# Researching the Self, the Other and their Relationship in Physiotherapy

A Theoretical and Methodological Exploration of Autoethnography

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## Attestation of authorship

"I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning."

Filip Maric, 04.03.2011

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#### **Abstract**

This dissertation sets out to explore the theoretical and methodological feasibility of an autoethnography situated within a theoretical framework that draws on my personal philosophical background. In doing so, the study raises some novel questions about the theoretical underpinnings of autoethnography. The dissertation addresses a number of competing issues: Firstly, because autoethnography is a relatively new qualitative research methodology, it remains somewhat unrefined, and alongside its potential benefits lie numerous conceptual problems and limitations. These issues differ depending on the paradigmatic position of each individual researcher and the theoretical framework s/he uses to shape his/her research. Full awareness of one's subjective philosophical position thus allows at least its acknowledgement, if not even a justification for its place and role in shaping the methodology. Secondly, the potential of my subjective philosophical position, comprised by the philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas and the philosophies and practices of Aikido and Zen, as an underpinning philosophy and theoretical framework for autoethnography is practically un- or underexplored in the existing literature around autoethnography. However, due to an overlap of core topics, it seems as though their combination might be beneficial to improve the strength and theoretical foundation of (my) autoethnography. Consequently, testing whether autoethnography is compatible with my philosophical background is a necessary precursor to any more detailed empirical work.

This dissertation acts as a preparatory study for a future autoethnography of my personal physiotherapy practice, in which the approach emerging from the present dissertation would be applied. In this sense, the present study bears some resemblance to the reliability and validity studies common to quantitative research, but instead takes as its focus the possible methodological

and philosophical compatibility of autoethnography with the philosophies and practices of Aikido, Zazen and Levinas.

To examine this question I have identified a number of key factors that are relevant to develop a theoretical framework for my autoethnography and these form the main structural features of the dissertation. Chapters include the basic philosophical, ontological and epistemological underpinnings, data and the methods of its processing, trustworthiness and ethical considerations for autoethnographic research. In each chapter I have compared and contrasted existing autoethnographic approaches with thinking inherent in my personal philosophical background. Through this process of contrasting and comparing a theoretical framework has emerged that partially builds on and infers from existing approaches, but also adds and changes some aspects in an entirely novel way.

In the dissertation I have shown that it may indeed be theoretically and methodologically possible to combine autoethnography with my personal philosophical background, and that approach may offer a strong enough foundation for its application in a future autoethnography of my physiotherapy practice. However, the present study was a strongly theoretical exploration and some problems and question remain that will have to be revisited and redeveloped throughout its actual, practical application.

#### **Chapter 1 – Introduction**

#### A first overview

The present dissertation functions for qualitative research much as reliability and validity studies do for quantitative research. The intention is to test the theoretical and methodological feasibility of autoethnography as a research methodology for an intended future study. This future study would be an autoethnography of my physiotherapy practice: a practice that I feel is disturbed, influenced and in places changed by my personal philosophical beliefs, values and assumption, which sometimes support and other times challenge what I have been taught to do. At a personal level such an autoethnography would allow an in-depth examination of my own practices and could lead to their justification, rejection and potential improvement. Through investigating my own practices as a physiotherapist, however, such an autoethnography could also provide a philosophically informed investigation of current (musculoskeletal) physiotherapy practice in general and explore different possibilities for its philosophical underpinning and more diverse ways to practise physiotherapy.

As a methodological perspective that has not yet been used for such a purpose in physiotherapy, autoethnography could yield additional and alternate ways to think about and practice physiotherapy. This new perspective could help broaden the scope of physiotherapy practice that has been called for in the literature, and bring about benefits for clients, colleagues and stakeholders alike (Nicholls & Larmer, 2005; Nicholls, Reid, & Larmer, 2009). However, throughout its relatively short lifespan, autoethnography has been used across the different paradigms for different purposes, using different methods, thus ultimately generating a variety of methodological forms. These forms and their differences are determined by

the various researchers' basic philosophical beliefs, values and assumptions (Crotty, 1998; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Giddings & Smythe, 2010; Grant & Giddings, 2002; Nicholls, 2009a). Drawing on different philosophies these individually different basic beliefs, values and assumptions situate each autoethnography in a different place amongst the various qualitative research paradigms and determine how and what it can achieve.

It is here that my basic philosophical assumptions play a second role in my current and potential future research endeavour, beyond just influencing my daily physiotherapy practice. More specifically, they form the philosophical background with which I would like to align a theoretical framework for *my* autoethnography and situate it next to the many other individual autoethnographic approaches. However, none of the philosophies that shape my basic philosophical assumptions are represented in the existing research paradigms and none of them consider themselves as approaches to doing research.

In extension of my personal, social, cultural, family and environmental background I believe my basic philosophical beliefs, values and assumptions to be influenced by, and formed by, two main sources. Firstly, the philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas (1906-1995), a French-Lithuanian-Jewish philosopher whose core interest revolved around the 'Other', the 'self', their relationship and the question of ethics (Levinas & Nemo, 1985). In conjunction with his philosophy there are also a number of other influences, from Jewish to continental western philosophies that he drew on or argued against (Malka, 2006). Secondly, there is a more eastern influence consisting of the practice and philosophies of Aikido, a Japanese martial art, and the philosophy and practice of Zazen, which is Zen-Buddhist meditation. In both of these eastern traditions the practices are considered, at least in parts, to be studies of the 'self' and its place and relationship with the world and the 'others' in it. Through studying these, they attempt to help answer the

closely connected question of how to act (personally and/or professionally) in daily life (Deshimaru & Leonard, 1991; Gannon, 2006; Ueshiba & Unno, 1988; Warner, 2003).

These philosophies are largely un- or underexplored in qualitative research as well as physiotherapy, however I believe that their introduction holds the potential of questioning and broadening existing approaches to both research and physiotherapy practice. Questions about the self, the other and their relationship are not only core topics of autoethnography and my philosophical background, but are also of crucial importance in physiotherapy. Our understanding of ourselves as therapist, our patients as our immediate others, and our relationship to them require constant reassessment if we desire to improve our practice. Thus, the topics of the present dissertation also begin the exploration of some key issues that will run right through to my future intended study. There, the autoethnographic approach developed and tested here would be practically applied to the initial research interest of critically examining my physiotherapy practice.

Due to the overlap of core topics between my philosophical background and autoethnography, I believe that their combination is both possible and could yield a novel, theoretically and methodologically feasible framework for my intended autoethnography. However, as indicated before, such a combination is not without difficulties and problems and needs to be examined in more detail before the newly framed methodology can be applied. Thus, the present dissertation sets out to examine if and how my philosophical background can inform and shape an autoethnography that is aligned with my personal beliefs, values and assumptions whilst also being theoretically and methodologically feasible.

#### How I came to this study

I believe that my core training as a physiotherapist does not differ much from that of most musculoskeletal physiotherapists. I finished my undergraduate training in Germany in mid-2002 and subsequently worked in a private physiotherapy clinic from then onwards whilst completing numerous workshops and courses on various musculoskeletal subtopics and techniques including training to hold the title 'sports-physiotherapist' in Germany. In early 2009 I left for New Zealand to commence my postgraduate studies and the present dissertation is the last step to the completion of my Masters in musculoskeletal physiotherapy.

The common tenor of all of the above training as a physiotherapist with a certain set of specializations in Germany and in New Zealand has been a biomedical approach to health and medicine. Historically, this approach to health has evolved from positivist and post-positivist basic philosophical assumptions and the development of the scientific method. More recently it has led to the development of the current 'gold-standard' form of evidence-based healthcare, which has a primary focus on quantitative, *hard* evidence (Miles, Loughlin, & Polychronis, 2008).

Exploring a very different perspective, I studied philosophy as a major (and ethnology and psychoanalysis as minors) for only one semester before entering my undergraduate physiotherapy course. After completing my degree, and whilst working in the above mentioned clinic, I continued these studies until the completion of an interim exam, which at that time could be taken after an equivalent of two years full-time study. It was during this time that I discovered and focussed on the philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas and Jewish philosophy in general. Further, about halfway through my undergraduate physiotherapy course I began a part-time course in 'Shiatsu' (a Japanese acupressure treatment method based on traditional Chinese medicine and some

Japanese Zen-Buddhist sentiments), completing the course six years later (Long, 2008; Masunaga & Ohashi, 1977). My study and practice of Aikido, Zazen and their philosophies began well before my physiotherapy training and has accompanied me ever since.

The different perspectives that I gained through exploring other schools of thought and practices has increasingly influenced all facets of my life, including my professional life and practice as a clinical physiotherapist. My idea in entering the course in Shiatsu for example, was a very conscious attempt to reconcile my professional practice as a physiotherapist with my personal philosophical beliefs, values and assumptions as they were and are still formed by non-positivist, western and eastern philosophies. However, while Shiatsu answered some of the questions I had, and allowed me to bring my specific training and my interests in closer proximity, many questions and problems arose through their meeting and remained open since.

Sometimes these questions and problems would be minor practical issues: for example relating to the exact execution of movements or even treatment techniques. At other times however, problems arose at a more basic philosophical level. For example, in Zen and Aikido some of the core topics are sickness, ageing, pain, suffering, death, correct posture, movement and the self's physical (and psychological, emotional, spiritual) interaction with others and the world around it. The outcome or aim of this interaction in both of these disciplines, as well as in their derivative treatment method 'Shiatsu', is a 'healing' or supportive relationship with the world and the others that live in it (Deshimaru & Leonard, 1991; Warner, 2003). Further, as touched upon earlier, the philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas, and more generally the study of philosophy, gave me yet another perspective on questions of ethics and my interaction with the world and the others that live in it.

The key point or problem here is that whilst the issues of interest (for example, pain, posture, movement, ethics) are much the same as in 'mainstream' physiotherapy, the perspectives on them and the answers sought for them differ from and often clash with what I have been taught to think and do as a physiotherapist. It is due to this overlap of topics and questions and occasional opposition of perspectives and answers that I have often tried to weigh these two poles of my personal and professional life against each other. This means that it became inevitable for me to bring them into conversation to find a plausible answer and way to act and practice that would either reconcile them or justify a decision for choosing one over the other.

What grew out of this frequent internal debate and my gradual familiarization with the possibilities and opportunities of scientific research throughout my postgraduate studies was the desire to take this internal debate to a more scientifically thorough level. The research question that evolved from this was: if and how the philosophies and practices that shape and guide my personal basic philosophical beliefs, values, assumptions and actions could inform and maybe even reform physiotherapy practice in a way that is both theoretically and practically feasible and beneficial for all parties involved.

The aim of such an investigation would be an improved and more rigorous theoretical foundation for decisions in regards to (my) physiotherapy practice, as opposed to the more anecdotal approach of my internal debate so far. In more detail, I believe it would be of great interest to explore this internal debate with more scientific attention to detail to highlight and critically investigate: 1) the philosophical and practical problems resulting from the encounter of traditional mainstream physiotherapy with 'other' philosophies and practices; 2) my efforts to tackle these problems; and 3) what kind of theoretical basis and practical approaches for physiotherapy result from these efforts and how they might benefit me and my clients as well as other practitioners and their clients.

An investigation of this sort is rather unusual in a profession that generally values objectivity, or an objectivist form of professionalism above all else. Consequently, to this date there are no investigations looking at the above issues in the way that I have suggested here. The few investigations that touch upon related issues have looked at for example questions about therapists' beliefs (Daykin & Richardson, 2004) or cultural competence (Jorgensen, 2000). In New Zealand there is some awareness that physiotherapists need to be culturally sensitive (Main, McCallin, & Smith, 2006; Ratima, Waetford, & Wikaire, 2006). However, these studies all relate to a culturally safe practice in regards to the patient's culture (Norris & Allotey, 2008), rather than to the impact of therapist's culture and belief systems on her/his clinical practice, and it is this that I am intending to investigate.

While my field of interest involves a large amount of reflection and any autoethnography could potentially be interpreted as a case study of reflective practice I would argue that this is not so. The debate around reflective practice is relatively new in physiotherapy and there is no consensus on the different positions taken in regards to the definitions of reflexivity or reflective practice as well as their aims, methods, outcomes and the place of the therapist within it (Clouder, 2000a, 2000b; Donaghy & Morss, 2000). Whilst certainly engaging in a form of reflective practice with the aim of improving my practice, my interest is also to use my own practices, experiences and reflections to investigate the culture of physiotherapy that I am a part of, as well as my interaction with it. Thus, rather than a case study, current developments in qualitative inquiry suggest that autoethnography is the methodology of choice to investigate such a research question (Anderson, 2006a; Atkinson, Delamont, & Coffey, 2003; Ellis & Bochner, 1996; Ellis & Bochner, 2000; Ellis & Bochner, 2000; J. Taylor, 2008).

#### (My) Autoethnography

As mentioned before, autoethnography is a fairly new research methodology in the field of qualitative inquiry and even younger in the health sciences (Anderson, 2006a; Ellis & Bochner, 1996). However, the number of researchers implementing it is rapidly increasing and the health disciplines are but one of many different disciplines that find themselves subjected to this new methodology (Brooks, 2010; M. C. Duncan, 2000; Gambs, 2005; Hogan, 2000; Neville-Jan, 2003; A. Neville-Jan, 2004; Poulos, 2010; Purdy, Potrac, & Jones, 2008; Spry, 2010; Warne & Hoppes, 2009; Weems, 2003).

One characteristic of the recent spread of autoethnography, is the highly heterogeneous array of 'autoethnographies' that have been and are being published. Definitions, philosophical underpinnings and resulting theoretical frameworks and paradigmatic positions, aims, methods, outcomes, benefits, limitations and their presentation often differ quite markedly from one autoethnography to another. In fact, most do not stop at the point of difference, but often openly contradict and critique each other (Anderson, 2006a, 2006b; Atkinson, 2006; Burnier, 2006; Charmaz, 2006; Ellis & Bochner, 2006; Flaherty, Denzin, Manning, & Snow, 2002; Vryan, 2006). Most often, and quite explicitly, the methodological differences are a result of the different beliefs, values and assumptions that are held by the various researchers and the different paradigmatic positions that they assign to. In fact, individuality of the methodological approach is a key argument of many autoethnographers. In making visible and explicit what is usually considered as bias and thus excluded from research, these autoethnographers want to expose the researcher's involvement in the research: that is, the influence and role of their subjectivity in their research projects (Anderson, 2006a; Denzin, 2006; Ellis & Bochner, 2000; Smythe, 2006; Tomaselli, Dyll, & Francis, 2008).

This individuality and heterogeneity poses considerable difficulties for an emerging researcher intending to do autoethnographic research. Through this high individuality, the question of finding the right methodology expands to having to situate this methodology within a coherent paradigmatic approach that has to be representative of one's own philosophical beliefs, values and assumptions. To do so one has to identify one's own basic philosophical assumptions and align the methodology with them to situate it amongst other research approaches and provide it with a theoretical framework that can guide its application (Crotty, 1998; Denzin, 2006; Giddings & Smythe, 2010; Grant & Giddings, 2002).

As I have mentioned above, the philosophies that I consider to be formative of my own basic philosophical assumptions are not represented within the existing research paradigms and none of them intend to provide theoretical frameworks for research methodologies (Crotty, 1998; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Deshimaru & Leonard, 1991; Grant & Giddings, 2002; Levinas & Nemo, 1985). Whilst this is the case and Levinas, for example, quite openly argued against the ethnographic approach of Claude Levi-Strauss, all of them revolve around topics akin to those of autoethnography, however from very different angles using very different methods (Deshimaru & Leonard, 1991; Levinas & Nemo, 1985; Levinas & Robbins, 2001; Ueshiba & Unno, 1988; Warner, 2003). It is due to this overlap of topics that I believe their combination would not only make my role and position within my research more explicit but, beyond that, it would be beneficial in the further development of autoethnography.

