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Reflections on Reflective Practice (3/7)

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Part 3: In search of practical reason In the first two reflections of this series (Ulrich, 2008a, b), we discussed two opposing perspectives of professional practice and found them both wanting. Neither the "reflective practice" mainstream nor the "applied science" mainstream respond satisfactorily to the increasingly problematic and contested nature of professional problem solving, and to the philosophical and methodological challenges that applied research and professional practice consequently face today (see Part 1).

My conclusion is that both perspectives might benefit from turning to practical philosophy for help. *Practical philosophy* is the branch of philosophy that deals with issues of practical as distinguished from theoretical reason, that is, with the life-practical and normative core of rational (or reasonable) practice. (For a brief introduction, see Ulrich, 1988.) I find it striking to observe that both the "reflective practice" and the "applied science" mainstreams have thus far largely ignored what philosophers of practice – from Aristotle to Habermas – can teach us about the quest for reasonable practice. Recognizing this deficit should help us understand the difficulties that both perspectives experience when it comes to supporting practicing researchers and professionals in their quest for competence. At the same time, we must ask why practical philosophy has apparently been of so little appeal to practitioners as well as to theorists of reflective practice and applied science, and what we can *do* about this situation.

As in the last *Bimonthly* we have focused on ways to reform the prevailing model of applied science, it is now time to look more closely at the reflective practice literature and to examine what's beneath its failure to take practical philosophy seriously. The questions that we need to consider are**:** (1) Why has the notion of "reflective practice" become so soft? (2) In what ways does

it miss the insights of practical philosophy? (3) Why have these insights hardly appealed to reflective practitioners? And finally (4), how can we help reflective practitioners in learning to practice practical reason? Questions (1) to (3) form the topic of the present Part 3, while question (4) will be at the center of Part 6 of the current series of reflections on reflective practice.

(1) Why so soft? **– Personal knowledge and artistry as the missing link between applied science and professional competence?** With the writings of Michael Polanyi (1958, 1966) and Donald Schön (1983, 1987), along with a number of other influential writers of the same epoch whom we have briefly encountered in Part 1, among them Schein (1972), Mintzberg (1973), Argyris (1976, 1982), Argyris and Schön (1974), Kolb (1984), Boud et al. (1985), and others, it became customary to identify the missing link between applied science and competent professional practice with the concept of *personal knowledge.* It had been coined by Polanyi (1958) and subsequently became most influential in Schön's (esp. 1983, 1987) work on the *reflective practitioner.*

Polanyi's main contribution was an analysis of the ways in which even in the exact sciences, the "art of knowing" (1958, Part One) depends essentially on the knowing subject, however seriously the quest for objectivity may be taken. There is an indispensable personal side to science, whether basic or applied; competent research practice depends not only on explicit knowledge and skills acquired through formal training and examination but equally on implicit and intuitive ways of knowing and reflecting in action. This "tacit dimension" (1958, Part Two; 1966) is acquired through personal experience and reflection rather than through formal training. In a famous formulation that sums it all up, "we know more than we can tell" (Polanyi, 1966, p. 4). Even in the exact sciences, "all knowing is ... either tacit or rooted in tacit knowing" (Polanyi and Prosch, 1976, p. 61).

With hindsight, this *personal knowledge* conception of research and professional competence may look more obvious than it was at the time when Polanyi was writing. Nowadays science theorists and professional educators of all creeds readily grant that "of course," there is an indispensable subjective side to science and expertise. At Polanyi's time,

however, avowing this subjective side was coming close to a paradigm break, as science and expertise were still supposed to be strictly objective, that is, free of subjective elements. In any case, it was unclear what researchers might do about this tacit dimension of science. Even today science theory still offers researchers little help in dealing systematically with it. This circumstance is particularly disturbing when it comes to applied science and expertise.

