

The Philosopher's Workplace

An essay on philosophical craftsmanship and art ¹

Leon de Haas

In this essay, the author will raise and answer the question, 'Where is the philosopher's workplace?'. In this question, "place" is meant to be both the philosopher's physical place, and the imaginary place where the philosopher's thoughts are dwelling. Besides, two more questions are implied; 'Who is the philosopher?', and, 'What is the philosopher doing?'

Introduction

In the evening of July 18, 2012, the French philosopher Oscar Brenifier had a counseling conversation with a South-Korean woman. The scene of the action was an auditorium of the Kangwon National University in Chuncheon, South-Korea. The context was the 11th International Conference on Philosophical Practice. The conversation took place in public; Brenifier, his guest and the interpreter were sitting on stage, while a small audience was sitting by and watching.

As usual, Brenifier started with the question, whether his guest had a question. The woman was hesitating; apparently, she couldn't express a clear question at the moment. As usual, Brenifier didn't accept this hesitation; he pushed through his questions to get a question from her. He succeeded, and she gave him a question.

Again and again, in the course of the questioning, the woman answered Brenifier's questions with her personal stories, although he did not ask for it. While he tried to release her thinking from her personal stories, she fell back on those stories all the time. Then, he took a detour, by asking questions about "the average Korean child". This worked; now she could stick to his questions. Later, he returned to the woman's personal involvement, and asked, "Do you recognize yourself in this Korean girl?". She agreed, and then he concluded that she, like the average Korean girl, wants to be a perfectionist, and that she must stop to be such a perfectionist. Here, Brenifier not only tempted her, by devious means, to share his diagnosis, he also gave her a moral talking-to.

Two times in the conversation, the woman indicated that she wished to stop the conversation. Both times, Brenifier reacted by questioning her wish, and succeeded in continuing the conversation. (The next day, the woman told me, that, the second time, she had decided by herself to continue the conversation, because she was curious about his method of philosophical questioning and that she wanted to experience it.)

In the discussion afterwards, Brenifier maintained that he does not interpret the guest's thoughts; he just asks questions. However, in my observation, Brenifier interpreted the guest's thoughts and her body language. Indeed, the backbone of Brenifier's method is questioning. But his questions are closed and strongly directive; they have a determined structure, which guides the guest's answers rigidly. With his personality and persistency, he forces his guest to answer his question, and to answer the way he wants, i.e., following a bivalent logic. The guest is forced to make choices between two possibilities, yes or no, this or that. No in-between is allowed; no maybe, no perhaps, no both this and that. By complying with this procedure, the guest leaves her own train of thoughts, to follow Brenifier's. His questions serve as a swing which brings the guest into a 'strange' state of mind, in which reliable feelings and opinions are being replaced by decisions that are the result of following Brenifier's rigid questioning. Moreover, Brenifier's questions are not neutral; they contain interpretations of the guest's answers. That was obviously the case in the conversation in Chuncheon, that evening of July 18th, 2012. More than once, he interpreted his guest's body language. When she answered a question with a smile, he interpreted the smile to be the approval of his question. And when she answered a question by closing her eyes, he was sure that she cut herself off the conversation. In both cases, Brenifier did not ask questions to verify his assumptions. Later, a Korean woman, who was, like myself, present in the audience that evening, told me about that body language. According to her, those expressions had a different meaning. A Korean woman who closes her eyes in a conversation, is concentrating well on the other one's words. And when she smiles, she shows respect for the other person.

¹ An abridged version of this essay has been published in: Manavayatan, The Humansphere. Bilingual (English - Assamese) Multidisciplinary Research Journal on Humanities, Vol. II, Number I, July - December, 2012, p. 1-10, Assam, India: Centre for Studies in Humanities.

To put it briefly, Brenifier's way of questioning is directive and interpretive to a large extent. In a way, Brenifier's questioning looks like Socrates' dialogues. As a "midwife", Socrates is also directive, aiming at deconstructing the other's truths. He has his partner in dialogue firmly in his grasp; he directs the train of thoughts, to lead him towards where he wants him, in a state of 'aporia'. But while Brenifier's method is procedural, to wit his severe bivalent logic, Socrates' is not. Socrates has an intention (the intention to bring the other into a state of 'aporia') and an attitude (the attitude of "I know nothing" on the one hand, and of "I shall seduce - if not, deceive - you" on the other hand). But he does not follow a structured procedure. He also expresses a lot more 'love' for his fellow man in the dialogue; a lot more empathy and compassion (mind his 'love' theme).

