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Practice-as-research and the Problem of Knowledge

ROBIN NELSON

> Knowledge and power are simply two sides of the same question: who decides what knowledge is, and who knows what needs to be decided.
>
> (Lyotard 1979: 8-9)

The 'problem of knowledge' has been a topic for debate in the Western philosophical tradition since Plato. Though no wholly uncontested conclusions have yet been reached, a distinctive approach with characteristic criteria and canons of evidence based upon rationality and justification emerged in the seventeenth century to inform the Enlightenment academy. After ideas about the origin and nature of the universe were de-coupled from myth and religion, opinion and belief could no longer suffice where knowledge might be established on more objective grounds.

As part of a hierarchy in which he installed knowledge above reasoning, belief and illusion respectively, Plato located the animal drives, passions, emotions and desires in the lowest part of the soul and intellect in the highest part. Plato also opened up a divide between theory and practice. At the beginnings of the Western tradition of thought, the privileging of theory might be traced back to the *Theaetetus*, in which as Bourdieu formulates it:

> 'practice' was not helped by Plato who offered intellectuals . . . a justificatory discourse which, in its most extreme forms, defines action [one might say practice] as the 'inability to contemplate'.
>
> (1990: 28)

Jumping through time, the schism between body and mind inaugurated by Plato was endorsed, though on very different terms, in the early seventeenth century by Descartes' retreat in the 'cogito' ('I think therefore, I am') into the mind as the sole locus of certain knowledge. Some practice-as-research (PaR) projects that advance the idea of 'embodied knowledge' pose a challenge, as we shall see, to the privileging of mind over body in the Western intellectual tradition in respect of the locus of knowledge. Furthermore, the project of bodily dissemination of knowledge from one community to another – for example the passing on of a movement vocabulary in the workshop from one dance or physical theatre community to another – challenges the dominance, if not virtual exclusivity, of writing (or other codified symbolic language) which has long since established itself as the appropriate means of storage and distribution of knowledge. But in the production of knowledge, as philosopher, David Pears, points out, 'practice nearly always comes first, and it is only later that people theorize about practice' (1971: 29). As he observes:

> the ability to respond to circumstances in a discriminatory way must precede the ability to codify the responses, if only because the use of distinct symbols to codify them is itself an example, indeed a sophisticated example, of a discriminatory response.
>
> (1971: 28-9)

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So the question arises as to whether physical Practice-as-research projects might in themselves be sufficiently discriminating as to produce knowledge, and disseminate it, even if they remain embodied in the sense that their outcomes are not further articulated in another mode of cognition such as words, spoken or in writing. We shall return to this point.

Whilst Descartes' 'cogito' appears to re-affirm the denigration of embodied knowledge in the western intellectual tradition and thus appears to do a dis-service to 'practice-as-research' from one point of view, from another perspective Descartes' fresh approach opens up possibilities for establishing new paradigms. Writing at a moment that marks the beginning of the modern era of Western rational-scientific tradition, Descartes breaks radically with the past in his approach to the problem of knowledge. Rather than accept the doxa of the ancients as handed down, Descartes aimed to build afresh a new world view and began by subjecting all established knowledge to a sceptical review. As Michael Williams summarises, 'he uses sceptical argument as a filter for eliminating all dubious opinions: we are to accept only propositions that resist the most sceptical assault' (2001: 3). Thus, although Descartes' method is that of rational argument, his disposition to scepticism affords a precedent calling in question what has gone before. The subsequent Western tradition of philosophy, then, is not so much a body of doctrine as a distinctive tradition of rigorous questioning. The particular question which arises out of practice-as-research, in this context, is whether anything might be called a rigorous research method which not only does not present itself in terms of rational argument but which might not even be put into words.

OBJECTS OF KNOWLEDGE

Adopting Bertrand Russell's terminology, Pears delineates three varieties of the object of knowledge roughly equal in importance: 'knowledge of facts, acquaintance [things which are not facts], and knowledge how to do things' (1971: 5). To Russell, the sense-data (the raw data of sight, hearing, touch and smell) are 'the most obvious and striking example of knowledge by acquaintance' (1967: 26) and, once extended by memory and introspection, contribute to self-consciousness 'the source of all our knowledge of mental things' (1967: 27).[1] Thus 'knowledge by acquaintance' is a specifically philosophical term and not quite the same thing as 'experiential knowledge' in 'practice-as-research' (to be explored with phenomenology below), though closely related to it.[2] Thus the discussion here will focus initially upon 'knowledge of facts' and 'know-how'.