Leading on from the initial problem and the identification of a research interest, the subsequent search for how best to investigate it (that is: what methodology to use) has led to a new question that needs to be resolved *prior to* the first one. Thus, in trying to be theoretically and methodologically stringent, my aim in the present dissertation is to investigate if and how the

philosophies that shape my personal basic philosophical beliefs, values and assumptions could inform and shape (my) autoethnography in a way that is both theoretically and methodologically feasible.

Answering this question is important, in order to lay the groundwork for a theoretically coherent methodology that allows the best possible approach to answering my primary research interest. Beyond having merit for *my* future study, the present dissertation also presents a novel contribution to the debate around autoethnography and qualitative research in general. This novelty is granted through the introduction of philosophies that are not commonly included in this debate. My initial assumption, that these philosophies have a significant contribution to make in the development and strengthening of autoethnography, will have to be tested both through the course of this study and throughout the course of its application in a future study.

The present study could further be a meaningful exemplary for other emerging researchers who are in need of identifying their own philosophical beliefs, values and assumptions in order to make informed decisions about the kind of research they can and want to do. Instead of excluding their subjective assumptions up-front or taking them for granted in one's choice of methodology, a study like the one intended here can give a solid base from which to decide on how one's subjective position can be included or excluded in one's research (Denzin, 2006; Smythe, 2006). In this sense, the present dissertation could also already be understood as a careful autoethnographic rapprochement to autoethnography: that is, an attempt to write myself into my research and (my) autoethnography (Denzin, 2006).

## Necessary steps for developing and testing my autoethnography

To answer the very theoretical question of the present dissertation and achieve the above aims the present study sets out as a critical reflective investigation of key aspects of autoethnography and my own basic philosophical beliefs, values and assumptions. Considering that none of the philosophies I draw on have articulated approaches to scientific inquiry it might be that such a comparison might not be possible for all of the key aspects of autoethnographic research or some of its parts. Where this is the case, I will draw on the existing approaches to autoethnography and their respective philosophical background to fill these gaps. I will try to identify which approach resonates most with my beliefs and convictions and provide a critical justification for any such decision made.

This process of comparing and contrasting will simultaneously be 'fed' with exemplary autoethnographic data to more practically test, critique, reject or strengthen the emerging theoretical constructs and methodological 'shapes', and make changes where necessary. However, rather than elaborating on the 'meaning' of the data, the focus of the present study will be on the theoretical and methodological feasibility of the emerging approach. The meaning of the data could then potentially be the focus of a following study using the approach to investigate (my) physiotherapy practice.

A preliminary review of literature on the philosophical and theoretical basis of qualitative research and autoethnography has given me a rough guide to the key themes that will need to be covered in order to stake out and test theoretical and methodological feasibility of the theoretical framework of (my) autoethnography as it emerges (Atkinson, et al., 2003; Crotty, 1998; Ellis & Bochner, 2000; Grant & Giddings, 2002; Smythe & Giddings, 2007). Throughout the process of this study, I have narrowed these down to four broad topics that also form the framework for the chapters to follow.

The second chapter covers the comparing and contrasting of existing basic philosophical assumptions in qualitative research with those of Levinas, Zen and Aikido. Amongst these are primarily ontological and epistemological assumptions, as well as some assumptions relating to the focus and aim of (autoethnographic) research.

The third chapter takes these assumptions to a more practical level and scrutinizes their translation and application to the practical issues of data and its processing. In other words, it compares and contrasts the type of data to be used as well as the methods of gathering, analysis, interpretation and presentation, and ties them together in a discussion of the issue of 'representation', a term that will be explained later in more detail and that again connects practical issues with theoretical ones.

The fourth chapter is an investigation of the different approaches to rigour and trustworthiness that are suggested to support and strengthen autoethnography as a research methodology. These are also closely linked to the issue of 'legitimation' (another term that I will explain later in more detail), which again intertwines practical matters with theoretical consideration.

The fifth chapter is an exploration of issues pertaining to the contractual and procedural ethics in the conducting of an autoethnographic study, and again links practical considerations like ethics applications and informed consent to the theoretical framework emerging throughout the whole dissertation.

As the present dissertation is a theoretical and methodological development and investigation of autoethnography, my philosophical background and the resulting theoretical framework and methodology, the main data sources I will draw on for the present studies are textual sources as well as in some cases

memories and ideas from my studies of Levinas, Aikido and Zen. In more detail:

- In regards to autoethnography these will be studies using autoethnography as a methodology, as well as a review of literature on their respective philosophical backgrounds and other theoretical and methodological aspects of autoethnography.
- As a reference for Emmanuel Levinas, I will use his writings, and those of related philosophers, as well as secondary literature on his life and philosophy.
- For Aikido and Zazen I will use texts that are traditionally seen as authoritative within those disciplines. Such texts are commonly books and articles written by teachers or masters of each discipline, as well as classic texts that have been passed down and commented on over many years.
- Further 'autoethnographic' data will be drawn from my own experiences, memories and ideas from my studies and practice of Levinas's philosophy, Aikido and Zen as well as other more personal accounts and considerations where they seem to enrich the respective theme under scrutiny.

Critical investigation of the above key aspects of qualitative/autoethnographic research, using the above specified data sources should cover all relevant topics that need to be examined to a) uncover the theoretical framework generated through the above dialogue and comparison between existing autoethnographic approaches and my philosophical background and b) outline a provisional autoethnographic approach based on this theoretical framework that could be applied and further developed in a future study. These two components will be reiterated and pulled together in the final chapter of the present dissertation and set the results into the wider context of qualitative (health) research, autoethnography and physiotherapy. I will then aim to specify remaining and resulting limitations of the emergent approach and the present dissertation and outline a direction for future research.

To summarize, in the present dissertation I have explained how an interest to research my personal physiotherapy practice and the subsequent search for a suitable research methodology has led me to the formulation of a precedent, theoretical and methodological question. Investigating the theoretical and methodological feasibility of an autoethnography, informed by my philosophical background, is important to develop and test a coherent and suitable methodology that I can use to research my personal physiotherapy practice. The following four chapters form the core of this process of searching, developing and testing a methodological approach that is both personal and professional at the same time. Lastly, the final chapter will draw together all findings and set them back into the wider context of both qualitative health research, autoethnography and physiotherapy and discuss limitations and directions for future research before concluding on the whole present dissertation.

## Chapter 2 – Basic philosophical assumptions of autoethnography

#### Social reality in autoethnography

In this chapter I will firstly identify, critically compare and contrast explicit and implicit basic philosophical assumptions underpinning the different paradigmatic positions of qualitative scientific inquiry as they apply to existing approaches to autoethnography. Secondly, I will further compare and contrast these positions against the philosophies of Emmanuel Levinas, Aikido, and Zen to find points of congruence and contradiction. Finally, I will discuss how and if this comparison leaves me with a theoretically feasible philosophical foundation for my autoethnography.

All research is understood to begin or be based on a set of beliefs and assumptions about the nature of reality and knowledge (Crotty, 1998). These basic ontological and epistemological assumptions determine both the ways in which we are going to explore the world (our research methodology) as well as the reasons for doing so (Crotty, 1998; Giddings & Smythe, 2010; Grant & Giddings, 2002). Depending on the basic philosophical assumptions to which we ascribe, we trace these back, in scientific inquiry, to a number of different philosophers that most clearly represent them or have played pivotal roles in their development. For quantitative inquiry and positivist and post-positivist worldviews/paradigms for example, Descartes, Comte, Hume and Popper are some of the key philosophers, while Husserl, Heidegger and Gadamer are key figures influencing the interpretive paradigm. Similarly, critical scientists most prominently refer back to Karl Marx and the philosophers of the Frankfurt school for their ontological and epistemological assumptions. Lastly, postmodern scientists trace their basic philosophical standpoints back to

philosophers like Foucault, Derrida, Deleuze and others (Crotty, 1998; Giddings & Smythe, 2010; Grant & Giddings, 2002).

Building on the work of these philosophers and the various standpoints they represent or have developed, autoethnographers, like all other scientists, have a certain understanding of social reality and the nature and place of the self and the other, and it is this understanding that guides their approach to scientific inquiry (Grant & Giddings, 2002; Nicholls, 2009a). As outlined in the introduction, I believe that my own basic philosophical assumptions are not just formed by my cultural and social background, my upbringing and my experiences. Closely intertwined with these it are also the philosophies and practices of Aikido and Zazen and the philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas, all of which have played and still play very important roles in my daily life (Deshimaru & Leonard, 1991; Levinas & Nemo, 1985; Ueshiba & Unno, 1988). But before going on to further explore these and particularly Levinas's philosophy, I would like to briefly summarize some key assumptions of the existing paradigms in the remainder of this section.

To scholars from the interpretive paradigm, phenomenologists and ethnographers alike, the self/individual is an active agent in the construction of (social) reality. Humans are understood as social beings that actively construct fluid definitions of truth and meaning as they roam and constantly try to make sense of the world they live in (Collinson & Hockey, 2005). The 'other' of the interpretive paradigm is any other part or phenomenon of the world that the self can interact with, observe, describe and make sense of if and when he/she intentionally chooses (Giddings & Smythe, 2010; Grant & Giddings, 2002; Levinas & Nemo, 1985).

For critical researchers, (social) reality is governed by hidden power structures that oppress, exploit and minimize the creative potential of people. Self or others, individuals, cultures and societies alike can be on either end of this

oppression, as the victims or as the conscious or unconscious perpetrators of unjust power configurations (Grant & Giddings, 2002; Quicke, 2010).

To postmodernist researchers, these power structures are 'discourses' that are generated through language and constitute what we perceive as (social) reality. All people, selves and others are equal players in the construction of these discourses and are themselves culturally, historically and spatially situated persons. In the words of Tony Adams and Stacy Holman-Jones, "the subject-selves of [postmodern] autoethnography are doing, speaking, and understanding beings, yes, but they are forthrightly incomplete, unknown, fragmented, and conflictual" (Adams & Holman Jones, 2008).

#### Social reality with Levinas

Contrary to these ontological positions, Levinas's continuous philosophical effort was dedicated to proving and/or establishing 'ethics as a first philosophy', that is, that ethics comes before ontology and epistemology (Levinas & Nemo, 1985). In the present section I will thus try to work out how Levinas interrupts my reading of what is possible, and what should be done in research at this very foundation of scientific inquiry.

In introducing Levinas, one of my philosophy professors used to say that when reading Levinas we should simply keep reading when we come across sections that we do not understand. In other words, understanding Levinas is a gradual process of familiarization and acclimatization, and learning his language and ideas bit by bit. Without being able to even attempt to explain the whole of his vast and difficult philosophy within this dissertation, to have him as a conversational partner or even informant of autoethnography, some introduction to his thought is necessary. More comprehensive and in-depth introductions are plentiful, but I hope to introduce all those ideas that are relevant to what I am writing about here (Bergo, 2007; Derrida, 1978;

Hutchens, 2004; Malka, 2006; Peperzak, 1991; M. B. Smith, 2005; Stone, 1998).

Two words, the 'self' and the 'Other/other', are central to any reading of not only Levinas but also autoethnography (as has become evident in the previous section) and I would like to continue with my introduction of them before going on to explain and explore them further in the context of his philosophy. While there might be many different ways to understand them, I would like to suggest a very simple reading of both the terms 'self' and 'Other/other' in the hope that it will be sufficient as a starting point for the present study. In this sense, I would suggest understanding the 'self' as a philosophical term for what we commonly speak of when talking about 'me', 'myself' or the 'I'. In the context of my autoethnography for example, my 'self' is 'me' as the researcher.

In regards to the 'Other/other', I am following Levinas's use of these terms and I will use either way of spelling depending on the context. The upper case 'Other' simply indicates another person, another human being that is different from and face-to-face with my 'self'. The Other is my direct neighbour (Levinas & Nemo, 1985; Levinas & Robbins, 2001; Stone, 1998). In the context of research, if 'I' am the researcher, the primary Other is often the study participant. More generally speaking the Other is any Other that is different from 'me, myself and I'. The lower case 'other' is a slightly more difficult concept. What Levinas refers to when writing about the 'other' is a more general other than my direct neighbour. It is much rather a generalized idea of 'otherness', possibly the 'otherness of the Other', his/her difference from me that makes them my 'Other' and that is reflected in his/her being as 'Other' (Levinas & Nemo, 1985; Levinas & Robbins, 2001). In the remainder of this dissertation I will use these terms in the sense that I have described here, however I will attempt to explain them further and explore their relationship in more detail in the broader context of this study.

For Levinas, there is a common thread that connects the western philosophical tradition, from the Greek philosophers, through Descartes to Kant, Hegel and then to Husserl and Heidegger. Put simply, this thread is the idea that all philosophy and all thinking sets out from and begins with the 'self'. This self then reaches out into the world, discovers and queries, investigates, theorizes and 'thematizes' it, tries to understand it, grasp it, comprehend and apprehend it. It makes everything that is 'other' part of the 'self' through knowledge (lat. scientia). To Levinas, the clearest expression of this 'behaviour' of the self is to be found in Hegel's dialectic philosophy (Levinas, 1990; Levinas & Nemo, 1985). At the core of this philosophy lies the so-called thesis-antithesissynthesis triad, which says that to everything that exists (for example the self) there must be a counterpart (for example the other). Both these parts however are then ultimately made the same in the dialectic movement of synthesis and their difference and thus all otherness that goes with it is diminished. What is left is all the 'same' and every 'other' is assimilated into the 'self' in the same way (Kojeve & Queneau, 1980; Levinas, 1990).

Levinas considered this problematic; the neutralization of difference/otherness as the core problem of all philosophy that sets out from the self as the point of departure. Levinas also considered both Heidegger and Husserl as successors and 'perfectioners' of Hegel's phenomenology and criticized them for beginning all thinking from the same point of departure; that is, the self (Levinas & Nemo, 1985). Considering the importance of Husserl and Heidegger to the development of interpretive and/or phenomenologic inquiry (Crotty, 1998; Giddings & Smythe, 2010; Grant & Giddings, 2002), we can see how Levinas might criticize forms of inquiry in which the researcher (the self) sets out to describe a phenomenon of interest and thus make it known to him-/herself. Along these lines, Levinas criticized Claude Levi-Strauss and his anthropology and ethnography as guilty of setting out from the self to study an 'other' culture, group or society and acquire knowledge of them (Atkinson, et

al., 2003; Levinas & Nemo, 1985). However, Levinas was also a student and great admirer of Husserl and studied under him for two semesters from 1928 to 1929 building a relatively close relationship to his mentor that extended beyond this time (Malka, 2006). Building on the phenomenological method of his teacher, Levinas set out to uncover the end of phenomenology, the barrier to the phenomenological gaze or else that which lies beyond the grasp of knowledge (Levinas & Nemo, 1985; Malka, 2006). What Levinas discovered at the 'end of phenomenology' was precisely the Other and his/her otherness. To Levinas, the Other is unknowable and un-synthesizable. Further, the otherness of the Other separates the 'self' and the 'Other' for all eternity and to an extent that can never be overcome. 'It is banal to say that we do never exist in the singular. We are surrounded by beings and things with which we maintain relations. [...] I touch an object, I see the other, but I am not the other' (Levinas, 1987).

