Retrieving a philosophy of practical knowing for Action Research

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The aim of this article is to frame a philosophy of practical knowing for Action Research. In the context of the extended epistemology well-adopted by Action Research, there has not been much elaboration of what practical knowing involves. In a third-person mode, this article explores what Aristotle, Husserl, Schutz, Dewey and Lonergan have said about practical knowing, and presents four core characteristics. These characteristics are: 1) the everyday concerns of human living, 2) how practical knowing is socially derived and constructed, 3) how its uniqueness in each situation needs to be attended to and 4) how practical Action is driven by values and is fundamentally an ethical process. In third-person mode, these four characteristics are framed as a framework of a philosophy of practical knowing for Action Research.

Key words: Action Research, extended epistemology, practical knowing

Recuperando una filosofía del saber práctico para la investigación acción

El objetivo de este artículo es el de enmarcar una filosofía del saber práctico para la investigación acción. En el contexto de la epistemología extendida, adoptada por la investigación acción, no hubo mucha elaboración de lo que implica el saber práctico. En el modo de la tercera persona, este artículo explora lo que Aristóteles, Husserl, Schutz, Dewey y Lonergan han dicho sobre el saber práctico; y presenta cuatro características fundamentales. Estas características son: 1) las preocupaciones cotidianas de la vida humana, 2) como el saber práctico es socialmente construido y derivado, 3) como su singularidad, en cada

situación, necesita ser atendida y 4) como la acción práctica es conducida por valores y es fundamentalmente un proceso ético. En el modo de la tercera persona, estas cuatro características se enmarcan como un cuadro de la filosofía del saber práctico para la investigación acción.

Palabras clave: investigación acción, epistemología extendida, saber práctico

1. Introduction

At the Academy of Management meeting in 2011 I attended a session on the topic of useful research. The session was led by the editors and authors of the revised edition of the book of that name (Mohrman, Lawler, & Associates, 2011). I attended, not only because of the general interest in the revised edition of book and the respective work of its authors, but also because I had been engaging in my own inquiry to articulate a personal philosophy for my Action Research work. The presentations and discussion followed a well-trodden path, namely that of the questionable relevance of much organisational and management research and the general exclusion of usefulness as a value in the formation and education of researchers. For many years I have been influenced by Susman and Evered (1978) who argue that the crisis in the organisational sciences is not an issue of relevance or usefulness but is one of epistemology. I contributed to the discussion and offered the participants, that, in my view, one of the sources of the problem was that research students were exposed to only one philosophy of science and that framing a philosophy of practical knowing, for example, in the work of Aristotle, was work that needed to be done in courses on the philosophy of science. This article is an output of my inquiry that followed from that session.

The starting point is to locate practical knowing in everyday living. Most of our lives are spent engaging with the continuous and endless sets of practical issues, meeting the exigencies that arise in the concrete course of our personal and professional lives, where we seek to apply intelligence in the service of practice. A particular focus of attention is how we apply conscious intentionality to issues of concern, where we seek to address worthwhile

issues, solve problems and change structures and patterns of behaviour. Thereby we may contribute both to more effective action and to our knowledge of structures, behaviours and the process of changing them. This is the realm of practical knowing.

The theory and practice of Action Research are grounded in embedded engagement, where contextual knowledge emerges interactively and collaboratively through cycles of action and reflection, and where Action Researchers are actors in the process. Action Research is a form of social science that is experientially rooted, practice-oriented, actor based and self reflective. Action Research builds on a range of philosophical viewpoints: Aristotelian praxis, hermeneutics, constructivism, social constructionism, critical theory, existentialism, pragmatism, process philosophies and phenomenology (*Sage Encyclopedia of Action Research,* 2014). A question arises about how we may conceptualise our engagement in addressing the worthwhile, and the practical of the everyday, in a manner that has some quality and rigour, and which may be considered 'scholarly'. The primary focus of this article is to offer a third person contribution to the theory and practice of Action Research by exploring and framing a philosophy of practical knowing to help those who teach Action Research, and who write about it in dissertations and other publications, and for those who practice it. This contribution is important in the context of our developing exploration of Action Research's growth in its own self-understanding. I seek to locate practical knowing philosophically and to frame its components so that practical knowing can be conceptualised as well as be used. The article is structured as follows. First I remind Action Researchers of different forms of knowing as expressed in the extended epistemology. Second, I introduce practical knowing and, thirdly, locate explorations of it in Aristotle, Husserl, Schutz, Dewey and Lonergan. Fourthly, I draw four characteristics from the works of these philosophers. I explore how interiority enables us to work with different forms of knowing. Then I bring practical knowing and Action Research together for theory and practice. Finally I offer a framework for a philosophy of practical knowing for Action Research.