Turning first to factual knowledge, since the inaugural linguistic turn in analytic philosophy at the beginning of the twentieth century:

> a piece of factual knowledge must be either a statement or something as complex as a statement. . . . [and] a piece of factual knowledge must at least be true. Truth is secured by matching one kind of thing with another kind of thing and it is plausible to call things of the first kind 'symbols' and to say that things of the second kind are symbolized. Not that symbols have to be like the things that they symbolize, but at least there must be some agreed way of deciding whether they fit or not. If there were no agreed way, language and thought would be impossible.
>
> (Pears 1971: 9)

It is clear how, taking such an approach to factual knowledge, verbal language, as a highly sophisticated system of symbols, has risen to dominance in the establishing of knowledge through argument and in delineating facts, theories and laws. Hence knowledge of this kind is typically articulated in a set of testable and falsifiable propositions. On its own terms of logical validity, rational argument provides justification for assertions, bringing to bear evidence based on adequate reasons appealing to *a priori* truths (by definition agreed in advance) or through inductive reasoning *a posteriori* (inferring general truths/laws from the accumulation of particular instances

[1] Russell summarises 'knowledge by acquaintance as follows: 'We have acquaintance in sensation with the data of the outer senses, and in introspection with the data of what may be called the inner sense – thoughts feelings, desires etc.; we have acquaintance in memory with things which have been data either of the outer senses or of the inner sense. Further, it is probable, though not certain, that we have acquaintance with Self, as that which is aware of things or has desires towards things' (1967: 28).

[2] Russell makes a distinction between 'knowledge by acquaintance' and 'knowledge by description', the latter involving 'some knowledge of truths as its source and ground' (1967: 25) where 'knowledge by acquaintance' involves direct awareness 'without the intermediary of any process of inference or any knowledge of truths' (1967: 25).

empirically established by observation and experience).

Practice-as-research projects, however, would appear to fit much more readily into the 'knowledge how to do things' than the factual knowledge-producing category. But before turning to this mode of knowledge, it is worth emphasising that in Pears' account above 'something as complex as a statement' might also establish facts. It is worth recalling also with Williams that:

> [f]rom the very beginnings of Western philosophy, there has been a counter-tradition arguing that the limits of reason are much more confining than epistemological optimists like to think, that the very idea of reason is a snare and a delusion and that, even if we could get it, scientific or philosophical knowledge would not be what it is cracked up to be.
>
> (2001: 5)

In respect of 'know-how', Pears uses the example of knowing how to ride a bicycle to illustrate what it is to know how to do something. He points out that, if it were possible to tell others how to ride a bicycle, factual knowledge might be displayed. But he accepts that the connection between knowing how to do things and factual knowledge cannot always be made. As he says:

> I know how to ride a bicycle, but I cannot say how I balance because I have no method. I may know that certain muscles are involved, but that factual knowledge comes later, if at all, and it could hardly be used in instruction.
>
> (pp. 26–7)

This insight seems to me importantly to afford a basis for the knowledge-creation of one significant kind of practice-as-research, embodied practice. To know how to dance in the manner of Merce Cunningham is a matter of having trained with practitioners in that tradition. A book, such as Roger Copeland's *Merce Cunningham : the modernizing of modern dance* (2004), though it offers 'know-that', factual knowledge of the emergence of a new dance approach, cannot afford the 'know-how', knowledge of how to dance in a Cunningham mode. The latter can only be gained through doing, and thus dissemination of that knowledge can at best only be partially undertaken in words. Even if it were possible to delineate in words (or other symbols such as Laban notation) all the muscle movements, body-shapes and dynamics involved in being a Cunningham dancer, there remains an important sense in which the embodied knowledge of the practice is both prior to, and distinct from, the written (symbolic) account after the event. A crucial part of the 'know-how' is in the feel of the dancing, just as the feel of balance is the crux of knowing how to ride a bicycle. What might be termed 'insider' practitioner perspectives have been developed in some practice-as-research work, if only as one mode of symbolic articulation (not necessarily in words) of evidence of process. But there is a case for saying such perspectives constitute a form of 'know-how', knowledge in its own right.

If knowledge in dance, physical theatre and other performance practices is like the 'know-how' of riding a bicycle and incommunicable in words but disseminable through a process of workshop education (in the etymological sense of *e-ducere* 'leading through' to knowledge), then practice-as-research practices begin to meet acceptable criteria for research which approximate to scientific and scholarly investigation. The outcomes might appear to lack permanency and the capacity for broad distribution such as is possible with the written word. But as Pears remarks, 'it would not necessarily be discrediting if I were unable to turn my aptitude into theory. I might rely on credentials instead of reasons' (1971: 27).