This is where historically, Donald Schön comes in. While Michael Polanyi was writing about science in general and about the exact, basic sciences in particular, Donald Schön took the same insight as a starting point and central idea for his study of how competent professionals work in practice:

> We are in need of inquiry into the epistemology of practice. What is the kind of knowing in which competent practitioners engage? How is professional knowing like and unlike the kinds of knowledge presented in academic textbooks, scientific papers, and learned journals? In what sense, if any, is there intellectual rigor in professional practice? In this book I offer an approach to epistemology of practice based on a close examination of what some practitioners – architects, psychotherapists, engineers, planners, and managers – actually do. ... In my analysis of these cases, I begin with the assumption that *competent practitioners usually know more than they can say.* They exhibit a kind of *knowing-in-practice, most of which is tacit.* (Schön, 1983, p. viii, emphasis added)

25 years later, Schön's approach – as influential as it has been – is still remarkably different from what is generally considered to be sound professional practice. As in the case of basic science, our contemporary notions of applied science and professional competence still put much more emphasis on the rigor and rationality expected from relying on explicit theory and procedures than on offering practitioners support in analyzing the tacit, often uncertain and momentous assumptions that flow into their use of theories and procedures for practical purposes. Equally little has changed about the fact that researchers and professionals are often quite unable to explain and justify such assumptions, as the philosopher of science Paul Feyerabend (1980, p. 20) observed at about the same time but independently of Schön:

> Routine argument and procedures as they underpin the research in a certain field and supposedly guarantee its "rationality" and "scientific nature," frequently rest on assumptions that later research shows to be wrong or even meaningless. Experts often ignore such assumptions – that is, they take them for granted without being aware of them – or else they are aware of them but do not know the reasons for or against relying on them; that is, when it comes

to discussing these assumptions, they are laypersons. (Feyerabend, 1980, p. 20, my transl.)

It is because "competent professionals usually know more than they can say" that despite such limitations, they are able to apply explicit theories and formal procedures successfully to situations of professional intervention. As Schön explains in one of the strongest passages of *The Reflective Practitioner:*

> In the varied topography of professional practice, there is a high, hard ground where practitioners can make effective use of research-based theory and technique, and there is a swampy lowland where situations are confusing "messes" incapable of technical solution. The difficulty is that the problems of the high ground, however great their technical interest, are often relatively unimportant to clients or to the larger society, while in the swamp are the problems of the greatest human concern. Shall the practitioner stay on the high, hard ground where he can practice rigorously, as he understands rigor, but where he is constrained to deal with problems of relatively little social importance? Or shall he descend to the swamp where he can engage the most important and challenging problems if he is willing to forsake technical rigor? (Schön, 1983, p. 42)

The "high ground" vs. "swampy lowland" metaphor rapidly became popular. More than that**:** it became a central explanatory scheme of the problem of reflective practice. We will deal with it in more detail a bit later; but already at this point it suggests an explanation as to why the reflective practice mainstream has turned its attention more to "soft," intuitive and emotional aspects of inquiry than to practical philosophy; namely, in reaction to the "hard," theory-based and objectivist model of science that prevailed in its early days and which Karl Popper (1968, 1972), whose ideas we examined in the previous discussion, summed up by his advocacy of an "epistemology without a knowing subject." A new emphasis on "personal knowledge" was apparently needed to counterbalance the triumph of an "objective knowledge" conception of applied science and rational practice (as exemplified by Popper's model of critically rational practice). Indeed, it is hardly by pure coincidence that the concept of "reflective practice" first emerged and became influential just when the model of the exact sciences was at the peak of its recognition as *the* rational way of doing research in all fields of inquiry, including the humanities, the arts, and professional practice, I mean the 1950s and the subsequent decades of the 20th century. A response was needed to the obvious limitations and shortcomings of an almost exclusively science-based and technical notion of

competent research and professional practice, in which professionals were seen rather narrowly as technical problem solvers and competent practice was largely congruent with the (supposed) rigor and objectivity of applied science. Polanyi and Schön's framing of reflective practice in terms of "personal knowledge," of "intuition" and "artistry," was widely seen to provide such a response. (For a thorough introduction to the thought of Polanyi and Schön, see Gelwick, 1977, and Smith, 2001.)

