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# RELATIVISME

‘Relativisme’ betegner en gruppe syn som holder at for eksempel påstander, proposisjoner, epistemisk berettigelse, estetiske dommer eller moralsk verdi er relative til uventede forhold, som kulturell kontekst, historisk periode eller matematisk rammeverk.

Relativisme spenner vidt. Noen av synene er allment kjent som kontroversielle, særlig relativistiske syn om moral. Innenfor akademisk filosofi kan imidlertid debatten om relativisme være snevrere og motivert av en rekke tekniske spørsmål i for eksempel semantikk eller språkfilosofi.

I filosofihistorien har idéen røtter i antikken, kanskje mest kjent gjennom Protagoras, som hevdet at mennesket er alle tings målestokk. Nyere former for relativisme videreføres av filosofer som Rousseau, Diderot og Herder, og i vår tid hos blant annet Gilbert Harman og John MacFarlane.

I “Protagorean Relativism in the Theaetetus of Plato” diskuterer Sverre Hertzberg Platons behandling av relativisme i diskusjonen om kunnskap hentet fra dialogen Theaitetos. Hertzberg undersøker Protagoras’ relativisme i relasjon til Heraklits ontologi slik som i dialogen. Et kjent argument mot relativisme behandles, og en lesning hvorpå relativisme anklages for dialektisk selvrefutering blir diskutert.

Oda Davanger skriver i “The Plotinian One and Anaximander’s Apeiron: Reading the Apeiron in Plotinus’ First Principle” om forholdet mellom nyplatonikeren Plotin og førsokratikeren Anaximander. Hun argumente-

rer for at Plotins idé om verdens opphav, den Ene, muligens er inspirert av Anaximanders første prinsipp, *Apeiron*. Ved å vise til flere likheter mellom den Ene og *Apeiron* vurderer hun til hvilken grad vi bør tro Plotin var kjent med Anaximanders tekster.

Artikkelen “Desire and Pleasure in Foucault’s *The Will to Knowledge*’s Conclusion: Towards a Queer Policy of Pleasures” av Antoine Alario diskuterer Foucaults distinksjon mellom nytelse og begjær. Alario argumenterer for at det finnes en kritisk viktig distinksjon mellom disse to begrepene, til tross for at dette ikke har blitt grundig undersøkt, og at denne er nødvendig for å forstå Foucaults prosjekt om seksualitetens historie.

Hans Robin Solberg har intervjuet professor Herman Cappelen. I intervjuet diskuterer Cappelen relativisme om sannhet, samt sitt eget ikke-relativistiske syn. Dag August Schmedling Dramer anmelder essaysamlingen *Background Practices* av den nylig avdøde Hubert Dreyfus, og Carl Wegner Kornes omtaler den nylig utgitte Blackwell companion til den omstridte forfatteren og filosofen Ayn Rand. Denne utgavens mesterbrev er skrevet av Mathias Helseth og Eivor Mæland.

Videre finner du Karl Poppers toleranseparadoks i et utdrag fra den leksikryptisk encyclopedi, og postdoktor i kjernefysikk ved UiO Gry Tveten skriver om relativisme i moderne fysikk med vekt på Einsteins relativitetsteori som et innlegg i vår spalte, «I praksis».

God lesning!

Maren Kildahl Fjeld &  
Adrian Kristing Ommundsen  
*redaktører*

# PROTAGOREAN RELATIVISM IN THE THEAETETUS OF PLATO

By Sverre Hertzberg

In Plato's *Theaetetus*, Socrates meets the young and promising mathematician Theaetetus, and the conversation quickly becomes an investigation into the nature of knowledge. When first asked what he thinks knowledge is, Theaetetus answers, after a couple of failed attempts and a brief lecture about the nature of definitions, that knowledge is perception ( $K=P$ ) (151e). This leads to a long conversation about the assumptions behind this definition, tied up to Heraclitean ontology (HO) and Protagorean epistemology, or the Measure Doctrine (MD). In order to give a good account of Theaetetus' definition, Socrates combines these three views, such that  $K=P$  is understood in terms of HO and MD.

Later on, Socrates attempts to disprove  $K=P$ , and provides us with several arguments against this understanding of knowledge. Perhaps the most famous argument comes towards the end, and is often referred to as the "self-refutation argument". This passage has been subject to much debate in recent years, particularly the question of whether this is a good argument.

In this paper, I will start by presenting Protagorean relativism as it is presented in the dialogue, and the connection between the epistemology and the ontological framework, inspired by the interpretation of Myles Burnyeat. Secondly, I will present the self-refutation argument and consider some different ways of understanding the passage associated with it. The aim of this paper is to explore one interpretation of the argument which holds that the argument is not intended by Plato to be an absolute refutation, but rather to point out how it is unable to hold its ground when put under scrutiny. I want to suggest that, although this leads to a somewhat weaker conclusion, this

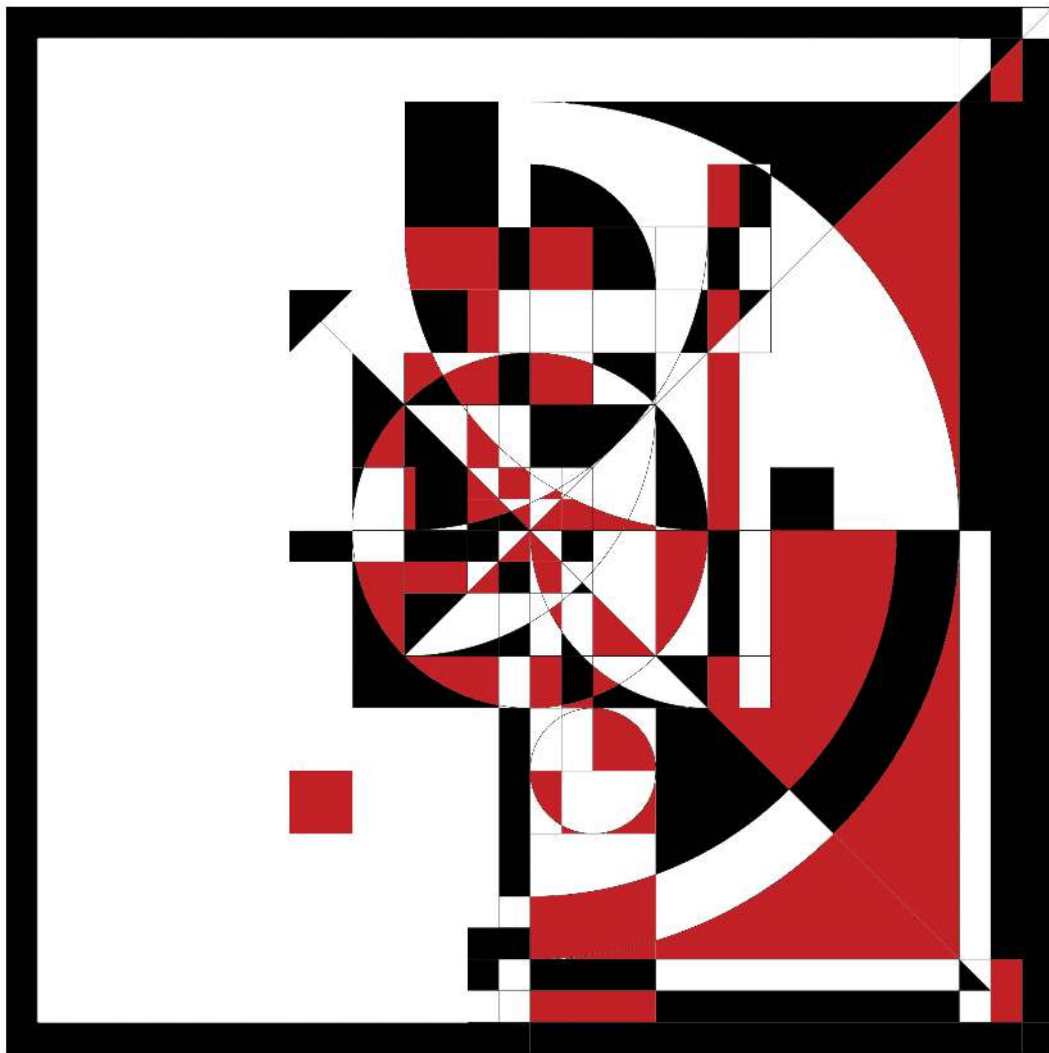
is the most charitable reading of Plato, and a good way of solving the puzzle at hand. In the end, I want to briefly discuss the importance of dialectics and debates in the Academy, and attempt to use this as a possible reason for believing the interpretation I am defending.

## Protagorean Relativism

### (i) *The Measure Doctrine (MD)*

Protagoras has in recent times been referred to as the father of relativism (Baghramian, Carter 2017: Sec. 3), and is credited with the thesis that 'Man is the measure of all things: of the things which are, that they are and of the things which are not, that they are not' (152<sup>a</sup>). Although only fragments survive from Protagoras' book "The Truth," the discussion in *Theaetetus* reveals at least how he was interpreted in Plato's time. The doctrine is formulated by Plato in many ways: "As each thing appears to me, so it is for me, and as it appears to you, so it is for you – you and I each being a man" (152a); "What seems true to anyone is true for him to whom it seems so" (170a). These different formulations are supposed to capture the same phenomenon, and for the time being, we can define MD as "if it seems to  $x$  that  $p$ , then it is true for  $x$  that  $p$ " (Burnyeat 1976:178).

In order for this theory to fit the definition of knowledge in question (Knowledge=Perception), Socrates claims that the term "appears" captures the same phenomenon as "is perceived" (152c1–2). It follows, if you accept both MD and that appears=is perceived, that when something is perceived, it is also known. He thus establishes a connection between Protagorean epistemology and the definition of knowledge as perception. Later on, it is also established



*Illustrasjon:* Rasmus Gaare

that perception not only refers to sensory experience, but can also be of “pleasures and pains, desires and fears; and there are other besides, a great number which have names, an infinite number which have not” (156b). Moreover, the theory is also supposed to account for conceptual knowledge e.g. knowledge of justice or virtue, meaning that it also entails a form of moral relativism.<sup>1</sup>

## *(ii) The ontological framework and a theory of perception*

In addition to this Protagorean epistemology, Socrates adds an ontological framework in order to support  $K=P$ , to which he refers to as “the secret doctrine” of Protagoras’ theory.<sup>2</sup> The basic claim of this ontology, highly influenced by pre-Socratic philosophers like Heraclitus and Empedocles, is presented in the following way:

What really is true, is this: the things of which we naturally say that they “are,” are in process of coming to be, as the result of movement and change and blending with one another. We are wrong when we say that they ‘are,’ since nothing ever is, but everything is coming to be. (152e)

In other words, what we perceive are not objects themselves, but processes. This can be illustrated by an example: Imagine someone planting a sunflower in his or her living room, and decides to film the entire process, from the first sprout until the fading away of the last leaf. This person decides it would be interesting to make a time lapse video of the footage, and creates a 2-minute edit entitled “sunflower”. When looking at a photo of the flower, any person would be quick to point out that “that’s a sunflower”. However, when watching time lapses like this, it becomes clear that what you are looking at is not a flower, but rather, the coming-to-be and fading-away of something. The stability we seemingly perceive is an illusion, caused by the slow motion of the changes that actually governs all things in the world.

This is supposed to give justification to MD, in the sense that it allows perception of the world to be something that belongs entirely to the perceiver. There is no objective world, and each individual world arises in relation to the person perceiving (Castagnoli 2004:5). The fact that what I perceive can never be the same as what you perceive supports the thesis that what appears to me is true of the world, not in itself, but in relation to me. This leads to the sort of relativism that Plato seems to be ascribing to Protagoras:

Hence, whether you apply the term ‘being’ to a thing or the term ‘becoming,’ you must always use the words ‘for somebody’ or ‘of something’ or ‘relative to something’. You must not speak of anything as in itself either being or becoming, nor let anyone else use such expressions. That is the meaning of the theory we have been expounding. (160b)

Socrates goes on to claim that, in order to better describe the world, we should change our vocabulary, so that verbs like “being” should be replaced by phrases like “coming-to-be” etc (157b–c). The exact relation between MD and this ontology is a controversial subject-matter, and for the purposes of this paper it will suffice to use one of the more common interpretations, namely that it helps MD resist problems like the principle of non-contradiction and explains the plurality of subjective worlds (Castagnoli 2004:8).

So far, we have seen that MD holds that there is a direct link between a person’s perception of the world and his knowledge, so that whatever seems true to someone, it is true *for them*. This view is backed up by an ontology, which posits that everything is in a constant flux and that nothing really is, but is rather coming-to-be. This ontological framework is supposed to show that every perception of the world is personal and demonstrates that we should not talk of anything as existing in itself, which in turn supports the thesis that all perceptions are true for you (in your world).

However, after spending some time sketching out the position in question, Socrates tries to show how this theory of knowledge fails. He gives a number of arguments, but the one I find most interesting, and the one who has received most attention in the past decades, is the self-refutation argument.

## **The Self-refutation Argument**

Arguments based on self-refutation are a common strategy against relativistic claims. Their basic structure is, very roughly, something like: if everything is relative, there are no truths. But then the claim that “everything is relative” cannot be true. It seems, then, that if you accept the theory, you implicitly also accept its falsity, and the theory refutes itself. (Baggini, Fosl 2010:130–31) However, the argument presented by Socrates in the Theaetetus is more complicated than this. As we have seen, Protagoras seems to think that what appears to be true to a person  $P$ , is in fact true for  $P$ . In other words, truth does exist in MD, ac-

cording to some interpretations, which means that an argument against it cannot be along the lines of the example of a self-refutation argument above. In order to examine the argument itself, it can be useful to consider the passage from which it emerges:<sup>3</sup>

(1) SOC. Secondly, it [MD] has this most exquisite feature: Protagoras admits, I presume, that the contrary opinion about his own opinion (namely, that it is false) must be true, since he agrees that all men judge what is.

(2) THEOD. Undoubtedly.

(3) SOC. And in conceding the truth of the opinion of those who think him wrong, he is really admitting the falsity of his own opinion?

(4) THEOD. Yes, inevitably.

(5) SOC. But for their part the others do not admit that they are wrong?

(6) THEOD. No.

(7) SOC. But Protagoras again admits this judgement to be true, according to his written doctrine?

(8) THEOD. So it appears.

(9) SOC. It will be disputed, then, by everyone, beginning with Protagoras – or rather, it will be admitted by him, when he grants to the person who contradicts him that he judges truly – when he does that, even Protagoras himself will be granting that neither a dog nor the ‘man in the street’ is the measure of anything at all which he has not learned. Isn’t that so? (171a6–c4)

As Eyjólfur Emilsson has observed, what Plato does here is to create a hypothetical dialog within the dialogue, between Protagoras and his opponents (Emilsson 1994:138). When confronted with the accusation that he must agree with the fact that his opponent is right in asserting the falsity of his own thesis, Protagoras has no other option than to agree. The argument can be reconstructed in the following way:

1. According to MD, every judgment is true.

2. Protagoras agrees that there are people who believe that MD is false.

3. Protagoras must, from (1) and (2), admit that it is true that MD is false.

4. Protagoras must, from (3), admit that MD is false.<sup>4</sup>

The first thing that one is struck by when analyzing this argument is the lack of qualifiers essential to Protagoras thesis, a problem identified by most scholars today. It seems that in both the passage above, and the reconstruction of the argument, the word “truth” is not being used relative to something, but as an absolute. However, the reconstruction seems to be consistent with the passage.<sup>5</sup> Surely, Protagoras would not agree to the first premise, unless it specified that every judgment is true, for the person judging. This changes the conclusion entirely, and Protagoras need only admit that MD is false, *for the people denying it*. The argument is thus guilty of the strawman fallacy; it is only able to refute a position Protagoras would not accept.

One might respond to this objection by saying that, while this argument does not successfully demonstrate that MD refutes itself, it does lead to a contradiction, in the sense that MD is both true and false. However, as Sarah Waterlow has demonstrated, Protagoras can easily deny the principle of non-contradiction (Waterlow 2009:20). In addition to this, it seems clear that with the proper qualifiers in place, there is no contradiction in the first place. It seems then, that the self-refutation argument is not in any way proving that MD is false in any absolute sense. If this is the case, as some have argued, Plato has reached an *ignoratio elenchi*, i.e. an irrelevant conclusion, and fails to address MD properly. It seems unlikely, as many have pointed out before me (for example Castagnoli 2004:8), that Socrates is unaware of the lack of qualifiers in his argumentation, especially since he seems to be fully aware of them elsewhere in the text. Why would Plato include this argument if he were aware of these issues? What is its function?

### *The Self-Refutation Argument as a Demonstration of MDs Dialectical Inconsistency*

There have been many attempts to solve this puzzle, but I will focus on the one I find most plausible, which denies that the argument proves the falsity of MD, but still raises a serious problem about its nature. This interpretation, defended by both Waterlow, Castagnoli and Emilsson, holds that Plato is neither attempting to demonstrate that MD

is inconsistent or that accepting it logically leads to rejecting it, but that “those who reject it can have no reason to even consider accepting it” (Castagnoli 2004:35). In other words, it is a useless position in any debate, since it follows from MD that an opponent’s belief in its falsity is true for them. The argument, then, is supposed to show us the difficulties of convincing others of such a thesis, and that in a debate, he “does not have anything plausible to say in return” (Emilsson 1994:137). Castagnoli summarizes what he believes to be Socrates’ real intention with the argument in a clear and concise way:

What Socrates does show is that MD turns out to be utterly indefensible, and thus untenable, as soon as put under scrutiny in a dialectical context, and therefore there is no real possibility for one to believe in it. (Castagnoli 2004:24)

As mentioned above, Emilsson observed that the self-refutation argument takes the form of a hypothetical debate between Protagoras and his opponents. His way of reconstructing the debate demonstrates the indefensibility of MD, and gives us good reason to think of the argument in this way.

When confronted with the fact that it is true for him that the doctrine is false for his opponent, his only option is to go on relativizing, saying something along the lines of: “Even if it is true for you that the Measure doctrine is false for me, that view of yours is nevertheless false for me” (Emilsson 1994:145). This could potentially go on endlessly, and Protagoras would never be able to “say anything which is intended as an objection to the claim that the Measure doctrine is false (simpliciter)” (Emilsson 1994:145).

Waterlow, Castagnoli and Emilsson reach this conclusion by means of entirely different interpretations of MD. While Waterlow argues that MD is a “factual relativism” (Waterlow 1977:34), Emilsson seems to hold that it is a relativism about truth. Castagnoli on the other hand, claims that it is a relativism of both truth and fact (Castagnoli 2004:5). And while Emilsson believes that the qualifiers can be read implicitly in the argument, Waterlow argues that they are left out on purpose. This reading of the argument is consistent with a number of different interpretations of MD, but given the scope of this paper, I will not attempt to defend one or the other here.

Based on this reading, however, Plato is not able to

show that MD is self-refuting. It seems to me that the only way to provide a successful self-refutation argument against MD is to accept the lack of qualifiers in the passage, and embrace an interpretation of Protagoras where truths are not qualified. This, however, given the many formulation of MD in the text, seems absurd. Especially considering the passage I quoted earlier, where Socrates clearly states that we must always add the phrase “relative to something” when applying the term “being” to something.

Even though MD is not self-refuting in an absolute sense, I would still claim that it is not a strong position, based on its inability to answer opponents and partake in a dialectical discussion. Second of all, if a Protagorean wants to apply his epistemology to his or her own discourse, he or she would have to begin every claim with “it appears to me that,” so that the entire theory will be presented as a belief, without any objective claims. In other words, any theory within this framework will be true, and the only way to be convinced of its truth would be to already accept it.

One might argue that a theory’s ability to hold up in a dialectical exercise is not at all relevant to its truth. And

**The stability we seemingly perceive is an illusion, caused by the slow motion of the changes that actually governs all things in the world.**

although this is a fair objection to the argument itself, it may seem that the importance of dialectics was more valued in Plato’s time, which

in turn might support the interpretation. According to Pierre Hadot, dialectical exercise was the main method of teaching at the Academy, and remained a central part of the education until the 1<sup>st</sup> century B.C. It consisted of two participants engaging in a back and forth discussion over a thesis, one attempting to defend it while the other attacked it (Hadot 2002:62). Neither of the participants necessarily agreed to the thesis in question, and the aim was not to emerge as a victor. Rather, it was seen as a spiritual exercise wherein both would “undergo an askesis, or self-transformation” (Hadot 2002:62).

The importance of dialectical practice in the Academy seems to me to be one more reason to believe that Plato was in fact just demonstrating Protagoras’ inability to partake in such discussions. As we have seen, the argument takes the form of a hypothetical dialogue, where the thesis is tested out by an opponent. It is shown that Protagoras is unable to defend MD against his opponent, and he is thus defeated in this context. Given the importance of the dialectical method of education in the Academy, and more generally, in all of Plato’s works, it seems reasonable to claim that Plato thought the ability to withstand scrutiny is an important aspect of any good philosophical theory.



## Conclusion

As we have seen, the “self-refutation argument” was not able to refute MD in any absolute sense. However, if read in a certain way, it can be understood as an attempt to demonstrate its inability to partake in dialectical exercise. This seems to me to be the best interpretation available, and we have seen that there are many reasons for believing it. First of all, the fact that the argument is presented as a hypothetical debate between Protagoras and his opponents indicates that it should be read in this context. Second of all, we have seen that the importance of dialectics for Plato might also support it.

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Exactly how this is done is beyond the scope of this paper, but for the discussion see 172a–c. A similar view can also be found in 166b–168c.

<sup>2</sup> 152c. Burnyeat points out that it is highly unlikely that Protagoras did endorse HO, and this is not meant to be taken seriously. (1990:12). The Protagoras of this paper will therefore be somewhat historically inaccurate, and is more of a platonic construct than an accurate representation of Protagoras and his philosophy.

<sup>3</sup> Note: In this part of the dialogue Theodorus (Theaetetus' teacher) assumes Theaetetus' role.

<sup>4</sup> This way of presenting the argument is borrowed from Castagnoli (2004:1).

<sup>5</sup> Socrates clearly states that Protagoras holds that “all men judge what is”, and not “all men judge what is, to them”.

# DESIRE AND PLEASURE IN FOUCAULT

## THE WILL TO KNOWLEDGE'S CONCLUSION: TOWARDS A QUEER POLICY OF PLEASURES

By Antoine Alario

*The Will to Knowledge's* last pages (Foucault 2015a:734–736) are puzzling in many ways: in a formal one, they are written within a very non-Foucauldian tone, within a nearly-prophetic register, as shown by the tense of the verbs, conjugated in the futural; two times, the futurist claim “one day” occurs in the text, indexed with the adverb “perhaps”, strengthening the temporal imprecision and the theoretical ambiguity of the excerpt. In a thematic way, those pages introduce an unexpected tension, between desire and pleasures, which is not demonstrated but assumed, and seems to arrive out of nowhere. My paper proposes to throw light on this conclusion.

The puzzling dimension of these pages might be the reason why the tension desire–pleasure is studied by few French Foucault scholars, although this tension seems really important for his thinking. Let's take some examples to illustrate this phenomenon: most of the literature published nowadays on Foucault doesn't discuss the matter desire and pleasure; the anthology recently published, *Michel Foucault: éthique et vérité (1980-1984)* (Lorenzini et al. 2015a) [ethics and truth], which nevertheless focuses on “the last Foucault”, who interests us now, doesn't contain any paper on these notions. Also, the *Dictionnaire Foucault* (Revel 2007) doesn't provide any definition for the words “Desire” and “Pleasure”, and the recent works of leading French Foucault scholars don't look at them either (Gros 2006; Sforzini 2014). One last point is that, in general, the French research on the tension ‘desire–pleasure’ only gives us access to articles and books studying it in relation to psychoanalysis (David-Ménard 2011; Allouch 1999), although psychoanalysis is radically criticized by the foucauldian history of sexuality. I'll focus on this ten-

sion in Foucault's work itself, without comparing it to psychoanalysis.

This desire–pleasure tension deserves our attention as Foucault himself talks about it, after *The Will to Knowledge*, as an “important matter”, which the researchers don't seem to care enough about. One mustn't forget that this tension was the topic of the course given by Foucault in São Paulo (Foucault 2015d:1499–1500), one year before *The Will to Knowledge*, in which Foucault opposed the *scientia sexualis*, whose task will be to explain the sexual behaviour relying on desire (I will come back to this concept later), and the *ars erotica*, in which, at the opposite, the matter consists in overwhelming sexuality towards an intense point of pleasure. Thus, this tension seems to be very important for Foucault's thought, as noticed by his American commentator, David Halperin, without studying it further : “the distinction between desire and pleasure [...] is at the heart of Foucault's thought” (Halperin 2000:105).

It can thus be very fruitful to throw light on *The Will to Knowledge's* conclusion, allowing us to fulfil this lack in actual research. Another point, more philosophical, is exposing a political dimension of pleasures, which could give us access to an original philosophy of pleasures, allowing a new conceptualization of them, different from their usual ethical or metaphysical meanings.

By shedding light on this conclusion, I also attempt to explain the controversy it started, especially with the Deleuze letter addressed to Foucault, “Désir et plaisir” (Deleuze 1994), written right after Foucault wrote *The Will to Knowledge*, in which Deleuze exposes the philosophical problems of this book, and of its conclusion: “how can pleasures act as counter-powers, and how does

Foucault conceptualize them?” (Deleuze 1994:62). The controversial dimension of Foucault’s conclusion has been strengthened by Judith Butler’s article “Revisiting ‘Bodies and Pleasures’” (Butler 1990), in which she tries to demonstrate the philosophical inefficiency of this conclusion.

To reach this goal, I will use a critical exegesis method, from a fundamentally heterogeneous corpus. Indeed, I won’t hesitate analysing, using the Foucauldian works, published books, and his courses at the Collège de France, as well as the many articles and interviews compiled in the French editions of the *Dits et écrits* (Foucault 2001;2005b). Further, I will deal with the different material Foucault used to deploy his thought exactly the same way, because I need to show the logic of this tension as much within the academical works of Foucault as within his intimate relation with his own actuality (I will explain this Foucauldian concept of actuality later in this paper), of which only the *Dits et écrits* can give an account. I will thus be able to clarify *The Will to Knowledge*’s conclusion with the texts which succeeded it.

I will use this method according to three moments: at first, I will try illuminating this conclusion using *The Will to Knowledge* itself, to give a better understanding of its complexity and its problems. I will then have to elaborate on this tension, catching its deployment throughout the history of sexuality, and to measure the extent in which this history can give an account of it. I will finally be able to propose Foucault’s concept of actuality as a key to understand *The Will to knowledge*’s conclusion.

## I. The political dimension of pleasures : a problematical tension

As I am intending to render more intelligible the last pages of *The Will to knowledge*, is it not so that the reading of this work allow me to do so? Indeed, this book enables us to understand the final tension between desire and pleasures as the result of two main moments in the text. First, exposing the two core concepts of *dispositif* and *resistance*, and second, already evoked, opposing *scientia sexualis* and *ars erotica*.

Indeed, the tension between *dispositif* and resistance is crucial in understanding that of desire and pleasure. The *dispositif* takes an important place in *The Will to Knowledge*, as its fourth part is dedicated to it; nevertheless, it is hard to find a clear definition of it. This concept is, by the way, central in Foucault’s thought, and has been studied many times (Raffnsøe 2008). I will just give a minimal notion of it, as it is not the purpose of my work: a *dispositif* is a

concept’s willingness to be heterogeneous, designating a plurality of structures such as discourses, practices, institutions and geographical determinations linked to a specific historical problem. For instance, the *dispositif* of education would designate and help to think, throughout a defined period, all the speeches, practices, and institutions related to the subject of education: The whole literature concerning this subject as well as the buildings where convey education takes place, as well as the actions related to this topic (the teacher going to school, the pupil doing homework, the parent punishing the child, and so on). I can add that a Foucauldian *dispositif* is necessarily *normalizing*: it is about conveying models, patterns, through the structures of discourses and institutions, which totally determine the way people behave, act and think according to a particular problem. Considering sexuality, we have a particular way of thinking of it, of behaving (of making love, of dating, and so on), and it is determined by the specific *dispositif* of sexuality we are living in.