The ephemerality of performance has been an issue in the practice-as-research context, but the gaining of access directly to live performance is ultimately a logistical not an epistemological problem.[3] Video and DVD recordings, and other documentation of practices, will be a matter for discussion below but some practitioners have advanced a sense of permanency in body

[3] Though there are difficulties with recordings of live performance, the AVphd forum is exploring the possibility of circulating recorded image material (film/video/net art) for peer review. Theatre depractice-as-researchtments in South Africa are conducting a pilot scheme of peer review for live performance though, even in a relatively small and geographically proximate, community, there are logistic and economic challenges.

memory. In challenging Phelan's assertion that performance 'becomes itself through disappearance' (1993: 146), Rebecca Schneider asks whether, 'in privileging an understanding of performance as a refusal to remain, do we ignore other ways of knowing, other modes of remembering, that might be situated precisely in the ways in which performance remains, but remains differently?' (in Gough (ed.) 2001: 101). Memory is a pre-requisite for knowledge in order to fit symbols to things in the traditional account above. More will be said below in respect of the development of concepts and practices such as 'witness' and 'trace' in documenting practice-as-research since establishing how things might remain differently has been a concern.

Some examples of practice-as-research seem to me to test certain concepts in ways of which words are not capable. For example concepts of space and time, particularly where they foreground human experience of space and time, might best be explored through that experience, through a praxis (or what Mike Pearson terms 'critical spatial practice'), rather than through writing or rhetorical debate (both of which are themselves practices). But the practical explorations of space and place in projects such as Fiona Templeton's 'You the City' (1998), Pearson's *Bubbling Tom* (2001), Miller and Whalley's 'Motorway as Site of Performance: Space is a Practised Place' (2003) or Lone Twin's various durational walks (*Streets of London*, 2001 or *walk with me walk with me will somebody please walk with me*, 2002) afford an experience of time/space/place constructed to challenge established concepts. The outcomes might be said to constitute performative essays which invite an experiential re-conceptualising, and thus at least afford substantial new insights, and even new knowledge. Such projects run a course betwixt and between rational argument and embodied knowledge and in so doing explore a liminal space favoured by a number of practice-as-research projects. The inhabiting of liminal space in itself poses a conceptual challenge to the clear categorical boundaries of Aristotelian logic. The case for such praxis (theory imbricated within practice) is not only that it effectively makes arguments but that the arguments are better made in the praxis (which might be seen as a set of symbols in the context of the discussion above) rather than in writing. As Lefebvre puts it in *Writings on Cities*, 'lived space . . . is felt more than thought' (1996).

PHENOMENOLOGY, POST-STRUCTURALISM, AND PERFORMATIVITY

There are days when no-one should rely unduly upon his 'competence'. Strength lies in improvisation. All the decisive blows are struck left-handed (Benjamin, 'One Way Street').

Thus far, knowledge has been considered largely in the context of the mainstream of the Western intellectual tradition based upon scientific reason and argument, merely noting that, from Descartes on, the core approach has been one of rigorous scepticism about *how* we know, as much as *what* we know. Given its apparently abstract and at times abstruse debates, analytic - and particularly linguistic - philosophy may seem to be a matter for specialists, remote from the concerns of everyday life. But, particularly in respect of its sceptical impetus, this is not the case. As Williams recognises:

> sceptical ideas are enormously influential in contemporary culture, which is characterized by pervasive and deeply felt misgivings about rationality, justification, and truth. Sceptical ideas, I believe, underpin such widely accepted doctrines as 'social constructivism', according to which what people believe is wholly a function of social, institutional and political influences, so that 'reason' is only the mask of power; relativism, which says that things are only 'true for' a particular person or 'culture'; and 'standpoint epistemologies', according to which social differentiation by gender, race, class or tribe gives rise to distinct 'ways of knowing', there being no possibility of justification according to common standards
>
> (2001: 10)

It is not perhaps an accident that many practice-as-research projects align themselves with more recent and – it must accordingly be acknowledged – fashionable thinkers. But, in a culture of relativism that affords no common standards, it might be argued that one person's authority is no more creditable than another person's fashion. Since the rise of Modernism, contemporary arts practices have overtly posed challenges to what has gone before. One reading might indeed see this disposition as an extension of an Enlightenment refusal of the authority of tradition, with its metaphors of the 'avant-garde' and 'cutting-edge' indicating a trajectory of inevitable progress. But with its challenge to structuralism's totalising accounts of social or psychological structures determining all human endeavour (Freud's structure of the psyche; Marx's structure of economics; Saussure's structure of language), **post-structuralism**'s rejection of grand narratives invites the relativism of Williams's 'standpoint epistemologies'. As David George remarks:

> It is only the postmodern debunking of modernist hierarchies which has enabled performance to claim its place as a legitimate field of inquiry in its own right and as a primary phenomenon enabling us now to reverse the relationship in which text is seen as prior and to hold performance as the primary ontology, and the one to be examined and theorized.
>
> (1996: 19)

There is, however, another aspect of the post-structuralist turn which aligns itself with arts practices and that concerns creative play as method.

