted fashion” (p. 353). Rogers also describes the “openness to experience” in terms of a “permeability of boundaries” whereby a person can express what is of value to him or herself without “forcing closure upon the situation” (pp. 353-354).31

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31 The notion of ‘creativity’ receives further attention in the analysis of Excerpt 4.
In the psychological context, John’s understanding of ‘the ideal’ and ‘the kingdom’ can also be considered in terms of the ‘archetypes’ of Jung’s analytical psychology. Archetypes are defined as “root images”, “themes or symbols” that can be “activated by forces operating in the psyche, thereby generating visions that are projected onto current experiences” (Ryckman, 1993, p. 97). Jungian psychology also places an emphasis on ‘instincts’ which are defined as “impulses to carry out actions from necessity, without conscious motivation” (Nagy, 1991, p. 167). In Jung’s own words, “an instinct is always and inevitably coupled with something like a philosophy of life, however archaic, unclear, and hazy this may be” (quoted in Nagy, p. 168).

If John’s reference to ‘the ideal’ is comparable to an archetype in the sense that it pertains to a fundamental theme operative within his thinking, then his understanding of the ideal as “when it becomes instinctive” shares further ground with the Jungian viewpoint. When John refers to ‘instinct’ and an ‘instinctive’ way of ‘acting wisely’, his meaning cannot be assumed to correspond to the Jungian idea of instinct as ‘impulse without conscious motivation’, but there is a parallel in a broader sense where what is ultimately being aimed at and valued is a process of learning to act spontaneously from one’s own nature. For John, ‘the perfect way’ is embodied by ‘acting wisely’ in a fashion that is ‘natural’ without ‘getting caught up’ in theoretical concerns. Jung’s approach is also process-oriented and ultimately concerned with the “wisdom” he describes as “never violent” for “where wisdom

32 It is to be acknowledged here that Jung generally considers archetypes in a predispositional context as “the necessary a priori determinants of all psychic process” (Jung, 1919/1983, para. 270), whereas John refers to his ideal within the specific aspirational context of a conscious idea of “the way to strive for”. Although John’s overall position is not necessarily ‘Jungian’, the suggestion here is that Jung provides constructs, such as ‘archetype’ and ‘instinct’, which can be useful to an understanding of John’s aspiration and practice.
reigns there is no conflict between thinking and feeling” (Jung, quoted in Clift, 1982, p. 43).

Adler’s “individual psychology” (Adler, 1929) can provide another psychological context for discussing the transcendent dimension of aspirations and John’s articulation of ‘the ideal’ and ‘the Kingdom’. According to Adler, human beings are “motivated to strive toward fulfilment of their own unique potentials” and consequently “strive for perceived or imagined goals that give direction to their behaviour. These goals are not tangible; they are imagined ideals” (Ryckman, 1993, p. 102). The Adlerian approach to analysis is teleological in the sense that he understands humans as “striving” beings, and striving itself as “an intrinsic necessity of life itself” (Adler, quoted in Klein, 1970, p. 277).

Several other philosophical-psychological constructs or contexts can assist the analysis of key points in John’s articulation and thinking. Examples include: Fromm’s (1955) theorising of the human ‘need for transcendence’ in order to develop potentialities; Allport’s (1955) notion of ‘propriate striving’; Maslow’s (1968) theory of ‘self actualisation’; and Kelly’s (1955) theory of ‘personal constructs’. The present concern however is to insure the progress of the analysis towards considering John’s approach in terms of an overall philosophical position.

4.9 Representing John’s Approach as an Overall Philosophical Position:

The Category of ‘Synergism’

Rather than describe John’s striving as ‘teleological’, or alternatively ‘deterministic’ in the sense that it is always determined by the privileging of his ‘vocational stance’, the consideration here is to incorporate the circularity mentioned above. John ‘defines’ his aspiration as a process issuing from his sense of
'vocation', and yet there is also an emphasis on the sense in which his 'striving' is
issuing towards 'the ideal' or 'the perfect way'. The plurality in emphasis, however,
extends beyond the dualistic notion of an 'issuing from' and an 'issuing towards'.

It is necessary to recognise here that the term 'circularity' is not referring to
a limitation in the sense of a self-repeating pattern in John’s reasoning or use of
different ideas. In other words, John does not lead the discussion towards a kind of
philosophical cul-de-sac where there is containment, system and completion to his
thinking. On the contrary, his approach exemplifies process modes of thought (as
outlined in Sections 2.5 - 2.8) and the articulation itself points to dynamic processes.
He speaks of “seeing the lights come on”, “passion”, “instinct”, “vocation” and
aspiration as pertaining to the “spirit” that students “breathe and live in”. Such kinds
of emphases in John’s articulation do not necessarily preclude the identification of an
overall philosophical position, but there is a dynamic quality here and its movement
in thought requires some care with any tendency towards oversimplification.

This ‘dynamic quality’ can be considered as a movement to, among, and
around a multiplicity of ideas or perspectives, and is itself projected onto the
aspiration as a pedagogical orientation. Rather than “play it safe” and contain his
approach to what he refers to in singular terms as “the accepted, dominant view”,
John aims for his students to “open their minds up” to a multiplicity of perspectives,
including “dissenting voices” and “thinking that is very different to what they have
been taught in the past”. For John and his pedagogical orientation, it is important to
place pre-understandings at risk: “dissenting voices” or “dissenting readings” can be
“just as valid as the accepted readings”, and there is value in realising that “it is okay
to question”.

229
'Circularity' is not a term of 'closure' in this context but pertains to the more "radical plurality" previously mentioned in the consideration of Tracy's hermeneutics. Tracy's hermeneutics, it can be recalled, are essentially an allowance for "difference and otherness" (Tracy, 1994, p. 20). The present proposal is that John's articulation is 'circular' in its capacity to incorporate different emphases (including the 'emphasis' that can be a 'student'), and in its willingness to embrace the expansion in thinking that such an approach can require. Rather than turn to a formulated set of relations for logically ordering the various points of emphasis, John's articulation relies on both the metaphoricity of language and the movement of the conversation to carry the plurality of his perspectives.

Hence, the consideration that John has a vocational stance, and that his striving involves a 'telos' or 'issuing towards', does not limit his aspiration to a focus on what lies in the future. Additionally, John emphatically draws the 'Kingdom of Heaven' expression towards more present concerns and away from a futuristic perspective on the "afterlife" which is a "boring" line of consideration for him. His perspective on 'the gap' is rendered as a matter for teachers to understand the present moment of the pedagogical process where the teacher is 'operationalising', and this present moment is the actualisation of an approach that is not "imposing" on students.

For John, there is a sense in which he has no concern with notions of a 'gap' ("if the teacher is not imposing his views, there is not a 'gap'") as long as the teaching is presently engaging the students ("operationalising – that's me and the students"). The process of engaging involves genuine inter-personal relations that are respectful rather than impositional. Hence, the notion of an 'engaging' process here can also be closely associated with a value of respecting students in the present
pedagogical moment. This 'engaging' is essential to the aspiring-valuing process, informing both John's reflection on Stenhouse's statement and his rendering of his own aspiration as being "all about the sort of spirit you want your students to breathe and live in".

It has been noted above that, when John speaks of 'aspiration' or 'the gap', he often uses philosophical or theological constructs that can also privilege the anterior moment, the sense in which 'aspiring' has a prior status in having already located or realised something of existential significance. He speaks, for instance, of aspiration as it relates to his "vocation", "the spirit" and the priority he expresses as "Seek first the Kingdom of God" or "Kingdom of Heaven". The anterior moment, in this context of self-realised valuing, can be considered as the already-interpreted moment or the "readiness to act" that can be associated with aspiration as "an affective and conative component of attitudes" (Postlethwaite, 1994, p. 354).

John values what he has already interpreted but as a 'seeker' he also values the claim on his attention of different perspectives. From a hermeneutical standpoint, the prioritising of this claim is an instance of what Gadamer (1991) refers to as "the essential relation between question and knowledge" (p. 364). Drawing from the celebrated Socratic docta ignorantia (or knowledge of not knowing), Gadamer emphasises how the raising of questioning "to a conscious art ... is reserved for the person who wants to know" (p. 366). John's 'wanting to know' involves the questioning that is inherent to seeking. His "love" of scripture is accordingly presented as a passion for "intellectual rigour and the intellectual challenge of trying to work out what it's about".

An overall philosophical position or category which can accommodate this circularity and its plurality of emphases is 'synergism'. In relation to matters
previously discussed (in Chapter 2), synergism is a category for the kind of reasoning processes that can facilitate a ‘transdisciplinary conversation’, the ‘allowance for otherness’, the hermeneutical ‘principle of multiple perspectives’ and the ‘practical ethic’ or respect for human beings that is necessary for a genuine dialogue. This respect accords with John’s emphasis on not imposing a point of view on students.

A brief consideration of definitions can suggest the essential characteristics of ‘synergism’ as a philosophical category or position. As indicated by Fuller (1975), “synergy means behaviour of integral, aggregate, whole systems unpredicted by behaviours of any of their components or subassemblies of their components taken separately from the whole” (p. 3). In simpler terms, synergism is associated with dynamics where “the whole is greater than the parts” (Nadler & Hibino, 1995, p. 297). Synergism is also described as a way of thinking which values co-operative relationships with students in teaching (Covey, 1989, p. 265), focussing “on total interactions rather than on problem areas only” (Nadler & Hibino, 1995, p. 297).

Synergistic thinking involves “a creative imagination” which in turn is defined as “the power to envision a future state” (Covey, Merrill & Merrill, 1994, pp. 60, 215). O’Neill (1981) represents synergism generally as a “circular process” and distinguishes a “positive synergism” which “functions in such a way as to create the ongoing conditions that predispose towards the success of subsequent phases of the process - which in turn create the conditions necessary to generate successful behaviour” (p. 80). In his Seven Habits of Highly Effective People, Covey (1989) uses circular diagrams to uphold synergy as “the highest activity in all life” (p. 262).

The synergistic thinker can therefore be described as a person with a non-reductive mode of approach to problems (such as ‘the gap’), a circularity and plural

33 Regarding the ‘recognition of otherness’ here, the epigraph to Covey’s (1994) chapter on synergistic thinking is notable: “Difference is the beginning of synergy” (p. 211).
emphases in thinking, creative or imaginative envisioning and a tolerance or respect for human beings in dialogic situations.

In teaching, this synergistic approach includes an orientation towards generating the kinds of pedagogic situations which are particularly valued by John. A recall of the following text units can indicate these kinds of pedagogic situations: “One of the things I really like seeing is the lights come on”; “they realise it is okay to question”; “I would very, very often be ... exposing them to a way of thinking that is very different”; “to open their minds up to these dissenting readings, to these dissenting voices”.

The general pedagogic emphasis here accords with Covey’s (1989) description of synergism in classrooms:

When you communicate synergistically, you are simply opening your mind and heart and expressions to new possibilities, new alternatives, new options ... There are times when neither the teacher nor the student knows for sure what’s going to happen ... Synergy is almost as if a group collectively agrees to subordinate old scripts and to write a new one. (pp. 264, 265)

Covey, Merrill and Merrill (1994) also associate synergism with a personal sense of “mission” (p. 106) and the prioritising of ideals referred to as “principle-centered living” (p. 267). ‘Principles’ are considered as ethical ideals which “deal with meaning and truth” (p. 53), and “principle-centered living” is associated with people who value a person-centred approach:

They’re more synergistic. Instead of doing ‘their thing’ to others, they find greater rewards in working with others to achieve shared vision. They value the difference. They believe in the synergy of third alternative solutions ... They can focus on the other person’s interests and concerns. (p. 292)
The general philosophical position of ‘synergism’ (as it essentially pertains to the interaction of dynamics where the whole system generates more than can be indicated by attending to all of the parts), does not require the reference to a sense of ‘mission’, but at a personal level the ‘synergistic position’ implies a motivated approach. Covey, Merrill and Merrill (1994) further characterise synergy at this personal level, as “seeking first to understand” and using “creative imagination” (p. 215) to explore and generate “viable possibilities” (p. 230). In this personal-synergistic context, the motivated approach consists of “a deep sustained energy” which the authors refer to as “the passion of vision” (p. 105).

The association of these ideas or features of synergy with the personal sense of ‘mission’ is not unlike the description of John’s aspiring-valuing process and its link to a “vocational stance” (Hansen, 1994). John’s valuing of difference and alternative perspectives is connected to “having students questioning and thinking” and to his aspiration for them “to think for themselves and make good judgements”. His valuing-aspiring process, however, is also connected with his own “passion” for “intellectual rigour”, “intellectual challenge” and the meanings that can be associated with scripture, the aspiration expressed as “Seek first the Kingdom of Heaven”, and “the burning issue” of Catholic school identity (or “What does it mean to say ‘This is Catholic school?’”).

4.10 The Synergistic Approach as ‘Passion’

The way that John perceives his aspiration as a ‘passion’ can also be aligned with the ‘synergistic’ approach or position. In considering that “the words synergy (syn-ergy) and energy (en-ergy) are companions”, Fuller (1975, p. 3) notes that synergy is a term connoting the integration and further generation of energising
elements. The human motivational question or the “question of what arouses and energises behaviour” is complex (Franken, 1988, p. 3), but when John refers to ‘passion’ it is clear that he is referring to a kind of motivated force that is fundamental to the process orientation of his teaching. For John, ‘passion’ is the key term for understanding what initiates and sustains the energies involved in his approach to people and teaching.

The evidence of this ‘energised’ modality or motivated approach to thinking about practice is furnished by the incidence and saliency of John’s references to ‘passion’: In the initial interview, John identifies scripture and his grandson as his “two passions”; the question of ‘What does it mean to say ‘This is a Catholic school?’ is referred to as a “burning issue” and affirmed as a topic he is “passionate about”; John speaks of aspiration as “a passion” and introduces the object of the passion (“Seek first the Kingdom of God”) in the active context of “what I do in terms of teaching”. There is also a sense in which ‘passion’ is viewed as leading or generating practice when John refers to how he would define his aspiration: “It’s passionate about ‘Seek first the Kingdom’ and then whatever else follows on from there.”

Rather than suggest a diminution or dissipation of energies in teaching, John retains a focus on what psychologists refer to as the “interest structures” (motivation) of his approach (Csikszentmihalyi & Rathunde, 1990). From a philosophical perspective, these ‘interest structures’ include what has previously been referred to as the ‘aspiring-valuing’ process. The ‘passion’ is a motivated dimension of this process, a ‘positive affect’ in the psychological sense of expressing an appreciation of people (“the students”) and things (“I love scripture”). There is also a ‘volitional’ dimension to the passion: the aspiration for the kingdom or “a society with love”
involves a willing to “seek first”. Taken together as ‘passion’, these dimensions of affect and volition can be viewed as an expression of how John values being an active constructor of his own experience.

The appreciation and willing mentioned here forms a complex with the cognitive component of analysis, questioning and judgement pertaining to John’s “passionate” interest in philosophical-theological matters. These matters require “intellectual rigour”, “intellectual challenge” and, in some cases, the hermeneutic understanding that can address a question (such as “What does it mean to say; ‘This is a Catholic school?’”) and not “interpret it the wrong way”. When discussing teaching, the central philosophical-theological ideas of John’s perceived aspiration are concerned with “the Catholic school”, “the ideal” and “the kingdom”. There is also the implication of concern with what philosophers refer to as ‘the good’ in the attention to “good judgements about what is valuable”. John maintains the focus on these motivational and axiological aspects of his approach even when the interviewer turns the conversation towards a consideration of Stenhouse’s statement and ‘the gap’.

Viewed as ‘synergistic’, John’s philosophical position and its understanding of aspiration as “the ideal” resonate with Reid’s (1968) pedagogical consideration of the theory-practice relationship: “We have, I believe, to work from the idea of applying theories and concepts, as such, to practice, towards the idea … of a person charged with ideas, deciding and acting in an enlightened way in the individual situation” (p. 87). The premise to this view also resonates with synergism as a philosophical position and John’s emphasis on passion:

I want to repeat that philosophical thinking (for example in education) is an activity of the person, and that the attitudes and feelings and interests (or the limitation of these) of the person affect intimately not only the way in
which he [sic] behaves, but the range of illumination of the thought itself. (Reid, 1968, p. 93)

In the educational and philosophical literature, the constructs that can be utilised to describe the qualities of these energies that are brought to, and brought about, by practice are varied. Examples include: ‘the educational imagination’ (Eisner, 1985), ‘value-sensing transcendent mode’ (Donaldson, 1992), ‘the emancipatory interest’ (Habermas, 1972), ‘the illative sense’ (Newman, 1870/1985), ‘imaginative expression’ (Collingwood, 1936/1985), ‘the I-Thou relation’ (Buber, 1965), ‘emotional intelligence’ (Goleman, 1995), ‘vital reason’ (Ortega, 2000) and ‘inspiration’ (Brazier, 2000).

4.11 John’s Approach as a Relationship Between ‘the Theoretic’ and ‘the Practical’

John’s use of language can suggest the sense in which he considers it important for experience to be animated by ideas that engage and develop the expression of an aspiration. The emphasis here does not focus on ‘the gap’ as a problem of practice failing to embody the ideas (or ‘the theoretic’). It is rather the understanding of ‘aspiration’ and the process of expressing it that is foregrounded when John reflects on Stenhouse’s statement. In other words, the problem of ‘the gap’ is re-interpreted as a question of process, a matter of “the way” or “the spirit” (as considered in the foregoing section in relation to the synergistic notion of ‘engaging’).

As previously indicated, there is an emphasis on hermeneutic understanding when John underscores the importance of certain ideas (“What does it mean to say ‘This is a Catholic school?’”; “And then of course it comes back to, well ‘What do
you mean by Kingdom of Heaven?”). In the context of synergism, Reid’s (1968) “person charged with ideas” (p. 87) is a person who becomes ‘charged’ through experiences which require an openness to new perspectives and the posing of new questions. This openness is comparable to that which has been outlined in relation to Gadamer’s (1991) philosophy of “genuine hermeneutical experience” (p. 357). For John, this hermeneutical context of practice is important in both these respects of being a person ‘with ideas’ and being a person ‘working on’ ideas.