The *dispositif* of sexuality must thus allow to describe the heterogeneous totality related to the phenomenon of sexuality, as it is the topic of Foucault’s history.

What is, then, the *dispositif* of sexuality? How can we describe it? The point of this Foucauldian history seems to be about answering this question, and I can define this *dispositif*, in relation to our topic, marked by a will to knowledge inherited from Christianity, whose object is the truth of desire – meaning the will to understand what desire is, to extract truth from desire by investigating it (through the method of confession, for instance, to make the desire express itself in order to grasp its truth). The *dispositif* of sexuality must then allow us to understand the plurality of speeches, practices and institutions which common point is the will to state the truth of desire, and through it the truth of the subject. For what is ‘desire’, this firstly stoic concept born in the first centuries (Foucault 2014)? It is the subject’s principle of intelligibility, thanks to which the subject can be understood in the truth of his being. Now I see why psychoanalysis, in this history, is the target of a strong criticism, as it is completely part of this tradition, of this *dispositif* willingness to say the truth of the subject, especially through confession.

But this *dispositif*’s description is not enough, otherwise the pleasures would never have to come up in the book. This concept is quickly put vis-à-vis with another one, resistance – “where there is power, there is resistance” (Foucault 2015a:685). We can’t properly analyze the strategies of a power, the mechanisms of a *dispositif* without taking into account the necessary points of resistance re-

siding in it. For Foucault, this is a methodological rule in order to understand the power as involved in every *dispositif*: relations of power and relations of resistance are the “irreducible opposites” (Foucault 2015a:686). So if the *dispositif* – in general – is the source of relations of power, as it effectuates strategies throughout a set of force relations – here, to tell the desire’s truth – then we also have to understand the relations of resistance facing it.

I can already show why, methodologically, Foucault couldn’t be satisfied with just describing this *dispositif*, referring to desire as the object of the will to knowledge; why he also needed to understand the facing points of resistance. But why, precisely, should this resisting function be attributed to pleasures? Why this hypothesis of *pleasures* as possible points of resistance to the *dispositif* of sexuality?

It is possible to understand why this function is attributed to pleasures thanks to the second moment I talked about: the opposition between *scientia sexualis* and *ars erotica*. I have already mentioned the course given by Foucault in São Paul one year earlier, in which he precisely opposes those two conceptions, respectively Western and Eastern, of the relation to sex – an opposition retaken in the third part of the book. Even before describing the main characteristics of the *scientia sexualis*, within the project of a description of the *dispositif* of sexuality, Foucault opposes to it a counter-power, the one of the *ars erotica*, defined as a truth produced by the pleasure, as an experience of which we have to know the duration and the intensity, at the reversal of a science founded on the investigation of soul and consciousness:

In the erotic art, truth is drawn from pleasure itself, understood as a practice and accumulated as an experience [...] ; it is experienced as pleasure, evaluated in terms of its intensity, its specific quality, its durations, its reverberations in the body and the soul. (Foucault 2015a:657)

I find that this tension between *scientia sexualis* and *ars erotica*, as hypothetical as it might be, motivates the conclusion of the book. Thus, Foucault needs to imagine the points of resistance to the *dispositif* of sexuality, using the opposition he discovered.

Those two elements inside the book allow us to understand both the intervention of pleasures as points of resistance, and their hypothetical dimension, because Foucault can only *imagine*, based on his researches, that these could be alternatives to the *dispositif* of sexuality, as they aren’t effective yet. The opposition between desire and

pleasure thus becomes an opposition between *dispositif* and resistance.

Even if we now understand better the grounds of this desire–pleasure tension, it remains problematic: as underlined by Deleuze in his letter. We don’t understand what Foucault means with his enigmatic concept of “pleasure”, even if we know it’s at the source of the *ars erotica*, because he doesn’t give a good explanation of it. We don’t understand how pleasure can oppose desire; how it can make a force of resistance, strong enough to get rid of either.

Hence, as shown by Butler in “Revisiting ‘Bodies and Pleasures’”, this duality between desire and pleasure can only lead to a reversal of one *dispositif*, into another: if, as suggested by Foucault, we could ever succeed in “counter[ing] the grips of power with the claims of bodies, pleasures, and knowledge, in their multiplicity and their possibility of resistance” (Butler 1999), and thus in breaking away from “the agency of sex”, wouldn’t the result be a simple change of *dispositif*, the substitution of the one of sexuality by the one of pleasures and bodies, neutralizing then the oppositional force of pleasures? More precisely, as *dispositif* and resistance must be the “irreducible opposites”, isn’t it contradictory to think that we can break away from the *dispositif* in favour of the only resistance? There can’t be *dispositif* without resistance, according to Foucault’s formula, just as there can’t be resistance without *dispositif*: thus pleasures can’t exist without desires, at the opposite of what is suggested by this conclusion. Butler seeks to demonstrate the inefficiency of this conclusion, beyond the hypothetical dimension of it, equally problematic.

Then, it won’t do to only consider *The Will to Knowledge* to try to understand its conclusion, even if the book allows us to understand its main motivations? Do the modifications in the two last published books of the *History of sexuality* allow me to understand it better?

It is indeed possible to read the beginning of *The Use of Pleasure* as a big reply to the problem faced few years ago. Beyond the title of the book, which seems to offer a clarification of the philosophical use Foucault made of pleasures, it introduces a new fundamental concept : the one of *aphrodisia*. The *aphrodisia*, introduced for the first time during the Lesson of the 28<sup>th</sup> of January 1981, in *Subjectivity and truth* (Foucault 2014), is a Greco-Roman concept Foucault clearly defines in 1984 :

The *aphrodisia* are acts, gestures, contacts, procuring a certain form of pleasure. (Foucault 2015b:769)

The *aphrodisia* are thus defined thanks to their heteroge-

neous dimension, as they make thinkable a multiplicity of various phenomena, from aesthetics pleasures to culinary and sexual ones. *The Use of Pleasure* and *The Care of the Self* propose to study the way the *aphrodisia* were perceived and acted by Greeks and Romans, relying on the example of three fields of application. The one of the body, of the alimentary regimentation, as pleasures were thought as a way to feed (*The Use of Pleasure*, ch.II; *The Care of the Self*, ch.IV). The one of women, of marriage and couples, as pleasures were also thought through the marital relationship (*The Use of Pleasure*, ch.III; *The Care of the Self*, ch.V). Finally the one of the boys, of the relationships between the man and the boys, the *erastês* and the *erômenos*, as they were the object of a real ethical concern (*The Use of Pleasure*, ch.IV; *The Care of the Self*, ch.VI).

I should also note that, among the remarkable modifications made since the first volume, the *aphrodisia* are not opposed to the *dispositif* of sexuality, nor to the desire, but more precisely to the “flesh”, a word used by Foucault to designate the Christian experience of sexuality, borrowing this Christian concept founded on the assimilation of the body and the flesh, of the impure movements inside the sinful material.

Am I then in position to conclude that Foucault’s perspective has radically changed, that he evacuated the final hypothesis of *The Will to Knowledge*? On the contrary, it appears to me that he deepened it: now he seeks to understand the *dispositif* of sexuality, drawing its deeper history, going back to its antique roots. He seeks to understand what is at the origin of “the birth of desire”, as the principle from which the experiences of the flesh and of modern sexuality developed. That is why Foucault, from now on, talks less about sexuality and desire than about flesh, as flesh is the new historical period (from the beginning of Christianity) to study in order to draw this history. What about this transition from pleasures to *aphrodisia*? This change follows the same logics : going back to before the birth of desire (one must remember that Foucault showed in *Subjectivity and truth* that the birth of desire occurred during the first centuries of our era, with Stoicism, before being reused and deepened by Christianity), to when desire was not used as the principle for subject’s intelligibility. Yet, as I just noticed, the *aphrodisia* correspond to this time.

Should I remain with these historical considerations? What about the goal of *The Will to Knowledge* which interests me, describing a *dispositif* and its possible resistances? It is possible that these modifications act in favour of this goal, allowing to imagine higher possibilities of resistance

to the modern *dispositif* of sexuality, which would not only deal with spatial variations (as it was the case with *ars erotica*, dealing with the difference between Western and Eastern), but historical ones (as it is now the case with the difference between Antiquity and modern experience). It is interesting to notice that, in spite of these modifications, the pleasures, through their ancient form of *aphrodisia*, remain the main element allowing resistance.

A question now arises, regarding these modifications: does this new formulation of the tension as a historical one between the time of *aphrodisia* and the time of flesh enable us to give an account of the conclusion of *The Will to Knowledge*? Does the history of sexuality, carried on with *The Use of Pleasure* and *The Care of the Self*, allow us to show the philosophical meaning of the original tension between desire and pleasures ?

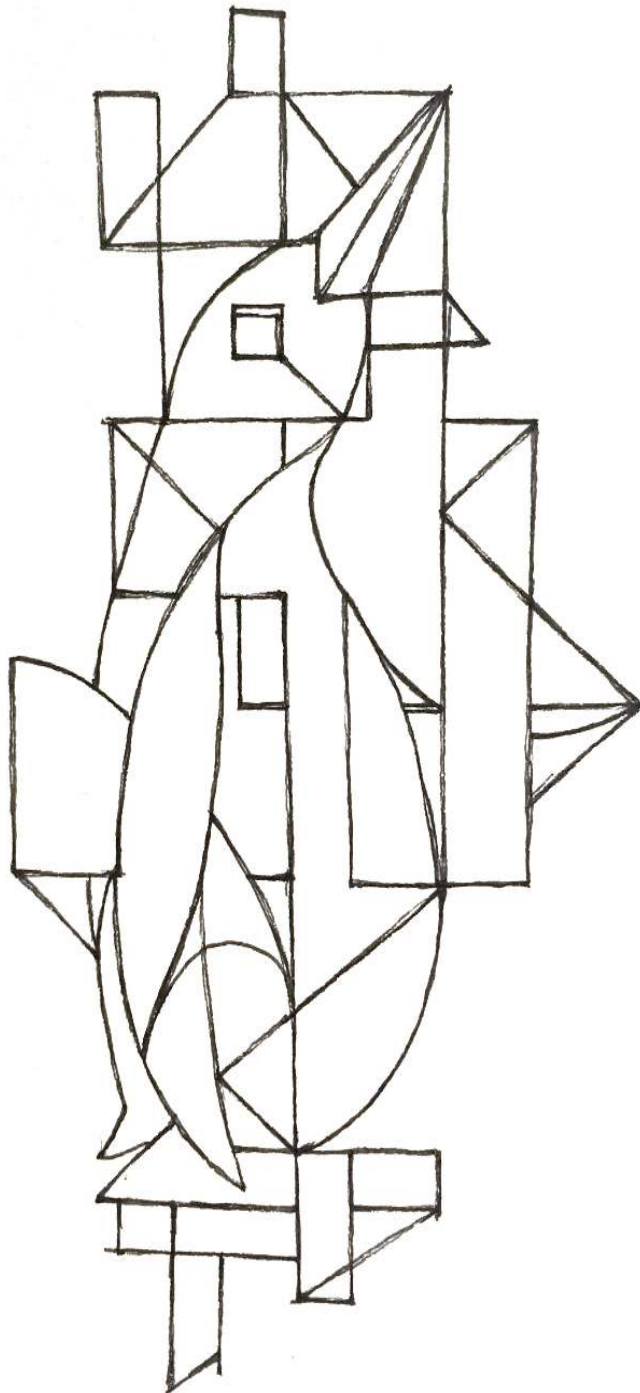
## II. The history of sexuality: ethical substances and actuality

The history of sexuality, as began in *The Will to Knowledge*, and continued in the already quoted Course at the Collège de France, *Subjectivity and truth*, enables a historical study of the *aphrodisia*. But, from there, doesn’t the point turn into a purely historical one ? It appears so while reading the two last published volumes, the goal of which are, according to Frédéric Gros, to “describe inflexions” (Foucault 2015d:1539), that is to say to give an account of the notable historical changes between classical Greece and the two first centuries of our era, in the use and perception of *aphrodisia*. But these historical elements don’t allow us to understand their philosophical extent, which motives me to better understand the conclusion of *The Will to Knowledge*.

But what exactly is the role of the desire–pleasure tension within the history of sexuality? I have to understand this point before inferring the insufficiency of the history of sexuality in making it intelligible. This was a core tension in the first volume of the *History of Sexuality*, as it allowed us to understand both the *dispositif* of sexuality and its counter-power. With the second volume, the tension becomes historical, as I’ve already underlined, opposing two periods, an ancient one of the *aphrodisia*, and a period of the flesh from the two first centuries of our era. But is the desire–pleasure problem just about a historical tension?

I think we are justified in saying that this tension is also about a philosophical one between two wide conceptions of the relations between the subject and its sexual activity, or two “ethical substances”. The concept of eth-





Illustrasjon: Rasmus Gaare

ical substance seems essential in order to understand the becoming of the desire–pleasure tension within the history of sexuality. The concept is elaborated upon in the introduction of *The Use of Pleasure*, in the first paragraph (Foucault 2015b:758–764), where the four modes of subjectivation are defined, meaning the four ways the subject can define himself as a subject – the history of sexuality is intrinsically linked with a history of subjectivity, as Foucault first wants to understand how subjects were constituted as subjects before understanding how, as constituted subjects, they were brought to recognize themselves as subjects of sexuality, continuing what is started in the first volume (Foucault 2015b:741). This process through which the subject constitutes himself, turns himself into a subject, Foucault calls subjectivation.

Subjectivation is done through four steps one must follow to become a subject. First, the determination of the ethical substance. Second, the mode of subjection. Third, the ethical work, and finally the *telos* of the ethical subject. How does the subject constitute himself as an ethical subject? For starters, what the subject transforms must be determined, his ethical substance, then the way to he subjects himself to rules, before the transition into respecting those rules, and finally to know the *telos*, the point according to which all those steps of subjective (or ethical) transformation are effectuated.

And it is precisely at the level of the first step of subjectivation that the difference between *aphrodisia* and flesh turns relevant: each of these experiences can be distinguished as they are relying on two distinct ethical substances, respectively the *aphrodisia*, or pleasures, and the desire. Thus, the ethical substances show how the desire–pleasure tension has not only become a historical tension, but a philosophical one, as it is about opposing two ethical ontologies, understood as models of subjectivation, founded on two distinct ethical substances. This new history of sexuality, as in Foucault's project, tells the transformation of the ethical substance of *aphrodisia* (determined in *The Use of Pleasure* and *The Care of the Self*) into the one of desire (determined in the nearly-published volume *The Confessions of the Flesh*).

But in spite of the philosophical dimension of this tension, relying on two ethical ontologies, I can see that the tension remains, as a historical one. Also, to that extent, this historical dimension doesn't allow us to fully understand the desire–pleasure tension. It only allows us to understand why pleasures can carry this function, as they are historically prior to the birth of desire.

Thus, it is impossible to consider only the history of

sexuality in order to understand the tension, as it can only give us a historical clarification of it. Then, how can I clarify it philosophically? To answer this question, I will make a methodological detour to understand the philosophical function of history in Foucault's theories, as it is within the history of sexuality that this tension appears: what is the philosophical aim of this history?

By relying on two of Foucault's theoretical texts about his historical method, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History" (Foucault 2015c) and "What is Enlightenment?" (Foucault 2015e), I can say that the Foucauldian history is wholly oriented towards actuality. This is what appears with the 1971 text, in which Foucault comments on Nietzsche and his conception of the "effective history", understood as an anti-finalist and anti-essentialist history. Yet, one of the points of this history is described as follows:

History has a more important task than to be a handmaiden to philosophy, to recount the necessary birth of truth and values; it should become a differential knowledge of energies and failings, heights and degenerations, poisons and antidotes. Its task is to become a curative science. [...] Nietzsche's version of historical sense is explicit in its perspective and acknowledges its system of injustice. Its perception is slanted, being a deliberate appraisal, affirmation, or negation; it reaches the lingering and poisonous traces in order to prescribe the best antidote. (Foucault 2015c:1296)

This excerpt seems to be perfectly relevant to my problem: the goal of history is to determine the "poisons" and "to prescribe the best antidote". Yet, isn't this precisely how we can understand the logic of *The Will to Knowledge*? Isn't it about determining the poison, that is to say the *dispositif* of sexuality, and to propose an antidote, i.e. the bodies and the pleasures? Far from being a distant comment on Nietzschean works, this text seems to be, for Foucault, a program to follow, a program he will remember perfectly when working on his history of sexuality. That is certainly the reason why we have guessed that the purpose of *The Will to Knowledge* was followed by the later volumes, and not given up: this purpose is actually that of this whole history, telling how to break away from the history of sexuality, from this experience focused on the subject of desire and the investigation of him. This central problem within the history of sexuality, allowing us to understand its philosophical project, invites me to think that this history is indeed oriented towards actuality, the very present of Foucault, as it is what must be diagnosed in order to

identify the "evil" and to prescribe the appropriate cure.

This is what Foucault explains in a more precise way in 1984, commenting on Kant's text on Enlightenment, which interests him as it deals with the matter of "pure actuality" (Foucault 2015e:1382), meaning it deals with the present time, the living day within its very differential intensity: "He is looking for a difference: What difference does today introduce with respect to yesterday?" (Foucault 2015e:1382). What interests Foucault with this text is the *ethos*, the attitude understood as particular relationship with actuality, present. Yet, this relation to actuality allows Foucault to define precisely his conception of the criticism, his critical ontology:

critique is to be practiced [...] as a historical investigation into the events that have led us to constitute ourselves and to recognize ourselves as subjects of what we are doing, thinking, saying. In that sense, that criticism [...] is genealogical in its point and archaeological in its method. (Foucault 2015e:1393)

This critical ontology could make for our understanding of the "point" of this historical critique, as it is working in the history of sexuality. So, what is that point? To understand, one must understand clearly the distinction between genealogy and archaeology, which is possible thanks to the enlightening article by Judith Revel, in which she defines the three Foucauldian "regimes of historicity" (Lorenzini *et al.* 2015b). These regimes can be distinguished by to the different temporaries they deal with: the *archaeological* regime relates the past with the past; this is notably what happens in the last volumes of the *History of Sexuality*, when the period of *aphrodisia* is related with the period of the flesh, both past. The second regime, called *genealogical*, relates the past with the present, as it happens in *The Will to Knowledge* when Foucault thinks the links between the 19th century's *scientia sexualis* and the psychoanalysis we know nowadays. Finally, the third regime, which we can term *ethical*, relates the present with itself, introduces this particular relation one can have with his actuality, exemplified by Kant's attitude towards Enlightenment. It is immediately interesting to notice that this third regime might be the one thanks to which we can now designate the strange form of *The Will to Knowledge*'s conclusion : this prophetic, futurist register, isn't it the one of ethics, of the attitude establishing a difference between the present and itself, to imagine its possible transformation?

Having made these methodological remarks, what does the quoted excerpt mean? It means that the Foucauldian

history, through an archaeological method, is intended as a critique of our present, of our actuality. The two last volumes of this history aim, finally, to reach a better understanding of the *dispositif* described in the first one and, as I can add thanks to the 1971 text, a better capacity of inventions of way to resist it.

Before going further, it seems important to clearly define the core concept of actuality, a concept well defined in the 2015 anthology already quoted, *Michel Foucault, éthique et vérité (1980-1984)*. Actuality is defined during the introduction as follows:

The actuality designates, within the Foucauldian «history of systems of thought», the clarification, in a critical way, of the way according to which the present works differently compared to what preceded it. (Lorenzini *et al.* 2015a:22)

Actuality can be understood as a measure of the difference, and a difference charged with potential, that of transforming the present. The difference contained in the present, able to transform it, is also what can be called the event, understood as a differentiation between the instant and what preceded it. Actuality is, in that sense, made possible by a critical attitude, an *éthos* able to catch the difference, the present as irreducible event.

This detour throughout Foucauldian methodology finally allows me to assert that the history of sexuality's point is its own surpassing in favour of the actuality, of a reinvented *éthos*, emancipated from the *dispositif* of sexuality. In that extent, Foucault's history seems to be all about the invention of an actuality of pleasures, of an *éthos* of pleasures to resist. But how is that possible? If it is now clear that the philosophical project of this history aims to emancipating us from itself, how can this emancipation happen? I must not forget the critique by Butler: how can we surpass the *dispositif* without surpassing at the same time the resistance?

More radically, I have shown that we cannot fully understand *The Will to Knowledge's* conclusion without considering Foucault's actuality, his own critical relationship with his present; how can this actuality allow us to understand the political force of pleasures? Moreover, I still have to answer Deleuze's question: how can pleasures act as counter-powers?

### III. The actuality of pleasures: a queer policy of pleasures

From now on, I'll be focusing on Foucault's actuality, aiming

to clarify problems arising with the desire–pleasure tension. To do so, it is not enough to consider the history of sexuality, but also the *Dits et écrits* [things said and written] (Foucault 2001:2005b), this amount of articles and interviews said or written by Foucault, constituting the most relevant testimony of Foucault's attitude regarding his actuality.

It is indeed in the *Dits et écrits* that can be found the largest occurrence of the word “pleasure” in Foucault's works, especially after *The Will to Knowledge*. The word is defined for the first – and last – time in a 1978 interview with Jean le Bitoux, intitled *Le gay savoir* [the gay knowledge] (Le Bitoux 2005), in which he notably explains that he chose this word to be substituted to the one of desire, as it doesn't have its historical thickness. Pleasure, at the opposite of desire, is hardly definable, precisely because it has little background (‘desire’ has been used throughout history, whereas pleasure is a kind of ‘virgin’ concept, according to Foucault). That's why it's hard to define pleasure, and Foucault only describes it as:

an event, an even happening, happening I would say out of the subject, or at the limit of the subject, or between two subjects, within this something which is neither body nor soul, neither outside nor inside (Le Bitoux 2005:51)

Already in 1978, the pleasure is not a random concept, is not a simple hypothesis of resistance, as Foucault defines it using this concept that, as we saw, will become a core one for his ethical thoughts to come: the event. Defining the pleasure as an anti-subjective, impersonal event, Foucault builds a concept to resist to the desire, understood as the essence of the subject. It is already possible to answer the Deleuze's question, about the Foucauldian conception of pleasure: the pleasure is an impersonal event capable of resisting to desire, as the essence of the subject. But how, precisely, can this resistance be effective?

Some articles in the *Dits et écrits* can be used to answer this question, through the use made by Foucault of pleasures to think his actuality. Pleasures are indeed associated with a deep criticism of what I could call the modern relational policy. This is what appears in an interview from 1981, “The Social Triumph of the Sexual Will: A Conversation with Michel Foucault” (Foucault 2005c), in which Foucault exposes the following thesis :

We now live in a relational world which has been considerably impoverished by institutions. Society and



institutions, which make its frame, have limited the possibility of relations, because a rich relational world would be extremely complicated to manage. We must fight against this impoverishment of the relational field. (Foucault 2005c:1128–1129)

The following political point is made: it is about resisting to a modern *dispositif* of normalization of behaviours, of adjusting relations to a very reduced range of relations; “the marital relations and the familial ones” (Foucault 2005c:1128), mainly. This is the big poison diagnosed by Foucault within his actuality, and the thought antidote is doubtlessly the use of pleasures: in this same article, Foucault explains that the use of “friendship relations” (Foucault 2005:1129) allows to enrich the relational spectra, to resist to predefined and normalizing schemes. And what is friendship? Foucault provides a very relevant definition of it in an interview from 1981, “Friendship as a way of life” (Foucault 2005a):

a relationship that is still formless, which is friendship: that is to say, the sum of everything through which they can give each other *pleasure*. (Foucault 2005a:983)

The pleasure is here associated with two key elements of Foucauldian critique: the capacity of resisting an impoverished relational world and, to do such a thing, the use of invention, of creation of new ways of life. Friendship, as defined by its double capacity to provoke pleasure and to feel some, allows the renewal of relational schemes, for instance the relationship between “two men of noticeably different ages” (Foucault 2005a:983). It is a relationship “to invent” entirely, as it doesn’t correspond to anything within the modern *dispositif* of relational schemes.

This is all the appeal of gay ways of life according to Foucault, being capable of enriching the relational spectra, containing this very force of resistance. This is notably what he analyses with the invention of the S/M relation, or with the fist-fucking – so many practices invented in the gay *milieux* and capable of provoking real effects of resistance thanks to the invention of new pleasures, of new relationships. In an interview from 1984, Foucault analyses the S/M as “the real creation of new possibilities of pleasure, that we had not imagined before”, as it invents “new possibilities of pleasures by using strange parts of the body – eroticizing this body” (Foucault 2005d:1556–1557). This corresponds to what Foucault calls the “desexualisation of pleasure”, it is to say the pleasure emancipated from the sex, as a *dispositif* normalizing sexual practices, centering

them around the genital orgasm. This effect of desexualization is made possible by transversal practices, marginal, including the use of drugs. This is what Thierry Voeltzel explains in the book he wrote with Foucault about their marginal relationship, *Vingt ans et après* [*Twenty years and after*] (Voeltzel 2014): the amyl nitrate consumed during a sexual relationship provokes an effect of desexualization, as “everything becomes a zone of pleasure” (Voeltzel 2014:105), and not only the genital organs any more. Yet, it is precisely to this kind of experience Foucault invites us, with his criticisms of modern relational policy. The stake is to “create new pleasures” (Foucault 2005d:1557), to “reopen affective and relational potentialities” (Foucault 2005a:985); which is precisely what gay ways of life are doing, according to Foucault.

The concept of potentiality is interesting because it allows the overlap of the one of actuality, which is central: the point is about living our actuality fully, resisting to the *dispositif* which prevent the development of its potentialities. This criticism of actuality is both ethical and political: political in its effects of resistance, and ethical in its base-ments because it is about constituting ourselves into gay *ethos*, even more precisely, into *queer*.

I can indeed use the concept worked by Halperin in *Saint Foucault* (Halperin 2000) to better understand these critiques: in this book, Halperin comments what he calls the “queer policy of Michel Foucault”, defining the queer as a position – an *ethos*, could I say – which takes its meaning from opposing the norm. The concept insists on the capacity to always be situated out of the norm, this poison of *dispositif*, and to resist it. Finally, advocating an actuality of pleasures – the invention and the development of new pleasures as new relational practices in order to extend the possibilities contained in the present – Foucault invites to a *queer*-becoming, to the development of a *queer ethos* against normalizing *dispositifs*.

Nevertheless, I wish to criticize this *queer* theory developed in *Saint Foucault*, and these criticisms can allow us to answer the Butler’s article. In his later article in 2003, “The Normalization of Queer Theory” (Halperin 2003), Halperin himself returns to his work, condemning the progressive normalization of the *queer* theory, and the paradoxical effect of it. The main problem noticed by Halperin consists in this normalization of the marginality, following an ironical process provoked by the enthusiasm of *queer* theory: in the past, gay people had to apologize for not being heterosexual enough; now they have to apologize for not being *queer* enough! To Halperin, this need not be termed progress.

This critique overlaps with that of Butler when she warns that we can't get rid of the *dispositif* in favour of the resistance, as one does not exist without the other: the *queer* only exists opposed to the norm.