(2) What is missing? – Pitfalls of the personal knowledge perspective

While I find Polanyi's and Schön's diagnosis of the problem – the limited reach of explicit procedures and technical rationality – correct, I am less convinced by the therapy they suggest. As much as I agree with the need for looking at the nontechnical, tacit core of applied science and expertise, I see no need to identify this nontechnical core with mainly psychological issues and with "soft," intuitive forms of reflection. I would argue that the core issues we need to confront are much more of a *philosophical* and methodological nature, for they fundamentally concern our understanding of what constitutes rationality in practical matters; for example, the ways we understand rational action, and rational criticism of practical propositions. Accordingly, they require "hard," explicit frameworks of rigorous and systematic reflection and argumentation rather than just "soft," intuitive responses. I find this philosophical and methodological dimension rather absent in Polanyi and Schön's treatment of reflective practice.

The work of Polanyi and Schön is rightly famous for its originality, and for good reasons continues to be influential as a source of reflection on reflective practice. Nevertheless, the emphasis they both put on "tacit" knowledge and intuition has its dangers. It tends to divert attention away from some of the core issues of professional education and practice that we need to confront, in particular with a view to the normative, value-laden basis of rational practice and to the question of how we can deal systematically with its judgmental and conflictual nature. To the extent we neglect this normative core of professional intervention, we risk missing the *argumentative* tasks with which it burdens the quest for (self-)critical and rational practice. We thus end up reinforcing the myth that "reflective practice" is essentially about appreciating the intuitive side of what we do; about being close to our

emotions and inner sources of creativity and commitment; a matter of personal artistry rather than of self-critical methodological discipline and rigor.

Ironically, the "personal knowledge" response thus falls into the very trap that it originally set out to overcome and which we have encountered in Popper's thinking about applied science and critically rational practice**:** it ends up confirming the view that what cannot be grasped in scientific and technical terms – with Popper**:** of controlled experimentation and deductive reasoning, with Schön**:** of the high ground of research-based theory and technique – needs to be relegated to a domain of merely subjective judgments.

As an example, Schön (1983, p. 45f, with reference to Schein, 1972, p. 44f) mentions the "divergent" nature of professional practice as distinguished from the "convergent" nature of the basic and applied sciences; in the terms of our own discussion, I would prefer to speak more concretely of emotional, worldview, and political aspects of professional intervention, along with many more. Another example that comes to mind (but which Schön considers at best marginally) is ethical reflection and argumentation**:** its normative and discursive categories clearly burst the reach of empirical research and deductive reasoning. In both examples, professionals need divergent thinking skills that are "neither theory nor technique" (1983, p 46). Hence, Schön agrees with Schein, "they must remain a mysterious, residual category" (1983, p. 46); a matter of "nonrational, intuitive artistry" (1983, p. 239) that eludes rational analysis. As he concludes**:**

> Let us then reconsider the question of professional knowledge; let us stand the question on its head. If the model of Technical Rationality is incomplete, in that it fails to account for practical competence in "divergent" situations, so much the worse for the model. Let us search, instead, for an *epistemology of practice implicit in the artistic, intuitive processes* which some practitioners do bring to situations of uncertainty, instability, uniqueness, and value conflict. (Schön, 1983, p. 49, emphasis added)

At the precise moment when Schön gets to the heart of the problem – the need for extending the model of technical rationality – he shrinks back from really confronting the task. Because he apparently does not recognize practical reason as a perfectly *rational* extension and necessary complement to technical rationality, he sees the only possible extension of technical

rationality in *nonrationality,* in an intuitive "knowing-in-action" that we cannot explain in terms of theory or procedure, and thus in "artistry" and "intuition." The best we can then apparently hope to achieve is that we become self-reflective with regard to this "tacit knowing-in-action," an effort that he calls *reflection-in-action* (1983, p. 49f). His prescription for overcoming the limitations of technical rationality thus suffers from the outset from a *fundamental confusion of nontechnical rationality with a lack of rationality in general* (Ulrich, 1988, p. 143). Accordingly, the term "reflection-in-action" promises more than what the underlying prescription can redeem; for the consequence of this confusion is that we either need to rely on technical rationality or else are bound to fall back on artistry and intuition.