The context is nevertheless generally ‘practical’ in the sense that John is articulating aspiration in relation to choices and his own experience. ‘Choices’ here pertains to the direction of focus, what John is “trying to do” and what he chooses not to “worry about” or “get caught up in”. ‘Experience’ here pertains to how John finds his aspiration to be both energised and energising as a ‘passion’. It is in this context of articulating choice and experience that John makes his references to aspiration as “the ideal”. Ideas are important to John in this context not only because they are bound up with his particular choices and ‘experienced reality’, but also because he recognises how an idea (valued as an ‘ideal’) makes certain choices and experiences possible.34

The context does not assume that the perceived aspiration can be separated from the ‘practical’ or ‘concrete’ circumstances of human life previously referred to as ‘facticity’ (Heidegger, 1923/1999, p. 5). John does not direct the discussion towards a consideration of transcendent metaphysics (where his ideas or ‘the ideal’ might be considered along Platonic lines as having their origins in a realm beyond the reach of ordinary human experience) or a metaphysics of morals (in the Kantian sense where the ideal might exist as a moral law standing over and above any need of

34 William James provides a ‘psychological’ version of the kind of recognition being implied here: “To sum it all up in a word, the terminus of the psychological process of volition, the point to which the will is directly applied, is always an idea” (quoted in Pascual-Leone, 1990, p. 250).
reference to experience). Although a normative dimension to John’s thinking is implied or referred to in certain comments (such as the references to “my duties” and “what we should all be aiming to do”), the general emphasis is directed towards what evolves within concrete circumstances or a qualitative-structural process (“when it becomes instinctive” and “think about a good mother with little kids”).

The references to ‘acting wisely’ as a kind of perfection (“the ideal”; “the perfect way”), including the analogical reference to a “good mother”, can be thought of here as an example of the profundity-practicality nexus. As an approach to ‘the gap’, John’s “espoused theory” (Argyris, 1982) addresses itself to the Context of Profundity when it values a discernment of ‘the good’ in a way that is inseparable from a discernment of the mode of expressing the aspiration (Carr, 1987, p. 169). An example arises in Excerpt Two when John reflects on the “right decisions” being made in the modality of being a ‘good mother’. In other words, the nexus here is not only a matter of ‘what to do’ but also a matter of ‘how to be’ (Kelly, 1991, p. 2).

Another example arises when John considers “good judgements about what is valuable” as a matter of “what sort of spirit you want your students to breathe and live in”.

John requires such matters of the Context of Profundity to be fully embedded in the ‘practicality ethic’ of everyday living.35 For instance, when the interviewer invites John to consider his references to “the ideal” and “acting wisely” as “mystical in some ways”, he responds with an acknowledgement but immediately re-directs the focus towards ordinary experience: “It’s mystical but its also very natural. If you think about a good mother with little kids ... And that, that’s wisdom, when it comes naturally”.

35 Both notions of ‘the good’ and the ‘practicality ethic’ have been outlined in Chapter 3.
This emphasis on what is “natural”, following on from the emphasis on a way that is “instinctive”, can allow the previous attention to the term ‘transcendental’ to be contextualised in relation to aspiration. In other words, the sense in which John’s aspiration is ‘transcendental’ can be located at the level of his concern for an approach which is more intimately connected with the mode of being of a person and less detached from historically situated actions (Bernstein, 1996, p. xi; Gadamer, 1991). Dunne (1993) associates this approach with Aristotelian phronesis and the kind of praxis which is “more personal and experiential, more supple and less formulable” (p. 10). John also values the phronetic ways of transcending ‘the theoretic’ whereby “to do the wise thing” is “natural”, “becomes instinctive” and is analogous to strong intuitions of good mothers who “don’t have to read the books”.

Aspiration is generally articulated by John in this ‘naturalistic’ context even when the terms he is using, such as ‘the ideal’ and ‘Kingdom of Heaven’, can initially appear to suggest something to the contrary. The present section has already observed that John uses terms which might putatively be associated with a ‘transcendental’ or ‘metaphysical’ standpoint (such as ‘the ideal’, ‘the perfect way’, and ‘the Kingdom of Heaven’), but his purpose and context of usage can require the discussion to be firmly linked to ‘the practical’. Any reference to John’s articulation as ‘transcendental’ or ‘metaphysical’ needs to be posited in this praxeological context.

In this context John’s approach to ‘the gap’ is to be articulated more specifically as a matter of the ethico-practical nature of pedagogical situations (where teachers are, for example, “operationalising”, “imposing” and “not imposing”), and the existential-personal qualities that are, or are not, brought to these situations (“when it becomes instinctive to do the wise thing” and “with some people it just
comes natural”). There is a ‘theoretical’ dimension to this approach, but it is not presented as in any way independent of the aspiring-valuing process or its pursuit of a natural and instinctive way of acting wisely. Although the “wisdom” that John values is a way of knowing in the sense that it produces “right decisions”, it is articulated as a primary attitude with an ethical character (constituted by the underlying unity that he refers to as “instinct” and “very natural”) rather than a theoretical knowledge about the world.

For John, hermeneutic understanding (or the lack thereof, “if we interpret...the wrong way”) is a crucial dimension of his perceived aspiration and his perception of experienced realities. In some respects, the articulation of this hermeneutic understanding parallels the articulation (in Chapter 2) of a ‘process of being’ or ‘becoming’ as “the kind of knowing that knows wisdom” (Schaeffer, 1999, pp. 641-656). There is also a parallel with Ortega’s (2000) articulation of ‘vital reason’ (briefly defined in Chapter 3 as ‘reason which takes life as its foundation’).36

The aspiration to ‘Seek first the Kingdom of God’ is presented as a hermeneutical question: “It comes back to: well, what do you mean by Kingdom of Heaven?”. As a person aspiring to “seek first” and have students “learn” to make good judgements, John’s reasoning here is directed to (and in the sense previously described as ‘hopeful’, directed by) what ‘becomes’ of people rather than ‘what is’ (Ortega, 1966). Similarly, the relationship between hermeneutic understanding and experienced reality can be a matter of what we “promote or prolong” when interpreting the question “What does it mean to say, ‘This is a Catholic school?’”.

As far as the emphasis on the ‘Kingdom of Heaven’ or ‘Kingdom of God can be viewed as ‘theological’ or the ‘theological context’ of John’s perceived

36 Ortega’s philosophy and ‘vital reason’ receive attention in the analysis of Excerpt 4.
aspiration, it is a “practical, praxic or contextual theology” (Fleischer, 2000, p. 4; Bevans, 1994). Such a theology is understood as “a vision of praxis which ultimately corresponds to what Christianity brought to humanity” (Audinet, 1996, p. 218). The ethical reflection involved in John’s view of what is or is not “imposing” is also required for his hermeneutical question of “What do you mean by the Kingdom of Heaven?”. However, it is not necessarily an epistemic capability in theological ethics that John is advocating when he says “Now that should be, I think, the aspiration for a teacher”. He is rather advancing some principal “criteria of transformation” (“a society that wasn’t boundaried”; “a society with love”) related to his “primacy of praxis” (Tracy, 1982, p. 62).

Hence, the notion of what is ‘transcendental’ in relation to John’s approach is significant as the irreducible dimension or “the ideal” of his perceived aspiration. In other words, the ‘transcendental’ consideration pertains to the profundity of the aspiring-valuing process, the meaning that might otherwise be understood or referred to as ‘deep aspiration’, and the sense in which the aspirant has the kind of commitment or ‘vocational stance’ where the aspiration can be considered as ‘a calling’ rather than ‘a goal’. As noted earlier in Grundy’s (1989) distinction between “transcendental aspirations” and “finite goals” (p. 95), the term ‘transcendental’ can point towards the ethical dimension of aspiration and the kinds of demands that aspirants place on themselves. It was noted there (Section 3.8.1) that judgements of value and judgements of ‘the good’ interpolate the notion of aspiration, and that these judgements are elemental to “an aspiration for action” (Grundy, 1989, pp. 95-96).

The ‘ideal’ here becomes associated with the condition of John’s aspiring. As long as the ideal remains an ideal, it is always beyond reach, but an imaginative
grasp of it makes the aspiration possible: “You can never ever reach an ideal ... you can only aim for it, can only aspire to it”. The purpose of adopting the ideal is fulfilled when it generates ‘a way’ (“the way to strive for”) and informs practice (“that’s what we should be trying to do”). Rather than think of the ideal as ‘the end’, there is a sense in which the dichotomous standpoint of conceptualising ‘means’ and ‘ends’ is transcended here: in other words, ‘the ideal’ becomes a kind of inspiration (as ‘inspiration’ is discussed in Chapter 3) that can sublate the question of attainability.

Practicality, in this respect, is inextricably linked with the more profound self-realisation of the nature of the aspiration. In other words, the question of ‘what works’ is now not merely pragmatic in the ordinary sense of ‘What is feasible?’ or ‘What is practicable?’ but acquires a more reflexive-pragmatic character that focuses on the continuing process of aspiring and valuing. The kinds of considerations that are relevant to this ‘reflexive-pragmatic’ understanding of practicality include: What is enabling of the aspiring-valuing process? What part of the process of aspiring requires more understanding? How can I act out of such an understanding? (Biesta, 1994, p. 299).

John’s perspective also transcends any preoccupation with the dualism of attainability and unattainability. His awareness of “things you don’t get caught up in” is based on the perception that he does not teach in order to fulfil the ideal of his aspiration, “measure up” or “put this theory into action”. Rather than focus on what is possible or impossible, he realises that there is an ideal involved in his aspiration and that he “can only aspire to it”. He understands what he feels “passionate about”, has a view on how to “interpret it” and is self-evaluative of his practice: “I don’t think I do that”. A salient feature of the excerpts is John’s sense of awareness or
perception regarding practical aspects of his aspiring process (such as what he is “aiming to do” and what “helps”, as well as what “never will be” and what he is “not going to worry about”).

The terms that are associated with profundity (such as ‘understanding’, ‘realising’ and ‘recognising’) can become the terms of practicality here because “the practitioner who must decide the good” (Grundy, 1989, p. 95) is also the practitioner who must decide his or her own concerns. In respect to the Context of Practicality, John appears to have developed a certain clarity about where he specifically intends, and does not intend, to direct his focus in the workplace. As a pragmatic matter of investing time and energies, this clarity about concerns is closely connected to John’s awareness (in the broad sense where ‘awareness’ encompasses terms such as ‘understanding’, ‘realising’ and ‘recognising’) that he is also deciding profound matters of ‘the good’ in the passion he articulates using terms such as ‘the kingdom’, a ‘spirit’, ‘what is valuable’ and so on.

Hence, the practicality of John’s decisions about where he will direct his attention is not communicated by him as merely “a solution that is expedient in the short run without regard for ultimate goals” (Csikzentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981, p. 12). For John, practicality is more than the necessity of a realism (or what has previously been referred to as ‘pragmatic insight’) which can assess limitations. His assessments are clearly stated: “I know how I would like a Catholic school to be run. But there’s no such school and never will be”. However, the practicality of the aspiration is not conditional upon such assessments: it is rather more broadly based or determined by what has been referred to above as ‘John’s awareness’.

When John articulates the intentional nature of his teaching (for example, what he is and is not “going to worry about”), he presents an awareness of the
hermeneutic understanding that shapes his practice. One way in which this ‘awareness’ is reflected is through John’s attention to plural contexts (pedagogical, curricular, ethical and philosophical-theological) for discussing aspiration and ‘the gap’. John is also ‘aware’ in the sense that he is sensitive to the inter-relations between various modalities and aspects of experience: “acting wisely” is connected to “instinct”, valuing and directing attention to “peace” makes a difference to student-teacher relationships, and “good judgment” is a “sort of spirit” that people can learn to “breathe and live in”.

In the philosophical, psychological and self-efficacy literature, individuals who demonstrate considerable levels of such awareness are generally associated with optimal states or processes which facilitate human potentialities. These individuals are variously described, for example, as “connected knowers” (Thayer-Bacon, 1993), “self-actualising” (Maslow, 1968), “self-realising” (Jung, 1969), “fully functioning persons” (Rogers, 1977), “emotionally intelligent” (Goleman, 1995) and “authentic” (Heidegger, 1973). Such constructs are multi-dimensional, but in each case a form of ‘awareness’ is in some way considered necessary to the optimal state or process.

4.12 Introduction to Excerpt 4

The excerpt which follows presents a text which contains a more exclusive attention to the question of how John approaches ‘the gap’. At the stage of the discussion where the excerpt begins, the interviewer is attempting to clarify John’s initial response to Stenhouse’s statement (as indicated in Excerpt 2). The attention to this clarifying purpose is sustained throughout the text.

37 As a psychological construct, ‘intentionality’ has been defined as “directedness toward the world” (Giorgi, 2001, p. 62). In the educational context, it is noted that the use of the construct assumes that “teachers are intentional agents who have beliefs, desires, emotions, intentions, and goals that help make up their aims and actions in teaching” (Noel, 1993, p. 123). Intentionality is not necessarily accompanied by awareness (Giorgi, 2001, p. 62).
In that initial response to reading the statement, John problematises the relatively straightforward character of Stenhouse’s reference to ‘the gap’. As previously indicated, the fuller context of Stenhouse’s (1979) work supports a reflexive approach to the problem-setting statement, but there nevertheless is a sense in which the statement appears to be a relatively straightforward text, referring to a ‘gap’ as if there is a clear-cut sense in which it exists between “our ideas and aspirations” on the one hand, and “our attempts to operationalise them” on the other hand (p. 3). Although not familiar with Stenhouse’s work, John’s reading did not result in a response which assumes that ‘the gap’ (as articulated in the Stenhouseian statement) can be taken for granted as an appropriate frame of reference for reflecting on the practice of teaching. His initial response is rather one which brings into question the terms in which Stenhouse proposed the existence of a “central problem” (p. 3).

In other words, John’s initial response does not accept Stenhouse’s statement as simply referential. After reading Stenhouse’s statement, John responds: “Perhaps where the gap is, if there is a gap, it’s the gap between the teacher and the students”. Moreover, John proceeds (in Excerpt 2) to present what appears to be a revision or counterclaim (“It’s not a gap between ideas and operations. It’s a personal thing”). Although the dialogic purpose of attending to Stenhouse’s statement does not require an ontological representation or determination of ‘the gap’, a certain level of clarity concerning John’s hermeneutic understanding of this matter is necessary if his reflection is to provide a useful text.

The excerpt below is derived from a later stage of the same interview where there is some reflection on John’s comments in the previous excerpts.
Excerpt 4

I: If you define a ‘problem’ in the dictionary sense as a ‘difficulty’ or in the
general sense that John Dewey expressed it, as a ‘felt difficulty’

J: Hmm.

I: A ‘felt difficulty’. What we’d be talking about when we come to ‘the gap’ and
concrete situations, (pause) we would be talking about felt difficulties. (pause).

J: Hmm

I: I’m just thinking that your, um, your way of looking at ‘the gap’ in terms of
what we’ve discussed before (pause) in a sense it sort of collapses any dualism
of aspiration and experienced reality, and the gap in the middle.

J: Hmm.

I: It collapses it, which to me doesn’t necessarily mean that there’s no gap, it’s just
how we (pause), what sort of notion of a ‘gap’ we have.

J: Yeah.

I: And what you’re saying, as I understand it, is that the conventional or linear
way of looking at the gap needs to be re-interpreted, if it’s to make sense to your
context, your situation.

J: Yeah. I don’t necessarily like the idea of ‘difficulty’, because that’s a negative
thing.

I: Hmm. Hmm.
J: Um, there are problems and challenges, um, and if we’re going to grow we should enter into them, you know you should get into it, if it’s a problem. If you treat it as a difficulty you’re going to be scared of it, and you’ll never take it on.

I: Yeah.

J: And I guess that’s one of the things I try to do with the kids, is not use this sort of language with them, but see ‘How we can work this out?’ ‘Is there some way that we can go about this, and find a way out?’... I came across a beaut quote the other day: ‘Our mission is to be faithful, not to be successful’... It’s not a bad way to look at problems. You know, what’s the approach to a problem? To be faithful to the problem.

I: Hmm.

J: Not necessarily to solve it, but to be faithful to it, to get into it.

I: So how would you define a problem?

J: Um, I think a problem is, some situation, I think it’s got to be real for a start. It’s, it’s, a situation that requires a creative solution: not just your common ordinary everyday exit strategy, if it was that it wouldn’t be a problem, we would know automatically how to solve it and it wouldn’t be a problem. So a problem is something that, um, draws us into being creative. Does that make sense?

I: Hmm. Hmm. Now if I just don’t let you get away from Dewey too quickly.

(chuckle).

J: Hmm. Hmm.
I: So, a felt difficulty. If I put that into the context of teacher stress.

J: Hmm.

I: There would be things at school that you find stressful?

J: Ah, (pause) Yes.

I: So that would fit in with Dewey? As a ‘felt difficulty’?

J: Um. (long pause) Yes. Now, there’s a difference between stress and distress. Um, the felt difficulty is the stress thing. What I need to do is to address that creatively or I’m going to be distressed.

I: Hmm.

J: Um, (pause) there are things that I find difficult, um, in my particular job ( ). But the way to enter into that is to be creative, and, not to try things that, that don’t work. Um, I know that getting resentful doesn’t work; that’s not going to solve the difficulty.

I: Hmm.

J: That’s not going to get me a way out of it. Um, so you have to be thinking ‘Well, what can I do in this situation?’ And that can be really really challenging, um, because people don’t always react the way that you, that you would like them to. Now you think, ‘Well, if I do this, that will solve the situation or that will ease the difficulty with this person, and you try it (chuckle).

I: (chuckle)
J: Um, so I see my duty as being faithful, not necessarily being successful. You always be creative, um, and I don’t mean by ‘creative’ being outlandish, but you try to think ‘What can I do differently that might work this time?’.

4.13 Analysis of Excerpt 4

This excerpt has been included for the purpose of developing a clearer view of John’s earlier comments concerning ‘the gap’ (Excerpt 2 in particular). It has been noted that these earlier comments can appear to express some uncertainty (“Perhaps where the gap is, if there is a gap”) or difference (“It’s not a gap between ideas and operations”) regarding the assumptions of Stenhouse’s statement. For Stenhouse, the reference to ‘the gap’ was a way of formulating what he considered to be a ‘central problem’. Hence, Stenhouse’s notion of ‘the gap’ relies on a conceptual linkage with the notion of a ‘problem’ which is felt as “real and frustrating” (p. 3). In the above excerpt, the interviewer works towards clarification by focusing on John’s conceptualisation of the term ‘problem’.