The problem of her critique actually comes from the fact that *dispositif* and resistance are put on the same level, and are only considered on the base of a political vis-à-vis. Yet, the interest of the "last" of Foucault's works consists in having enriched this political problem with ethical considerations from the end of the 1970s. Indeed, how can pleasures act as counter-powers? I can now answer Deleuze: by acting in the creation of *queer* ways of life, understood as local centres of resistance, which are not situated at the same level as the *dispositif*. The *dispositif* corresponds to a global level, whereas the ways of life can only act at a local one: the ambition of *queer* ways of life in Foucault does not consist in overthrowing the *dispositif*, or substituting it, but in opposing local strategies of resistance to it.

Indeed, *queer* people do not resist by taking to arms, destroying, literally, the symbols of heteronormativity, but by meeting up in saunas, by experimenting new pleasures in "La Fistinière", by forming relationships different from the ones described by the heteronormative *dispositif*.

This is a consideration Butler did not see while commenting on *The Will to Knowledge's* conclusion relying only on its textual content: this conclusion is only understandable considering the *queer* attitude of Foucault towards his actuality. The problem of this conclusion is still its radical dimension, because it is hypothetical – Foucault was only imagining possibilities of resistance, possibilities he would spend the last years of his life exploring, as I have shown.

Nevertheless, this program of resistance was already contained in the enigmatic conclusion, as Foucault talked about "counter[ing] the grips of power with the claims of bodies, pleasures, and knowledges, *in their multiplicity* and their possibility of resistance." The precision of the multiplicity, as opposed to the unity of the *dispositif* of sexuality, already put the two poles at different levels. The tension between the pleasures and desire cannot be frontal, cannot simply be face-to-face, contrary to what Butler claimed, and the political extent of pleasures is only possible with the constitution of a *queer ethos*. The tension cannot be reduced to its political dimension, and it is only possible to understand it retroactively thanks to Foucault's later ethical works, as I have tried to show.

It is finally necessary to understand this *queer* ethico-policy of pleasures, regarding the Foucauldian actuality, in

order to clarify the conclusion of the *History of sexuality's* first volume, understanding the capacity of political resistance contained in pleasures.

## Conclusion

If *The Will to Knowledge's* conclusion is enigmatic, I have tried to clarify it in several ways: using the book itself, it seems possible to understand the desire–pleasure opposition as a tension between *dispositifs* and resistance. Nevertheless, this frontal opposition remains problematic and a difficult position to hold philosophically; the use of the following history of sexuality allows us to understand that the methodological purpose of understanding the *dispositif* and the ways to resist it remained the same, and was carried on by a deeper history of the *dispositif* of sexuality. Yet, the history of sexuality only illuminates the desire–pleasure tension in a historical way, as an opposition between two ethical substances, the *aphrodisia* and the flesh, and I have shown that this history has no other methodological aim than its own surpassing in favour of the actuality. Taking into account this Foucauldian actuality allows us to define a *queer* policy of pleasures in Foucault, associated with a *queer* ethics of invention of transversal and local ways of life, meaning the operational mode of pleasures can be understood as counter-powers.

Thus I can, at the end of this article, claim at least three, although interrelated, results of my research: *The Will to Knowledge's* conclusion only gets its meaning retrospectively thanks to Foucault's *queer* critiques of his actuality; understanding this tension between desire and pleasure necessitates considering a *queer* ethico-policy of the Foucauldian actuality, which can only make it fully intelligible; finally, this policy of pleasures as counter-powers is only understandable when associated with a *queer* ethics of pleasures, acting through the invention of transversal ways of life providing them their force of resistance.

This last point seems particularly potent, as it allows us to think of a new philosophy – original, political and ethical – of pleasures. Would it be possible, based on this *queer* ethico-policy of pleasures, to construct a Foucauldian philosophy of pleasure? And, thinking pleasures and actuality as familiar concepts, did Foucault not initiate a thinking of pleasures as carrying an always renewed actuality – a proposition it might be possible to hold at a more ontological scale? These are only open interrogations, exceeding the topic of this article, but which might show the way for possible in-depth studies.

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## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup>I chose not to translate this French word on purpose, because it seems like neither the english word "dispositive" nor its conceptual equivalent "deployment" could give a proper account of it.

# THE PLOTINIAN ONE AND ANAXIMANDER'S APEIRON: READING THE APEIRON IN PLOTINUS' FIRST PRINCIPLE

**Plotinus (AD 205–270) is the founder of Neoplatonism and his philosophy is mainly influenced by Platonism, Aristotelianism and Stoicism. I propose that the first principle in Plotinus' philosophy, 'The One,' may have been influenced by 6th century BC Anaximander of Miletus' first principle, the *Apeiron*. I provide a brief description of Plotinus' the One and Anaximander's *Apeiron* and suggest that Plotinus may have had access to Anaximander's work. I identify six conceptual similarities between the One and a non-material interpretation of the *Apeiron*. I conclude that there are enough similarities, without the concepts of Plotinus' the One and Anaximander's *Apeiron* being identical, to suggest that Anaximander may have informed Plotinus' first principle philosophy.**

*By Oda Karoline Storbråten Davanger*

The philosophical work of Plotinus covers a wide range of areas in philosophy, one of which concerns from where everything originates. Much is written on Plotinus' place in the history of philosophy, that is, who he inspired, who he is inspired by, and which schools of thought he belongs to. Plotinus (AD 205–270) is the founder of Neoplatonism and his philosophy is mainly influenced by Platonism, Aristotelianism and Stoicism (Emilsson 2017:i & 9).<sup>1</sup> I propose that Plotinus may also have been influenced by an even more ancient philosopher, namely, Anaximander of Miletus. This would mean that Plotinus was not only influenced by Plato and Aristotle with regards to his philosophy concerning the origin of things. At first glance, Plotinus and Anaximander may not seem to have more in common than the mere fact that they both purported first principles that are responsible for the existence of things. Anaximander, as far as we can tell from the fragment left of his teachings, argued that everything comes from what he called the *Apeiron*, a concept which is still to some degree shrouded in mystery. Plotinus maintained that everything comes from 'The One,' which is the first principle in his philosophy. In this very basic sense, the two philosophers have in common that they believe everything comes from something singular, not plural, and are therefore monists. Not much attention has been paid, however, to the connection (if there is one) between Plotinus' the One and Anaximander's *Apeiron*.

I argue that there may be reason to believe that Plotinus was influenced by Anaximander in regards to the One, despite the lack of many direct references to Anaximander in Plotinus' work. It was, after all, in 6th century Miletus that "the search for unity" emerged into philosophy from the mythical (Sweeney 1972:56) and it would arguably make sense for Plotinus to draw inspiration from the philosophers belonging to that point in time when developing his own philosophical search for unity. At the very least, I posit that there are several similarities between Plotinus' the One and Anaximander's *Apeiron* that warrant a certain amount of attention. First, I shall provide a brief description of Plotinus' the One as provided in chapters 1–3 in *Ennead* V and a brief description of Anaximander's *Apeiron*. Second, I will discuss whether there is reason to believe that Plotinus had access to Anaximander's work, and what kind of access he might have had. Third, I shall give an account of how the two concepts, the One and *Apeiron* are similar. I conclude that despite limited work on this question, there may be grounds to believe that Plotinus was influenced by Anaximander in his notion of the One.

## I.

'The One' is Plotinus' first principle. It is also referred to as "The Good," sometimes as "the First,"<sup>2</sup> "father," and "God."<sup>3</sup> It is the first and highest in a system of hyposta-

ses, where the One is the very top of a pyramidal order of being. The bottom of the pyramid is all that is material, which is also seen to be evil – or rather – being in the least perfect state (Emilsson 2017:30 & 63).<sup>4</sup> The three primary hypostases are the One, Intellect and Soul, respectively. These three hypostases compose what Plotinus calls the “Intelligible realm” (Emilsson 2017:38). They are immaterial, and are more perfect than the material. There is much that can be said on the One in Plotinus’ work. In this paper, I shall concentrate on an understanding of the One as Plotinus’ first principle.<sup>5</sup> Plotinus believed that everything originates from the first principle, and as such he can be classified as a monistic philosopher. In this way, every existing thing and all creation can be traced back to the One and originates from it. Plotinus can be classified as a monist because he believes that there is a first principle that is singular, and that the most basic start of existence does not include notions of plurality.

The primary and most obvious similarity between the One and Anaximander’s *Apeiron* is that they are both, in a sense, *archés* and first principles that account for the origin of the universe in philosophical and non-mythological terms. It is useful to include some information about the Anaximander fragment, although no comprehensive account will be given by any means. Simplicius says about Anaximander, in his Commentary on Aristotle’s *Physics*, that:

Of those who declared that the first principle is one, moving and indefinite, Anaximander... said that the indefinite was the first principle and element of things that are, and he was the first to introduce this name for the first principle [i.e., he was the first to call the first principle indefinite]. He says that the first principle is neither water nor any other of the things called elements, but some other nature which is indefinite, out of which come to be all the heavens and the worlds in them. The things that are perish into the things out of which they come to be, according to necessity, for they pay penalty and retribution to each other for their injustice in accordance with the ordering of time, as he says in rather poetical language. (Curd, ed. 1995:12; Curd’s brackets)

An extensive interpretation of Anaximander’s fragment would be irresponsible to do without extensive knowledge of the Ancient Greek language, so I will rely in part on the scholarship that is done on this fragment in order to understand the different ways one might interpret it.

There are conflicting views in the field of philosophy on how to understand Anaximander’s *Apeiron*, and whether Anaximander was a natural philosopher<sup>6</sup> or whether he should be interpreted in a more theological manner. Scholar of Plotinus, Giannis Stamatellos, notes:

Anaximander’s *apeiron* marks a different position from the other Milesians on the material principle of the cosmos. Whereas Thales and Anaximenes define the originaive substance as water and air respectively, and thus associate it with a particular material element, Anaximander speaks of an unlimited substance, which lacks any materiality and mortality. (Stamatellos 2007:140)

Some maintain that the *Apeiron* was a material substance, others that it was not. Stamatellos interprets the Anaximander fragment to be something immaterial. Finding any similarity between Anaximander’s *Apeiron* and Plotinus’ the One depends on how one understands not only the latter, but also the former.

One reader of Anaximander, Aryeh Finkelberg, formulates an interpretation of the *Apeiron* that is *both* material *and* this other quality of the “unchangeable whole,” and admits that the *Apeiron* may have had some sort of metaphysical property (Finkelberg 1993:253).<sup>7</sup> The difficulty Finkelberg struggles with is that Anaximander never calls his *Apeiron* air, nor gives it any other material property (Finkelberg 1993:255). Rather, “Anaximander discovered the possibility of envisaging the higher unity of the manifold as a conceptual unity rather than a material one,” (Finkelberg 1993:255) meaning that the *Apeiron* must have been, at least in part, something conceptual. If the *Apeiron* had material qualities it is quite different from Plotinus’ the One, which is, by virtue of its absolute perfection, not material in the slightest. Elizabeth Asmis, however, argues that the *Apeiron* is not of any material quality at all (Asmis 1981:287), but that Anaximander was a monist who coined a term for the process of generation, that is, the process by which things come to be (Asmis 1981:279). In part, she bases her argument on ancient sources such as Aëtius and Simplicius, who connect Anaximander’s *Apeiron* with the reason for the continued perpetuation of generation (Asmis 1981:297) and because the *Apeiron* itself is beyond ends but is instead something “ungenerated” and “undestroyed” (Asmis 1981:289). There is little evidence from Anaximander himself that settles the matter.

One explanation of the difficulty in deciding whether

or not Anaximander's *Apeiron* was supposed to be something material may be answered by Leo Sweeney, who points out that there was no explicit idea of 'spiritual' as distinct from matter in Anaximander's time (Sweeney 1972:56). Sweeney argues that Anaximander was a theistic philosopher, perhaps in part because philosophy was so nascent and that Anaximander's "intellectual milieu" was "open to infiltration from mythological and religious notions," but also that this era was paradoxically marked by an absence of "explicit distinctions" between the theological and the non-theological (Sweeney 1972:56). Similarly, according to H. B. Gottschalk, "the notion of immaterial being was almost certainly unthinkable in the sixth century B.C." (Gottschalk 1965:50). Then again, Asmis writes that "A monotheism of this type, [...] a single all-powerful deity [...], would not be at all surprising for Anaximander's time" (Asmis 1981:297) suggesting that there are divided opinions in the historical investigation of Anaximander to whether he would be capable of conceiving of an *arché* with divine properties. We may have reason neither to interpret the *Apeiron* as something strictly material, nor as strictly immaterial. We can, however, ask whether Plotinus might have been inspired by those facets of the *Apeiron* that are not strictly material.

## II.

For my thesis to have any believable grounds at all, there must be adequate reason to believe that Plotinus had access to Anaximander's work. Plotinus references Anaximander many times, particularly in his second *Ennead* and on the creation of matter (Stamatellos 2007:139). Therefore, we can assume that Plotinus was familiar with Anaximander's *Apeiron*. It is Stamatellos' view that allusions and specific references to the Presocratics in the *Enneads*, including Anaximander, have largely been ignored in modern scholarship and that their significance have not been awarded their due (Stamatellos 2007:2). Although we can be certain that Plotinus knew of Anaximander because there are direct references to him in his text, we can only speculate as to what kind of source material Plotinus may have had. Some scholars suggest that Plotinus only had access to handbooks of the time, not original texts, and thereby that he follows the doxographical tradition on Anaximander of his time (Stamatellos 2007:21), such as Aëtius, Clement of Alexandria's *Stromateis* (Stamatellos 2007:132), Hippolytus' *Refutatio* (Stamatellos 2007:124) or, even earlier, Theophrastus who informed Simplicius and Hippolytus (Sweeney 1972:3). According to Stamatellos, this suggestion may be difficult to justify

if based on biographical information or anything from the *Enneads* (Stamatellos 2007:21). Stamatellos disputes Eusebius' testimony that Presocratic texts were scarce in Plotinus' day due to the abundance of Presocratic quotations in Neoplatonic work (Stamatellos 2007:21). He argues that it is not so unlikely that Plotinus had direct access to primary texts instead of mere doxographical handbooks, and that he almost certainly had some original Presocratic texts, such as Parmenides' poem (Stamatellos 2007:20). I rely in part on contemporary scholars to grasp Anaximander's *Apeiron* – as well as ancient sources such as Simplicius, who came after Plotinus – because there is reason to believe that the notion of Anaximander's *Apeiron* was a debated issue also in Plotinus' time (Stamatellos 2007:140–141). Therefore, I posit that Simplicius, who relied on earlier sources and must have been informed by earlier debates, is a valuable source in the attempt to understand the *Apeiron* from a Plotinian point of view.

Plotinus read the ancient Greek philosophers independently and ventured his own interpretations of their texts (Emilsson 2017:34 & Stamatellos, 2007:19). This indicates that he may have been inspired by others such as Anaximander, rather than solely Plato and Aristotle, whom he is generally taken to be influenced by. P.A. Meijer claims that Plotinus considered himself interpreter of "Plato's hidden system" and that the One is "obviously based on Plato's *Parmenides*" (Meijer 1992:22–23).<sup>8</sup> Stamatellos, on the other hand, argues that Plato's *Parmenides* has been mistakenly accredited at points in the *Enneads* where the Presocratic Parmenides should have been accredited and furthermore, that these relate to the Intellect, not the One (Stamatellos 2007:32). Plotinus even veers from the Parmenidean tradition that Being is derived from non-Being (Stamatellos 2007:66).<sup>9</sup> Although Stamatellos states that Plato was a major influence for Plotinus, he finds that Plotinus credits Presocratic significance as "original authorities and authentic thinkers" (Stamatellos 2007:27). Plotinus does not treat Plato's and Aristotle's preceding philosophical accounts as unquestionable authorities, but rather as earlier attempts at grappling with serious philosophical problems that are worth re-examining (Stamatellos 2007:8). One example of Plotinus' independent thinking is that Aristotle says, referring to Anaximander's *Apeiron*, that "the infinite body cannot be one and simple" (Sweeney 1972:4), which is directly oppositional to Plotinus' notion of the One. Stamatellos even posits that Plotinus' interpretation of the Presocratics show signs of "greater acquaintance" with their texts than Plato or Aristotle, displaying more sympathy toward them



than Plato's sometimes negative or ironic attitude to the Presocratics (Stamatellos 2007:173). He argues, for instance, that Armstrong erroneously attributes Plotinus' reference of the "extremely ancient philosophers" in *Ennead* VI.1.1 to Aristotle's discussion of the Presocratics in the *Metaphysics* (Stamatellos 2007:26–27). Stamatellos states that while the *Metaphysics* is certainly relevant in this passage, it is not the Presocratic *arché* – discussed by Aristotle – that is the subject in this part of Plotinus' text, but rather, the kinds of being, suggesting that Plotinus may have had other sources to rely on (Stamatellos 2007:27). In light of these insights, it may seem to be the case that Plotinus may have read more of Anaximander than we know for certain. It seems he may have had access to the same information as did, for example, Simplicius, who discusses and preserves some original text by Anaximander in *Physica*. That being said, Plotinus typically adopted vocabulary of his own time (Emilsson 2017:25), as well as Aristotelian vocabulary such as "substance" (*ousia*), 'act' ('activity,' 'actuality,' *energeia*) and psychological distinctions such as 'rational,' 'perceptive' and 'vegetative'" (Emilsson 2017:31) instead of those of the earlier Greeks. This means that if there are traces of the *Apeiron* in the One, they will not be expressed in Anaximandrian terms.<sup>10</sup> Therefore, there is reason to believe that Plotinus did have access to Anaximander's teachings, that he acknowledged Anaximander's authority as an ancient philosopher, and that he ventured his own independent reading of Anaximander, which may have led to Anaximander's influence on Plotinus' the One.

### III.

Plotinus and Anaximander were both monists in that they both claimed that everything comes from one single something. In order to defend my claim that Plotinus may have been somewhat influenced by Anaximander in his notion of the One, it must be shown that there are more similarities than the obvious, very general ones. Stamatellos does not mention Anaximander as someone who could have inspired Plotinus' notion of the One,<sup>11</sup> but instead accredits him the Plotinian "concepts of matter" (Stamatellos 2007:2).<sup>12</sup> He does on some occasions, however, include evidence to support my claim that there are elements of Anaximander's *Apeiron* in the Plotinian One.<sup>13</sup> In this section I will point out some features of Plotinus' conception of the One, and how these features resemble traits similar to that of a conceptual understanding of the *Apeiron*. Undoubtedly there will be more to say about Plotinus' the One than can be expressed in this paper, but I will present a short list of features of the One for purposes of outlining

a basic understanding of it as first principle of existence, and how these resemble the *Apeiron*: Firstly, the One is the origin of all things. Secondly, the One is beyond being. Thirdly, the One is absolutely simple and perfect, which entails production. Fourth, the One is infinite. Fifth, the One is negatively defined because it is prior to and the cause of opposition. Finally, the One is needed and desired by all other beings and they wish to return to it.

**(1) Ultimate Origin:** Plotinus claims that the One is the ultimate origin of all and seems to take this as a given, established fact. He seems more interested in asking why or how things came into existence. The question of the reality of the One, however, seems for Plotinus to already have been settled in philosophy:

And how did [Intellect] come into existence at all and arise from the One [...] For the soul now knows that these things must be, but longs to answer the question repeatedly discussed also by the ancient philosophers, how from the One, if it is such as we say it is, anything else, whether a multiplicity or a dyad or a number, came into existence, and why it did not on the contrary remain by itself, but such a great multiplicity flowed from it as that which is seen to exist in beings, but which we think it right to refer back to the One. (*Ennead* V.1.6)

In this passage, Plotinus states, among other things, that we know that everything comes from the one. Furthermore, he states that all these things that exist have multiplicity as a quality of their existence, but by virtue of their existence and their multiplicity they also refer back to the One because the One is simple and because it is their ultimate origin. Although this passage is mostly focused on the question of *how* rather than *that* all existence comes from the One, the premise that everything does come from the One is clearly communicated.

This premise that everything comes from the One is simply logical for Plotinus. Because everything must have an origin, it must be that something is nothing but the originator.<sup>14</sup> Much like the One is the generator and ultimate origin of all things for Plotinus, the *Apeiron* is for Anaximander that "out of which come to be all the heavens and the worlds in them" (Curd, ed. 1995:12). Scholars of Anaximander often remark that things that exist come to be in terms of opposition to one another (Sweeney 1972:5 & 7). This is because beings are beings in terms of opposition, particularity and distinguishability. This is also the reason why they may perish, "according to necessity"

in Anaximander's words, when they cease to be opposite to each other and lose their independence and distinguishability; for without opposition they are the same, and without opposition to anything they are absolutely simple and the same as the first principle. The opposites, viz., the things that are, are "multiple and in conflict" (Sweeney 1972:61). The opposites, however, do not exist in the *Apeiron*, but are rather produced by it, the *Apeiron* being "simply other than them all because it is their origin" (Sweeney 1972:58). As such, the *Apeiron* contains no opposites or particularities but is simple despite being generator of all multiplicity. For Plotinus, "What comes from him [i.e. the One] cannot be the same as himself" (*Ennead* V.3.15) the simple principle must also be the first, not already containing plurality. This is the case also for Anaximander. The *Apeiron* "...does not have a first principle, but this seems to be the first principle of the rest [...] and this is divine" (Curd, ed. 1995:12).<sup>15</sup> The *Apeiron*, like the One, is the origin of all things and cannot really be grasped as "something." Plotinus writes, "It is because there is nothing in [the One] that all things come from it: in order that being may exist, the One is not being, but the generator of being" (*Ennead* V.2.1). Here, Plotinus explains the necessity of the One as generator. The first principle must necessarily also have some special feature in order to be generator of everything, namely, that there is nothing in it as Plotinus states. For if there were something in it, that something would also need a maker or a cause. It is because the One is the origin of all things that it cannot really be anything in the strict sense.

**(2) Beyond Being:** The idea of not being anything, while also being the origin of all things, seems paradoxical. This problem does not seem lost on Plotinus, who writes, "The One is all things and not a single one of them." (*Ennead* V.2.1) In order to provide an answer to this paradox, Plotinus explains that it is not a being, but a principle of being. (*Ennead* V.2.1) While Stamatellos holds that Plotinus was the first to articulate a transcendent being (Stamatellos 2007:24), Emilsson in a sense similarly claims that the radical simplicity of the One is a "crucial step beyond his predecessors" (Emilsson 2017:75). According to Emilsson, the One is beyond being because it is simple: "The One is beyond being in the sense that there is nothing we can say that it is: if we said it was just or brave or whatever, we would, Plotinus thinks, be presuming distinctions [plurality] within it" (Emilsson 2017:63). Because being implies multiplicity, and because the One

is the utmost simplicity, it cannot be a being in this sense. That is not to say that it does not exist, however.<sup>16</sup> Rather, the One is beyond being. It is, in the words of Stamatellos, something that "transcends being" (Stamatellos 2007:24). As such, we must understand the One as a transcendental principle of being; something that is so simple that it cannot be *per se*, but nonetheless exists as a first principle.

It is certainly one possible interpretation of the *Apeiron* that it could be something beyond the material sphere, since it is very carefully not attributed any material quality (Finkelberg 1993:255). Furthermore, if one thinks like Plotinus that the first principle is the cause of all things, it cannot also be one of those things of which it is the cause. The properties of the first being necessitates some transcendent feature and sort of 'being beyond being.' In other words, if the *Apeiron* is the cause of everything, it cannot itself be part of that 'everything.' Apparently, this would also not be inconsistent with Anaximander's thought. Anaximander "accepted as an unquestioned fact

**It is because the One is the origin of all things that it cannot really be anything in the strict sense.**

that one thing could arise out of another [without being contained by the other], as day arises out of night and spring out of winter"

(Sweeney 1972:58; Sweeney's brackets). In other words, Anaximander thought that things could be generated from something that was not like it, or that being came from 'beyond being.' In fact, Sweeney actually finds that Plotinus' the One is similar to Anaximander's *Apeiron* in this way, namely, that the One is the cause of all things but does not itself contain them (Sweeney 1972:58). Because Anaximander had no easy way of saying that his *Apeiron* was transcendental during his time (Sweeney 1972:56), I can only suggest that not attributing any definite characteristics to it meant that it was not something that existed physically, like the things it produced. Instead, it was supposed to be some sort of divinity or 'beyondness,' similar to Plotinus' first principle as the cause of everything.

**(3) Production and Perfection:** Two necessitating factors of the One's existence "beyond being" is (A) that it produces being, and (B) that it is perfect. Sometimes, it seems that for Plotinus these two things, production and perfection, are more or less the same thing (Emilsson 2017:73). According to Emilsson, "the principle invoked to explain anything is more unified than that of which it is the principle" (Emilsson 2017:45). This means that whatever the One produces, i.e., being, these products are less unified than its producer. It also follows that on top of the production chain, the first principle is also most unitary.



In this way, it may be helpful to think of the concept of the One, or the singular, as something that does not really exist in our world, because everything in the lower realms is multiple. The concept of the One exists as opposing to all multiplicities. The idea of being nothing but one, “being beyond being,” is foreign to us. In order to understand the multiplicities in our world, however, we must think of singularity. That is how all multiplicity ultimately refers to singularity. In order for multiplicity to exist, so must necessarily singularity exist. The One is the absolute origin because it produces, and everything has to be less perfect than its maker, so the One must be the most perfect, which also necessitates its existence “beyond being” (Emilsson 2017:387).<sup>17</sup> Because the One is beyond being, Plotinus finds that the effects, or products of the One may be called “the first act of generation.” This generation is also a symptom of the One’s perfection.<sup>18</sup> For Plotinus, “the One, perfect because it seeks nothing, has nothing, and needs nothing, overflows, as it were, and its superabundance makes something other than itself” (*Ennead* V.2.1). The One is independent and needs nothing to sustain itself, which is in contrast to every other being, which can all trace their existence back to the One and depend on it to exist (*Ennead* V.3.15). In this sense, perfection and production go hand in hand.

Anaximander’s *Apeiron* is similarly perfect in the sense that it is not composite or containing its opposites or multiplicity (Sweeney 1972:57). Sweeney’s interpretation of Anaximander’s *Apeiron* finds that it must have been simple and that the likelihood of Anaximander conceiving of the “opposites” present inside the *Apeiron* is low (Sweeney 1972:58). Anaximander, like Plotinus, links the *Apeiron* with perfection and godliness (Sweeney 1972:65). If the *Apeiron* were limited, “it could not perform its unique causal function” (Sweeney 1972:57). In other words, it is as necessary for the *Apeiron* to be perfect – in order to produce everything that is – as it is necessarily so for the One. Anaximander’s *Apeiron* is perfect because it is “by nature the Infinite,” as well as being self-moving, intelligent, divine, and – according to Sweeney – physical (Sweeney 1972:65). While the material question has already been discussed, the idea that the *Apeiron* is in motion may differ from the Plotinian notion of first principle. Admittedly, the two concepts are not identical, and nor should they be, each having been conceived centuries apart. The sta-

tic notion of the One is not, however, the whole story. Indeed, Emilsson quotes Plotinus as saying that the activity is “entirely” the One because there is no distinction between the agent and the activity (Emilsson 2017:84). In fact, Stamatellos claims that in this regard Plotinus differs from Parmenides’ “immobile non-plural unity of Being” (Stamatellos 2007:65).