2. The extended epistemology

Philosophers have been exploring different forms of knowing since Plato. Tekippe (1996) uses the term 'primordial knowing' to encapsulate such diverse forms of knowing, such as aesthetic, mystical, religious, interpersonal, moral and commonsense knowing. Windelband (1958) distinguished between *nomothetic* knowledge as derived from the natural sciences and seeking to generalise create laws that explain objective phenomena, and *idiographic* knowledge that describes the effort to understand the meaning of contingent, unique, and often subjective phenomena. Ryle's (1949) distinction between knowing *what* and knowing *how* is part of everyday speech.

In the field of Action Research Heron's extended epistemology has become mainstream (Heron, 1996; Reason & Torbert, 2001; *Sage Encyclopedia of Action Research*, 2014a). This extended epistemology describes four ways of knowing: experiential, presentational, propositional and practical. Experiential is described as 'knowing directly through experience' (*Sage Encyclopedia of Action Research*, 2014a, p. 328). Presentational knowing captures knowing 'through artful means' (*Sage Encyclopedia of Action Research*, 2014a, p. 328). Propositional expresses 'knowing conceptually' (*Sage Encyclopedia of Action Research*, 2014a, p. 328). Practical knowing is 'knowing through skilful doing' (*Sage Encyclopedia of Action Research*, 2014a, p. 328). Heron and Reason (1997, p. 281) argue that practical knowing is primary as it 'fulfils the three prior forms of knowing, brings them to fruition in purposive deeds and consummates them with its autonomous celebration of excellent accomplishment'.

Building on the affirmation that Action Research may be understood as practical knowing (Argyris, Putnam, & Smith, 1985; Reason & Torbert, 2001; Coghlan, 2011), this article supports an orientation towards framing a philosophy of practical knowing as a social science (van Hoolthoon & Olsen, 1987), and so extending the different meanings of 'science' described by Cassell and Johnson (2006). In the Action Research literature, Action Research is described as 'a kind of science with a different epistemology that produces a different kind of knowledge' (Susman & Evered, 1978, p. 601), 'a

science of practice' (Argyris, Putnam, & Smith, 1985, p. 4) or as 'a kind of scientific inquiry conducted in everyday life' (Torbert, 1991, p. 220). Toulmin and Gustavsen (1996) locate it in *phronesis*, rather than in *episteme*, that is, that practical wisdom is not a theoretical grasp but is rather shown in concrete, practical, local action to remedy a situation. In discussing practical knowing as social science, Reason and Torbert (2001) argue that practical knowing is a constitutive dimension of transformational social science, alongside the participatory imperative, experiential grounding and a normative theory about what action is timely in the present. Schutz (1971) acknowledges that social science has to deal with human conduct and its commonsense interpretation in social reality. This is difficult to do as the subjective meaning that an action has for an actor is unique, and so it is difficult to develop methodological devices for obtaining objective and verifiable knowledge of a subjective meaning structure. Action Research as practical knowing enables that difficulty to be confronted (Coghlan & Brannick, 2014).

Action Research starts with everyday experience and is concerned with the development of living knowledge, drawing on diverse forms of knowing: not just empirical and rational ways of knowing, including the experiential and tacit, the presentational and aesthetic, the relational and dialogical, the propositional, and the practical. What this article seeks to do is to explore a realm of practical knowing that is established in the philosophical tradition and that has been neglected in the academy since the seventeenth century. What do philosophers say about practical knowing? Are there characteristics that may be identified so as to frame how it may be understood, particularly for Action Research? In exploring these questions, I am engaging in philosophical inquiry. Practical knowing has no theory of practical knowing and cannot work one out as it is not concerned with developing theory. To obtain a theory of practical knowing we need to begin a specialised form of inquiry. It is a philosophical quest and one of interiority.