Outer-academic locations of philosophical practice

In Brenifier's philosophical questioning we recognize a rather recent form of philosophical practice. This practice is characterized by the combination of (i) an outer-academic location and (ii) a conversational form of philosophical practice, together with (iii) the intention to counsel another person with existential questions. This combination has been introduced by the German philosopher Gerd Achenbach (Achenbach 2010).

Achenbach left the philosophers' traditional workplace - like the study room, classroom, library, the conference meeting -, and started to philosophize in the counselor's consulting room. He presented himself, in public space, as a philosophical counselor ("philosophischer Berater", in German).

The relocation of philosophical workplaces had begun earlier. In the 1940's and 50's, Sartre's and De Beauvoir's workplace was preferably the parisian café. Their existentialist followers dwelled in cafés and smoky attic rooms. In the 19th and 20th century, the activistic marxist and neo-marxist philosophers considered the streets and factories their workplace.

Special to Achenbach's relocation was the resemblance to the consulting rooms of psychiatrists, psychotherapists and social workers. Ever since 1981, "philosophical practice" is synonymous with philosophical counseling. We tend to forget the more existentialistic and social-political meanings of the term "philosophical practice". Philosophical counseling is not so much the philosopher's own personal life, nor a social-political activity and action, as it is a service supplied by a retailer at the counseling market.

Let's have a look in the recent history of the positioning of philosophical practice.

Heidegger's 'clearing'

In his Essay 'Das Ende der Philosophie und die Aufgabe des Denkens' (1964; The End of Philosophy and the Assignment of Thinking; see Heidegger 2000), Martin Heidegger notices, that Modern philosophy has tried to think "the matter itself", i.e., reality itself, being itself.

According to Hegel, writes Heidegger, philosophy came home with Descartes' ego cogito. 'Ego cogito' is the excellent 'subiectum' which becomes the 'fundamentum absolutum'. The subject is what is really present, positioned in our consciousness.²

According to Hegel, being becomes, in the process of speculative dialectics, with itself. The movement of thoughts, i.e., the method, is the matter itself.

The call for "the matter itself" needs the proper philosophical method. However, what actually is philosophy's matter, is already decided before. The matter of philosophy, as metaphysics, is 'the being of the beings', i.e., their presence in the form of substantiality and subjectivity.³

For Husserl, too, the matter of philosophy is the subjectivity of consciousness. According to Heidegger, the 'principle of all principles' is, for Husserl, first of all not a matter of content, but of method.

² "Mit Descartes' ego cogito, sagt Hegel, betritt die Philosophie erstmals festes Land, wo sie zuhause sein kann. Wird mit dem ego cogito als den ausgezeichneten subiectum das fundamentum absolutum erreicht, dann sagt dies: Das Subjekt ist das in das Bewusstsein verlegte hupokeímenon, das wahrhaft Anwesende, welches in der überlieferten Sprache undeutlich genug Substanz heißt." (Heidegger 2000, p. 68)

³ "Der Ruf 'zur Sache selbst' verlangt die sachgerechte Methode der Philosophie. Was jedoch die Sache der Philosophie sei, das gilt im vorhinein als entschieden. Die Sache der Philosophie als Metaphysik ist das Sein des Seienden, dessen Anwesenheit in der Gestalt der Substantialität und Subjektivität." (Heidegger 2000, p. 68)

In Heidegger's view, Modern continental philosophy has been looking for "die Sache selbst" ("the matter itself") - the world, reality, being - , but has found it in the philosophers' subjectivity.⁴

Then, Heidegger reveals that he has used the call for "the matter itself" as a signpost. It should have led us to the determination of the task of thinking the end of philosophy. This end has been given by the rise of modern science, which has taken over the metaphysical and ontological tasks of philosophy. With Hegel and Husserl, the matter of philosophy is the subjectivity. Their problem is not "the matter itself", but the way to represent the matter.

Heidegger does not reject the idea that "the matter itself" reveals itself in the philosopher's thinking. His point is, that up till now their thinking forgot to think something that is essential, both in reality and in thinking.

Heidegger thinks, that in Hegel's and Husserl's thinking, there is something that remains "unthought", both in the matter of philosophy and in its method. And what is "unthought", is the open space where she is thinking.