Another production similarity is that the One does not directly produce being, but rather, its emanation does. Its emanation is indefinite and can be understood as potential intellect (Emilsson 2017:94). Similarly, in the *Stromateis*, Anaximander’s *Apeiron* is described as producing “that which is productive [...] of hot and cold was separated off” from the *Apeiron* (Sweeney 1972:4). One argument in support of the simplicity of the *Apeiron* is that the opposites are not separated directly from the *Apeiron*, but from the *gonimon* as an intermediary step similar to emanation from the One. This productive thing that first separates off

from the *Apeiron*, viz., the *gonimon*, can be understood as potential opposition or “generating power,” and has been interpreted by some scholars<sup>19</sup> to mean that being does not come from the first

principle itself, but from that which is separated off from it (Sweeney 1972:32).<sup>20</sup> If so, this *gonimon* is reminiscent of the One’s emanation, allowing the *Apeiron* to be a simple, non-composite entity. The One’s emanation corresponds to its external activity, which can be understood as the first Other to the One (Emilsson 2017:94).<sup>21</sup> Understood as such, Anaximander’s *Apeiron* is – much like Plotinus’ One – conceived of as a condition rather than a direct cause of being (Emilsson 2017:77), whose first Other is where being-as-plurality begins.

(4) **Eternality:** The One and Anaximander’s *Apeiron* are both infinite principles. Plotinus directly links perfection to infinity: “The One is always perfect and therefore produces everlastingly” (*Ennead* V.1.6). He conceives of the One as something eternal and infinite, despite often referring to it in terms that are used to describe the passing of time. In the following passage he addresses this apparent contradiction:

When we are discussing eternal realities we must not let coming into being in time be an obstacle to our thought; in the discussion we apply the word “becoming” to them in attributing to them causal connection and order, and must therefore state that what

**Because of this difficulty in grasping the first principles, due to their radical singularity, the two philosophers resort also to metaphors, imagery and poetical language.**

comes into being from the One does so without the One being moved: for if anything came into being as a result of the One's being moved, it would be the third starting from the One, not the second, since it would come after the movement. (*Ennead* V.1.6)

In this passage Plotinus admits that he refers to that which is timeless, or rather, beyond time in ways that might sound like the One is subject to time. He refers specifically to the use of the term “becoming” when something is produced by the One. The One, in light of the brief discussion on activity in the One above, does not move or change, because that would then be a quality of the One that would come into being before its emanation, or rather, “potential intellect” (Emilsson 2017:94). It might help to think of the One as being infinite in the sense that it is beyond being, and therefore also beyond such things as time and space. For Plotinus, the One “since it is the cause of existence and self-sufficiency, is not itself existence but beyond it and beyond self-sufficiency” (*Ennead* V.3.17). If time is something that can be said to exist, that too must owe its existence to the first principle. One cannot let the temporal conception of coming into being disturb the notion of ‘eternal realities’ such as the One. The other hypostases of the intelligible realm, Soul and Intellect, are also “true beings” beyond time and space (Emilsson 2017:173), and so the term “becoming” is in this context a sign of causality and order, not of time.

Anaximander's *Apeiron* is also perfect and infinite. This similarity is not lost on Sweeney, who writes that the *Apeiron* “is a god whose very reality is infinite,” dissimilar from first principles in Pythagoras, Plato or Aristotle, but similar to Plotinus', despite the “allowances made” for differences between the two notions (Sweeney 1972:65). Plotinus rejects the idea that something material can be infinite or limitless (Stamatellos 2007:139). Aristotle said about Anaximander's *Apeiron* in his *Physics* that it had no starting point, “since in that case it would have a limit” (Sweeney 1972:3). We can think that if Plotinus finds Anaximander's *Apeiron* to be infinite, he also finds that it could not have been material. Nevertheless, in *Ennead* II Plotinus seems to interpret the *Apeiron* more as indefinite than limitlessness or infinite deity, which for Plotinus means that the *Apeiron* is something more like an “indefinite substratum of beings,” namely, the essence of matter (Stamatellos 2007:142). This is quite the opposite to Plotinus' the One. Granted, if the only way Plotinus read Anaximander was in the context of the sensible realm and the creation of matter, the thesis that Anaximander's

*Apeiron* is a forerunner to the Plotinian One is dubitable.

Perhaps, then, it is more appropriate to say that Anaximander's *Apeiron* might have a connection to the becoming of matter from the Intelligible realm, not to the One. This would certainly seem to go together with Stamatellos' treatment of Plotinus' discussion of matter and Anaximander in *Ennead* II. As such, the *Apeiron* is “that unqualified immaterial and immortal substance that is the source of qualified, material, and mortal things in the cosmos” (Stamatellos 2007:140). This sounds more like a distinction between the intelligible and the sensible realm, rather than that between being and origin. Despite this concession, I hold that the similarities between the One and Anaximander's *Apeiron* are worth accounting for. One may note, for instance, that Plotinus uses the same name of the *Apeiron* (ἄπειρον) in his description of the One, which means “without limits” (Stamatellos 2007:34). There is still value in noting that both of the first principles share this trait of being beyond time and space.

**(5): Apophatism:** Plotinus' difficulty in trying to express or explain what the One is has been remarked by several scholars, as well has Anaximander's evasive description of the *Apeiron*. It is common to refer to this way of speaking of the One, which cannot really be spoken of – it cannot really *be* anything that is because it *is* the origin of all that *is* – as “negative theology.”<sup>22</sup> Plotinus is acutely aware of this issue:

[The One] is, therefore, truly ineffable: for whatever you say about it, you will always be speaking of a “something”. But “beyond all things and beyond the supreme majesty of Intellect” is the only one of all the ways of speaking of it which is true; it is not its name, but says that it is not one of all things and “has no name,” because we can say nothing of it: we only try, as far as possible, to make signs to ourselves about it. (*Ennead* V.3.13)

Plotinus concedes that we cannot know the One (*Ennead* V.3.12) and therefore the One is ineffable. Plotinus here establishes a limit to knowledge, and claims that the One is beyond that limit. The One is not included in “all things” and cannot be reduced to any name or signifier of knowledge. He therefore concedes that all we can do is attempt, as far as might be possible, to grasp such a concept and “make signs to ourselves about it.” In other words, to understand the One is an impossible task because we cannot say what it is. What we can know, however, are the

effects of the One, which are apparent to us according to Plotinus. He writes that, “we say what [the One] is not, but we do not say what it is: so that we speak about it from what comes after it” (*Ennead* V.3.14). When attempting to define the One, Plotinus instead states that we have to turn what the One produces or is the cause of, in order to try to grasp it.

Part of this difficulty of understanding the One is due to the fact that it is the first principle and cannot be understood on the basis of understanding anything else. Other things may perhaps be compared or contrasted to *it*, but the One itself, being beyond everything, cannot be understood by means of how we normally understand things. This is because the One is, of course, the originating cause of difference. Only from the beginning of difference, opposition, multiplicity and Other can we begin, albeit paradoxically, to discuss the notion of the One. According to Stamatellos, the following excerpt exemplifies this:

For since the nature of the One is generative of all things it is not any one of them. It is not therefore something or qualified or quantitative or intellect or soul; it is not in movement or at rest; not in place, not in time, but “itself by itself” of single, or rather formless, being, before all form, before movement and before rest; for these pertain to being and are what make it many. (*Ennead* VI.9.3)

Stamatellos notes that Plotinus is describing the One in terms of negation, often even negating the negation, i.e., by being neither in movement nor rest in order to explain its radical singularity. While Emilsson connects this apophatism to Plato’s *Parmenides* (Emilsson 2017:80), Stamatellos connects this negating of concepts to the “negative apprehension” of Anaximander’s *Apeiron* as separate from the cosmos, without temporal, spatial, qualitative or quantitative limits, unborn, indestructible, inexhaustible, and unidentifiable (Stamatellos 2007:35–36). Aëtius even accuses Anaximander of having “failed” in his account of the *Apeiron* on the basis of not having really said what it is (Couprie & Kocandrl 2013:63–64). Understood as such, the *Apeiron* nearly looks like the Plotinian notion of perfection.

Because of this difficulty in grasping the first principles, due to their radical singularity, the two philosophers resort also to metaphors, imagery and poetical language. Plotinus is accused of using words “metaphorically as a hint and cannot be taken at face value” (Emilsson 2017:66), while Anaximander is accused of resorting to

“poetical language” by Simplicius. Armstrong notes:

It is interesting that Plotinus finds the poetic possession (for Plato a state far inferior to the clear knowledge of the philosopher) a suitable analogy for our highest awareness, that of the One, and that it is for him a kind of knowledge (though not knowledge of the One) which it certainly is not for Plato. (Armstrong in Henderson (ed.) 1984:120–121 fn. 3)

This particular choice is obviously at a cost of clarity, but nevertheless a clarity that cannot be reached, precisely because of the ineffability of the principles. In this way, both Plotinus and Anaximander implicitly state that there might be a limit to human knowledge, and that to know the first principle clearly is impossible for such beings as plural and complex as us. They both find that they must do so “poetically,” which one might not be equally able to say about Plato’s work on first principles.

**(6) Morality:** Things that are and that exist ultimately depend on their maker, and need their cause in order to exist. Sometimes in Plotinus’ texts, it seems as if everything that exists desires to return somehow to their maker, or origin: “Everything longs for its parent and loves it, especially when parent and offspring are alone; but when the parent is the highest good, the offspring is necessarily with him and separate from him only in otherness” (*Ennead* V.1.6).<sup>23</sup> Plotinus invokes the bonds of family, and the notion of some innate desire to return to childhood or to return to the parent altogether and relinquish any form of independent existence. He also addresses the “first relationship,” the one between the One and the Intellect, as some sort of very special relationship, namely, that the only thing separating Intellect from the One – and that beside from this factor they are together – is that there is otherness. We must infer from this that otherness is what makes Intellect a being of its own, and furthermore, that this otherness is what allows for separation from the One. Plurality and otherness are obstacles for unity with the One. This otherness might also, however, be something that the offspring resents because it keeps it away from perfection and goodness in the highest degree. Perhaps the children long to return to the parent because it is the most perfect and the most Good. When Plotinus mentions this longing, he employs value-laden language, metaphors and imagery.

This value-laden way of expression is present in descriptions of Anaximander’s *Apeiron* as well. Whereas One is also the Good, there is a notion of justice in the *Apeiron*.

According to Simplicius, there is this idea that opposites may return to the *Apeiron* and cease to be because their very independent existence is unjust.<sup>24</sup> It is interesting to note that in both cases, multiplicity and existence have some immoral connections; imperfect and evil in Plotinus (at least for lower levels of generation), and unjust in Anaximander. The Intellect and Soul are, after all, eternal too. This notion of justice, however, is what brings scholars to think that Anaximander believed in cyclical generation and destruction, and that things “perish” into the *Apeiron* as well as are generated by it (Asmis 1981:282). If one does not think that this cyclicity could be another type of eternality, this differs from the Plotinian notion that the sensible world is eternal with no beginning and no end (Emilsson 2017:40). It does not seem to be so for Plotinus as it is for Anaximander, that beings can return to their maker. According to Stamatellos, however, there is reason to believe that Plotinus links the motion of the cosmos or “heavenly bodies” to Anaximander according to the testimony of Aëtius, as well as to Plato (Stamatellos 2007:132).

In terms of generation, Plotinus makes it clear that it is not possible to ascend, but only to regress further toward multiplicity (*Ennead* V.3.16). This is not in conflict with generation in the *Apeiron*, where of course, things cease to be if they reunite with the *Apeiron*. Nevertheless, Plotinus still somewhat strangely expresses this longing to reunite (*Ennead* V.1.6). If this reunion with the One is at all possible for Plotinus, plurality must become so simple that they become somehow at one with the One. For Anaximander, it is this very otherness that eventually must be relinquished in destruction that I find to be expressed in that very “retribution” to one another for “injustice” that is expressed in poetical language. There is not really much on reuniting with the One and relinquishing independent existence in Plotinus.<sup>25</sup> Some passages in the *Enneads* nevertheless suggest a longing to return, and relinquishing of independence, of which there also can be found traces in Anaximander’s philosophy.

#### IV.

To conclude, I have presented a brief account of Plotinus’ One and Anaximander’s *Apeiron*, and suggest that Plotinus may have had enough information and source material on Anaximander to be so well acquainted with his work that he might have had his own interpretation of Anaximander’s *Apeiron*. They both argue that there is a beginning without a beginning, i.e. a first principle or cause that is the cause of everything, which is fixed, is pri-

mary, and necessary for all other things. Admittedly, these kinds of similarities can be true of many monists. I argue that there are enough similarities, however – without the concepts of Plotinus’ the One and Anaximander’s *Apeiron* being identical – to suggest that there might be some sort of link between the two concepts. In light of the six similarities I have presented in this paper, between the monisms of Anaximander and Plotinus, I have suggested that Anaximander may even have been a source of inspiration in Plotinus’ articulation of the One. Perhaps one may even cautiously suggest that further research should be done to inquire into whether Plotinus’ One was – at least in part – inspired by Anaximander’s *Apeiron*. Of course, a source of inspiration is never entirely the same as what it has come to be inspired by and there will always remain differences that must be accounted for.

I maintain that there are grounds to believe that Plotinus may have been more than merely indirectly influenced by Anaximander, specifically in the part of his work that deals with the One. I believe that further investigation on the topic would be worthwhile, and grant that my position may need to be modified in order to accommodate similarities between Anaximander’s *Apeiron* and Plotinus’ Intelligible realm as a whole. Perhaps the Intelligible realm is closer to a Plotinian understanding of the *Apeiron* than the One, and there may be even more evidence to support this. In either case, when studying the notion of generation and origin in Plotinus, a close reading of Anaximander’s *Apeiron* seems appropriate.

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## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup>Plotinus has been the greatest contributor to Platonism aside from Plato himself (Emilsson 2017:9).
- <sup>2</sup>*Ennead* VI.9.3.14–22, credit to Meijer 1992:124.
- <sup>3</sup>As found in *Ennead* V.1 (trans. Armstrong).
- <sup>4</sup>Because the notion of evil is a complicated one in the history of philosophy, I shall refrain from a discussion of what evil is in this short paper. Rather, I will refer to Plotinus' conception of the material as imperfection, which often believed to be how Plotinus conceives of the material sphere when referring to it as evil. It is evil because it is as far removed from 'the One'/'the Good' as possible.
- <sup>5</sup>Although I refer to several works that examine Plotinus' the One as it is presented in the entirety of Plotinus' work, I primarily base my own reading of Plotinus' the One from the first three chapters of *Ennead* V; 1. On the Three Primary Hypostases; 2. On the Origin and Order of the Beings Which Come After the First; 3. On the Knowing Hypostases and That Which Is Beyond.
- <sup>6</sup>See for instance "Anaximander's 'Apeiron'" by H. B. Gottschalk for an account of the debate on the nature of the *Apeiron* and a defense for the view that the *Apeiron* is something material.
- <sup>7</sup>Aryeh Finkelberg discusses three possible interpretations of the *Apeiron*, (1) *Apeiron* as an airy *arché* similar to that of Anaximenes (Finkelberg 1993:241); (2) *Apeiron* as an eternal generator and unchangeable 'whole' (Finkelberg 1993:250) and; (3) she concludes that the *Apeiron* must have been both airy and an unchangeable 'whole,' in order to reconcile two somewhat irreconcilable claims (Finkelberg 1993:254).
- <sup>8</sup>One objection to my argument is that, despite the similarities I will present in section III between Anaximander's *Apeiron* and the One, Plotinus may have had similar inspiration from others. Plato's *Parmenides* is generally believed to be Plotinus' main inspiration for the One. The scope of this paper does not permit an extensive study of Plato's *Parmenides* and whether there is something that Plotinus could have inherited from Anaximander that he did not from Plato. Such a discovery would, of course, be of great asset to my thesis. Nonetheless, I maintain that evidence will be presented to show that such a study may be warranted.
- <sup>9</sup>Stamatellos does, however, believe that Plotinus derives the One from Plato's Good, which is "beyond being" (Stamatellos 2007:70).
- <sup>10</sup>Other examples given by Emilsson are: 'attribute' ('accident,' *kata symbebēkōs*), 'forms' (*eidē*) (of bodies and in the soul); 'power' ('potentiality,' 'potency,' 'faculty,' *dynamis*) (Emilsson 2017:31).
- <sup>11</sup>Stamatellos claims that the Presocratics who "foreshadowed" the

concept of the One include Heraclitus, Empedocles, Pythagoras and Anaxagoras (Stamatellos 2007:2).

<sup>12</sup>Stamatellos argues that Anaxagoras has been greatly influential for Plotinus in his notion of the One (Stamatellos 2007:57). I will not attempt to argue that Anaxagoras hasn't been influential, but rather, that Anaximander also was influential for Plotinus in this regard.

<sup>13</sup>According to Stamatellos, "Plotinus sets out his own interpretation of Anaximander's principle and to some extent appears to agree with it" (Stamatellos 2007:140), in contrast to how he is quite critical of theories of other Presocratics such as Empedocles, Anaxagoras and the Atomists (Stamatellos 2007:142). This agreement is rooted, however, according to Stamatellos, and at least in part, in Plotinus' idea of material indefiniteness. Stamatellos takes issue with Armstrong, who claims that Plotinus' criticism of Anaximander shows how closely he is following the Peripatetic tradition (Stamatellos 2007:140).

<sup>14</sup>Emilsson writes something similar, "[Plotinus] rather assumes that since there is plurality in Intellect it needs a further principle, and argues that this principle must be of a different kind" (Emilsson 2017:71).

<sup>15</sup>This passage is from Aristotle's *Physics* 3.4 203b10–15.

<sup>16</sup>It has been noted that Plotinus did not have the vocabulary to express a distinction between "being" and "existing" (Emilsson 2017:76).

<sup>17</sup>For Aristotle, to be is to be unified, but the One is exempt from this, as it is beyond being, being instead "sheer unity," not merely unified (Emilsson 2017:387).

<sup>18</sup>Therefore only the "next greatest" can come from the One. This production needs that which it comes from, and because it comes directly from the One it can also see it. The One, by contrast, does not need its product. It is, after all, already perfect by itself. The superabundance of the One that leads to production from it is, actually, not the purpose of the One, but rather some side-effect of its perfection (*Ennead* V.2).

<sup>19</sup>Sweeney mentions Paul Seligman in this context (Sweeney 1972:32).

<sup>20</sup>This can be supported by ancient descriptions of Anaximander's *Apeiron*; pseudo-Plutarch, *Miscellanies* 179.2: "He declares that what arose from the eternal and is productive of [or, capable of giving birth to] hot and cold was separated off at the coming to be of this cosmos..." (Curd, ed. 1995:12).

<sup>21</sup>According to Emilsson, the distinction between internal and external activity runs through every Plotinian principle down to soul and is crucial for an understanding of causation in the Plotinian system" (Emilsson 2017:51).

<sup>22</sup>Emilsson refers to this apophatism as "negative theology" (Emilsson 2017:80).

<sup>23</sup>This passage reminds us of the initial words of the fifth *Ennead*, namely, of the image of the father and the child that has forgotten him (*Ennead* V.1.6).

<sup>24</sup>See my introductory remarks on the Anaximander fragment.

<sup>25</sup>Meijer finds that Plotinus seems to "allude to a periodical(?) return to the One" (Meijer 1992:39 footnote 139). There are in Plotinus notions of "returning" to the one for souls to become virtuous (Meijer 1992:39).

# TRUE OR FALSE FULL STOP

## AN INTERVIEW WITH HERMAN CAPPELEN

By Hans Robin Solberg

Herman Cappelen is a professor of philosophy at the University of Oslo with a part-time position at the University of St. Andrews. He has published influential books and papers on many topics, especially in the philosophy of language but also philosophical methodology, epistemology, metaphysics, and philosophy of mind. In particular, he has worked on the topic of relativism about truth, and, together with John Hawthorne, he wrote the book *Relativism and Monadic Truth* (2009). The book presents and argues against relativism about truth, while maintaining that truth is a monadic property: if something is true, it is true full stop. In this interview, Cappelen discusses his understanding of relativism about truth and the arguments for and against the view, together with how the debate relates to other questions in philosophy.

*In general, what is relativism? And what are some examples of specific kinds of relativism we can find in contemporary philosophy?*

I think it is important to distinguish two ways the term relativism is used in philosophy, including contemporary philosophy. The historical use of it had to do primarily with a very vague thought that is not as common today. The vague thought is that in some domain, or maybe very generally, truth is relativized to some kind of parameter. The easiest way to think about that is in the moral or normati-

ve domain: the claim something ought to be done is true or false only relative to something, e.g., your background, or your community, or your choices, or something like that.

This vague thought then gets cashed out or explained in two different ways in more contemporary work, and the weird thing that happens is that now one of the things that was called relativism in the past turns out to be the opponent of contemporary relativism. One way to spell out what I just said about relativization is that you say “well, when I say that it’s good to  $\phi$  what I’m really saying is that it’s good for me to  $\phi$  relative to...” and then you put in the parameter that you relativize to, into the claim made. And so when I say, just to make things very simple, that it’s right to  $\phi$ , what I’m really saying is that it is right for Herman to  $\phi$ , and then what you are saying is that it’s right for you to  $\phi$ , and so on. So people make these claims that have the relativization built into it. That’s still a form of relativism in the old-fashioned traditional sense, since it is still going to end up with there being, in some sense, no objective truths about what you ought to do. There is the truth for Herman and there is a truth for other people, and those things can differ.

This move, where you build the relativization into the content of the claim, is what at least many





of us today call contextualism. The relativization doesn't have to do with truth itself it just has to do with the content of what you said. So, when I tried to explain this right now I said: what you said is that it is the right thing for you to do, what I said is that it is the right thing for me to do. So, the relativization becomes a part of the content. What you have done isn't to fiddle with truth you just fiddled with the content of what is said. Now, in the past people used the term "relativism" to cover those kinds of views. Gilbert Harman, for example, in defending versions of relativism, would talk as if that was relativism. And there are people today who still talk in that old-fashioned way, so David Velleman published a book on relativism and he uses "relativism" in the way that I just described, where you are fiddling with the content of the claim, not anything having to do with truth. That is one way to use "relativism", and it might be the way that it was used throughout much of its history.

But, then, today I think we've made some very significant progress, in that we've distinguished the view that I just described from a very different view, the view where it is not the content of what you say that has the relativization built into it, but the truth-evaluation of what is said. On this view, when you say that it is right to  $\phi$  and I say that it is right to  $\phi$ , we're saying the same thing. You didn't say that it was right *for you* and I didn't say it was right *for me*. What was said was just the same thing, so in a sense we agree. If you say it is right to  $\phi$  and I say it is not right to  $\phi$ , then we disagree, because you've affirmed something that I denied. Recall that on the previous view you wouldn't have said something that I denied, right, because you would've have just said that for you it is right to  $\phi$ , and I would've said that for me it is not right to  $\phi$ , and those are perfectly compatible. But in this new way, that I think of as the contemporary way, of using the term "relativism", you and I have disagreed, because you affirmed what I denied.

So, where does the relativism come in? Well, that comes in at the level of how we evaluate claims as true or false, not in how we individuate claims. On this view, when you evaluate the one thought, or content, or proposition (people use different terms) "it is right to  $\phi$ " or "one should  $\phi$ ", you can say it's true, I can say it's false, and we can both

be right. When I have been writing about relativism I've taken that to be the relevant sense of the term. It is a form of relativization that doesn't build the parameter-relativity into the content but builds into the truth-assessment, whatever you think that is. I have now talked about normative claims, but, of course, you can be relativist in any number of domains, you could think that, to be super extreme, mathematical claims are only true or false relative to a certain type of parameter, or you could think the same for claims about knowledge, that it is relative whether someone knows something or not, and you could go through different domains and see where relativism applies and where it doesn't. And, of course, the limit of that is you could be a global relativist where everything is relativistic.

Just one more thing about how different those two initial ways of using the term relativism are, the one that builds it into the content and the one that makes it to be about the truth-evaluation: You could be a relativist in the old-fashioned sense and build it into the content, so that when you utter the sentence "it is good to  $\phi$ " or "you ought to  $\phi$ ", then what you really said is that *you* ought to  $\phi$ , you just talked about yourself. The person who denies the second kind of relativism could agree with that, and just say "yes, you built that into the content but the truth-assessment is now objective and universal". So, the two views are very different, and the paradoxical and extremely unfortunate way about mixing these two ways of using "relativism" is that old-fashioned relativism is now sort of understood as the alternative, the opposing view, to contemporary relativism. So, the terminology gets confusing quickly. If you want to get into contemporary debates, the way to do it is to think in the second way where you are not fiddling with the content expressed, but just with how you assess truth and falsity.

*You defended, together with John Hawthorne, in your book Relativism and Monadic Truth a non-relativistic understanding of truth. You call it the simple view where truth is a monadic property. Could you describe that view?*

The simple description of that simple view is just that it is the denial of the second kind of relativism, let's just call that relativism from now on. It



is the view that when you assess something as true or false it is simply true or false. Another way to express the view is: it is true or false *simpliciter*, or it is true or false full stop. All those little extras at the end are just supposed to remind you that there isn't anything more. It's just true or false and there is no relativization.

In the book I wrote with John Hawthorne, we talked about this little package of views that we thought went well together: when you speak you express something we call propositions, or contents, and they are also the contents of beliefs. Propositions, then, serve two roles initially, they are the content of sentences and the sentences express what you believe. And those sentences are monadically true or false. This we thought was a package of views that go well together. They are, anyway, the traditional picture, we think.

*How should we think about assessing for truth and falsity on this simple view?*

The truth-predicate just applies to something in the following simple way: if you have a content or a proposition, it's either true full stop or false full stop. Then there is this activity of trying to figure out which one it is, and, of course, in that activity we'll be engaged in all kinds of complicated things and we'll disagree and so on. Whether you will end up agreeing with me about whether it's true or false will depend upon all sorts of things about you and all sorts of things about me. But the point is that that doesn't affect whether it's true or false. These activities of assessing are not constitutive of the property of being true or false, there is a super-important disconnect.

*You have described the opposing view, relativism in the contemporary sense, where you have some content and the truth-value can vary due to some parameter. In the book you describe in more detail what you think the best version of that view is. Could you say something more about what you take relativism about truth to be? And what arguments people give in support of that kind of relativism?*

It might help to give a little bit of history. The thought that relativism, in this contemporary sense, is true, had not been very popular among those thinking about truth and content and those

kinds of things. The view just hadn't been worked out very much. What had been worked out reasonably well was the thing that is now called contextualism, where you build it into the content, which had been worked out in all kinds of ways. The idea that you just have one content but the actual truth-value was relative to some kind of parameter, that view hadn't been very well worked out. And then there was some, I think, groundbreaking work done: by Max Kölbel, who wrote a book, Peter Lasersohn, who wrote some papers, and then somewhat strange historically, a paper by my co-author John Hawthorne, Andy Egan and Brian Weatherson — maybe one of the first papers that tried to articulate this relativistic position in more detail. Then after that the person who ended up, I think, getting a lot of the credit for relativism and developing it throughout many papers and in a book was John MacFarlane.

The simple version of the view that they actually articulated was that, with respect to some particular terms — the examples they often went back to had to do with a certain kind of might-claims, “it might be the case that...”, they called it epistemic modals — they tried to find areas where they thought this kind of relativism is plausible and argue that there is evidence for it, even. Another case is what they call predicates of personal taste. An easy way to think about it might be something like “it is funny”, like in, “that movie was funny”. And the achievement, if you can call it that, of this tradition was to first develop a formal framework that included a truth-predicate that wasn't monadic but relativized in a relevant sense. Then the hard work, so to speak, was to articulate and describe the way that framework explained a whole bunch of phenomena. The view itself, if you just put it without the thing that it's supposed to do, is just: you have a formal system where all attributions of truth or falsity are indexed to what MacFarlane calls a context of assessment. So that is the view, and then the next question is why would you want to do that?

The driving idea, the core simple idea, that anyone can understand, is that if you say “that movie was fun” and I say “no, it wasn't fun”, there is a very strong sense that we have disagreed with each other, and you have said something that I have denied. That's data point number one. It says we disagreed, so you want to explain the sense that

we disagreed, that there is a genuine disagreement, and, of course, if you had just said it was fun for you and I had said it is fun for me, then it looks like we haven't had a disagreement. But if it's just this proposition, "it was fun", and you assert it, I deny it, that looks like a genuine disagreement.

