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To The Reader

This inaugural issue of *Action, Theory and Criticism for Music Education* is devoted to papers presented at the interdisciplinary colloquium held June 11-15, 2000 in Helsinki Finland by the “MayDay Group” of musicians (MDG) and the “Artist, Work of Art, and Experience” group of artists (AWE). These proceedings were originally published in the *Finnish Journal of Music Education (Musikkikasvatus)*, Vol. 5, No. 1-2 (2000). With the permission of that journal, they are now made accessible to the international community of music education scholars. Two lectures by Professor Richard Shusterman, a leading pragmatist philosopher who has concerned himself centrally with the arts, were arranged by AWE to coincide with the colloquium and produced two interviews by Lauri Väkevää of the University of Oulu, Finland, the second of which is published here for the first time. Thanks are offered to Professor Shusterman for his contribution to the colloquium and for granting permission to publish the interviews.

By way of background, the MayDay Group (www.maydaygroup.org) is a group of international scholars from a variety of disciplines in music and music education. J. Terry Gates, SUNY Buffalo and Thomas A. Regelski, SUNY Fredonia (both now emeritus) created the group in 1993 to consider mounting challenges facing music educators and the status of music in society. Its analytical agenda is to interrogate traditional and status quo conceptions of music and music education from the perspectives of critical theory, critical thinking and research from all relevant disciplines. Its positive agenda is to inspire and promote action for change, both concerning how music and musical value are understood in the contemporary world of music and in the institutions responsible for music in society, particularly music education. The AWE Group (<http://triad.kiasma.fng.fi/awe/WRITINGS/index.html>) includes artists from several disciplines associated with several art schools and universities in Finland who share mutual interest in applying Pragmatism to important issues in art and art theory. Finnish philosopher Pentti Määttänen, a specialist in John Dewey and Charles S. Pierce, has been informal leader of this group.

MayDay colloquia are held once or twice a year, and each explores one of the seven “action ideals” posted on the Group’s website. The Helsinki meeting focused on Ideal Five: “In order to be effective, music educators must establish and maintain contact with ideas and people from other disciplines.” A joint meeting with artists was, therefore, very apt and produced much of mutual value. As a prelude to the colloquium, Professor Claire Detels, a musicologist at the University of Arkansas and a MDG member, agreed to produce a “study paper.” This was drawn directly from her book *Soft Boundaries: Re-Visioning the Arts and Aesthetics in American Education* (Bergin and Garvey Publishers, 1999), a critique of how single-disciplinary specialization and scholarly and pedagogical insularity within and between art and music departments of universities and schools have produced negative consequences for the effectiveness of arts and music education. The study paper was not read at the colloquium; but because it was addressed directly by several papers and other participants, it is also included with the proceedings.

Given the commitment of the AWE group to pragmatism and a strong interest on the part of several MDG members in music and music education as *praxis*, a Pragmatist theme evolved that addressed distinctly post-modern, post-analytic and post-structuralist perspectives on art, music and music education. In contrast to the hegemony of modernist aestheticist accounts of art, music and music education, the pragmatist-praxial tone of these proceedings exemplified for the arts a trend in other disciplines that has recently been called “the practice turn.”* In contrast to the “linguistic turn” of analytic, common language and formal language philosophy that occurred early in the 20th century, this newly burgeoning *practice theory* is concerned with human actions that are organized around praxis and pragmatic values, and that involve shared and embodied understanding, skills and know-how—where, in short, meaning arises in situated conditions of use.

Heidegger, Wittgenstein and a wide array of notable post-analytic, post-modern and post-structuralist philosophers, as well as second-generation critical theorists such as Habermas, have influenced the growth and direction of practice theory. It incorporates recent social philosophy and cultural theory and, in distinction to the rationalist bias of analytic theory, draws on empirical findings from the social sciences and cognitive studies, including neuroscience and consciousness research. The relevance for the arts and for music and music education in particular of this new emphasis on embodied praxis should be obvious; at the very least it offers the promise of new directions for thinking and research regarding the challenges facing music education. Thus, this collection of papers presents a variety of fresh and sometimes competing perspectives that otherwise have been overlooked, minimized, or even denied in many status quo discussions of music and music education. This new and sometimes provocative research is offered in keeping with the MayDay Group’s agenda to facilitate and disseminate new ideas, to continue to promote analysis of and open-minded dialogue about both old and new ideas, and to help effect change for the betterment of music education and music in society.

* Theodore R. Schatzki, Karin Knorr Cetina and Eike Von Savigny, eds. *The Practice Turn in Contemporary Theory*. Routledge: 2001.

Thomas A. Regelski, Editor.

Discernment, Respons/ability, and the Goods of Philosophical Praxis

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Can one learn this knowledge? Yes, some can. Not, however, by taking a course in it, but through '*experience*'. Can someone else be a man's teacher in this? Certainly. From time to time he gives him the right *tip*. This is what 'teaching' and 'learning' are like here. What one acquires here is not a technique; one learns correct judgments. There are rules, but they do not form a system, and only experienced people can apply them right.

➤ *Wittgenstein (Philosophical Investigations II.xi)*

My karma ran over my dogma.

➤ *seen on a bumper sticker*

I: Introduction

In a critical review of Thomas Regelski's "The Aristotelian Bases of Praxis for



Music and Music Education as Praxis,"¹ Karen Hanson asks rhetorically of Regelski's



essay, "Is it an instance of praxis? Does it exemplify the approach for which it pleads?"²

The reader is given no indication why these questions are raised, what their significance may be, or how they are supposed to articulate with the rest of her critique. However, it is clear that Hanson means to imply that Regelski's essay (a) should somehow have exemplified the praxial orientation it advocates, and (b) has failed to do so. The review is


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also silent on what seem to me to be two fairly significant matters raised by this rhetorical flourish:

- why an ostensibly theoretical exposition should be expected to exemplify praxial (and therefore, presumably, non-theoretical) attributes; and
- what a successful effort might be expected to look like.

These issues intrigue me, because they seem to want Regelski's essay to do something we do not usually ask philosophy to do. We do not usually expect, for instance, that an analysis of spirituality be spiritual. Nor do we ask that accounts of so-called aesthetic value be themselves sources of aesthetic gratification, or that music philosophy be musical. Why, then, should an essay on praxis be an instance of praxis? Equally important and even more intriguing to me is a further issue: assuming one grants, for the sake of the argument, the exemplification requirement, what might a praxial account of praxis look like? How would one write in order to exemplify philosophical praxis?

I explored Hanson's review for possible clues as to her stance on these issues – but largely without success, I am afraid. Perhaps notably, she does at one point criticize Regelski's arguments as "ethereal," in contrast to Philip Alperson's accounts which, in her

 words, at least "begin to suggest some workable practices."³ So part of what Hanson appears to want in an exposition of a praxial orientation to music education is a clear and explicit indication of 'practical' instructional strategies. On its face, that is a different

 issue than being an instance of praxis.⁴ But I mention it here because one of the further issues to which we may want to attend eventually is whether the demand for explicit, unambiguous, or clearly-workable practices (a very familiar theme in North American

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music education, by the way) is a reasonable expectation of praxial accounts. If not (and I have my doubts), perhaps part of what we can learn by examining the issue Hanson has raised concerns the kinds of 'workable-ness' or practicality appropriately and inappropriately expected of philosophical praxis.