Speculative dialectics is how the matter of philosophy appears by itself and for itself. In this way, it becomes present. Such appearing happens, necessarily, in brightness. This brightness is founded on something that is open and free. Brightness plays in the open sphere and fights there with darkness. Only this openness gives way to speculative thinking to think what is thinks.⁵

Heidegger not only follows the movement of the philosopher's thoughts, but, at the same time, sees the philosopher as someone who is present somewhere sometime. And this presence implies an open space, a free area where things can appear and disappear. This open space is both the physical spot, somewhere on earth, and the speculative spot, somewhere in the philosopher's mind. And, Heidegger continues, "We call this openness, which grants a possible shining and showing, the clearing"⁶. With this word 'clearing', Heidegger draws our attention deliberately to the physical reality of the open spot in the forest. The clearing is the condition that makes the light possible, not the other way around. Thanks to the clearing - this spot, freed from trees and bushes - we can be present here, and absent. The sun can shine here, and, at night, darkness can reign.

All philosophy's thinking that follows the call for "the matter itself", is with its method already admitted to the free sphere of the clearing. But philosophy knows nothing about the clearing. It's true, philosophy speaks of the light of reason, but it does not pay attention to the clearing of the Being⁷.

Philosophy is not aware of the open space which forms the condition of her thinking, and where she can speak of the light of reason. As Heidegger puts it, philosophy is not aware of the clearing of being.

As we see, the meaning of the word "clearing" has changed. The literal meaning of the word - the plain image of the open space we are staying - has changed to an allegorical use of the word.

According to Heidegger, both Hegel's dialectical method and Husserl's phenomenological method - despite their great differences - has reality ("die Sache selbst", "the matter itself") presented in and through

⁴ "Die Methode richtet sich nicht nur nach der Sache der Philosophie. Sie gehört nicht nur zur Sache wie der Schlüssel zum Schloß. Sie gehört vielmehr in die Sache, weil sie 'die Sache selbst' ist. Wollte man fragen: Woher nimmt denn 'das Prinzip aller Prinzipien' sein unerschütterliches Recht, dann müßte die Antwort lauten: aus der transzendentalen Subjektivität, die schon als die Sache der Philosophie vorausgesetzt ist." (Heidegger 2000, p. 70)

⁵ "Die speculative Dialektik ist eine Weise, wie die Sache der Philosophie aus sich selbst für sich selbst zum Scheinen kommt und so Gegenwart wird. Solches Scheinen geschieht notwendig in einer Helle. Nur durch sie hindurch kann das Scheinende sich zeigen, d.h. scheinen. Die Helle aber beruht ihrerseits in einem Offenen, Freien, das sie hier und dort, dann und wann erhellen mag. Die Helle spielt im Offenen und streitet da mit dem Dunkel. Überall wo ein Anwesendes anderem Anwesenden entgegen kommt oder auch nur entgegen verweilt, aber auch dort, wo wie bei Hegel spekulativ eines im anderen sich spiegelt, da waltet schon Offenheit, ist freie Gegend im Spiel. Diese Offenheit allein gewährt auch dem Gang des spekulativen Denkens erst den Durchgang durch das, was es denkt." (Heidegger 2000, p. 71)

⁶ "Wir nennen diese Offenheit, die ein mögliches Scheinenlassen und Zeigen gewährt, die Lichtung". (Heidegger 2000, p. 71)

⁷ "Alles Denken der Philosophie, das ausdrücklich oder nicht ausdrücklich dem Ruf 'zur Sache selbst' folgt, ist auf seinem Gang, mit seiner Methode, schon in das Freie der Lichtung eingelassen. Von der Lichtung jedoch weiß die Philosophie nichts. Die Philosophie spricht zwar vom Licht der Vernunft, aber achtet nicht auf die Lichtung des Seins." (Heidegger 2000, p. 73)

the method. Heidegger stresses this "presented". He notices, that "the matter itself" is already present by itself and doesn't need the philosopher's method to be present. His way to show this, is his use of the words light, darkness, bring to light, being present, etc. The word 'clearing' plays a key role in his presentation of presence. He is not interested in the philosopher's or thinker's presence; he draws his and our attention to the alleged presence of "reality", of "being", before, in and beyond all our thoughts and methods. Heidegger is looking for a way of thinking that gives light to this presence of "being". His re-meaning of the word "clearing" brings our thinking into his conceptual world of "aletheia" (that which is not hidden) and "presence". Instead of presenting reality in and through a method, like Hegel and Husserl did, he claims the presence of reality in his thinking itself. True thinking doesn't need a method, as it is integral part of reality itself. And "true thinking" is Heidegger's way of thinking, i.e., his re-thinking the traditional ideas of philosophy, which implies revelation of the ideas that were forgotten to be thought. Consequently, he says, that this "forgetting" was an activity of reality itself.