But on the other hand there is a sense that you haven't done anything wrong, and I haven't done anything wrong. The second desideratum, then, is to respect the intuition that there is some kind of subjectivity in this domain, there isn't an objective truth about what's fun, that all depends on your sense of humor and so on. What they did to respect that was to say "well, we capture the disagreement by letting the content be these non-relativized things", so that's the disagreement bit, but then from your context of assessment there will be one standard of humor and from mine there will be another, and so since truth is always relativized in that way you get to be right from your point of view and I get to be right from my point of view, even though you say it's true and I say it's false.

So, they provided a structure for saying that we disagree but we can both be right. Some people, like MacFarlane, Max Kölbel, and Peter Lasnik, likes to describe it as a form of faultless disagreement. There is disagreement but the disagreement involves no fault on behalf of one or the other participants. If you are looking for arguments, that's argument number one, that's like the data-driven argument.

Then there is another argument that Hawthorne and I talk quite a bit about, there is a whole chapter devoted to it, and it's a bit more technical and a bit harder to get people to see. It's an argument that somehow comes from David Lewis, it is found in some of the work of Jeff King, and you can find it in parts of MacFarlane's writings, though he downplayed it a little bit when he published his book. Well, the way we describe it, it has twelve different premises and a conclusion, so I don't think it would be very suitable for this interview, and the way Jeff King does it, it's also super complicated and long. But to give just the spirit of it: In almost all formal systems for languages in formal semantics theorists tend to relativize truth to some parameter or other, so it actually looks like some form of relativism in these formal systems is the standard view. David Kaplan, for example, and

this is a very important precedence for it, says, well, truth and falsity is relative to a world, it is true in this world but it could have been false, so it is false relative to another possible world. So people seem comfortable thinking that truth or falsity is relative to a possible world. And many others are comfortable with the idea that you relativize to times, a proposition could be true at one time and false at another, and Kaplan even included places as parameters. So you don't have simply truth or falsity. But this was sort of independent of the original motivations of relativism, they were just formal moves that were made. And then MacFarlane, in particular, used to say "hey, so what's weird about including standards of taste, or a sense of humor, or some body of evidence", so you just add a parameter to something we're completely comfortable with having parameters with respect to anyway.

*So, that is two arguments that support relativism: the case of faultless disagreement and the fact that a lot formal theorizing in linguistics and logic seems to have added this relativity anyway by having parameters when you assess for truth-value. How do you respond to those arguments?*

So, Hawthorne and I, in that book, we say, well, first it was a mistake to accept all of those other relativizations. Truth is monadic, across the board. When we talk about truth relative to a world that is a derivative notion, the basic notion is the notion of truth *simpliciter*. It was a mistake to include relativization to times and it was a mistake to include relativization to places. Now, that's hard work, because now you have to show that you don't need it in the case of modality, talking about what is possible and necessary, you don't need it with respect to time, and you don't need it with respect to place. And so we do a bit of that work throughout the book, showing how in each of those cases this relativized notion really is derivative and that the basic notion is a monadic one. So, it was hard work writing that book because you had to say something about modal logic and modality, say something about tense, you had to talk about all these different areas in which people have made relativizations and say, you know, that was a useful theoretical tool but it doesn't cut at what is fundamental, it doesn't cut at the basic structure of language and thought. That was one strategy of replies, go after

that “look, we’re doing it many places already, so why not add them” and reply “no, you shouldn’t have gone down that road”. Basically, you misinterpret people if you go down that road.

As the second response to what I described as the first argument, the one from faultless disagreement, we tried to show that you can generate that sense of disagreement and the sense of faultlessness, without going relativistic. You could do that in two kinds of ways: you can explain those intuitions in better ways and you can show that the relativist predicts things that aren’t real, that relativism overgenerates phenomena, predicting that there should be phenomena that don’t really exist. In particular, we say there isn’t always that sense of disagreement, and we give a bunch of cases where one person says “this is fun” and another person says “that is not fun” and there is no sense of disagreement. If you think about very weird cases, like talking animals, it is very weird, when you realize how totally different from us they are, to think that there is a deep sense of disagreement. But the relativist would get us to think “no, there are these genuine deep disagreements in all these cases” and we show that, typically, that isn’t the case. And in the cases in which there *is* a sense of disagreement, there are many ways for the non-relativist to explain that. A natural case to think about is standards. You build the standards into the content, not into the truth-assessment, now, when you are talking about what’s funny and I talk about what’s funny, we try to generate a kind of common standard, and part of what we’re disagreeing about is what is funny or not relative to that communal standard. That’s a sense of disagreement but it doesn’t require that there are two separate truths – it’s in fact an effort to coordinate.

Since we wrote that book, which was quite a few years ago now, this literature has continued and it is a hard literature to get into. There are now literally hundreds of dissertations and papers written on little sub-parts of each of these issues. That’s great. This way it becomes more sophisticated. Through collective effort we now know massively more about how to defend relativism and how to argue against it than we ever did in the history of philosophy. Which I think is a sign that we’re making incredible progress very, very fast. But it also means that if you were to try to get into to this

now, it would take years and years of work just to look at all the explanatory models.

*Have you seen any work defending relativism within a domain that you think is more persuasive than other work?*

...

No.

*So, still a global anti-relativist?*

Well, I like the arguments we have in the book, they are pretty good arguments. I mean, the way I work I think about something for many years and then I write a book about it. Then we wrote, I think, ten replies to different leading relativists who were replying to us. And as John and I were writing up those replies, none of that made us change our minds. And then, I felt like I’ve made enough of a contribution to that field and I started working on something else, I think after that I started worrying about intuitions, and I kind of left studying relativism-topics, not behind, really, because I have students working on it and so on, but... yeah, maybe I’ll go back to it at some point and see what people have done.

*You mentioned earlier contextualism about meaning.*

Yeah, the parameter you want to relativize to gets built into the content of what you say. So, when you say “one ought to  $\phi$ ” what you’re saying is relative to your standards, and that’s actually part of the content. You didn’t say it out loud but it’s sort of hidden in the content there, the thing you asserted, the proposition expressed, has a reference to your standards in it. Or, if you say “it’s fun”, you said that by your standards it’s fun. So, let’s just try to speak in that way: I say “by Herman’s standards this is fun”. Now, that could be true for absolutely everyone, everywhere. It’s perfectly compatible for that sentence to be monadically true. You could say Herman expressed some proposition and it was the proposition that relativized the funness to his standards but that relativized claim itself is non-relatively true, That’s going to be true for you even though you disagree, you would say “it’s not fun”, because then you’re saying that by your standards.

*Kind of the way that some traditional logicians wanted to deal with tense and place, for example, you would look to a fully specified proposition. Then when we utter something like “it’s raining” we’re really saying it is raining at that place at that date at that time, and that gives you a proposition that is invariantly true or false.*

Exactly.

*So, this view is compatible with the monadic understanding of truth. You have earlier argued against contextualism about meaning and some of those arguments that you used against contextualism can be used in support of relativism about truth. Could you say something more about the relationship between these two strands in you thinking?*

So, the background is: I was right out of graduate school, it was a long time ago, and in the early 2000s, so almost twenty years ago, I wrote a book with Ernie Lepore called *Insensitive Semantics*. That book is an effort to argue in favor of something we call minimalism about semantic content. So, there we were in favor of a semantics that didn’t include much context sensitivity. However, in that book we also argued for the view that we need a notion of *what was said* that is very rich. We argued that semantics doesn’t exhaust what is said. There are many things said and one little part of that is the semantic content and that part doesn’t have all these relativizations built into it. So, what we argued against was a kind of contextualism about semantic content, not against contextualism about what was said, we’re in favor of contextualism about what was said.

Now, it should be said that there are some very interesting connections here, the way I see it. For example, a lot of MacFarlane’s early work just took the arguments from *Insensitive Semantics* – I mean, he didn’t steal them but he used the same kinds of arguments – and used them as a theory in favor of relativism about truth. So what he did with truth, to let truth vary with assessors, we did all that work with having what was said be much richer. That’s the history of it. Just after *Insensitive Semantics* came out MacFarlane published a reply where he sort of said “no, you guys really should have been relativists about truth”, and that’s an early MacFarlane paper where he says all these ar-

guments are great arguments for relativism about truth. I still think that much of what MacFarlane wants to do with the relativization of the truth-predicate, can be done by being more pluralistic and rich about the notion of what was said.

*I guess the distinctive thing about your view is that you accept a pluralism where, when you utter something, a lot of propositions are put into play at the same time, not just one.*

Right. Another, even more radical part of my view is that one sentence can express different propositions for different people. So the view I have is that I utter a sentence, the sentence will express many propositions, one of them will be the semantic content. Relative to you the cluster of propositions could be C and relative to, say, Bjørn Ramberg it could be C2, and C and C2 need not be the same cluster. So, what I think is that I say each of the things in your cluster, so relative to you I will have said something that I didn’t say relative to Bjørn. This gets very tricky, I know it sounds very relativistic but it isn’t. You could actually correctly, *truly*, say that Herman said something true, Bjørn could say that Herman said something false, but that’s all compatible with monadic truth because one of the things I said relative to Bjørn is false but one of the things I said relative to you is true. If you have this picture, where there’s a cluster of content, you get something that, again, sounds a little bit relativistic. But I’m not worried about that because it doesn’t make the truth-predicate relative, it’s just a consequence of how what I said will depend in part on the interpreter. So, most of what is contextual I like to build this kind of relativization into what was said, say, what Herman said relative to an interpreter. Again, that is compatible with a monadic truth-predicate, because it only relativizes the saying-relation. This is what I call content relativism – and that’s a form of relativism that I endorse. It’s not about truth, but about content, i.e. about what is said.

*Recently, you’ve been working on the topic of conceptual engineering, how concepts change and maybe improve. In some discussions of conceptual engineering, people talk of some kind of “relativism”, where depending on the concept we’re using, or the version of a concept we’re using, the truth-value of a claim might differ. So, one example is “fish”. Say that 400-500 years*

*ago people just called anything living in the sea “fish”, so a whale would be a fish, but then on the modern understanding of the word there are much more stringent criteria, and the whale would not be counted standardly as a fish but as a mammal. The question is whether or not it was true that whale were fish when we had this concept and now it’s false once we’ve changed the concept? What do you think of this kind of seeming relativism?*

It is important to keep track of what we mean by relativism here. This sort of phenomenon is not in any way related to the relativism that I talked about earlier. Here’s something that could happen quite easily, and, I think, happens a lot: You mean one thing by “fish” and then you utter the sentence “whales are fish”. By that you express a certain proposition, say, that the whale is an animal that swims in the ocean. That’s monadically true or false. Then I have a different meaning for “fish”, where it excludes mammals, for example, and then I say “whales are fish”. I will be expressing a different proposition from you, and mine might be false while yours is true. But given the way we set up things earlier that just means that we expressed different contents, it is the contents that have changed. Now, that’s the answer to the initial question.

Then there is a whole cluster of complications that look kind of relativistic, but if I have thought my way through it properly, they are really just versions of this content relativism that I’ve just described to you. Let us use the example of “fish” again, but let’s make it a little bit different: At some point in the past people used “fish” in such a way that that little thing, one little thing, call that thing A, was a fish. Then I want to say that, well, concepts can change over time, so that things that once was in, is now out. Now we go a little bit further into the future, and A is no longer correctly described as a fish. Now, I just described why, so far, there is no form of relativism here. But there is a problem because I also want the following to be true: so I’m the person speaking now, I want to be able to say what the person in the past said and I want to do it, what we call, homophonically, I want to use the same word, that is, I want a kind of continuity of topic. So, I want the following to be true: that when I utter “you said that A is a fish” I’ve said something true. But, what I say when I say “A is a

fish” is false, and when you said “A is a fish” in the past it was true, but at the same time I said what you said when I say “you said that A is a fish”. So, now it looks like we’ve both said something true and said something false relative to different times, but I don’t want that kind of relativism. What I really think is that what has happened is that what you said has changed over time. So, it’s a form of content relativism. These are complicated issues, they’re very fuzzy.

*So, you want the content of the assertion of the original speaker to have changed at the subsequent time?*

Yeah, but I also want it to be true that I can say what you said using the same sentence, the sentence that is now changed in meaning.

*Ok, because there is no relativism about truth if the concept change, but still we might want to say, at least many wants, to say that it is false that, for example, A is a fish.*

It is false given what I mean by it. At the same time, it is also true for me to say that you said that A is a fish. But I know that you meant something different by it, when you said it, it was true. So, there is a clash. What you said was true because of what you meant but at the same time you said that A is a fish and that’s false. A lot of work needs to be done to resolve that tension. But it’s not a view that is the kind of relativism we talked about at the beginning.

# FIGHTING NIHILISM: A REVIEW OF BACKGROUND PRACTICES

Review of

*Background Practices: Essays on the Understanding of Being*

Hubert Dreyfus (Mark Wrathall, ed.)

(Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017)

By Dag August Schmedling Dramer

*Background Practices* is the second installment of Hubert Dreyfus' collected papers, papers he has written during his extensive career as an academic philosopher, a career that has spanned almost 50 years. Unfortunately, the volume was published after the philosopher passed away the 22<sup>th</sup> of April 2017, age 87, so he did not get a chance to witness the final result. The editor of the volume, Mark Wrathall, who has been a student and colleague of Dreyfus, would certainly have included an additional homage in the introduction if Dreyfus' passing had happened earlier, but as of now, it stands: "The essays in this volume exemplify a distinctive feature of Hubert Dreyfus' philosophy, namely the way his work inextricably intertwines the interpretation of texts with his own analysis and description of the phenomena at issue."

Timeless as Dreyfus' phenomenologically inspired philosophy is, it is also *very much in time*, as he adopts Martin Heidegger's *historistical* way of thinking about, and doing, philosophy. As Wrathall presents it in the introduction:

Dreyfus seems as committed as Heidegger to the thought that "one cannot think without thinking historically." Thus Dreyfus always philosophizes in a kind of dialogue with thinkers in the history of philosophy. (2017:1)

Now Dreyfus' philosophy is timeless, but also *timely*, as Dreyfus was never parochial, but a philosopher highly interested in making the thinking of the past relevant to the contemplation of the present.

For Dreyfus, as for Heidegger, it is more important to relate a text to "current concerns rather than freezing the text in the past" (Chapter 1). "It has always seemed

to me," Dreyfus explains, "that the text of a thinker is only worth studying if reading it makes a significant difference in how we see the world and ourselves. Our job as commentators is to clarify the text and bring out its relevance" (Chapter 2). (2017:1)

For brevity's (and intellectual integrity's) sake, I will limit myself to a general discussion of just some of the thirteen papers in the volume, as discussion of them all would be beyond the scope of this review. The book consists of thirteen papers that in the volume function as chapters. And the book as a whole is in turn separated into four parts. Each part has its overarching theme, in which the papers of each part have common elements.

But why is this volume titled *Background Practices*? It sounds like something out of sociology or anthropology. Background practices, it turns out, are of *ontological* import as Dreyfus recognizes "that an understanding of being is embodied in the 'background practices' of a culture" (2017:5). The full title makes it clear: *Essays on the Understanding of Being*, where *being* is to be contained in the practices of a culture, i.e. in the *background*. This suggests that the practices are often overlooked and ignored and that it is the job of the phenomenologist to uncover the meaning of being, already implicitly endorsed in the very practices a given culture has.

Before I continue the discussion on the second volume however, some remarks about the discipline of phenomenology should be made, in order to better understand Dreyfus' way of doing philosophy. Phenomenology can be viewed as an enterprise that encourages us to see what is hidden in plain sight; of



making us aware of the aspects of our experiences of the world without us being aware of them *as such*, i.e. the parts of our experiences that are constitutive of the experiences themselves. For instance, when asked how we see the table in front of us, most of us will pause for a moment before we begin to describe its colour, shape, etc. This is what Bertrand Russell famously does when discussing epistemological concerns in his *Problems of Philosophy* (1912). Describing the table in this way is all well and good for some purposes, but to the phenomenologist, this is not how the table is first encountered. The table is not first perceived as a set of qualities that are then taken to be *of* a table, rather, the table is first encountered as something on which to place your books, something with which to sit down by, lean against etc. It is hardly perceived as an *object* at all, but, to borrow from the ecological psychologist J. J. Gibson, as something that *affords* certain actions and not others. Only later, in an abstract description, do the *qualities* of the underlying object emerge.

At least, that is what one influential strand of thinking that stems from Heidegger presents. The *existential thinker* will then do for culture and understanding, what the phenomenologist does for perception. The cultural and hermeneutical can be said, then, to retrieve the background understanding implicit in our practices and activities and make us aware of the constitutive elements of our understanding that are taken to be *always already there*.

“Background practices” is a technical term for Dreyfus and he mentions the concept in several of his papers. Wrathall’s discussion and clarification of the term in his introduction proves highly useful, even essential, especially if you are new to phenomenology and existentialism. Wrathall begins with a more general account of practices and distinguishes them from skills:

[s]kills, one might say, enable us to participate in a practice fluidly. But a practice is not reducible to a skill. It is rather the standing condition of the possibility of acting skillfully in a domain. To be more precise, a practice is a complex structure that sustains action. (2017:4–5)

It is clear from this quote that for Dreyfus, practices have the function of *founding* the various skills we have as human beings. “Skills” are still very important to Dreyfus, and the fact that what it is to be a human

is exactly our nature as skilful copers is something that is always in the background of his discussions. “Skilful coping” is another technical term for Dreyfus, and it designates the way in which we humans are absorbed in and by our activities in virtue of our skilful, engaged rapport with artefacts and other humans in our surroundings. In the mode of skilful coping, the distinction between subject and object disappears, and all that is left is the ongoing flow of the activity. The idea is that when the flow is disrupted, we enter the contemplative mode, and then the condition of the possibility of viewing ourselves as subjects that stand against unfamiliar objects, is established. Skilful coping is not just an interesting description of human psychology – of how we act and perceive in our daily lives – it is also a way for Dreyfus to establish the fact that we first and foremost are *practical animals*, living out our lives with a background understanding (that is often unarticulated), which our coping, skills and activities make sensible for us. “Skilful coping” is thus another fundamental concept Dreyfus in earlier works has used to criticize intellectualism in the cognitive sciences, but also, more broadly, in philosophy.

The first essay collection, to which *Background Practices* figure as the second volume, *Skillful Coping: Essays on the Phenomenology of Everyday Perception and Action*, contains papers such as “The Primacy of Phenomenology over Logical Analysis” and “Overcoming the Myth of the Mental”. The first volume can be seen as the groundwork that sets forth an understanding of human being-in-the-world, and prepares for the more existential discussions in *Background Practices*. In the first volume, Dreyfus establishes the mind as directly and necessarily in contact with the world, a world that is subtended by what is then understood as the background practices that return in the second volume.

Part I. of *Background Practices* takes up questions related to authenticity and everydayness, and consists of three papers within which Dreyfus presents his familiar Heideggerian exegesis of “everyday intelligibility” based on skilful coping. In chapter 2 of part I, for instance, Dreyfus discusses intelligibility, which, fundamentally speaking, is an immediate and shared form of intelligibility that belongs to a culture, and Dreyfus asks himself the question if there can be anything that is more intelligible than this everyday form of understanding: Is there a deeper and perhaps more authentic level of understanding available to a human being, or to a culture as a whole? In the chapter, Dreyfus presents a response to his critics on whether his reading of division I of *Being and Time* was

reading too much into the more existential part II of the magnum opus. One of the things Dreyfus was known for was to provide a careful reading of division I of *Being and Time*, which is the division that inspired Dreyfus to retrieve the background understanding, and via skilful coping, re-establish our unmediated, non-conceptual and non-intellectual contact with the world.

Dreyfus answers his critics by introducing his now well-known phenomenology of skill acquisition, in which the person (Dasein) goes through 4 stages from novice to expert, stages in which the abstract rules used at the beginning of learning the skill, ends up being discarded for the unmediated, bodily contact with the surroundings. By introducing a fifth stage, in which the cultural expert, what Heidegger following Aristotle calls the *Phronimos* turns from simply being a virtuous agent, recognized by the community, into being a History Maker, Dreyfus makes it clear that an essential part of being human is disclosing new worlds, i.e. modes of being in the world, and that we only do that on the basis of the pre-existing practices in which we exercise our skills. The history maker is a “world transforming master” and is at a level above the fourth stage, “expert,” and is best understood as a “cultural master,” one who masters the cultural practices to such a degree as to reach for new possible ways of being (2017:33). A good example of how this works intraworldly, so to speak, is that of the virtuoso pianist, who, by already having reached the peak of skill in her domain, will improvise on that which she already can, and thus make people open to new ways of playing the piano. With enough improvisation on variations of the same theme, a new style can emerge, that later, upon explicit recognition, can be classified as a genre. This is how genres (action-comedy), styles (hipster), motifs (the leitmotif of Wagner) and categories emerge, and is exemplified in sports, music, the visual arts and clothing, to name but a few of the various practices that can be mentioned. Dreyfus concludes the chapter by stating that yes, there is such a thing as a “higher kind of primordial understanding” (2017:44) open to the cultural master, but the condition for this understanding must always rest in the more basic skilful everyday intelligibility that we all share.

Just as the individual by acquiring new skills through training and practice opens up new ways of being directed to the affordances of the landscape, so does a cultural practice, which consists of many individuals, disclose new modes of *being*. For instance, there is a *collective* understanding of what the practice of soccer consists in, that, although related to the various skills displayed in soccer-

playing, soccer as a phenomenon is not reducible to. Now, the various practices a given culture displays (bartending, office-working, gardening, etc.) are, at least at times, relatively *explicit*, as we have to learn *rules* for acting in these domains, and we have to be inculcated into, say, gardening by being instructed on how to recognize weed from ordinary grass, and learning how to use the tools for cutting them safely and appropriately, before we can be said to be skilful gardeners. It is part of Dreyfus’ general phenomenological project of showing us how the explicitness of action and thought, our abilities to conceptualize, is slowly discarded when our experiences allow our bodies to respond directly to the features of the landscape, without need of preliminary guiding thoughts. In other words, the skills we all have and share as cultural beings, give us over to the world directly, that is, without any mediation. So the aforementioned practices in a culture are taken up and, so to speak, incorporated into our bodily dispositions to act in the world.

We can understand practices both by talking about them and by acting non-reflectively in them. But an important point remains: Practices like gardening and soccer-playing are still only *parts* of a given culture, and can be understood and discussed within the culture in explicit ways (through rules written down, committee work and debates etc.), even when they, through skilful coping, are formed into the background for our skilful action. And so the various practices we partake in end up forming several backgrounds against which we live out our activities.

But the practices Dreyfus targets with the name “background practices” are not merely operating in the background. They also form the background against which a large number of practices makes sense. These are the practices that, at the deepest level, form the background to any other practice at all in a particular world because they embody pervasive responses, discriminations, motor skills, etc. which add up to an interpretation of what it is to be a person, an object, an institution, etc. (2017:9)

In other words, “background practices” is the term for the *background of all backgrounds*, which, at the most fundamental level, remains unarticulated. You might say that it is the world that subtends all the micro-worlds we call the practices. In fact, on some readings of Dreyfus, the background cannot, *in principle*, be fully articulated, but must remain as taken for granted, in order for our activities to make sense at all. This is analogous to the skilful



coper, who must remain in the flow of coping by perceptually closing out (that is, not focus on) all that is irrelevant to the situation at hand. A fruitful way to talk about the background is by likening it to that of a *framework* of understanding within which we think. It is part of a framework that we do not focus on: like the picture frame that forms part of our visual periphery, allowing the picture to appear, without itself being the object of direct attention. Now if you focus on the picture frame, you will not see, *not get*, the picture. But if you allow the frame to remain in the background, the picture will appear. Another philosopher, and a long-time collaborator of Dreyfus, Charles Taylor, who understand the background of a culture in terms of a framework, explains the analogy:

Th[e] [point] emerges as soon as we take account of the fact that all beliefs are held within a context or framework of the taken-for-granted, which usually remains tacit, and may even be as yet unacknowledged by the agent, because never formulated. This is what philosophers, influenced by Wittgenstein, Heidegger and Polanyi, have called the “background.” As Wittgenstein points out, my research into rock formations takes as granted that the world didn’t start five minutes ago, complete with all the fossils and striations, but it would never occur to me to formulate and acknowledge this, until some crazed philosophers, obsessively riding their epistemological hobby-horses, put the proposition to me. (Taylor 2007:13)

For those interested in what Heidegger says about science, part II will provide the reader with three papers discussing the important, and at times highly complex, relation between science and phenomenology. To make it clear how there is no “anti-science” in Heidegger as some readers would claim, Dreyfus discusses how scientists, by being “background realists” can come in contact with the “worldless entities” of the physical sciences, entities that are independent of our socially constituted practices. Dreyfus concludes with a form of “plural realism” which is a view where the “deworlded entities” the natural scientist speaks of and the ordinary artefacts we use in our daily life, both have equal status as “real”. This allows Dreyfus to defend the distinction between the humanities, which main project is that of understanding and interpretation of meaningful practices, and the natural sciences, which main task is explaining the world through hypothesizing about the entities that per definition reside outside of the human realm.

In part III the “plural realism” Dreyfus introduced in section two is further explored, as what it means for new worlds to emerge is discussed. Here the (in)famous Heideggerian notion of “historical worlds” is taken up, and Dreyfus discusses the emergence of different worlds in the history of the west. Interestingly, it is the works of art that are characterized as “manifesting, articulating, and glamorizing a world’s style” (2017:14). Great works of art, according to Heidegger, gather around themselves cultural practices and open and illuminate new worlds, by holding up the people of a culture an exemplary emblem of meaningfulness, which people can understand their lives in relation to.

The discussion of the different worlds, that have emerged over the centuries of the western world (the Greek, the Roman, the Christian and the Modern) allows Dreyfus, drawing on Heidegger, to take up the problem of technology in part IV, as it is related to the alienating practices of modern times, associated with nihilism and rampant instrumentalization and commodification. One of the most illuminating contributions of the later Heidegger is his understanding of the *being* of technology, as something that is hardly related to actual technologies as such, but is better understood as a “clearing” within which objects, animals and other people are reduced to mere “standing reserves” as they, like all things in this day and age, can be replaced through increasingly sophisticated means of manipulation. Heidegger’s (and Dreyfus’) fear is that we humans, Dasein, will lose our essential role as world disclosers, as we are ourselves reduced to the objects and processes we manipulate, and thus forget that it is we who disclosed this mode of being (viewing things) to begin with.

So section IV brings the existential threads together, as technology, nihilism, background practices and alienation are seen as interrelated phenomena, understandable co-constituting each other. Technological practices, or, “the technological understanding of being” leads to a flattening of the landscape, rendering it as existentially flat as a non-soliciting pancake.