3. Practical knowing

Practical knowing is the knowing that we draw on to meet the exigencies of everyday life. We develop knowledge of how to make coffee, to drive car, to play tennis, to work with colleagues to achieve common ends. In fulfilling these tasks we draw on our intelligence to know what is appropriate to do and how to do it. We do not need to know the thermodynamics of brewing coffee to make coffee, but we do need to know practical things of how much coffee or water to put in for the coffee to be drinkable. Scientists engage in practical knowing when they ensure equipment is sterilised, and doctors do so when imparting scientific knowledge to patients. In this latter instance, they select the intervention appropriate to their knowledge of the patient to communicate the impact of and desired actions to be taken out of, for example, the results of blood tests. While at times we may learn some theory explicitly to help us develop skills, but mostly it is trial and error.

What is practical knowing? Toulmin (1990) points towards the particular, concrete, timely and local details of everyday human affairs. Reason and Torbert (2001) present its dimensions as being, timely, voluntary, mutual, validity-testing, transformative action at all moments of living. Luckmann (1987, p. 80) defines it 'to be a structured and subjective coherent set of activities in reality whose main function is to guide action'. Dewey draws on the Oxford dictionary to define it as 'good sound practice sense': combined tact and readiness in dealing with the ordinary affairs of life' (1938, p. 67). There is an issue of terminology. Heron (1996) and other Action Researchers have used the term, 'practical' knowing, while some philosophers discuss 'commonsense' knowing. Is there a difference? There is clearly a realm of 'practical' knowing that enables each of us to get through our day: making breakfast, catching the bus and so on. These are the routine activities to which we apply our intelligence so that the toast is not burned and that we catch the right bus. These activities can be interrupted and we apply our (and sometimes other people's) intelligence to restore the equilibrium. 'Common' sense suggests that there is something shared, not only capacities (making drinkable coffee) but realms of shared content and wisdom. For example,

within occupational communities there is shared technical knowledge and know-how on which professionalism is built. Here, we engage in practical activities that have both a familiar pattern and a situational uniqueness that have to be addressed. Architects and builders have to design and build within the confines of space and budget. Managers have to manage within the limitations of their organisational structure, resources, people and culture. These activities are essentially collaborative as they involve shared or sequential actions by others. Despite the subtle nuances between the two terms, in this article I am using the terms commonsense knowing when reporting the philosophers' words, and practical knowing in the discussion and application to Action Research.

4. Practical knowing in Western philosophy

Stephen Toulmin (1990), in his reflection on the emergence of modernity from the renaissance period, notes that there were two beginnings to modernity, one humanistic and the other rationalistic. In his view the emergent focus on the rationalistic, as epitomised by Descartes, obscured and distorted humanistic modernity, and set up the breakdown of the integrity between theory and practice. He points to four shifts: from the oral to the written, from the particular to the universal, from the local to the general and from the timely to the timeless. He concludes that these four when taken together 'reflect a historical shift from practical philosophy, whose issues arose out of clinical medicine, juridical procedure, moral case analysis or the rhetoric of oral reasoning, to a theoretical conception of philosophy' (p. 34). He concludes.

> Thus, from 1630 on the focus of philosophical inquiries has ignored the particular, concrete, timely and local details of everyday human affairs: instead it has shifted to a higher, stratospheric plane, on which nature and ethics conform to abstract, timeless, general and universal theories (p. 35)… Today this theoretical agenda is wearing out its welcome and the philosophical problems of practice are coming back into focus (p. 186).

Since that statement was written, there have been efforts to articulate the values of useful research and engaged scholarship (e.g. Van de Ven, 2007;

Mohrman, Lawler, & Associates, 2011) though without attempting to frame a foundational philosophy. Within Action Research there has been a flourishing of endeavours to demonstrate Action Research's solid grounding in Aristotelian praxis (Eikeland, 2008), pragmatic philosophy (Pasmore, 2001; Greenwood & Levin, 2007; Bradbury, 2008), Habermasian communicative action (Shani, David, & Willson, 2004), phenomenology (Ladkin, 2005), feminism (Maguire, 2001), critical theory (Kemmis, 2001), constructivism (Lincoln, 2001), social constructionism (Gergen & Gergen, 2008) and in the philosophy of Wittgenstein (Shotter, 2003). The neglect of actionability in the Anglo-American analytical philosophical tradition, which has dominated the English-speaking academy, has its counterpart in a thrust within the so-called continental tradition that addresses critical consciousness and social structures with an emancipatory intent. The third person aim of this article is to contribute to retrieving practical knowing from the obscurity into which Toulmin has argued it has been pushed by the academy.

