The Trojan Horse:
Epistemological Explorations Concerning
Practice-based Research

Since 2001, art students with a MA title in the Netherlands have been offered the opportunity to obtain a PhD degree. The doctoral dissertation should consist of a work of art, supplemented by a written thesis. This essay discusses the consequences of this development for the academic world. Implicitly it is namely admitted that there exists knowledge that can only be articulated through (non-discursive) art works. The article focuses on the (positive) contribution that artistic research might make to the already existing corpus of knowledge as produced at universities. What this artistic knowledge is, how it can be valued and evaluated and other questions are investigated through the work of Heidegger, Foucault, and Merleau-Ponty.

I
The story is well-known. The Greek siege of Troy had lasted for ten years. Still seeking to gain entrance, the Greeks devised a new ruse: a large wooden horse, its hollow body filled with Greek warriors led by Odysseus, to be brought peacefully, but by guile, beyond the Trojan defenses. The rest of the Greek army feigned departure. One man, Sinon, remained. His task was to convince the Trojans that the horse was a gift which would bring good luck – the horse was after all the sacred animal of Poseidon. Despite the warnings of Laocoon and Cassandra, the Trojans dragged the wooden horse into Troy and celebrated what they believed was their victory and the end of the siege. That night, after the huge celebration which left the majority of the people and defenders of the city in a drunken stupor, Sinon released the Greek warriors. Stealthily emerging from the horse, they opened the city gates for the rest of their army and together slaughtered the Trojan men, taking all the women and children into slavery. In this way, the Greeks successfully managed to enter what was for them a strategically important site. And, punished by their own ignorance and curiosity, the Trojans came to a bloody end.

Though not quite as disastrous – perhaps even the converse (it depends on whose side you are on) – I tend to regard Practice-based Research (PBR) in the arts as a Trojan horse, brought within the firm walls of the academic community or university kingdom.¹ It is still too early to conclude whether the sometimes glorious, sometimes reluctant entrance of PBR within the academic sanctuary has been such a tremendous success as the famous Greek trick. Regardless, the artists, protected by the frame known as PBR, have been let in, following in the wake of the many Sinons who – institutionally and in accordance with policy, but always also ideologically inspired – paved a way for them. The main reason, however, for my comparison of PBR with a Trojan horse stems from the fact that the consequences of the entry of PBR into the world of universities and sciences are still

¹ When I use the abbreviation PBR henceforth, the reader should remember that I confine myself here to artistic research.
obscure and quite unforeseeable, an idea more or less comparable to the unanticipated effects of the embracing of the Greek construction by the Trojans. In other words, does the scientific world realize what it will elicit by (re)installing specific kinds of artistic production within its privileged and well-preserved domain?

Let me be clear from the start: this essay is not a warning. I am in no way trying to fulfill the role of a Laocoon, nor do I in any sense begrudge PBR a (possible) success in (re)conquering its place in the scientific world. On the contrary: for more than two years I myself am working in the Faculty of Performing Arts of Leiden University, a department installed to bridge the gap between professional arts education and university training. This department offers musicians who are highly talented performers and/or composers as well as sufficiently trained researchers the opportunity to get a PhD degree. Educated as both a professional jazz pianist and a music philosopher, I myself am the hybrid product of the mingling of art and science. Thus, I consider myself an advocate of the Greek case, though with firm Trojan sympathies and absolutely less violent intentions.

II

But let’s put aside this Trojan Horse metaphor for a while and address the issue more concretely. What interests me here is the question whether the academic, university or scientific world (the bodies represented by these three adjectives of course don’t always completely overlap; however, within the context of this essay and considering primarily the Dutch situation, I regard them more or less as interchangeable) recognizes with regard to the acquisition and distribution of knowledge what it is welcoming when it invites these practice-based researchers, these artists with scientific questions closely related to their artistic practices, within its borders (for example, by granting such an artist a PhD degree). What is it that the representatives of this world in fact admit by taking PBR seriously?

As a part of a PhD project, PBR implies that artistic actions or productions of the researcher are in some way an integral part of the whole project. This can mean, to give one example, that artistic experimentations are the source of data which will be used to answer initial research questions, themselves emanating from the artistic practice. However, and this is the crucial point, the idea of works of art as integral parts of a PhD project means that there is the possibility that these works will also be the results of the research.⁲ Although (most often) accompanied by a written thesis, the final outcomes of the research project are, in the latter case, communicated through art and distributed by means of art works.

Why do I find this aspect so crucial? What the scientific world and the universities concede with this kind of research, and especially with the possible result – an art work – is the very fundamental and quite revolutionary statement that knowledge can articulate itself outside of discursive practices, outside spoken and written language, and that this kind of knowledge cannot be generated otherwise than in or through the production of art. The art work is not a practical aid which rushes in to help the discursively presented conclusions; it is itself the statement and the conclusion. Furthermore, perhaps it is precisely the written thesis that somehow functions in the margins of the main thing,

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⁲ See for example the docARTES brochure at http://www.docartes.be. DocARTES involves a collaboration between the Conservatory of Amsterdam, the Royal Conservatoire in The Hague, the Leiden University Faculty of Creative and Performing Arts (all in the Netherlands) and the Orpheus Institute in Ghent (Belgium), in order to develop and realize a full PhD program. The main aim is to help candidates to develop their artistic qualities, broaden their academic knowledge and expand their methodological skills.
the artistic production. Banned to the periphery, the thesis at most confirms in another
language what the artwork already expresses. It is the art work that speaks, the art work
that claims the leading part. Music, painting, dance, theater, film, poetry: these are the
possible results of PBR. During the research process, the subjected media have undergone
changes, and it is through this transformative process that knowledge is obtained, that is,
that the current (scientific) knowledge has altered.3