Dreyfus defines nihilism as the levelling of all meaningful differences, as a result of which existence no longer has inherent meaning. Human existence loses its goal or direction, and thus nothing can have authority for us, make a claim on us, or demand a commitment from us. (2017:14–5)

But Dreyfus is never about simply pointing out our dre-

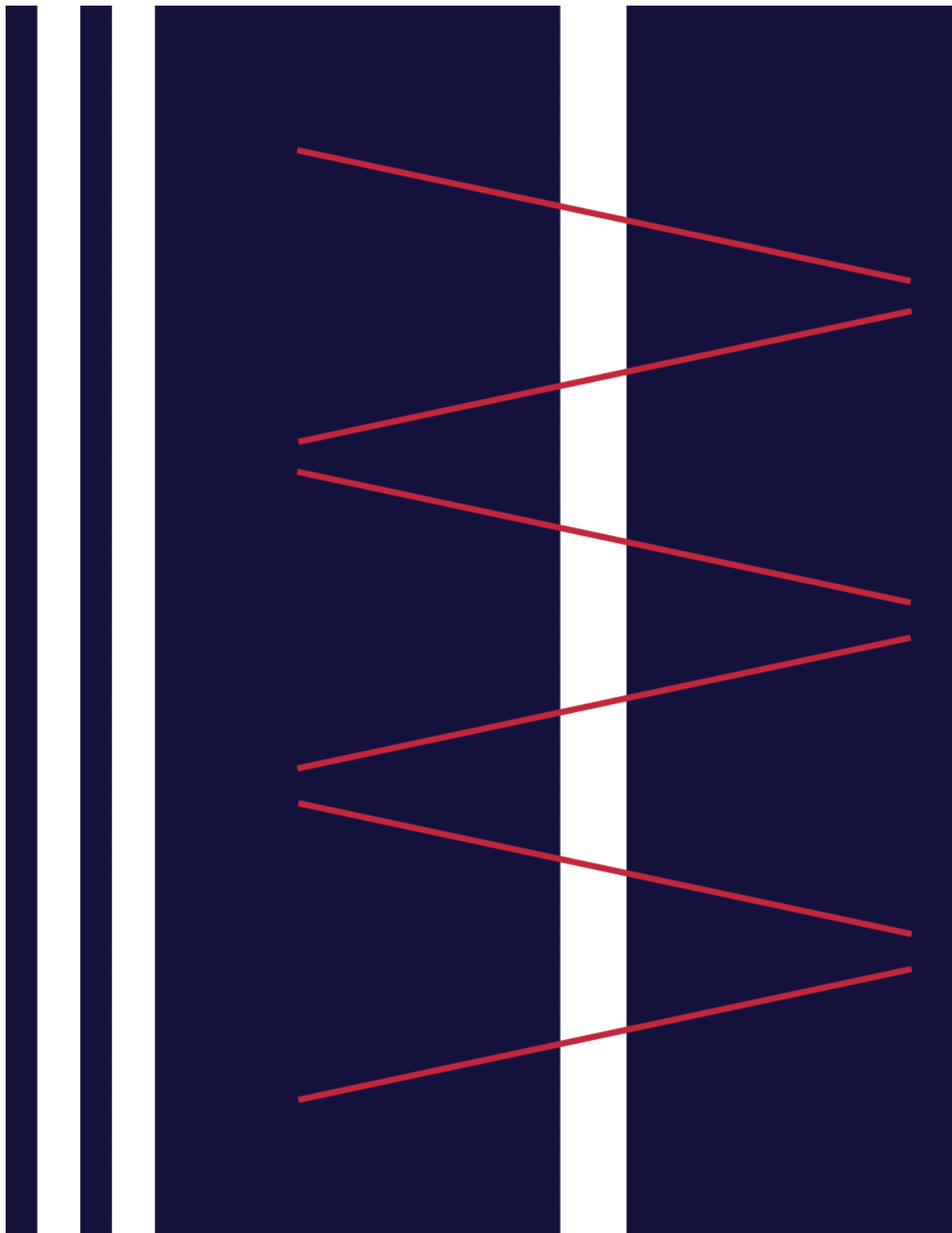
ary existential condition in this day and age; his positive existential/philosophical outlook is underlying nearly all of his papers. For instance, in chapter 11 Dreyfus takes up the question of how to affirm technology in our lives, by incorporating it into our meaningful practices (and not letting them rule the practices themselves), and, by borrowing from Albert Borgmann, let the focal practices (practices that meaningfully perpetuates a sense of purpose through the relevance of say, the family meal) guide our comportment, instead of technological activities for the sake of technological activities.

As Dreyfus says in an interview, he didn't know he was suffering from nihilism before he read about it. And it is clear that for the philosopher, thinkers such as Heidegger, Kierkegaard, Merleau-Ponty and Foucault offer us ways out of the impending doom of existential flattening.

In order to read *Background Practices: Essays on the Understanding of Being* and get something out of it, it pays, as I have hinted at, to have some foreground knowledge of existentialism and phenomenology, yet Dreyfus' clear, direct and unpretentious style pulls you in, whether you fully grasp the topics or not. This effect might have something to do with the philosopher's enthusiasm, an enthusiasm that it is clear by now is subtended by the knowledge that philosophy remains important, potentially life-transformative and essential for understanding our predicament, be they existential, metaphysical or otherwise. Dreyfus' philosophy lives on, while the philosopher himself has passed out of the world, us other Daseins has to cope with existence while still, essentially, remaining in-der-Welt-Sein.

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*Illustrasjon:* Abirami Logendran

# A REBEL ENTERS ACADEMIA

Review of

*A Companion to Ayn Rand*

Allan Gotthelf & Gregory Salmieri (eds.)

(Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2016)

By Carl Wegner Korsnes

Providing a range of alternative perspectives often proves fruitful to philosophical discussions. A review of Blackwell's *A Companion to Ayn Rand* – devoted to the founder of what is called *Objectivism* – printed in a magazine issue dedicated to the discussion of *Relativism*, is thus not intended as an ironic act, but rather as an element broadening one's horizon.

Blackwell's *Companion to Ayn Rand* is an eagerly awaited philosophical companion to one of the most influential and controversial philosophers of the 20th century. Well, at least among a certain group of thinkers it is awaited. As a matter of fact, many – not to say most – academic philosophers, would not only reject the claim that she is one of the most influential philosophers of the 20th century, but would also discard her as a serious philosopher all together. Why this disparaging view on Rand's philosophy among academicians?

Is it Rand's unconventional method of partly conveying her philosophy through best-selling novels, such as *Atlas Shrugged* and *The Fountainhead*, that makes academicians question her role as a philosopher? Considering that several philosophers throughout the years – Voltaire, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Jean-Paul Sartre, just to mention a few – have conveyed their philosophy through novels and plays, this seems to be an unlikely reason. Could it be that Rand's philosophical values, her right-leaning political philosophy, makes her philosophy largely ignored within an often left-leaning academia? Hopefully not, as that would represent a thoroughly *unphilosophical* attitude.

A possible explanation – and probably also a consequence – of Rand's condition as an “outsider” within much of academia is a general misunderstanding of her overall philosophy. For instance, a well-known characteristic of Rand's Objectivist philosophy is its defense of *egoism*. It is indeed the case that egoism is at the core of Objectivism. However, Rand's egoism should not be confused with *egocentrism*, which is something different. Besides serving as a thorough introduction to the

most central aspects of Rand's wide-ranging philosophy, the key achievement of Blackwell's *Companion to Ayn Rand* is that it places Rand's philosophy in a philosophical context and thus clears up many potential misinterpretations of her philosophy.

## The Moral of Selfishness

A striking aspect of Rand's philosophy is the extent to which it is applicable to everyday reality. Thus, reading the *Companion to Rand's Objectivist philosophy* almost forces the attentive reader to critically think through many norms and values that many take for granted. Perhaps most known is her rejection of altruism and defense of ethical egoism.

A central clarification made in the *Companion* regarding Rand's view on *ethical* egoism is that it is not the same as *psychological* egoism. Psychological egoism makes the claim that people always act egoistically, i.e. that no human actions are ultimately motivated by anything other than self-interest (Salmieri 2016:132). This theory thus describes how people in fact act. Rand's ethical egoism, on the other hand, describes how people *ought* to act. Rand claims that people's own interest *ought* to be the goal of all human action, but she does not make the claim that all human action ultimately *is* driven by self-interest. On the contrary, she argues that self-sacrifice – or, altruism – is very apparent in society.

Altruism is often connected to the term “love.” Rand, on the other hand, argues that that self-interest is is exactly what makes love something wonderful, the fact that you want the person you love, and that that person wants you too. Entering into a relationship for the sake of the other, like a saint giving bread to poor children, is not a pleasurable situation. One can draw a parallel between this kind of relationship and the many human destinies described by Dostoevsky, one of Rand's favorite authors (despite their philosophical disagreements). In many a novel he masterly describes psychological thought-processes behind self-sacri-

fice, such as the tragic figure Marmeladov, from *Crime and Punishment*, who marries a poor widow out of pity. Their life together becomes miserable.

Yet, for what reasons does Rand consider it immoral to live for the sake of a “higher purpose?” The goal of Rand’s moral philosophy is to enable human beings to achieve uncompromised happiness, and she considers the value of “living for others” a severe constraint to this enablement. Furthermore, placing others’ welfare – even random people one has never met – before one’s own is irrational, she claims. When discussing altruism and egoism, one is according to Rand choosing between selfishness and sacrifice, i.e. whether *yourself* or *the other* should benefit from your moral values. In fact, despite her views on egoism being most known, she does not find egoism to be a fundamental issue in moral philosophy:

The choice of the beneficiary of moral values is merely a preliminary or introductory issue in the field of morality. It is not a substitute for morality, nor a criterion of moral value as altruism has made it. (Rand 1964:x)

Blackwell’s *A Companion to Ayn Rand* devotes four full chapters to the issue of Rand’s ethics. However, given the central role ethical egoism plays in Rand’s philosophy, the matter is widely discussed in articles in other sections as well.

### ‘Existence Exists’

The way Rand treats metaphysics as a field of study exemplifies how important she regards philosophy’s ability to be relevant to humans’ practical life. According to Rand, the answers one gives to metaphysical questions shape a person’s character. She defines some of the key issues in metaphysics, and their epistemological implications, as follows:

Are you [I] in a universe which is ruled by natural laws and, therefore, is stable, firm, absolute – and knowable? Or are you in an incomprehensible chaos, a realm of inexplicable miracles, an unpredictable, unknowable flux, which your mind is impotent to grasp? [II] Are the things you see around you real – or are they only an illusion? Do they exist independent of any observer – or are they created by the observer? Are they the object or the subject of man’s consciousness? [III] Are they what they are – or can they be changed by a mere act of your consciousness, such as a wish? (Rand 1982:3)

Her answers to the metaphysical questions mentioned above boils down to what she calls “the primacy of existence,”

which holds that “there is a mind-independent reality, which can be perceived and understood by (human) consciousness, but which is not created or directly shaped by consciousness” (Rheins 2016: 246).

The first axiom of all metaphysics, according to Rand, is that “Existence exists.” The statement simply reaffirms the existence of whatever exists. She does not regard the formulation as a vacuous tautology; she argues that “existence” is an *axiomatic concept*, and thus an unanalyzable primary. The repetition serves a “special underscoring” function that, according to Rand, is “a matter of life and death for man” (Rand 1967:55). This rather dramatic formulation reflects how important she regards metaphysics to be for people’s practical life.

In the *Companion’s* chapter on Objectivist metaphysics, Jason G. Rheins quotes a radical example from Rand’s *Atlas Shrugged* that shows practical implications of actively evading the existence of unwelcome facts. One of the villains in the novel, James Taggart, reacts to danger on the premise that what exists need not exist if one chooses not to acknowledge it:

... danger, to him, was a signal to shut off his sight, suspend his judgment and pursue an unaltered course, on the unstated premise that the danger would remain unreal by the sovereign power of his wish not to see it – like a fog horn within him, blowing, not to sound a warning, but to summon the fog. (Rand 1957:868)

To Rand, how one responds to the existence of something – whether it is dangerous or not – reflects one’s fundamental metaphysical views. Such evasions as the character Taggart engages in is fundamentally evil, according to Rand’s ethics. The Objectivist ethics argues in favor of living according to the axiom of existence, accepting that facts are facts and living accordingly. Rand acknowledges that the axiom of existence may at first sound like a given, but argues that humans in fact often do not live in accordance with it. Throughout the *Companion*, the reader is presented with examples – hypothetical as well as real-life – where the fundamental metaphysical questions have implications on all aspects of human life – from ethics to politics, and from economics to aesthetics.

### A Romantic Rebel

An interesting aspect for the readers to take notice of when reading the *Companion* is the radicalism of Rand’s aesthetic theory. Her radicalism consists of being an alternative to the modernist aesthetic values, and belonging rather to the

aesthetic tradition of Aristotle and Romanticism. In other words, Rand's aesthetics is radical in virtue of endorsing what many people consider the opposite of radical, such as representational paintings, melodic music, and recognizable sculptures.

Franz Schubert was an enormously gifted composer whose musical production is extraordinary in quantity as well as quality. It is said that he could compose an entire musical masterwork, writing it directly down on paper, without once writing a single erroneous note. Within his circle of friends, there were generally two kinds of reactions to his unparalleled talent. Some friends called him a genius whose gifted inspiration was due to a direct connection to God. Other friends of Schubert knew how much he struggled and how dedicated he was to his musical studies, and considered him to be a master within his craft. Ayn Rand would have belonged to the second group of friends.

Besides being opposed to what she calls "mystical" explanation, such as the reference to God, the reason why Rand would have belonged to the second group is that her aesthetic theory is based on evaluating art on the basis of how skillfully the craft is carried out. She regards artistic creation as an expression of reason. Note that the first group has no rational explanation of how Schubert achieved what he did. While regarding what we today call "art" as different (learnable) crafts was common in ancient Greece and in the renaissance, it is indeed not uncommon within modern aesthetics to regard art as mysterious and unanalyzable, as something *sui generis*, beyond rational explanation. Although Immanuel Kant probably is the one who explicates the idea of the unexplainable genius most thoroughly, the general thought appears in writings of Herder, Goethe, and Emerson, just to mention a few (see for instance Herder 2006, Goethe 1989, and Emerson 1940).

Rand opposes the modernist ideas that usually follow the modernist doctrine, such as art serving no practical purpose – thereby the phrase "art for art's sake." In *The Romantic Manifesto*, her main work on aesthetics, she addresses the nature and function of art, which is clearly presented in the Companion. Rand argues that "Art does have a purpose and does serve a human need; only it is not a material need, but a need of man's consciousness" (Rand 1969:5). She regards art as a voice of philosophy, in the sense that it expresses "This is life as I see it" (Rand 1969:25). It is apparent that she regards philosophy as inevitably fundamental to one's identity:

Accordingly, Rand holds that, far from being a castle in the air or just a technical pursuit for professional aca-

demics, philosophy goes to the core of who one is and directs the course of one's life. (Binswanger 2016:408)

The purpose of art, according to Rand, amounts to fulfilling two needs: cognition and motivation. First and foremost, artwork can help one to use philosophy, as it can concretize highly abstract philosophical concepts: "Art brings man's concepts to the perceptual level of his consciousness and allows him to grasp them directly, as if they were percepts" (Rand 1969:8). A corollary need that art has the potential to fulfill is of a motivational character. The concretization of abstract concepts can help one to keep focused on what truly matters in life. Art thus provides emotional "fuel."

A necessary condition for the concretization of abstract philosophical concepts and judgments is that art is recognizable – for instance, that paintings and sculptures are representational. However, this does indeed not mean that she argues in favor of photorealism. According to Rand, successful artistic concretization depends upon a selection process emphasizing what is important to man – a process she calls "stylization." She presents a hypothetical scenario:

If one saw, in real life, a beautiful woman wearing an exquisite evening gown, with a cold sore on her lips, the blemish would mean nothing but a minor affliction, and one would ignore it. But a painting of such a woman would be a corrupt, obscenely vicious attack on man, on beauty, on all values – and one would experience a feeling of immense disgust and indignation at the artist. (Rand 1969:24)

Rand argues that if a re-creator includes every detail, it would interfere with the purpose of making the recreation (Binswanger 2016:415).

Lastly, Rand's view on romanticism is based on addressing the universal. In the introduction to her novel, *The Fountainhead*, she stated:

Romanticism is the *conceptual* school of art. It deals, not with the random trivia of the day, but with the timeless, fundamental, universal problems and *values* of human existence. [...] It is concerned – in the words of Aristotle – not with the things as they are, but with things as they might be and ought to be. (Rand 1943:vvi)

The romanticism of Rand is thus in sharp opposition to the Hegelian view of art being devoted to the depiction of every-day phenomena (related to "the end of art" argument), exemplified in instances where a picture of a soup box is



regarded as an artwork. Rather, Rand's romanticism is highly compatible with painter and philosopher Odd Nerdrum's philosophy of kitsch, where a painter's dramatic presentation of the *universally human* is considered a core value (Nerdrum et al. 2001). Rand sees romanticism as based on the premise that man has free will – also a fundamental of the human existence – a matter of huge importance for Rand in every aspect of her philosophy.

### The Controversial Ayn Rand

In philosophy – *especially* in philosophy – it is crucial to be presented to perspectives that stand in contrast to one's current values, whether it is the philosophy of Karl Marx or Ayn Rand. Blackwell Riley Publishing deserves credit for publishing a philosophical companion to Rand, as it to my knowledge is the first philosophical companion to Rand's philosophy printed by a publisher "independently" of the intellectual circle of Ayn Rand enthusiasts, such as the Ayn Rand Institute (ARI). Blackwell also deserves credit for a solid selection of authors, writing on various topics – ranging from familiar Rand topics, such as ethical egoism and capitalism, to perhaps less known aspects of Rand's philosophy, such as aesthetics and epistemology.

The *Companion* is appropriately introduced with two shorter chapters on Rand's life and Objectivism in a philosophical context. In the following part, "Ethics and Human Nature," central aspects of Rand's view on ethics are explored, such as ethical egoism discussed briefly above. This part also includes interesting clarifications on Rand's view on the act of valuing (and her concern that many people do not perform this activity). Capitalism is one of the topics on Rand's political philosophy presented in the section "Society." Here it becomes clear that she regards capitalism not merely as an economic, but also as a moral matter; "a free mind and a free market are corollaries," she claims (Rand 1961:21).

In the last half of the *Companion*, part IV "The Foundations of Objectivism" presents the reader to the Objectivist epistemology and metaphysics. Especially Rand's take on metaphysics is refreshing, as she (again) appears to draw inspiration from Aristotle's notion of the field of metaphysics. In the following section, "Philosophers and Their Effects," three articles present a more thorough study of Rand's philosophy in a philosophical historical perspective. The last section is devoted to Rand's aesthetics and romanticism, as discussed above.

Ayn Rand represents a unique voice in modern philosophy. When reading Rand, I almost get an impression of reading a philosopher of ancient Greece; her language is crystal clear, her philosophical discussions are relevant to everyday

life (whether one agrees with her or not), she holds reason and objectivity as ever-visible goals, she can appear somewhat downright, and she argues for the individual's happiness as an obvious aim of moral action.

In a 1960's talk show, where she was asked about how her philosophy was received in society, she replied: "My views would probably be the norm of the future, but *not* right now" (Warpicachu 2012). She was obviously well aware of her reputation. Perhaps Blackwell's *A Companion to Ayn Rand* represents the beginning of a change in attitude towards Rand within academia.

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### NOTES

<sup>1</sup>The higher purpose has many names: "thy neighbor" (Christianity), "the collective" (socialism), "the country" (patriotism), "general welfare" (utilitarianism), "duty" (deontology), etc.

<sup>2</sup>In fact, Rand has expressed that she would have named her philosophy "existentialism" were it not for the fact that existentialism already existed(!), a philosophical movement with which she did not identify.

<sup>3</sup>Mimi Reisel Gladstein's *The Ayn Rand Companion* from 1984 emphasizes the literary aspect of Rand's works, and does not offer a thorough philosophical analysis.

# I PRAKSIS

## ALT ER RELATIVT

Av Gry Merete Tveten

Relativisme er et mye brukt begrep innen postmoderne tenkning og anvendes innen mange forskjellige områder. Innen fysikk er det derimot lite stoff å finne om relativisme, annet enn i den veldig konkrete tolkningen av ordet brukt i omtale av relativitetsteori, til tross for at relativisme burde være høyst relevant for vårt fagfelt. Det er også ganske vanlig å forbinde relativisme med fysikk, og mange tilskriver Albert Einstein kampropet «*Alt er relativt*».<sup>1</sup> Tvert om skal Einstein ha sagt at «Relativitet angår fysikk, ikke etikk» som en respons på at hans relativitetsteori inspirerte tanker om relativitet i andre fagfelt, noe han så på med stor misnøye. For Einstein var relativitet noe som kun angikk hvordan vi måler tid og avstand, med liten eller ingen relevans utenfor fysikk. Dessuten var hans arbeid med relativitetsteorien i stor grad motivert av et ønske om å kunne synkronisere klokker adskilt av store avstander, slik at målinger gjort av folk på forskjellige steder til forskjellige tider skulle kunne sammenlignes på en entydig måte. For ham var altså relativitetsteori en del av et prosjekt hvor målet var å beskrive den fysiske verden entydig. Som fysiker har jeg sjeldent diskutert relativisme og enda sjeldnere lest om dette skrevet av fysikere eller for fysikere, til tross for at fysikk nok har inspirert tanker om relativisme innen andre fagfelt. Her vil jeg forsøke å få fram at relativisme er relevant for fysikk og at tenkning fra andre fagfelt relatert til relativisme påvirker også moderne fysikk.

Fysikk som fagfelt holder sterkt på ønsket om å produsere objektiv kunnskap. Tilhengere av ekstrem relativisme som er overbevist om at sannhet er noe som varierer fra person til person vil trolig finne fysikk som fagfelt meningsløst. En mer moderat versjon av relativisme er derimot mer relevant, hvor vi anerkjenner at sannheten om «tingene i seg selv» kanskje er noe vi ikke kan vite noe om. Moderne fysikk tvang fram en ny anerkjennelse av at ob-

jektiv kunnskap om absolutte sannheter trolig er en utopi og at man må nøye seg med objektiv kunnskap om relative sannheter. Siden fysikk først og fremst er en empirisk basert virksomhet, vil jeg starte med det mest konkrete, nemlig beskrivelser av målinger og observasjoner.

### Hvor ble det av det absolutte?

Fram mot slutten av 1900-tallet var den rådende oppfatningen at det fantes en absolutt tid og et absolutt rom, som alle observasjoner relatert til tid og rom kunne relateres til. Moderne kommunikasjon, først i form av telegrafi, skapte nye utfordringer. Hvordan skulle man synkronisere klokker over store avstander? Hvordan kunne man si om to hendelser er simultane eller ikke, når hendelsene er adskilt over store avstander? Einsteins spesielle relativitetsteori og generelle relativitetsteori oppstod i kjølvannet av disse spørsmålene, som man for første gang i menneskets historie omsider kunne undersøke eksperimentelt for relativt store avstander. Som leserne antageligvis er godt kjent med, avlivet Einsteins teorier forestillingene om absolutt tid og absolutt rom. Før hadde man forestilt seg et univers som i prinsippet kunne strippest for alt fysisk innhold, men hvor likevel rommet og tiden eksisterte. Denne forestillingen ble erstattet med tidrom, hvor tid og rom henger sammen og hvor rommets egenskaper i seg selv avhenger av hva det er fylt med og hvor.

Konsekvensen for oss som observatører er at vi må kunne, ved behov, være eksplisitte med hensyn til hvilken observatør og hvilken referanseramme vi oppgir våre målinger for. Når vi bruker begrepet referanseramme innen fysikk mener vi ofte hvordan man velger å plassere aksene som vi relaterer våre målinger av avstander til og inndelingen av disse aksene. En referanseramme kan anses som stillestående eller den kan bevege seg relativt til en annen referanseramme.

Verken avstand eller tid kan entydig bestemmes uten å samtidig gi opplysninger om observatør. Vårt eneste faste, absolutte holdepunkt er lysets hastighet i vakuum, en såkalt universell konstant. Vi kan være enige om en gitt måleenhet som for eksempel meteren, men denne måleenheten vil ikke være entydig bestemt uten at vi også er entydige på hvilken referanseramme vi forholder oss til. Relativitetsteori forklarer hvorfor to observatører, hvor den ene er i ro og den andre er i bevegelse, vil få forskjellige resultater når de måler lengden på et objekt eller tid, selv om de bruker samme målestokk og klokker som virker på den samme måten. Det gir derfor strengt tatt ikke mening å snakke om målinger av tid og avstand uten å samtidig si hvor observatøren befinner seg og hvor raskt observatøren beveger seg.

I de fleste praktiske eksempler er vi på jorda og beveger oss så sakte at vi derfor ikke trenger å være eksplisitte. Hvis du for eksempel reiser med et tog som beveger seg 360 km/t, så vil forskjellen på ett sekund for deg og en observatør som står i ro være 0.0000000000001 sekund. Det betyr at du får såpass like resultater (for like til at måleutstyret ditt kan fortelle deg at det er en forskjell) enten målingene dine gjøres på en lab i et bygg eller en lab på et slikt tog, og at forskjellen trygt kan neglisjeres. Satellittkommunikasjon, som GPS, er derimot basert på at klokker med nanosekundpresisjon (et nanosekund er en milliarddel sekund) synkroniseres. Satellitter beveger seg med rundt 14 000 km/t relativt til jorden og det tilsvarer store nok forskjeller i tidsmåling mellom jordobservatør og satellitt, at man må ta hensyn til dette. GPS ville ikke fungert uten at vi tok hensyn til relativitetsteori og er et eksempel fra vår hverdag hvor vi trenger å ta hensyn til relativitetsteori. I løpet av en dag ville klokkene i satellittene gått flere mikrosekunder for sakte sammenlignet med klokker på jorden, hadde ikke relativitet blitt tatt hensyn til.

Einsteins relativitet er kanskje det mest kjente eksempelet på at man innen fysikk måler relativt til noe og at man ikke kan enes om en beskrivelse uten å samtidig være enige om beskrivelsen av observatør. Innen et annet viktig område av fysikken, termodynamikk (eller varmelære om man vil ha et norskere uttrykk for det), ble det vist allerede på 1800-tallet at det ikke finnes noen naturgitt, absolutt temperaturskala. Resultatet er at vi til evig tid må leve med at det finnes forskjellige måter å bestemme en temperaturskala på og at dessverre kun kultur kan brukes som argument for at Kelvin er overlegen Fahrenheit.

I løpet av 1900-tallet ble det klart at ikke bare må man i praksis godta at man måler relativt til noe annet og eva-

luerer sannhet relativt, men at det antageligvis er slik at det ikke finnes absolutte holdepunkter i prinsippet heller. Naturen byr oss ikke på noen foretrukken referanseramme for våre målinger eller beskrivelser av naturen, og vi er avhengig av mer eller mindre vilkårlige konvensjoner.

Er mangelen på privilegerte referanserammer et problem for objektivitet i fysikk? Fysikere flest ga ikke opp drømmen om objektiv kunnskap. Selv om mange størrelser er relative, går det an å gjøre målinger og beskrive målingene på en slik måte at to observatører vil være enige om målingen, gitt at de har den samme framgangsmåten og kunnskapen (Sivia 2005:3–11, 78–128). Vi kan kanskje ikke oppnå objektiv kunnskap om absolutte størrelser, men vi kan ha tilnærmet objektiv kunnskap om relative størrelser. Følgelig har mye arbeid blitt lagt ned i felles standarder for målinger slik at man relativt enkelt kan sikre seg at fysikere på forskjellige steder måler på samme måte og beskriver sine målinger på de samme måtene. Når det kommer til stykket er det aller meste relativt til noe annet, og det er ikke så rart at mange tror det var Einstein som pleide å si at «Alt er relativt».