While Aristotle distinguished different ways of knowing he did not do it in the disembodied manner as we tend to do today. As Eikeland (2008) argues, Aristotle's theory of knowledge is multidimensional, non-reductionist and relational and that *episteme* takes several forms. For Aristotle there is always a knower and something known, related to each other in different and specific ways. Certain relationships between means and ends to specific forms of knowing are also implied. *Theoresis* refers to knowing objects at a distance as a spectator. *Empeiria* refers to practically acquired experience as in *techne* which refers to using materials and instruments in making and building and *phronesis* which refers to virtuous performance and practical reasoning. *Phronesis* is non-instrumental and puts the focus on experience and understanding rather than on formulated knowledge (Dunne, 1993). Aristotle's notion of *phronesis* describes the good person as one whose life is oriented towards value, and not merely satisfaction, and whose courses of action are genuinely good because they are oriented towards value and because they recognise what is required to implement them in the concrete situation.

Phenomenology emphasises human consciousness and reflection on the lived experience of the world over that of abstrActions (Ladkin, 2005; *Sage*

Encyclopedia of Action Research, 2014b). Intentionality of consciousness, i.e. how we can focus on something outside of ourselves in order to appreciate experience is a central theme. Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) is the founder of phenomenology and he elaborated a philosophy of practical knowing. Alfred Schutz (1899-1959) was also in the phenomenological tradition and he brought this tradition into social science by framing the notion of phenomenological sociology. Pragmatism expresses a philosophy of action through the practical efforts of experience, experimentation and their practical consequences (Reason, 2003; Greenwood & Levin, 2007; Bradbury, 2008; *Sage Encyclopedia of Action Research*, 2014c). John Dewey (1859-1952), one of the founders of pragmatism and its application to education also elaborated a philosophy of practical knowing (*Sage Encyclopedia of Action Research*, 2014d). Bernard Lonergan (1904-1984), a Catholic philosopher-theologian built on the medieval tradition of Aquinas and integrated it with modern philosophy of Descartes, Kant, Hegel, Marx, Hume, Locke, Husserl and Heidegger and modern science of Newton and Einstein (Coghlan, 2009). He provides an extensive account of practical knowing. The choice of these philosophers is the fruit of my own inquiry, rather than any attempt to be universal or comprehensive. Indeed I hope that this article will stimulate others to investigate and elaborate more extensive philosophical foundations of practical and others forms of knowing for Action Research.

5. Four characteristics of practical knowing

From the works of these philosophers I have identified four characteristics that underpin when we know in the practical mode of knowing.

1) Practical knowing is focused on the everyday concerns of human living.

2) Practical knowing is socially derived and constructed.

3) Practical knowing requires attentiveness to the uniqueness in each situation.

4) Practical action is driven by values and is fundamentally ethical.

While each of these philosophers is writing in the context of his own questions and pursuits within the philosophical debates of his time, there is an evident emergent of these four characteristics that I offer to the Action Research community for consideration.

5.1 Practical knowing is focused on the everyday concerns of human living

The first characteristic is that practical knowing is focused on the everyday concerns of human living. For Husserl (1970), the commonsense world comes to us as a practical world that is out-there, and is both a world of facts and affairs and a world of values. His notion of lifeworld captures the ordinary world in which we live and his notion of intentionality emphasises being attentive to everyday experience. He argues that everyday life is more than superstition and so we must be rigorous in researching it. Schutz (1971) explores how commonsense knowing is the way of apprehending and understanding the world. The everyday world is apprehended in normal pragmatic human living by the wide-awake adult and is a system of constructs for living in the world. It is the world of feeling cold, of being apprehensive and of meeting and communicating with others. It is a central understanding as it is always present and we cannot escape from it. While we are not always doing science or mathematics we are always using commonsense knowing.

Lonergan (1992, p. 197) opens his discussion of commonsense knowing with these words:

> One meets intelligence in all walks of life. There are intelligent farmers and craftsmen, intelligent employers and workers, intelligent technicians and mechanics, intelligent doctors and lawyers, intelligent politicians and diplomats...There is intelligence in the home, in conversation and in sports, in the arts and in entertainment. In every case, the man or woman of intelligence is marked by a greater readiness in catching on, in getting the point, in seeing the issue, in grasping issues, in acquiring know-how.