The practical dimension of reason is strangely absent in such a conception of professional competence. Rather than taking refuge in nonrationality, it would appear consequent to mobilize the one perfectly rational extension of technical rationality there is – practical reason. But Schön misses this opportunity to bring practical philosophy back into the "epistemology of practice" for which he searches. Reflective practice thus becomes a kind of stop-gap exercise – a philosophically insufficient and methodologically precarious attempt to compensate for the supposed unavailability of rationality – rather than a way forward to recover the lost dimension of practical reasoning. But how can we expect to overcome the fundamental philosophical and methodological limitations of technical rationality if we ignore the other, nontechnical dimension of rationality in all practice?

Remember our discussion of the merits and limitations of science education in Part 2. We now can reformulate the danger that we associated with the prevalent tendency to equate professional education with science education, and sound professional practice with applied science, in Schön's terms. The danger is that we focus so strongly on the *high ground* of theoretical and technical rationality that we then apparently need to redress the balance by falling into the other extreme of associating professional practice with the *swampy lowlands* of personal intuition and artistry, trial and error, and muddling through. The "objective knowledge" approach of the high ground of science theory thus leads us into the swamp of merely "personal

knowledge," which really plays first fiddle but about which we cannot speak.

To be sure, I do not mean to deny the idea that all knowing has a tacit and partly nonrational side and that accordingly, there is indeed a strong personal element in professional competence. My concern is, rather, that referring to it in *methodological* argumentation risks begging the core issues**:** Where exactly resides the rationality, the intellectual rigour, the critical discipline and falsifiability that we associate with the work of a professional? How can we *systematically* learn to acquire and control those "other" skills of a competent professional – the *middle ground* of a rational, yet not merely theoretical or technical, basis of professional competence, as it were?

Another issue that comes up is this. Where are the *values,* the ethical, religious, political, socio-economic and environmental concerns and considerations that permeate and drive all practice? Are they also part of the swamp? Never heard of Kant (1787, 1788), the father of critical philosophy, for whom *ethical reasoning* is the highest of all forms of rationality? How come Schön's concept of reflective practice makes us almost forget that valuable professional advice is exactly what the term suggests**:** it is inescapably value-laden and hence, requires corresponding critical and *argumentative* skills for dealing with its own value content.

We begin to understand why Schön's work – and the reflective practice mainstream that follows him – tells us little about such *nontechnical, yet thoroughly rational* requirements of professional competence. Merely denying their rational nature and focusing instead on intuition and artistry is not good enough. To be sure, inasmuch as intuition and artistry do of course have a part to play there is nothing wrong with the idea of reflecting on this part; however, such a reflective focus on intuition and artistry cannot spare us the methodological discipline of developing and training *critical argumentative skills* such as stakeholder dialogue, boundary critique, ethical reflection and discourse, and many others available to those who care. With its current focus on the (supposedly) tacit and nonrational core of competent practice, the reflective practice mainstream risks cementing the very split between formal, science-based training and intuitive, personal practice that it diagnoses and deplores. Could it be that the reflective practice literature is

insufficiently reflective with regard to its own underlying concept of competent practice?

The example of management practice As an example of the importance of "nonrational, intuitive artistry," Schön (1983, pp. 236-266) discusses *the art of managing.* He deplores the split between management science and management practice, the first being treated mainly as a matter of theoretical reasoning and mathematical modeling and the second as an art grounded in a basically "nonrational dimension" (1983, p. 239) and remaining to some extent "mysterious" (1983, p. 243). Although he acknowledges that this conception is "creating a misleading impression that practitioners must choose between practice based on management science and an essentially mysterious artistry" (1983, p. 243), he still in essence associates the core skills it takes to be a good manager with an "art of managing" that can at best be trained by means of case studies and by "extending and elaborating on artistry," that is, "reflecting on artistry and its limits" (1983, p. 266).