Creativity and play have long been associated, improvisation being an established mode of artistic investigation, but there is also a playfulness in much post-structuralist thought and writing which is, I suggest, attractive to arts practitioner-researchers. There is a deliberate playfulness – as well as a seriousness of purpose – in obfuscatory writing which consciously draws attention to the problematics of discourse. There is a play (in the sense of scope for movement) in Derrida's key concept of *différence/différance* (1978), and the possibility of infinite deferral suggests a free play beyond rule-governed activity.[4] There is a celebration of playfulness in the writing of Barthes when he pushes an idea to its limits, and sometimes beyond (see for example, *Mythologies*), and room for negotiation in his formulation of the 'writerly text' (1977: 155–64). Furthermore, post-structuralism fosters a sceptical and radical mode of thought which resonates with experimentation in arts practices insofar as play is a method of inquiry, aiming not to establish findings by way of data to support a demonstrable and finite answer to a research question, but to put in play elements in a *bricolage* which afford insights through deliberate and careful juxtaposition. The process (that of Goat Island or Forced Entertainment, for example) is rigorous in working through, and selecting, material for presentation, but it is a rigour functioning in a different conceptual framework from that of logical argument based in reason as traditionally perceived. Its aim is to discover 'what works' or what invites critical insights through a dialogic engagement, rather than what is true adjudged by the criteria of scientific rationalism.

Devices of self-reflexivity acknowledging the different rules of the post-structuralist game being played are often better performed than made in writing where deletions, bracketing off parts of words, and raised eyebrow pairs of inverted commas are more obtrusive. In performance, a vocal inflection, a gesture, a manner of looking, a mode of address might readily indicate a particular version of the perceived need in traditional philosophy not only for something to be known but for it to be known that it is known (see Pears 1971: 4). The equivalent in contemporary performance, in a culture of scepticism about representation, relativism and multiple perspectives, is an indication that we know that we don't know and

[4] Callois distinguishes between *paidia*, free play, and *ludus*, rule-governed 'non-serious' behaviour. For a range of summary accounts of play, see Schechner, 2002: 95–101.

that you know that we don't know, and that you know we're not purporting to know absolutely. I am not suggesting that this is the mode of all contemporary performance but aiming to indicate something of the complexity of its symbolic structures.

Turning to **phenomenology**, a now century-old philosophical tradition, (established by Husserl in *Logische Untersuchungen*, 1900-1901), it is equally unsurprising that dancers and physical theatre practitioners particularly have sought to align their practice-as-research projects with key aspects of its approaches. Given its late take-up in Britain in the 1980s and 1990s, phenomenology, like post-structuralism, has emerged as an influential conceptual framework contemporaneously with the rise of 'practice-as-research'. The sub-branch of 'existential phenomenology' derived from Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit*, 1927, particularly as taken up by Maurice Merleau-Ponty, emphasises, amongst other things, a life practice of becoming (as distinct from being), and the embodiment of thought rather than the Cartesian discrete mind.[5] In some ways paralleling post-structuralism, Merleau-Ponty blurs category boundaries and emphasises slippage and 'in-between-ness'. But his particular emphasis is upon incarnate perception as an 'inter-twining' ('the chiasm', 1969) in which experience is perceived through the body and its immersion in the world. For Merleau-Ponty, perception is always incarnate, context-specific and apprehended by a subject, and thus any knowledge or understanding is achieved through an 'encounter' in a subject-object inter-relationship.

A number of projects have sought to break down established relationships between performance and audience in Western traditions which typically have kept subject and object apart and encourage treatment of the performance as the object of the gaze. In contrast, innovative practice-as-research approaches in the domain of phenomenology aim to construct 'encounters', sometimes actively involving 'experiencers' in a practical engagement, or at least denying a fixed and comfortably separated viewing position. Some projects, perhaps following Deleuze and Guattari, have aimed to construct a 'haptic' space to demonstrate that a clear distinction between seeing and feeling is based upon a false opposition between two senses as experienced. Others have played with the experience of time, in Bergson's sense of *durée*, of time experienced as distinct from clock time. The functioning of memory in the process of becoming and, in Schneider's formulation, of 'remaining differently' (Schneider 2001: 100) figure in other practice-as-research projects, perhaps drawing upon muscle memory.[6]