The questions I want to raise here are: What kind of knowledge is it that can be passed on
only through art works? What kind of knowledge is it that cannot (primarily) be articulated
in ‘academic’ language?4 How do we understand and verify which kind of knowledge is
distributed when we are listening to a certain recent composition of a PhD candidate, when
we read this or that particular poem, when we look at those specific paintings, when we
experience precisely that intermedial art work? Can we speak of knowledge that somehow
exists outside the language that seems to be specifically created and equipped to convey
knowledge? And how can we engage this artistic knowledge? How do we recognize and value
it? PBR (re)opens the discussion of what knowledge is, and about the question when it can
adorn itself with the predicate ‘scientific’. This immediately concurs with the premise that
PBR can lead to a certain kind of knowledge, and confirms that this knowledge somehow
diverges from the standard scientific knowledge. (I think it is important to mention here
that it is impossible to homogenize this concept of standard scientific knowledge. The
fundamental differences between philosophical knowledge and knowledge acquired in
medical laboratories or chemical experiments cannot be underestimated. The denominator
‘scientific knowledge’ is always already problematic, because too generic and wide-ranging.
And of course, the same goes, mutatis mutandis, for PBR. In this sense, the binary opposition
between PBR and academic research, as often found in essays and books on PBR, is careless
and needlessly confronting, to say the least.) Granted, many PBR projects easily fit within
the mould of already existing, and (therefore) unproblematic, scientific research with regard
to how they affect an increase or change in the existing body of knowledge. It is the other
projects that I am interested in here: projects that, due to their own specific nature, confront
conventional ideas concerning the production and distribution of scientific knowledge.

The following discussion, which is more of an exploration than an enumeration of
existent sites dealing with this topic, will tug against three anchorages, three plateaus
from which the epistemological challenges of PBR can be examined: the relation between
language and music, the relation between art and truth, and corporeality as a source of
knowledge.

3 Although not an actual example of PBR, I consider Peter Greenaway’s *Nightwatching* worth mentioning
in this context. *Nightwatching* is a multimodal docudrama based on Rembrandt’s famous painting from
1642. Greenaway’s artwork, taking the senses completely by surprise, is supported by (spoken) texts in
which Greenaway explains his ‘rereading’ of *The Night Watch* with contemporary technology. According to
Greenaway, Rembrandt’s masterpiece is a visualized accusation against certain powerful Amsterdam regents
who had plotted an attack on a former captain for complex political reasons. True or not, *Nightwatching*
challenges us to see Rembrandt’s original in a completely different light. Greenaway relates *The Night
Watch*, the showpiece of Dutch national heritage, to contemporary culture by emphasizing the political and
existential actuality of its subject through current artistic means.

4 For the sake of convenience, I comply here with the opposition ‘academic’ or ‘scientific’ language on one
side and literature and poetry on the other. Especially in contemporary continental philosophy and literature
studies, the distinction between the two disintegrates.
III
‘Writing about music is like dancing about architecture – it’s a really stupid thing to want to do.’ It was most likely singer/songwriter Elvis Costello who uttered this challenging statement regarding the incommensurability of music and language. There is a longstanding tradition of ideas circling around the fundamental impossibility of retracing or reducing music to linguistic signs, this impracticality of capturing music in words. However, it is not my intention to trace the entire genealogy here. Instead, I would like to present a few ‘anchor points’ functioning as the underpinning for the following statement: although several musical features are indeed also conveyable through language (perhaps even only becoming perceptible and experienceable through language), music always already, at the same time as it is disclosed, escapes closure within any discursive strategies that attempt to objectify, classify and measure musical patterns and structures by means of (scientifically approved) methods. This suggestion, that in or through music something (knowledge?) is articulated that can never be grasped by language, should, on its own merits, serve as a basis for claiming the possibility to present the results of a research project through the instrumentality of a musical performance or composition.

In Enten/eller (Either – Or), Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard makes a distinction between concrete and abstract ideas. The former are represented most easily (though not necessarily) by or in the most concrete medium, i.e. language. The latter – labeled ‘impoverished’ by Kierkegaard, due to the fact that they are the farthest removed from generalizations, concretions and iterability – cannot, owing to their very nature, be represented by language. According to Kierkegaard, the most abstract idea is the spirit of sensuality. Sensuality is immediate, that is, directly experienceable by the senses, without mediation, critical reflection or conceptualization, and, therefore, unrepresentable through language. So then, which medium is able to capture this spirit of sensuality? According to Kierkegaard

‘it cannot be represented in sculpture, for in itself it is a kind of quality of inwardness. It cannot be painted, for it cannot be grasped in fixed contours; it is an energy, a storm, impatience, passion, and so on, in all their lyrical quality, existing not in a single moment but in a succession of moments, for if it existed in a single moment it could be portrayed or painted. Its existing in a succession of moments indicates its epic character, yet in a stricter sense it is not an epic, for it has not reached the level of words; it moves constantly in an immediacy. Nor can it be represented, therefore, in poetry. The only medium that can represent it is music’.5

Language is the proper medium for (concrete) ideas.6 Music expresses the sensual, the immediate, not conceptually, but in its immediacy. Because there is always reflection in language, it cannot express the immediate. Reflection kills the immediate. According to Kierkegaard, this is also the main reason why it is impossible to express the musical in language.7