In other words, the difference between the self and the Other cannot and should not be neutralized in order for them both to exist next to each other (Levinas, 1998, 2000). It is here already, in the need of the Other to exist and his/her otherness to be fully acknowledged, that it becomes evident how Levinas's philosophy is ethical. To Levinas, acknowledging the Other/other and thus upholding his/her difference is the primary responsibility of the self and even further this 'responsibility' for the Other is the core of the human condition itself. The self with Levinas is firstly a 'self-for-the-Other' (Levinas & Nemo, 1985; Levinas & Robbins, 2001).

Personally, I sometimes wonder whether there is a proximity between Levinas's 'self-for-the-Other' and Zen-Buddhisms 'primordial self' that is understood to be different from the 'self/ego of daily life' (Deshimaru & Leonard, 1991; King, 1994; Warner, 2003). While this is a correlation drawn too easily, it is one key aspect in which I believe Levinas and Zen have begun to converge and/or challenge each other. However, to test the merit and

practicality of this convergence I will need to investigate this in much more depth in the future, alongside a more detailed introduction to Zen-Buddhist philosophy. Nevertheless, it seems important for me to state my personal tendency to reconcile them in this central aspect and in that also illustrate how different philosophies come to influence, inform my own thinking by interrupting and overlapping each other.

So what Levinas uncovered at 'the end of phenomenology' was that in the Other/other was not just an end, but also a new beginning. Setting out from the Other, Levinas found the self to be necessitated by the Other. The Other asks for the self to take on its responsibility and asks for a relationship that is marked not by knowledge and assimilation but by the acknowledgement of his/her otherness (Levinas & Robbins, 2001). The primary action of the self is thus not an outward movement that is, reaching for and grasping something that is other, but an inward one, receptivity for the Other and his/her otherness. It is only after the self has been 'inspired' or called by the Other that it can then set out to respond to this calling, taking on its responsibility. In his own words, 'I am I in that I am responsible [...] in the sole measure that I am responsible, a non-interchangeable I [...] such is my inalienable identity of subject' (Levinas & Nemo, 1985).

Contrary to the western philosophical and scientific tradition, in which the self is the beginning and end of all knowledge, Levinas's philosophy thus offers a radical alternative to this position in putting the Other first. In doing so, the self cannot begin and be in the world out of self-interest. It cannot aim at a self-interested accumulation of knowledge, but rather has to respond to its ethical responsibility for the Other first and this responsibility is precisely not to know, but acknowledge and preserve the Other/other. It is in this way that Levinas understands 'ethics as a first philosophy' that comes before ontology and epistemology as conceived by the traditional philosophy and science. Levinas's intention was not to replace ontology and epistemology, but to test

and improve them on moral grounds. However, it is on these grounds that Levinas saw existing philosophical positions fail, and it is through a further exploration of these criticisms that I would like to look at how and where Levinas situates ontology and epistemology.

#### Thinking, knowledge and truth

What Levinas criticized about thinking, knowledge, truth and evidence in the western philosophical tradition ties back to his central criticism of the self as the beginning and end of all philosophy. To Levinas, through a movement of this sort, the self is never truly in relation with the other; 'knowledge is an adequation between thought and what it thinks. There is in knowledge, in the final account an impossibility of escaping the self; hence the sociality cannot have the same structure as knowledge' (Levinas & Nemo, 1985, p. 60). Further, beyond being 'a-social', the acquisition of knowledge as a movement from and back to the self is 'an act of assimilation, absorption, apprehension and suppression of alterity [i.e. otherness]' (Levinas & Nemo, 1985, p. 60). Consequently, the idea of accumulation of knowledge that is reflected in most of modern science is subject to the same criticism in that 'even if truth is considered never definitive, there is a promise of a more complete and adequate truth. Without doubt, the finite being that we are cannot in the final account complete the task of knowledge; but in the limit where this task is accomplished, it consists in making the other become the Same.' (Levinas & Nemo, 1985, p. 91).

Even more radically, and using words that seem familiar to the critical paradigm, he goes on to describe knowledge as 'the murder of the otherness of the known and [...] his/her colonization' (Levinas & Nemo, 1985, p. 60). For Levinas, the distance from a thinking that murders otherness to the physical act of murder of the Other was not very far. To be able to physically murder the

Other, the thinking that precedes this has to allow for such actions, that is, the refusal of responsibility and hate of the Other (Levinas, 1998). Thus, amongst many others, Levinas often accused Heidegger's thinking as a totalitarian thinking that inevitably led to Heidegger's joining of the Nazi-party in 1933, a thinking that can connect to any kind of totalitarian thinking and culminated in the atrocities of World War II (Levinas & Nemo, 1985).

Following what I have explained about Levinas so far, to be more ethical it seems that one should not 'know' because to be responsible for the Other means to not know him/her and instead acknowledge his otherness and simply follow one's responsibility as a 'self-for-the-Other'. As much as this would be true if there was only one Other, this fairly utopian formulation is not quite the end of Levinas's thinking. Although most of his writing focuses on the relationship between the Other and the self, a relationship that he called the primary relationship, Levinas was well aware that we are never truly alone with the Other (Levinas, 1998, 2000). Next to the Other, and already everpresent in my relationship to my primary Other, there is another Other, and another and another and so on, meaning we are always in relationship with not just one Other but a multiplicity of Others around us, and these Others are always already there. Levinas termed this 'additional' Other; the Third, the Fourth, and so on (Levinas, 1998).

Whilst there has been, and is, continuous debate about the problem of 'the Third' and his/her definition, I believe that this understanding of the Third seems adequate for the purpose of the present dissertation (and difficult enough as it is). Further reading in regards to the issue of the Third is plentiful, and is likely to expand throughout the ongoing reception of Levinas (Delhom, 2009; Fagan, 2009; Nortvedt, 2003; Peperzak, 2003; Simmons, 1999; von Wolzogen, 2005; Zeillinger, 2009).

So what does the Third bring to my relationship to the Other that is so significant? Well, with the presence of the Third, another Other, I find myself in a very difficult, complex and conflicting situation. In the presence of the Third, my (so far simple, singular) responsibility is suddenly divided or challenged, because I find myself in a situation in which I have the maximal responsibility for not just one but two Others. And, more radically, Levinas goes as far as to say that I am not just responsible for two (or more) Others, but I am even responsible for their responsibility for each other. The problem that I am thus subjected to is how to stay true to my responsibility to the Other, a responsibility that demands my entire subjectivity, without simultaneously denying the Third the very same responsibility that I owe him/her as another Other? Further, if I am fully responsible for the Third, where have I then left the Other? And lastly, how do I stay true to my radical responsibility that extends beyond myself and makes me responsible even for their responsibility for each other?

Left with two Others for which I am equally responsible, I find myself in a situation where I have to begin to describe this situation and to negotiate my responsibility between the two. However this negotiation is considerably difficult because what I have to describe and negotiate between is in fact indescribable and unknowable. In having to 'compare the incomparable' I thus find myself in an ethical dilemma (Levinas & Nemo, 1985; Levinas & Robbins, 2001). It is precisely in this dilemma, in the presence of the Third, Fourth, etc., that Levinas recognizes the need for ontology, epistemology and all that follows from them. However, whatever solution I find to this dilemma it will inevitably always bear a trace of injustice and immorality, because any solution that I find will always reduce the rights of one versus another, or more likely reduce my responsibility and responsivity for *all* others involved.

A complex question arises at this point if all of the above is put together: If the necessity of ontology and epistemology is re-established and a new place has

been assigned to them, why then all this hardship, all this laborious working through the relationship with the Other? In other words, if the need for knowledge and science as we know it is re-established through the presence of the Third, what relevance and implication is left of the primary relationship with the Other?

Some argue that all Levinas ever did was to uncover the 'moral foundation of the immoral' (Lingis, 2009; von Wolzogen, 2005). That is, through illuminating the primary relationship with the Other, Levinas merely showed that whatever we do is based on an ethical relation. In other words, even if we attempt to neutralize the other, this neutralization is based on a primary acknowledgement of his/her existence and thus, good precedes evil, but evil is inevitable due to the existence of the Third, Fourth, etc., (Levinas, 2000). What follows from this is that there is no need to change existing scientific approaches as they could all represent an inevitably immoral way 'to try our best' at being ethical.

On the other hand, and this is the direction I am more drawn to and also a motivation for the present as well as my intended future study, others argue that the philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas does imply a need for change (Zeillinger, 2009). This point is difficult to argue, however, because Levinas never quite formulated in which way change would have to take place and even explicitly did not consider his philosophy a programmatic one (Levinas & Nemo, 1985). Nevertheless, I would argue that his conception of the 'said' and the 'saying' can be read as a signpost to an alternative (Levinas, 1998, 2000).

As a provisional definition, the 'said' is the formulated language of knowledge as we understand it. Contrary to this, the 'saying' that Levinas recognizes behind the 'said' refers to or represents the desire of the self to step into sociality; that is, relation with the other. In other words, the 'saying' signifies

the response to the Other and it is this response that transcends the 'said' and reaches beyond the self towards the for-the-Other (Kunz, 2006; Levinas, 1998, 2000; Simmons, 1999; Stone, 1998). In his own words, 'what interests me about the said, the finished work, is less what it intends to say, i.e. its content, but the 'saying' that hides behind this 'said' and points to and/or indicates the response to the Other' (Levinas & Nemo, 1985). But if it is not the finished work that is of interest, then one needs to ask what is the reason for doing research at all: why and how does one undertake research that does not focus on the finished work (the 'said') but highlights the 'saying' and the relationship to the other? It is this question that I would like to turn to next.

#### Why do autoethnography?

To understand the reason for research it can be helpful to look back into the research question, as it is generally thought to imply some of our values and goals in attempting to answer it (Crotty, 1998; Giddings & Smythe, 2010; Grant & Giddings, 2002). Thus, I would like to look into the research questions and reasons for doing research that are reflected in existing autoethnographic approaches before looking at a research question formulated with influence from Levinas,

It may be argued that autoethnographers from the interpretive paradigm do research to uncover and describe the essences, the being and meaning of individual and social phenomena. They explore issues of personal importance within acknowledged social contexts to understand the meaning, structure, and essence of lived experience (Ballard, 2009; Bochner, 2000). They use the lived experience of the author's self (auto-) as part of a culture/group (-ethno-; from Greek: ethnos meaning people, nation, race) to increase their knowledge and write (-graphy, from Greek graphia) about themselves, the groups they are part of, and their relationships, in order to increase sociological understanding

through explicit theoretical analysis and make generalizations that are meaningful to others (Anderson, 2006a; Roth, 2009; Vryan, 2006).

Researchers from the critical paradigm frequently do research to uncover and challenge existing power structures that oppress individuals as well as groups, and seek to acquire knowledge that will empower the oppressed and thus help bring radical change to society for the better (Denzin, Lincoln, & Smith, 2008; Grant & Giddings, 2002). Consequently, autoethnographers close to this paradigm study the individual in relation to social groups and the power relations between. Studying these contexts allows them to write stories of resistance (Quicke, 2010) where the author is the oppressed and the hope is that this will inspire others to write themselves out of their own oppression and thus heal themselves through the process of autoethnography (Tolich, 2010). Others see autoethnography as a chance to be more visible and thus more accountable for their own actions and possible oppressions of the 'others' they investigate or consider to be a part of (Dauphinee, 2010).

Postmodern scientists have both embraced the above reasons (in parts) but also present alternative reasons for doing autoethnography. They use the 'narrative as a source of empowerment and a form of resistance to counter the domination and authority of canonical discourses' (Ellis & Bochner, 2000). By doing so they want to extract meaning from experience and bring the personal in dialogue with the cultural and social in order to locate 'the particular experiences of individuals in tension with dominant expressions of discursive power' (Bochner, 2000; Ellis & Bochner, 2000; Neumann, 1996). In their programme paper on 'queer autoethnography', Adams and Holman Jones state that autoethnography is an effort to 'set a scene, tell a story, and create a text that demands attention and participation; makes witnessing and testifying possible; and puts pleasure, difference, and movement into productive conversation' (Holman Jones, 2005, p. 375). They further want to create work that turns 'language and bodies in upon themselves reflecting and redirecting

subaltern knowledges in which fragments of lived experience collide and realign with one another, breaking and remaking histories' to change ways of being, knowing and acting in the world (Spry in Adams & Holman Jones, 2008, p. 375). Drawing on Helene Cixous, a French postmodern feminist, Gannon calls for deconstructive textual practices that 'circle 'the truth' with all kinds of signs, quotation marks, and brackets, to protect it from any form of fixation or conceptualization' and that 'invert binary categories such as emotional/rational, personal/theoretical, social/individual, and they will collapse these categories into one another without abandoning any of the frames available for thinking and being in the world' (Gannon, 2006, p. 6).

So, what is it that Levinas's philosophy has to offer as an alternative to and/or extension of these questions and reasons for doing research, particularly autoethnography? Having identified ethics as the first philosophy and also the first priority, the research question will in some way have to account for this. With Levinas, the first question of philosophy is that of justice: - whether and how I as an individual self can be just in this world. Whether and how I can be just in this world is a questioning of my responsibility for the Other, the Third, and so on. It is asking whether I am truly being responsible, whether and how I am self-for-the-Other. It is a questioning of (my) 'being', the central notion of Heidegger's philosophy and Heideggerian phenomenological research. But this is not a questioning of the structure of my being; this, to Levinas, is rather secondary, as I have tried to explain thus far. What is primary is to ask whether whatever I claim as my being or 'my place under the sun' - another expression that Levinas used frequently- is a just and responsible claim to make.

The answer, as suggested above, is likely to be a negative one. Justice is never fully acquired. The rights of one always lessen the rights of another. However, even if the answer is negative, frequent and unremitting inquiry is necessary so as to prevent the self from settling down, because the settling down cements the form of injustice in place (Levinas & Nemo, 1985; Levinas & Robbins,

2001). Instead of settling down and cementing provisional answers to the question of justice, the Other actually demands the frequent and unremitting revision of our response to the question of justice, responsibility, the Other, Third, and so on.

Thus, with Levinas, my research could be thought of a provisional response to a research question that is in fact asked by the Other, not myself. Further, it is not the Other as the problem, that is the focus of my research, but myself, hence the advantage of autoethnography that allows research to deal with the self. In the case of my intended future autoethnography, the Other asking the question is the multiplicity of Others that I am personally and professionally responsible for/to- my patients/clients, my study participants, colleagues, teachers, mentors, family, friends, students, policy makers, funding agencies etc. The question itself could sound something like this: "Is your (i.e. my) way of practising physiotherapy just, ethical, responsible and responsive, and what are you doing to make it so?"

In response to this question, an autoethnography informed by Levinas would primarily have to examine whether and to what extent my thinking, being and actions are ethical or just, and try to improve and bring about change where necessary. The goal of such an investigation would thus be to find ways to better the self in the sense of Levinas's ethics, or, in the words of Norman Denzin, to present an alternative to and encourage 'a way of seeing and being that challenges, contests, or endorses the official, hegemonic ways of seeing and representing [for] the other' (Denzin, 2006, p. 422). It could be understood as the attempt to generate a temporary and spatially located response to the other(s) in the author's life and do responsive and responsible research that acknowledges and bears witness to the Other as the limitation of knowledge and representation (Dauphinee, 2010). A writing that is for, not about the Other/other; responding and being responsible to the other in writing and a

writing for the ethical and political work of witnessing the other (Adams & Holman Jones, 2008; Dauphinee, 2010; Denzin, 2006).