Lonergan is presenting intelligence as 'catching on', a process that he refers to as 'insight', which is found in all forms of human activity. Insight is at the centre of the knowing process and of the general empirical method that underpins all inquiry (Coghlan, 2009, 2010a; Coghlan & Brannick, 2014).

The focus in this context is on a common kind of insight that is found wherever people work to solve problems and complete tasks and that this kind of intelligence has its own properties when compared to those of mathematics, science or philosophical inquiry. Lonergan calls the mode of knowing used in everyday living commonsense knowing. He notes that it does not build knowledge in the same way as traditional science. He reflects that commonsense understands similarly but it does not go on to pursue universality for its own sake by seeking universal definitions as traditional science does. He grounds commonsense understanding in i) a flow of questions and ii) a cluster of insights. People catch on to one thing then another, building up a cluster of insights into problems of their concrete living.

The realm of practical knowing directs us to the concerns of human living and the successful performance of daily tasks and discovering immediate solutions that work. It is based on a vast network of interlocking assumptions which are not verified scientifically or philosophically in the everyday world. Rather they rely on empirical plausibility. Life goes on because these assumptions prove themselves in practice. Schutz (1971) provides the example of posting a stamped addressed letter in a postbox. The letter is collected by an anonymous postman who takes it to an anonymous location where it is sorted and then shipped by anonymous persons and eventually is delivered to its destination by a different anonymous postman. Practical knowing is sensible, reasonable and rational in how it is a pragmatic knowledge of the plausible.

When we know in a practical mode we are applying our intelligence to the particular, the contextual and the practical. While we are informed by theory we have no inclination to frame a theoretical understanding beyond the immediate setting. We are in the familiar world and our interests and concerns are those of human living and the successful performance of daily tasks and discovering immediate solutions that will work. While we may use technical language and formal modes of speech, we move fluently between sayings and meanings and, draw on resources of language, tone and volume, eloquence and facial expressions, pauses, questions, omissions and so on to make sense of what is going on.

5.2 Practical knowing is socially derived and constructed

The second characteristic is that practical knowing is socially derived and constructed. Schutz (1971) argues that while we have constructs that are unique to ourselves that are derived from our biographical situation, most of them are socially derived, taught to us by parents, teachers and others. For example we cannot understand a tool without knowing the purposes for which it was designed and is used or a symbol without knowing what it stands for in the mind of the persons who use it. So there is reciprocity of perspectives. Most of our knowledge is handed down; only a small part comes from personal experience. Knowledge is socially distributed where we have expertise in some areas and not in others. When we are faced with a concrete project, we remember and draw on our knowledge at hand, accumulated from past experiences.

Schutz refers to 'typifications', that is generalisations, recipes or standardisations that coped with projects in the past that are similar to the unique problem of the present moment without having to think about them. We do not need to think about recognising a bus before we get on it or a comb before we tidy our hair. These are useful as they make it possible to live out the ordinary routines of everyday life without intensive inquiry all the time. The 'typicality' or general nature, culture and society has no theoretical interest in these situations. For example, Schutz refers to Rover, his Irish setter, as his friend and companion. While he knows that Rover also has the general characteristics of Irish setters, of dogs and of animals he is not concerned about that. We take our everyday world for granted and do not question it. It's what 'everybody knows'. The practicality is unquestioned until obvious error or failure forces us to ask questions. What am I to make of it? What must I do now?

5.3 Practical knowing requires attentiveness to the uniqueness in each situation

The third characteristic is that practical knowing requires attentiveness to the uniqueness in each situation. A particular characteristic of practical knowing is that it varies from place to place and from situation to situation. What is

familiar in one place may be unfamiliar in another. What works in one setting may not work in another. No two situations are identical. Time has passed; the place has changed. We remember differently. A remembered set of insights are only approximately appropriate to the new situation. They are insights into situations which are similar but not identical. Therefore, our practical knowing needs be differentiated for each specific situation. Accordingly, as Lonergan (1992) explores, commonsense knowing operates from a store of accumulated insights. But a remembered set of practical insights is incomplete. Such a set must be completed by further insights into the concrete, particular here and now situation. Most of the remembered insights have to be adjusted. At least one further insight is required by which one grasps what was thought, said, and done before one fits and grasps the new and present situation. The next recent insight becomes part of the remembered set. So we have to choose and bring to focus and get insights that we consider relevant to the particular situation here and now. As Lonergan (1993) puts it when we are in a concrete situation we

1) Have a good look around with a shrewd eye, decide what's up and needs to be done in this concrete situation.