The discussion of the term ‘problem’ provides evidence that John views the process of using language as important, both to his own attitude as a teacher and in teaching itself. There is a regard for the effect of language on the students: “I try...not use this sort of language with them”. There is also a regard for his own attitude: “If you treat it as a difficulty, you’re going to be scared”. The language of a “beaut quote” is also significant to the positive attitude (“It’s not a bad way to look at problems”) and to the basic practical concerns of teaching (“you know, what’s the approach to a problem: to be faithful to the problem”).

This care with the use of language is significant to the general emphasis John places on tending and preserving the aspiring-valuing process rather than
focusing on the gap as ‘a negative thing’ or ‘felt difficulty’. John does not find that
his emphasis on functional or synergistic dimensions of aspiration requires a
dismissal of the term ‘gap’, but the care with language does require certain critical
distinctions: “there’s a difference between stress and distress”; “if it was that it
wouldn’t be a problem” and “our mission is to be faithful not to be successful”. This
‘critical’ dimension of John’s reflective process is important because it plays a key
role in determining “the approach to a problem”, the way people “see”, “look at
problems” and think about matters of practicality such as “How can we work this
out?” and “Is there some way that we can go about this, and find a way out?”.

In the terms used by the present work (in Chapter 3), John is sensitive here
towards the ‘thought-language-world’ relationship. For John, the ordinary negative
connotations of the term ‘problem’, as reflected in Dewey’s definition, are to be
generally avoided. His approach is based on taking into account how people think,
feel and respond in actual situations (“What might I do differently that might work
this time?”). John’s orientation, in other words, is again towards ‘the practical’
rather than the semantics of alignment with a conventional definition from a
dictionary or a philosopher. A problem, in this kind of practical orientation, is
something “you should get into” and the practical reason for not treating it as a
difficulty is that “you’ll never take it on”.

Nevertheless, the ‘practical’ orientation is again not atheoretical. John
responds affirmatively when the interviewer suggests that he is re-interpreting the

38 It can be recalled here that the interviewer notes that Dewey considers a ‘problem’ to be a ‘felt
difficulty’ and that Stenhouse’s statement has presented ‘the gap’ as a problem which is ‘real and
frustrating’. However, the reference to ‘felt difficulty’ in the interview is made for the purpose of
rendering a general or ordinary language sense of the term ‘problem’. In the more specific Deweyan
context, a ‘problem’ or ‘felt difficulty’ is more tightly connected to a strong emphasis upon
experimentalist-scientific kinds of thinking and reasoning. The comment that John concerns himself
with “how people think, feel, and respond in actual situations” accords with Dewey’s pragmatism
where it emphasises experience as the starting point for teacher reflection, but differs with respect to
Dewey’s claim that “the form of intelligence used in vocations is the same as that involved in
sense in which notions of a ‘gap’ ordinarily imply a dualism (“the gap in the middle”). Given a theoretical proposition, such as Stenhouse’s statement or a definition of a ‘problem’, he adopts an evaluative stance (“I don’t necessarily like the idea of difficulty”; “that’s a negative thing”), articulates an alternative definition (“A problem is ... a situation that requires a creative solution”), supports his reasoning with another theoretical proposition (“I came across a beaut quote the other day”) and is discriminative or ‘critical’ in his use of concepts (“Now there’s a difference between stress and distress ...”).

In this theoretical-philosophical dimension of John’s approach, the care or sensitivity towards the thought-language-world relationship is maintained. Sensitivity here requires an openness towards such re-interpretation or change in perception. John’s approach to ‘the gap’ accords here with the assertion that “the way we see the problem is the problem” (Covey, Merrill & Merrill, 1994, p. 121). This acknowledgement or openness towards re-interpreting the problem-setting dimensions of ‘the gap’ is basically a practical matter when it determines practicality.³⁹ Although John can provide a definition when the interviewer seeks a clarification, he also is primarily concerned with ‘the way we see’ in the sense that his general approach points to the necessity of taking into account the interaction of words, thoughts and situations. This modality of awareness, or sensitivity towards the thought-language-world relationship, is considered more specifically in the following section as an ‘existential sensitivity’.

³⁹ Covey’s approach is also a practical-philosophy paradigm in the sense that he is not primarily concerned with what defines the class of propositions or situations that can be called a ‘problem’, but rather places the emphasis on perception, or that interaction between thought, language and world that comprises “the way we see”.

252
4.14 The ‘Logos’ and ‘Pathos’ of Awareness in Aspirational Contexts: John’s ‘Existential Sensitivity’

The text of a previous excerpt (Excerpt 2) and its analysis can inform the reference to sensitivity in the present analysis. In this previous excerpt, John has indicated that he views aspiration in terms of a driving force which he refers to as a “passion”. Aspiration, in Excerpt 2, is also “all about spirit” and “what sort of spirit you want your students to breathe and live in”. The essential concern in these matters, particularly from a philosophical standpoint, is with the process John describes as learning “to make good judgements about what is valuable”.

Hence, the analyses of the present work have commonly referred to John’s ‘aspiring-valuing process’ rather than his ‘aspiration’ and it has been observed that the emphasis he places on this process is both of a critical and personal nature. The mode of attention that is critical and passionate, or in other words, “logos as well as pathos” (Heschel, 1965, p. 92, cited in McBride, 1981, p. 182), is considered here as John’s ‘existentially sensitive’ approach towards consideration of ‘the gap’.

Sensitivity, in this ‘aspirational’ context, involves paying attention to the qualities of things in the process of aspiring and experiencing. To the extent that John is both passionate and ‘aware’ when it comes to valuing, he is ‘existentially sensitive’ to the dynamics of his perceived aspiration, as indicated previously by the examples pertaining to the thought-language-world relationship. Beyond specific examples of ‘this paying attention to the qualities of things’ (such as the critical distinctions “between stress and distress” or the personal aspects of valuing “the mission to be “faithful” and “creative”’), there is also a more general context where the proposed category of ‘existential sensitivity’ pertains to primary attitudes and qualitative-structural relations in the intersubjective domain.
John’s emphasis on viewing ‘the gap’ in terms of whether the teacher is ‘imposing’ also suggests that he espouses to be sensitive in this more general ethical context where “the priority must be given to the other” (McBride, 1981, p. 182). The more general context is outlined by McBride (1981):

This sensitivity means that we are not only aware that we are seen by others, but also how this seeing others affects them; not only that we are touched by others, but that we affect others by the way we touch their lives; not only how others hear us, but whether we really hear them. (pp. 180-181)

In terms of the philosophical literature, ‘existential sensitivity’ can be considered by attending to a variety of discussions concerning the nature of human awareness. Examples include: Heidegger’s discussions of “a minding”, “a heeding” and “a caring attunement” (Heidegger, 1962, pp. 176-177). In Heidegger’s (1968) view: “To learn means to make everything we do answer to those essentials that address themselves to us at any given time ... Teaching calls for this: to let learn” (pp. 14-15). As previously indicated, Gadamer’s (1991) emphasis on “genuine hermeneutical experience” is rendered as the awareness of “human finitude” and “one’s own historicity” (p. 357). He follows Heidegger in claiming that “all correct understanding ... must direct its gaze ‘on’ the things themselves” (p. 267).

Another influential source in this area of philosophy is Buber’s consideration of “awareness” and “dialogue” in the “I-Thou” relation (Buber, 1965). ‘Dialogue’, in Buber’s writings, extends beyond any emphasis on the exchange of literal language and takes in the broader ethical and existential dimension of “experiencing the other side” where the ‘other’ can be anything that “says something to me, addresses something to me” (p. 26), such as another human being, nature, silence or spirituality. In this broader conception of dialogue “the limits of the
possibility of dialogue are the limits of awareness” (Buber, 1965, p. 27). The term ‘I-Thou’ accordingly refers to that sensitivity whereby “we reach a new level of awareness when we approach the other as a ‘Thou’ - as a relational being” (Connelly, 1997).

In proposing the category of ‘existential sensitivity’ here, the critical (‘logos’) and passionate (‘pathos’) dimensions of John’s awareness are considered as interconnected aspects of his aspiration. Throughout the analyses of the previous excerpts, it has been noted that the language John uses to refer to matters of an interpretive, evaluative or ‘critical’ nature, including ‘the gap’, is closely connected with the language of his ‘aspirational voice’: for instance, the “intellectual rigour and challenge” is a “love” and “passion”; the “meaning” of “a Catholic school” is “for me the burning issue” and “good judgement” is connected with “spirit”. The close relation between the ‘logos’ and ‘pathos’ aspects of John’s articulation is also presented throughout the text of Excerpt 4.

In Excerpt 4, the critical distinctions involving “the idea of difficulty as a negative thing”, “the difference between stress and distress”, “being faithful and being successful”, being “creative” and “being outlandish”, can all be viewed as examples of the ‘vital reasoning’ that can be associated with the practical rationality that can be essential to a person engaging “a project of life” (Ortega, 1914/2000). “Vital reason”, previously indicated as “reason with life as its foundation”, is also that which is “concerned with the person as a concrete, evolving totality - a totality that extends into the future and the possible of a person” (Pascual-Leone, 1990, p. 244).
4.15 The ‘Existentially Sensitive’ Approach as ‘Vital Reason’

The appropriation of Ortega’s (2000) philosophy of vital reason (“ratio-vitalism”) for the consideration that ‘logos’ and ‘pathos’ are intimately connected in John’s perspectives can be supported by the following set of three observations:

Firstly, “vital reason” (as previously indicated) is reason “with life as its foundation”, thereby including the kind of energy and vitality previously associated with aspiration generally. In Chapter 3, it was noted that there is a personal sense in which aspiration and human life are linked, as well as an etymological sense in which the word ‘aspire’ is linked with breathing and vitality. In Chapter 4, the ‘synergism’ of John’s perceived aspiration has been rendered in terms of a motivated approach, consisting of a “deep sustained energy” where the logic of “parts adding add to the whole” does not necessarily capture “the passion of vision” as a life-engaging process (Covey, Merrill & Merrill, 1994, p. 105).

Secondly, the philosophy of vital reason recognises that dispositions (such as implied by references to ‘passion’ or a ‘vocational stance’) are constitutive to the thinking person as a ‘concrete evolving totality’ and to his or her concerns that extend ‘into the future and the possible’. In this respect, Ortega “considers pedagogy to be no other than the application of a manner of thinking and feeling about the world” (Sevilla, 2001, p. 244). Accordingly, Ortega (1966) articulates a philosophy of education that speaks of a sense of “mission”, “vocation”, “passion” and “transforming societies” in relation to both teachers and students.

The reference here to ‘fundamental dispositions constitutive to thinking’ and the more general pedagogical reference to ‘a manner of thinking and feeling about the world’ are rooted in Ortega’s philosophical anthropology. For Ortega (1961), “vital reasoning” deals with life where “the basic and truest meaning of the word
‘life’ is not biological but biographical ... It means the totality of what we do and what we are” (p. 60). As with phronesis, vital reason is a holistic construct: it refers to the capacity of human beings to deal with practical questions (‘what we do’) without necessarily separating the capacity to posit questions concerning any matter of relevant human experience, including the personal matter of our fundamental mode of being (‘what we are’).

The third observation supporting the appropriation of Ortega’s construct of vital reason is more specific to ‘existentialism’ as a philosophical category or perspective. To consider John’s ‘manner of thinking and feeling’ as an ‘existentially sensitive’ approach can require a broader view and a more flexible approach than that assumed by other kinds of existentialist philosophies. Whereas some of these philosophies place a heavy emphasis on viewing the fundamental nature of our human condition in relation to some form of existential anxiety (variously referred to otherwise by terms such as ‘angst’, ‘dread’, ‘meaninglessness’, ‘absurdity’ and ‘anguish’), Ortega’s philosophical anthropology encompasses more possibilities and perspectives.

In the sense that existential anxiety can be considered as an ‘affected pathos’, it is a kind of “felt difficulty” or “negative thing” that John’s ‘manner of thinking and feeling’ is disinclined to accept as a point of departure for considering ‘the gap’. The construct of vital reasoning, rooted in Ortegean philosophical anthropology, runs parallel with John’s existential perspective here. For Ortega (1966), “history and life are a perpetual creating ... All we are given is possibilities – to make ourselves one thing or another” (p. 17). For John, the decision to “be creative” and “to grow” is an existential choice that determines key aspects of his
manner of thinking and feeling, such as the clarity of judgement indicated by references to "what I need to do" or "things that don't work".

Although Ortega's work is conscious of human insecurities and the challenges that come with living, the dynamism of "perpetual creating" (p. 17) is fundamental to its conception of life, and vital reason accordingly requires an approach that is open to this creative process. In other words, vital reasoning can require an existentially sensitive approach, or in the Ortegean language rendered above, a general awareness of the "possibilities" whereby we create "one thing or another" (Ortega, 1966, p. 17). This is because vital reason, as 'reason which takes life as its foundation', functions according an existential perspective: "Life, which means primarily what it is possible for us to be, is likewise, and for that very reason, a choice, from among these possibilities, of what we actually are going to be" (Ortega, 1972, p. 36).

The emphasis on existential choice means that life is to be "owned" by each person in his or her circumstances (Ortega, 1966, p. 17). This 'owning', according to Ortega, is where "we must make our life" and be "faithful" to its "call" or "vocation" (Ortega, 1966, p. 71; see also Mora, 1963). The terms 'call' or 'vocation' here do not refer to a singularity in the sense of making one 'life decision', but rather to the collective or plurality of decisions whereby Ortega (as indicated above) speaks of "history and life" as a "perpetual creating" (1966, p. 17). To remain "faithful" or "resolved in the true sense" can require "the qualities that are requisite for the undertaking" (p. 18), such as what Ortega refers to as a "kind of resolute, clear-seeing will" derived from a "high creative passion" that "admits of reflective criticism without losing its creative energy" (p. 18-19).
Although John’s ideas do not necessarily coincide with all aspects of Ortegean philosophy, the observations above pertain to several of the key areas in which it is Ortega’s dynamic interrelationship of life and practical thinking that is particularly relevant as a philosophical point of reference. ‘Vital reason’ is Ortega’s construct for the expression of this dynamic interrelationship. Previously referred to as a ‘practical rationality’ which ‘takes life as its foundation’, vital reason is also an ‘open’ construct in the sense that it is compatible with the assumption that an existentially sensitive person develops his or her own store of knowledge and ideas. In this respect, Ortega proposes that responses to matters of choice and action are informed by our “vital” (albeit often tacit) ideas of “the nature of our world”, “the values of things” and “the reality we are wont to refer to as human life” (Ortega, 1966, p. 70).

Ortega (1966) also recognises that ideas are ‘vital’ in the sense that “our lives are not given to us ready-made” (p. 17) and “to live ... it is necessary to make up our minds what we are going to do next” (p. 71). As we negotiate these practical matters, ideas are “a matter of inescapable necessity, an ingredient essential to every human life” (p. 70). Hence, ideas are also ‘vital’ in the imperative sense of the term: “We cannot live on the human level without ideas. Upon them depends what we do” (p. 37). Ortega accordingly finds ideas to be important to our “prospects” for living (p. 31). The process of forming and acting upon ideas is referred to as “paths of ideation” (p. 31) where “our existence is at every instance and primarily the consciousness of what is possible to us” (pp. 30-31).40

40 The present attention to the role of ideas is limited to the context of reflection on John’s ‘existential sensitivity’. In the following section, the role of some specific ideas in John’s approach is considered.
Towards Clarification of the Criteria for Existential Sensitivity: ‘Openness’ and ‘Awareness’

The process of forming ideas of ‘what is possible to us’ is particularly significant to the category proposed as ‘existential sensitivity’ in the present analysis. ‘Existential sensitivity’ is otherwise a loose metaphor for what is referred to above as a dynamic interrelationship between ‘the theoretic’ (or ideas concerning life) and ‘the practical’ (or choices and actions) in the praxis of teaching. The more rigorous or categorial reference to ‘existential sensitivity’ requires evidence pertaining to an awareness of this interrelationship and an openness to its possibilities.

‘Openness’ here is essentially a matter of orientation towards possibilities, such as creative-imaginative kinds of ideas or the envisioning of alternative courses of action. In this respect, there is an overall sense where John can be viewed as a practitioner who responds to Stenhouse with a question: ‘What is possible?’. The orientation is towards allowing a problem to be “something that draws us into being creative” and the accompanying attitude must value this process in order to pay attention to the kinds of questions it involves, such as “What can I do differently that might work this time?”. Having already advanced the question “Well, what can I do in this situation?”, John’s openness is attested to by the re-formulation which is directed to what he can subsequently do “differently”.

To ask these kinds of questions can also require an awareness on John’s part that he is able to discover possibilities: possibilities that do not necessarily become salient when meaning and action has been decided by a ‘one-shot’ interpretation of a problem or situation. Openness and awareness, as criteria for the category of existential sensitivity, become terms which overlap in meaning to some extent here. To be ‘open’ can entail being aware, and to be ‘aware’ can entail being open. In
Excerpt 4, these qualities are integrated into an active process of discovering possibilities: when problems emerge, it is necessary to “get into it”, “take it on” and “you have to be thinking” because situations can be “really challenging”.

John recognises that this active process is also an on-going process. His orientation towards possibilities is guided by the practical considerations not only of what he “can do” but also of what “might work this time”. The process of reasoning towards an episode of action operates within a larger processive-relational context where John considers “the situation” in terms of past, present and hoped-for experience. As for the latter, “sometimes things don’t go the way that you would like them to”. At this point, there is a new dimension of experience that can be reflected upon in retrospect and taken into consideration for the purpose of locating a “creative solution”.

In this approach, the experiences that “don’t go as you would like” are treated as part of the process where practicality is a matter of finding the way towards a solution. Rather than focus negatively on this aspect of his experienced reality, John re-asserts the ethical grounding of the reasoning process (in the “duty” to “be faithful”), and the process of reasoning is thereby committed to a renewed attempt at solving the problem. There is no mention of wasted effort nor any implication of forcing a certain result or control of the situation. At the end of Excerpt 4 the emphasis on creativity remains undiminished (“you always be creative”), and the question of ‘what works’ in certain “challenging” contexts becomes a formative matter of following courses of action that do not necessarily lead directly to a solution.