Heidegger's Essay "Bauen, Wohnen, Denken" ("Building, Living, Thinking"; Heidegger 1985), shows that his thinking the "presence", the "place", etc., is locking our attention up in his concepts. A bridge - his example in this Essay - is not just the physical bridge we observe and use; actually, the bridge is the "place" where the cosmic "frame" of the axes of heaven and earth, and of the divine ones and the mortals, gather.

Levinas' criticism

Emmanuel Levinas experienced that and how Heidegger's thinking locks up the attention and draws us away from where we currently are as living and experiencing creatures. Actually, Heidegger went back on the phenomenological step forward out of the ivory tower of philosophical concepts and theories; he invented his own ivory tower. Levinas showed us (Levinas 1969), that Heidegger is not present. He does not meet the situation, he does not have an encounter with his fellow human beings, he does not look them into the eyes. Heidegger covers up the situation and his fellow human being with the veil of his concepts, which he claims to be the "proper" understanding of this situation and this human being - of Being as such. He overrules the other's self-understanding by claiming the "proper" understanding. So, Heidegger is not "here" now; he is not with the other; he is in his metaphysical concepts and thinking.

In his criticism of Heidegger, Emmanuel Levinas opens up our attention, and we see ourselves in this current situation, encountering other creatures, other human beings. Now, encountering the world, the philosopher is free from his interpreting the world. (Levinas' eyes had been opened by Martin Buber.) The philosopher's assignment can no longer be to develop concepts, categories and methods, but consists of cleaning his thinking and attention, and being here with his fellow human beings. This philosopher is no longer busy reducing reality to his concepts and theories, nor trying to manage his observations and understanding through his method. No, this philosopher opens up to the world as it is present here, now. His work is dialogue instead of labeling and interpreting.

Ludwig Wittgenstein's 'forms of life'

In a different way, Ludwig Wittgenstein did the same. He showed us, how philosophical concepts and theories reduce the rich pluriformity of human life - and of the word-meanings we use in the situations of our lives - to a poor jargon of invented generalizations.

Wittgenstein focussed on philosophical concepts of meaning. His concern was the experience and understanding of our irreducible human lives, in which morality, esthetics and beliefs are important. Actually, he criticized the generalizing and reducing way of thinking in matters of life. He showed us, how this way of thinking abuses our language as we have learned it in our socialization. He showed the violence - and logical invalidness - of a language which eliminates the pluriformity of life situations and the richness of the usage of words, in favor of an Ideal Language or absolute Truths.

With his concept of the "language game", Wittgenstein got himself a tool to describe a multiplicity of real life situations of the use of language expressions, when some philosopher claimed the one and only "proper" meaning of words like "meaning", "feeling", "truth". etc., or reduced the richness of meaning, seeing, etc., to just one aspect of it. To understand the meaning of an expression is to describe the use of an expression, i.e., to describe some language games, - "And to imagine a language means to imagine a form of life." (Wittgenstein 2009, § 19)

Along a different way as Husserl's and Levinas', Wittgenstein's philosophy arrived at the real situations of every day life. And like Levinas, this philosopher has left the alleged "philosophical" practice of totalizing

and reducing, to find himself present in everyday situations of personal and social life, in which moral responsibility request respect for the uniqueness and reducibility of the situation and the other person.

So, with the Jewish thinkers Wittgenstein, Buber and Levinas, European philosophy has cleansed her thinking, and is ready to meet the world, encounter fellow human beings, and assume responsibility - with respect for the other and the situation, with an open mind, without conceptual reductions.

For Levinas, this is what philosophy should be. For Wittgenstein, philosophy is just the cleansing; the rest is life itself, and not a matter of philosophy. Wittgenstein's attitude prevents us from getting our moral mind occupied by abstract concepts (like Levinas' concept of "The Other" carries the risk of specializing the notion of encountering the fellow human being, which might lead our attention away from the real person in front of us).