2) Are concerned with how we are to behave

3) Are focused on developing concrete understanding in the situation which is before us and don't want universal truths and science.

On the subject of the uniqueness of each situation, Schutz (1971) describes action as designated human action devised by the actor in advance. We visualise the state of affairs to be brought about before taking a single step. We draw on an idealisation that 'I-can-do-it-again'. Schutz lays out a schema that describes how that works. What worked before in the circumstances of what was done then to address the problem then is unique. It is irretrievable and obsolete and has to be revisited and modified in the present unique situation. If the present uniqueness is ignored the threat to knowing is obvious. 'It was never done before and so it cannot be done now!' So, it is important to grasp what is going on in this everyday process of forming projects and generalising afterwards by means of the I-can-do-it-again idealization.

Not to grasp this insight leads to an aberration and a false generalisation of commonsense knowing. At the same time we can know that we can learn from mistakes and correct ourselves and so are prepared to risk that we can do it again.

5.4 Practical action is driven by values and is fundamentally ethical

The fourth characteristic is that practical action is driven by values and is fundamentally ethical. As introduced earlier, Aristotle's notion of *phronesis* describes the good person as one whose life is oriented towards value, and not merely satisfaction, and whose courses of action are genuinely good because they are oriented towards value and because they recognize what is required to implement them in the concrete situation (Fitterer, 2008). *Phronesis* is a first person activity as practical knowing engages with the concrete. As Chappell (2014) notes, for the most part the Aristotelian concept of ethical knowledge is more like knowledge-how than knowledge-that. He suggests that if we want to know what good bike riding is we need to look, not only at a verbal definition of bike riding, but at actual examples of it.

In the realm of practical knowing we are confronted with an imperative of having to act in a concrete situation (Barden, 1991; Coghlan, 2013; Chappell, 2014). Accordingly, value and ethics are at its heart. We are faced with a concrete problem and we seek to answer the question for understanding as to what possible courses of action there might be. We may ask what courses of action are open to us and we may review options, weight choices and decide. We may know the theory underpinning the situation and possible options. We may reflect on the possible value judgements as to what the best option might be and we may decide to follow through what we judge to be the best value judgement and so we can take responsibility for consistency between our knowing and our doing. The judgement of value is grounded, therefore, in an evaluation of the reality of the situation, and an intentional response to value and the thrust to act ethically. Practical knowing does not formulate values but sees the situation as it relates to us. In the realm of practical knowing we want to know how to act in a specific situation and what the consequences might be, rather than be given theory. Choices about action flow from the

deliberation of what is valuable and the judgement of value that an intended action is good or worthwhile which leads to the questions, 'What will I do?' (Chappell, 2014) and 'Will I do it?' (Coghlan, 2013).

In the practical mindset, deciding what to do, what is good/bad, right/wrong, what works or does not work etc. is somewhat haphazard and uneven as the practical mind aims at the practical and is difficult to objectify. Hence there is a need for something that is beyond both the realm of practical knowing and of other forms of knowing which enables us to understand and talk about both. This something I call interiority.

6. The realm of interiority

At the heart of the notion of the extended epistemology is that there are different forms of knowing. The way of holding different forms of knowing is called 'interiority' (Coghlan, 2010b). Interiority is where we can turn from different forms of knowing to the appropriating how we know. It is a first person activity where we can recognize the competence of different forms of knowing and meet their demands without confusing them. Interiority involves shifting from *what* we know to *how* we know, a process of intellectual self-awareness. Interiority analysis involves using one's knowledge of how the mind works to critique an intellectual search for meaning or truth in any area. We can, therefore, be poetic about the beauty of a sunset in the aesthetic form of knowing, while at the same time, know that in the scientific realm the sun does not set. For instance, when my doctor told me that my cholesterol levels were too high he chose to do so in terms of warning about a possible stroke (the practical knowing realm), rather than in the technical terminology of blood test readings (the scientific realm). The selection of which realm of knowing in which to engage is an act of interiority. It can take place in first- and second-person activity in getting something done and in critical reflection in knowing that we know what we are doing. When we frame interiority as a philosophical activity we are presenting a third-person explanation of our knowing processes.