But perhaps even more interesting is that Kierkegaard pairs the sensual and the immediate with indeterminacy. It goes without saying that language is not able to

6 The price that has to be paid is that the sensuality of language is virtually neglected (except perhaps in poetry) in favor of its instrumental use value.
7 Kierkegaard 1992, 80.
express the indeterminate; indeterminacy is that which by definition escapes insertion into linguistic categories. And it is precisely through music that we can encounter the indeterminate. Music is able to give us an experience – and thereby, in some way or another, knowledge – which (discursive) language, whether scientific or otherwise, can never achieve. And, although he had some serious reservations regarding the Romantic project (see footnote 8), Kierkegaard seems to adopt a classic Romantic thought here. Many Romantic thinkers (E.T.A. Hoffmann, Jean Paul, Wilhelm Heinrich Wackenroder, Ludwig Tieck, etc.) connected ideas of indecisiveness and indeterminacy to music, regarding instrumental music in particular as an ‘open sign’, continuously deferring the realization of a determinate signified. (Hereby (instrumental) music opened the possibility to experience the sublime.)

Although the era of Romanticism is far behind us, the idea that music and language cannot be reduced to one another – given that they engender different experiences, different contacts with reality, different knowledges – reappears in many contemporary guises. In Philosophy in a New Key, Suzanne Langer writes that music can ‘articulate with clarity and precision subtle complexes of feeling that language, for all its denotative power, cannot even name.’ Jacques Derrida, writing briefly about the difficult relation between music and philosophy, wonders if philosophy is not only possible when it represses music. Seeming to be each others’ opposites, philosophy is equated with mastery, controllability, and appropriation, whereas music makes possible experiencing the impossibility of appropriation as it expresses a multiplicity of voices. And in ‘Performative vs. Critical Interpretation in Music’, Jerrold Levinson brings up several arguments leading to the conclusion that the audible results of a musical performance can never have a one-to-one relation with a verbal interpretation of the work. On the one hand, each performative interpretation can give rise to many different critical interpretations. On the other hand, the results of a musical performance, though possibly (in)formed by a critical interpretation, are never unambiguously and obviously reducible to one verbal elucidation of that work. In other words, there is ‘an underdetermination of critical explanation by performative choice.’ Though he doesn’t mention it explicitly, I think Levinson touches here upon the irreducibility of music to language (and vice versa). However, this does not mean that words are imperfect, or that, when confronted by music, they prove insuperably inadequate. Rather, one could say that neither can be reduced to the other’s terms. Following and paraphrasing Michel Foucault, one could say that it is in vain that we say what we hear; what we hear never resides in what we say. And it is in vain that we attempt to make audible in music what we are saying; the space where discursive texts achieve their splendor is not that inhabited by our ears but that defined by the sequential elements of syntax.

8 However, with this Kierkegaard does not mean to say that music is a more perfect medium than language. ‘I never had any sympathy ... for that purified music which thinks it can do without words ... The apparent poverty of language is precisely its wealth. For the immediate is the indeterminable and so language cannot apprehend it, but the fact that it is indeterminable is not its perfection but a defect’ (Kierkegaard 1992, 80).

9 Langer 1957, 222.


11 By critical interpretation, Levinson denotes ‘either explanation of a work’s manifest features or ascription of features to the work of a more subtle sort, and as centrally concerned with the meaning, significance, or point of a work’ (Levinson 1993, 33).

12 Levinson 1993, 50.

relation of language to music is an infinite relation. And the musicological, music theoretical, music historical discourses are merely an artifice: they give us, as Foucault writes, ‘a finger to point with, in other words, to pass surreptitiously from the space where one speaks to the space where one [hears]; in other words, to fold one over the other as though they were equivalents.’ However, if one wishes to keep the relation of language to music open, if one is able and willing to recognize their incompatibility instead of regarding it simply as an obstacle to be avoided, then one must erase the above-mentioned workings of (scientific) language and preserve the infinity of the task.

Nevertheless, the problematic relation between music and language is at stake in PBR, in particular in the abiding question of how the discursive outcome of the research should relate to the artistic outcome. If it is fundamentally impossible to explain in language what is happening in the musical performance or composition, then a written thesis accompanying the musical product(ion), that serves as substitute for a major part of a ‘normal’ dissertation, can never be (considered as) a mere elucidation of the artistic results. If what is stated above in one way or another matters to us, the attempt to reduce music to language is futile and unacceptable. On several occasions Derrida made it convincingly clear that every translation is a transformation – from one language to another, and even within one language. This means that something is always lost with every translation.

Therefore, my conclusion is that, with regard to the distribution of knowledge (whatever this knowledge might be), we should make space for music (and of course also for other artistic media) to express what cannot be expressed in any other way, if only because it would be a mistake to withhold certain non-discursive knowledge from the scientific world.