I am not a true believer. I do not think this reflective focus on the tacit and nonrational side of management – on managerial intuition and artistry – is the best we can do to educate competent and self-critical managers, apart from giving them technical managerial skills such as marketing, finance, and so on. After all, the current generation of managers has been trained to a considerable extent along these lines, with Harvard-type case studies and efforts to reflect on what can be learned from them. The results, I fear, are not particularly encouraging; some might want to argue that they are poor and that society as a whole is paying a heavy price for them. (No need to discuss the many cases of serious mismanagement, managerial error, fraud and irresponsibility, excessive executive salaries, and other forms of managerial incompetence that we all have witnessed in recent years.)

Intermediate summary: the lost middle ground I fear the notion of professional competence that informs the bulk of the current reflective practice literature may do more harm than good to the quest for reflective practice. The diagnosis of a widespread over-reliance on technical rationality may be correct – although I would not really want to play off nontechnical against technical rationality, we need both – but the suggested therapy of a

reflective focus on nonrationality and artistry is definitely insufficient. The embodiment of this therapy, the prevailing conception of "reflection-in-action," risks being equally insufficient, for it cannot address some of the most fundamental issues related to the quest for competence:

1. It cannot help us to recover the lost middle ground of nontechnical yet rational skills that are essential to professional competence. The best chance to achieve this lies in a methodologically disciplined effort to consider the "other," practical-normative dimension of rational practice, based on the insights of practical philosophy.

2. It has no adequate grasp of some of the most crucial argumentative, discursive, and critically reflective skills that I would want to associate with professional competence; I am thinking, for example, of the societal repercussions of what professionals do (e.g., the costs and risks their recommendations may impose on third parties, including nature and future generations) and of normative implications of "competent" practice (e.g., issues of ethical rightness and democratic legitimacy).

3. It fails to address the root problem beneath the over-reliance on technical rationality, which I suspect lies in the mentioned fundamental confusion of nontechnical rationality with nonrationality, and in a consequent (but mistaken) attempt to ground applied science, critical rationality, and professional competence one-sidedly in the theoretical dimension of reason, along with a reflective focus on intuition and artistry.

(3) What to do? – **Facing the lacking appeal of practical philosophy to reflective practitioners and theorists** The dilemma that we face is this. On the one hand, the two perspectives of professional education embodied in today's "reflective practice" and "applied science" mainstreams are insufficient pillars of professional competence; on the other hand, the considered third pillar of practical philosophy is not easily accessible and has thus far been of very limited appeal to practitioners and theorists of reflective practice.

In this situation, it is imperative that we are clear about these three questions**:**

1. What are the main reasons for the wanting appeal of practical philosophy to reflective practitioners that we need to overcome?

2. How do we explain the relevance of practical philosophy to practitioners and theorists of reflective practice?

3. Can we pragmatize practical philosophy so as to make it easier accessible, and practicable, to many practitioners?

Re: 1. *What are the main reasons for the wanting appeal of practical philosophy to reflective practitioners that we need to overcome?* From the perspective of reflective practitioners, the main reason is a historical circumstance**:** it is the fact that the contemporary reflective practice mainstream originates with the work of Donald Schön, and with the personal knowledge focus that he adopted from Michael Polanyi. Due to this focus, it is understandable that the reflective practice literature has developed little interest in practical philosophy.