7. Action Research as practical knowing

Practical knowing as Action Research builds on other forms of knowing and takes them to skilled intentional action to address worthwhile purposes. Taking the four characteristics of practical knowing, I now discuss how they illuminate and guide the theory and practice of Action Research (Table 1).

Table 1: Practical knowing and Action Research

Practical knowing	3rd Person	1st Person	2nd Person
Everyday concerns	Concerns for practical living Pursuing worthwhile purposes	Inquiring into how I judge what is worthwhile and what concerns me	Building common ground on what is worthwhile and needs to be addressed and how.
Social constructed	Typifications	Inquiring into how I frame reality and critiquing my con-structions	Dialogue between different construc-tions and beliefs Building common understanding as the basis for action
Attending to uniqueness of each situation	I-can-do-it-again	Inquiring in the present tense, confronting what was done before through cycles of action & reflection	Inquiring in the present tense, confronting what was done before through cycles of action & reflection
Values driven & ethical	Choosing what to do	Being transparent about choice points	Being transparent about choice points

7.1 The everyday concerns of human living

Action Research does not pursue knowledge for its own sake but, as Reason and Bradbury (2008) express it, it pursues worthwhile purposes, which Reason and Torbert (2001, p. 6) frame as 'the flourishing of human persons, communities, and the ecologies of which they are part'. The concerns of our

universe are many: the global challenges of an economic order that maintains poverty and the displacement of peoples, and the destruction of the environment, to name a few. There are local concerns in many communities, such as housing, employment, inclusion and participation. Within specific organisational settings there may be concerns about improvement and change. Those who are affected may undertake Action Research, not merely to study them but to transform them. First-person practice engages us in inquiring into how we judge what is worthwhile. Second-person collaboration works at building a common view of what is worthwhile that needs to be addressed and in engaging to address them.

7.2 Socially constructed

Action Research has long been comfortable with understanding that our thinking and the creation of our institutions and their operations are socially constructed (Berger & Luckmann, 1967; Gergen & Gergen, 2008). Accordingly Action Researchers, in their first person practice, attend to how they frame reality and learn to critique their framing. Second person practices bring different constructions and beliefs together and the dialogical and collaborative activities which ensue seek to build common understanding and consensual collaborative action. Accordingly, Action Researchers, in their first-person practice, attend to how they frame reality and learn to critique that framing. Second-person practices bring different constructions and beliefs together, and the dialogical and collaborative activities which ensure seek to build common understanding and consensual collaborative action.

7.3 Attending to the uniqueness of each situation

In working within the realm of practical knowing where knowing is always incomplete, and where reflexive attentiveness to unfolding contextual dynamics is central to both understanding and action, Action Research's emphasis on cycles of action and reflection is paramount. Drawing on past experience and previous insights as to what worked and did not work before, Action Researchers inquire into the uniqueness of the present situation, and seek insights into the concrete, particular here and now situation. They work to

consider what is relevant to the particular concrete situation in the here and now, and to adapt remembered insights by means of the I-can-do-it-again idealisation in order to choose what to say and do. First- and second-person practices demand attention in the present tense to a) the unique contextual forces that bear on a situation, countering tendencies to go with 'what was done before' and so enabling an I/we 'can do it again' with confidence and resolve and b) uncovering theories-in-use (Argyris & Schon, 1974) and action logics (Torbert & Associates, 2004) through authentic inquiry (Marshall, 1999; Coghlan, 2009).

7.4 Values driven and ethical

Practical action is driven by values and is fundamentally ethical in now values are identified, choices are made and actions are taken. Reason (2006) points out that Action Research is characteristically full of choices. As it is conducted in the present tense, attentiveness to these choices and their consequences, and being transparent about them are significant for considering the quality of Action Research. He argues that Action Researchers need to be aware of the choices they face, and make them clear and transparent to themselves and to those with whom they are engaging in inquiry, and to those to whom they present their research in writing or presentations. The explicit attention to what he calls 'choice points' flows from the deliberation of what is valuable and the judgement of value that an intended action is good or worthwhile (Coghlan, 2013; Chappell, 2014). The first- and second-person practices involve making explicit the values that underpin the reading of a situation and in selecting what actions to take

8. Toward a framework of practical knowing for Action Research

Figure 1 captures the framework of practical knowing for Action Research. Its characteristics, drawn from the philosophers introduced above, are: 1) our knowing in this mode is concerned with the everyday concerns of human living, 2) that much of our knowing in this mode is socially derived and constructed, 3) that we need to attend to the uniqueness of each situation and