However, the question remains: what kind(s) of knowledge might be contained by music, that would justify music as a valid medium used to enter into the realm of PhD-worthy research and obtain the (coveted) degree? Is it possible to connect this ‘musical knowledge’

14 Ibidem.
15 Ibidem. Several contemporary hermeneutical approaches complicate the relation between music and language in a slightly different way. They concur with Suzanne Langer’s idea that certain musical passages can indeed communicate with a readiness comparable to that of speech. Yet, we cannot know this without saying it. Somehow we have to use language to express what music allows us to know outside of language. But, as music philosopher Lawrence Kramer explained in a recent lecture on music and meaning, the moment we do so, we are inescapably caught up in a double indeterminacy, one that is derived from the unavoidable sense of difference between what the music expresses and what the words say, and one that is part of the ambiguity inherent in language itself.
16 ‘For the notion of translation we would have to substitute a notion of transformation: a regulated transformation of one language by another, of one text by another. We will never have, and in fact never had, to do with some ‘transport’ of pure signifieds from one language to another, or within one and the same language, that the signifying instrument would leave virgin and untouched’ (Derrida 1981, 20). See also, for example, ‘Qu’est-ce qu’une traduction relevante?’ or ‘Des tours de Babel’ in Psyché.
17 In ‘Society Must Be Defended’ Michel Foucault formulates the topic pregnantly: ‘The question or questions that have to be asked are: “What type of knowledge are you trying to disqualify when you say that you are a science? What speaking subjects, what discursive subject, what subject of experience and knowledge are you trying to minorize when you begin to say: “I speak this discourse, I am speaking a scientific discourse, and I am a scientist.” What theoretico-political vanguard are you trying to put on the throne in order to detach it from all the massive, circulating, and discontinuous forms that knowledge can take?’ (Foucault 2003, 10).
with the most desired result in academic research, with the ultimate aim of collecting
knowledge at universities: truth? Or, to reformulate the question: is there truth of or in
music, of or in art? And if so, what is truth of or in music, of or in art?

IV
Is a relationship between truth and art thinkable? Can a work of art somehow give us insight
into truth? Is there truth in art? Answering these questions in the affirmative would enable us
to dispel some of the objections the current scientific and academic world might have to allow
research that produces art as an outcome within its domain. After all, scientists would then
find, among artists, allies in their eternal quest for truth, that is, for opening up the mysteries of
the world in order to increase human knowledge and certainty. If art demonstrably provides
truth, then there would be a strong reason to legitimize PBR and a strong argument for PhD
degrees obtained through artistic research with works of art as the outcomes of that research.

In order to answer the question of whether there is truth in art, we must first deal with
the question of what truth is. Of course it is impossible to discuss here in great detail this
incredibly complex topic; I will therefore confine myself to a very schematic representation
(leave aside an elaborated historical overview), just sufficient to make my argument.

In the Western metaphysical tradition, notions of truth have been based on the distinction
and relation between theoretical concepts and empirical facts. It is, by and large, an idea of truth
that depends on a mimetic model of direct correspondence between a representation and its
referent. In Parmenides and The Origin of the Work of Art, Martin Heidegger calls this metaphysical
notion of truth by its Latin name: veritas. In the context of the arts, veritas not only enables us to
distinguish between works that ‘say correctly’ and ‘say incorrectly’, but it also allows us to better
understand the world in the light of how it is judged or considered by the work itself.18

Yet, in The Origin Heidegger wonders if we should be satisfied with this concept of the
nature of truth that has become familiar to us over centuries. Should we be satisfied with this
supposition that truth can best be understood as the agreement or conformity of knowledge
with fact? Heidegger’s answer to this question is an unmistakable ‘no’. For, Heidegger argues,
the fact must show itself to be fact if knowledge and the proposition that forms and expresses
knowledge are to be able to conform to the fact; otherwise the fact cannot become binding
on the proposition.9 In other words, in order for a fact to show itself, it has to stand forth
out of concealedness; it has to stand in the unconcealed. With this reasoning, Heidegger calls
forth a more fundamental truth, namely truth as unconcealedness. He calls this truth by its
ancient Greek name, aletheia. However, the way in which Heidegger rethinks aletheia differs
from the assumption of Western tradition regarding the essence of truth, namely, that it is
an unambiguous disclosure that something ‘is’ as such. Deconstructing Western
logocentrism, that is, its use of binary oppositions, Heidegger states that unconcealedness or disclosure (two
possible translations of aletheia) ‘does not simply result in something disclosed as unclosed.
Instead, the dis-closure is at the same time an en-closure, just like dis-semination, which is not
opposed to the seed, or like in-flaming, which does not eliminate the flame but brings it into
its essence.20

So, instead of regarding truth as a truthful correspondence, as the verification of a
bridge between concept and fact, Heidegger recognizes an opposition in the nature of truth
which subsists between concealedness and unconcealedness. In other words, concealment is

20 Heidegger 1992, 133.
essential to the disclosure of truth. There is truth in the strife between closure and disclosure. Why? Each being we encounter and which presents itself to us, also always, and at the same time, withholds itself in a concealedness, the latter term being described by Heidegger as the double form of refusal (when we can say no more of beings than that they are) and dissembling (when a being presents itself as other than it is). This double concealment belongs to the nature of truth as unconcealedness.21

Accepting this reformulation of truth opens the opportunity to rethink a possible relationship between art and truth. An art work, judged by Heidegger’s thoughts, is not something to be pragmatically adjudicated in terms of fixed principles whereby its correspondence to the world is deemed true or false. Truth in art has nothing to do with mimesis, the imitation or depiction of reality, the Aristotelian idea of homoiosis or the medieval concept of adaequatio, the likeness of some actual thing transposed into an artistic product.

So, when Heidegger writes in The Origin that in art, truth is set to work, and when he uses a figurative painting to exemplify this (one of Van Gogh’s paintings of shoes), he doesn’t state (as in his Is There Truth in Art? Herman Rapaport correctly notes that art’s truth is

‘reducible to a nostalgia for universals, absolute values, or a stable ground for justifying opinions and assessments of quality or longevity ... nor [is it] a transcendental universalizing concept or ground that exists outside the work as a guarantor of its authenticity as art.’22

Art’s truth cannot be located in its ability to represent; art makes perceptible. Unlike a techno-scientific objectification that seeks to penetrate into beings in order to inveigle the secret of their functioning out of them (according to Heidegger, beings so withdraw that in the end this whole operation is, in fact, in vain), art makes perceptible the undisclosable of beings. Art opens a space in which concealedness itself can display itself. Art divulges a secret without encroaching on it. It lets be. It lets beings be. It lets (en)closure be.