Responsible autoethnography could thus be understood as a praxis of deconstructing, dispersing, displacing and disassembling the self and its place under the sun to make more room for the other (Gannon, 2006). Following what Levinas tried to make his mode of philosophy, it could be a constant effort to 'unsay' the 'said' that ultimately has to continue beyond the study itself (Levinas & Nemo, 1985).

There is another correlation to Zen-Buddhist thinking that I would like to make in regards to some of the above points, yet again mainly to stake out the field for questions that I will have to carry on into my future research. Firstly, the notion of 'unsaying' the 'said' that I believe is also very close to postmodern ideas of temporary and spatially located, provisional knowledge, reminds me of the notions of 'non-attachment' and 'letting go' in Zen-Buddhism (Deshimaru & Leonard, 1991; Warner, 2003). Not being 'attached', and 'letting go', in Zen refer to a 'not settling' for anything, from our thoughts and wishes to our desires and fears, and I believe this to have some similarity to Levinas's 'unsaying' and the postmodern notion of the impossibility of truth. Secondly, considering autoethnography as a methodological praxis of deconstructing the self in pursuit of the self-for-the-Other or the primordial self of Zen, also appears to bring it closer to both Zen-Buddhism, Aikido and other traditional martial arts. Just as much, and often for longer, than autoethnography these disciplines aim to deconstruct the ego/self in the pursuit of a more ethical self.

Looking back to Levinas and considering the close intellectual relationship between Derrida and Levinas it not surprising that such ideas very much converge with Derrida's ideas of deconstruction, if we understand autoethnography 'as a writing indebted to the other; writing as the effect of a vulnerability to the other; vulnerability as the impossibility of escaping the responsibility to and for the other because the other [...] creates and recreates my body through repeated inscriptions' (Derrida in Gannon, 2006, p. 487). Much like Derrida's deconstruction, I would argue that an autoethnography with Levinas could be an ongoing praxis of giving the self to the other, an openness and tentative response to the other and his/her manifold teachings (Diprose, 2002; Gannon, 2006). It is autoethnography, because I am asked, or called, as an individual (auto-) and it is my individual, inalienable primary responsibility and obligation to respond to and acknowledge every Other (ethno) with my whole subjectivity, my thinking, my writing (graphy), my body, my embodied personal and professional practices of physiotherapy, Aikido and Zen (Denzin, 2006; Deshimaru & Leonard, 1991).

To conclude, in the present chapter I have attempted to lay out the basic philosophical assumptions of current existing approaches to qualitative inquiry in general and autoethnography in particular, focusing on the interpretive, critical and postmodern paradigm. I have further tried to contrast these with the basic tenets of Emmanuel Levinas's philosophy to test its feasibility as an alternative, additional and/or partial theoretical framework for autoethnography. This investigation has led from different perspectives on (social) reality, over alternative ways to conceptualize thinking and knowledge to an alternative formulation of the reasons for research. All of these points are generally considered to be of great importance in doing research and establishing a solid theoretical foundation from which to do so (Giddings & Smythe, 2010; Grant & Giddings, 2002). In the next chapter I will move on from this theoretical foundation to more practical questions relating to the 'how' of doing such research. In other words, what kind of data can be used and how it might be processed from collection to interpretation, to its presentation and representation in the final product of research?

# Chapter 3 - Data types and processing in autoethnography

### Types and sources of data

Having discussed some of the core philosophical assumptions on which autoethnography is based, and compared and contrasted them against the philosophies of Levinas, Aikido and Zen, the present chapter will outline the types of data and the methods of analysis, interpretation, presentation and representation that are being explored in autoethnography. As before, I will draw on the philosophy of Levinas and the practices of Aikido, Zen and Shiatsu to change, reject, support or expand existing approaches.

A wide variety of data types and sources have been used for data collection in existing autoethnographies and generally speaking, they are similar to those commonly used in ethnography. Data have been sourced from fieldnotes, personal diaries, reflective journals, diary extracts, memories, newspapers, books, articles, letters, emails, memos, sketches, photo, video and audio material, medical records, lab results, logs, weblogs, websites, podcasts, and the like. Personal narratives, stories of the autoethnographers own experiences as well as the experience of others, family, friends, colleagues can also be searched to further enrich, support or dismiss data (Anderson, 2006a; Butler, 2009; M. Duncan, 2004; Ellis & Bochner, 2000; Holt, 2008; Taber, 2010).

Researchers close to the interpretive paradigm give priority to those data types that are usually considered objective or 'hard' types of data to support the 'softer' personal narrative ones (Anderson, 2006a; Ballard, 2009; Brooks, 2010; Wall, 2006, 2008). In other words, they would give privilege to participant or self-observation and 'factual descriptions' of experiences made

during a period of fieldwork (Wall, 2008). In contrast or even resistance to this, postmodernist autoethnographers emphasize the softer, more personal types of data for their auotethnographies whilst being aware that there are differences between observational, methodological, theoretical and personal notes (Richardson, 2000). Arguing for a further diversification of data sources, postmodern researchers have suggested and exemplified the use of visceral, aesthetic and affective experiences (Brigg, 2007; Denzin, 2006; Ellis & Bochner, 2000; Richardson, 2000). While the inclusion of highly subjective, personal and even somatic aspects of experience poses great questions for the methods of their analysis and interpretation, presentation and representation, the exploration of new methods is part of the argument and programme of postmodern autoethnography.

To me personally, the idea of including the somatic thinking and bodily knowledge in our research resonates with my experiences from the practice Aikido, Zazen, Shiatsu and physiotherapy (Deshimaru & Leonard, 1991; Ueshiba, 2004; Ueshiba & Unno, 1988; Warner, 2003). All these practices put great emphasis on physical processing of information that does not require this information to enter into cognition (Deshimaru & Leonard, 1991; Masunaga & Ohashi, 1977). Bodily knowledge is considered to be just as or even more important than the knowledge of the mind. In fact, the knowledge of the mind is only considered to be of significance if it grows from a bodily practice (Deshimaru & Leonard, 1991; Masunaga & Ohashi, 1977; Warner, 2003).

It is particularly dancers and performance artists who, along with performance ethnographers and autoethnographers, are beginning to explore the somatic in academia and who are calling for its consideration and inclusion in academic discourses (Barbour, 2011; Brooks, 2010; Denzin, 2006; Gingrich-Philbrook, 2005; McCall, 2000; Müller, 2010; Spry, 2006). To my knowledge, the somatic is not commonly and explicitly included in the academic discourse of physiotherapy, neither as a source of data nor as an analysis, interpretation or

presentational tool, and I would argue that this is due to the dominance of the post-positivist paradigm in physiotherapy research and practice (Gibson & Martin, 2003). This seems almost surprising, considering how much we work with data gained through touching, moving, handling and treating our clients. What I would like to argue for here is that a more explicit inclusion of the somatic holds great potential for new and different ways to reflect on, investigate and improve our practice. Thus, next to more traditional, written forms of scientific data I would like to include somatic data in my autoethnography through further drawing and building on current 'performance research' and my experiences from Aikido, Zen, Shiatsu and physiotherapy (McCall, 2000).

I would argue that Levinas's philosophy does not suggest the use of any particular data source that has not been mentioned so far. His basic phenomenological work includes reflections on death, parenthood and other relatively mundane experiences. However, building on Rosalyn Diprose's discussion of Levinas and her idea of corporeal generosity I could imagine that all data types could be subsumed under the umbrella term of either the 'teachings of the other' and my response to them (Diprose, 2002). The potential of this is a further opening to the Other, to otherness and his/her/its infinite possibilities. It is an increased openness to inspiration through and awareness for, the other in the phenomena, experiences and encounters of our daily lives. What is important to highlight here, however, is that firstly I am the student, the recipient and respondent to 'teachings' that come to me from the exterior, and secondly that they shape and reshape my subjectivity through their interrupting and inspiring me and demanding for my response and responsibility (Levinas, 2000; Levinas & Nemo, 1985). What I am arguing here, in understanding data as something coming to me rather than me as the researcher reaching out to collect it, is an attempt to stay coherent with Levinas's key criticism of the western philosophical and scientific tradition as

being a tradition that sets out from the self as the beginning of all reality and knowledge.

The notion of 'teachings of the other' also seems to allow yet another cross-reference to my experiences, particularly from Zen but also Aikido. In both Zen and Aikido, 'teachings' are very explicitly received from a practitioner in the capacity of teaching. These 'teachings' allow the inclusion of yet another type of data or data source for my autoethnography - thoughts and insights or, more accurately, my renderings and interpretations from a) the teachings received through the practice of 'Kusen' and 'Mondo' given by a Zen-master, or b) the instructions and teachings given by an Aikido teacher during and after practice on the mat (Deshimaru & Leonard, 1991; King, 1994; Ueshiba, 2004; Ueshiba & Unno, 1988; Warner, 2003).

In the lineage of Zazen, in which I practice, the 'Kusen', is a form of talk given during sitting/meditation periods in which the master addresses important issues of the practice. These talks are not intended as information that is to be pondered upon, but rather to support our bodily practice and study of the self and 'letting go of the self' in the very moment of our practice. Through our bodily practice these teachings gain meaning that has the potential to extend beyond that moment and resonate in our daily lives (Deshimaru & Leonard, 1991).

Different from this, the 'Mondo' is a question and answer session, usually held after a meditation period, still within the practice hall and the same, seated position held during meditation practice. In these sessions, the students ask their teacher questions and in return receive an answers that are intended to prompt their practice and study of self, as well as help them overcome theoretical and practical difficulties and deepen their understanding (Deshimaru & Leonard, 1991).

In the function of supporting the students' study of self, I would argue that the practices of 'Kusen' and also 'Mondo' are different from the traditional research method of interviewing in which the 'other' is the interviewed (that is, observed and interrogated) by me in the desire to acquire knowledge. Through offering teachings that are meant to help the study of my'self', they lessen the intrusiveness of interviewing the 'other' for the sake of knowing him/her.

Openness, recognition and acknowledgment of constant and recurring interruption through the other, whether understood as a teacher or not, could further prevent the formulation of rash definite conclusions, as I have tried to explain in the previous chapter (Kunz, 2006). Where this idea becomes somewhat problematic, however, is in the limitless particular encounters that we have in our daily lives and that demand our individual response and responsibility. If every interaction we have with the world contains a teaching of the other, data could literally come from every encounter with another person, whether it is a patient, client, friend or random stranger in person, by text or by other means. As a sampling strategy to limit this potentially endless stream of inspiration and interruption, for the intended autoethnography of my physiotherapy practice I believe that I would have to focus on those 'teachings' that I feel are relevant to my practice. As one of my arguments and motivations to write about (my) practice autoethnographically is that (my) practice is both strongly and inextricably intertwined with the personal, and this form of delimiting the data would still leave me with a wide enough field to source data from.

## Data collection, analysis, intepretation and presentation

Once the types and sources of data are specified, the question becomes: How it is collected, analysed and the product made ready for presentation? Similar to

other established forms of qualitative research in traditional ethnography the gathering of data happens mostly before and sometimes during periods of fieldwork. During these periods the ethnographer aims to immerse him/herself in a culture of sociological interest in order to gain an 'emic' or insider's perspective. Through this period of immersion the ethnographer aims to write and gain 'thick' or rich descriptions of cultural phenomena and experiences through observation and interviewing. The descriptions gained are then brought back from the field for further scholarly analysis and interpretation before the gained insights are compiled for publication (Anderson, 2006a; Atkinson, 2006; Atkinson, et al., 2003; M. Duncan, 2004; Nicholls, 2009c; Ryang, 2000; Taber, 2010).

The difference that an interpretive approach to autoethnography offers, is an extension or reinforcement of these basic ethnographic tenets. The autoethnographer is already part of or a full member of the culture under investigation: the insider's perspective is granted to the fullest. Following from this, the descriptions gained through observation and engagement in the culture of interest are thought to be closer to the cultural experiences of the group members and thus the essence of the phenomenon than any observations made, written and interpreted by an 'outsider' could be (Anderson, 2006a, 2006b; Vryan, 2006).

The criticism made here is that an outside observer inevitably brings a perspective to the field that will alter and thus distort the actual cultural experience or phenomenon that he/she is trying to observe and understand (Vryan, 2006). In other words, the researcher's subjectivity influences all interactions and observations, and consequently, the analysis, interpretation and presentation of findings. To increase scientific rigour and trustworthiness, traditional ethnographers have tried to account for the involvement of the subjective through writing separate personal and even emotional field notes that they keep and maybe publish apart from their scientific works (Anderson,

2006a; Atkinson, et al., 2003). Along these lines then, autoethnographers working from the interpretive paradigm could consider the inclusion of very personal observations, as well as reflections on how their subjectivity alters the research data and process, as an increase in trustworthiness. More simply, speaking, the 'auto' involved in the 'ethno' offers an additional set of data for interpretation and sociological analysis next to the data gained about the 'ethno' (Anderson, 2006a; Ellis & Bochner, 2006).

Simply including the researcher's subjectivity as another level for sociological analysis still implies the possibility of relatively detached or objective analysis and interpretation of the data considering the 'auto', the 'ethno' and their interaction. However, as discussed in the previous chapter, it is precisely this implication that a postmodern perspective argues against. To postmodern autoethnographers the subjective is not just another level of sociological interest. On the contrary, it is not possible to escape the subjective for an objective point of observation, regardless of whether we look at others or ourselves. Thus, possibly all our observations and interpretations of what we perceive as the outside world tell us more about ourselves than they tell us about the outside world. Consequently, data collection, analysis and interpretation are an ongoing and often simultaneous process for the postmodern autoethnographer. Any observation and interpretation makes new data available. Further, much in the way that observation, analysis and interpretation cannot be separated from the subjectivity of the researcher, so the "product cannot be separated from the producer" (Richardson, 2000).

Highly influenced by Laurel Richardson's (Richardson, 2000) idea of writing as a method of inquiry, postmodern autoethnographers are building on and expanding the diversity of forms of academic writing through experimentation with new forms like poetry, drama, polyvocal texts, readers' theatre, responsive readings, aphorisms, comedy and satire, visual presentations, allegory, conversation, layered accounts, writing stories, and the like (Adams

& Holman Jones, 2008; Denzin, 2006; Ellis & Bochner, 2000; Ellis & Bochner, 2002; Gannon, 2006; Holman Jones, 2005; Lau, 2002; Spry, 2006, 2010). The aim of these forms of writing is much less the traditional third person objective sociological analysis, but rather what has been termed 'evocation': that is, the reader is touched or moved professionally and personally both in a cognitive but also in emotional and somatic ways. In the words of Richardson, "evocative forms of writing hold back interpretation so the reader can do that through reliving the experiences". Such practices are intended to make the analysis of data a shared task between the researcher and the reader and allow more subjectivity and diversity than the analysis of an anonymous, authoritative scientific voice (Richardson, 2000).

In his work, Levinas and his engagement with the Talmud, and I believe that the format of the Talmud itself may be yet another form of writing that is very close to, but much older than, the polyvocal and fragmented texts that are being experimented with so far in scientific research (Lau, 2002; Stone, 1998). The Talmud (Hebrew: דומלת "instruction, learning") is an essential text of Judaism containing multivocal rabbinic discussions pertaining to Jewish law, ethics, philosophy and a multitude of other topics. Its format is reminiscent of webpage designs, where a multiplicity of different texts around one or more topics can be found on one page that links to a vast number of other pages, topics, and so on (Rosen, 2001). One of the core tenets of the Talmud is also very close to postmodern ideas in that the text deliberately denies the reader any definite conclusions to any of its topics or problems. Instead it offers the reader a multitude of different perspectives to a problem and thus invites the reader to engage with the text, analyse, interpret and thus join into the debates and examine their meaning and value to his/her daily life. While a few authors have suggested and experimented with the use of the Talmudic format for academic texts, none to date have published studies on its possibilities for autoethnography (Rodgers, 2009; Rozenberg, Munk, & Kainan, 2006).