In what follows, I want to see whether Hanson's questions – regardless of their intent – can be used constructively. To that end I want to take up the notion of philosophy *as praxis*: What should a praxial approach to the practice of philosophy look like? What are its challenges? Its risks? And what kind of conditions might impede or threaten its success?

II: Should Philosophical Accounts of Praxis Exemplify Praxis?

Let us begin by asking the question that arises indirectly from Hanson's critique. Should Regelski's essay have been an example of praxis? Why or why not? That done, we can turn to what for me is the more interesting question of How?

I think a reasonable case could be made for a simple negative response to the question "Should it be?". To ask that an argument or explanation constitute an instance of what it advocates or describes is a rather unusual request. Again, we do not ask that descriptions of trees exemplify "treeness" or "green leafiness", or expect arguments advocating euthanasia to be themselves lethal. Language does not work that way, or at least it need not, or not always. On this view, a philosophical account of praxis is primarily a theoretical undertaking, a matter of careful conceptual analysis and systematic elaboration. And in such undertakings, exemplification is not at all a common expectation.

Alternatively, I suppose one might respond that exemplification is a philosophical option – a stylistic choice one might elect for persuasive or strategic reasons – but it is a discretionary matter, not a philosophical obligation. Responding this way allows that exemplification is a possible means to the end of persuading others of the virtues of one's position; but there is nothing inherent in the idea of praxis that requires its exposition be conducted one way rather than another, exemplificationally rather than analytically. On this view, Regelski might have chosen to write praxially had he thought it enhanced his argument's power or economy or cogency, but to imply that not electing to do so amounts to a philosophical failing is unfair and wrong – if that was Hanson's intent.

These two responses are predicated on different assumptions about what kind of thing philosophy is. The first response takes philosophy to be a theoretical undertaking and one's manner of writing to be primarily a matter of its logical consistency, clarity, and precision. Philosophy seeks truth, and style is beside the point. The second takes philosophy to be a means to the end of persuading others to one's view, and how one goes about that is a strategic matter the justification for which is best gauged by whether one's view prevails. Philosophy is technique and style is a rhetorical tool.

But I want to advance a third possible response, one that grants Hanson's apparent point – although for reasons other than those she may have had in mind.⁵ On this view, there is indeed something in advancing praxis as a philosophical position that justifies a critic's demand for exemplification: something inherent in what praxis means, or is, that we should be able to detect in arguments advanced on its behalf. This view takes philosophy not as theory, not as technique, but as praxis. Philosophy as praxis posits a



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very different relation between what it seeks to achieve (its ends) and how it seeks to get

there (its means, or in this case, what I have so far referred to as "style"⁶); and this should be manifest in the manner of presentation. As praxis, philosophy is a human social practice guided by standards and devoted to ends, none of which are absolute: its ends are multiple and subject to contestation, and what constitutes "right philosophical action" is variable and context-relative. From a praxial purview (as specifically opposed, again, to a theoretical or technical one) philosophical endeavor is guided by (and may be reasonably expected to evince) experientially-derived, character-driven skills and intuitions. To be a philosopher, then, is to be experienced in, and to have expertise in, ways of knowing, orienting, and acting that are distinctively philosophical and guided by distinctively philosophical dispositions. It is reasonable to expect, then, that a philosophical undertaking seriously committed to illuminating the distinctiveness of praxis will


exemplify these unique dispositions in certain ways.⁷

Thus, one's position as to whether philosophy must exemplify aspects of what it advocates depends in interesting ways upon what one believes philosophy to be. But explaining what something as disparate and diverse as philosophy "is" is no easy task. In a recent effort to conceptualize music philosophy, for instance, Jorgensen

enumerates what she calls "symptoms" of the philosophical.⁸ I take it that what motivates this strategy is precisely a wariness of absolutes and a recognition of the need to accommodate a plurality of valid understandings of philosophy – laudable concerns, to be sure. However, one would presumably like to know not just what the symptoms are, but whether the patient has the disease: what *is* philosophy? To that question, it seems to me

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praxis is a most useful answer – although, I hasten to add, we have a lot to learn about


 what conceiving of philosophy as praxis implies for how we go about doing it.⁹


III: How Might We Expect to Find Praxis Exemplified in Praxial Philosophy?

Praxis and Phronesis


Before proceeding further, let me sketch my understanding of praxis: not because present company requires it, but because my answer to our second question has to build on that understanding. By praxis I refer to a kind of practical human engagement embedded within a tradition of communally shared understandings and values. It is, moreover, a mode of action through which participants constitute themselves, both as a community and as individual members of that community. Fundamental to praxis is phronesis, the *ethical discernment* by which agents gauge what course of action is right


 and just in a given situation.¹⁰ Because praxis is socially-situated action, phronesis is crucially important, both in human terms and for the practice: that is, right action benefits both the individual and the *socius*, and conversely, wrong action is both an individual

 failing and detrimental to the practice.¹¹ But because social circumstances are highly variable, fluid, ever-evolving, and unpredictable, the right course of action can never be enshrined in general or invariant rules: it is matter of doing the right thing, at the right time, to the right person or people, in the right way, with the right intent, to the right extent, and so on. And as Aristotle observes with typical understatement, this is "not for

 every person, nor is it easy."¹²

Elliott describes praxis as a knowing-in-action, and, after Ryle, as a kind of 'know-how', as opposed to 'knowing-that'. These are apt and useful ways of putting it. It is important to note, however, that the productive knowledge of a skilled artisan is also a kind of know-how – one whose circumstances are not primarily social, and do not require phronesis. Phronesis is not just knowing-how, then, but also knowing-when, knowing-whether, knowing-to-whom, knowing-how-much, and knowing-in-just-what-way. It is situationally-specific and situationally-relative, such that the agent must decide each course of action on its own merits – without resort to the kind of generalized knowledge

 that legitimately prevails in technical and theoretical fields.¹³ What constitutes right action in praxis is never self-evidently given, and cannot be determined by detached

 logical reasoning.¹⁴ Phronesis is experience- and character-driven, a function of who one is. The ethical-phronetic agent, then, is one whose experience makes her adept at surveying an uncircumscribable range of potentially relevant factors in a concrete situation; at identifying what from among these manifold particulars it is important to attend to or deal with; and at making the right choice from among unlimited consequent possibilities for action. As Aristotle comments in the Ethics, there are many ways to go wrong (both excesses and deficiencies) but only one right way.

I stress the social embeddedness, the plurality of potential actions, the open-textured, almost indeterminate quality, and the character-driven nature of phronesis because it seems to me they are what is most distinctive about it, and because phronesis is what distinguishes praxis from theory and from technique. Indeed, it is precisely the erosion of this distinction, the reduction first of theory and then of praxis to technique,

that concerns most contemporary advocates and adherents of praxis. The fundamental point of praxial philosophy is the distinctiveness, irreducibility, and necessity of practical judgment to human thriving.

The distinction between practical and technical/theoretical judgment is crucial, then, and what distinguish the former from the latter are:

- the undecidability, in praxis, of the right course of action by technical or universal rules;
- the concreteness and groundedness of praxis, and the necessary priority of the particular;
- the consequent centrality to praxis of questions, questioning, and discernment; and
- the distinctive responsibility these facts place upon the individual agent – in contrast to the systematic and sequential guidance offered by predetermined procedures or methods.