In these ‘formative’ contexts of practical decision-making where practicality is not altogether clear, openness and awareness are ‘vital’ elements of the process. A
salient feature of John’s comments regarding these contexts (which he describes as “really, really challenging”) is his recognition that the creative process is neither ahistorical nor asocial. Although open to possibilities, John is aware that he deals with “this situation”, “this person” and “this time”, in terms of what can be practically achieved. The ‘vital’ aspect here is a matter of living with flexibility. These formative contexts can require a certain flexible modulation rather than a polarisation of ‘what works’ and what does ‘not work’. To envisage practicality in these contexts in an absolute form can be “to conceive human life other than it could possibly be lived” (Haddock, 2002, p. 22).

From the Ortegean or ‘vital’ perspective, perfectionistic and absolutist conceptions of human life can be not only limiting to the discovery of possibilities but also pernicious to the development of human potential. These kinds of conceptions are associated with a rationalism that upholds the autonomy of theoretical thought and thereby “abandons life” (Ortega, 1961, p. 36). Ortega accordingly suggests that problems, difficulties and shortcomings are necessary to the awakening and mobilising of a more authentic use of our human agency and capacities (Ortega, 1972, p. 48).

John’s references to his own reflection (“you try to think”) suggest an approach that is aware and open in this more ‘vital’ or ‘real’ sense: actions are performed “differently” on the basis of the possibility of what “might work” in the variable or situated moments of “this time”. The ‘open’ and ‘aware’ process of discovering possibilities, described here again for its manner of thinking and feeling as ‘vital reasoning’, is not for John a preoccupation with having alternative courses of action consciously before his mind, nor is it an insistence that premeditation and

41 The point is significant to the sense in which existential sensitivity, as openness and awareness, can be considered to afford ambition but not pretension.
42 The concept of ‘authenticity’ is addressed in Chapter 5.
planning are to be preferred to what he has previously described as an “instinctive” way of making decisions (Haddock, 2002, p. 22). As indicated in Excerpt 1, it is rather an approach that dismisses these kinds of concerns (“you don’t get caught up in that”) and focuses instead on the more positive character of aspiration and values.

There is an element of concern for feasibility in the awareness of the ‘vital’ question ‘What is possible?’. However, the interest in possibilities also allows for risk-taking and the making of mistakes. John is not primarily concerned with problem-solving for the sake of resolving any immediate sense of ‘a gap’ between his aspiration and experienced reality. When a problem arises, he is concerned to find “a way out of it”, but it is more important to “be faithful” and approach a problem “as something that draws us into being creative”. Hence, in John’s reflectivity, there is no insistence on certitude nor any overriding concern for “being successful”.

‘Practicality’ here, as far as it can be thought of as an ‘end’ to be achieved, is something that can be “continuously negotiated, modified, challenged and acted upon in specific circumstances” (Rizvi, 1989, p. 70). In reflection on a specific problem, the contingencies of initiating action are recognised when John acknowledges that the creative process can be “really, really challenging” and that his thinking is aimed towards “what might work this time”. The openness to acting “differently” according to the context of “this time” has been noted above.

In the course of his vital reasoning, practicality with John becomes not only a matter of rejecting certain kinds of thinking (“the idea of difficulty”) and feeling (“getting resentful”), but also a matter of being willing to enact an idea that has been generated from the creative process (“you try it”). Hence, there is an element of experimentation in the openness of the process he designates as “creative”. Although
John does not articulate a formalised ‘action research’ approach to problems, the action following upon reflection is subject to his critical perspectives. Some of these critical perspectives, including ideas that John rejects or retains, have been indicated in the analyses of previous excerpts.\footnote{Further attention to the role of critical reflectivity in John’s approach is provided in the following section.}

The focus on practicality as an idea of ‘what’ can be done is given meaning and direction by the hermeneutic understanding of ‘why’ the creative process is being engaged. In Excerpt 4, existentially sensitive expressions (such as “if we’re going to grow” and “what I need to do”) indicate the purposes John associates with his awareness and openness. As noted above, John’s existential sensitivity leads to a particular emphasis on possibilities that are inherent to, and emergent from, the aspirational dimension of his teaching. Hence, his approach is one of opening up the hermeneutical dimension of his aspiration and experienced reality (Gadamer, 1991).

In Excerpt 4 the general emphases of John’s approach to ‘the gap’ can be summarised as a matter of thinking “creatively”, acting “differently” according to “the situation” and his “duty” to “be faithful”, understanding what is “a negative thing” and realising that the pathos of certain feelings such as being “scared”, “distressed” or “resentful” can lead to the impracticality “that’s not going to solve the difficulty” or “take it on”. These kinds of collective emphases are constitutive of ‘a manner of thinking and feeling’ which seeks to generate the synergism and vitality that an aspiration can make available to pedagogic relations.

\textbf{4.17 The Creative Balance: John’s Approach as the Pursuit of ‘Nexus’}

The present section continues the reflection on John’s ‘manner of thinking and feeling’, focusing on certain aspects of his emphasis on creativity, and
considering these aspects further for the possibility of informing the wisdom question. In following this direction, the analysis posits John’s perspective on creativity as central to his approach to the gap. Moreover, this ‘creativity emphasis’ is also viewed as central to the aspiring-valuing process whereby John is ultimately concerned with “acting wisely” as “the way to strive for”. In order to relate the role of creativity to the ‘conversation’ of the thesis, it is necessary for parts of this section to include some brief retracing and synthesising of previous considerations.

For John, addressing problems creatively can be a matter of practicality and profundity. The practicality is articulated initially as the practical necessity to “be creative”. Reflecting on the experience of a ‘felt difficulty’, John asserts: “What I need to do is to address that creatively” (italics added). Following the observation that “there are things that I find difficult in my particular job”, John again places his valuing of creativity on a practical footing: “the way to enter into that is to be creative, and, not to try things that don’t work” (italics added). The orientation here can also be described as “creative solution finding” (Nadler & Hibino, 1995): John is concerned with “thinking” that “will solve the situation” and contrasts creativity with things “that are not going to solve the difficulty”.

At an earlier stage of Excerpt 4, John has reflected on responses to “problems and challenges” as a profound matter of the direction and meaning of human lives: “if we’re going to grow we should enter into them” (italics added). This reference to the broader view of human living accords with previous suggestions that John is exercising ‘vital reason’. The concern with human maturation also coheres with that dimension of John’s approach previously referred to as his ‘process orientation’. This process orientation has been linked with the
observation that John is adopting an aspiration-centred approach to the discussion of ‘the gap’.

Hence, the attention of the present section is given to a more specific consideration of how this emphasis on creativity as “the way to enter” implicates the Contexts of Profundity and Practicality. As indicated above, the initial general observations are apparent in the text of Excerpt 4, but John’s concern for profound matters (such as the maturation process which determines “if we’re going to grow” and the “duty” of “being faithful”) is not entirely linked there with the practical value or benefits of being creative. In other words, John emphasises the instrumental value of creativity but, for reasons of his concern with the Context of Profundity, stops short of insisting on the experience of successful outcomes.

A general practical-philosophical question arising from the study of Excerpt 4 is pertinent here: Given his advocacy of creativity as “the way to enter”, how is this ‘practical’ aspect of John’s perspective on ‘the gap’ related to his broader philosophical commitments? John’s commitment to “acting wisely” as “the way to strive for” can now be recalled. As the present section addresses it, the “creativity emphasis” is critical to the more specific consideration that John is, in effect, articulating a ‘phronetic’ approach or paradigm where his deliberations draw not only on the aspiration (as previously indicated) but also on the “dialectical integration of the person as a totality” (Pascual-Leone, 1990, p. 245).

It is at this point that the proximity of the wisdom question to the previous analysis of John’s ‘manner of thinking and feeling’ becomes more salient. John’s philosophy for deliberating on problems entails much more than the creation of ideas that “might work” or help to “ease the difficulty”. The analysis of his approach requires a regard for matters of balance and integration co-terminous with the regard
for creative ideas that are useful for dealing with problems. In other words, John’s emphasis on a practical creativity is interconnected with the other processes he considers to be central to his practice. This ‘interconnected-ness’ can be framed as a ‘phronetic’ approach to teaching.

John’s valuing of creativity is ‘phronetic’ in the Aristotelian sense that it is directed towards a ‘capacity to act’ and is combined with his ethical commitments. From an Aristotelian perspective, these commitments involve a concern for ‘the good’ and a regard for embodying the character of the ‘phronimos’. For instance, the analysis of Excerpt One has noted that John is more concerned with an ‘instinctive’ way of ‘acting wisely’ than with any notion of his practice ‘measuring up’ to a theory. John’s interest in the practical benefits of creativity can be viewed as a continuation of the phronetic kinds of interests previously observed, such as his person-centred references to the practical wisdom of ‘good mothers’ and his aspiration for students to make ‘good judgements’.

The observation that John articulates an approach to practice that is animated by ideas has previously been highlighted, and in Excerpt 4 his emphasis on a creative and imaginative response to ‘the gap’ implies the converse or complementary understanding where it is essential for practice to generate ideas. In the previous section it has been noted that this creative-imaginative emphasis is directed to a practical concern with discovering possibilities for interpreting and addressing situations. These aspects of John’s approach can be identified as examples or individuations of the general model of the theory-practice relationship which the present work has described as ‘dialectical’ and ‘praxeological’ (Usher & Bryant, 1987).
Previous sections have also observed that this model is widely supported in the professional practice literature in relation to the kind of reflection that is associated with phronesis (Carr, 1995; Halverson & Gomez, 2001). The ‘life’ or ‘vital’ dimension of John’s reasoning, reflected in his concern for such matters as his ‘mission’ and ‘vocation’, also accords with the ‘practicality ethic’ referred to in Chapter 3. The ‘practicality ethic’ essentially contextualises the question of ‘what works’ in ethical considerations, thereby balancing and integrating practicality with profound questions of ‘the good’ in human lives.

As a matter of profundity, John’s emphasis on creativity can be viewed from the different perspectives suggested in the previous analyses. The philosophical dimension of John’s thinking requires these multiple perspectives. John conceives the practicality of creativity from a perspective where the contextualising ground of the creative solution-finding process is considered to be existential (‘if we’re going to grow’) and axiological (‘our mission is to be faithful’). In articulating his notion of a problem as ‘a situation that requires a creative solution’, there is also an ontological and hermeneutical implication: a problem must be recognised as ‘real’ and ‘a situation that requires just your common ordinary everyday exit strategy’ is conceptually distinguished as not being a ‘problem’ at all. These examples indicate the multi-dimensionality of the philosophical thinking that is involved in John’s reflections.

As a matter of profundity, the emphasis on creativity can also be viewed for its underpinnings in John’s philosophical-theological commitments. It has previously been noted that John’s philosophical thinking is amenable to theological reflection or can be alternatively contextualised as ‘Practical Theology’. In Excerpt 4, creativity is closely connected to a sense of ‘mission’ and the practical character of
'being faithful'. The creative process emerges out of practical matters of choice and action (such as "a situation that requires a creative solution") but is also made possible by a philosophical-theological hermeneutics that can be receptive to a wide range of interpretations ("there are many metaphors for truth").

The breadth and depth of John's thinking in these various areas are significant to the Context of Profundity (as, for example, his 'philosophy') and the Context of Practicality (as, for example, his shaping of a practice). More specifically, John's reasoning involves a critical reflectivity that is also concerned with clarifying and orientating itself towards "the possible of a person" when it deals with such matters as how he is "going to grow", what is "negative", "stress" and "distress", "the approach to a problem" and "what I need to do".

As vital reason, the critical reflectivity can be considered as an expression of 'pathos' or John's passion for 'good judgements about what is valuable'. For John, the critical thinking which values such things as 'being faithful' and 'being creative' is integral to the passion he has previously indicated as his aspiration. In Ortega's philosophy (1966), the integration or balancing of vital elements that are both "critical and creative" is a hallmark of the person who is "resolved in the true sense" (p. 18). Ortega accordingly describes a "high creative passion" that "admits of reflective criticism" and thereby "seeks to complete itself" (p. 19).

In following Ortega, psychologist Pascual-Leone (1990) describes this kind of integrated or truly resolved person in terms of "wisdom-as-will within vital reason" (p. 247). Pascual-Leone theorises a "movement toward wisdom" as "a growing into human maturity" (p. 246). This movement is grounded in "a will-to-be disposition":

If a person has a will-to-be disposition, he or she shall progress toward maturity and wisdom with life experience; if the person has instead a will-
not-to-be (eg. neurotic attitudes or an excess of anxiety/fear), he or she must change it into a 'will-to-be' before life experiences can move him or her toward maturity and wisdom. (p. 246)

The expression 'will-to-be disposition' is clarified by Pascual-Leone (1990):

In this expression I understand 'to be' as meaning what existentialist philosophers (eg. Heidegger, 1966; Jaspers, 1959, 1970, 1971; see also Arendt, 1981) and some psychologists mean by being ... The will-to-be disposition is a motive that propels the person toward human growth. (p. 246)

Siegel (1999), following the work of educational researchers and theorists, provides a useful definition of the term 'disposition' as it applies more specifically to 'dispositions constitutive to thinking' in practical contexts:

If a thinking disposition is a tendency, propensity, or inclination to think in certain ways under certain circumstances, then a disposition more generally, is a tendency, propensity, or inclination to behave or act in certain ways under certain circumstances ... dispositions are not mysterious or metaphysically dubious entities, but rather are properties just like other properties. They differ from other properties only in the way in which we (sometimes) identify them .... To the question 'What good are they?' at least one answer is clear: Thinking dispositions are good to the extent that they cause or bring about good thinking. They do their job when they constitute the animating force that causes thinkers to think well. (italics added). (pp. 209, 211)

In John’s case, the ‘disposition’ that can ‘cause or bring about good thinking’ is a matter of profundity and practicality. It is profound in the sense that it can be closely connected with the deepest aspirational concerns that John articulates with reference to passions, ideals, values, spirit and the Kingdom of Heaven. John’s use of ultimate-type expressions (such as ‘the perfect way’, ‘the Kingdom of Heaven’, ‘Make me an instrument of your peace’) implies the profundity of what is important to him in his practice. As previously indicated, John frequently links these
expressions with matters of disposition and practicality: ‘the perfect way’ that ‘becomes instinctive’; the mantra of peace ‘that helps’; the ‘natural’ way of ‘acting wisely’ where ‘the right decisions are made’; the ‘faithful’ way that is ‘creative’ but not ‘scared’ or ‘getting resentful’.

The emphasis on ‘good judgement’ and the intentionality that can ‘strive for’ an ‘instinctive’ way of ‘acting wisely’ are examples of what Pascual-Leone (above) associates with the ‘will-to-be disposition’. Creativity is a functional dimension of the manner of thinking and feeling of this will-to-be disposition. In psychological terms, the creativity is a mode of processing whereby the will-to-be disposition can more fully engage the potential to ‘think well’. John implies the profundity of what is involved in this will-to-be disposition by retaining the philosophical-theological import of the gospel idiom (‘Seek first the Kingdom of Heaven’) and by referring to ‘good judgement’ as a ‘spirit’ he aspires for his students to ‘breathe and live in’.

As John articulates it, creativity is not ‘being outlandish’ but is a process that is more balanced and integrated with the fundamental motives of his approach. John expresses this sense of integration with a degree of conviction: not only is creativity linked with the ideas associated with ‘mission’ and the ‘duty’ to be faithful, but also to need (‘what I need to do’) and commitment (‘you always be creative’). In such an approach, practicality in thinking is closely connected with profundity of purpose. The conceptualisation or re-interpretation of a ‘problem’ as ‘a situation that requires a creative solution’ and the concern ‘not to try things that don’t work’ reflects the concern with practicality, but ultimately this concern is inseparable from a commitment and fidelity to a profound way of living that is ‘the way to strive for’.
These aspects of John’s emphasis on creativity and other aspects of the analysis of his approach are further synthesised in Chapter 5. The kind of synthesis involved allows the positing of a holistic perspective for the consideration of John’s ‘case’ as a contextualisation of the wisdom question. This synthesis is significant to the exploration as a ‘conversation’ in the sense that a further penetration or closer pursuit of a question can require multiple perspectives to be interpreted not only for their important connections but also for the indication of new pathways of inquiry.

Chapter Conclusion

The present chapter has proceeded in the direction of the more specific contextualisation of the wisdom question begun in the previous chapter. As a moment of ‘exploration’, the present chapter represented a turn from Stenhouse’s perception of a ‘central problem’ to the responses of the interviewed teacher.

‘Findings’ concerning the utility of themes in the interviews and the conversation of the thesis are summarised in the final chapter, but some general indications are noted here in reviewing the present chapter. Reflecting on the teacher’s articulation of matters of choice and action, the analyses have pointed to ways in which the teacher’s ‘voice’ can support the admissibility of the Contexts of Profundity and Practicality to the conversation of wisdom inquiry. For the teacher, aspiration in the field of education is both a profound and a practical concern. A general tendency of the teacher’s articulation of his approach is to report the integration of aspiration with practice. In reflecting on his experience and Stenhouse’s statement, the teacher’s perspectives have also generally avoided a dichotomisation of the elements involved in ‘acting wisely’.
These findings are not inconsistent with the model of wisdom as a 'nexus'. The primary categories used in the analyses (namely, 'synergism', 'existential sensitivity', 'vital reason' and 'the creative balance') have been useful in organising multiple perspectives on John’s approach to teaching, and assisted reflection on his responses to Stenhouse’s statement of ‘the gap’. In the following chapter, the exploration draws some final connections, including the proposal of a further synthesis and linking of John’s approach to the wisdom question.
Chapter 5

Synthesis and Concluding Reflections

Introduction

In this final chapter, the focus is given to reflection on the case study and the exploration of the thesis as a whole. The chapter is divided into two parts: Part A tries to ascertain the possibility that the case study opens up a particular pathway for the exploration of the wisdom question, and Part B reflects on the main contours of the whole thesis as an on-going conversation ‘prioritised’ by the question of wisdom (Gadamer, 1991).