### Modellen og virkeligheten

En ikke helt uvanlig gang i fysikk er at noen framskaffer observasjoner eller målinger som krever en forklaring. Dette var tilfellet da kvantefysikken ble født i løpet av første halvdel av 1900-tallet. Forsøk som viste at partikler interferer med hverandre slik bølger gjør og at lys kan slå løs elektroner som om lys bestod av partikler og spektrallinjer fra forskjellige grunnstoffer, utgjorde blant annet en enorm mengde observasjoner som ikke passet inn i rammeverket av den gang eksisterende forklaringsmodeller og teorier. Forskjellige utvidelser av eksisterende modeller ble foreslått, men disse utvidelsene sviktet i møtet med andre observasjoner enn dem som inspirerte utvidelsene. Noe nedlatende ble disse forsøkene på å berge eksisterende teorier kalt for ad hoc hypoteser. I praksis er det derimot ganske vanlig i naturvitenskap å først prøve seg med mindre revisjoner av veletablerte teorier før man går til et så drastisk steg som å forkaste en teori helt. Fysikk har trolig utviklet seg på en langt mer kaotisk måte enn hva det er vanlig å forestille seg (Renstrøm 2011:9–100).

Pierre Duhem hevdet at teorier alltid vil være underbestemt av data. Alltid er et sterkt ord og jeg tror det er mulig i prinsippet å konstruere en teori som ikke er underbestemt. I praksis virker det derimot å være regelen heller enn unntaket at det til en hver tid ville vært ønskelig med flere målinger og bedre målinger. Det er et evig jag etter mer data for å bestemme teorien bedre eller begrense antall

teorier som er kompatible med tilgjengelig datagrunnlag. I praksis innebærer det at det innen mange områder av fysikk sameksisterer en rekke forskjellige forslag til teorier med mål om å forklare de samme fenomenene. Slike teorier kan gjensidig utelukke hverandre.

Det er vanlig praksis å tillate et mangfold av teorier så lenge det ikke foreligger konsensus om at observasjoner eller målinger utelukker disse teoriene. Eksperimenter planlegges for å undersøke hvor godt konkurrerende modeller beskriver virkeligheten. I tilfeller hvor det ikke er mulig på nåværende tidspunkt å forestille måter å empirisk teste en teori, så får teorien leve videre så lenge den ikke kolliderer med veletablerte teorier. Interesserte lesere av populærvitenskapelig litteratur har trolig møtt på parallelle universer og påstander om at verden er et hologram. Slike forklaringsmodeller er utfordrende å undersøke empirisk og bryter med vår hverdagslige forståelse av verden. Selv om de fleste fysikere nok foretrekker enklere bilder på virkeligheten tillates arbeid med slike teorier ut fra at de ikke kan utelukkes. Er dette et tegn på at konseptuell relativisme er akseptert blant fysikere? Blant fysikere møter du dem som tror det finnes en teori som kan forklare alt. Teorien er der ute og bare venter på å bli oppdaget av oss fysikere. Du møter også fysikere som har et mer pragmatisk forhold til teorier. Teoriene er modeller av virkeligheten. De virker innenfor rammene de er skapt for å virke innenfor, forklarer visse fenomener og er kun en menneskelig konstruksjon. Selv tilhører jeg sistnevnte gruppe fysikere, men mange er langt mer optimistiske på vegne av fysikkens evne til å gjengi virkelighetens mange fasetter enn det jeg er.

Det nok mest kjente eksempelet på teorier som ikke lar seg forene er kvantefysikk og generell relativitetsteori. I dag kan verden, sett med en fysikers øyne, grovt sett deles inn i to typer fenomener. Mye kan, i det minste prinsipielt sett, forklares med kvantefysikk. Kvantefysikken passer best til å beskrive de minste tingene i universet som elektroner og lys. Kvantefysikk kan også beskrive hverdagslige objekters egenskaper og dynamikk. Hvis du virkelig vil (for det er mye mer tungvint enn å bruke Newtons likninger) kan du beskrive hvordan en ball du kaster beveger seg med kvantefysikk. Fenomener knyttet til tyngdekraft kan derimot ikke kvantefysikk forklare, og kvantefysikken kan heller ikke beskrive tid og rom i seg selv, slik generell relativitetsteori kan. Generell relativitetsteori predikerte at rommet krummes av tunge objekter, og observasjoner bekreftet

**I praksis innebærer det at det innen mange områder av fysikk sameksisterer en rekke forskjellige forslag til teorier med mål om å forklare de samme fenomenene. Slike teorier kan gjensidig utelukke hverandre.**

dette senere. Slike egenskaper ved selve rommet kan ikke kvantefysikk forklare. Kvantefysikk har med verden målt i små avstander og små objekter å gjøre. Generell relativitetsteori har med store avstander og sterke tyngdekraftfelt å gjøre. Hvis du trenger å beskrive noe veldig lite og veldig tungt, så trenger du kvantefysikk og generell relativitetsteori samtidig for å beskrive objektet. Svarte hull er et eksempel på et slikt objekt og her oppstår det problemer. Generell relativitetsteori predikerer at svarte hull er punktopjekter, uten utstrekning i rommet, mens kvantefysikk predikerer at minste tillatte radius for et svart hull er omtrent  $10^{-73}$  meter. Radiusen kvantefysikken predikerer er så liten at det er nesten ingenting, men det er nok til å skape teoretisk krøll. For å gjøre en lang historie kort kan man si at når kvantefysikk og generell relativitetsteori møtes i beskrivelsene av svarte hull så blir uoverensstemmelser mellom disse to teoriene synlige.

Selv mister jeg lite nattesøvn av at svarte hull er problematiske for våre nåværende rådende teorier. Jeg ser fram til at vi får større kunnskap om svarte hull basert på

målinger og observasjoner, men synes ikke det at to teorier ikke kan forenes i seg selv er et problem. Derimot synes jeg det er spennende at det er fenomener som ikke helt lar seg forklare på en helhetlig måte. Dette tyder på at det fremdeles er rom for å utvikle nye teorier som bedre forklarer verden, og at vi kanskje en dag blir nødt til å revidere vår forståelse av fysikk totalt for å kunne forklare en større mengde observasjoner og fenomener på en helhetlig måte.

### Den subjektive fysikeren

Forestillingen om fysikeren som en objektiv observatør har gradvis blitt erstattet av en anerkjennelse av at selv fysikere gjør subjektive betraktninger i sitt daglige virke. Denne subjektiviteten er selvsagt neglisjerbar i mange situasjoner, som for eksempel når enkle målinger skal utføres eller når matematiske utledninger foretas, som ikke krever utstrakte antagelser for å kunne være gjennomførbare. Her kommer fysikkens utstrakte arbeid med felles målestandarder og matematikkens allment aksepterte spilleregler til unnsetning, og én fysiker kan lett byttes ut med en annen. Subjektets effekt kan således fjernes fra likningen.

Moderne fysikk er et komplisert samspill mellom matematisk modellering, målinger som krever en tverrfaglig innsats og statistiske vurderinger for å finne ut hvilke modeller som passer best med målinger. I valg av framgangsmåte, modeller og metodikk inngår en god del kompliser-

te vurderinger. Når målet er objektiv kunnskap, hvordan håndterer man slike vurderinger? Det er vanlig å kreve at man blottlegger antagelsene man legger til grunn og argumenterer for egne preferanser. Innen flere forskningsområder har det også blitt vanlig å tallfeste egen tro på forutsetninger man gjør ved at man eksplisitt inkluderer det som sannsynligheter når man utfører sine statistiske analyser. Men hvor godt lykkes vi? Studier tyder på at kanskje så mye som halvparten av rapporterte funn ikke kan reproduceres ut fra beskrivelsene publisert, men dette er tall fra andre fagfelt enn fysikk. Hvor stort problemet er innen fysikk er uvisst, men fysikere er blant de som føler seg tryggest på at egen forskning er reproducerbar og sånn sett kan sies å oppfylle visse krav til objektivitet (Baker 2016). Likevel er det ikke tvil om at det forekommer tilfeller hvor resultater ikke kan reproduceres og hvor forskerens kommunikasjon med omverdenen om sine funn hadde blitt forbedret av en større oppmerksomhet rundt det at vi alle, selv fysikere som leser vitenskapelige artikler, *er subjekter* som ser verden fra litt forskjellige ståsteder.

### Fysikk og relativisme

Relativisme er sjeldent eksplisitt nevnt innen fysikk. Det fins ingen kultur for teori relativisme eller lignende. Fysikk ville blitt meningsløst i verste fall, eller til noe helt annet enn fysikk i dagens forstand, hvis man skulle gitt opp håpet om å formidle teorier og kunnskap som vil bety det samme for alle som lærer om det. Likevel eksisterer et mangfold av teorier som tyder på en toleranse som ofte forbindes med relativisme. Våre målinger og beskrivelser av fenomener er dessuten som regel relativt til noe annet (selv om dette ofte ikke nevnes eksplisitt).

Relativisme kan også sies å være relevant for fysikk fordi vi som bedriver fysikk er mennesker med våre subjektive erfaringer og subjektive opplevelser av verden som vil prege vårt arbeid og vår læring. Når vi tar hensyn til at kontekst og kultur spiller en rolle også innen de såkalte harde realfagene, kan vi best mulig oppnå våre ambisjoner på fysikkens vegne. Særlig ønsket om reproducerbarhet forutsetter en evne til å sette seg inn i andres ståsted for å best kunne videreformidle egne underliggende antagelser og forutsetninger.

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### NOTER

- 1 Einstein mente slett ikke at alt er relativt. Han mente brukte begrepet relativitet på en veldig spesifikk måte som kun angikk tid, rom, bevegelse og observasjon. "Alt er relativt" ble derimot popularisert av sosiologens far, August Comte.

# OVERSETTELSE

## DE RE PUBLICA

### CICERO

*Innledning og oversettelse ved Kristoffer Aunevik*

**M**arcus Tullius Cicero (106 f. Kr – 43 f. Kr) var en romersk statsmann, advokat, forfatter, taler og filosof. Cicero er en av de mest kjente romerne og er blant dem som vi har flest tekster av i dag. Han virket først som forsvarer og innenfor dette feltet var han svært suksessfull særlig på grunn av hans virkningsfulle retorikk, og hans forsvarstaler er i dag blant hans mest kjente verk. Dette gjelder blant annet talene mot Catilina som er et forbilleglig eksempel både på Ciceros strålende latin og hans voldsomme retorikk.

I dag regnes Cicero også som en av Romas fremste filosofer, og han krediteres for å ha presentert gresk filosofi for romerne i latinsk språkdrakt, som skapte en helt ny filosofisk terminologi på latin. Det er ikke så lett å tilordne Cicero en filosofisk retning, da han i hans verk uttrykker sympati med både stoikerne og peripatetikerne. Filosofiske verk er den nest største delen av hans forfatterskap med titler som *Om pliktene*, *Om staten*, *Om gudenes natur* og *Samtaler på Tusculum*, men til tross for dette er ikke hans filosofiske side blitt særlig belyst innenfor academia. Cicero leses og studeres nok i dag i større grad på grunn av hans språk som er et strålende eksempel på god og klassisk latin. Cicero ble drept i 43 f. Kr som følge av hans kritiske taler mot Marcus Antonius.

*De re publica*, eller om staten som den heter på norsk, er et filosofisk verk i form av en dialog mellom kjente romere satt til 129 f. Kr. I utdraget som følger er det den kjente hærføreren Scipio Aemilianus Africanus og statsmannen Gaius Laelius som diskuterer. I verket presenteres fordeler og ulemper ved forskjellige styresett, slik som kongedømme, aristokrati og demokrati. Verket er naturligvis påvirket av Platons *Staten*, men i motsetning til Platons idealstat så finnes faktisk den idealstat Cicero beskriver, da den deler alle instanser med Roma: et senat, en folkeforsamling og et statsoverhode i de to konsulene som styrte byen ett år om gangen. I teksten som følger har Scipio

blitt spurt om å legge fram sine meninger om forskjellige styreformer og å velge den beste blant dem. Han tar imot ønsket med stor glede og begynner å beskrive menneskets natur og hvordan de kommer sammen og danner samfunn og små grupper. I det aktuelle utdraget legger Scipio fram de tre nevnte styreformene, kongedømme, aristokrati og demokrati, og tar opp det gode og det dårlige med hver enkel.

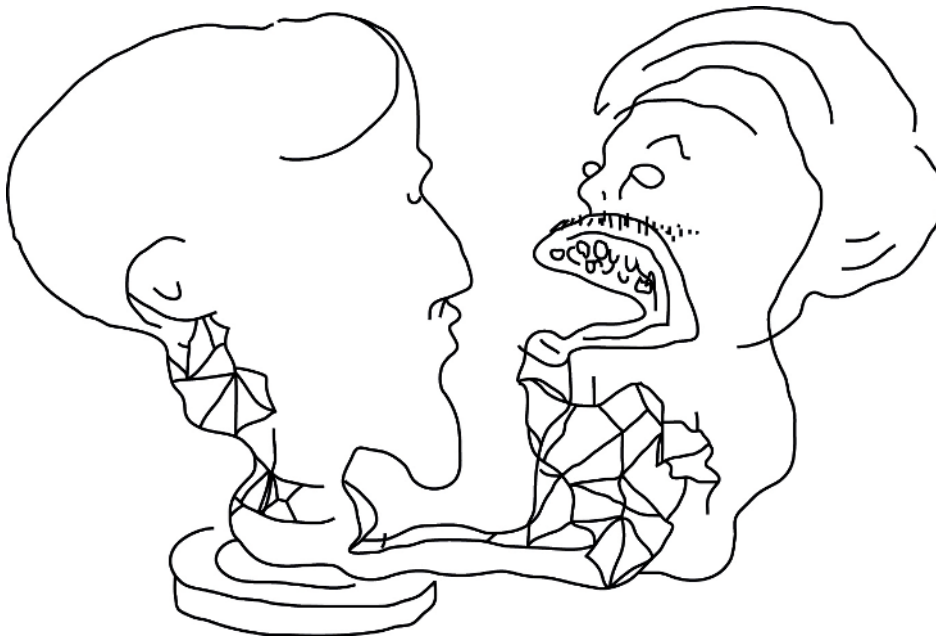
For å forstå Ciceros meninger i utdraget kan det lønne seg å ha Romas historie samt Ciceros samtid i mente. På Ciceros tid hadde den romerske republikken eksistert i nærmere 500 år og Romas styreform ble trolig ansett som en viktig grunn for dens suksess og Cicero mente nok derfor at politikk måtte bedrives slik den alltid hadde blitt for å forsikre statens stabilitet. Men Cicero levde i en stormende tid, hvor de gamle verdiene ikke ble respektert like mye som før og dette gjorde nok at han hadde et negativt syn på folkestyre, noe som kommer fram i utdraget.

Også verdt å nevne er at det på Ciceros tid fantes sentrale politiske fraksjoner, nemlig *optimates* (de beste) og *populares* (de folkelige). Cicero var en del av *optimatene*, som besto av den romerske adelen og som sto for en konservativ politikk. *Optimatene* var forfektet av senatets makt og ville at det skulle ha størst innflytelse, ettersom senatet også besto av de fremste borgerne, mens *populares* var tilhengere av folkeforsamlingen og ville at den skulle ha størst innflytelse. Julius Caesar var blant annet et kjent medlem av det sistnevnte.

#### **Utdrag fra *de re publica* (1,39 – 45)**

**Scipio:** Staten er altså folkets sak, men et folk er ikke enhver forsamling av mennesker samlet på hvilken som helst måte, men en forsamling av en mengde forbundet ved rettslig enighet og et nyttefellesskap. Men den viktigste grunnen til å inngå dette er ikke så mye svakhet som en viss naturlig så å si sammenkomst av mennesker. For den-



*Illustrasjon: Rasmus Gaare*

ne menneskeslekten er ikke en enkeltgjenger, men skapt slik at den ikke engang i overflod av ting [...]

[...] Disse forsamlingene utpekte altså først et oppholdssted på et sikkert sted for å bosette seg; og da de hadde forskanset det med natur og håndverk, kalte de en slik forbindelse av hus for en landsby eller by, prydet med templer og offentlige rom. Ethvert folk som er en slik forsamling av en mengde, som jeg har beskrevet, ethvert samfunn som er en ordening av folket, enhver stat som jeg har sagt er folkets sak, må derfor styres av en viss rådgivende instans for at den skal være langvarig. Men denne første instansen må alltid føres tilbake til den grunnen som skapte samfunnet; deretter må den enten tildeles én eller visse utvalgte, eller påtås av mengden og alle.

Derfor, når den høyeste makten er hos én, kaller vi ham for konge og forfatningen av den staten for kongerike. Men når den er hos utvalgte, så sies den å styres av viljen til de beste. Mens i demokratiet (slik kaller de det nemlig) er all makt hos folket. Og hvis hvilken som helst av disse tre typene holder det første båndet som forener menneskene seg imellom med statens felleskap, er det ikke fullkomment og heller ikke det beste etter min mening, men likevel akseptabelt, og et styre kan være mer utmerket enn et annet. For enten det er en rettferdig og vis konge eller de utvalgte og fremste borgerne eller folket selv, selv om dette bør anbefales minst, synes det likevel å kunne være en sikker forfatning hvis ingen urettferdigheter eller

begjær blandes inn.

Men i kongeriker er de øvrige altfor mye uten del i den offentlige lov og rådslagning, og under styret til de beste kan folkemengden knapt delta i friheten, da mengden står utenfor enhver offentlig rådslagning og makt; og når alt styres av folket, selv om det er rettferdig og passende, er allikevel selve rettferdigheten urettferdig, da den har ingen grad av verdighet. Derfor, hvis Cyrus, den berømte perseren, var den mest rettferdige og den viseste kongen, synes jeg at folkets sak (den er nemlig, slik jeg sa tidligere, offentlig) likevel ikke var å trakte etter i høy grad, da den hadde blitt styrt av vinket og viljen til én. På samme måte, hvis massilierne, våre klienter, styres av de utvalgte og fremste borgerne med den høyeste rettferdighet, finnes det likevel i denne tilstanden en viss likhet for folket med et slaveri; hvis athenerne under visse perioder da rådet hadde blitt fjernet, utførte ingenting annet enn folkets beslutninger og vedtak, beholdt ikke samfunnet sin pryd ettersom det ikke hadde noen spesifikke grader av verdighet.

Og dette sier jeg om disse tre statsformene når de ikke er opprørte eller sammenblandet, men beholder forfatningen sin; og hver enkelt av disse formene har for det første de lytene som jeg sa tidligere, deretter har de andre beslektede ødeleggende lyter. For det er ingen av disse statsformene som ikke har en usikker og farlig vei til et viss tilgrensende onde.

# UTDRAG FRA DEN LEKSIKRYPTISKE ENCYKLOPEDI

**Token-identitesteori:** Idéen om at partikulære mentale prosesser er identiske med partikulære fysiske prosesser. Dette synet står i motsetning til type-identitetsteorier, som hevder at det er generelle mentale prosesser som er identiske med generelle fysiske prosesser, se *Type-identitetsteori*. En kjent formulering av Token-identitesteori er Donald Davidsons *Anomale Monisme*.

**Toleranseparadokset:** Først utviklet av Karl Popper (1902–1994) i *The Open Society and Its Enemies* fra 1945. Paradokset er at absolutt tolerante samfunn ikke kan forbli absolutt tolerante. Absolutt toleranse tolererer alle meninger og politiske bevegelser. For å vedvare som tolerante samfunn, kan ikke tolerante samfunn tolerere intoleranse, for hvis man tolererer intoleranse kan intolerante bevegelser vokse og gjøre det helhetlige samfunnet intolerant. Popper konkluderer derfor at absolutt toleranse er umulig.

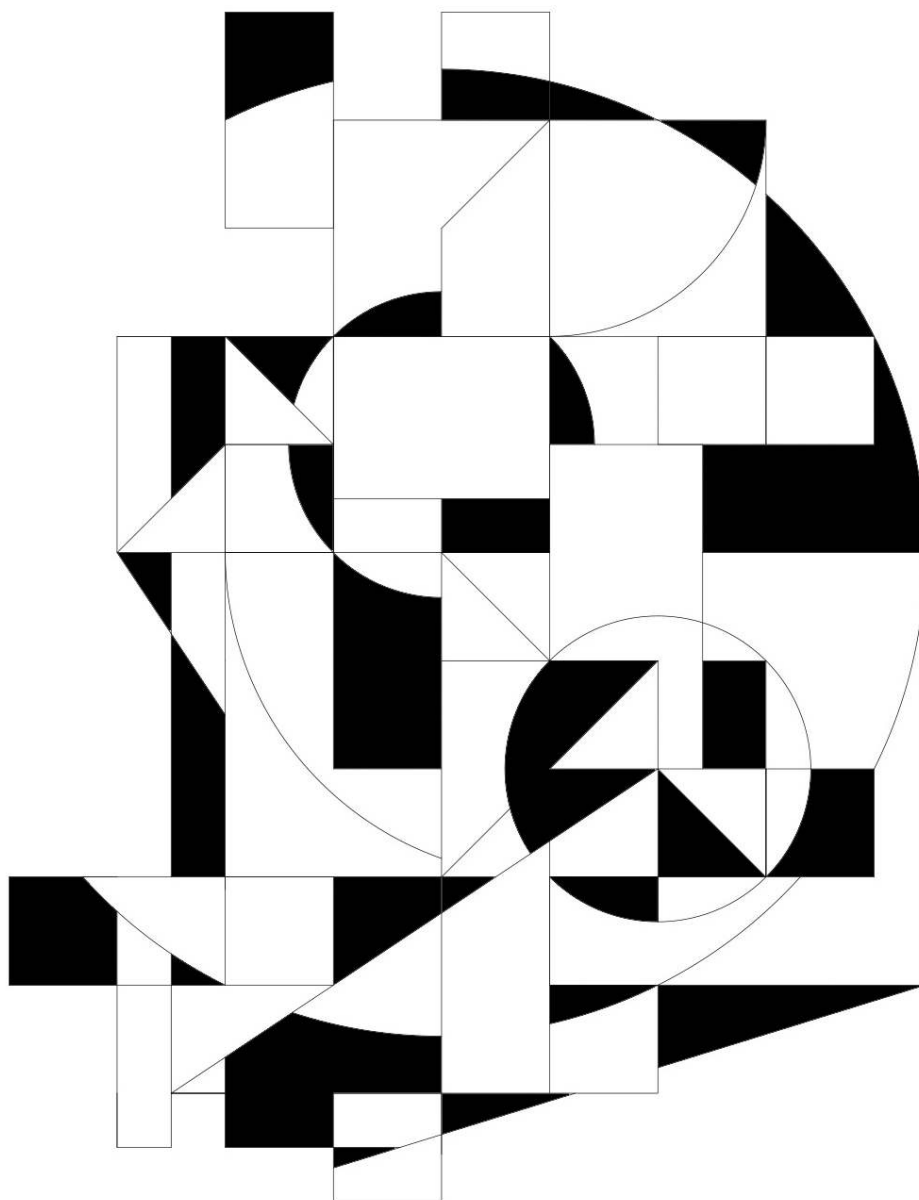
Et samfunn er absolutt tolerant hvis det tillater alle og alles meninger. Absolutt toleranse innebærer også å tolerere autoritære grupper, som ønsker å forby opponerende ideologier og meninger til fordel for sin egen. Hvordan skal samfunnet forholde seg til slike bevegelser? Paradokset oppstår i valget mellom to muligheter, enten å tolerere intoleranse, eller å ikke gjøre det.

Det første hornet innebærer å tillate de intolerantes meninger, og beskytte deres rett til ytringsfrihet. Dette er ikke helt ideelt ettersom det kan gjøre samfunnet mindre tolerant. For eksempel, en intolerant gruppe som sprer hat eller klandrer andre grupper for samfunnsproblemer bidrar til å gjøre samfunnet mindre tolerant. I dette tilfellet blir det tolerante samfunnet, i sitt forsøk på å opprettholde absolutt toleranse, endret til et intolerant samfunn.

Det andre hornet innebærer å ikke tillate intolerante stemmer, ved for eksempel å forby bevegelser med intolerante ideologier. Popper er nøye med å legge til at hvis intolerante bevegelser er villige til å argumentere rasjonelt, så må man gjøre det i stedet for å forby bevegelsen. Men i de tilfeller der de intolerante ikke er interessert i argumentasjon eller å legitimt fremme sine synspunkter, må samfunnet være beredt på å stoppe disse bevegelsene. I dette tilfellet må det absolutt tolerante samfunnet modifisere toleransen til en svakere toleranse for å kunne motarbeide intoleranse og forsøke å forbli tolerant.

Det er paradoksalt at et samfunn enten må være intolerant overfor intolerante grupper, eller risikere å bli intolerant ved at de intolerante får for mye makt, for at det skal være et tolerant. H.B.

**Transcendentale argumenter:** En form for argumenter som beviser mulighetsbetingelsene for visse trekk i erfaringen. Disse trekkene er gjerne slike som er i alle erfaringer, som at vi erfarer at alle gjenstander har romlige egenskaper, eller at vi opplever at verden har en vertikal akse. Uten å undersøke om erfaringen er nøyaktig, undersøker man bare hvordan erfaringen kan være som den er. Noen hevder at slike argumenter kan brukes til å motbevise skeptisisme, ved å vise at man kan ha sikker kunnskap, selv i tilfeller hvor man hallusinerer.



*Illustrasjon: Rasmus Gaare*

# RESPONSE-DEPENDENCE: ON THE IDEA OF FITTINGNESS

## MESTERBREV VED MATHIAS HELSETH

*Hva handler masteroppgaven din om?*

Responsavhengige teorier, om verdi, påstår at verdi, på en eller annen måte, er avhengig av våre emosjonelle responser til de gjenstandene vi tilskriver verdi. Dette innebærer blant annet at verdiers eksistens er avhengig av at det finnes individer som kan verdsette. Dette gir igjen opphav til mange ulike teorier om sammenhengen mellom våre emosjonelle responser og gjenstandene vi responderer på, og om verdiers ontologiske status. Det disse teoriene imidlertid ser ut til å enes om er at det å verdsette noe egentlig innebærer å anerkjenne en spesifikk emosjonell respons på det man verdsetter; hvis jeg mener at noe er skammelig, er dette fordi jeg mener at det vil være «passende» («fitting») å føle skam i denne konteksten. Min oppgave utforsker derfor i hovedsak hva det vil si at en emosjonell respons er «passende» for den gjenstanden eller de omstendighetene, som tilsynelatende forårsaker responsen.

*Hva argumenterer du for/mot i oppgaven?*

Mange filosofer har, i lys av John Lockes distinksjon mellom primær- og sekundærkvaliteter, sammenlignet verdier med farger. Dette skyldes at farger er responsavhengige, i den forstand at fargene vi ser ikke ville eksistert uavhengig av et menneskelig persepsjonssystem. Dette står i kontrast til primærkvaliteter, som for eksempel en gjenstands form, som eksisterer uavhengig av våre responser.

I min masteroppgave påpeker jeg imidlertid at denne analogien ikke forklarer hvordan individuelle forskjeller kan påvirke hvilken verdi en gjenstand har for det responderende subjektet. Et enkelt eksempel på dette er nøtteotter, som jo er skadelige for mennesker med nøtteallergi, mens de er helt ufarlige for alle andre. Jeg argumenterer derfor for en *relasjonell* forståelse av verdi, hvor verdien til en gjenstand oppstår i et bestemt subjekts relasjon til gjenstanden som verdsettes. Følgelig argumenterer jeg for at en analogi mellom lukt og verdi vil kunne illustrere det relasjonelle aspek-



tet ved vår verdsetting, i motsetning til farge.

Denne responsavhengige forståelsen av verdi gjør imidlertid at vi står i fare for å konstruere en teori som er *for* subjektiv. Dette betyr ikke nødvendigvis at evaluerende påstander ikke kan ha en sannhetsverdi. Men i oppgaven konkluderer jeg med at mange av de grunnene vi har for å tilskrive gjenstander en verdi er *interne*, fordi de blant annet omhandler det responderende subjektets emosjonelle disposisjoner. Dette betyr igjen at vi ofte ikke har tilgang til alle grunnene for et spesifikt subjekts responser.