The Ivory Tower and its annexes

What about the locations and practices of philosophical counselors? They intend to leave the Ivory Tower of academic work. But where are they now?

As we have seen above, Brenifier's philosophical conversation can take place in public. If the guest permits, an audience can be present and observe the dialogue. In principle, you can have Brenifier consult you at any place, which not necessarily needs to be private. Other philosophical counselors consider the guest's questions and problems private. So, their conversations happen at private places like a consulting room.

Group conversations meet the same considerations; they can be private (for the group, like in a business organization, or a class room), or public (like in a philosophical café).

Similar to all these locations is, that they are not the locations of academic philosophy - not the libraries, study rooms and class rooms at university, not the writing pad of the theorizing philosopher, not the lounge in the conference center.

And similar to those forms of philosophical counseling, the subject matter is not - at least not primarily - philosophy as it has been thought and written by professional philosophers, but the life stories and existential questions of "ordinary people", i.e., people who are not professional philosophers.

As in Brenifier's conversational situation, the counselor is not himself existentially involved in the dialogue. He is just "the midwife", helping his guest to express her thoughts and to think clearly. So, when following the idea of philosophy as developed by Wittgenstein and Levinas, not Brenifier is the philosopher, but his guest is. The counselor is just the "midwife". It is the guest who give birth to her thoughts and choices, not the counselor. With it, some counselors are more a "soft" midwife, while others, like Brenifier, are more a surgeon.

Although the location of the counseling is outside the Ivory Tower of academic philosophy, yet, if we look at it from Wittgenstein's and Levinas' perspective, the conversation is abstracted from the guest's real life situations. These situations, and the guest's experiences of it, are at best represented in the guest's stories. Indeed, "represented". In the conversational situation of the counseling, the guest's experiences that are at stake, are reduced to her words, her propositions. For the guest herself, these words are part of her - recollected and relived - experiences; for the counselor they are just words, although his empathy might be activated.

As a philosophical counselor, Brenifier is not interested in the guest's experiences (emotions, feelings, personal life stories), but just in the guest's sentences. He wants his guest to investigate the logic of her sentences. On the other hand, a philosophical counselor like the Norwegian Anders Lindseth (Lindseth 2005) is quite interested in the guest's experiences, i.e., her life story, her emotions, feelings, hesitations, doubts, etc etc. However, regardless of these differences between Brenifier and Lindseth, both counselors confine the attention to the guest's words and sentences, and act as if the guest's mind puzzles can be solved in this conversation. Within the context of this essay, I must stress, that this ambition indicates the philosophical pride that questions of life - existential questions - might be solved in the philosophers' Ivory Tower, or its annexes, thanks to the philosopher's specialized technics or knowledge.

Conversational forms of philosophical practice

In philosophical counseling - and I consider also philosophical cafes and philosophy with kids forms of counseling - philosophizing is to have a conversation, to be in dialogue.

Within the isolated conversational situation, many philosophical counselors reproduce Heidegger's "over-determination" of the guest's thinking⁸. Even when they do not agree with Heidegger's philosophy, these counselors have "pre-knowledge" (Lindseth 2005) of the guest's existential experiences, deeper thoughts, moral problems in general, etc., etc. Mostly, the relation of these counselors to philosophy is eclectic; they use the history of philosophy - and often the history of "wisdom" in general - as a grab bag of quotes which answer the guest's questions and troubles. Actually, these alleged "philosophical" counselors act like psychotherapists; they changed the psychological jargon for a philosophical terminology. Similar is the diagnostic and problem-solving attitude.

Different from those interpreting and eclectic counselors, both Brenifier and Lindseth respect the developments in Western philosophy since its linguistic and phenomenological turns. Brenifier challenges his guest to use her words critically, and to obey to logical rules (be it the rules of bivalent logic). Lindseth advises his fellow philosophical counselor to take off his or her pre-knowledge about the world and existential phenomena, and to give room to the guest to express her experiences and thoughts in her own way.

Brenifier's and Lindseth's methods are considered opposites. Where Brenifier's method is often called "ruthless" and essentially non-empathetic, Lindseth's is supposed to be empathetic and respectful towards the guest in the conversation. Nevertheless, both methods share the same, say, "geographical" structure. They are located at artificial places, the consultation scene. The guest's thoughts are abstracted from their 'natural' habitat, i.e., the guest's situations of everyday life. As a consequence, the philosophical conversation tempts the guest to lock oneself up in the flow of this conversation, i.e., the words of this conversation.