From the relative security and stability of the technical-theoretical perspective to which





praxis stands opposed¹⁵ such attributes are lacks or defects; and this disavowal of categorical abstraction and acceptance of contingency are sure signs of soft-headedness. But praxis is not a deficient version of *techne* or *theoria*, and cannot be evaluated by those standards. Nor is it a primitive kind of judgment for which logical substitutes are available and should be sought. Phronetic power of discernment is experiential knowledge that is *essential* to right action in the here-and-now, real-time, social world, where the ends to which our actions are directed always have significant consequences yet can never be pre-scribed or pre-determined. To engage in praxis is thus to commit to particularity and concreteness, to forego the comfort and neatness of abstractions and procedural codes, and to put one's *self* "on the line", so to speak. This is the respons/ability (responsibility & response-ability) of the praxial agent: her


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resourcefulness and quickness in taking stock of a novel situation and embarking on the appropriate course of action. The skilled practitioner, for all her practical expertise, may have difficulty explaining why a particular strategy is the best one in a particular situation, yet she deploys her practical judgment with adeptness and swiftness that will forever elude the theoretician or technician.


Practical judgment, then, operates in a space outside the field divisible into subjects and objects, or hard-bounded concepts; or perhaps we might rather say, after Geraldine Finn, that it operates in an ethical space *between* them. Finn writes of what she


 calls "the question which *is* ethics",¹⁶ and describes the authentically-ethical encounter as

 "[a] praxis which will cost me something if it is effective"¹⁷ precisely because it puts both knower and known into question. On Finn's view, the truly ethical encounter takes place only when categorical assumptions are bracketed, when the security of rules, regulations, and procedures is relinquished in an attempt to encounter the "other" in its concrete particularity – rather than as an instance of something already known. The point is similar to Adorno's claim: "Objects do not go into their concepts without leaving a remainder. Aware that the conceptual totality is mere appearance, I have no way but to break immanently . . . through the appearance of total identity. Since that totality is structured to accord with logic . . . whose core is the principle of the excluded middle, whatever will not fit this principle, whatever differs in quality, comes to be designated

 contradiction."¹⁸ Both Finn and Adorno seem to be pointing to what might be called the potential tyranny of the category; to be arguing for a mode of being present to 'the other' without reducing it to an instance of something else; and to be arguing against "a re-


presentation which relieves us of the ethical responsibility of attending to . . . [its

 particularity] and inventing our relationship with it."¹⁹ Several points warrant special note here: first, that this ethical/phronetic presence to particularity demands considerable effort or psychic investment of the agent, and is to that extent closely linked to character; second, that this demand to think anew is rich in transformative and reconstructive potential – both for the agent and for the attendant knowledge-action. And third, this attitude or disposition sounds very much like the sustaining root and the source of the transformative potential implicit in the fifth Action Ideal's appeal to interdisciplinarity,

 and taken up by Claire Detels in her argument to "soft boundaries."²⁰ The potential value of interdisciplinarity and soft-boundedness lie, I am saying, in their promise to nurture phronetic dispositions of the kind that keep praxis alive and growing, ever creating and recreating itself. The nature of practices is such that the rightness of an action is never beyond question, because practices never have their goods or goals fixed for all times. Phronesis, the ethical discernment that guides right action in such highly variable conditions, is a practice's life's blood.

Phronesis and Philosophy

The question, of course, is how we might expect all this to manifest itself in specifically philosophical praxis. Not surprisingly, phronesis will figure centrally in my answer. Philosophy guided by phronesis, I submit, would manifest dispositions like openness to contingency, plurality, and fluidity. And these dispositions would also entail suspicion toward claims advanced as conceptual shortcuts to ends deemed self-evidently good – as substitutes, that is, for phronetic discernment (or in other words, as technical

means to avoid engaging 'the other' on its own terms). We would also expect to see careful attention to, and concern about, what is due to whom, under what circumstances, and so on. We would expect to see people's efforts devoted to goods internal to the practice rather than to personal gain, or at the least, to see efforts directed to personal gains of the kind that simultaneously benefit the practice. We should see, in other words, an active interest in sustaining community: an intersubjective concern for action that is right and just – action that attempts mutuality, openness, cooperation, respect, and fairness. We should see respect for exemplary achievement, acceptance of the authority  of tradition over personal predilections or idiosyncratic whims,²¹ and keen interest in helping others become more discerning of the traditions that ground the practice. And since practices never have their goals and 'goods' fixed for all times, we would expect to find vigorous debate about these goals and goods, tempered, of course, by awareness of the provisional nature and potential fallibility of claims advanced.

To engage in philosophy in a spirit of phronesis, then, may entail accepting as one's guide something like what Habermas calls the "ideal speech situation" or the spirit of "communicative action" – where participants engage in free and frank debate devoted to consensus building. Although Habermas has described this in many ways over the years, the following is particularly congruent with the key points in my argument:

Under the pragmatic presuppositions of an inclusive and noncoercive rational discourse among free and equal participants, everyone is required to take the perspective of everyone else, and thus project herself into the understandings of self and world of all others; from this interlocking of perspectives there emerges an ideally extended we-perspective from which all can test in common whether they wish to make a controversial norm the basis of their shared practice; and this should include mutual criticism of the appropriateness of the languages in terms of which situations and needs are interpreted.




In the course of successfully taken abstractions, the core of generalizable interests can then emerge step by step.²²

Key to Habermas' account is the point that people constitute themselves, both as individuals and collectively, through communicative relations. The ethical agent, the agent of praxis, is inconceivable without such relations. A central concern of praxis, then, is the maintenance of the social norms or human institutions, and through them, coherent



personal identities.²³

This commitment to a 'dialogical form of practical reason' founded in full awareness of others' perspectives is laudable, and richly suggestive of ways praxis should manifest itself in philosophical praxis: most notably, openness and inclusiveness, commitment to taking up the view of the other, and pursuit of social or collective solidarity. Yet, certain features of Habermas' particular account seem at odds with the position I have begun developing here. Habermas' overall objective is a rationality capable of generating universal norms in the moral and political spheres, norms capable of grounding a strong justification of democracy over authoritarian governance. Confronted with the radical plurality of 'goods' in postmodern society, he looks to communicative discourse for rules and regulations that will help avert relativism. Only, it seems to me, Habermas' moral concern lies primarily with duties and obligations in a society where "rights" now take priority over the competing "goods" of Aristotelian praxis. So extensively is his view informed by critique that reason, rationality, and abstraction come to upstage the particularity and concreteness I want to claim for praxis. For all the attractiveness of his appeals to open and free dialogue, then, the

 prominence of rules and regulation in Habermas' system²⁴ and its ultimate quest for universality detract from its utility as a model for the pursuit of philosophy with phronetic spirit as I want to portray it.