Whereas the pathway of analysis in Chapter 4 has included some synthesising constructs, such as ‘vital reason’ and ‘existential sensitivity’, the synthesis of the present chapter is more reflexively oriented. The chapter is, in this sense, a movement of thought from the use of multiple perspectives and synthesising constructs towards a more self-conscious kind of reflection. This kind of reflection, in Part A, is essentially a matter of turning back to consider John’s perspectives and the perspectives proposed by the analyses of Chapter 4 as a ‘moment’ in the conversation of the thesis: from the many perspectives contributed by John (and the analyses of his approach), is it possible to identify “a particular horizon that moves with one and invites one to advance further” (Gadamer, 1991, p. 245)?

In other words, the direction of thought in the present chapter involves consideration of the case study and the exploration hitherto for its connections and possibilities. The ‘connections’ involve summary reflections on the multiple perspectives contained in the thesis and the ‘possibilities’ include suggestions (or ‘recommendations’) for opening up further areas of hermeneutical reflection on the
question of wisdom. There is also a sense, however, in which this chapter is ‘singular’ in its orientation: one construct (‘authenticity’) is retained as a focus for the synthesis contained in Part A. The remainder of the chapter attends exclusively to the connections and possibilities of the thesis as a contextualisation of the question of wisdom.

Part A

5.1 Synthesis: Authenticity as a Wisdom-Oriented Mode of Being

5.1.1 John’s Approach as an ‘Authenticity Approach’

In allowing for the cumulative syntheses of perspectives on John’s approach, the analysis of Chapter 4 has relied primarily on the use of constructs as categories to organise its reflections and set various points of reference for returning to these reflections. As it takes up a more summative position for reflecting on the excerpts, this final section of analysis draws on a construct that can require a certain breadth and cohesiveness of thought in consideration of the categories. The construct warranting attention here is ‘authenticity’ and the rendering of it has a basis in ideas which Chapter 2 has proposed as the fundamental epistemological and ontological ‘commitments’ of the thesis.

In Chapter 2, the essential relevant ideas pertained to the ‘knowing process’ for exploring the question of wisdom and the ontologically grounded hermeneutics of Gadamer. After posing the question ‘What kind of knowledge knows wisdom?’, the pathway of exploration in the thesis was formed by the commitment to a ‘process orientation’ which in turn led into Gadamer’s (1982) emphasis on human knowing as “the conversation that we are” (p. xxiii). In
pursuing the hermeneutical dimension of the wisdom question opened up by this pathway, authenticity warrants attention as a possible condition of 'the kind of knowledge that knows wisdom'. This is because Gadamer's hermeneutics (as indicated in Chapter 2) is committed to viewing human understanding not only as a cognitive phenomenon but also as an ontological and existential one (Gadamer, 1977, p. 18).

The attention to authenticity is also warranted in representing John's fundamental motives as a 'will-to-be disposition' which is ready to act (“what can I do?”) in a practical, balanced and creative way whilst at the same time willing its own maturation (“if we’re going to grow”). In synthesising such perspectives on John's approach under the category of 'authenticity', it is necessary to acknowledge that there are different versions of the construct, and the view towards 'authentic living' in the present section has a broader and more inclusive scope than that indicated in certain existential-analytic texts (Rowan, 2001, p. 456).

The relevant description of authenticity, in relation to both 'the gap' and the analysis of John's approach, is derived from Spinelli (1989, as cited in Rowan, 2001, p. 458):

While in the authentic mode, we maintain an independence of thought and action and subsequently feel in charge of the way our lives are experienced. Rather than reacting as victims to the vicissitudes of being, we, as authentic beings, acknowledge our role in determining our actions, thoughts, and beliefs and thereby experience a stronger and fuller sense of integration, acceptance, openness, and aliveness to the potentialities of being in the world.

The appearance here of words such as “integration” and “openness”, as well as the ‘vital’ word “aliveness”, accords with the general sense in which John's approach has been described as 'existentially sensitive'. Spinelli's reference to
authentic beings who acknowledge their ‘role in determining actions, thoughts and beliefs’ also implies the ‘awareness’ that the analyses have associated with existential sensitivity. ‘Authentic being’ involves awareness of this ‘role’ and a responsiveness to its ‘potentialities’. In following the terms of the previous chapter, authenticity requires a “will-to-be disposition” or “a motive that propels the person toward human growth” (Pascual-Leone, 1990, p. 246).

The account of authenticity by Spinelli is marked by the use of Heideggerian language, such as ‘authentic mode’, ‘authentic being’ and ‘being in the world’. This is a significant observation in terms of both the existentialist perspective brought to the construct of authenticity and the ontological representation of authentic living. The existentialist perspective is significant in the general sense that John is viewed as a person who places particular emphasis on the creation of life paths out of choices made in the course of experience (Pascual-Leone, 1990, p. 247). The ontological implication is significant in the more specifically Heideggerian sense of recognising the historicity or temporal dimension of authentic living: a person is not necessarily living authentically in every instance but is authentic as ‘authentic Dasein’, or as Spinelli puts it, “while in the authentic mode” (p. 458).

In assigning this existential and ontological character to authenticity, there is a reflexive consideration to take into account regarding the question of what is recognised as ‘existential’ and what is ‘authentic’ in different versions of ‘authentic living’. The present framing of authenticity as a ‘moment’ or ‘mode of being’ does not necessarily imply that ‘authentic beings’ are to be viewed as distinctively unimodal people nor does it require from them an approach to life that is beholden to a particular existentialist philosophy, school of thought or doctrine. As a category that is warranted by the kind of approach John articulates, ‘authenticity’ is a
construct that refers to a person who is recognising his or her engagement in the existential matters of choice and action to have profound implications for human lives (Rogers, 1977, p. 271).

‘Existential matters’ can be thought of as the essential concerns of a person or the contexts in which a person determines his or her own involvements. These involvements can reflect the personal nature of what motivates a particular person. The qualifier ‘existential’ suggests that these are matters which can be discussed in terms of “the significance of one’s life, of one’s very being” (Vandenberg, 1990, p. 151). Examples of ‘existential matters’ in John’s case include his emphases on “vocation”, “mission”, the commitments to be faithful and creative in concrete situations, and the striving after the human potentiality he identifies as “instinctive wisdom”.

In the attention of a ‘practical philosophy paradigm’ to actual people and actual lives, existential matters can contextualise discussions of authenticity or wisdom. John provides a substantive context for such discussions not only in his response to the questions concerning ‘the gap’ but also through his disclosures of what he deems to be important and meaningful. Hence, an ‘existential matter’ is disclosed in dialogical relations that allow something of a person’s uniqueness to be known (Vandenberg, 1990). The kind of open and honest expression involved in such disclosure is also ‘phenomenological’ in the broad hermeneutical sense of providing a text that is “becoming full of the world, full of lived experience” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 32).
5.1.2 The Rogerian Perspective on ‘Authenticity’

Reflecting on his career as a psychotherapist, Rogers (1977) describes what is discovered in authentic dialogic relations with others as “the person who emerges” (p. 115). This emerging person is also “a living, breathing, feeling, fluctuating process” (p. 114) and his or her “increasingly existential living” is characterised by observation of, and active participation in, this process (pp. 188-189). Rogers accordingly claims that the process of becoming more fully human or “becoming a person” (p. 71) does not allow its insights to remain a theory: there is no authentic telling apart from experience and without participation in the direction that is guided by these insights (pp. 170-171).

In addressing more specifically the question of what it means to communicate authentically on existential matters, Rogers proposes certain dialogic or personal qualities of people who are ‘becoming’ their potentialities. Many of these qualities coincide with the main points of emphasis in the excerpts and analyses. The essential relevant features of Rogers (1977) view include: a concern for “personal growth”, an “awareness and openness to experience” (p. 115), “willingness to be a process” (p. 122), honest “expressiveness of feelings” (p. 188), “creativity” (p. 193), a caring for others (pp. 224, 305), a concern for “the good life” (p. 196) and “the process of functioning more fully” (p. 191).

Rogers (1977) does not claim that all these characteristics or qualities are present in every instance but he does draw on empirical research and his own “existential phenomenological” reflections to support the observations of his experience and that of his colleagues (p. 125). Although empirical testing and the application of Rogerian theory in diverse areas of practice (such as education, race relations, politics, family relationships, administration, leadership and counselling)
have been reported as producing generally favourable results (Ryckman, 1993, p. 423), the psychological literature has elsewhere emphasised the limitations of confirming its philosophical dimensions within a positivistic paradigm (Josselson & Lieblich, 2001).

In its philosophical-anthropological dimension, authenticity in Rogerian theory is essentially concerned with “the full potential of the human organism” (Rogers, 1977, p. 104). The use of the term ‘potential’ in this context is not necessarily concerned with achievements of the well-marked kind, such as the attainment of a university degree or an executive position in the workplace. Rogers (1977) is rather more concerned again with an existential context that is more difficult to define in operational terms: “the person comes to be what he [sic] is ...What this seems to mean is that the individual comes to be - in awareness - what he is - in experience” (pp. 104-105).

The highly reflexive character of this description can suggest not only how authenticity may defy the limits of procedural formalism, but also how self-defeating an attempt to do so could become to the contextual and existential nature of authenticity itself. In other words, as much as authenticity may be considered by some writers to be recognisable (Bugental, 1981, p. 102), it is also more experiential and ultimately more paradoxical than a theory can account for. As previously noted with the construct of wisdom, the reflexive paradox is the question of the embeddedness of the object of inquiry in its own pursuit: the wisdom of the inquiry after wisdom, the authenticity of the ontological representation of authenticity.

Rather than dismiss reflexive paradoxes, the present work has proposed that

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44 In the conceptual modelling used for the present work, the given examples here pertaining to intellectual achievement and occupational prestige are more functionally important to the satisfaction of a ‘goal’ than to the meanings associated with ‘aspiration’ and ‘authenticity’. This is particularly the case in the specific light of John’s approach where it seems justifiable to posit that aspiration can represent something akin to authenticity.
any theorising of highly reflexive questions ultimately belongs within the paradoxicality. In Chapter Two, a paradox was understood to imply that the question inevitably leads logical thinking to an *impasse* which becomes self-referring and meaningless unless it “challenges fresh thinking and prompts new questions” (Packer, 1988, p. 491). The positive practical character of this view of paradoxicality accords with John’s own emphasis on creativity and existentialising his philosophical thought processes. This emphasis would require authenticity to be aligned with the aforementioned process of ‘becoming’ (Rogers, 1977).

5.1.3 The Profundity of ‘Existentialising’ an Educational Philosophy

The profundity of what it means for an educator to ‘existentialise’ philosophical thinking is proposed by Vandenberg (1990):

> Any doing of philosophy of education by experienced teachers ought to involve reflection on their own practice in such depth that it involves their very existence. As soon as this is understood, however, it becomes clear that all valid thinking about education is existential and the qualifier ‘existential’ can be dropped as readily as the word ‘philosophical’... If doing philosophy of education by a teacher is not isolated to the cerebral cortex, but engages the teacher’s whole being, including the cerebral cortex, it is much more than thinking what one is doing. It is thinking what one is being. Doing philosophy of education thus becomes virtually equated with existing more authentically as a teacher ... It is an organic unification of thinking, doing and being. (p. 151)

The present references to ‘existential’ dimensions of John’s approach to ‘the gap’, including the ‘existential sensitivity’ rendered previously as a synergistic modality jointly constituted by a dynamic interrelationship of ‘logos’ and ‘pathos’, require this broader conceptualisation of existentialism. As indicated in Chapter 2, the term ‘existential’ in the present work is generally deployed with a view towards
“the irreducibility of the subjective, personal dimension of human life” and “the sense in which the wisdom question ultimately requires something more than an intellectual exercise” (Baldwin, 1995, p. 257). As with wisdom, authenticity is only an abstract concept until it is existentialised, and references to ‘existential matters’ are only the contextualisation of authenticity (Vandenberg, 1990).

Vandenberg (1990) stresses that the contextualisation of theoretical constructs is nevertheless significant “when individual teachers confront the normative questions of educational practice” (p. 150). Distinguishing “contextualisation” from “relativised” modes of philosophical reflection, Vandenberg argues that contextualising the “doing of philosophy of education ... makes it relevant and lowers the level of abstraction” (p. 251). Although contextualisation “may seem to abandon concern for the universal that is characteristic of philosophy”, teachers’ “philosophising responses” to questions of educational practice can become more authentic when connected to “something that would make it more real” (pp. 150-151).

Several categories associated with John’s reflection on practice can be synthesised or thematised as such a concern for the ‘more real’. 'Existential sensitivity', 'vital reason', 'practical theology' and the 'praxeological' orientation can all be read as dimensions of this concern in John’s approach. The ‘concern for the more real’ here is not ‘metaphysical’ in the technical philosophical sense of studying theoretical issues pertaining to characterisations of reality. It is rather a matter of how John tends to consider people, situations or experiences when he is indicating possibilities of meaning and action (Okshevsky, 1992, p. 19). This kind of

45 The reference to ‘normative questions’ here can be thought of as substantive educational questions of profundity and practicality, such as “how and why the students should be educated” or “the nature and aim of education” (Vandenberg, 1990, p. 150). These normative questions become even more substantive or “contextualised” in the form of questions such as “What is the knowledge that should be taught to these students this year?” (p. 150).
‘life-oriented’ contextualisation is an integral feature of John’s discourse in the excerpts.

As far as the teacher’s ‘concern for the more real’ is linked above with the ‘more authentic’, it also involves “a genuine effort to become all that one can become as a teacher” (Vandenberg, 1990, p. 151). It can be recalled that, for John, “the perfect way”, “the way to strive for” and “the instinct to do the wise thing” require effort to be aimed towards a significantly different direction from the concern for a practice that can “measure up to a theory”. Moreover, the effort itself is qualitatively different. Having rejected the whole standpoint of concern for the embodiment of theories (“you don’t get caught up in that”), John articulates the personal-experiential nature of his striving by referring to “passion”, “peace”, “instinct”, “growth”, “love” and creative values.

There is a general or collective sense here whereby these terms can be considered as integral to John’s articulation of a concern for ‘the Good’. In this articulation, ‘the Good’ involves a responsiveness to the various kinds or levels of ‘calling’ implied by the hermeneutic understandings of: a problem as “something that draws us”, particular situations as “really challenging”, teaching responsibilities as a matter of “being faithful” to a “mission”, aspiration as linked to a sense of “vocation” and the ultimate motivation rendered as “Seek first the Kingdom of Heaven”. For John, teaching is primarily concerned not with the production of something but with developing and exercising a profound respect for ‘the Good’ (Olson, 1992).

46 The reading here has benefited from Heidegger’s (1968) perspectives on the authentic nature of ‘Dasein’, and in particular, his late philosophy where authentic ‘thinking’ as a response to being is emphasised. This thinking “has in itself a calling, directing it to what there is to be thought” (Heidegger, 1968, p. 161).
Whether authenticity is contextualised as a concern for the ‘more real’, ‘the Good’ or ‘all that one can become’, it implicates in each case a claim upon the attitude as well as the intellect of a person (Bultmann, 1974, p. 13). Authenticity can require something more radical and searching than the kind of effort that fades at the point of struggle or genuine challenge. Terms such as ‘resoluteness’, ‘commitment’ and ‘responsibility’ are accordingly salient in the philosophical literature on authenticity (Heidegger, 1927/1962; Ortega, 1931/1961; Sartre, 1943/1956). Although the ‘authentic person’ is generally regarded as ‘resolute’ in the sense of following a course of “self-conscious deliberation and decision”, there is also an emphasis on the underlying regard for the process of change that is necessary for personal growth (Baldwin, 1995, p. 260).

Authenticity can be thought of as a radical demand in the sense that it pertains to what the literature refers to as a ‘transformation’ or change process which claims a person “whole - and wholly” (Bultmann, 1974, p. 13). In other words, there is commonly some kind of deep personal investment or aspirational level of significance associated with the ‘becoming’ or ‘journeying’ of the person who lives ‘authentically’ (Rogers, 1977). The authentic person is accordingly often represented as a person given to taking up challenges rather than retreating into complacency or any contentment with a lesser regard for human beings and their concerns (Wilbur, 1997, pp. 22-32). Authentic living, in this sense, is a “fuller experiencing” (Rogers, 1977, p. 80) which includes an “outward relatedness” (Greening, 2001, p. 145).
5.1.4 Authenticity and John’s Approach as a Concern for Persons

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Although a primary concern for persons (or ‘love’) is widely considered to be the distinctive hallmark of authenticity, the present interest concerns the applicability of ‘authenticity’ as a synthesising construct. The ‘applicability’ of the construct of ‘authenticity’ requires it to be defensible as a philosophical construct for the purpose or context of the synthesis. In John’s case, the question is not whether he is ‘authentic’, but whether the approach he is presenting, in respect to its key elements (such as ‘love’), aligns with the authenticity construct. It is accordingly proposed here that John’s emphasis on ‘love’, along with other key text units and constructs used to establish a hermeneutical perspective on his approach, can be viewed as comprising an ‘authenticity approach’.

‘Authenticity’ here encompasses both the ‘logos’ and the ‘pathos’ of the approach John articulates. The ‘logos’ of John’s critical reflectivity and its tendency to be concerned with the axiological basis of aspiration and teachers’ work are not disconnected features of his ‘aspirational voice’. It has previously been noted that John’s concern with the pedagogical significance of person-centred values can be considered as integrally related to an ‘existential sensitivity’. Because John’s perceived ‘aspiration’ is rendered in the ‘pathos’ language of ‘passion’ and ‘love’, his existential pedagogy also requires a commitment to ‘being’ from himself and for
his students (in an ‘outward relatedness’) towards the “sort of spirit” the students come to “breathe and to live in”.

5.1.5 The ‘Authenticity Approach’ as a ‘Phronetic’ Orientation and a Process

In the educational context, the ‘commitment to being’ is also a concern for potentiality in the profound sense rendered by Vandenberg (1990): “The question each person should address in education is ‘Who will I become?’” (p. 227). John’s perceived aspiration concerns the ‘becoming’ of students, their capacities for good judgements about what is valuable, as well as his own ‘becoming’ as a person who “seeks first” what he describes as a “society of love”. His perceived aspiration has a self-directed or ‘discovery’ dimension in the sense that it re-interprets ‘the gap’ as a call for people involved in education to “seek”, “to learn” and “to find out”. As previously noted, the stress on the teacher’s facilitative role (“to encourage kids to find truth for themselves”) is critical for the alternative John proposes to the impositional role (where teachers impose “their brand of truth on students”).