‘Color shines and wants only to shine. If we try to make it comprehensible by analyzing it into numbers of oscillations it is gone. It shows itself only when it remains undisclosed and unexplained ... To be sure, the painter ... makes use of pigment; he uses it, however, in such a way that the colors are not used up but begin, rather, for the first time, to shine. To be sure, the poet, too, uses words, not, however, like ordinary speakers and writers who must use them up, but rather in such a way that only now does the word become and remain truly a word’.23

21 Heidegger 2002, 30-1. Heidegger comes then to the conclusion that, when concealment belongs to unconcealedness, truth, in its nature, is un-truth. This doesn’t mean that truth is at heart falsehood or that truth is never itself. Truth is, viewed dialectically, always also its opposite; the nature of truth is, in itself, the primal conflict between disclosure and closure (Heidegger 2002, 31). Logically following this line of reasoning, one has to conclude that Heidegger is actually deconstructing here the idea of presence. A being is not either present or absent anymore but, quite to the contrary, a complex interplay between withdrawal and emergence, enclosure and disclosure, showing and concealing. A being is not simply something that can be taken for granted in its thereness – its thereness as always being there. Its presence is divided in itself. A being is something other than that which by its very nature decides the difference between presence and absence (Rapaport 1997, 22-3).

22 Rapaport 1997, ix.

23 Heidegger 2002, 25. It is important to notice that Heidegger’s point of departure is not the whole corpus
In contrast with the manufacture of equipment, for example, the creation of an art work does not cause the material to disappear but shows it as it is: by nature undisclosable.

The working of art enables humans not to experience a higher (metaphysical) world, but to wonder at the inexhaustibility of reality. Through art, it is possible to regain a perspective in which every being, a tree, a mountain, a house, the call of a bird, completely loses its indifference and ordinariness.

In this sense, art supplements science. In other words, in or through art we can perhaps arrive at another kind of knowledge, another kind of thinking, a thinking beyond opining, representing, reasoning, and conceiving, that is, beyond ‘ordinary’ thinking. In What Is Called Thinking? Heidegger proposes this ‘other’ thinking as at once receptive, in the sense of an attending to what things convey to us, and active, in the sense that we respond to their call. This thinking is not ratiocination, not conceptual or systematic (in the sense favored by the German idealistic tradition), nor does it lead to a clear opinion about matters. It is a taking to heart and mind – with rigor and strictness, Heidegger stresses – the particular things before us – things we normally fail to see in their presence – in order to discover in them their essential nature and truth, a nature of reality that is both hidden and revealed, that both appears and withdraws from view, not in turn, but concomitantly.

According to Heidegger, thinking means the ‘letting-lie-before-us’, and what lies before us should not be manipulated by means of grasping, by means of an assault (a modus operandi permeating science in general). To disclose and keep disclosed what is unconcealed – that is how this ‘letting-lie-before-us’ can be understood; that is what connects it to art. In other words, there is a close connection traceable between Heidegger’s interpretation of the concepts ‘thinking’ and ‘aletheia’.

Art as aletheia. Art as laying out, laying before, laying to, as the ‘letting-lie-before-us’. Art is a (projective) saying which simultaneously brings the unsayable as such into the world. As such, art not only lets us experience beings differently; in or through art, (an other) reality is created. Art doesn’t re-present; it presents. Whenever art happens, it presents the instigation of the strife between the unfamiliar and the familiar, between the extraordinary and the ordinary. According to Heidegger, science (including history, literature, and philosophy as well as the natural sciences) does not think that way.

I want to reserve an investigation of whether there is really such a fundamental difference between (contemporary) art and of art works as it has been classified in the past by certain people acting on behalf of the art world (art historians, aestheticians, directors of art institutions, etc.). A being is only a work of art when it sets truth to work.


Heidegger 1968, 8.

24 ‘1. Thinking does not bring knowledge as do the sciences. 2. Thinking does not produce usable practical wisdom. 3. Thinking solves no cosmic riddles. 4. Thinking does not endow us directly with the power to act’ (Heidegger 1968, 159).

25 However, Heidegger is not utterly opposed to techno-scientific progress; its routing and challenging also provide us with the opportunity to surpass certain stagnant metaphysical stipulations.

26 This calls for a comparison with Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology. In Eye and Mind we read concerning painting: ‘In a forest, I have felt many times that it was not I who looked at the forest. Some days I felt that the trees were looking at me, were speaking to me ... I was there, listening ... I think that the painter must be penetrated by the universe and not want to penetrate it’ (Johnson 1993, 129).
science for the last paragraph of this essay. However, if we take Heidegger’s thoughts serious, art can indeed contribute to the production of knowledge and truth. As such, it could legitimately claim a position within the academic world.

V

If we are willing to agree that art somehow confronts us with the uncanny, the unfamiliar, as Heidegger argues, can we shed a little more light on this unfamiliarity? Or, to pose a somewhat more circumspect question, how can works of art somehow supplement and even correct scientific knowledge? And, to connect the question back again to PBR, what site is it, that is not covered or disclosed by more traditional art studies like musicology and art history, that becomes the special playing field for PBR? What can the specific contribution of PBR be to the already existing corpus of (scientific and academic) knowledge?