The hermeneutic orientation of Gadamer, on the other hand, while it shares many of the important attributes of Habermas' notion of dialogue, seems more reflective of the phronetic requirement for ongoing interpretation and reinterpretation, construction and reconstruction, without a secure method or ultimate point of arrival.²⁵ As I understand Gadamer, philosophy is an unending series of interpretive acts directed by nothing more (or less) durable or reliable than a deep desire to know. Philosophy, "doing things with words", is a fundamentally practical undertaking engaged in the pursuit of full understanding of others and simultaneous modification of one's own grounds for understanding. Gadamer's philosopher is very much a participant, then, never a mere observer or a purveyor of technically-derived truths; and what hermeneutics tries to do is reconstruct authentically what happens in understanding, assiduously avoiding the assumption of a privileged or superior vantage point. Thus, says Gadamer, understanding is an *event*, and like all action, "always remains at risk." It is "an adventure, and like any other adventure is dangerous" – while at the same time affording "unique opportunities. It is capable of contributing in a special way to the broadening of our human experiences, our self-knowledge, and our horizon, for everything understanding mediates is mediated along with ourselves."²⁶ Accordingly, as praxis, the philosophical act of interpretation consists not in the application of a technique, but always and unavoidably draws upon,


even as it deepens, one's perceptiveness, responsiveness, flexibility – dispositions that are hallmarks of phronesis as I understand it through Aristotle.

My brief characterizations of Habermas and Gadamer suggest two somewhat different orientations to praxis, two temperaments that, despite a common commitment to praxis, diverge in important ways and suggest different attendant phronetic dispositions. Both Habermas and Gadamer are interested in perspective-taking and the achievement of common ground. But where Gadamer emphasizes the inherent ongoing riskiness of acts of interpreting and understanding, Habermas focuses on giving and criticizing reasons for holding particular claims, with the eventual intent of finding something more secure and durable – something, I suggest, more like theory than praxis. Thus, an interesting kind of dialectical tension: between the theoretical and technical deployment of rational philosophical tools on the one hand, and the phronetic discernment constitutive of philosophical praxis on the other; between deliberation on the one hand, and right action on the other. In the next section we will encounter this same dialectical tension from a somewhat different perspective.

Pluralism, Standards, and Standardization


Another interesting way to explore the question of what traits an essay that is an instance of philosophical praxis should exemplify, is to turn to Regelski's own essay: to examine assertions he makes about how praxis pertains to music and music education, and to apply those claims to the practice of philosophy. If his claims for praxis are valid, they should characterize philosophical as well as musical praxis. Thus, for instance, we would expect philosophical praxis to be concerned with "practical, down-to-earth matters

– as opposed to metaphysical [ones]..." (p.22). On that criterion, I think Regelski does quite well, although, having characterized his writing as "ethereal", Hanson would almost certainly disagree.

It would be interesting to attempt an exhaustive evaluation of Regelski's essay by  the criteria implicit in his own arguments; but that is not our purpose here.²⁷ Instead, I want to focus on a handful of claims he makes specifically with regard to the openness, inclusiveness, and pluralism of praxis, and thus, I submit, of phronesis. On the arguments advanced by Regelski, we would expect philosophical praxis to show evidence of a belief that philosophical 'goods' – the criteria by which 'right' philosophical 'results' are determined – "[vary] considerably from one person or human situation to another and over history"; and indeed, that there can be "no singular or 'standard' instances of" right philosophical results – since philosophical praxis is not guided by the "standardized techniques, practices, or outcomes of *techne* and *poiesis*" (p.28). Moreover, we should find evidence of the expressed conviction that the ideals which guide philosophical praxis "cannot take the same form for all people, places, and times because 'right results' vary considerably according to the specifics of situatedness" (p.29). Indeed, each individual's philosophical praxis is, on the claims Regelski advances, "very...idiosyncratic" (p.30). Thus, praxial philosophy is "perfectly at home accounting for the pluralism of values" engaged by philosophy of all kinds (p.42), philosophy undertaken "... in relation to an infinite range of possible 'goods' or intentions" (p.47).


Now, I alluded earlier to the kind of phronetic dispositions implicated by the concrete and unpredictable circumstances of praxis – dispositions like flexibility,


provisional convictions, acceptance of contingency and fallibility. Regelski's claims to an infinite range of goods, and to the absence of standardized techniques and outcomes seem to point in those same directions. However, I wonder if Regelski is comfortable – or the rest of us, for that matter – with the degree of openness and tolerance implicit in these claims, when applied specifically to philosophy. I raise that question with Hanson's

 challenge in mind,²⁸ and in view of Regelski's conspicuous opposition to aesthetic accounts of music and music education. When it comes to philosophy, his openness and tolerance only goes so far. Might this apparent contrast be what prompted Hanson to ask her rhetorical questions?²⁹ It is worth reflecting on this issue, since too much openness and plurality can erode the consensual 'nerve',³⁰ at the heart of any healthy practice.³¹

The tension between Regelski's endorsement of openness, pluralism, diversity, idiosyncrasy and the like, and his conspicuous reluctance to exercise such dispositions when it comes to aesthetic ideology opens up an important point for consideration. The claim that phronesis must somehow accommodate an extraordinarily broad range of philosophical intentions and actions gives us just half the picture; for, recall, the action with which phronesis is specifically concerned is 'right' and 'just' action. And rightness and justice are meaningful only within traditions, relative, that is, to standards of practice. While praxis recognizes plurality, then, 'many' does not and cannot mean 'just any'. The adeptness or resourcefulness which enable right philosophical action must always answer to standards of philosophical practice. Only, importantly, the rightness of a particular action is best gauged by those for whom phronesis has become a way of being: who are adept and resourceful when it comes to knowing what to attend to in novel situations, and

when, and how; and what is due to whom, and in what degree – practical philosophical

 know-how that cannot be transmitted theoretically or executed technically.³² Those who have, through extended immersion and apprenticeship in philosophical practice, developed an intuitive sense of its nerve; a keen capacity for problem detection; a deft ability to distinguish the promising lead from the dead end; a tacit understanding what is due to whom and when; a reliable sense for how far to pursue an argument, and when it is satisfactorily concluded – they are the ones whose actions embody the standard, the ones to whose authority neophytes must submit if they are themselves to achieve practical

 fluency.³³ This may sound exclusive, but a practice that is all-inclusive is no practice at all. And it may sound elitist, but it is only to recognize the fact and the peculiar importance of expertise to praxis. In any event, I think a reminder of the ways we would expect such phronetic expertise to manifest itself should allay most fears of elitism.


The dialectical field to which we have been alluding, this tension between the necessity for standards on the one hand and the impossibility of standardization on the other, is precisely the context in which the phronesis at the heart of expert philosophical praxis must be placed. Philosophical expertise is no assurance of success. Each start, even for the expert, is a new experience with new potential hazards: a renewed quest for ever-elusive right action with nothing more secure to guide it than one's sense of the nerve of the practice (yet, at the same time, something profoundly unattainable without that sense). Accordingly, we should expect to see convictions carried confidently yet not dogmatically; lightly though not diffidently; fluently, as befits experience and expertise, yet at the same time with respect for the fragility and uncertainty of the philosophical

quest, and awareness of other perspectives, other potential 'goods', other potential courses of right and just action. These same dispositions should also manifest themselves in patience and respect for the sincere philosophical efforts of others – if not always their ideas³⁴ – in light of the inherent difficulty of philosophical praxis.³⁵ This is hardly to suggest that such dispositions be unconditional or limitless, since praxial convictions must, given the nature of praxis, resist absolutes and universals, manifest wariness toward non-relatives, and evince impatience with such things as dogma, authoritarian posturing, and rigid, hard-boundaried thought. Yet, on balance, we should expect to find in phronetically-guided philosophy respect for contingency, and acceptance of the genuine efforts of others as part of a shared philosophical quest in which individual successes always benefit the practice as a whole. Key, then, are attitudes of mutuality, civility, caring, and responsibility – both to other individuals and to the practice through which personal and collective identity are constituted.