All such projects might draw upon existential phenomenology for a conceptual framework and each would need to establish its specific research inquiry, but my aim here is merely to indicate the appropriateness of practical research in this domain and to insist with David George that '[e]xperience is also a form of knowledge gained as first hand, knowledge gained from praxis' (1996: 23). Moreover, the arts are not alone in forcing to a breach of category boundaries which, to some, characterises postmodernism. Archaeologists such as Michael Shanks, for example, have recognised that:

> the social needs to be understood as an embodied field: society is felt, enjoyed and suffered, as well as rationally thought. The statistical analysis of social science is not enough. Archaeologists, like many others in the humanities, are now attending to the phenomenological qualities of things and places, what it means to experience architectural spaces and landscape, the significance of different experiences.
>
> (Pearson & Shanks 2001: xvi)

Those practice-as-research projects which locate themselves in phenomenological approaches have the potential to yield experiential insights into what it feels like to perform. With the addition of a dimension of qualitative audience research, the project may extend to what it feels like to a range of people

[5] Lester Embree, editor of the *Encyclopedia of Phenomenology* (1997) distinguishes four tendencies in the history of phenomenology of which existential phenomenology, derived from Heidegger, is just one. See, http://www.phenomenologycenter.org/phenom.htm).

[6] Since inaugurating his own company in 1994, Felix Ruckert has developed a 'dance as encounter' practice and in 2004 he initiated the annual festival, 'xplore - sinnliche extreme/ extreme sinnlichkeit' (sensory extremes/ extreme sensuousness) of which he has since been curator. Practice-as-research PhD projects which have engaged in 'encounters' include those of Anna Fenemore (2000), Jane Munro-Beveridge (2006) and Rita Marcalo (2006).

experiencing a performance that, particularly in spatially dynamic events, may be different for each 'experiencer'. As George notes:

> [t]he term 'experience' is crucial: for too long spectators have been equated with readers as decipherers of meaning. . . . The traditional task of 'making sense' is then replaced by unique experiences, which are both cognitive operations and forms of emotion. The word 'experience' derives etymologically from the French 'to put to the test'. Experience is an experiment.
>
> (1996: 23)

In such late twentieth century approaches, action, the doing of things, has thus, contra Plato, been conceptually rejoined to thinking. Indeed, the concept of the '**performative**' has brought scholars from a range of disciplines to seek ontological insights from the performing arts. Research into performance may be insightful in unpacking the operation of cultural codes and conventions to reveal how social reality is constructed and knowledge is legitimated and circulated in the performance of everyday life.

It is apparent, then, that where the performing arts may have been excluded from Plato's Republic for casting mere shadows, and from the academy subsequently as concerned with practices discrete from contemplation, performance studies and performing arts today are not only deeply imbricated within the central cultural questions of the moment, but they are key to contemporary understanding of ontologies. They are linked with virtual reality, computer games and the construction of cyborgs; in social constructions, in both the performing arts and everyday life; in neuro-science and perception; in presence and absence, identity and its fragmentation. The multi- and inter-disciplinary academy is gradually coming to recognise a range of research projects to which performance as a mode of inquiry is intrinsic.

To summarize, it is evident that the contemporary performing arts, whilst playful and experiential are not without a seriousness which can produce substantial new insights. New knowledge may be produced about the disciplines of the performing arts themselves in terms of better understanding of their processes and products. Given performing arts' connections with many other subject domains in multi- and inter-disciplinary projects, new insights might be produced through resonances between the one and the other which transform understanding of each separately, and the two combined as, for example, in *Theatre/Archaeology* (Pearson & Shanks 2001). In respect of the concept of 'performativity', however, performance, as variously understood takes centre stage not just in theatres but in culture and ontology, in developing new understandings of 'reality' itself.

The sketch above of phenomenology, post-structuralism, and performativity is not intended to be an exhaustive account of the conceptual frameworks for 'practice-as-research' projects but to illustrate how, under new paradigms, performance has increasingly emerged in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries as meaningful space for research. The increased acknowledgement of the value of experiential 'knowing through doing' has afforded recognition of how artists have gone about being rigorously creative in research. Contemporary creative artists are well-placed to illustrate the tensions between a lack of resolution and transparent representation and a need nevertheless for rigour in principles of composition beyond any inherited rules of the game.

EVIDENCE

An arts practice or artwork may stand alone as evidence of a research outcome. A musical composition, a choreography, a theatre-piece, an installation or exhibition, a film or other media artefact, a performance in any field, may self-evidently illustrate a development of what has gone before in ways which offer substantial new insights in the subject domain as adjudged by those in a position to make such judgements,

namely peer reviewers. Because art is inherently reflective and reflexive, practice-as-research activity may be identical with art activity in key and necessary aspects. But, more typically perhaps, practice-as-research is marked as distinct from art *per se* by differences of degree rather than kind in such matters as intention and context. The reflective and reflexive intent of practice-as-research is directed within and at the academy rather than within and at the artworld itself, even though the boundary between domains may be increasingly blurred.