Another important aspect of the postmodernist diversification of and experimentation with analysis, interpretation and presentation, is the notion of *performance*. According to McCall (2000) sociologists began turning their field notes into performances as early as the late 1980s and simultaneously theatre artists and academics in performance studies began to produce or adapt ethnographies in order to perform these. Currently autoethnographers are exploring this notion in numerous ways and the writing and presentational practices are being opened to and adapted to this idea (Denzin, 2006; Ellis & Bochner, 2000; Richardson, 2000).

One might argue that in fact every research product is at the same time a performance or performed subjectivity, whether it is written or presented in another, more 'bodily' format. Following my understanding of Levinas, every performance could be understood as both a response to the Other as well as a performance of my negotiation between multiple Others - the Other, the Third, the Fourth, and so on - and it is thus a notion that I believe is important to and easily integrated into autoethnographic research.

The idea of somatic or bodily performance may also resonate with the practices of Aikido, Zen, physiotherapy and Shiatsu as embodied philosophical and therapeutic practices. I would argue that in Aikido and Zen we collect, analyse, interpret and present somatic data as we practice. Much the same is true for physiotherapy, where we use not just our cognition but to a great extent also our eyes, hands, body and skin to attain and process data and bring information across to the patient. However, there are considerable difficulties in the translation of the somatic and individual into a communicable form (Barbour, 2011; McCall, 2000; Spry, 2006). Regardless of these difficulties, in an autoethnography of my physiotherapy practice, grappling with them, and undertaking further practical exploration of somatic methods of data collection

and processing, could yield novel and interesting insights to the academic context of physiotherapy.

### Representation

Regardless of the form used for the presentation of data and research findings, every presentation is also a representation of the phenomenon under research. The question of representation has sparked much debate in and around (auto-) ethnography, and one of the most comprehensive discussions on this topic can be found in Flaherty, Denzin, Manning and Snow's review symposium on the so-called 'crisis in representation' (Flaherty, et al., 2002).

To postmodern scholars, autoethnography is at its core a critique of the traditionalist perspective on representation (Flaherty, et al., 2002). It is considered "part of a corrective movement against colonizing practices that erased the subjectivity of the researcher while granting him or her absolute authority for representing the other of the research (Gannon, 2006). The possibility to capture and represent the lived experience of those under research was questioned and thus led to experimentation with new and more subjective and interactive ways of knowing, reading and writing as I have described above (Collinson & Hockey, 2005).

Regardless of the mode of representation chosen, along the lines of Levinas's position on knowledge that I have described in Chapter two, to Levinas there is a violence in representation. This 'violence does not consist so much in injuring and annihilating persons as in interrupting their continuity, making them play roles in which they no longer recognize themselves, making them betray not only their own commitments but their own substance...' (Levinas in Dauphinee, 2010, p. 816). Alphonso Lingis, a central figure in the translation and publication of Levinas's work into the English language, writes about the impossibility of this violence. 'I present to the other the representation of him

that I form. But in facing me, contesting or confirming that identity I have assigned to him, the other rises apart, beyond the representation...' (Lingis in Dauphinee, 2010, p. 809).

The instability and impermanence of representation thus become an advantage to an autoethnography informed by Levinas. It makes visible how the other breaks free and beyond the confines of my representation and disrupts my ability to settle for any representation I give (Kunz, 2006). Instead, it reinstates my ongoing responsibility to 'unsay' the said and reformulate my response. In a very simple way, my autoethnography could thus be a partial, temporary and performed reflective practice in which I am critically reflecting on, questioning and, where indicated, justifying my professional physiotherapy practice. In this I believe it is also very close to the 'reflective practice that is increasingly being called for in the health sciences, including physiotherapy (Clouder, 2000b; Donaghy & Morss, 2000; Gannon, 2006; B. J. Taylor, 2006). However, in being written and accessible to the public it offers personal reflection and 'self-evaluation' to a wider professional debate and adds a stringent Levinassian ethical component (and a number of other ones from Aikido and Zen) into the evaluation protocol.

To perform such a reflective autoethnographic practice, I have discussed in the present chapter the potential use of a wide range of types and sources of data, from traditional ethnographic sources to the more postmodern addition of the 'somatic' and an alternative approach to 'interviewing' derived from the teacher-student relationship in Zen and Aikido. Similarly, I have identified a wide range of modes of data collection, analysis, interpretation and presentation that leaves me with multiple options to explore and experiment with in my future intended study. Next to traditional methods of writing and representation, in support or extension of some of the existing experimental approaches, I would like to experiment with fragmented texts, drawing on the Talmudic format, as well as exploring somatic forms of data interpretation and

presentation (Barbour, 2011; Lau, 2002; Rodgers, 2009; Rozenberg, et al., 2006; Stone, 1998). I have further tried to show how the issue of representation ties all these considerations back to some of the basic philosophical or ethical assumptions that I have laid out in the previous chapter.

All of the above matters are crucial in forming the raw material that is necessary to work with throughout an autoethnographic study and crafting the 'final' research product. Thus, after having discussed both the theoretical framework and the more practical questions of data and its processing, my intention in the next chapter is to discuss how I aim to ensure that the methods and methodology I am using are rigorous, trustworthy and scientifically legitimate.

# Chapter 4 – Trustworthiness and legitimation in autoethnography

#### Traditional criteria for trustworthiness

In the previous chapter I have laid out a wide range of data types and methods of analysis, intepretation and presentation for (my) autoethnography. Rather than advocating the use of alternative methods based on the philosophy discussed in the second chapter, I have argued in support of the use of a wide variety of methods including traditional and postmodern notions. I have further laid out a provisional idea for an alternative understanding of 'interviewing': that is the 'kusen' and particularly 'mondo' that could be beneficial for my autoethnography.

Building on this, in the present chapter I will discuss theories and techniques for the establishment of rigour and trustworthiness to further strengthen and legitimize the emerging approach. As is the case with all aspects of research, these issues are just as much linked to basic philosophical assumptions as they are to the specific context under discussion. I will thus recur to and build on them frequently in the specific context of this chapter (Flaherty, et al., 2002; Grant & Giddings, 2002). In looking at the different existing positions on criteria for rigour and trustworthiness in qualitative research (and autoethnography), I will firstly try to outline how they are used to establish authority, relevance and legitimacy of a text, an author, a methodology, a research tool, and so on. I will then move on to discuss some of the autoethnographic and postmodern criticisms of these traditional criteria and finally compare and contrast these approaches with the philosophies and practices of Levinas, Aikido and Zen in the search for arguments that support existing approaches and changes, alternatives and extensions.

In referring to 'traditional' criteria I am using a seemingly inaccurate description of the general criteria for rigour and trustworthiness as summarized in Tuckett's (2005) article. 'Rigour' and its criteria of internal and external validity and reliability are considered the benchmark for the establishment of value and quality of a quantitative research study, whereas Guba and Lincoln's 'trustworthiness' criteria are generally seen as the qualitative research alternative (Tuckett, 2005). Its well known criteria of 'credibility, confirmability, dependability and transferability' are commonly used as a baseline tool to ensure the quality and value of qualitative research studies, and different research methods are used to ensure these criteria are built into the research methodology (Tuckett, 2005). Although rigour and trustworthiness are not frequently addressed by autoethnographers, their practices nevertheless give credit to some of these ideas and I will try to show that in the following discussion.

Transferability for example refers to the study findings' relevance and meaning to other situations and populations, and has been criticized as an extension of the objectivist concept of generalizability (Tuckett, 2005). The value of an autoethnographic study is then considered to be determined by usefulness to others (Vryan, 2006); meaning, does it further the understanding and contribute to the knowledge of other people, experiences, contexts, and the like? The analytic and interpretive autoethnographer's desire to increase sociological understanding through explicit theoretical analysis and the generation of findings that are meaningful to others is thus an idea that is very much in line with the concept of transferability (Anderson, 2006a; Atkinson, 2006; Atkinson, et al., 2003; Delamont, 2007).

Credibility commonly asks whether it is possible to believe an author: that is, whether the data collected, interpreted, presented and represented is in fact true or believable (Nicholls, 2009b; Tuckett, 2005). In her study of the ethics of

autoethnography, Dauphinee argued for the use of 'veracity' as a criteria in the context of autoethnography and I believe that this concepts provides a considerable challenge to that of credibility (Dauphinee, 2010). The difference it makes is that it is more a demand for honesty to be ensured by the autoethnographer than a criterion that can be tested and measured by readers and external evaluators. Consequently, on the side of the person evaluating the research, be it a reader or reviewer, 'veracity' becomes much more a question of 'trust' than a testable criterion.

As Dauphinee further says, however, in science 'we do not trust, we verify. It is this fact that makes all theory violent. But it also makes all theory a form of faith, because verification – and particularly verification of value – is often impossible' (Dauphinee, 2010, p. 813). She goes on to argue that knowing whether the information we get from an autoethnographer writing about his/her experiences is worthy of trust is no different from knowing whether the information we get from others as our informants is worthy of trust. Contrary to that, she argues that 'the data gathered within the rubrics of most accepted academic methodologies is just as suspect as any autoethnography, and perhaps more so, because the autoethnography does not purport to be more than it is' (Dauphinee, 2010, p. 812).

What increases the veracity and/or credibility of autoethnography is thus the 'visibility' of the author and his/her intentions, theories and methodologies. What 'visibility' means or asks here is that the subjective be written and exposed openly into the final product of research (Anderson, 2006a; Atkinson, 2006; Atkinson, et al., 2003; Bochner, 2000; Collinson & Hockey, 2005; Dauphinee, 2010; Ellis, 2000; Holt, 2008; Sparkes, 2000; J. Taylor, 2008). The criterion of visibility is thus a central one in autoethnography, as autoethnography is considered to be the methodology that aims to do precisely this - to make visible what is usually either taken for granted or excluded from the research to ensure its legitimacy (Atkinson, et al., 2003; Dauphinee, 2010;

Smythe, 2006). This present Masters dissertation, for example, is also an attempt to develop and thus make visible how my personal beliefs, or the moment the philosophies that I define as formative of them, influence my choice of methodology and/or paradigmatic positioning. The same is true for my intended future study in which I first have to make visible and explicit how my subjectivity interplays with my professional practices in order to critically examine this interplay.

# Criticisms of and alternatives to traditional criteria for trustworthiness

In the above discussion of traditional criteria for rigour and trustworthiness I have already touched upon some of the existing criticisms and alternatives to them. In this section I would like to expand on this and include some that I have not discussed yet, and will look into them in more detail. As I have already mentioned, Guba and Lincoln's trustworthiness criterion has been criticized for too closely resembling the objectivist criteria of validity and reliability (J. K. Smith & Deemer, 2000; Tuckett, 2005). Autoethnographers, particularly those embracing postmodern philosophies, are engaging in an extensive debate about alternative criteria for autoethnography that stay true to their convictions (Bochner, 2000; Clough, 2000; Collinson & Hockey, 2005; Denzin, 2006; Ellis, 2000; Emdin & Lehner, 2006; Gannon, 2006; Gingrich-Philbrook, 2005; Holt, 2008; Koro-Ljungberg, 2010; Quicke, 2010; Sparkes, 2000). Broadly speaking, there are two different ideas suggested; whilst some are radically arguing against the use or establishment of any kind of criteria, others are searching for criteria that are closer to their ontological and epistemic beliefs.

Those arguing against the use of objective criteria in general, in following critical philosophical standpoints, advocate resistance to the oppressive, dominating and restrictive potential that is implicit in the formulation,

definition and usage of such criteria (Clough, 2000; Gannon, 2006; Gingrich-Philbrook, 2005; Koro-Ljungberg, 2010). They further argue that the use of such criteria gives the false impression of 'truth' and holds a deceptive promise of "certainty and stability and the legitimacy" (Adams & Holman Jones, 2008). Instead of settling for such misleading certainties, postmodernist autoethnographers advocate a writing that can be "opaque and ambiguous to stay true to the subjective, fragmentary, chaotic and paradoxical nature of reality, thinking and action (Adams & Holman Jones, 2008; Denzin, 2006; Richardson, 2000). Building on what I have already discussed before, I believe that not settling for any such criteria could also be considered a further help to remain open to the other and the complex reality of every new moment (Deshimaru & Leonard, 1991; Levinas & Nemo, 1985).

If there can be no canonical approach, no set recipes or rigid formulas to autoethnography and no general criteria that can be formulated, what then can be done, considering the need to communicate and share our insights with both the academic and non-academic world (Wall, 2008)? It is in response to this question that a large number of autoethnographers have attempted to formulate criteria that are more inclusive of the subjective, the emotional and somatic and are furthermore context- and/or case dependent (Bochner, 2000; Clough, 2000; Collinson & Hockey, 2005; Ellis, 2000; Holt, 2008; Koro-Ljungberg, 2010; Quicke, 2010; Sparkes, 2000).

Carolyn Ellis and Arthur Bochner, two key figures of postmodernist autoethno-graphy, argue that 'we should never insist on reaching agreement beforehand on the criteria'. To them, 'traditional analysis is no more appropriate to understanding, interpreting, or changing people than storytelling' (Ellis & Bochner, 2006, p. 439). Whether or not a story is good or bad however, is decided in very different ways than suggested by the traditional criteria for scientific works and thus they go on to reflect on criteria that are and have been important to them in their own autoethnographic

narratives (Bochner, 2000; Bochner & Ellis, 1999; Ellis & Bochner, 1996; Ellis & Bochner, 2000; Ellis & Bochner, 2002, 2006). Carolyn Ellis wants to feel and think with the story, be immersed in its flow (as in a good novel), 'afterwards unable to stop thinking or feeling what I've experienced' and ultimately 'be evoked narratively' (Ellis, 2000, p. 273). If that is achieved, she asks about what she has learned from the story - the plot, its writing, its goals, claims, achievements and ethical considerations (Ellis, 2000). Ellis and Bochner advocate for a very personal form of storytelling that 'centers attention on how we should live and brings us into lived experiences in a feeling and embodied way' (Ellis & Bochner, 2006, p. 439).

Paralleling the efforts of Ellis and Bochner, many other autoethnographers have thought and written about criteria that they consider meaningful, ranging from aesthetic merit to versimilitude, revelation, clarity, honesty and communicative resonance (Clough, 2000; Emdin & Lehner, 2006; Holt, 2008; Quicke, 2010; Richardson, 2000; J. K. Smith & Deemer, 2000; J. Taylor, 2008). In summarizing their key factors, a point in which most of the alternative criteria seem to overlap is that they all aim to account for the subjective, the emotional, the somatic and the aesthetic in one way or another.

Considering that I want to explore some of these aspects in my intended autoethnography, I think that any further discussion and specification of criteria will depend on the data actually gathered and the methods chosen for its final presentation (Gingrich-Philbrook, 2005; Holt, 2008; Wall, 2006, 2008). I believe that a number of new criteria might emerge, and others might change and I will have to explain and put them to the test through the course of my intended study. What I aim to do in the next section is begin this process by reflecting on some of the criteria discussed thus far and searching for possible additions and extensions to them based on the philosophies of Levinas, Zen and Aikido.