Although the object of John’s ‘passion’ or ‘commitment to being’ can be represented in words by such references to the salient features of the interview texts, the ‘searching’, ‘becoming’ or ‘growth’ that is involved nevertheless requires an experiential process. In other words, John’s perspectives can be considered as an ‘approach’ or theory of pedagogy, but it is the experiential process that counts for students and teachers alike. The implication is that John is less concerned with ‘experienced reality’ in the episodic sense (involving particular events or certain experiences) than with the developmental or process-oriented sense, such as pertains to Vandenberg’s question above (‘Who will I become?’).
The aspiration to "seek first" is, in this sense, 'at the limits' of language. It is accordingly noted that experiential processes of 'searching' or 'becoming' can draw descriptions in the attending literature towards metaphors (such as 'the journey' and 'the quest') and creative uses of language (such as parables, koans and poetry).47 There is also, however, already a sense in which John is relying on metaphor when he begins with the term 'seek' in order to "define aspiration". From a hermeneutical perspective, 'Seek first the Kingdom of Heaven' is 'at the limits' of language, or is 'profound', to the extent that it is considered to invite analysis, interpretation and ongoing reflection.

Authenticity is also described in the philosophical literature as something that must be sought, not primarily as an intellectual matter but as a profound engagement with the possibilities of experience (Heidegger, 1927/1962). In other words, authenticity 'comes from the heart' rather than from 'the theoretic', and is filled out with the experience of 'the practical'. Ideas and insights are considered essential to this 'vital' process but are subsumed by 'the practical' in the sense that all the creative elements of authenticity are infused into life:

It [authenticity] concerns a person's relation with the world, it cannot be arrived at by simply repeating a set of actions or taking up a set of positions. In this manner, authenticity is connected with creativity: the impetus to action must arise from the person in question, and not be externally imposed. (Authenticity, 2004, para. 7)

It can be noted that historical persons commonly upheld as examplars of authenticity (such as Socrates, Jesus and Gandhi) are often reported as having experienced life at a profound level and having experienced passion about the

47 The reference to 'the attending literature' here is transdisciplinary and general. Examples of the metaphors of 'the journey' and 'the quest' appear in works of philosophers (Pojman, 1992; Wittgenstein, 1969), psychologists (Jung, 1963; May, 1953), educationists (Greene, 1995; Vandenberg, 1990, p. 151), and theologians (Heschel, 1954/1982; Kung, 1988), as well as spiritual writers (Merton, 1979; Vardey, 1995).
transformative purposes of living authentically.\textsuperscript{48} Some change process is also implicated in John’s emphases on aspiration, passion, wisdom-getting, personal growth and creativity.\textsuperscript{49} The concern with change is not without a purpose, and in the case of the wisdom-getting that “becomes instinctive” the change (or the ‘transformative purpose’) is worth “striving for”.

In the philosophical terms of the present work, a ‘transformative purpose’ is concerned with ‘the Good’, and in the context of philosophical anthropology ‘the Good’ is a matter of ‘human potentialities’ or what has previously been referred to as “becoming” and “all that one can become” (Gadamer, 1991; Rogers, 1977). In John’s philosophical-theological idiom, the ‘transformative purpose’ is also articulated as “the perfect way”, “the ideal” and the “Kingdom of Heaven”. John’s framing of these matters in terms of what is “instinctive” and “natural” is significant to the notion of ‘transformation’ here. In other words, as far as John’s approach can be discussed as ‘transformationist’, it is again necessary for the approach to stay in touch with the experiences of human beings.\textsuperscript{50}

As with the sense in which ‘aspiration’ can extend beyond the notion of a ‘goal’ in making a greater claim upon the will of a person (in terms of being more fully engaged or personally ‘invested’), ‘authenticity’ also pertains to something that is distinctive about the humanity of a person. When John discusses ‘the gap’ in terms of the attitude inherent to the humanity of the person who is “striving” and “being creative”, he articulates the approach of a person making a certain kind of

\textsuperscript{48} Rather than engage the discussion or judgements of historical persons as ‘authentic’, the consideration here rests with the meaning that is generally associated with the construct of authenticity.

\textsuperscript{49} The consideration here again is not towards any judgement of personal authenticity but a reflection on the points of emphasis in the particular approach John is articulating.

\textsuperscript{50} From the perspective of the psychological literature, the transformative process engaged by the authentic person is describable as a ‘realisation’ or ‘actualisation’ of being human (Jung, 1963; Maslow, 1968).
question of wisdom. There is also a sense, however, in which this chapter is ‘singular’ in its orientation: one construct (‘authenticity’) is retained as a focus for the synthesis contained in Part A. The remainder of the chapter attends exclusively to the connections and possibilities of the thesis as a contextualisation of the question of wisdom.

Part A

5.1 Synthesis: Authenticity as a Wisdom-Oriented Mode of Being

5.1.1 John’s Approach as an ‘Authenticity Approach’

In allowing for the cumulative syntheses of perspectives on John’s approach, the analysis of Chapter 4 has relied primarily on the use of constructs as categories to organise its reflections and set various points of reference for returning to these reflections. As it takes up a more summative position for reflecting on the excerpts, this final section of analysis draws on a construct that can require a certain breadth and cohesiveness of thought in consideration of the categories. The construct warranting attention here is ‘authenticity’ and the rendering of it has a basis in ideas which Chapter 2 has proposed as the fundamental epistemological and ontological ‘commitments’ of the thesis.

In Chapter 2, the essential relevant ideas pertained to the ‘knowing process’ for exploring the question of wisdom and the ontologically grounded hermeneutics of Gadamer. After posing the question ‘What kind of knowledge knows wisdom?’, the pathway of exploration in the thesis was formed by the commitment to a ‘process orientation’ which in turn led into Gadamer’s (1982) emphasis on human knowing as “the conversation that we are” (p. xxiii). In
pursuing the hermeneutical dimension of the wisdom question opened up by this
pathway, authenticity warrants attention as a possible condition of ‘the kind of
knowledge that knows wisdom’. This is because Gadamer’s hermeneutics (as
indicated in Chapter 2) is committed to viewing human understanding not only as a
cognitive phenomenon but also as an ontological and existential one (Gadamer,
1977, p. 18).

The attention to authenticity is also warranted in representing John’s
fundamental motives as a ‘will-to-be disposition’ which is ready to act (“what can I
do?”) in a practical, balanced and creative way whilst at the same time willing its
own maturation (“if we’re going to grow”). In synthesising such perspectives on
John’s approach under the category of ‘authenticity’, it is necessary to acknowledge
that there are different versions of the construct, and the view towards ‘authentic
living’ in the present section has a broader and more inclusive scope than that
indicated in certain existential-analytic texts (Rowan, 2001, p. 456).

The relevant description of authenticity, in relation to both ‘the gap’ and
the analysis of John’s approach, is derived from Spinelli (1989, as cited in Rowan,
2001, p. 458):

While in the authentic mode, we maintain an independence of thought and
action and subsequently feel in charge of the way our lives are
experienced. Rather than reacting as victims to the vicissitudes of being,
we, as authentic beings, acknowledge our role in determining our actions,
thoughts, and beliefs and thereby experience a stronger and fuller sense of
integration, acceptance, openness, and aliveness to the potentialities of
being in the world.

The appearance here of words such as “integration” and “openness”, as well
as the ‘vital’ word “aliveness”, accords with the general sense in which John’s
approach has been described as ‘existentially sensitive’. Spinelli’s reference to
authentic beings who acknowledge their "role in determining actions, thoughts and beliefs" also implies the 'awareness' that the analyses have associated with existential sensitivity. 'Authentic being' involves awareness of this 'role' and a responsiveness to its 'potentialities'. In following the terms of the previous chapter, authenticity requires a "will-to-be disposition" or "a motive that propels the person toward human growth" (Pascual-Leone, 1990, p. 246).

The account of authenticity by Spinelli is marked by the use of Heideggerian language, such as 'authentic mode', 'authentic being' and 'being in the world'. This is a significant observation in terms of both the existentialist perspective brought to the construct of authenticity and the ontological representation of authentic living. The existentialist perspective is significant in the general sense that John is viewed as a person who places particular emphasis on the creation of life paths out of choices made in the course of experience (Pascual-Leone, 1990, p. 247). The ontological implication is significant in the more specifically Heideggerian sense of recognising the historicity or temporal dimension of authentic living: a person is not necessarily living authentically in every instance but is authentic as 'authentic Dasein', or as Spinelli puts it, "while in the authentic mode" (p. 458).

In assigning this existential and ontological character to authenticity, there is a reflexive consideration to take into account regarding the question of what is recognised as 'existential' and what is 'authentic' in different versions of 'authentic living'. The present framing of authenticity as a 'moment' or 'mode of being' does not necessarily imply that 'authentic beings' are to be viewed as distinctively unimodal people nor does it require from them an approach to life that is beholden to a particular existentialist philosophy, school of thought or doctrine. As a category that is warranted by the kind of approach John articulates, 'authenticity' is a
construct that refers to a person who is recognising his or her engagement in the existential matters of choice and action to have profound implications for human lives (Rogers, 1977, p. 271).

‘Existential matters’ can be thought of as the essential concerns of a person or the contexts in which a person determines his or her own involvements. These involvements can reflect the personal nature of what motivates a particular person. The qualifier ‘existential’ suggests that these are matters which can be discussed in terms of “the significance of one’s life, of one’s very being” (Vandenberg, 1990, p. 151). Examples of ‘existential matters’ in John’s case include his emphases on “vocation”, “mission”, the commitments to be faithful and creative in concrete situations, and the striving after the human potentiality he identifies as “instinctive wisdom”.

In the attention of a ‘practical philosophy paradigm’ to actual people and actual lives, existential matters can contextualise discussions of authenticity or wisdom. John provides a substantive context for such discussions not only in his response to the questions concerning ‘the gap’ but also through his disclosures of what he deems to be important and meaningful. Hence, an ‘existential matter’ is disclosed in dialogical relations that allow something of a person’s uniqueness to be known (Vandenberg, 1990). The kind of open and honest expression involved in such disclosure is also ‘phenomenological’ in the broad hermeneutical sense of providing a text that is “becoming full of the world, full of lived experience” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 32).
5.1.2 The Rogerian Perspective on 'Authenticity'

Reflecting on his career as a psychotherapist, Rogers (1977) describes what is discovered in authentic dialogic relations with others as “the person who emerges” (p. 115). This emerging person is also “a living, breathing, feeling, fluctuating process” (p. 114) and his or her “increasingly existential living” is characterised by observation of, and active participation in, this process (pp. 188-189). Rogers accordingly claims that the process of becoming more fully human or “becoming a person” (p. 71) does not allow its insights to remain a theory: there is no authentic telling apart from experience and without participation in the direction that is guided by these insights (pp. 170-171).

In addressing more specifically the question of what it means to communicate authentically on existential matters, Rogers proposes certain dialogic or personal qualities of people who are ‘becoming’ their potentialities. Many of these qualities coincide with the main points of emphasis in the excerpts and analyses. The essential relevant features of Rogers (1977) view include: a concern for “personal growth”, an “awareness and openness to experience” (p. 115), “willingness to be a process” (p. 122), honest “expressiveness of feelings” (p. 188), “creativity” (p. 193), a caring for others (pp. 224, 305), a concern for “the good life” (p. 196) and “the process of functioning more fully” (p. 191).

Rogers (1977) does not claim that all these characteristics or qualities are present in every instance but he does draw on empirical research and his own “existential phenomenological” reflections to support the observations of his experience and that of his colleagues (p. 125). Although empirical testing and the application of Rogerian theory in diverse areas of practice (such as education, race relations, politics, family relationships, administration, leadership and counselling)
have been reported as producing generally favourable results (Ryckman, 1993, p. 423), the psychological literature has elsewhere emphasised the limitations of confirming its philosophical dimensions within a positivistic paradigm (Josselson & Lieblich, 2001).

In its philosophical-anthropological dimension, authenticity in Rogerian theory is essentially concerned with “the full potential of the human organism” (Rogers, 1977, p. 104). The use of the term ‘potential’ in this context is not necessarily concerned with achievements of the well-marked kind, such as the attainment of a university degree or an executive position in the workplace. Rogers (1977) is rather more concerned again with an existential context that is more difficult to define in operational terms: “the person comes to be what he [sic] is ... What this seems to mean is that the individual comes to be - in awareness - what he is - in experience” (pp. 104-105).

The highly reflexive character of this description can suggest not only how authenticity may defy the limits of procedural formalism, but also how self-defeating an attempt to do so could become to the contextual and existential nature of authenticity itself. In other words, as much as authenticity may be considered by some writers to be recognisable (Bugental, 1981, p. 102), it is also more experiential and ultimately more paradoxical than a theory can account for. As previously noted with the construct of wisdom, the reflexive paradox is the question of the embeddedness of the object of inquiry in its own pursuit: the wisdom of the inquiry after wisdom, the authenticity of the ontological representation of authenticity.

Rather than dismiss reflexive paradoxes, the present work has proposed that

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44 In the conceptual modelling used for the present work, the given examples here pertaining to intellectual achievement and occupational prestige are more functionally important to the satisfaction of a ‘goal’ than to the meanings associated with ‘aspiration’ and ‘authenticity’. This is particularly the case in the specific light of John’s approach where it seems justifiable to posit that aspiration can represent something akin to authenticity.
any theorising of highly reflexive questions ultimately belongs within the paradoxicality. In Chapter Two, a paradox was understood to imply that the question inevitably leads logical thinking to an impasse which becomes self-referring and meaningless unless it “challenges fresh thinking and prompts new questions” (Packer, 1988, p. 491). The positive practical character of this view of paradoxicality accords with John’s own emphasis on creativity and existentialising his philosophical thought processes. This emphasis would require authenticity to be aligned with the aforementioned process of ‘becoming’ (Rogers, 1977).

5.1.3 The Profundity of ‘Existentialising’ an Educational Philosophy

The profundity of what it means for an educator to ‘existentialise’ philosophical thinking is proposed by Vandenberg (1990):

Any doing of philosophy of education by experienced teachers ought to involve reflection on their own practice in such depth that it involves their very existence. As soon as this is understood, however, it becomes clear that all valid thinking about education is existential and the qualifier ‘existential’ can be dropped as readily as the word ‘philosophical’... If doing philosophy of education by a teacher is not isolated to the cerebral cortex, but engages the teacher’s whole being, including the cerebral cortex, it is much more than thinking what one is doing. It is thinking what one is being. Doing philosophy of education thus becomes virtually equated with existing more authentically as a teacher ... It is an organic unification of thinking, doing and being. (p. 151)

The present references to ‘existential’ dimensions of John’s approach to ‘the gap’, including the ‘existential sensitivity’ rendered previously as a synergistic modality jointly constituted by a dynamic interrelationship of ‘logos’ and ‘pathos’, require this broader conceptualisation of existentialism. As indicated in Chapter 2, the term ‘existential’ in the present work is generally deployed with a view towards
the irreducibility of the subjective, personal dimension of human life" and "the sense in which the wisdom question ultimately requires something more than an intellectual exercise" (Baldwin, 1995, p. 257). As with wisdom, authenticity is only an abstract concept until it is existentialised, and references to 'existential matters' are only the contextualisation of authenticity (Vandenberg, 1990).

Vandenberg (1990) stresses that the contextualisation of theoretical constructs is nevertheless significant "when individual teachers confront the normative questions of educational practice" (p. 150). Distinguishing "contextualisation" from "relativised" modes of philosophical reflection, Vandenberg argues that contextualising the "doing of philosophy of education ... makes it relevant and lowers the level of abstraction" (p. 251). Although contextualisation "may seem to abandon concern for the universal that is characteristic of philosophy", teachers' "philosophising responses" to questions of educational practice can become more authentic when connected to "something that would make it more real" (pp. 150-151).

Several categories associated with John's reflection on practice can be synthesised or thematised as such a concern for the 'more real'. 'Existential sensitivity', 'vital reason', 'practical theology' and the 'praxeological' orientation can all be read as dimensions of this concern in John's approach. The 'concern for the more real' here is not 'metaphysical' in the technical philosophical sense of studying theoretical issues pertaining to characterisations of reality. It is rather a matter of how John tends to consider people, situations or experiences when he is indicating possibilities of meaning and action (Okshevsky, 1992, p. 19). This kind of

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45 The reference to 'normative questions' here can be thought of as substantive educational questions of profundity and practicality, such as "how and why the students should be educated" or "the nature and aim of education" (Vandenberg, 1990, p. 150). These normative questions become even more substantive or 'contextualised' in the form of questions such as "What is the knowledge that should be taught to these students this year?" (p. 150).
'life-oriented' contextualisation is an integral feature of John's discourse in the excerpts.

As far as the teacher's 'concern for the more real' is linked above with the 'more authentic', it also involves "a genuine effort to become all that one can become as a teacher" (Vandenberg, 1990, p. 151). It can be recalled that, for John, "the perfect way", "the way to strive for" and "the instinct to do the wise thing" require effort to be aimed towards a significantly different direction from the concern for a practice that can "measure up to a theory". Moreover, the effort itself is qualitatively different. Having rejected the whole standpoint of concern for the embodiment of theories ("you don't get caught up in that"), John articulates the personal-experiential nature of his striving by referring to "passion", "peace", "instinct", "growth", "love" and creative values.

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Although a primary concern for persons (or ‘love’) is widely considered to be the distinctive hallmark of authenticity, the present interest concerns the applicability of ‘authenticity’ as a synthesising construct. The ‘applicability’ of the construct of ‘authenticity’ requires it to be defensible as a philosophical construct for the purpose or context of the synthesis. In John’s case, the question is not whether he is ‘authentic’, but whether the approach he is presenting, in respect to its key elements (such as ‘love’), aligns with the authenticity construct. It is accordingly proposed here that John’s emphasis on ‘love’, along with other key text units and constructs used to establish a hermeneutical perspective on his approach, can be viewed as comprising an ‘authenticity approach’.