In 'Feminist Theory, Music Theory, and the Mind/Body Problem' Suzanne Cusick presents some interesting observations. In search of the feminine in music and musicology, that is, in search of ‘an otherness’ that never has been articulated in musical discourse – that perhaps never was capable of being articulated – Cusick comes to the conclusion that music is most often expounded as if it were a mind-mind game, a game in which the composer has come to be understood as mind – ‘mind that creates patterns of sounds to which other minds [the minds of the listeners, MC] assign meanings. ‘29 Reconsidering her own primary relation to music, Cusick, however, sees her own playing, her corporal activity, as the central core of her musicality. For her, what is scrupulously denied in most musicology and music theory is the inextricable presence of the body: ‘We end by ignoring the fact that these practices of the mind are non-practices without the bodily practices they call for – about which it has become unthinkable to think. ‘30 And where else than from a performer-centered subject position can a ‘theory’ of musical bodies be developed? Here, I think, we are encountering a site, a site of knowledge, which is accessible only for artists, a site which could function as a legitimization of PBR. The site of the performer, the site where mind and body meet in a non-pre-established hierarchy, gives access to knowledge that is impossible to achieve through more detached and exclusively mind work.

Cusick gives a good example of the surplus value of PBR: performer-centered analysis. She investigates bars 75-79 from the chorale prelude on ‘Aus tiefer Not’ (‘Out of the depths I cry to Thee’) in J.S. Bach’s Clavierübung, Part III (BWV 686) for church organ. Neither harmonic nor contrapuntal analysis would identify this passage as critical to the work’s meaning. Yet, for the performer, this is by far the most physically challenging moment in the piece. Neither foot nor hand can rest long enough to balance the body. The body’s center of gravity is constantly shifting. Cusick reads this passage as a private message from Bach’s mind through the body of the organist to the organist’s mind and therefore as part of the work’s musical meaning.31

A more common, mental analysis of ‘Aus tiefer Not’ (an analysis most often based on a close reading of the score) is supplemented here by an analysis (in)formed by the physicality of the performer. Bars 75-79 switch from the periphery to the center of attention when the bodily experience of the performer is taken into account – an experience that can also

29 Cusick 1998, 45.
30 Ibidem.
mark the activity of listening to the piece (for example because wrong notes or muddled articulations easily occur in this passage). In fact, one could say that tactility enters the site of music analysis, a contribution that both complements and alters already existing analytical practices. As such, PBR functions as an accumulator and transformer of knowledge; that is, if PBR is not limited to artistic production alone but also includes a reflection on that production. And it should be perfectly clear that only (highly) trained musicians can contribute to this specific production of (alternative) knowledge. Only they (in fact just some of them) have enough embodied as well as mental knowledge at their disposal to articulate such fundamental, and at the same time subtle, complementary viewpoints.

The ‘embodied music theory’ as proposed by Cusick recognizes performers as receivers of meaning, as knowers whose knowledge comes from their bodies as well as their minds. ‘To deny musical meaning to purely physical, performative things is in effect to transform human performers into machines for the transmission of mind-mind messages.’ The alleged binary and hierarchical opposition between mind and body is deconstructed here. The act of making music is the exact site of an actual solution to the mind-body opposition. The body becomes a site of knowledge, a corporeal and, to a certain extent, prereflective knowledge. Cusick’s essay makes us aware of the fact that music is always incorporated. There is no music without a body that moves, plays, sings, and hears. The ‘embodied music theory’ opens the possibility to acknowledge music’s tactility as well as the added value of PBR.

‘There is more sagacity in thy body than in thy best wisdom,’ Nietzsche’s Zarathustra says. This statement, as well as Cusick’s cogent insights, can give the initial impetus to recognize and pay serious attention to what is called ‘bodily or embodied knowledge’, a knowledge of the body that (at first) does not manifest itself on the level of thinking. By emphasizing that music making is first of all a physical activity and that the mere physicality of that activity can teach us something (new) about the music in question, Cusick opens the door to a musical phenomenology and, consequently, for research activities based on the corporeal contribution of the musician, until now almost absent in academic musical practices.

According to Maurice Merleau-Ponty, a human is, before he thinks, a being that lives, moves, acts in the world. Each day, his body makes thousands of (minuscule) movements outside the

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33 In Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and Its Challenge to Western Thought, George Lakoff and Mark Johnson write: ‘Perception has always been accepted as bodily in nature, just as movement is, conception as purely mental – the formation and use of concepts, but this picture is false: The body is not merely somehow involved in conceptualization but is shaping its very nature’ (Lakoff and Johnson 1999, 37).
34 Nietzsche 1969, 62.
35 Studying performances is undoubtedly part of the work of current musicologists and music theorists. Nevertheless, what most of these scholars miss is the actual experience of performing a piece, an access to the knowledge stored in the body, which is not so easy to articulate or to objectify. In La barbarie, Michel Henry gives the example of a biology student reading a book about genetic codes – absorbing scientific knowledge. However, the act of the reading itself, the movement of the eyes and the turning of the pages with his hands, is his bodily knowledge: the knowledge of life itself (Henry 1987, 24). Henry notes an embarrassing tension, an unbridgeable gap, between the study of life, biology, and life itself. Perhaps the distinction between a musicological work and an actual musical performance functions as the musical equivalent to Henry’s story.
active and conscious control of his mind. When he is walking, biking, eating, typing, his body acts (almost) effortlessly. His body ‘remembers’ and reproduces the necessary movements.36