Second, from a more philosophical perspective, another main reason certainly must be seen in the fact that practical philosophy is not an easily accessible branch of philosophy. Again, however, it seems to me the reasons for this relative inaccessibility are historical rather than systematic; accordingly, I see no reason why the situation might not change. Let us not forget that practical philosophy as we know it today started with Aristotle's work on *phronesis* (practical wisdom or prudence). With its central ideas of cultivating an understanding of personal virtues and balanced judgment, it was still close to everyday practice and thus was accessible to many people. It was only later that practical philosophers began to work with *theoretically* ideal notions of rational practice such as Kant's categorical imperative or Habermas' ideal speech situation, so that in today's practical philosophy literature, practical reason has become more a theoretical than a practical project; a philosophical construction that is no longer easily accessible to ordinary people and in any case is remote from what we can hope to achieve in everyday practice. (I emphasize "theoretically" because one may duly ask how ideal is a theoretical conception of practical reason that helps us understand but not practice it.) As much as these philosophers have taught us about the nature of practical reason, they have been less successful in helping practitioners to *practice* practical reason.

Third, and related to the two previous reasons, the reflective practice movement appears to have largely missed a major recent development in the field of practical philosophy, namely, its turn to discursive models of practical reasoning. In this development I see new opportunities for both, explaining the relevance of practical philosophy to practitioners and pragmatizing it so that practitioners may use it.

Re: 2. *How do we explain the relevance of practical philosophy to practitioners and theorists of reflective practice?* The current remoteness of practical philosophy from practice does not imply that the quest for practical reason is irrelevant; but it does make it understandable why many professionals tend to "switch off" when it comes to the practical-normative dimension of rationality. However, with the discursive turn of practical philosophy, the seeds of change have already been sown. There are two basic ways in which a discursively oriented practical philosophy is relevant to reflective practitioners.

First, it seems to me the discursive turn of practical philosophy offers an untapped opportunity to uncover and strengthen the *methodological structure of reflective practice,* about which today's reflective practice literature tells us remarkably little. Reflective practice depends essentially on the way we understand the structure (or logic) of rational argumentation and discourse in matters practical, which is exactly what practical philosophy is all about. Practical philosophy today is essentially informed by discourse theory, and as such can furnish an explanatory framework that is more useful than the "high ground" vs. "swampy lowlands" scheme. It may show us the way to overcoming the continuing split between technical skills and personal competence through discursive practice.

Second, practical philosophy is equally indispensable as a source of insights into the *fundamentally two-dimensional nature of reasonable practice.* Again, framing reflective practice in such terms looks more useful than the high ground vs. lowlands scheme. It shows us the way to dealing systematically with the two-dimensionality of reason, rather than escaping into an unproductive opposition of technical rationality with nonrationality. It appears that this mistaken opposition has made the reflective practice

mainstream focus so much on the "high ground" of theoretical and technical rationality, and on the effort to respond to it by strengthening the swampy lowland (?) of personal knowledge, that it has gone blind in its practical-philosophical eye, as it were. It shares this fate with the applied science mainstream. Both ignore the fundamental two-dimensionality of reason; both have consequently fallen victim to an explanatory scheme that relegates nontechnical and nontheoretical rationality to a merely subjective or personal realm of acts of judgment and belief, about which we supposedly cannot talk and argue rationally. Fortunately, once we recognize how impoverished is this scheme of the high ground of theory vs. the swampy lowland of practice and discover, with the help of practical philosophy, that there is a rational alternative, we can throw the scheme over board and begin to focus on the real challenge, namely, developing conceptual frameworks and tools that help us put practical philosophy into practice.

Re: 3. *Can we pragmatize practical philosophy so as to make it easier accessible, and practicable, to many practitioners?* Properly understood, reflective practice begins once we have thrown the high ground/lowland scheme over board and instead begin to ground our notion of reflective practice in practical philosophy (along with science theory and psychology, to be sure); for only then may we hope to discover methodological principles and tools that will help us to deal critically with the two dimensions of rational practice and to do justice to their fundamental interdependence. In this way practical philosophy, which so far has been mainly a theoretical program of research, will at the same time become a force that informs and moves not only theoretical philosophical thought but also the practice of research and professional intervention.