Conflict and Conversation


Yet, conflicts are inevitable, since debates over such matters as right action and whose action is right have an ineliminable political dimension. The inevitability of conflicts, however, must not distract us from two facts of fundamental importance: first, the obvious necessity of accommodating and constructively resolving them where possible; and second, the crucial role they play in keeping practices viable and vital. Conflicts are important to traditions, part of the machinery by which they define and reconstitute themselves over time. Rigorous debate is the means by which we expose flawed ideas, and those that withstand careful critical scrutiny are stronger and more

resilient for having been so criticized, scrutinized, and refined. Thus, philosophical disagreements are not signs of weakness or cause for embarrassment, but indications of vitality. We should welcome robust, vigorous debates over such important issues as standards of evidence, meanings and interpretations, and the like, accepting them as valuable opportunities for growth and advancement. A living tradition is, in Alasdair MacIntyre's words, "an historically extended, socially embodied argument, and an


 argument precisely in part about the goods which constitute that tradition."³⁶ But a phronetically-motivated philosophical praxis would strive to focus its debates precisely on the kind of goods that constitute and offer to advance the practice, resisting or suppressing those that weaken it. Among the latter:


- the kind of adversarial philosophical practice motivated more by personal gain than the advancement of the practice;
- criticisms advanced without a sincere effort to understand the view in question or the assumptions on which it is based;
- peremptory efforts to foreclose discussion by power or position alone;
- deployment of ad hominem and other such tactics, which divert and obfuscate rather than clarifying issues; and
- exploiting phronetic openness and vulnerability to individual advantage by treating them as weakness.


Above all, I think, we should expect to find in phronetically-directed philosophy evidence of firm commitment to the pursuit of truth, clearly tempered by the recognition that truth is not a timeless absolute, and willingness to subject ideas to the ongoing project of collective refinement. We should expect to see convictions held firmly, yet flexibly and provisionally, accepting both change and conceptual shades of grey as


 fundamental preconditions to the possibility for philosophical growth.³⁷

The metaphor of conversation is often used to characterize these dispositions, and it is a good fit in many senses. A conversation is a kind of ongoing quest for mutual agreement about concerns which may change during its course. Conversations are sustained by attitudes of vigilance and agility, give and take, and are arrested or aborted by authoritarian posture. The conversational attitude requires openness, a willingness both to engage the other and to allow one's views and convictions to be challenged: a lack

 on both sides.³⁸ To converse with another is always to grant her the right to call what I say (and who I am) into question, and is at the same time to acknowledge her concerns as worthy of a serious answer. Conversation requires an empathetic appreciation of the concrete needs and beliefs of the other: a willingness to modify one's own stance, as the other does the same, in hopes that through mutual reconstruction of our respective views we can achieve and sustain a new consensual understanding. Conversation is rendered possible, then, by attitudes of connection and mutuality, rather than separation and

 opposition.³⁹ And where disputes threaten discourse, it is important that rivals be able to assess their respective positions by their own standards, but using their rivals' characterizations. The ability to state a rival's view in terms acceptable to her or him

 would thus seem a minimum condition for entering into a conversational exchange.⁴⁰ In many of its broader features, I concede this description resembles Habermas' idea of communicative action. Only, a "speech situation" can only be truly "ideal" – in the non-Platonic, utopian sense – if it takes its bearings from moral/ethical concerns rather than

 formal or procedural ones.⁴¹

IV: Threats to Phronesis


Having speculated at length about how phronetic dispositions might manifest themselves in philosophical discourse, it may be useful to think briefly about what non-phronetic discourse might look like: to address explicitly the kind of conditions and assumptions that impede or threaten philosophical praxis, by failing to recognize or engage in philosophy *as* praxis. What often happens is that philosophy's external trappings and marginalia are mistaken for the genuine article, such that one engages in an activity that mimics philosophy's easily-perceived yet peripheral attributes while neglecting its more fundamental concerns. An obvious manifestation of this mistake is the apparently widespread assumption that philosophy is simply expressing and arguing about opinions. Just as grievous is a tendency to invert the priority of style and substance, such that arcane vocabulary and rhetorical flourishes usurp the proper place of clarity and cogency in philosophical discourse. Also troublesome is engagement in analytical projects without regard for the ways they potentially articulate with the efforts of others in the philosophical community. Behind each of these problems is a failure to grasp the nerve of the practice,⁴² a failing often traceable to the apprenticeship process so crucial to phronesis.

Beyond such individual failings lie a number of systemic conditions and assumptions with considerable potential to weaken and corrupt philosophical praxis:


- the prominence of individualism,


- the hegemony of technique,
- the reduction of philosophy to theory,
- the refusal of standards, and
- insularity.


The threat posed by modern individualism has already been alluded to several times in this paper. I have criticized the adversarial approach to philosophy, in which insufficient or insincere effort is made to grasp the point of one's rival, since, in any

 event, the point of engagement is primarily to prevail or discredit one's opponent.⁴³


Typical of this orientation is the dogmatic, authoritarian stance that I have argued is antithetical to phronesis: a refusal to acknowledge or consider the contingency and fallibility of one's own purview, and a consequent inclination to engage in philosophy as a blood sport where the end of victory justifies whatever means are necessary to achieve

 it. By refusing the mutuality essential to communication⁴⁴ and by pursuing philosophy

 for external rather than internal goods,⁴⁵ such dispositions and pursuits exert seriously


 detrimental impact on philosophical praxis.⁴⁶ Often complicit in such situations is the


positivistic presumption of objective validity or Truth, a position of superiority and power founded in a putative rationality presumed to elude one's rivals. Unwavering convictions of objectivity, then, serve to justify a refusal to put one's self or one's views


 into question;⁴⁷ for refusing to attempt to meet the other on neutral ground; and for

insisting that the 'other' speak one's own language and converse within conceptual and value frameworks that are one's own. Praxis and phronesis are clearly impossible where such dispositions prevail.

Closely related to the assumption of objectivity is the view of philosophy as a technique through which one achieves truth by adherence to rules of syllogistic logic. On this view, engaging in philosophical discourse is a function of one's mastery of technical skills, an assumption that absolves the would-be philosopher of any necessary ethical

 obligation. As a rule-governed activity,⁴⁸ successful philosophical practice consists in successful rule-identification and rule-following. Contingency and shades of grey are contaminants or impediments, obstacles to be transcended by robust technique and method/ological rigor. The technical view of rationality thus seeks to marginalize or eliminate the fact of human agency, denying both the possibility and need for a distinctive 'practical knowledge' within which ends must be discovered and rediscovered

 rather than being self-evident and fixed for all times.⁴⁹ Not surprisingly, the technician believes technique is superior to and a necessary replacement for the vagaries of phronesis. The primary criterion by which technical rationality gauges philosophical efficacy is its capacity to yield 'clearly workable practices,' a view with which, I hope it is clear, praxis has considerable difficulty.