As such, a body already knows; a human being already has ‘knowledge’, a knowledge which withdraws from reflection, which in fact precedes reflective knowledge.37 This ‘understanding’ of the world by the body – Merleau-Ponty calls this habitude – irrevocably leads to an epistemological problem. Scientific knowledge objectifies phenomena and reduces them to something different from themselves: a concept, a measurable entity.38

Echoing Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty opens Eye and Mind with the sentence: ‘Science manipulates things and gives up living in them.’39 Of course, it offers models to map out this habitude, but its systemization is a priori associated with a loss in experience: what science describes does not equal human experience.40 It is exactly this experience of habitude that withdraws itself from any reflective, discursive understanding. In other words, in his phenomenology, Merleau-Ponty is not looking for the object of knowledge; rather he is concerned about ‘immediate knowledge’, which is only traceable in bodily actions. The problem is, of course, how to describe and analyze that which does not belong to the order of ideas, of concepts, of models.41 This problem is obviously of utmost relevance for the epistemology of PBR: it brings us back to the discussion regarding the relationship between the artistic input and the accompanying discursive thesis (most commonly) required in order to obtain the PhD degree. The written thesis can never be a substitute for the artistic production, given the fact that the latter will (also) contain ‘embodied knowledge’.

36 This corporeal memory differs from mental memory in that the latter goes through representation, a Vergegenwärtigung (realization) of former events. Corporeal memory doesn’t need this representation: in order to walk, I don’t have to remember how to move my legs. Corporeal memory is not discursive or ideal.

37 There might be a correspondence here with what the Hungarian-British polymath Michael Polanyi describes as ‘tacit knowledge’, a pre-logical phase of knowing. For Polanyi, this tacit knowledge, underlying explicit knowledge, is more fundamental. All our knowledge rests in a tacit dimension; it functions as a background, which assists in accomplishing a task which is in focus (for example, when reading a text, words and linguistic rules function as tacit subsidiary knowledge). Akin to Merleau-Ponty, Polanyi writes in 1967 in The Tacit Dimension, that we should start from the fact that ‘we can know more than we can tell’ (Polanyi 1967, 4).

38 Merleau-Ponty 1962, 54.

39 Johnson 1993, 121.

40 Cf. footnote 35. In much of his later work, (jazz) musician and philosopher Donald Schön distinguishes between ‘knowing that’ and ‘knowing how’. The latter consists of skills which someone is able to perform but unable to identify by name, so-called non-discursive knowledge. According to Schön, there is substantial (unconscious) ‘knowing how’ in practical professions such as music making. Directed against ‘technical-rationality’ as the grounding of professional knowledge and with special relevance for art(istic research), Schön introduces, in The Reflective Practitioner (1983), the notions ‘knowing in action’ and ‘reflection in action’. For example, for musicians it is impossible to name or to be consciously aware of everything they do in the process of playing or singing. Making music is thus first and foremost a matter of ‘knowing how’. In it, there is not so much a continuous alternation between mental thinking and corporeal acting; rather, thinking and knowledge rest within the actions themselves. In many respects, Schön is using a distinction that would have been familiar to Aristotle, who makes a distinction between episteme (rational knowledge) and techne (practical knowledge necessary for poiesis (production) and praxis (action).

41 Merleau-Ponty’s problem here somehow resembles St. Augustine’s with time: ‘What, then, is time?’ St. Augustine asks himself in his Confessions. ‘If no one asks me, I know what it is. If I wish to explain it to him who asks me, I do not know’ (Augustine 2006, XI, XIV,17).
Merleau-Ponty speaks of a *praktognosia*, knowledge that is not only expressed in action, but, in addition, results from the acting itself, without resting on mental knowledge.\(^\text{42}\) *Praktognosia*, however, is not only negative (*non-reflective* knowledge): above all it is an understanding of life itself; it is practical or working knowledge.

In the opinion of Merleau-Ponty, *praktognosia* can be traced in the work of Paul Cézanne. His paintings present the ambiguity of the living environment, the so-called ‘wild world’. By moving the body and the gaze, the viewer receives different perspectives. Therefore, Cézanne’s paintings clearly go beyond photographic reproduction; compared to photos, the images are distorted. Cézanne’s paintings in particular, give ‘visible existence to what profane vision believes to be invisible.’\(^\text{43}\) However, it is not visibility as such but the corporeal act of seeing in all its facets that is, according to Merleau-Ponty, examined by Cézanne:

> ‘To unveil the means, visible and not otherwise, by which it makes itself mountain before our eyes. Light, lighting, shadows, reflections, color ... They are not ordinarily seen. The painter’s gaze asks them what they do to suddenly cause something to be and to be this thing, what they do to compose this talisman of a world, to make us see the visible ... The visible in the profane sense forgets its premises ... But the interrogation of painting in any case looks toward this secret and feverish genesis of things in our body.’\(^\text{44}\)

Cézanne, through Merleau-Ponty, makes it clear to us that corporeal wisdom is not reducible to reflective (profane) wisdom. Bodily knowledge is not the same as knowledge amassed through representations. Perhaps Cézanne could thus act as a predecessor of PBR, articulating and communicating specific knowledge through art works while formulating his ‘research questions’ in extensive correspondences. The outcome of his research, however, is only conveyable through art. And perhaps Merleau-Ponty’s *praktognosia* is not so far removed from the epistemological premises of PBR.

**VI**

Even though both Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty are not so naïve as to be unaware of the functions and benefits of science and scientific knowledge, their evaluations of both are in general quite negative. In any case, they appraise (certain) artistic actions much higher, also regarding the production of knowledge.