4) that our practical knowing and action is driven by values and is fundamentally ethical. As we engage in a practical knowing mode in our Action Research work we may enhance the established criteria that frame how we might identify quality Action Research (Bradbury-Huang, 2010; Coghlan & Shani, 2014) by being transparent about:

− how the practical concerns that drive our Action Research are selected and with whom

− how we inquire into and critique our construction of situations and our own thinking

− how we engage in cycles of action and reflection that enable us to address the challenges of each unique situation

− how we decide what is good to do and implement it congruently.

Figure 1: Practical knowing for Action Research
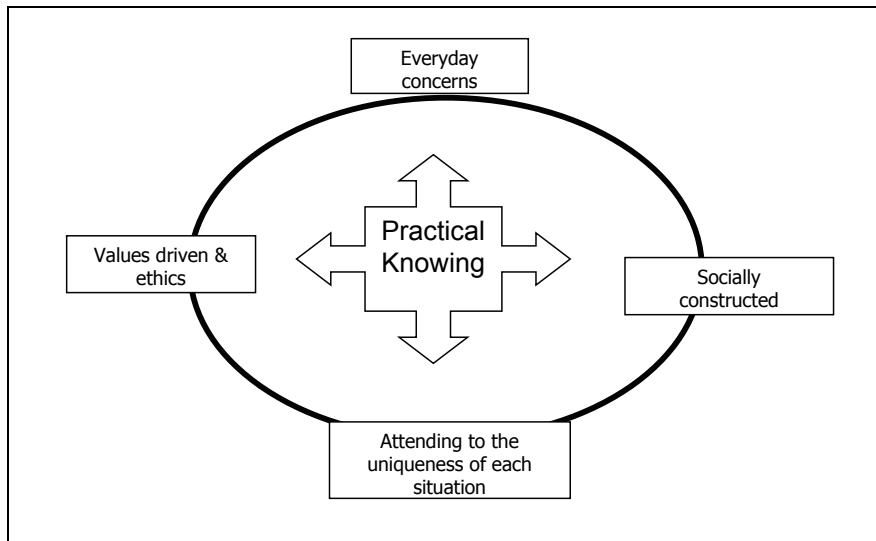
In the spirit of my experience at the Academy of Management meeting and subsequent inquiry I am suggesting that it is timely that we engage in a philosophical examination and clarification of the realm of practical know-

ing, as we position its place in Action Research. This is necessary in the context that Dohn (2014) argues, that the Action Research literature tends unwittingly to subsume all focus and knowledge under propositional knowledge. It is also necessary in the context of the academy's preference for propositional knowledge and its neglect of practical knowing. Action Research argues that the academy remains truncated in its focus on one form of knowing to the exclusion of others, and so retrieving practical knowing offers the academy the opportunity to rescue its integrity. It is through interiority that we can both know and decide in what realm of knowing to engage, and so offer different forms of contribution to the academy.

9. Conclusions

The aim of this paper has been to frame a philosophy of practical knowing so as to contribute to retrieving it from the obscurity into which, as Toulmin notes, it has been pushed by the academy. In the context of the extended epistemology well-adopted by Action Research, there has not been much elaboration of what practical knowing involves. I have explored what several philosophers have said about practical knowing, framed four core characteristics for a third-person framework of a philosophy of practical knowing for Action Research (Figure 1). These characteristics are: 1) the everyday concerns of human living, 2) how practical knowing is socially derived and constructed, 3) how its uniqueness in each situation needs to be attended to and 4) how practical action is driven by values and is fundamentally an ethical process. Understanding that practical knowing remains in the world of things-related-to-us is a key insight. I have shown how these characteristics are recognisable in the theory and practice of Action Research as first-, second- and third-person practice.

The field of Action Research is ready for a reflection and clarification of the notion of practical knowing. Accordingly it is timely that we engage in a philosophical examination and clarification of it so as to deepen our understanding and practice of Action Research. Practical knowing is a specialisation of knowledge for dealing with the concrete in practical living. Putnam (1978) argues there is more to knowing than scientific knowing and that it is

a cultural necessity to include practical knowing in our efforts to understand ourselves and science. This paper offers a philosophical contribution to that understanding.

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