The equation of philosophy with theory (that is, its reduction to theory) is an  equally serious and vexatious problem for phronesis.⁵⁰ Closely related to the technical view in its detachment and presumed detachability from the concrete, particular world, theoretical knowledge is widely deemed superior in virtue of the immutability and universality of the truths of which it is the presumed purveyor. Yet, since the world of human intentions and actions is anything but general, invariant, and law-like, phronesis is the indispensable guide by which we navigate the concrete, the particular, the processual

here-and-now. This is not to suggest that theory cannot inform praxis, a functional



relationship that figures centrally in Regelski's essay,⁵¹ but it is to urge that theory can never replace practical knowledge; that practical knowledge is no defective version of theory; and that making our way in the human world requires the grounded, down-to-earth guidance that is only available in phronesis. Praxis is no purveyor of timeless truths, nor is phronesis the view from everywhere. Understanding is an event, and a risky one at that; one to which the phronetic agent relates not as impartial observer, but as present-tense, embodied participant. Phronesis always finds itself caught up in the midst of things, then: questioning, guiding, feeling its way forward. The point is that doing philosophy is no merely theoretical undertaking: for words always entangle us in countless connections with other words and meanings. Navigating such connections and meanings is an act to which phronesis is essential, and an act at which phronesis excels.

We have talked at some length about the dialectical tension between the necessity for standards and the impossibility of standardization in phronesis. Among the most serious threats to phronesis and to philosophical praxis is the tempting assumption that, to repeat a phrase I used earlier, 'many' means 'just any', such that philosophy is a cluster of symptoms attached to nothing substantial. But an unbounded and unrestricted pluralism is nothing but abject relativism, the view that 'anything goes'. On that view, philosophy is whatever anyone wants or needs it to be, and virtually any expository or critical undertaking deserves to be recognized as an instance of philosophical practice. Clearly, this kind of unbounded pluralism is inimical to philosophical praxis, fostering such unfortunately widespread notions as:

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- philosophers "just do pretty much what I do when I let my mind wander";
- philosophies are things one simply chooses on the basis of subjective predilections, and there is no explaining or debating such preferences;
- since one becomes a philosopher or does philosophy by an act of arbitrary will, just about anyone can do it; and
- to appeal to or insist upon adherence to standards is to assume a stance that is unjustifiably elitist and exclusionary.

In North American music education there are relatively few philosophical models, and those of us who are drawn to philosophy are often self-taught. Opportunities for the kind of cognitive apprenticeship essential to the development of phronetic skills and vital philosophical praxis are, unfortunately, rare – a concern which should be taken very seriously by the profession. The fact that it is not attests further to the severity of the problem.


I conclude this brief survey of threats to phronesis with disciplinary insularity, because it seems to me that interdisciplinary discourse is essential to keeping this ethical space open, to nurturing phronetic respons/ability and flexibility. By engaging others in conversation and learning to see ourselves through their eyes, we subject our beliefs and convictions to scrutiny and challenge, unsettling things in ways that render professional growth and transformation possible. Thus, while disciplinary content is obviously a relevant consideration in initiating disciplinary alliances and dialogue, such content may ultimately be less important than the attitudes and dispositions implicated by interdisciplinarity itself. If that is so, we would do well to seek out exchanges and interactions with areas of inquiry for whom interdisciplinary encounters are already well-established and highly-valued features of the intellectual landscape: areas currently making 'cultural waves', such as cultural studies, women's studies, and critical pedagogy


and theory. Conservative exchanges within conventional disciplinary alliances will not accomplish what we need. What we require is the kind of dialogue that subverts disciplinary complacency, helping us ask more meaningful and significant philosophical questions – questions of the kind that are essential to vitalizing music education's philosophical community and securing philosophy's rightful place of priority within professional discourses. The relationship between phronesis and interdisciplinarity, then, is intimate and important: for it is precisely to phronesis that we must turn for guidance when customary concepts, disciplines, principles, schemes, and conventional ways of seeing things fail us, impeding our efforts to find our way in novel terrain.


V: Wrapping Up


Recent scholarship in music education has contributed a great deal to our understanding of the ways praxis manifests itself in music and education. But it is also useful, I think, to examine the nature and significance of practical judgment outside musical or educational contexts – where the idea of praxis can be disentangled from musical and educational issues. The 'triangulation' achieved by juxtaposing musical, educational, and philosophical praxis helps highlight what practical knowledge entails apart from its instantiation in particular practices. It helps remind us that praxis is not uniquely concerned with issues of musical instruction, and that novel though its vocabulary and emphases may be to music educators, praxis is not so much a “new” way of knowing, but rather one of our oldest: practical, reliable, and essential to making our way in the world of human social practices. Not just 'at home' with plurality, fluidity, unpredictability, and change, but uniquely-suited to concrete and novel circumstances,

practical judgment is and always has been crucial to the conduct of human affairs. Thus, advocates of praxis should not be seen as radical insurrectionists attempting the overthrow of aesthetic orthodoxy; their greater concern is simply to remind us of the significance of capacities and abilities we have always had, and knowledge those with exceptional practical expertise have always had in abundance. Praxis's quarrel with

 aesthetic ideology is, from this perspective, a function of the latter's idealistic⁵² gravitation to abstraction and universality, its propensity to taking rather than making, and its consequent tendency to obscure the crucial facts of music's social situatedness and

 practical nature.⁵³ Human practices and the practical/ethical knowledge that guides them are resilient, but not infinitely so. The dispositions that enable phronetic discernment can be suppressed, even extinguished by practices, belief systems, or institutions that fail to recognize their value or create conditions necessary to their flourishing. That, I believe, is the fundamental issue behind praxis-based challenges to aesthetic ideology, and is what justifies Regelski's intolerance toward the aesthetic rationale for music education – which is where we began this essay.

My primary intent here has not been to vindicate praxis – or to vindicate Regelski,
 for that matter.⁵⁴ Rather it has been to explore the character of phronesis, specifically as it relates to philosophical discourse in music education. Having concluded that exploration, I am persuaded that phronetic dispositions are essential to the practice of philosophy in music education. I am not sanguine about their current health or long-term prognosis, however. Living in an era where technical rationality and individualism reign supreme, and working within a profession that valorizes 'the practical' (i.e., the

 technical)⁵⁵ seemingly above all else, it seems to me imperative we learn to engage in philosophy in ways that foreground phronetic skills and dispositions. For it is only by doing that that we will achieve the kind of philosophical community that can make good on its rightful claim to professional significance.

I will not reiterate here the list of attitudes, dispositions, and conditions that have been associated with the spirit of phronesis in this paper. I will, however, point briefly to what I think are the central issues with which we need to be concerned. First, we in music education philosophy need to work hard at finding the right (phronetic) balance between the dialectical polarities of openness to and tolerance of difference, on the one hand, and the maintenance of standards on the other: between the need for new ideas and perspectives, and the need to preserve and care for the nerve of philosophical practice; between novelty and tradition; between creativity and authenticity; between accepting or encouraging differences, and maintaining solidarity. Obviously, there are no maps that can tell us how to do this. But that, of course, is precisely the point of phronesis. And fortunately for us all, technical or theoretical tools do not exhaust the cognitive resources at our disposal.

Second, it is important we recognize that the unavailability of a method for phronesis means it must be learned and transmitted through exemplary instances: thus the importance of exemplification. We in music education philosophy need to work diligently and self-consciously at exemplifying phronetic dispositions in our discourse and in our writing, an effort that, as Aristotle warned, is not easy. The dearth of opportunities for training, the overwhelming 'how-to' emphasis of our curricula, and the

scarcity of models are each very serious obstacles to philosophical praxis in music education. And creating and maintaining a viable philosophical community is a daunting task in the face of forces like technical rationality and individualism, forces that deform people's views of what philosophy is, even as they relegate it to ever-increasingly marginal status.