Although I think we still need to take their concerns and elaborated alternatives seriously, the question is warranted within the context of this essay as to whether there is still such a fundamental difference between (contemporary) art and science. Stephen Wilson writes in *Information Arts. Intersections of Art, Science, and Technology*:

> ‘Both value the careful observation of their environments to gather information through the senses. Both value creativity. Both propose to introduce change, innovation, or improvement over what exists.’\(^\text{45}\)

Furthermore, former assumptions underlying the scientific approach – the alleged reality of the observed world, the organization of nature, objectivity, repeatability, and multi-observer...
verification – have long since been subjected to heavy criticism from many different sources.\(^4\) Regardless, recent developments show each side moving towards the other.\(^47\) On the one hand, artists explore technological and scientific frontiers, asking questions about the possibilities and implications of technological innovations. On the other hand, scientific conceptualizations call for cultural commentary and/or direct artistic input, for example to explore and extend scientific principles and technologies in unanticipated ways. Simultaneously, researchers have become acquainted with artistic work pointing toward new research directions.

Sometimes the two are hard to distinguish, as a little quiz in Stephen Wilson’s book makes clear: is the development of a method for modulating sound onto the flow of dripping water the work of an artist or a scientist? And what about the creation of a device that is sensitive to hugs and can react to things it hears on television?\(^48\) Scientific research or artistic production? Or both, dialectically \textit{aufgehoben} in a new category? Science changes basic notions about the nature of the universe and the nature of humanity. Art helps to explore and settle new worlds of representation. Though not mutually exchangeable, both art and (fundamental) science make us relate to reality in new ways; both create new realities. Perhaps they have more in common than Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty would like us to believe.\(^49\)

Wilson sees a new kind of artist-researcher emerging.\(^50\) Both the arts and sciences could benefit from such a cooperation. On the one hand, the arts could act as a kind of ‘bad conscience’ of the sciences, playing a critical role as an independent zone of research, in which artists insert critical commentary into the worlds of science and technology: ‘the arts could become a place where abandoned, discredited, and unorthodox inquiries could

\(^{46}\) There is always a point at which technologies geared towards regulation, containment, command, and control, can turn out to be feeding into the collapse of everything they once supported,” writes Sadie Plant in Zeros + Ones (Plant: 143).

\(^{47}\) Of course, the collaboration of science and art has a longstanding tradition, Leonardo da Vinci being exemplary. Especially music, being part of the \textit{quadrivium} (alongside geometry, mathematics, and astronomy), has been closely connected to natural sciences for many centuries. In the 20th century, it is John Cage (among others) who tries to bridge the gap between science and music which arose in the 18th century. In 1940, Cage sought the assistance and support of another composer, George Antheil, for a center of experimental music to be set up either at Mills College in Oakland or the School of Design in Chicago: ‘I’m doing everything I can to establish a ‘center of experimental music’. \textit{The purpose of this center will be to do research, composition, and performance in the field of sound and rhythms},’ Cage writes in a letter to Antheil (italics mine).


\(^{49}\) Michael Polanyi maintains that practitioners (artists) follow rules and exemplars and rely on experience for making judgments in their work in the same way that scientists do in their work. He thus criticizes the putative distinction between practical knowledge and other kinds of knowledge, like theoretical knowledge. For him the process-of-knowing is the same. Instead of making the common distinction between thinkers and doers, Polanyi proposes a division between agentic and intellective doing: to focus one’s thoughts can be seen as intellective doing whereas to move one’s body should be regarded as an agentic act. Perhaps this might lead to the conclusion that artistic research only results in practical knowledge. In my opinion, this might be true, but it is definitely not the whole truth. Artistic research can indeed contribute as well to more fundamental knowledge as the reflections on truth and the relation between language and music have shown.

\(^{50}\) Wilson only pays attention to collaborations of artists and exact scientists. Of course it would be interesting as well to see if and how artists can change certain concepts and ways of thinking within the social sciences and humanities. I already explored above how PBR can influence and complement musicology and music theory. Many other examples can be found elsewhere in this issue of DJMT.
be pursued. Artists working within research settings can teach those worlds to be open enough to learn and benefit from the unorthodox contributions that they proffer. On the other hand, the art world itself can benefit because artists can explore fields that do not neatly fit into historically validated media, and offer their work in new contexts. In other words, the purpose of this collaboration is not to cause artists to lose touch with their artistic roots. They must keep alive artistic traditions of iconoclasm, play, and sensual communication.

In this article I tried to present PBR as a welcome and perhaps even necessary supplementation to already existing knowledge production within academic settings. Artistic research contributes in a fundamental way to the development and realization of knowledge. It reopens the question of truth, it is an important participant in the discussion surrounding how discursive language and ‘other utterances’ relate to each other, and it adds different kinds of knowledge to already existing and accepted ones. Regarded this way, the academic Trojans should be more than welcoming to the artistic Greeks, instead of treating them as undesirable intruders, to be followed suspiciously. But the same goes, mutatis mutandis, for the art world. PBR in the arts leads to the creation of new art, to new contexts in which art can be presented, to new discourses on art, and to new artists, who cannot and should not be considered as degenerated mutants, subordinated to scientific conventions. On the contrary, artists are already successfully contributing to certain transformations within the scientific mores, and so doing, to artistic developments as well. Artists (re)entering the domain of the sciences can make a fruitful contribution to both cultural fields. Let’s welcome the Trojans!

51 Wilson 2002, 37. Or: ‘Art (or artistic experience) can criticize science (or scientific experience), not to mention the possibilities of intra-artistic or intra-scientific criticism’ (Hannula c.s. 2005, 31).
Literature