# Potential additions and extensions for trustworthiness criteria

Returning to the criteria of transferability that I have discussed in the first section of this chapter, I believe that I can make a very different argument in reading it with Levinas. Commonly transferability refers to the meaning that my study has to other situations and people. What I would like to suggest in building on Levinas is to turn this around and make transferability a criterion that looks inwards and not out. What I mean by 'turning it inwards' is to consider transferability as a question not to the generalizability/transferability of our research to other situations and people, but to the transferability of the 'teachings of the other' to me. In other words, rather than asking 'how is what I am saying relevant and meaningful to others?' asking instead 'how is what others are saying relevant to me?' - or possibly 'am I listening to the other?'. With Levinas, I would argue that the question 'whether I am listening to others' is one that cannot be overlooked and probably even precedes any question about how my response is perceived. Along the lines of my interpretation of Levinas's philosophy, this criterion might possibly be called 'responsibility', in the sense of both a responsive and responsible autoethnography (Koro-Ljungberg, 2010). All this, however, is not to say that I do not hope for my research to be 'meaningful to others' (Anderson, 2006a), but with Levinas I believe that what I am looking for is rather a 'meaningful for others' - my findings being for others as opposed to applicable to them.

Further, the idea of turning the question of transferability, rigour and trustworthiness to the inside resonates with some ideas I know from Aikido and Zen. Although there have been some recent changes, traditionally legitimation of martial arts lineage and teaching was awarded from one's own personal teacher at a point at which the teacher considered his students to be fit in a technical, theoretical and also spiritual sense. This latter idea I believe has

some proximity to the Zen-buddhist idea of 'I shin den shin' (Japanese: from my heart/mind to your heart/mind) transmission possibly leading to the formal 'shiho' or 'shukke tokudo' ceremony in which the transmission from teacher to student is authenticated and legitimized and the student acquires official teacher status within the schools lineage.

A number of things are interesting to me here in relation to autoethnography. Firstly, the official ceremonies that link the one-to-one transmission from student to teacher to the greater school or organization seem to support the use of standardized forms of authentication and legitimation as signs to the wider community. But the ceremonial and standardized forms of transmission are generally considered a mere formality and are criticized as tools for the preservation of the authority and hierarchy within the official organization (Warner, 2003). This criticism I believe is very much in line with the postmodernist critique of objective and standardized criteria for legitimation as a tool for the establishment and maintenance of academic authority and hierarchy, as mentioned above (Clough, 2000; Denzin, 2006; Koro-Ljungberg, 2010).

In line with this criticism, or the more subjective alternatives sought by postmodern scholars, is the idea one-to-one transmission, authentication and legitimation. In Zen, this form, 'from my heart/mind to your heart/mind', that is, from teacher to student, is considered to be important and the central foundation for any form of objectified form of legitimation. While one-to-one transmission, authentication from teacher to student is certainly an element of any teaching - western, eastern or otherwise - I believe that it is not commonly considered as central in the western academic context. In linking this idea with the idea of 'the Other as my teacher', I would argue that it is possible to consider legitimation, scientific rigour and trustworthiness a matter of the Other rather than myself or the (scientific) community that I am part of. This I believe is very close to the idea of bringing our research back to our research

participants as the central component of legitimation and authentication (Tuckett, 2005). Beyond the Other that finds him-/herself in my research product, from my heart/mind to your heart/mind transmission is also relevant in the writer-reader relationship. Importantly however, it is the reader and not the writer that can ensure or better grant authenticity and legitimacy from his/her subjective position; another idea that is in close proximity to postmodern conceptions of the writer-reader relationship.

To summarize, whichever criteria my autoethnography finally generates and adheres to, I will attempt to make my choices and decisions visible and thus open them to debate, critique and continuous reassessment and unsaying. This continuous reassessment I also view as close to an openness to (interruption through) the other and thus maybe already a form of adherence to the criteria of 'responsibility' that I have suggested here, whilst also having some resemblance of the common practice of 'member checking' (Tuckett, 2005). After having applied the philosophical framework developed in chapter two to the types and methods of data processing to be used and within this chapter to questions of rigour, trustworthiness and legitimation, I would like, in the following chapter, to do the same with questions of contractual and procedural ethics that normally precede the commencement of any research study. This is important as these ethics form the last component of the theoretical and methodological framework of (my) autoethnography as outlined in the introduction to this present dissertation.

# Chapter 5 – Ethics in autoethnography

#### Research ethics and Levinassian ethics

The reason for including a separate chapter on ethics into this dissertation is that there are two different meanings of 'ethics' in autoethnography. On the one hand, there is Levinas's 'ethics as a first philosophy' that I have discussed in chapter two and that forms a thread throughout my whole dissertation through touching on and challenging various aspects of autoethnography (Levinas & Nemo, 1985). On the other hand, there are the contractual and procedural ethics of scientific research, in particular the kind of research that involves human study participants. Whilst autoethnography's most outstanding characteristic is that it involves no study participants (other than the researcher), and ethics committees are likely to approve such studies based on this fact, I agree with Martin Tolich (2010) that despite this characteristic there is a need for autoethnographers to *anticipate* ethical problems that might arise through the course of their study and its publication. Further, it seems important to do so, considering that the self/auto of autoethnography is understood to be in an irredeemable relationship with the Other and that consequently any thinking and writing about the self will always also concern and involve the Other in some way (Tomaselli, et al., 2008).

In addition to this, a large number of authors understand autoethnography as a research methodology with an ethical agenda, an ethical consciousness, goals, commitment and an ethical imperative, and there is much debate about the ethics of autoethnography within the literature (Anderson, 2006a; Ballard, 2009; Dauphinee, 2010; Drury, 2006; Ellis, 2007; Emdin & Lehner, 2006; Holman Jones, 2005; Hurdley, 2010; Roth, 2009; Stith, et al., 2006; Tamas, 2009; Tolich, 2010; Tomaselli, et al., 2008; Wall, 2008). However, it is true

that little practical information is available to help the aspiring autoethnographer steer through the problems of contractual and procedural ethics (Tolich, 2010). Thus, setting out from and frequently recurring to Tolich's most recent article on the ethics of autoethnography (Tolich, 2010), it is my aim to search the range of possible practical solutions to questions of contractual and procedural ethics, and again interrupt and enrich this search with Levinas, Aikido, and Zen. This, however, means that both of the above meanings of ethics will inevitably overlap, much like the Levinassian philosophy/ethics has been a common thread throughout all of the previous chapters. As there are two main groups of participants in autoethnography, I will look at my contractual and procedural ethical responsibilities to the 'Other' first, before looking at some considerations in regards to the 'Self' of the researcher as research participant. But before going on to do so, I would like to make further comments in regards to the overlap between the two meanings of ethics that I will be discussing here.

Firstly, there is a proximity between the ethics of Levinas and the 'ethics of science'. In all research involving human study participants it is mandatory to apply for ethics approval prior to the collection of data and any further steps. The ethics application and approval or dismissal is in fact the *first* step of the study (Tolich, 2010). While thematically still quite far apart, this *priority of ethics* and my responsibility for it in scientific research coincides with Levinas's 'ethics as a first philosophy' and responsibility as the core of subjectivity that I have outlined in chapter two (Levinas & Nemo, 1985; Levinas & Robbins, 2001; Malka, 2006). There is however a contentious but crucial point separating them: the fact that ethics approvals require a *description* of study participants and their identification and classification as members of a particular group of some sort is, according to Levinas, an unethical act in itself because such a description would already imply knowledge of those others and a restriction of their otherness. The possible implications for this in regards to the culture and practice of ethics committees

are numerous and would require a separate and more in-depth exploration than I can achieve here. The implication of this for my autoethnography is that if I were to follow a Levinassian idea of ethics, applying for ethics approval would involve an intrinsic violent/unethical act that would make the application itself seem somewhat paradoxical. Whether I apply or not, as I have mentioned above, making these and the following considerations is important in order to account for all aspects of research.

## Responsibility for the Other

Many autoethnographers have acknowledged that there is a need to be concerned about the ethics of representing those that we inevitably mention in the stories of ourselves, regardless of them not being 'participants' in the common scientific sense of the word (Ballard, 2009; Dauphinee, 2010; Denzin, 2006; Ellis, 2007; Roth, 2009; Tamas, 2009; Wall, 2008). As Elizabeth Dauphinee argues and I have tried to show before 'The [traditional] academic gaze is an all-encompassing gaze. It seeks to make sense of everything it encounters and more significantly, to *master* what it encounters' (Dauphinee, 2010, p. 806). While autoethnography maybe does not solve this problem entirely it at least does not seek to appropriate the voice of the Other, but instead acknowledges the subjectivity of any representation of an Other. It is always also '[...] a reflexive awareness of the self as a perpetrator of a certain kind of violence in the course of all writing and all representation – a violence, incidentally, that cannot be avoided' (Dauphinee, 2010, p. 806). The question, then, is yet again how to minimize this violence (again, assuming that this is possible).

In response to this question, Martin Tolich (Tolich, 2010) developed ten ethical guidelines for autoethnography (see table 2 below) as an extension or specification of the eight points on ethics and rights of the other assembled in the Congress of Qualitative Inquiry's 'Position Statement on Qualitative

Research and IRB's' from 2007 (see table 1 below). Whilst I am aware that the establishment of generalizable *guidelines* is only possible on the basis of philosophical assumptions closer to an objectivist and interpretivist worldview, I agree with Tolich when he argues that the intention behind his guidelines is 'not to tame autoethnography; rather, it would provide its followers with predictability and a more disciplined base to utilize researchers' autobiographical data to analyze and interpret their cultural assumptions' (Tolich, 2010, p. 10). I further believe that it is wise to engage with some of the ideas behind his guidelines, as they touch on most issues raised by autoethnographers interested in the ethics of their methodology. Rather than blind adherence, such engagement could lead to an individual response; a set of subjective guidelines that are considered fit for the purpose of a particular study.

Tracing my interpretation of Levinas and the fact that he explicitly said that his intention was not to formulate a normative ethics, I believe that generalized guidelines increase rather than decrease violence against the Other (Levinas & Nemo, 1985; Levinas & Robbins, 2001). This counter-argument, however, does not diminish the responsibility to formulate and continuously reformulate - that is, to 'say' and continuously 'unsay' an individual, temporarily and spatially situated ethics in response to the other. Thus, what I have done in the following table, before going on to discuss Tolich's specific guidelines for autoethnography, is to formulate a preliminary, current position on the general guidelines for qualitative research as developed by the Congress of Qualitative Inquiry to further develop my autoethnography (Congress of Qualitative Inquiry in Tolich, 2010):

Table 1: International Congresses of Qualitative Inquiry eight standards of 'The Position Statement on Qualitative Research and IRBs' on the conduct of research involving human subjects (Tolich, 2010).

	International Congresses of Qualitative	Current provisional commentary and applicability for my autoethnography
	Inquiry eight standards on the conduct of	
	research involving human subjects	
1	Consider, identify, and resolve conflicts	I will aim to follow this point and believe that the present engagement with these
	of interest that might affect research	guidelines is the first necessary step in this direction, as much as a general interest in
	participants, researchers, institutions, and	ethical philosophy and the improvement of the self is (Dauphinee, 2010; Gannon, 2006).
	research outcomes.	
2	Understand and use valid study designs	Yes, this is the aim of the present dissertation. Beyond this, the introduction of Levinas,
	for qualitative inquiry that respect the	Aikido and Zen as key informants offers a critique of existing qualitative study designs.
	rights of individuals and protect the well	
	being of research participants.	
3	Apply standards of minimal risk as set	Following my interpretation of Levinas I am actually arguing that research as a pursuit of
	forth in the Common Rule for the	knowledge is always unethical, i.e. a violent act to the other. Hence, refashioning the
	protection of human subjects in the	"academic gaze" (Dauphinee, 2010) into an "academic, individual listening to the
	conduct and practice of research.	teachings of the other", i.e. a turn to autoethnography and the self-for-the-other could be
4	Involve and recruit participants according	the first step towards the minimization of risk for others and possibly even an increase in
	to best practices for weighing risks to	benefit.
	individuals and benefits to society.	

	International Congresses of Qualitative	Current provisional commentary and applicability for my autoethnography
	Inquiry eight standards on the conduct of	
	research involving human subjects	
5	Document their plans in study proposals	I will aim to do so for those that I mention in my study and those it might have meaning
	for fulfilling responsibilities to research,	for. As should have become evident by now, the introduction of Levinas actually
	institutions, sponsors, and participants.	increases the call for responsibility.
6	Respect participants' autonomy and the	I would argue that Levinas, but also Zen-buddhism urge us to accept and respect our own
	voluntary nature of participation, and	heteronomy, i.e. our dependence on the world we live in and the others that inhabit it.
	document the informed consent processes	This seems to stand in stark contrast to the presupposition of the autonomy and
	that are foundational to qualitative	intentionality of the self/researcher that is reflected in other paradigmatic positions. In
	inquiry.	regards to informed consent see the next chapter section.
7	Provide for and encourage	Yes, this also enables the continuation of my learning and thus research process, both
	communication with participants and	during as well as well beyond the duration of the study.
	respond to respondents' requests for	
	information, withdrawal, or modifications	
	to consent agreements in a timely and	
	appropriate manner.	
8	Design and conduct qualitative studies in	Yes, however compliance does not disable the need to challenge and change existing
	compliance with federal and local	requirements where it appears justified.
	institutional requirements for the	
	protection of human subjects in research.	

I would argue that the preliminary positions in regards to these general comments that I have listed in Table 1 offer a solid base from which to explore and refine them further throughout the course of their practical application in my intended autoethnography. Further, as becomes evident in reflecting on these general ethical guidelines of the Congress of Qualitative Inquiry, all of the above points are concerned with the rights of the other. Likewise, my responsibility for the Other/other is a key point of the whole approach that I am conceptualizing and developing in the present dissertation. Tolich's ten guidelines, specific for autoethnography, also focus primarily on the rights of the other (see table 2 below). Where they bring up additional points that not yet covered, I aim to discuss them in the remainder of this chapter to further strengthen my approach.

Table 2: Tolich's ten guidelines for ethics in autoethnography (Tolich, 2010)

Tolich's ten guidelines for ethics in autoethnography				
Cor	sent			
1	Respect participants' autonomy and the voluntary nature of participation, and			
	document the informed consent processes that are foundational to qualitative			
	inquiry (Congress of Qualitative Inquiry, 2007).			
2	Practice "process consent," checking at each stage to make sure participants still			
	want to be part of the project (Ellis, 2007).			
3	Recognize the conflict of interest or coercive influence when seeking informed			
	consent after writing the manuscript (see Jago, 2002; Rambo, 2007).			
Consultation				
4	Consult with others, like an IRB (Chang, 2008; Congress of Qualitative Inquiry).			
5	Autoethnographers should not publish anything they would not show the persons			
	mentioned in the text (Medford, 2006).			
Vulnerability				
6	Beware of internal confidentiality: the relationship at risk is not with the			
	researcher exposing confidences to outsiders, but confidences exposed among the			
	participants or family members themselves (Tolich, 2004).			
7	Treat any autoethnography as an inked tattoo by anticipating the author's future			
	vulnerability.			
8	Photovoice anticipatory ethics claims that no photo is worth harming others. In a			
	similar way, no story should harm others, and if harm is unavoidable, take steps to			
	minimize harm.			
9	Those unable to minimize risk to self or others should use a nom de plume			
	(Morse, 2002) as the default.			
10	Assume all people mentioned in the text will read it one day (see Ellis, 1995a).			