‘Authenticity’ here encompasses both the ‘logos’ and the ‘pathos’ of the approach John articulates. The ‘logos’ of John’s critical reflectivity and its tendency to be concerned with the axiological basis of aspiration and teachers’ work are not disconnected features of his ‘aspirational voice’. It has previously been noted that John’s concern with the pedagogical significance of person-centred values can be considered as integrally related to an ‘existential sensitivity’. Because John’s perceived ‘aspiration’ is rendered in the ‘pathos’ language of ‘passion’ and ‘love’, his existential pedagogy also requires a commitment to ‘being’ from himself and for
his students (in an ‘outward relatedness’) towards the “sort of spirit” the students come to “breathe and to live in”.

5.1.5  The ‘Authenticity Approach’ as a ‘Phronetic’ Orientation and a Process

In the educational context, the ‘commitment to being’ is also a concern for potentiality in the profound sense rendered by Vandenberg (1990): “The question each person should address in education is ‘Who will I become?’” (p. 227). John’s perceived aspiration concerns the ‘becoming’ of students, their capacities for good judgements about what is valuable, as well as his own ‘becoming’ as a person who “seeks first” what he describes as a “society of love”. His perceived aspiration has a self-directed or ‘discovery’ dimension in the sense that it re-interprets ‘the gap’ as a call for people involved in education to “seek”, “to learn” and “to find out”. As previously noted, the stress on the teacher’s facilitative role (“to encourage kids to find truth for themselves”) is critical for the alternative John proposes to the impositional role (where teachers impose “their brand of truth on students”).

Although the object of John’s ‘passion’ or ‘commitment to being’ can be represented in words by such references to the salient features of the interview texts, the ‘searching’, ‘becoming’ or ‘growth’ that is involved nevertheless requires an experiential process. In other words, John’s perspectives can be considered as an ‘approach’ or theory of pedagogy, but it is the experiential process that counts for students and teachers alike. The implication is that John is less concerned with ‘experienced reality’ in the episodic sense (involving particular events or certain experiences) than with the developmental or process-oriented sense, such as pertains to Vandenberg’s question above (‘Who will I become?’).
The aspiration to "seek first" is, in this sense, 'at the limits' of language. It is accordingly noted that experiential processes of 'searching' or 'becoming' can draw descriptions in the attending literature towards metaphors (such as 'the journey' and 'the quest') and creative uses of language (such as parables, koans and poetry). There is also, however, already a sense in which John is relying on metaphor when he begins with the term 'seek' in order to "define aspiration". From a hermeneutical perspective, 'Seek first the Kingdom of Heaven' is 'at the limits' of language, or is 'profound', to the extent that it is considered to invite analysis, interpretation and ongoing reflection.

Authenticity is also described in the philosophical literature as something that must be sought, not primarily as an intellectual matter but as a profound engagement with the possibilities of experience (Heidegger, 1927/1962). In other words, authenticity 'comes from the heart' rather than from 'the theoretic', and is filled out with the experience of 'the practical'. Ideas and insights are considered essential to this 'vital' process but are subsumed by 'the practical' in the sense that all the creative elements of authenticity are infused into life:

It [authenticity] concerns a person's relation with the world, it cannot be arrived at by simply repeating a set of actions or taking up a set of positions. In this manner, authenticity is connected with creativity: the impetus to action must arise from the person in question, and not be externally imposed. (Authenticity, 2004, para. 7)

It can be noted that historical persons commonly upheld as exemplars of authenticity (such as Socrates, Jesus and Gandhi) are often reported as having experienced life at a profound level and having experienced passion about the

47 The reference to 'the attending literature' here is transdisciplinary and general. Examples of the metaphors of 'the journey' and 'the quest' appear in works of philosophers (Pojman, 1992; Wittgenstein, 1969), psychologists (Jung, 1963; May, 1953), educationists (Greene, 1995; Vandenberg, 1990, p. 151), and theologians (Heschel, 1954/1982; Kung, 1988), as well as spiritual writers (Merton, 1979; Vardey, 1995).
transformative purposes of living authentically. The concern with change is not without a purpose, and in the case of the wisdom-getting that "becomes instinctive" the change (or the "transformatory purpose") is worth "striving for".

In the philosophical terms of the present work, a 'transformative purpose' is concerned with 'the Good', and in the context of philosophical anthropology 'the Good' is a matter of 'human potentialities' or what has previously been referred to as "becoming" and "all that one can become" (Gadamer, 1991; Rogers, 1977). In John's philosophical-theological idiom, the 'transformative purpose' is also articulated as "the perfect way", "the ideal" and the "Kingdom of Heaven". John's framing of these matters in terms of what is "instinctive" and "natural" is significant to the notion of 'transformation' here. In other words, as far as John's approach can be discussed as 'transformationist', it is again necessary for the approach to stay in touch with the experiences of human beings.

As with the sense in which 'aspiration' can extend beyond the notion of a 'goal' in making a greater claim upon the will of a person (in terms of being more fully engaged or personally 'invested'), 'authenticity' also pertains to something that is distinctive about the humanity of a person. When John discusses 'the gap' in terms of the attitude inherent to the humanity of the person who is "striving" and "being creative", he articulates the approach of a person making a certain kind of

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48 Rather than engage the discussion or judgements of historical persons as 'authentic', the consideration here rests with the meaning that is generally associated with the construct of authenticity.
49 The consideration here again is not towards any judgement of personal authenticity but a reflection on the points of emphasis in the particular approach John is articulating.
50 From the perspective of the psychological literature, the transformative process engaged by the authentic person is describable as a 'realisation' or 'actualisation' of being human (Jung, 1963; Maslow, 1968).
effort. The nature of the genuine effort and concern involved here can require the qualitative distinction previously drawn between a person who is ‘striving for’ and a person who is simply ‘going at it’. This distinction characterised the person ‘striving for’ as engaging a more conscious, flexible and evolving kind of effort.

In addition to striving and being creative, the ‘attitude’ John emphasises is articulated as one that is non-imposing, passionate, loving, faithful, independent in thought and prepared to provide students with “dissenting readings”. Described previously for its ‘ethico-practical nature’, this approach has a particular interest in what is integral to both aspiration and experienced reality. In other words, the hermeneutical significance of ‘the gap’, as John articulates it, becomes a matter of locating the ‘human’ dimension of what aspiration and experienced reality have in common. John’s emphasis on the ethico-practical nature of his work accordingly requires teaching to be viewed as a learning relationship that is evolving with students.

As with the literature on authenticity, this ‘phronetic’ emphasis prioritises human experience over what can be pre-specified or formulated. It accords with Heidegger’s view of the authentic teacher-student relationship as “an open space which constantly takes its start from the quality of the learner’s engagement with the domain in which he or she is operating” (Bonnett, 2001, p. 25). It is also an approach that harmonises with the more general descriptions of ‘authentic’ education as something that does not necessarily focus on reproducing ‘norms’ of the social world, but rather on an education that can be variously described as “emancipation” (Freire, 1982), “re-creation” (Eisner, 1998, p. 56) and “releasement” (Greene, 1995).

It has previously been noted that John’s approach emphasises the intrinsic qualities of persons (the “natural” wisdom of “good mothers”, students with the “sort
of spirit” to “make good judgements”) in a way that is also similar to Gadamer’s ‘phronetic’ emphasis on ‘the genuine hermeneutical experience’. Bernstein (1996) summarises the relevant sense in which the meaning of authenticity does not reside in theory: “Gadamer seeks to show us that authentic hermeneutical understanding becomes integral to our very being and transforms what we are in the process of becoming, just as phronesis determines the being of the phronimos” (p. 150).

In keeping this ‘phronetic’ emphasis on ‘being’ in view, it can be noted that John is articulating an approach where aspiration functions more as a guide for his efforts than something to be guided (Heidegger, 1966). As John describes it, aspiration is linked with the clarity of a calling (“my vocation”) and with a prioritising kind of decision (“seek first”). However, the challenges of John’s concern with a process of maturation that “we should enter into” and a wisdom that “becomes instinctive” also involve the less formulable kind of direction that can be “something that draws us” or something to “breathe and live in”. There is a sense here in which John is articulating a ‘phronetic’ approach where “man [sic] and being are appropriated to each other” (Heidegger, 1957, p. 31).
Part B

Summary and Concluding Reflections

5.2 From Authenticity Towards a Holistic Perspective on Wisdom Inquiry

Although important to the synthesising process, the notion of authenticity is proposed here only as an emergent construct, focus or thread around which the exploration of the wisdom question as a ‘conversation’ can be facilitated (Van Manen, 1990, p. 91). In other words, it is highly significant that the cumulative syntheses of the present work yields a discussion oriented to authenticity, but also necessary to acknowledge that these are the kinds of ‘findings’ that have larger implications. The ‘finding’ that the authenticity construct is ‘highly significant’ here is thus limited to its identification as a salient feature of the thesis as a ‘conversation’.

It is also necessary to recognise that authenticity is a category extracted from the organising of reflections within a particular context of investigation: a context which has identified education and teacher reflection as a ‘site’ for promoting discourse about the wisdom question. The mandatory caution in forming generalisations from case studies applies here. When the authenticity construct is foregrounded in the content emerging from the exploration of the thesis, it is therefore acknowledged as ‘significant’ only to the extent that a prior development is kept in view, namely, the theoretical-hermeneutic framework of the thesis.

Notwithstanding the sense here in which authenticity can be regarded as an ‘embedded’ construct, the mapping of the ‘Practical-Philosophy Paradigm’ (Figure 2) may be used as a heuristic model to develop further hermeneutically based explorations of the relationship between the wisdom question and its
contextualisation as ‘authentic’ living. It can be noted here that Figure 2 incorporates the general modelling of wisdom exploration as an inquiry of two contexts (proposing wisdom as a ‘nexus’), and that the field of teaching and the ‘language site’ of the theory-practice relationship are not the only possibilities for further use of the Practical-Philosophy Paradigm. The model, in other words, may be used for the on-going study of the wisdom question within the general parameters in which the present work is couched or it may be adapted or modified for the purposes of a different approach.

5.3 Mapping the Main Contours of the Exploration: Its Philosophy, Conclusions and Findings as a ‘Conversation’ on the Question of Wisdom

1. Research Design and an Implication Emerging from the ‘Hermeneutic Priority of the Question’

The most fundamental principles governing the exploration of the thesis have been derived from Gadamer’s hermeneutics, and pertain to “the close relation between questioning and understanding” (Gadamer, 1991, p. 374). As outlined in Chapter 2, these principles uphold “the hermeneutic priority of the question” whereby “the person who wants to understand must question”, and to understand an answer a person “must understand it as an answer to a question” (p. 370). The thesis has also upheld the “privileged name of wisdom” (Hakim, 1998, p. 89) in the sense that “the etymology of the words wisdom and wise suggests that they have always denoted or connoted high or elevated forms of behaviour” (Birren & Fisher, 1990, p.
318). Hence, the present work acknowledged that “a question places what is questioned in a particular perspective” (Gadamer, 1991, p. 362).

The notion of meaning-making as “the fusion of horizons” accordingly has involved working with such a “particular perspective” and “the priority of the question over the answer” (Gadamer, 1991, p. 370). This sense in which meaning-making can involve a reflective process that mediates between a point of view and an openness to the question has been accorded considerable respect throughout the exploration. In other words, the subject-matter has required a certain mindfulness: ‘wisdom’ has been the object of inquiry and the process of prioritising the question (“What is wisdom?”) has a ‘horizon’ beyond the dogmatism of merely asserting a point of view. Gadamer’s approach to philosophic hermeneutics has been useful here in “attaining the hermeneutical horizon” (or larger philosophical context) required by a thesis that is concerned with wisdom (Gadamer, 1991, p. 370).

The implication of following Gadamer’s hermeneutics, in respect to the wisdom question, has required particular attention to the general qualitative research principle that “research design should be a reflexive process operating throughout every stage of a project” (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1989, p. 33). Examples of how this reflexive process, or ‘turning back’ to the question, has shaped the pathway of inquiry include: the requirement of methodological strategies (such as ‘transdisciplinarity’) for dealing with the multi-disciplinary nature of the wisdom construct; the adaptation of the ‘conversation’ of the thesis to John’s re-interpretation of Stenhouse’s statement and the necessity of re-directing the explicit focus on ‘the gap’ towards the ‘implicative’ aspects of John’s approach (such as ‘vital reason’, ‘existential sensitivity’ and ‘authenticity’).

51 ‘Meaning-making’ is otherwise referred to by Gadamer as “interpretation”, “understanding” or “the hermeneutic phenomenon”.

294
2. The Thesis as a Methodological Conversation

In recognising the particular kinds of challenges associated above with wisdom inquiry, the ‘reflexive’ issue is not only “what we understand but how we come to know” (Krippendorff, 1991, p. 115). Reflexivity, in this wider sense, includes some attempt “contextually [to] recognise the various mutual relationships in which our knowing activities are embedded” (Steier, 1991, p. 163). Wisdom research must concern itself with this second-order level of inquiry. However, the concept of ‘wisdom’ is not necessarily reducible to the question of how knowledge claims are produced, and the disciplines that have traditionally studied the production of knowledge claims (such as epistemology, psychology and sociology) have generally used the term ‘wisdom’ within the context of a purpose motivated by the needs of the discipline itself.

For philosophical hermeneutics, there is a ‘third-order’ level to wisdom inquiry in the sense that its concern is not only with the reflexivity of the knowing process (or the knowledge of ‘what’ or ‘how’ we know), but also with the meaning of ‘wisdom’ in the reflexivity of the knowing process (or the ‘wisdom’ of the knowledge of ‘what’ or ‘how’ we know). The thesis has accordingly set out to present a form of reflexively oriented research that recognises that wisdom, \textit{qua} wisdom, is an object of inquiry that pertains to an ultimate level of meaning, the ‘meaning of meanings’ in this ‘third-order’ or ultimate philosophical sense.

In simpler terms, wisdom is a matter constituted by fundamental questions of being-in-the-world, such as how we go about thinking, behaving, knowing or valuing (Heidegger, 1927/1962). When one of these ‘things’ is wisdom inquiry, the ‘third-order’ or ultimate-type question of how to go about it is a constitutive part of the purpose of doing philosophical hermeneutics. The thesis has accordingly
proposed a way of doing philosophy, and presented its work as an example of this ‘Practical-Philosophy Paradigm’. Questions of the ‘kind of knowledge which knows wisdom’ have been explicitly addressed in Chapter Two, but the ‘how’ question is also implicit to the proposals for exploring the wisdom question (Chapter One), the contextualisation of the question in terms of human aspirations (Chapter Three), the study of John’s approach (Chapter Four) and the concluding reflections on the inquiry (Chapter Five).

There is a sense here in which the thesis in toto can be considered as a methodological conversation. The understanding of reflexivity as contextually recognising “the various mutual relationships in which our knowing activities are embedded” (Steier, 1991, p. 163) finds advantages in using the metaphor of ‘conversation’ and “allowing a multiplicity of voices to speak to the research issues of concern” (Gergen & Gergen, 1991, p. 79). In this context, themes of conversation and dialogue can be considered as “multilogue” (Steier, 1991, p. 6). The salient methodological features of the reflection on wisdom inquiry, such as the place envisioned for ‘transdisciplinarity’ and ‘synergistic reasoning’, are also modes of response to the ‘third-order’ challenges of the wisdom question.

3. The Creation of a General Theoretical Model

The thesis has posited a general model (Figure 1) or way of thinking about the wisdom question. Proposing that the progress of human lives involves two interrelated contexts, a Context of Profundity and a Context of Practicality, the general model simplifies the complex dynamics relating to the wisdom construct. Although the epistemological and ontological ‘pre-text’ of the thesis accepted the self-reflexivity of wisdom inquiry, the model nevertheless posited a substantive
conceptualisation of wisdom as the 'nexus' of the two contexts. The model has allowed wisdom to be approached as a profound question and allowed for the possibility of a substantive discourse in the process of encountering wisdom inquiry as a 'radical challenge' (as represented in Section 1.8, Section 2.2, Section 2.10.3 and Section 5.1.3).

4. The Utility of the Models in Dealing with the 'Tensions' of Wisdom Inquiry, and in the Formation of a Sense of Direction for the Conduct of Research

This substantive framing of the object of inquiry has been useful in working with the 'tensions' of wisdom inquiry, such as the tension between a 'sense of direction' and an openness to 'change in direction'. The exploration, having adopted Gadamer's hermeneutical principle of 'the priority of the question', has found this tension to be embedded in the thesis writing and the particular context of its case study: the way that an experienced teacher deals with the problem stated by Stenhouse as 'the gap' between aspiration and reality.

Other related tensions, such as between the 'reflexive' and 'substantive' aspects of wisdom inquiry, have been incorporated into the 'Model of the Practical-Philosophy Paradigm' of which the present work represents a particular case (Figure 2). The models can be used to frame such tensions embedded in wisdom inquiry. (Paradoxicality, for instance, can be considered as a matter of profundity and the substantive response a matter of practicality.) In the present work, this 'framing' has

52 The 'self-reflexivity of wisdom inquiry' is discussed in Section 2.1 as a 'reflexive paradox'. It was noted there that a logical approach to discussion of the wisdom question can become self-referring. This logical impasse was described as an encounter with paradoxicality. There is, for instance, a paradox in admitting knowledge claims (to 'know wisdom') where the researcher's own activity can always be questioned for its 'wisdom'. Hence, 'self-reflexivity', in the present context, is a reference to the reflexive embeddedness of the question 'What is wisdom?' in the process whereby wisdom inquiry is mediated linguistically by a researcher. A response to the paradox is outlined in Section 2.2.
been useful in formulating a rational approach and in reflecting on the process of wisdom inquiry itself. It has allowed "the sense of the question" (or a limitedness) and "the questionability of what is questioned" (or an openness) to form the relation that is considered necessary to hermeneutic understanding (Gadamer, 1991, pp. 362-363). Gadamer's hermeneutics are also an essential feature of the conception of 'philosophy' followed in the thesis, namely, philosophy as 'disciplined conversation' within the broader framework of all research as 'disciplined inquiry' (outlined in Section 1.11.1).