Third, we would do well to note that what has been here described as phronetic openness, communicative intent, and the like, are coded "feminine" within the framework of current epistemological politics, and are easily attacked as softness or derided as confusion. The very vulnerability necessary for phronesis can be turned against the *phronimos* by the unscrupulous, mistaken for weakness or indecision by those for whom the lure of technique's (false) claim to superiority has proven too seductive to resist. But we must not settle for the relative comfort of reason-driven, universalist discourse in praxial realms where phronesis claims rightful sovereignty.

Last, we need to insist on an understanding of philosophy as something properly done, not consumed: as praxis rather than commodity.⁵⁶ Philosophy is a human practice, a process guided by practical-ethical knowledge. It is crucial that we recognize, honor, and nurture phronetic excellence in music education philosophy, and that we discourage, and work cooperatively to eliminate, developments and conditions that threaten to undermine it. Since, by its nature, we cannot prescribe the directions right and just philosophical action will take, it is imperative to keep its full range of options and valences open: resisting shortsighted demands that would reduce it to the "clearly workable," and refusing to acquiesce to the forces that would reduce it to mere theory.

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¹ Thomas Regelski, in *Philosophy of Music Education Review* 6(1) 1998, 22-59

² Karen Hanson, in *Philosophy of Music Education Review* 7(2) 1999, 118-120. This quote is from page 118

³ Ibid., 120.

⁴ Unless, of course, one quite mistakenly equates "praxial" with "practical". Hanson's argument is too sketchy to say whether this is what she intends, but it is worth noting that this is a widespread misunderstanding of praxis (one paralleled by the unfortunate equation of "pragmatic" and "practical").

⁵ "May have had," because Hanson offers no indication of her reasons.

⁶ I use quotation marks here, because in praxis I take it that the relation between content and form is not a dualistic affair. Style does not relate to substance in praxis the way it does in theoretical or technical endeavor.

⁷ I am not primarily interested in this paper in judging Regelski's essay on these grounds – grounds which, by the way, should become clearer in subsequent pages. A balanced assessment would probably have to concede unevenness. On the other hand, Hanson's approach shows few of the dispositions one would expect of phronesis – criticism she can presumably evade by disavowing any commitment on her part to praxis.

⁸ After Nelson Goodman, obviously. Estelle Jorgensen, "On Philosophical Method." *Handbook of Research on Music Teaching and Learning*, Richard Colwell ed. (New York: Schirmer, 1992) 91-101.

⁹ I will argue here that it means, among other things, resisting rigid conceptual boundaries, claims to unconditional truth, and the adversarial philosophical practices with which they are intimately associated. In order to accommodate things like fluidity, mutability, and perspectival plurality, a praxial philosophy clips its wings in the theoretical and technical domains that are home to absolutes. I grant that this may seem an unlikely claim in light of the ways "praxis" has sometimes been described in debates in music education philosophy, but invite the reader to keep an open mind and follow the argument.

¹⁰ Accounts of phronesis often associate it with "right action". I add "and just" because the "rightness" of phronesis is not just a matter of getting something technically or practically correct: its social situation means right action is always defined in part by its good for the community engaged in the practice at hand. I do not, however, mean to appeal to "justice" as a universal abstraction here. What is "just" is as situationally-

relative as what is "right" in the view I want to advance. Where I use 'right' alone, it should be understood implicitly to include the dimension of 'justness'.

¹¹ It is detrimental in that it detracts from, compromises, or corrupts those internal 'goods' for the sake of which the practice exists, and the individual failing is one that reflects on the agent's character – a shortcoming of both agent and act. On 'internal' and 'external' goods, see note 47.

¹² *Nicomachean Ethics* [hereafter *EN*] II(9). The center of gravity of my understanding of praxis (though not its overall structure) may well differ somewhat from Regelski's. Regelski states, for instance, that praxis is "*centrally concerned with the critical and rational knowledge of both means and ends* needed to bring about 'right results' for people" (p.28, emphasis added). I, on the other hand, am less inclined to emphasize the "critical and rational knowledge" component since, though clearly essential, it does not seem to me to function 'critically' and 'rationally' *in praxis per se*. Accordingly, I am interested to emphasize phronesis, the ethical determination of right action or right results which, because of the particularity of each concrete situation, makes its determination not so much critically or rationally – if by these is meant reflectively and logically – as intuitively (although I need to add quickly that I do not mean by intuition anything mystical or magical – these are intuitions borne of experience and expertise).

¹³ Ethical cases, according to Aristotle, "do not fall under any art or any law, but the agents themselves are always bound to pay regard to circumstances of the moment as much as in medicine or navigation." *EN* II(2).

¹⁴ Instead of doing good and just things, writes Aristotle, most people "take refuge in theorizing; they imagine that they are philosophers and that philosophy will make them virtuous; in fact they behave like people who listen attentively to their doctors but never do anything their doctors tell them." *EN* II(4). This passage makes clear the insufficiency of theory to philosophy, while also showing its necessity.

¹⁵ I question the strategic wisdom of having set up "the aesthetic" as the opposite of ('other' to) praxis in our debates within music education. The deficiencies of the 'aesthetic' view are more clearly apparent, it seems to me, if situated within the *theoria-techné-praxis* constellation. That is, the 'other' to praxis is *theoria* and *techné*. I speak to this concern more extensively in note 56.

¹⁶ "The Space-Between Ethic and Politics: Or, More of the Same?" in Eleanor Godway and Geraldine Finn (eds.) *Who Is This We?: Absence of Community* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1994) 101-116.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 113-14.

¹⁸ *Negative Dialectics*, 5.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 108.

²⁰ This reference is to an “action ideal” of the Mayday Group in music education, which advocates contact with ideas and people from other disciplines. Pursuant to this ideal, Claire Detels wrote a discussion paper entitled “Softening the Boundaries of Music in General Education,” to which I refer here.

²¹ To this, we should probably add a careful concern for weighing various competing points of view in light of the strength of the evidence advanced by each.

²² "Reconciliation through the Public Use of Reason: Remarks on John Rawls's Political Liberalism" in *Journal of Philosophy* XCII:3 (March, 1995) 117-18.

²³ This last observation I owe to Joseph Dunne. *Back to the Rough Ground* (University of Notre Dame Press, 1997) 177.

²⁴ His commitment to full and open debate is limited by "rules of discourse" which, among other things, restrict participation to subjects with "competence" to speak and act. Thus, the way competence is defined and circumscribed, and by whom, become potentially troublesome issues. This issue is hardly unique to Habermas' account, however, as we will see shortly. In fairness to Habermas, it should be acknowledged that his system allows that the same rules can and must be implemented differently in each dialogue situation – how the rules are applied, is, on his view, a function of phronesis.

²⁵ Pierre Bourdieu makes a point not unrelated to the contrast between Habermas and Gadamer I allude to here. "Practical sense," or having "a feel for the game," he says, is a "quasi-bodily involvement in the world." And, "Belief is thus an inherent part of belonging to a field. In its most accomplished form ... that of native membership ... it is diametrically opposed to what Kant . . . calls 'pragmatic faith', the arbitrary acceptance, for purposes of action, of an uncertain proposition..." *The Logic of Practice* (Stanford University Press, 1990) 66-67. What interests me in this statement is its rejection of the sufficiency of the propositional and its explicit endorsement of the necessity of the body – which implicate, I think, a fundamental uncertainty that cannot permit phronetic skills to be set aside in practical engagement.