In the last group of his guidelines, titled 'vulnerability', Tolich reiterates but also stresses some of the above points for the anticipation and constant consideration of the vulnerability of the other that results from his or her appearance in the researchers story/autoethnography. The key points made here are that firstly, when writing an autoethnography, it is advisable to assume that all those mentioned in the text will read it eventually. Secondly, minimizing risk and harm for others should be another guiding principle, not just in regards to the unwanted exposure of others to outsiders but also the unwanted exposure of (familiar) others amongst each other. In the words of Martin Tolich, 'the question "Who would be offended by what is written?" sensitizes and focuses writers both to potential harm and to their responsibility to minimize harm' (Tolich, 2010, p. 7).

Reading these suggestions, I agree with Tolich that keeping them in mind makes it easier to decide whether or not to include a particular story in my study or, if the story contains a particularly important topic or point, to decide if and how to change the names of people, places, settings etc. Other than common methods to maintain anonymity and confidentiality that can be used by the author to ensure the above points, 'informed consent' is a further method that is well established in qualitative inquiry and that in agreement with Tolich I am intending to implement. However, what I would like to do in the next section is an exploration of how informed consent might be thought about 'otherwise' when interrupted by Levinas, Aikido and Zen (Kunz, 2006).

# Consent and participation

Following on from the fact that it is not customary to gain ethics approval for the conduction of an autoethnographic studies, there is just as much ambiguity about the necessity to gain informed consent (Tolich, 2010). While some authors have made retrospective arguments for their choice not to gain informed consent from the others appearing in their stories, other authors have

tried to make a point for its implementation in their autoethnographies (J. Taylor, 2008; Tolich, 2010).

The first three of Tolich's criteria all relate to consent (see Table 2), more specifically to 1) prospective, 2) process and 3) retrospective consent. The problem that Tolich highlights with retrospective consent is that it is a possible place for a conflict of interest in that "undue obligation [might be placed] on research 'subjects' to volunteer" (Tolich, 2010). To prevent this problem from occurring I believe that it is more advisable to aim for both prospective and process consent and gain those where possible. In practice this would mean that where I can get a hold of those that I intend to include in my stories I will ask for prospective informed consent and will keep checking my writing with them for further process consent. Giving informed consent, however, does not exclude the wish for anonymity. Meeting such requests through the process of writing should not pose a problem to the content of the study. Lastly, in case of doubt or uncertainty, a potential exclusion of a story or data set might be indicated (Tolich, 2010).

Gaining informed consent further seems to coincide with the idea of 'veracity' as a criteria or tool to enhance trustworthiness as discussed in the previous chapter. If one of the core (ethical) strengths of autoethnography is its clarity of intentions, as I have discussed in the context of the trustworthiness criteria 'veracity' in the previous chapter (Dauphinee, 2010), it seems almost self-evident that it is necessary to extend this clarity beyond the text itself to the others that might find themselves written into it.

Even though I agree with these ideas, a number of questions and problems arise that might make it difficult, questionable or even impossible. What is important at this stage, however, is not immediately resolving them but much rather formulating them so they can accompany the research process. For the purpose of my own study one question could be whether it is really possible

and necessary to gain informed consent from everyone who has influenced me in a way that is relevant to my practice. Further, can I really track back everyone who has been an influence to the development of my beliefs, values and resulting changes in practice? It seems unclear to me, whether influencing and thus shaping someone is really a matter of choice, in more Levinassian terms: whether being 'Other' to me as the 'self' is really a matter of choice. I wonder how this is different from the scientific concept of participation that implies active decision or intentionality from the Other? Can the Other choose who is going to be responsible for him/her, who is going to respond to him/her, and how? It seems unlikely. Levinas does not seem to talk about this issue much and I believe rightly so, as inquiry into this might imply a possibility of knowing the Other. What is more important to Levinas is that 'I' as an individual self am *chosen* and irreplaceable in my responsibility and response for the Other: that is, my subjectivity and responsibility for every Other is irreplaceable and inalienable (Levinas & Nemo, 1985; Levinas & Robbins, 2001).

Understanding the others in my story as my teachers, as I have suggested before, poses yet another question that resonates with ideas from my Aikido and Zen practice. Firstly, there is a significant difference between understanding someone as my teacher and that person actually considering themselves my teacher. In a teacher-student relationship that is mutually understood as such (and *only* in the case of this mutual understanding), informed consent is, in some way and to some degree, given for the student to receive the teachings and possibly pass them on at a later stage. Changes and a certain amount of individual interpretation of these teachings are presupposed in the teacher-student relationship. However, as I have mentioned in the previous chapter, definite legitimation or verification of transmission is an important element of the passing of 'knowledge' in these disciplines and thus frequent and continuous interaction between the student and teacher, so a close teacher-student relationship is needed.

In tying this back to the scientific context, the continuous interaction between teacher-student bears resemblance to the notion of process consent, Tolich's second consent guideline (Tolich, 2010). Process consent does not seem much different from the praxis of 'member checking'. However, the idea of a teacher-student relationship offers another understanding, in that it encourages further ongoing learning rather than just a checking of acquired knowledge. Showing the others in my stories what I am producing could thus aid the unsaying of my response and increase both the learning experience as well as the 'ethics' (agreement over publication).

A number of autoethnographers are experimenting with yet another form for their autoethnography that significantly emphasizes this point (Ellis, 2007; Emdin & Lehner, 2006; Roth, 2009; Scantlebury & LaVan, 2006; Stith, et al., 2006). The central idea behind this specific form of autoethnography is the idea of 'cogeneration': in other words, the co-construction of stories by those involved in them. Bringing autoethnography closer to forms of participatory research, co-constructed autoethnographies aim to involve the 'Other' of the story in its production, thus further minimizing any necessity of the 'self' to represent the 'Other'. The question posed here is that if others are always part of my stories, in that they shape and play their roles, why not have them tell their own part and create a story of interaction through cogenerated dialogues (Ellis, 2007; Roth, 2009).

While I think this is one of the most promising extensions of autoethnography, in reading it with Levinas there is a difficulty in the conception of dialogue that it employs and it might need some 'correction' if I were to build on it. While Michael Roth (2009), one of the key advocates of such cogenerative methodologies, claims to build on Levinas in the development of his ethics of autoethnography, I would argue that it is much more the dialogical philosophy of Martin Buber than that of Levinas that he is building on (Buber, 2006). One

of the key problematics or differences between Buber and Levinas, a relationship that has been and is subject to extensive academic interest (Buber, 2006; Levinas, 1996; Putnam, 2008), is the notion of 'dialogue'. What Levinas criticizes about 'dialogue' is that in dialogue, as it is conceived by Buber and adopted by the above researchers, there is an implication of equality between the conversational partners and thus a sameness that abolishes the insurmountable difference and height of the Other that is central to Levinas's thinking (Bergo, 2007; Derrida, 1978; Levinas, 1998, 2000; Levinas & Robbins, 2001; Myhrvold, 2006).

Levinas's concern about a perspective that equalizes the self and the other extends beyond the violence that it implies, and that I have attempted to describe that in the 'philosophies' chapter. Beyond being violence, sameness of the self and Other opens the possibility of a reduction of my responsibility for the Other. In other words, if the other and I are on eye-to-eye level, a worry and responsibility for myself might diminish my responsibility for the Other, a sentiment that Levinas heavily criticized and argued against as the danger of the 'worry for the self' (Levinas, 1998, 2000). This 'worry for the self' is also another reason for his continuous rejection of understand the Third as 'the self as Other' (von Wolzogen, 2005). Such an interpretation would consequently bear the same danger of equalization as the above conception of 'dialogue' that he criticized so heavily. What is interesting about the 'worry for the self' in the context of autoethnography and the contractual and procedural ethics that I am describing in the present chapter, is that many researchers have expressed concerns and arguments about my responsibility not only to the others in my stories but also to myself as the author (Ballard, 2009; Dauphinee, 2010; Ellis, 2007; Roth, 2009; Tamas, 2009; Tolich, 2010; Wall, 2008). In the following section I will discuss this argument in more detail: that is, my responsibility for myself in autoethnography, in more detail.

### Responsibility for the self

Concern about the author's/researcher's vulnerability in autoethnography results from the inclusion and exposure of the personal within the professional. Whilst being advocated as autoethnography's asset, it just as much carries the danger of unwanted reactions in response to intimately personal information and stories about the researcher (J. Taylor, 2008; Tolich, 2010; Wall, 2008). In the seventh of his ethical guidelines, Tolich (2010, p. 10) argues that autoethnographers should 'treat any autoethnography as an inked tattoo by anticipating the author's future vulnerability', and goes further to explain that by publishing an autoethnography - possibly even on a website or mentioning it in a curriculum vitae - and thus exposing one's personal information, one makes a permanent marking for which there might not be a way to erase it in the future (Tolich, 2010). The effect of this branding or stigmatization might be adverse outcomes of job interviews, meetings and debates with colleagues and even family and friends.

For Sarah Wall, who wrote an autoethnography of her experiences with international adoption, the questions go even further and ultimately led her to step back from the publication of her autoethnography (Wall, 2008). In her reflections on writing this autoethnography, Wall wonders whether there might be a component of voyeurism (and I would like to add exhibitionism) in the fascination with autoethnography. Further inquiring into the suspicion of voyeurism, she asks whether the personal stories we offer in our autoethnographies "indulge our culture's perverse curiosity about the private, peeking in on damaged selves" (Wall, 2008). The question behind all this is thus an extension of the question asked in regard to our exposure of the Other: How much personal detail is necessary, advisable, and of interest in our autoethnographies? What exactly is 'personal detail' and what falls out of this classification? Is autoethnography exactly a questioning of the potentially

artificial boundary between the personal and the professional that poses this question through the exposure of the impossibility to draw a line between the two? Again, what this means is that in autoethnography there is nothing that is not part of any other research study as well, whether it is included or 'bracketed'. It is made visible and offered to public scrutiny and critique rather than subdued in the name of academic professionalism (Adams & Holman Jones, 2008; Ellis & Bochner, 2000; Gingrich-Philbrook, 2005; Tomaselli, et al., 2008).

Considering what I have written about Levinas's critique of the 'worry for the self' it would seem logical to dismiss such self-interested considerations and simply respond to, and be responsible for, the Other. As mentioned before, the only thing that could halt and alter this responsibility is the appearance and presence of the Third as another Other that I am just as responsible for. However, as described in the second chapter, Levinas's definition of responsibility goes further and extends to my even being "responsible for his/her responsibility" (Levinas, 2000; Levinas & Nemo, 1985; Peperzak, 2003; Zeillinger, 2009). Being responsible even for the Other's responsibility means that I am also responsible for his/her responsibility for his/her Other and at the same time, but not in the same way, and also for me (Levinas & Nemo, 1985; Levinas & Robbins, 2001). I believe that this is a window for 'worry for the self' in Levinas's philosophy. Further, to me this resonates with another idea that I believe to have heard both in a Zen, but also a physiotherapy context - the idea that I cannot help or be for another unless my remain whole and intact. Giving myself up for the Other to my own harm would thus be detrimental to my continuous obligation to be-for-the-other. Thus, in writing an autoethnography there does seem to be a justified place and need to anticipate my own vulnerability that could result from its publication or even just the attempt to do so.

Even in writing the present dissertation I have often felt the danger of trying something that is 'different' in an academic field that is so intensely dominated by the postpositivist paradigm and the quantitative scientific method.

Explaining what it is that I am writing this study about has aroused a number of odd silences, questioning faces and unsure smiles amongst my colleagues and friends, and I believe the same could be the case in the larger study that I would like to do in the future. The questions that arise here are numerous and seem somewhat daunting, and I can understand Sarah Wall's reluctance to publish her autoethnography (Wall, 2008). Maybe quantitative research or just research about others is much easier, much less emotionally risky, because by taking the position of the objective researcher I am much less involved, exposed and vulnerable. It feels as if by doing an autoethnography I might potentially be putting my career at risk. Choosing carefully what I write and asking myself whether I should write like this at all will be continuous questions along this way.

There is another danger I see in writing an autoethnography. Considering that autoethnography uses memories and thoughts about my encounters with others, I could imagine being misunderstood as someone who will potentially analyse every situation that I am in. Thus, in the worst case, people staying away from me so as not to be analyzed could lead to alienation and estrangement from my colleagues, friends and family. Thus, it needs to be clear that not everyone whom I might encounter is going to be featured in my next publication. But this is difficult and somewhat contradictory, because what I am saying is also that my research is a personal matter and that it is ultimately my personal quest of striving to be 'better', 'more ethical' or simply appropriate and adequate for every new situation and Other that I encounter. Whatever the questions that arise along the lines of those listed here, and there are plenty more of them, the intention of the present dissertation is to test the theoretical and methodological feasibility of an autoethnography of my physiotherapy practice. The methods I have explored here, and that I can build

and expand on throughout their practical application, will hopefully make it a little easier to account for some of these problems.

What I have attempted to describe in the present chapter are some primary considerations in regards to the contractual and procedural ethics of scientific inquiry as they relate to autoethnography. Whilst building on Levinas to dismiss the idea of seeking ethics approval for my autoethnography, I have tried to argue for the importance of anticipating ethical problems that might arise along the way. Building on Tolich, a number of other autoethnographers and Levinas, Aikido and Zen, I have tried to lay out some ideas of how I might attempt to tackle these problems in a practical matter. I believe that this is another indispensable step in the theoretical and methodological preparation of my autoethnography, as well as offering first insights into how Levinas, Aikido and Zen might enrich the debate about ethics in autoethnography. Having so far discussed the different philosophies of autoethnography, the different standpoints in regards to data processing, rigour, trustworthiness and ethics, I will try in the following chapter to step away from the many details and pull all these findings together to discuss them in the greater context of autoethnography and my intended future study.

# **Chapter 6 Discussion and Conclusion**

# Revisiting autoethnography

In the previous four chapters I have discussed a number of aspects that I have identified to be of key importance to autoethnography. These aspects have been the philosophical underpinnings, data types and methods of processing, issues of rigour and trustworthiness and lastly ethics in autoethnography. The discussion in these four chapters allowed me to compare the different existing approaches to autoethnography and their key characteristics and contrast these with an understanding inspired by the philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas and the philosophies and practices of Aikido and Zazen. In the present chapter I would like to step back from these details and reflect back on autoethnography as it exists thus far, before drawing together the approach that has emerged throughout this dissertation. Building on this, I will further aim to discuss a number of limitations in regards to the present dissertation and identify remaining problems and issues relevant to my future research and autoethnography in general, before drawing a final conclusion.

As has become evident throughout the present dissertation, autoethnography is a qualitative research methodology quite different from others, with the most apparent difference being its choice of the researcher as the primary participant. In doing so, it amplifies the traditional ethnographic 'emic perspective' and offers a strong inside view of its primary research participant and some autoethnographers have claimed that this is the only perspective we can have: 'None of us know how anyone else perceives the world, what another person feels or thinks. We only know what we ourselves feel and think and what others tell us of their experience.' (Hale in Wilkes, 2009, pp. 33-34).

To interpretivist autoethnographers, autoethnography and its choice of the researcher's self as the primary participant offers an additional level for sociological analysis and understanding of the self's role in the co-construction of meaning with others (Anderson, 2006a). To critical autoethnographers, it offers an inside view to search for structures of oppression in both the self and others alike (Quicke, 2010), whereas postmodernist autoethnographers consider it to be a critique and challenge to traditional ways of representation and legitimation and attempt to perform the interaction between selves and others (Ellis & Bochner, 1996; Ellis & Bochner, 2000). Further, traditional boundaries between the personal and professional become blurred and the subjectivity of the researcher finds more acknowledgment in his/her research (Adams & Holman Jones, 2008; Denzin, 2006; Wilkes, 2009). The blurring of these boundaries allows an inquiry that can investigate how deeply the personal and professional are intertwined, how they influence, interrupt and/or question each other and how this relationship has meaning for the personal and beyond it (Anderson, 2006a; Denzin, 2006; Ellis & Bochner, 2000).