There are those, however, who believe that a work of art cannot take account of, and articulate, its own context when, if we are dealing in standpoint epistemologies, context is crucial. However an artefact may be disseminated, the context(s) of its showing may not be transferable. Thus, although an arts practice or artwork may stand alone as evidence of a research outcome, it may be helpful, particularly in an academic institutional context where much rides on judgements made about research-worthiness, for other evidence to be adduced. Practitioner knowledge is both a necessary and sufficient condition for arts practices but it is only a necessary condition for practice-as-research since research sufficiency may lie in sustained and structured reflection to make the 'tacit knowledge' explicit.

Some research outcomes are processual, emergent that is in the processes of generation, selection, shaping and editing material in practice. These processes and insights may be documented in notebooks, sketchbooks, photographs, on video and even in related artworks and practices. Since not all performing arts or performance practices constitute research and many would make no claim so to do, a useful rule of is to present such evidence as the researcher thinks might clarify the research dimension of the project. Some projects have an over-arching creative aim with one aspect only being the focus for research. In reviewing the created product, a research auditor may be usefully led by a clew (clue) towards the research focus amidst the sometimes labyrinthine complexity of an artwork. Indeed research imperatives are at times not apprehensible in a practice-as-research practice, not because they are not in play, but because the research might take a number of directions in a complex piece. Where practitioner-researchers are working on a problem identified in a specialist sub-branch of their domain, the specificity of the investigation may be clear. But that is not always the case. Where the experience of performers is in a mode of tacit knowledge, or the perceptions of visiting 'experiencers' are solicited, it may be that a simple form of documentation of them giving witness to their experience contributes to the overall insight afforded by the piece. A series of talking heads recorded on a palm-corder may be sufficient to provide evidence of a range of responses, where a more formal, social scientifically founded, audience research project would be too great an additional research burden on a practice-as-research project.

The status of video recording as testimony is not yet fully established in law though it has been admissible in certain circumstances. Bernard Stiegler addressed this topic in a dialogue with Jacques Derrida. Stiegler notes:

> *[o]ur law rests on a device for the administration of evidence and on a notion of evidence which is not the same thing as testimony but which clearly affects the notion of testimony, and which presupposes this 'teletechnology' that is writing. Moreover, history as a scientific practice has a lot of trouble integrating audio-visual material. Already quite some time ago, Marc Ferro argued that the audiovisual document should be recognized as a historical source, as an archive, but this approach still meets with a lot of resistance in academia, perhaps more particularly in France.*
>
> (Derrida & Stiegler 2002: 93; original emphasis)

Proceeding to make a distinction between evidence and testimony, Derrida in response asserts that, 'it is not possible to bear witness without a discourse' (2002: 94) because giving testimony involves a person pledging to speak the truth of their experience in public (in a court

of law before the jury representing society). Though there may be a fine line between evidence that may be falsified against other objective measures, testimony or witness are pledges not to tell the 'objective' truth but to say sincerely what was seen, heard or experienced. As Derrida summarizes:

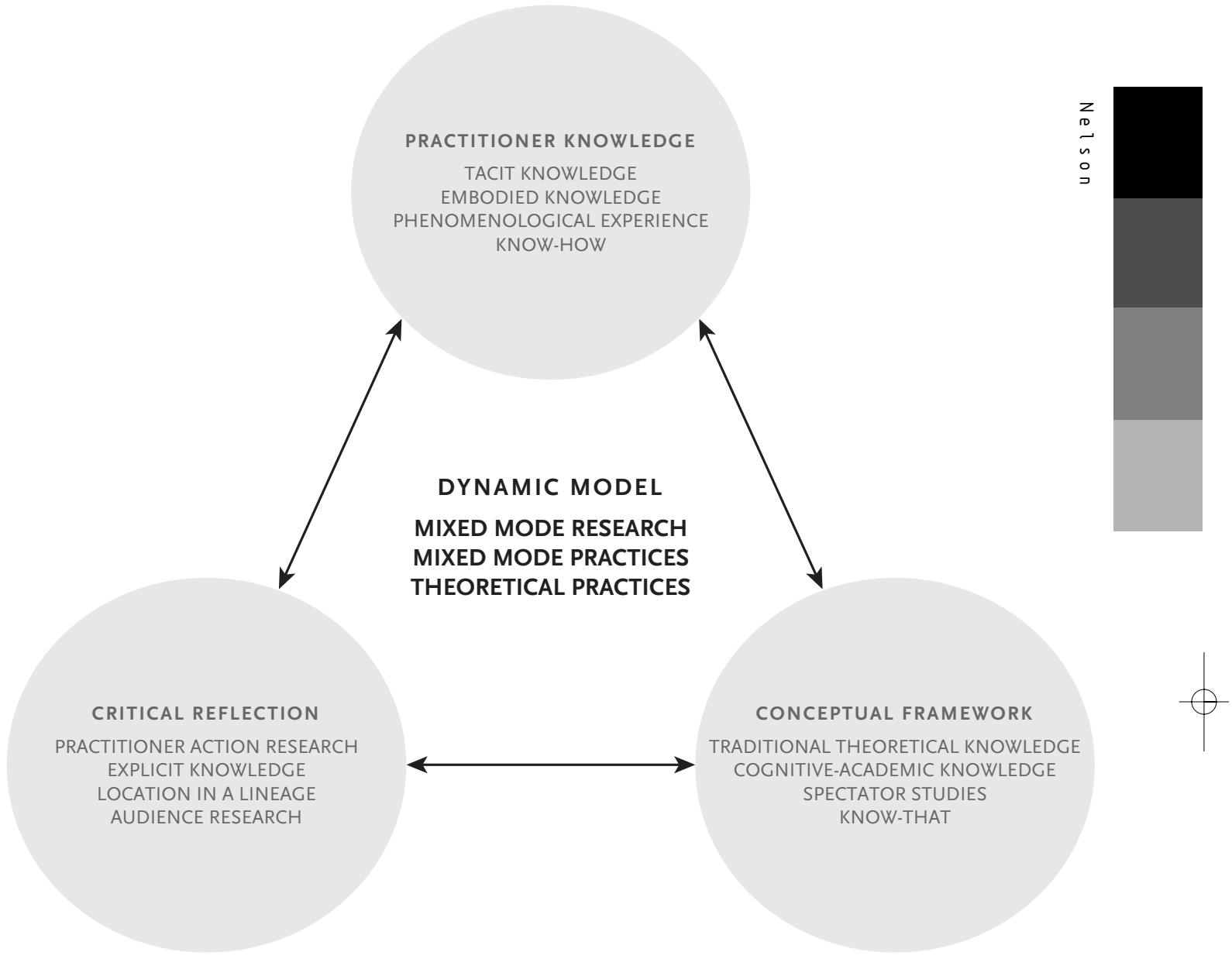
> A witness who comes and says, 'Here's what I saw,' will not be accused of perjury if he didn't see things correctly or was mistaken. He will be accused of perjury if he lies, and if, in bad faith, he doesn't say what he saw or heard. . . . False witness is not faulty witness.
>
> (Derrida & Stiegler 2002: 98)

Derrida also claims accordingly that '[t]echnics will never produce a testimony' (2002: 94), pointing out that, in the infamous Rodney King case, the video record counted as evidence only when 'the young man who shot the footage was asked to come himself and attest . . . , swearing that he was present at the scene and saw what he shot' (2002: 94).

I have elaborated this point because, where ephemeral artwork is concerned, and where a range of people may experience it from different perspectives, the testimony or witness of 'experiencers' as well as audio-visual documentation is frequently adduced as evidence. Indeed the testimony of those who witnessed an event of which there may be no other documentation at all is literally the only trace of that event. In many instances, however, it might be supported by audio-visual material – a photograph, a score, an indistinct, wide-angle video shot from the back of the performance space. Assuming such material is presented in good faith – and the protocols of formal academic submission should suffice here – both testimony and audio-visual material might constitute evidence. In the absence of falsifiablity in accordance with traditional scientific method, however, it may in certain instances be helpful to cross-refer such evidence, possibly locating it in a model such as that proposed here.

The model initially borrowed the idea of triangulation of data-sets from the Social Sciences and sought to apply it in an arts and media practice-as-research context. But since that model is strongly associated with the hard social science notion of different data sets seeking to affirm one fixed and knowable reality, it is not entirely appropriate for practice-as-research. Thus the model has been developed into a dynamic model for process, cross-referring different sources of testimony, data and evidence in a multi-vocal approach to a dialogic process. The product sits in the centre of the triangle. In respect of process, starting at the top of the model the suggestion is that practitioners have 'embodied within them', enculturated by their training and experience, the 'know-how' to make work. A dancer's body, for example, is trained – literally shaped – in a specific movement tradition but, equivalently, a documentary film maker draws upon established codes and conventions of practice which may be tacitly deployed in going about the work. This corner of the triangle marks one kind of useful knowledge that, because it is embodied and tacit is not always brought forward as evidence in research. Developments and breaches of established traditions and conventions in ways of working, otherwise concealed, might be made discernible, if it were brought out.