The two models (Figure 1 and Figure 2) have been crucial to the sense of direction generally required for the conduct of research. This sense of direction has also been required by what has been referred to above, in general terms, as the 'challenges' inherent to wisdom inquiry (and more specifically referred to in Section 2.1 as the necessity of dealing with circular and recursive processes generated by reflexivity). Both the sense of direction and the openness to change direction have been facilitated by the use of the General Model (Figure 1) as a heuristic device for generating further reflection on evidences, constructs, literature, methodology and the contextualisation of the wisdom question. Modelling of the Practical-Philosophy Paradigm has allowed progress from general to more specific pathways of exploration. This modelling has allowed the issue of reflexivity to be managed and a 'sense of direction' to be derived from the tension between the reflexive and substantive requirements of dealing with the wisdom question.

The models also allowed this 'use of the tension' to incorporate different modes of reflection without imposing a specific systemically-located way of demarcating the 'meaning space' of the wisdom question. In other words, the use of the models was compatible with the open-endedness of 'the priority of the question',
and 'meaning-making' became a function of certain themes rather than an operation dominated by a single analytical perspective or procedure. The models have allowed the expansiveness of a 'conversation' on the wisdom question within the context of disciplined inquiry: in this context the models inform the selection of a pathway of inquiry whilst retaining the 'expansive' features of conversation, such as the use of multiple perspectives from different disciplines and the use of a dialectical approach towards the tensions of wisdom inquiry.

5. The General Context of the Thesis as 'Contributor' to the On-going Conversation of Wisdom Inquiry

The thesis represents the philosophy of the general model, a philosophy engaging two primary domains: wisdom-related literature and a case study. The model is not inconsistent with the findings in either domain. On the contrary, the General Model has provided the themes or a "generative guide" for writing the research study, illuminating connections within and between the domains (Van Manen, 1990, p. 168). The models may be used as tools for structuring research studies aimed at promoting discourse about wisdom-related literature or about interpretations 'in the field' where actual situations and people are directly involved.

More specifically, the words 'profundity' and 'practicality', as well as correlates associated with the theory-practice relationship, have comprised a functional 'thematic set' of terms at the interface of the literature and the study of 'John's case'. The thesis is, in this sense, a presentation of numerous specific examples of how the thematic approach lends itself to the content of wisdom-related literature and the case study (or conversely, the content lends itself to the themes).
In terms of both the literature and John’s case, the thesis has demonstrated that the hermeneutical significance of the themes is extensive: the wisdom question generally pertains to the deeper questions of the meaning of lived experience (or a ‘Context of Profundity’), and to the practical concerns of human beings in the course of such experience (or a ‘Context of Practicality’).

6. ‘The Recognisable’, ‘the Ineffable’ and the Possibilities of Indirect Access to the Wisdom Question: Identification of the Teacher as ‘an Orientated Person’

In referring to the usefulness of the themes, it is necessary to acknowledge that “no thematic formulation can completely unlock the deep meaning, the full mystery, the enigmatic aspects of the experiential meaning of a notion” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 88).

Given the widely acknowledged “elusiveness” of the construct of wisdom (Sternberg, 1990, p. ix), this concession has a particular significance in relation to wisdom inquiry and the thematisation of the wisdom question in the present work as the ‘pursuit of nexus’. ‘Nexus’ is elusive in this ‘lived’ sense whereby its “experiential meaning” is a “wisdom of practice” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 32), or to allow for the radical plurality of the wisdom question, its experiential meaning is the process of actualising certain “vital possibilities”: namely, “what is in our power to be, our vital potentiality” (Ortega, 1972, p. 31).

The ‘elusive dimension’ of the wisdom construct pertains to the ineffability (or what Van Manen refers to as “a sphere of ineffability”) that can be associated with these possibilities and potentialities (Van Manen, 1990, p. 144). Throughout the thesis, wisdom is more than can be said (in ‘the theoretic’), but there is also a
sense in which attention to human lives (in ‘the practical’) invites or requires something to be said: possibilities must be considered and judgements are made in relation to the nature and extent of these possibilities. A ‘sphere of ineffability’ can be associated with possibilities and human potentialities, but a description can also be developed regarding the person and his or her approach towards matters of choice and action.

In providing such description, the Practical-Philosophy Paradigm of the present work presented an instance where dimensions of exploratory and descriptive research “blur together in practice” (Neuman, 1994, p. 19). The case study illuminates the sense in which a person, such as an educator who “must decide ‘the Good’” (Grundy, 1995, p. 89), is in some fashion an orientated person. Although there remains much that could be said about John’s approach or the sense in which he can be understood as an ‘orientated’ person, it is also necessary to keep in mind the kind of question from which the reference to an ‘orientation’ emerges. For the present work, the concern with an ‘orientated person’ is an exploration of ‘matters of wisdom’.

The guidance of Gadamer’s hermeneutics would suggest that the question ‘What is wisdom?’ (investigated from the standpoint of a more specific context as ‘What is John’s approach?’) requires certain distinctions to be underscored here. An exploratory ‘conversation’, in utilising all its essential elements (such as description, the creation and analytical use of a set of categories, and the drawing of connections) can perhaps absorb the ambition of achieving conceptual clarity in ‘matters of wisdom’, but not afford the pretension of ‘resolving’ the wisdom question. In other words, there is a sense in which it is always necessary (particularly within a practical philosophy paradigm) to view the conceptual benefits of exploring the wisdom
question as preparatory to something: the “testing of possibilities”, a different experience or another conversation (Gadamer, 1991, p. 375).

To speak of a ‘sphere of ineffability’ and ‘elusiveness’ at the conclusion of the present study is therefore not a closure nor a mystification of the wisdom question. It is rather a reflection on certain requirements of the wisdom question as a question explored within a qualitative research context. As Van Manen points out: “Qualitative research (qualis means ‘whatness’) asks the ‘ti estin’ question: What is it?” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 33), and must accordingly deal with the ‘hermeneutic circle’ or the situation where the ‘whatness’ ultimately requires a study of the parts (‘matters of wisdom’) and the whole (‘wisdom of practice’). The parts, such as specific matters of choice and action, are often amenable to description but the reduction of the whole to what literal language can convey denies the hermeneutic grounds of the thesis.

On these grounds, the question requires a ‘vital’ or living context: here “the whole” is not that for which philosophy can “provide answers that would little by little fill in the blanks” (Merleau-Ponty, 1968, p. 105). The ‘vital’ or ‘living’ dimension is, however, that which makes it possible to take another look at the question, re-awaken the experiences that give rise to the question, re-learn past lessons or find the conversation drawn forward by the changing aspects of the context of the question (Merleau-Ponty, 1962; Van Manen, 1990, p. 31). In the thesis, this sense in which ‘the whole’ question of wisdom lies both within and beyond what is immediately understandable is pervasive. Examples of its appearance include: the dialectic of theory and practice, the historicity and potentiality of human lives, the priority of the question, the significance of context,
the process orientation, transdisciplinarity, synergism and the notion of 'nexus' as a balancing of different kinds of dynamics.

7. Finding the Importance of 'Genuine Hermeneutical Experience' as a Condition of, and Guide for the Exploration of the Wisdom Question

In broad hermeneutic phenomenological terms, "wisdom of practice" is "a category of lived experience in all its modalities and aspects" (Van Manen, 1990, p. 32). The thesis has indicated ways in which a 'profundity-practicality' or 'nexus' model requires an openness towards varied possibilities in human experience. In John's case, forms of this openness have been described as 'synergism', 'vital reason' and 'existential sensitivity'. The thematic use of the model has also posited an important place in wisdom inquiry for multiple perspectives and the person who can convey the depth and breadth dimensions of an actual practice.

This appreciation or respecting of experience (in contrast to mistaking words for reality and the illusory appearance of a 'wisdom of practice') interpolates the 'pursuit of nexus' at several points in the 'conversation' of the thesis. Examples of such points where the appreciation becomes a requirement include: authenticity, the 'concern for the more real', the approach to the language-thought-world relationship, Gadamer and Nussbaum's notions of the 'experienced person', the 'phronetic' orientation, the dialectical theory-practice relationship and the 'practicality ethic' of 'allowing for otherness'. The 'hermeneutic interview' delivered the contribution of an experienced practitioner's hermeneutic understanding to the conversation, illuminating these aspects and providing a context for the use of key terms (such as 'aspiration' and 'reality') which can otherwise 'float' beyond the desire to make sense (Van Manen, 1990, p. 88).
An example which highlights the general point concerning language and experience here can be recalled from Excerpt 4. Asked how he would define a 'problem', John responded: "I think a problem is some situation; I think it’s got to be real for a start." A situation was not necessarily a problem because it had been labelled as a 'problem', but rather because there existed an actual requirement: "It’s a situation that requires a creative solution". The requirement must also have a certain character. It was not a requirement for "just your common ordinary everyday exit strategy" and to label such a situation as a 'problem' was considered a mistake: "if it was that it wouldn’t be a problem".

As he reflected on aspiration in an educational context, the concern for the 'more real' did not limit the development of John’s ideas to his specific teaching experience, but the entry of concepts (such as 'wisdom' and 'Kingdom of Heaven') into the discussions was invariably directed to some concrete dimension of human experience or a sensibility that is relevant to that experience (“a good mother with little kids”; “respect” and “love” for persons). In other words, John’s concern for the 'more real' in the interviews was 'phronetic' in its orientation towards the experience that drives or stimulates the conversation (Van Manen, 1990, p. 98).

Although the thesis has essentially focused more on the question of wisdom (its reflexivity, contextualisation, and methodology) than the construct of wisdom, its exploration has generally reported a ‘living’ or existential meaning: there can be no strict and simple demarcation of ‘nexus’ as a field of experience. The ‘elusiveness’, however, has not precluded the possibility of fulfilling the “task” of philosophical hermeneutics: namely, “the opening up of the hermeneutical dimension” (Gadamer, 1977, p. 18).
This ‘opening up of the hermeneutical dimension’ has involved the exploration in an effort to understand the wisdom question as ‘the pursuit of nexus’. Without losing sight of the above qualification regarding expressions that elude more precise definition, it can be noted that several conceptual generalisations relating to the notion of ‘nexus’ have warranted attention in the thesis. For instance, both the literature and John’s case suggest how the ‘nexus’, or negotiation of the Contexts of Profundity and Practicality, can require a creative, open-minded and flexible approach. As indicated in the thesis, there is widespread support for these qualities or attributes in the philosophical, psychological and educational literature addressing the notion of ‘phronesis’ and wisdom generally.

The analyses of John’s dealings with matters of profundity and practicality does not deny the possibility of a philosophically or transdisciplinally-grounded integral relation between the two contexts. In the course of thematic reflection, there is a sense in which the analyses often suggest that profundity and practicality are co-extensive or inseparable aspects of John’s response to, and participation in, the hermeneutic understanding that shapes his practice. As John understands it, wisdom is “mystical” but the profundity is also concretised in ways that are “very natural” when “the right decisions are made”. There is a sense here where neither Context (‘Profundity’ nor ‘Practicality’) can be said to be generally predominant. John’s hermeneutic understanding is thus rendered here as a matter of balanced integration.

For John, the orientation (or “spirit”) of this ‘hermeneutic understanding’ is also inseparable from the aspiration he perceives and articulates as “Seek first the

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53 In this generalisation, nexus is a ‘vital connect’ in the Ortegean sense of ‘vital’ outlined in the analysis of Excerpt 4.
Kingdom of God". Teaching, and moreover life, in this "seeking" are a journey into human maturation and potentiality (the 'Context of Profundity'): a journey which is constituted together with practical concerns involving matters of choice and action (the 'Context of Practicality'). Practicality, for instance, can be a matter for John of choosing or showing "love" in concrete and creative ways rather than "getting resentful" or deciding against the process whereby "we're going to grow" if we "enter into" various kinds of "problems and challenges". The interrelationship can be represented as 'intertextuality' when noting that John speaks of "a kind of spirit" that a person can "breathe and live in", how he "knows" that becoming resentful "doesn't work" and associates "being creative" with what does work, and how he experiences a problem as a "situation" that is "real" and is "something that draws us into being creative".

Although it provides a plenitude of possibilities for extending the 'conversation' of the present work, the variety of ways of perceiving, thinking and acting that can be associated with the Contexts of Profundity and Practicality also imply the complexities of the 'pursuit of nexus'. From a hermeneutical standpoint, the study of the two contexts indicates that 'nexus' is a multi-faceted and multi-layered notion (Van Manen, 1990, p. 78). The 'horizons' of the wisdom question in this sense are far-reaching in terms of the varied possibilities of further exploratory research becoming more "familiar with the basic facts, people and concerns involved" (Neuman, 1994, p. 19).

Conclusion

The thesis has reported its approach to the wisdom question as a 'Practical-Philosophy Paradigm', and outlined models for the use of this paradigm in wisdom
inquiry. In metaphorical terms, the thesis has conducted a 'conversation' and undertaken a 'journey', exploring a range of relevant literature and developing a particular contextualisation of the wisdom question. It has thematised the wisdom question as a pursuit of the 'nexus' of profundity and practicality, and demonstrated the utility of the themes throughout the course of its investigations. Moreover, the 'conversation' has indicated how the formulation of wisdom as a 'nexus' is implicated in perspectives derived from the literature and the field of education.

The perspectives of an experienced teacher, reflecting on aspiration and the notion of 'the gap', have been combined with perspectives from wisdom-related literature, resulting in the proposal of a number of categories with implications for wisdom inquiry. Accordingly, the conversation has engaged the process of opening up the hermeneutical dimension of teacher aspiration as a rich source of insights and possibilities for interpreting the wisdom question.

The use of different sources and multiple perspectives in the conversation has incorporated current trends in research. These trends include innovative methodological principles proposed in relatively recent forums and discussions on 'transdisciplinarity'. In proposing and exploring these initiatives, models, perspectives, categories, and literatures, as well as demonstrating a Practical-Philosophy Paradigm, the thesis has approached the wisdom question as a question with complex issues that can be particularly challenging for research.

It can also be recalled that the thesis has proposed that the challenges of wisdom inquiry can require a general 'process orientation'. The process orientation has aimed to provide perspectives for a way of thinking about the wisdom question, and the 'way of thinking' has been posited within a context where the researcher values an on-going conversation and promoting discourse about interpretations.
The wisdom question, in this context, invites an educational process in the sense indicated by Whitehead’s philosophy of education:

Education is the guidance of the individual towards a comprehension of the art of life; and by the art of life I mean the most complete achievement of varied activity expressing potentialities of the living creature in the fact of its actual environment ... Each individual embodies an adventure of existence. The art of life is the guidance of this adventure. (1929/1954, p. 39)

At the beginning of the present work, it was suggested that ‘nexus’ is a ‘vital connection’ where something is ‘realised’. The ‘realisation’ is ‘practical’ in the sense that it concerns what is being brought to fruition, and it is profound in the sense that it expresses human potentialities. In ‘journeying’, the present work has aimed to conclude at “a place where there are always possibilities of clearings, of new openings” (Greene, 1995, p. 149). The thesis has accordingly reached a ‘place’ where a way of thinking about the wisdom question has been formulated, a particular context has been explored, and a philosophical approach which allows or opens up possibilities for further explorations has been demonstrated.

There are, of course, other contexts to explore beyond the field of education and aspiration. In the end, however, it may be necessary to retain a view towards the aspirational and educational implications of the wisdom construct. As indicated in the thesis, one of the deep roots of the concept of wisdom lies in the aspiration of the ancient wisdom-loving person (a philos-sophia) for deeper understanding, and in the esteem for the person with practical knowledge (a phronimos) who can deal with problematical situations. While recognising the

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54 The thesis acknowledged the sense in which concepts develop ‘a life of their own’. It also considered the sense in which a desire for theoretical and practical kinds of knowledge is implicit in our definitions of wisdom, as well as explicit in the Socratic and Aristotelian conceptions of wisdom. In Chapter One, for example, wisdom was defined by Kekes (1994) in The Oxford Companion to Philosophy as “a form of understanding” with the “aim” of attaining a “reasonable conception of a good life” and an ability to “make decisions and act from its point of view” (p. 912).
historical scope and importance of such aspirational and educational implications in wisdom inquiry, the Practical-Philosophy Paradigm can nevertheless require a commitment to studying new perspectives and letting others speak of what is important in matters of their own experience.

The central role of the metaphor of 'conversation' in the thesis has been to uphold this commitment to the 'voice' of others. In any continuation or extension of the Practical-Philosophy Paradigm, it is necessary for people to report from the varied contexts and courses of their lives. Beyond the willingness to study "the worlds of others in order to learn firsthand about how they live, how they talk and behave, and what captivates and distresses them" (Emerson, 1981, p. 1), the 'commitment' involves what the thesis has referred to as the existential or 'practical ethic' of 'allowing for otherness'. In other words, the study of 'other contexts' here includes an ethical consideration of dialogical relations with 'what is other'.

These final perspectives at the conclusion of the present 'journey' can allow the Practical-Philosophy Paradigm to be viewed as responsive to both philosophical traditions and the recognition of our evolving relationship to knowledge and learning. The present work has accordingly approached the wisdom question with a view towards the richness of such traditions and the potentialities of current concerns with 'practice-oriented' approaches. As our relationship to knowledge and learning continues to change, the wisdom question may be recognised in the way we understand this evolving process and how it can benefit our dealings with tangible, real-world problems. From the perspective of the present work, this would be another instance of 'nexus', the profound matter of our human potentialities being linked with the practical concerns of human lives.
References


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325


Appendix One

Transcription Notation

I Interviewer
J John
( ) *Empty parentheses* indicate the transcriber’s inability to hear what was said (Silverman, 1993, p. 18).

Underscoring indicates some form of emphasis or stress (Silverman, 1993, p. 18)

, (Pause) *Commas* indicate a tiny pause. Lengthened pauses are directly indicated by the word ‘Pause’ in parenthesis.

* Asterisks indicate expressions of particular significance to the line of thinking pursued in the analyses.

**Intonations** Intonated types of utterances (such as ‘ah’, ‘um’, ‘ah hum’, ‘hmm’) have been included in the excerpts in order to reflect more accurately the movement and texture of the conversation. For example, the response or intonation indicated as ‘Hmm’ (used by both speakers but mostly by the interviewer) is generally suggestive of an acknowledgment, understanding or ‘following’ of what the other speaker has said. The indication ‘Hmm. Hmm’ is the more emphatic use of intonation.