From the perspectives of Wittgenstein's and Levinas' localization of thinking in real life situations and encounters, both Brenifier and Lindseth must be considered "ivory tower philosophers".

The philosopher's presence

Since the discovery of 'presence' and 'encounter' as the reality and intention of philosophical reflection and conversation - so, since Heidegger, Buber, Levinas and Wittgenstein (let me call it "present philosophy", prepared by Kierkegaard, Nietzsche and Husserl) - , the 'natural' place of philosophy is not the antic Athenian "Agora" anymore, neither the study or class room - but the philosopher's own daily life situations.

In this approach of philosophical practice, philosophy is: working on consciousness, on attention and presence. First of all, we are living beings, breathing, metabolism, interacting in natural and social contexts, learning to experience by processing sensory impressions, learning language by participating in social situations and interactions, learning to live by working and by finding our way in the world and in society. While being a living human being, we are able to philosophize; we can reflect upon our experiences while experiencing our situations. "Present philosophy" is the activity of opening our thinking when it is locked up in cognitive absolutisms which work as "thinking knots" and fix our experiencing. "Present philosophy" is our consciousness of the possibility and the moral "call" to respect life, to respect the other creatures we meet. He or she, who philosophizes this way, engaged in life situations, in the act of living, - he or she is a philosopher then.

Philosophy as an art

To live, and to meet our fellow human beings, is not in itself philosophy. Michel Foucault wondered, why everyone's life couldn't become a work of art (Foucault 1984). Typically, this remark shows an "absent"

⁸ I borrow the term "over-determination" from the French philosopher Louis Althusser.

kind of philosophy. As if philosophy is capable of withdrawing the living body from its natural and social surroundings, to (re-)design it as if it were a piece of clay or rock (the philosopher as a secularized god).

In “present philosophy”, I cannot (re-)design my life; I cannot create my life as a work of art. But it is possible, while fully involved into the situations of social life, to reflect upon our thinking (in) these situations. And, from this “transcendental” point of view, we can cleanse our thinking, by refloating fixed images and thoughts. So we can open our attention to the situation, and pay attention to the other persons who are present here now.

In this way, we can compare philosophy to the arts. But not by making “my life” to the material of “my creative work”. “Present philosophy” can be called art, because the result of philosophical efforts is not one or another “formed material”, but, on the contrary, the irreducible “clear” consciousness of (some) reality. Actually, “present philosophy” is an art without any “material”, unless it was “current experience” or “presence”.

The philosopher’s craftsmanship

As an art, the backbone of philosophy is the philosopher’s craftsmanship. It needs a craft to be present with a clear mind, and to pay attention to whom and to what is present here. The philosopher’s skills are the ability to transcend one’s involvement in the situation, without losing one’s engagement; the ability to observe one’s own thoughts, feelings, observations, etc., without fixing them in words and images; and the ability to be aware of the words of one’s own thoughts, to recognize their fixations and reductions, and to free one’s attention out of these knots. These skills need a lot of training, actually, a lifetime training.

As said before, the habitat of “present philosophy” is everyday life, the real life situations. Here, the philosopher’s thinking does not meet itself; the philosophizing human being is never alone on this planet. First of all, his family, friends, neighbors, co-workers, colleagues, fellow drivers in traffic, etc etc are involved, i.e., all those with whom he shares his habitat. Then, it might be, that he wants to share his skills with others, who are not “natural” inhabitants of his habitat. He might meet them on the counseling market, or the philosophy class market, etc. He welcomes them as his guests; and he supports them in their wish to be philosophers in their own lives. It is clear, that he can help them strengthen their philosophical skills, and discover the art of clear mind, but they only can train and realize them in the concrete situations of their lives.⁹ (8)

By way of conclusion

Obviously, this Essay is a meta-philosophical text, not ‘primary’ philosophy. It is a reflection upon philosophical practices. The author is hoping that this reflection contributes to the philosophical quality of philosophical practices.

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⁹ The author distinguishes between the ‘physical situation’, which is the situation of the encounter between the philosopher and his guest, and the ‘narrative situation’, which is evoked by the guest in her story. The narrative situations refer to the guest’s real life situations she is reflecting upon. Whereas the conversation between the philosopher and his guest is enclosed within, and mediated by their words, the real situations of philosophical reflection are, to the guest, his real life situations. See: De Haas 2011.

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