Secondly, the discursive turn of contemporary practical philosophy offers us new opportunities for bringing practical philosophy down to earth, that is, to everyday communicative practice. Since communicative practice is part of everyone's experience, I cannot see why we should not be able to translate the insights of practical philosophy into reflective tools that everyone can understand and practice. I trust that once we start to reframe reflective practice in terms of critically discursive practice, we will indeed have taken a crucial step towards this aim of rendering practical philosophy practicable.

We will thereby also learn to understand Polanyi and Schön's central concepts of personal knowledge and of "reflection-in-action" as leading us to a fundamentally rational, rather than nonrational, core of professional competence.

As a third and last hint, my personal approach to pragmatizing practical philosophy is by means of what throughout my writings, beginning with *Critical Heuristics* (Ulrich, 1983), I have called the "critical turn" of our understanding of knowledge and rationality. Basically, the idea is that the quest for true knowledge and rational action orients us towards ideals that we can never claim to have achieved. This is why reflective practice is so relevant¨! What matters for reflective practice is not so much the extent to which we may in concrete circumstances achieve true knowledge and rational action, but rather a systematic effort to make it clear to ourselves and to everyone concerned in what ways we may fail to achieve these ideals. This latter effort protects us from raising inaccurate and unjustified claims, and thereby also from errors of judgment as well as from a lack of mutual understanding and intolerance in our cooperation with others.

The critical turn, because it does not depend on idealistic assumptions regarding rational discourse and action, allows us to begin practical work on the job of supporting rational reflection and discourse on nontechnical issues. We can then conceive of reflective practice in the methodological terms of critical intersubjective argumentation rather than in the psychological terms of personal intuition and artistry. We can, in other words, begin to face the *argumentative tasks* that professional claims entail under everyday conditions of today's complex and pluralist world, including their normative core and what is now mistaken as the "swampy lowlands" of personal views and value judgments behind it.

Concluding remarks   It should have become clear from our three reflections on reflective practice thus far that we need to overcome the unfortunate split between the "personal knowledge" conception and the "applied science" conception of professional competence. It should be equally clear, though, that while understanding the two perspectives as complementary is necessary and helpful, it is not sufficient for ensuring

rational practice; for it does nothing to recover for rational practice the missing dimension of practical reason. No kind of combination of the two perspectives will be able to do justice to this neglected "other" dimension of rationality.

Clearly, then, a proper understanding of professional competence today needs to be grounded not only in science theory (regarding our notion of applied science) and in psychology (regarding our notion of reflective practice) but also in practical philosophy (regarding both notions). Given today's remoteness of practical philosophy from the needs of practice, however, it is also clear that I am talking about a project that lies ahead of us rather than about a body of literature that already exists. The project as I understand it consists in *developing practical philosophy as a framework for practicing the critical turn of our concepts of knowledge and rationality.*

Accordingly, reflective practice, too, will become a new project**:** we will need to redefine and *develop the quest for reflective practice as a critical, argumentative effort grounded as much in practical reason as in theoretical reason.*

In the continuation of this series of reflections on reflective practice, I will pursue in some more detail the difficult but essential issue of how we can recover and pragmatize the lost dimension of practical reason. I will obviously not aim (nor be able) to offer a "theory" of critically discursive practice; but I will try to sketch out a few basic methodological ideas that might help us *practice* practical reason, as a third systematic pillar of reflective practice.

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[HTML] http://wulrich.com/bimonthly_may2008.html
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Picture data Digital photograph of a detail of the *seated poet* of the Acropolis, whose identity remains unclear (possibly Sophocles or Homer). My photograph shows a detail picture of a certified replica of the original votive relief of a Greek poet or philosopher, probably of the 4th century B.C., discovered in the 19th century on the west slope of the Acropolis of Athens, Greece. I bought the replica in 1974 from the museum store of the National Archaeological Museum in Athens. Technical details: aperture priority mode, ISO 100, aperture f/4.7, shutter speed 1/500, focal length 25 mm (equivalent to 50 mm with a conventional 35 mm camera). Original resolution 3648 x 2736 pixels; current resolution 700 x 550 pixels,

September 2008

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

October 2008

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
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19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

compressed to 102 KB.