The process of practitioner 'action research' is a conscious strategy to reflect upon established practice as well as to bring out 'tacit knowledge'. Documentation might be recorded in the form of a notebook or sketchbook as used by arts and media practitioners in their typical creative processes. The setting up of research aims at the outset of a project should be followed by conscious strategies to document the process. Photographs and video-audio record may serve as documentary evidence in this context, as noted above. It might include audience research in the form of reader response captured on a palm-corder after a showing, or a recording of a post-showing discussion. In short, it is in the first instance a process of making the tacit more explicit. In addition, critical reflection might be



informed by the lineage of work of this kind. Nobody works in a vacuum; all creative work operates within – or reacts against – established discourses. Similarly, critical reflection is located in a conceptual framework, at minimum the baggage of education and experience which artists bring to bear in the making and critical reflection processes.

This route brings us to the third corner of the triangle that marks the broader context of conceptual frameworks. One way in which creative practice becomes innovative is by being informed by theoretical perspectives, either new in themselves, or perhaps newly explored in a given medium. Insights might be articulated in a traditional academic mode such as a critical essay which may be written by the practitioner herself or by a collaborator colleague. Though in the third corner of the triangle, the knowledge becomes overtly 'cognitive-academic', I want to

stress that each corner of the triangle, each stage of the process of making and of research as well as the product itself, is seen as potentially knowledge-producing. If the knowledge produced in documentary film-making is seen to be 'not extracted from a sealed reality, but tacitly formed in the encounter of the film-maker, the object of filming, the film medium and, eventually, the spectator' (Hongisto 2004: 3), it is not a hard, factual, content-based knowledge but a relational, processual knowledge. The latter can only be fully articulated through an inter-related process dynamic, travelling, as the model indicates, in either or both directions between the angles. Though insights may indeed be evident within the product, the production of knowledge is typically processual and the relational encounters in which it is yielded might helpfully be pointed up for the purposes of articulating research. The conditions for knowledge to occur lie in the relational encounters, but the mutual illumination of one element by another is likely to be necessary to meet the 'contribution to knowledge' requirement in affording a distinctive understanding that is the aggregate function of the different in-puts. The research in its totality yields new understandings through the interplay of perspectives drawn from evidence produced in each element proposed, where one data-set might be insufficient to make the insight manifest. In sum, praxis (theory imbricated within practice) may thus better be articulated in *both* the product *and* related documentation, as indicated.

Not only has practice-as-research yielded knowledge of many kinds in many forms over the past decade, it has contributed significantly to a shift in the language of knowledge through its emphasis on 'know-how' and the relational and the experienced as distinct from the purely cognitive-objective. The arts have historically been somewhat marginalized in the academy, seen as secondary even in their place as one of the four faculties of the founding medieval universities. But 'know-how', and its practical application, should not be under-valued and 'knowledge' should not be constricted to any single paradigm. A recent scientific inquiry into acupuncture involving the collaboration of scientists from several universities demonstrated by use of the most advanced brain scanning equipment that, with deep needling, the limbic system, part of the pain matrix, is deactivated.[7] The finding was surprising because experts had always assumed acupuncture activates the brain in someway. Though, by measuring the impact in the brain, the experiment thus produced new knowledge in the rational-scientific paradigm, it was not needed to validate the 'know-how' of acupuncture practice in a two thousand-year-old Chinese tradition.

The construction of 'knowledge' has shifted through history. The equation of empirical science with knowledge, for example, is historically a recent phenomenon. Growing rapidly as the empirical sciences did from the latter half of the eighteenth through the nineteenth centuries, their increasing social utility ousted what Kant termed the 'pure knowledge' of philosophy (see Osborne 2000: 3). So, 'practical applied knowledge' came to dominance a century ago, but, regrettably for the arts, only in the now established rational-scientific framework. However, the establishing in 2005 of an Arts and Humanities Research Council (formerly a Board) in the UK, perhaps indicates that arts research (at least in the UK) is at last gaining recognition equivalent to that in other disciplines. What is now needed, as George remarks, is 'an attempt to identify how the elements of performance form an internal system, constructing a unique reality and providing a unique form of experience. Indeed, it is time to speak less of practice-as-research and to speak instead of arts research (a significant methodology of which just happens to be based in practices).

[7] This experiment, involving a collaboration between the universities of Bristol, Dundee, Southampton and York was popularly disseminated in one of three BBC2 documentaries on complementary medicine in January 2006.

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