But despite its promises, autoethnography has a number of problems that need to be acknowledged and accounted for. Firstly, compared to many other social science methodologies, autoethnography is a relatively young research methodology (Anderson, 2006a; Atkinson, et al., 2003; Gannon, 2006). Due to this novelty, it is far from being established and researchers from various disciplines are only slowly exploring its potential for their various research interests and needs. In the course of this slow introduction of autoethnography into academia, many problems and questions arise that consequently make autoethnograpy seems less refined than many other, more established qualitative research approaches (Tolich, 2010; Wall, 2008).

Regardless or because of its novelty, rapidly increasingly numbers of researchers are implementing it and exploring its potential in a wide variety of areas and ways (Adams & Holman Jones, 2008; Anderson, 2006a; Ellis &

Bochner, 2000; Holman Jones, 2005). In the health and sports sciences, for example, it is slowly emerging as an alternative form of patient/athlete narratives, however to my knowledge it has not been explored in the way I suggesting here and in the way I am intending to apply it to my own professional practice (Brooks, 2010; Collinson & Hockey, 2005; Neville-Jan, 2003; Richards, 2008; Sparkes, 2000).

Further, there are several criticisms made against autoethnography that decelerate its establishment as a recognized and widely applied research methodology. Most prominently, some researchers accuse autoethnography of being a self-indulgent form of research that only serves the researchers own purposes (Collinson & Hockey, 2005; Delamont, 2007; Ellis, 2009; Ryang, 2000; Sparkes, 2000). Anderson argues that 'autoethnography loses its sociological promise when it devolves into self-absorption' and that 'autoethnographers must prevent this from happening' and are 'also constrained from self-absorption by the ethnographic imperative of dialogic engagement with others in the social worlds they seek to understand' (Anderson, 2006a). Sara Delamont, a passionate critic of autoethnography, argues that the researcher him-/herself is 'not interesting enough to write about in journals, to teach about, to expect attention from others. We are not interesting enough to be the subject matter of sociology. The important questions are not about personal anguish (and most autoethnography is about anguish). [...] autoethnography is an abuse of our privilege – our duty is to go out and research [...] not sit in our homes focusing on ourselves' (Delamont, 2007, p. 3).

In light of all these difficulties and criticisms, I believe that the present dissertation is yet another exploration of the potential and possibilities of autoethnography that are necessary steps in its ongoing development. I am aware however that I am taking a very particular and subjective angle to autoethnography and that my interest is to apply it to a very particular field,

namely my own professional physiotherapy practice. One of the intentions of combining my philosophical background with autoethnography was to strengthen and further refine it based on a sound and coherent theoretical framework, if it proved to be possible in the intuitively envisioned way. In the following section, I would like to summarize how and whether I have achieved this and what I am left with as 'my autoethnography'

### My autoethnography

Following from the findings of the present dissertation, there are some aspects of autoethnography that I can borrow directly from existing approaches, others that I can infer from or build on, and some aspects that my own philosophical background adds to it that have not yet been considered for its theoretical framework. In chapter one, my philosophical background has allowed me to formulate a novel approach to autoethnography as a performed and embodied methodological praxis, in which I am asked/called as an individual (auto-), and it is my individual, inalienable primary responsibility and obligation to respond to and acknowledge *every* Other (ethno) with my whole subjectivity, my thinking, my writing (graphy), my body, my embodied personal and professional practices (physiotherapy, Aikido, Zen, Shiatsu).

As discussed in Chapter Two, to conduct an autoethnography based on this newly developed theoretical conception, it is particularly the postmodernist approach to data and its methods of processing that seems to be most fitting. Through its inclusion of the somatic, both as a data source and a tool for processing it, the postmodernist perspective sits well with my experience as a body worker in physiotherapy, Shiatsu, Aikido and Zazen in all of which the somatic plays a central, but in physiotherapy often neglected role. Further, the idea of autoethnography as a performed, embodied methodological praxis appears to link well with this inclusion of the somatic and encompasses traditional and experimental writing and analysis methods (Denzin, 2006;

Richardson, 2000; Spry, 2006). This however 'does not prevent us from writing in other ways for other audiences at other times' (Richardson, 2000, p. 936), but supports the notion that there is no single right way to represent the Other.

Existing literature on autoethnography offers a wide range of criteria, objective as well as more subjective ones, which can be implemented to increase the trustworthiness of one's methodological approach. As I have tried to show in the example of transferability, my philosophical background allows a rethinking of traditional criteria in a novel way that supports the notion of autoethnography as a form of inquiry that in-quires into the researcher. Further, an addition that particularly Levinas's philosophy brings to this is the yet to be refined possibility of including *responsibility* and *responsivity* as core criteria for trustworthiness. Importantly however, in my autoethnography I want to build on the idea of *visibility* of the researcher in his/her research to make my decisions and thinking within my study more transparent and thus increase trustworthiness (Dauphinee, 2010).

Lastly, building on Tolich's argument for anticipating ethical issues arising in the process of doing autoethnography and the guidelines (Tolich, 2010), in chapter four I have tried to lay out a basic structure to guide my decisions in regards to the contractual and procedural ethics. However, the close connection of contractual and procedural ethics of scientific research to the more philosophical approach to ethics suggested in Levinas's philosophy has led me to intertwine both and thus reformulate some of Tolich's ideas based on the underpinning philosophy explicated in chapter two. Whilst, for example, the application for ethics approval seems somewhat questionable in the light of a Levinassian ethics, the idea of informed consent is one that I aim to include as widely as possible to establish and maintain rapport with the Others in (my) autoethnography.

In regards to the criticisms and limitations of autoethnography that have been brought forth by others, I hope to have accounted for many of them throughout this study. However, as I have tried to argue, I believe that most of these criticisms are no different from the criticisms and arguments that arise between the different paradigmatic positions, in other words the same fight fought on different grounds (Anderson, 2006a; Atkinson, et al., 2003; Delamont, 2007; Ellis & Bochner, 2006; Flaherty, et al., 2002). Thus, I believe that debate over them is less specific to autoethnography, but more generally philosophical. What I have tried to unpack throughout the whole dissertation is a philosophical foundation that is different from those represented in current paradigmatic frameworks (Crotty, 1998; Grant & Giddings, 2002). Rather than weighing existing positions against each other and then taking a side, I have tried to engage with these issues by contrasting them with my philosophical background and unpacking the novel and alternative perspective that it offers.

In regards to the central criticism of self-indulgence I believe that the whole of the present study offers a strong counterargument (Atkinson, et al., 2003; Delamont, 2007). In fact, particularly the philosophy of Levinas offers a perspective that completely turns this argument around and potentially allows the accusation of all traditional approaches to research as self-indulgence. In these traditional approaches, the relationship with the Other is marked by knowledge and the accompanying absorption, acquisition and assimilation of the Other into the self (Levinas & Nemo, 1985). Contrary to this, autoethnography as conceptualized here might offer an approach to research that allows a relationship with the Other that is not marked by knowledge, but a desire to be self-for-the-Other whilst and through leaving him/her wholly 'other'.

The main limitation of the autoethnographic approach that has emerged throughout the present dissertation comes with the problem of the Third (Delhom, 2009; Fagan, 2009; Simmons, 1999). As I have explained, the Third

Other and my ability to be fully *for this Other* by demanding the same ethical attention/response. What exactly the meaning of this is for autoethnography and the possibility to do more ethical research and more ethical practice is a problem that I will have to look into in much greater detail in my future research endeavour. What I can say so far - and this is also implicit in my above description of my autoethnographic approach - is that the Third demands for research and with it autoethnography, to not just be for one Other, but for multiple Others. It is for this reason that I have included my responsibility for *every* Other, in the description of (my) autoethnography.

Despite this limitation, I believe that the findings of this present dissertation offer a firm foundation for a future application of my autoethnography. The aim of the present study was to develop and test the theoretical and methodological feasibility of an autoethnography informed by my philosophical background, and I believe that this process of developing and testing has generated such a feasible autoethnographic approach. What has emerged from exploring the possibility of aligning my own identity with my research is an approach to autoethnography that is both personal - in its relation to my philosophical background - and professional – in its suitability for a theoretically and methodologically feasible, critical investigation of (my) physiotherapy practice. The future application of this approach would allow further refinement and testing on a more practical level. Beyond the theoretical and methodological feasibility that I have investigated here, there are however also a number of limitations to the present dissertation that I would like to acknowledge in the following section, before finally concluding the dissertation as a whole.

# Limitations of (my) autoethnograpy

Four main limitations have come to surface throughout the process of conducting the present study. Firstly, it is possible to argue that the present dissertation was too broad and that as a result I have not reached to depth that I could have, had I isolated some of its parts. For example, I could have just compared existing approaches to autoethnography against each other, or, I could have taken just one paradigmatic approach to autoethnography, for example the postmodern, and compared it to the philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas only.

Whilst I have in fact considered these possibilities multiple times throughout the course of this study, in the end I was reluctant to do so for a number of reasons. In trying to align my research with my personal philosophical beliefs, values and assumptions it was of key importance that all those influences that I see at their core are represented within the emerging approach. Thus, separating Levinas from Aikido and Zen would have created an artificial and seemingly objective debate in place of the general idea of autoethnography to acknowledge and express the subjective within it (Denzin, 2006). Inspired by critical postmodernist positions, I would like to consider this exposure of the personal a 'methodological act' that is moral, political and pedagogical and allows to twist and 'queer' autoethnography in new and different ways for new and different purposes (Adams & Holman Jones, 2008; Denzin, 2006).

In my internal debate Levinas, Aikido, Zen and many other yet unmentioned influences fold in on each other, contradict and coexist, challenge and support each other continuously and whilst more complicated and probably lengthy, I believe that this approach seems more true to the complex nature of reality, my self and the Other. Quite obviously however, Levinas's philosophy has taken on the most volume in this debate as represented in this dissertation. However,

sometimes the focus or core perspective can change and Aikido or Zen can come to the centre. I have refrained from letting that happen here because there would have been too much introductory work to do and it would have exceeded the limits of the present study. In the future however, I would like to integrate Aikido and Zen more explicitly and explore the effects of their meeting with Levinas both on (my) autoethnography and (my) physiotherapy practice.

Deciding to take just one paradigmatic approach to autoethnography would have been a relatively easy matter considering that the majority of published autoethnographies are postmodern. What made me opt against this idea however, was the importance of particularly the interpretive paradigm, or even more so the phenomenology of Husserl and Heidegger, but also the ethnography of Levi-Strauss to the development of Levinas's thought. It seemed as though introducing his thinking would have been impossible without drawing on and contrasting it against these. As a result of this, however, I am aware that the representations I have given of the interpretive, critical and postmodern paradigm may seem as very crude and overemphasize some of their aspects, while excluding others. Further, I might have grouped existing autoethnographies and autoethnographers into these crude paradigm boxes in a way that is not true to their intentions. The aim of the present study was to test the theoretical and methodological feasibility of an autoethnography informed by my philosophical background. Any simplifications of the above sort have been made in favour of this aim, however in full appreciation of the fact that there is always more depth and more detail to look into.

Lastly, I am aware that my representations of Levinas, Aikido and Zen are subjective interpretations of these philosophies and practices. What I have said about them, I have done from an entirely subjective perspective and I am merely a student and practitioner and not a teacher of any of them in their

sense of the word. Considering that none of them are intended as research approaches, it could be argued that by stripping them from their context I have also stripped them from their original purpose. It is an argument I have heard very often, particularly in Zazen, that the 'application' of the philosophy of Zazen to other contexts is a common western fallacy (Deshimaru & Leonard, 1991). On several occasions one of my Zen teachers said that we should not try to put a 'Zen-hat' over everything we do, i.e. apply some Zen ideas to everything we do and thus pervert it. Instead he advised us to just practice Zazen continuously and that through this practice Zazen would slowly permeate our lives, unconsciously, naturally. In this sense, I hope that what I have produced here is not just a theoretical exercise, but a representation of how these philosophies and practices have come to permeate my every thought and action, through their ongoing study and practice.

#### Conclusion

To conclude, the present dissertation set out to test the theoretical and methodological feasibility of an autoethnography informed by my personal philosophical background, notably the philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas, followed by the philosophies and practices of Aikido and Zazen. Its intent is to develop and test a methodological approach, autoethnography, situated in a specific philosophical foundation and theoretical framework and to identify its applicability in a future intended study. This future intended study is an autoethnography of my physiotherapy practice, a study that is yet novel in physiotherapy in both content and methodological form and that might yield beneficial insights into how we think about and practice physiotherapy.

To test the theoretical and methodological feasibility of the approach emerging throughout this dissertation, I have identified a number of key aspects comprising the philosophical and methodological foundation of autoethnography. These factors include the basic philosophical, ontological

and epistemological underpinnings, the data types and methods of its processing, issues of rigour and trustworthiness and ethical considerations for autoethnographic research. Using those key characteristics as points of difference, I have compared and contrasted existing autoethnographic approaches across the paradigms against each other, as well as against my personal philosophical background. Through this process of contrasting and comparing a theoretical framework has emerged that appears to be theoretically and methodologically feasible in partially building on and inferring from existing approaches, whilst also adding and changing some aspects in an entirely novel way. Whilst data types and the methods of their processing can be borrowed from other existing autoethnographic approaches, my philosophical background offers a philosophical underpinning for autoethnography that is quite different to the ways in which autoethnography is understood thus. Most prominently based on Emmanuel Levinas's philosophy the possibility herein lies in understanding autoethnography as a qualitative research methodology in which I am asked/called as an individual (auto) and it is my individual, inalienable primary responsibility and obligation to respond to and acknowledge every Other (ethno) with my whole subjectivity, my thinking, my writing (graphy), my body, my embodied personal and professional practices. This different philosophical underpinning then consequently permeates all the other theoretical and methodological aspects of autoethnography including how trustworthiness and ethics can be established and maintained throughout its application.

The implications of grounding (my) autoethnography on Levinas's ethical philosophy and the philosophies and practices of Aikido and Zazen have shown to be both possible and quite far reaching at a theoretical level. In fact, they appear to further broaden the possibilities of autoethnography by giving it yet another potentially strong theoretical and methodological foundation. However, any approach no matter how strong leaves some questions and weaknesses open to further scrutiny. In the present dissertation, I have found

these to be particularly the role of the Third and the limits of Levinas's 'said' as the final autoethnographic product, and its 'unsaying'. But rather than further exploring these question in the highly theoretical manner of the present dissertation, it appears as though it is time to take the emergent approach to a more practical level. Actually applying (my) autoethnographic approach to an autoethnography of my personal physiotherapy practice would allow a more practical way of revisiting those questions and further testing, reshaping and redeveloping (my) autoethnography parallel to a critical exploration of my personal professional practice. In this sense, 'conclusion' is probably the most inappropriate of words for the end of this study as its meaning derives from the latin 'concludere' which means a 'complete closing'. Rather than a closing, I would like to understand the present work as a 'complete opening', a 'said' nevertheless, but a 'said' aware of its need of 'unsaying' so it can be newly and continuously surprised and inspired by the Other/other that it tries to respond to. In the words of Levinas, "in the face of the other, I can never say I have done all my duty" (Levinas & Nemo, 1985, p. 105).

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