²⁶ "Hermeneutics as Practical Philosophy," in *Reason in the Age of Science* (Cambridge: M.I.T. Press, 1981)109-110.

²⁷ If Regelski's essay is not consistently successful in exemplifying phronetic dispositions as I have tried to illuminate them here, Hanson's critique is clearly unsuccessful, raising the interesting question: Which is more grievous, Regelski's oversights or Hanson's implicit claim to be exempt from such concerns?

²⁸ That is, does Regelski's essay exemplify the openness and tolerance that one might expect of a praxis-based argument?

²⁹ I believe dogmatic stances – though this is not to suggest that Regelski's essay is dogmatic – do contradict the spirit of phronesis in important ways: a point that will be taken up later.

³⁰ The "nerve of the practice" is a very useful phrase appropriated from Frances Sparshott.

³¹ To put it rather coarsely, the issue here is how "gladly" phronesis is prepared to "suffer fools." It seems that even (or perhaps, *especially*?) this is a determination that must be referred to phronetic discernment.

³² This is, in a sense, like qualifying for credit, observes Regelski (personal communication): if one doesn't already have it, one cannot get it. It also warrants comment that its irreducibility to method is among the more important reasons for philosophy to exemplify praxis: the deepest significance of phronesis for philosophical discourse can be grasped only through exemplary instances of it.

³³ A wise composer colleague of mine once commented that it takes at least fifteen years to become a composer. One wonders if the same applies to philosophy – but suspects it does. Again, the words of Pierre Bourdieu resonate: "[O]ne cannot enter this magic circle by an instantaneous decision of the will, but only by birth or by a slow process of co-optation and initiation which is equivalent to a second birth." *The Logic of Practice*, 68.

³⁴ I am suggesting an important distinction between being tough on ideas and being tough on those who hold or advance them. Whether the former necessitates the latter depends upon whether former are advanced with phronetic and communicative intent.

³⁵ The phrase 'philosophical praxis' here is not synonymous with 'philosophical practice' – at least as the latter is widely engaged in at present. I reserve praxis for a specific kind of philosophical practice: that guided by phronesis.

³⁶ Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984) 222.

³⁷ Consider Alasdair MacIntyre's (Ibid., 278) description of his philosophical efforts as "a work still in progress, and if I can now proceed to carry that work further, it is in crucial part because of the generous and penetrating way in which many philosophers . . . have contributed to that work by their criticism."

³⁸ An important part of what openness to 'the other' demands is respect for each other's understanding of 'good' – which calls into question one's own conception, reminding one (importantly) of the partiality, situatedness, or contingency of one's conception.

³⁹ Carol Gilligan argues that the latter (separation and opposition) tend to be characteristic of male discourse and values, while women are more inclined to emphasize connection and commonality.

⁴⁰ And where a critic is unable or unwilling to articulate the view he or she opposes in terms acceptable to the person whose view it is, there is good reason, I think, to be suspicious of motivations and to refuse to engage that critic conversationally.

- ⁴¹ Put differently, the source of the ethical obligation should not be one's relation to the practice in which one is involved, but rather the relationship to concrete others established by that practice.
- ⁴² And an attendant inability to distinguish the philosophically substantial from the trivial – indeed, often, the inability to distinguish philosophical from non-philosophical pursuits.
- ⁴³ MacIntyre's characterization of modern politics as “civil war carried out by other means” (Ibid., 253) might as accurately apply to many philosophical exchanges.
- ⁴⁴ Or perhaps more to the point, taking mutuality for a sign of exploitable vulnerability. The difference parallels that between conversation and argument.
- ⁴⁵ This distinction and the point about modern individualism are central points of Alasdair MacIntyre's argument in *After Virtue*. External goods are those that serve individual gain. Internal goods are those for which the practice exists, and whose achievement benefits both the individual (though not necessarily in the same ways as the pursuit of strictly external goods) and the community.
- ⁴⁶ This, because praxis requires local forms of community in order to thrive.
- ⁴⁷ It is interesting and worthy of reflection that even the most positivistic of research methods allow for statistically-estimated probabilities of error.
- ⁴⁸ Appeal to “principles” often amounts to the same thing.
- ⁴⁹ What the technician view omits are precisely “those ongoing modes of human activity within which ends have to be discovered and rediscovered, and means devised to pursue them.” The words, appropriated from another context, are Alasdair MacIntyre's (*After Virtue*, 273).
- ⁵⁰ Note that where Regelski's essay stresses the roles of *techne* and *theoria* within praxis, I am stressing the potential threats they pose. My strategy is motivated by the conviction that what Dunne calls “the lure of technique” (inclusive, by the way, of theory, which in modern times has become predominantly technical) has all but extinguished our recognition of praxis – which leads to the profound neglect of conditions necessary for its effective deployment, and, more seriously still, to outright denials of its existence.
- ⁵¹ I believe we differ on the extent to which theory or critical reason can direct praxis – a difference owing, perhaps, to Regelski's inclination to Habermas. See also note 12, above.
- ⁵² Perhaps “contemplative immaterialism” would be a good way to characterize the core values of philosophical idealism?
- ⁵³ I think it unfortunate that praxis and aesthetic have emerged as opposites in music education (although they are diametrically opposed in many senses), because this has to an extent led to people perceiving praxis as a negative view – i.e., “not aesthetic” or “anti-aesthetic”. This is unfortunate because in the first place, praxis is a positive orientation

with interests far broader than the arts or issues of aesthetic value. In the second place, it has caused people whose aesthetic convictions were only vaguely articulated to form an understanding of praxis as vague "other" to the vague "aesthetic" – hardly a propitious state of affairs! Finally, I would urge caution among those of us critical of aesthetic ideology, lest we impute to it a unity and coherence it does not have. We need to exercise care to criticize not so much "the" aesthetic as the specific features of such orientations that are at odds with praxis and phronesis – and to stress the practical impact of such oversights.

⁵⁴ Again, judged as an instance of philosophical praxis (which was not necessarily his intent here, but arguably should be in future efforts) Regelski's success is mixed. Specifically, his didactic, sometimes seemingly dogmatic tone is at times at odds with the character I have wanted to claim for phronesis (although I must stress again that phronetic openness is not limitless, and is necessarily intolerant of the assumptions implicit in many aesthetic accounts). On the other hand, I find little that could be characterized as phronetic in Hanson's remarks, and am inclined to conclude they represent the kind of adversarial philosophical practice about which I have commented negatively in this essay.

⁵⁵ This is an important point. On the Aristotelian view, knowledge consists of two kinds, the theoretical and the practical. Practical know-how, in turn, consists in both technical and praxial/phronetic forms. Our contemporary uses of "practical", however, tend to assume the mechanical means-ends structure of technique: to the serious detriment of our appreciation of the ethical, question-centered know-how that is phronesis. Thus, the issues that preoccupy music education, in North America at any rate, tend to be technical concerns about "how to" most effectively achieve musical ends deemed self-evidently desirable, as opposed to ethically-influenced praxial questions like "whether," "to whom," "under what circumstances," "how much," and the like.

⁵⁶ I believe this has direct and profound significance for the way we teach philosophy to prospective music educators. It should foreground questions, not answers, and attempt above all else to develop habits and dispositions that are philosophical in nature – rather than promoting the passive consumption of pre-ordained 'truths'.