September-October, 2008
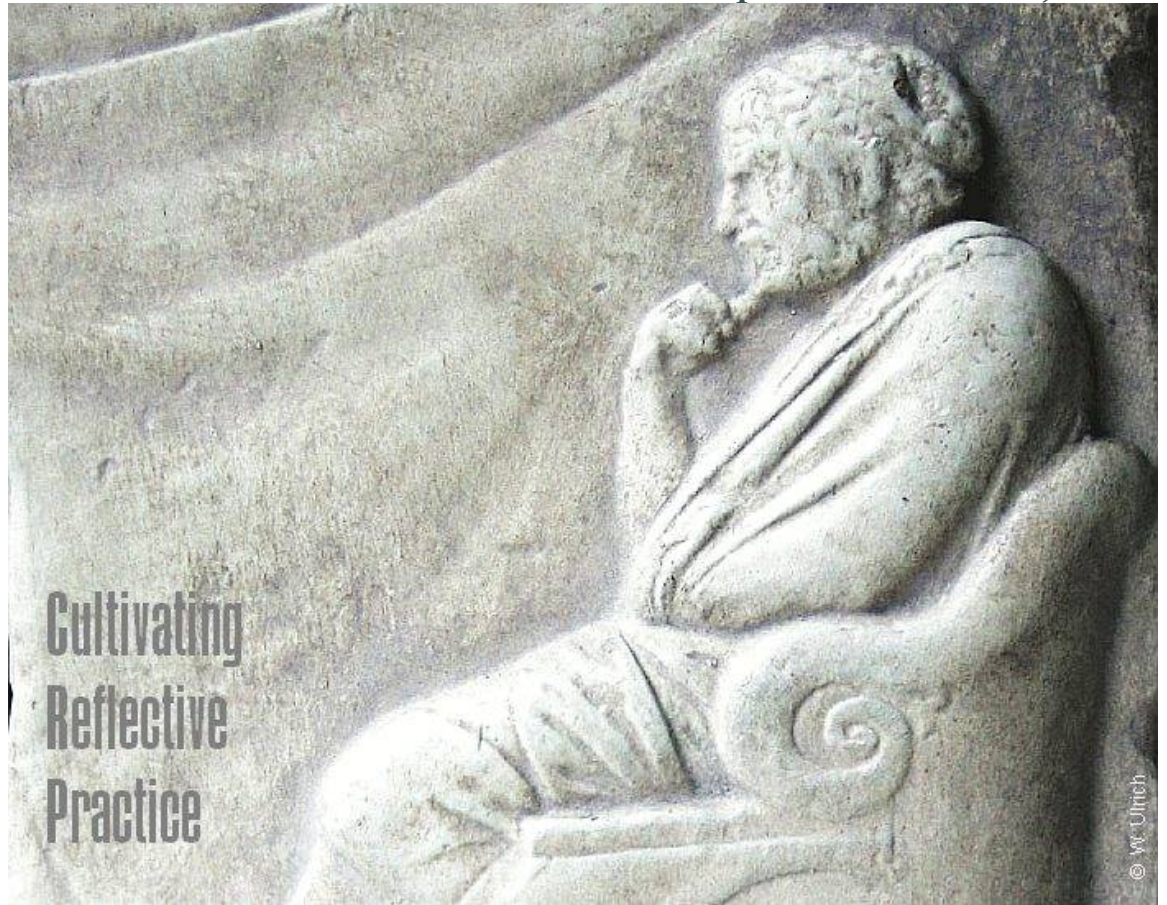
Cultivating reflective practice: pondering what we know but can't tell

„We know more than we can tell.''

(Michael Polanyi, *The Tacit Dimension,* 1966, p. 4)

Previous Picture   Next Picture

Personal notes:

Notepad for capturing
personal thoughts »

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