I hvilken grad en respons er «passende» til de omstendighetene som formodentlig har forårsaket den, ser derfor ut til å måtte *fortolkes* ut ifra omstendighetene og det responderende individet.

*Hvorfor bør andre lese oppgaven din?*

Oppgaven min gir en oversikt over tre ulike responsavhengige teorier innenfor etikk, redegjør for noen av de mest sentrale problemstillingene på feltet, og skisserer i tillegg en ny (original) responsavhengig teori.

*Hva er dine planer for fremtiden?*

Jeg håper på å få en jobb.

# FREEDOM IN DARK TIMES: A CONCEPTUAL AND COMPARABLE ANALYSIS OF ARENDTIAN AND BEAUVOIRIAN FREEDOMS



## MESTERBREV VED EIVOR MÆLAND

*Hva handler masteroppgaven din om?*

Oppgaven er en begrepsanalyse av deler av Hannah Arendts frihetsbegrep lest sammen med deler av Simone de Beauvoirs frihetsbegrep. I sekundærlitteraturen på Beauvoir er det etter Kristana Arp (2001) vanlig å dele Beauvoirs frihetsbegrep inn i tre deler: ontologisk frihet, konkret frihet og moralsk frihet. Hos Beauvoir ser jeg på *Pyrrhos* og *Cineas* (1944) og *Tvetydighetens etikk* (1947), mens jeg hos Arendt tar utgangspunkt i *Vita Activa – det virksomme liv* (1960) og flere essay, blant annet «What is freedom?» og «Introduction into politics». Jeg sammenligner de to første delene av Beauvoirs frihetsbegrep med det Arendt omtaler som frihetens gave og politisk frihet. Begrepet moralsk frihet viser til hvordan Beauvoir argumenterer for at en moralsk aktør kun kan oppnå autensitet ved at visse relasjonelle betingelser er møtt, nemlig at vedkommende verken blir utsatt for undertrykkelse eller deltar i undertrykkelse av andre. Det finnes egentlig ikke noe tilsvarende begrep hos Arendt, så jeg sammenligner i stedet denne normative påstanden med Arendts analyse av

undertrykkelse og hennes normative argumentasjon mot dette.

*Hva argumenterer du for/mot i oppgaven?*

Jeg argumenterer for at det er større likhetstrekk mellom Arendts og Beauvoirs filosofi generelt, og deres frihetsbegrep spesielt, enn det man tidligere har antatt. Disse likhetene har ikke bare å gjøre med at de begge har bakgrunn fra fenomenologi og eksistensialisme, men også med at de er opptatt av lignende filosofiske temaer. Til tross for åpenbare forskjeller, som at Arendt var opptatt av politisk teori mens Beauvoir, i de tekstene jeg ser på, konsentrerer seg om eksistensialistisk etikk, så er det overlappende sider ved deres frihetsbegrep. Både Arendt og Beauvoir setter frihet som en bærende normativ verdi i tenkningen sin rundt hvordan et samfunn skal organiseres eller hvordan mennesker bør behandle hverandre. Arendts frihetsbegrep utvikles også i sammenheng med hennes analyse av totalitarisme, på samme måte som mange Beauvoir-kjennere argumenterer for at hun i stor grad baserer sin analyse om kjønnet undertrykkelse i *Det annet kjønn* på frihetsbegrepet hun utviklet i sin etiske periode, nemlig *Pyrrhos* og *Cineas* og *Tvetydighetens etikk*. Med andre ord er begge tenkernes frihetsbegrep utviklet i nær sammenheng med en analyse av hva ikke-frihet er, enten i form av totalitarisme eller undertrykkelse, noe som jeg argumenterer for at er med på å gjøre deres frihetsbegrep relevante i dag. Både Arendt og Beauvoir ser frihet som et relasjonelt fenomen.

*Hvorfor bør andre lese oppgaven din?*

Både Arendt og Beauvoir har bidratt med innflytelsesrike analyser av undertrykkelse, totalitarisme og frihet, problemstillinger som mange vil mene er spesielt aktuelle i dag. Min oppgave kan være en innføring i deler av deres frihetsbegrep.

*Hva er dine planer for fremtiden?*

For tiden jobber jeg på et infosenter for studenter mens jeg går på et samlingsbasert skrivestudium ved Universitetet i Tromsø. Når det er fullført, håper jeg å få en jobb hvor jeg kan forene min interesse for politisk filosofi og etikk med skrive-, redigerings- og tekstarbeid.

# REISEBREV FRA MÜNCHEN

## LUDWIG MAXIMILLIANS UNIVERSITÄT

### EN RESPONS TIL ERLEND FINKE OWESSEN

Av Ludvig Fæhn Fuglestad

Fra tidligere å ha blitt karakterisert på grunnlag av sine særegne metoder og problemstillinger, og med geografisk tilhørighet i Amerika og Storbritannias universiteter, lar ikke lenger analytisk filosofi seg definere som en skole. Mens det som var analytisk filosofi stadig blir mer synonymt med universitetsfilosofi *per se*, setter den også sine kulturelle særpreg til side og innretter seg etter en mer generell, humørløs forskningspraksis egnet en mer nøytral verdensrolle. Litt som Tyskland, egentlig. Tyskland har i likhet få bekjennelser, både innad og utad, og har i moderne tid blitt kjennetegnet av sitt fravær av nasjonalisme samt nøytrale rolle i global politisk sammenheng. Et ideelt sted for virkningsgivende, humørløse beslutninger, og kanskje likeledes for denne nye «nøytrale forskningen»? For det er ikke tilfeldig at det nettopp er her tradisjonen mer enn noe annet sted er på vei opp med høy hastighet, og landets høyest rangerte universitetet, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität i Bayerns hovedstad München, er ikke et unntak. Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität (LMU) huser landets største filosofifakultet i hjertet av universitetsområdet i byens sentrum, samt det ledende Munich Center for Mathematical Philosophy (MCNP) litt lenger opp i den kongelige avenyen Ludwigsstraße, hvor jeg befant meg på utveksling.

Med tanke på tyskernes berøringsangst overfor egen kultur og nasjonale historie, er det kanskje naturlig å importere anglo-amerikanske tradisjoner til fordel for deres egne, omfattende filosofihistorie som hadde sin storslagne gullalder her i romantikken og modernismens tid, helt frem til verdenskrigene. Hvis filosofer noen gang har vært høyt ansett, så må det ha vært under Tysklands storhetstid, hvor faget faktisk først ble opphøyet til en fullverdig profesjon slik vi kjenner til det i dag.

Når man går gjennom de praktfulle søylegangene i det nyklassisistiske hovedbygget, kan man drømme seg tilbake til denne gamle tiden, før man vekkes opp igjen av bråkete

amerikanere, som en besøkende John Searle. Denne kontrasten mellom det gamle og det nye Tyskland, kommer særlig til syne når vi sammenlikner LMUs opprinnelige filosofifakultet med det nye, analytiske MCNP. De to er skarpt adskilt. Hos førstnevnte forholder man seg i hovedsak til tysk filosofi, alt foregår på tysk, seminarrommene er gamle biblioteker i mørk eik, som man kommer til gjennom trappeoppganger i marmor, og det er langt mellom professorene, som er høyt ansett og nyter stor innflytelse. Formalistene på det voksende MCNP, derimot, snakker gjerne engelsk med hverandre, skjønt alle i rommet er tyske; de kan kanskje sies å være mer saklige, men der de labber uttrykksløst omkring i slitte sneakers kan man også si de er mer blottet for kultur. Whiteboardene er fylt av lange deduksjoner i symbolsk logikk, og man er veldig opptatt av at filosofi er en vitenskap. Vi kan være glad for at vi holder oss nokså moderate her hjemme, fordi filosofikulturen på universitetet slo meg som polarisert – det gamle mot det nye.

En grunn til at denne kontrasten kommer så godt til syne, er at vi befinner oss i Bayern. Det er en kjent sak at bayerne er mer konservative og langt mer stolte av sin kultur enn det berøringsengstelige og progressive nord, og skillet mellom Øst- og Vest-Tyskland blekner i sammenlikning. Det kjempes en tydelig kulturkamp mellom de to, som i så måte legger seg på linje med den mellom henholdsvis det tradisjonelle og det analytiske filosofifakultetet. Bayern er altså et unntak fra det kulturelt mer nøytrale og globaliseringsvennlige landet for øvrig, og jeg erfarte ved flere anledninger at de rakk ned på hverandre. Medstudenter fra de mer nordlige delene av landet – matematikkfilosofer, så klart – har lagt ut til meg om sin avsky for bayernes arroganse, deres selvtilfredshet, og om hvordan de konsumerer for mye kjøtt og kjører forurensende biler. Et lite uttrykk for bayernskepsis drypper gjerne ut først, og hvis man ønsker å høre mer, så er det bare å åpne



kranen. Til og med den sydlige dialekten mener man er plagsom. Fra den andre siden har mer konservative, gjerne katolske medstudenter tilhørende det gamle fakultetet langet ut både mot fremmedgjørende matematisk filosofi og, i samme åndedrag, mot de andres kulturforvitrende globaliseringstrang.

Mens jeg selv bare tok ett kurs på det gamle fakultetet, befant også filosofistudenten Erlend Finke Owesen seg der på fulltid det samme semesteret, og han har selv skrevet et reisebrev fra utvekslingen som er trykket her i *Filosofisk supplement* i nummeret 03/16. Owesen gir stedet en positiv vurdering: For eksempel er Ludwig-Maximilians Unisveristät en «ærefull institusjon», byen er «vakker og sjarmerende», og «god orden og renhet råder i gatene.» Beliggenheten er «fenomenal på alle måter,» og Münchenerne er «karismatiske, stilfulle og elegante.» I en fotnote sammenliknes også München med Berlin, hvor det kommer frem hvilken side han tar i kulturstriden nevnt over: «Men for all del: Den med forkjærlighet for bongotrommer, tagging og menn med langt, fett hår må gjerne dra til Berlin!» skrives det her (*Filosofisk supplement, Vitenskap*, 03/16. Red. Solberg, H. R. og Hellem Aaby, B.).

Erlends teori om nordtyskernes skepsis, er at de er misunnelige. Mitt eget reisebrev fra den samme utvekslingen er ment som et kritisk svar til denne glansbildeframstillingen. Erlends blomsterfasade skal opp i flammer, og frem skal sakens andre side.

Et godt sted å begynne for å illustrere kontrasten mellom det gamle og det nye, kan være områdene hvor vi bodde. Mens Owesen bodde midt i historiske Schwabbing, så å si Münchens Frogner, holdt jeg selv til i futuristiske Olympiadorf—landsbyen hvor utøverne bodde under de olympiske leker i 1972. Mellom sentrum og Olympiadorf ligger en mangefelts Autobahn, før man kommer til den olympiske parken med utsiktstårnet Olympische Turm og Olympiastadion, som i dag fremdeles tjener som byens sportsarena, samt som konsertlokaler for Slagermusik-festivaler og annet. Både parken, landsbyen, sportsanleggene og Bayerische Motor-Werk-hovedkvarterene som ligger der, er bygget i det som på syttitallet var en svært moderne stil. Parken er stor, med kunstige vann og kunstige topper med utsikt over resten av byen, og over Alpe. Delen av landsbyen hvor jeg bodde ligger inntil parken og består av et hundretalls toetasjes bungalower, hver med en liten altan, hvor de kvinnelige utøverne holdt til, og overfor ligger leiligheten hvor det epokegjørende gisseldramaet

fant sted under lekenes siste dager. Bungalowene huser i dag utvekslingsstudenter fra alle verdens hjørner, men særlig Asia. Sportsanlegget med stadion i midten, er tegnet som et slags telt som er ment å etterlikne fasjonen til Alpe i bakgrunnen. Det består av to typer prefabrikkerte deler; først bæresøylene som står to og to og møtes på midten, som holder oppe et slags teppe bestående av glassplater sydd sammen med vaiere. Det skal nevnes at disse kalkulasjonene av vektfordeling og bæreegenskaper var utført med penn og papir, før man hadde programvare til dette. BMW-bygningen er ment å etterlikne en virvelvind, ettersom selskapet begynte som en flymotorprodusent, før landet ble fratatt retten til dette etter de to krigene. Mellom er det fargede rør, antennemaster, og modernistiske skulpturer. Denne bydelen skulle representere det nye Tyskland. Tom står gisselleiligheten fra lekene, og ved den finnes et lite minnesmerke på hebraisk for de

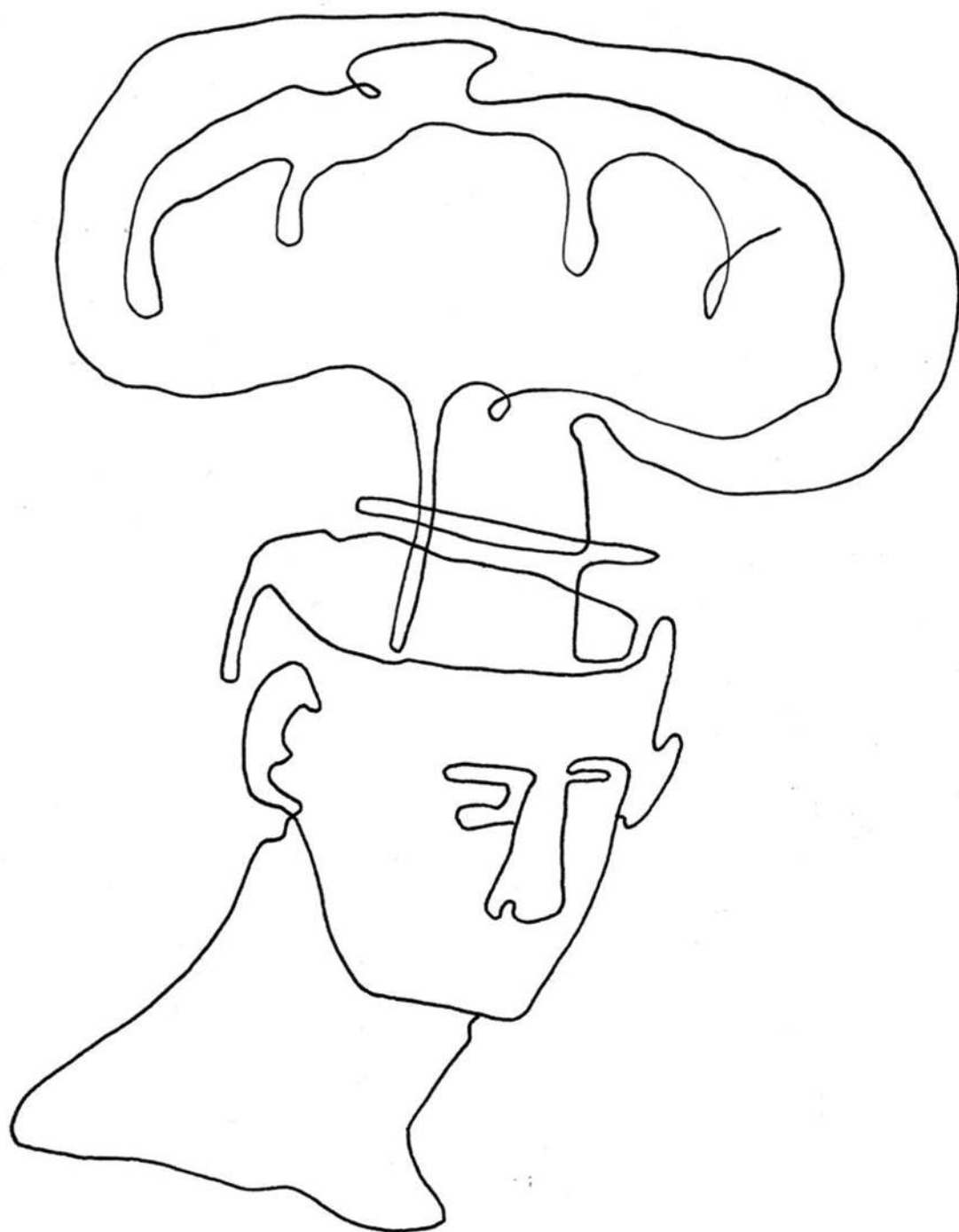
elleve israelske utøverne som ble drept under aksjonen. En forskjell fra mange andre byers OL-anlegg er at det er vedlikeholdt og fortsatt brukes aktivt, men allikevel står det bare en fjern skygge igjen

av fremtidsoptimismen som definerte etterkrigstidens Vest-Tyskland. Kraftwerks «Antenne», fra samme tid, spiller i bakgrunnen.

Det er et fremmedgjørende område, særlig om man går fem minutter gjennom parken vestover i retning Olympia Einkaufszentrum, et av de første og største kjøpesentrene i landet. Tusener av biler står parkert utenfor, og senteret overflødiggjør hele resten av byen. Her er det materialisme som råder, fordi det er mening å finne i å ha en velutstyrt husholdning, med det riktige dusjhodet, støvsugeren, og hvitevarene, alt i ypperste stand. Mens det her i Norge er kaffekapselmaskinen som splitter landet mellom de pietistiske og de vulgære, skal tyskerne ha en automatisert maskin for alt—automatiske røremaskiner, nøtteknekkere, ostekuttere, og så videre, og det er enorme kjøttdisker der, med svært lav kilopris i tillegg. Det var på dette kjøpesenteret, sommeren 2016, at masseskytingen som snudde byen på hodet en natt fant sted. Neste dag var alt tilbake til det vanlige, og det viste seg at den skyldige var en ung mann, som på soverommet hadde bøker om både amerikanske skoleskyttere, islamistisk terror, og Anders Behring Breivik. Hadde du selv holdt til i disse omgivelsene ville kanskje ikke ideen om å skyte

**Allee Allee Allee Allee Allee**  
**eine Straße, viele Bäume,**  
**ja, das ist eine Allee**

#### – Tradisjonell tysk sang



*Illustrasjon:* Oda Aurora Norlund

rundt seg på Olympia Einkaufszentrum vært likeså ubegripelig.

Fremmedgjøring og materialisme er to nøkkelord, og *Ordnung* og *Punktlichkeit*, som tyskerne er så kjent for, gjelder ikke like mye her nede; faktisk er de nokså uorganiserte. Hele byråkratiet på universitetet og med myndighetene går sakte, fordi alt er gjort av mennesker med penn og papir. Faktisk går hjulene mye glattere rundt hjemme i Norge, med våre automatiserte systemer med gode brukergrensesnitt, kanskje grunnet i vår langt høyere minstelønn. De ser også langt mindre sunne ut her nede, og de er slitne og bleke i huden. Bayerne røker og drikker mye, elsker fotball, og eter salt husmannskost hver dag. Et vanlig måltid kan bestå av en halv kilo oversaltet *Schweineknödel*, dertil en halv arm lang saltkringle, en *Brezl*. Spør man derimot etter en «Brezl», som ikke er den bayerske måten å betegne denne kringlen på, kan de finne på å spørre hva du mener; det samme gjelder *Brötchen*, som her betegnes som *Semmel*. «Hva er en Brezl? Jeg vet ikke hva du snakker om.» De sverger ikke bare til dialekten sin, men også til det svært søte bayerske ølet, som serveres nesten lunkent i literglass til halvannen Euro. I den lokale *Bierstube* er det vanlig å stille opp i *Lederhosen*, som man bruker så ofte anledningen byr seg—og dem er det mange av: I Bayern tviholder de på sine mange helligdager som feires nesten ukentlig til ære for en eller annen helgen, noe en utvekslingsstudent gjerne blir klar over først etter å ha ankommet sentrum, for så å se at hele byen er stengt. Fagutvalgskontoret på filosofifakultetet er likt vårt eget, bortsett fra at de har et stort kjøleskap fylt med søt øl, samt flere dusin kasser stående ved inngangspartiet. Her drikkes det mens det leses, fra morgen til kveld, og det serveres også alkohol i studentkantinen hvor det er vanlig å ta seg en øl til lunsjen. Studentenes mathall er en egen stor bygning, hvor hvert måltid består av svinekjøtt med seige raspeballer, om ikke saltkringer. Når man eter her – nei, blir *føret* – opplevs det som et massivt industrielt husdyranlegg, noe landet for øvrig også er kjent for. Altså konsumeres kjøttet på et sted svært likt der det ble produsert.

Hvis du syntes våre egne bergensere kan være høylytte og patriotiske, tar du feil. Mange land har sant å si en region hvor man er opptatt av sin særegenhet og av å understreke sin tilhørighet, og hvor man kanskje ser det slik at resten av landet er misunnelige. Men her i Bayern er det som om hele Tysklands nedslåtte patriotisme og humørløshet finner sitt utløp, multiplisert med ti. En forklaring kan være at nasjonalisme er fyfy, men når det gjelder *regionalisme*, derimot, er det bare å fyre løs. Postkortbildene med Lederhosen, fet mat, og gjøkur kommer alle herifra, og mens de øvrige tyskerne er gørr lei av disse stereotypene, omfavnes de varmt her nede. Den typiske bayeren man møter på en av de mange ølstuene, er gjerne en ingeniørstudent på Münchens enorme Technische Universität,

hvor alles patriotiske drøm er å kunne tjene landet hos BMW. Med sine Lederhosen, glatte fjes, og blonde hår med barbert nakke og rundt ørene, er det ikke vanskelig å forestille seg dem stående på rekke og gi hilsen—og Erlend med dem.

München er ikke bare Erlends favorittby, men det var også Hitlers. Han utnevnte byen til Nazistbevegelsens hovedstad, og det var her han ble fengslet under det mislykkede Ølkjellerkuppet i 1923—og kulehullene fra kaoset som fulgte, er fremdeles å finne på veggen i Ludwigstraße. Her er historien ekstra nær, og mange av bygningene som føreren selv tegnet, står fremdeles rundt om i sentrum, mens de i andre tyske byer har blitt revet. Enkelte diskre hakekors er også å finne om man leter. Men historieforglemmelsen er allerede i gang blant disse unge patriotene der de står på stolene og synger «Allee, Allee», og jeg tok gjerne på meg oppgaven å minne dem på hva som hendte her for ikke så alt for lenge siden. Men å ta et oppgjør med dette, som man har et eget ord for – *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* – er ikke lenger et tema. Hvordan tyskerne kunne gjøre det de gjorde, er et spørsmål som fulgte meg hver dag gjennom dette utvekslingsoppholdet.

Kanskje er jeg urimelig i min vurdering av bayerne. Kanskje har de ikke noe annet valg, enn å lete i det gamle for finne en identitet å klamre seg til, hvilket i økende grad blir nødvendig i et europeisk land på globaliseringsfronten. Når både unge og gamle samles på Marienplatz for å nyte Rathaus-Glockenspiel, et stort gjøkur på rådhuset som har spilt klokken tolv hver dag så lenge man kan huske, dveler man kanskje bare ved det velkjente og trygge som aldri forandres.<sup>1</sup> Kanskje er formalistene på MCNP ikke noe bedre, men flykter i stedet inn i den analytiske filosofiens logiske systemer hvor de kan finne *Sauberkeit*, *Ordnung* og *Lebensraum*, uten å måtte ty til totalitarisme. Kanskje er det formalistene som er de egentlige nazistene i ny forkledning, likesom en rehabilitert seriemorder som har fått orden på livet og tviholder på hverdagen og sunne medmenneskelige forhold, og nå får utløp for sine lyster på kjøkkenet hvor han forbereder de flotteste middager til familie og venner. Men en hitlerbart er ikke mye større enn et frimerke. Tenk litt på det, Erlend.

#### NOTER

<sup>1</sup>Enkelte utfordrer denne uforanderligheten. En dag jeg selv møtte opp for å overvære ritualet, ble seansen kuppet av en original og virkningsfull form for demonstrasjon fra den innvandringsfiendtlige organisasjonen PEGIDA. Fra et kraftig høytaleranlegg de hadde rigget i forkant, satt de på islamske bønnenrop med fullt volum i det samme øyeblikket klokken skulle begynne å spille, noe som selvsagt var til manges forskrekkelse.

# FILOSOFIQUIZ

*Det åpnes for at gode argumenter kan gjøre flere svar riktige.  
Interessante løsningsforslag sendes til [redaksjon@filosofisksupplement.no](mailto:redaksjon@filosofisksupplement.no) og kan belønnes!*

## SPØRSMÅL

1. Hva er det motsatte av relativ?
2. Beauvoir hevdet at kvinnens essens ikke var «stivnet», men...??
3. Hva heter standpunktet som hevder at et utsagns betydning avhenger av dets sammenheng?
4. Hvem er kjent for å ha postulert at moralske dommer er basert på følelser, i motsetning til fornuft?
5. Hvilken tysk filosof og matematiker fra den tidlige opplysningstiden utviklet en relasjonell teori om rom?
6. Hva søker «New Relativism» som er utviklet de siste femten årene å forklare? ?
7. Hvem sa «Det finnes ingen sannheter, bare fortolkninger»?
8. Locke hevdet at det finnes to ulike klasser sansekvaliteter, primære og sekundære. Hvilken av disse er relativ til subjektets sanseoppfatning?
9. «There is nothing neither right or wrong, but thinking makes it so.» Hvem skrev dette, og i hvilket skuespill?
10. Hva heter artikkelen fra 1905 hvor Einstein først foreslår den spesielle relativitetsteorien?

- SVAR
1. Absolutt.
  2. Kulturelt ervervet (eksplosiv-fast).
  3. Kontekstualisme.
  4. Hume.
  5. Leibniz
  6. Uenigheter i kontekstavhengige domener.
  7. Nietzsche.
  8. Sekundære sansekvaliteter.
  9. Shakespeare, Hamlet.
  10. On the Electrodynamics of Moving Bodies.

# NESTE NUMMER NATUR

Slående mengder forskning tyder på at de katastrofale klima- og miljøproblemene som mennesket nå står overfor, først og fremst korrelerer med vår ødeleggelse og utnyttelse av naturen. Med andre ord kan det tyde på at mennesket er skyld i at jordas arts mangfold minker og at mennesket har avfortryllet naturen, slik blant annet Horkheimer og Adorno hevdet. Det moderne, opplyste mennesket har tildels blitt adskilt fra naturen som det en gang var avhengig av, i kraft av å ha fullstendig behersket naturen med avansert teknologi.

Det finnes ulike måter å forstå begrepet «natur» på. Ordet «natur» kommer fra det latinske ordet *natura*, som bokstavelig talt betyr «fødsel», men ble også brukt om en gjenstands essens eller en persons iboende karakter. *Natura* er igjen oversatt fra det greske φύσις (*physis*), et begrep benyttet især av Aristoteles for å omtale gjenstanders prinsipper om «bevegelse og stillstand». For Spinoza, derimot, ble skaperen Gud lignet med den skapte naturen, slik det er uttrykt i hans idiom «*Deus sive Natura*» («Gud eller Naturen»).

I en forstand innebærer begrepet «natur» hele det materielle eller fysiske universet og alle dets bestanddeler. Ligger det dermed i «natur» at det er kun et fysisk, og hva mener vi i så fall med «det fysiske»? Kanskje begrepet natur dermed blir for snevert? En bredere tolkning av naturbegrepet vil kunne hevde at begrepet referer til den naturlige verden som mennesket og andre dyr bor i. I denne sammenhengen snakker man ofte om at mennesket nå har tatt steget over i den *anthropocene* tidsalder: en epoke hvor menneskets påvirkning nå utveier de mektigste naturkrefter. Hvis dette stemmer tyder det på en prekær relasjon mellom mennesket og natur. Skillelinjene mellom det naturlige, det overnaturlige, så vel som det kunstige, kan også nevnes som relevant; dette kommer delvis til syne i distinksjonen mellom *nature* og *nurture* på engelsk. Slike debatter om det naturlige kan for eksempel være feministisk, metafysisk, miljøfilosofisk, eller bioetisk motiverte.

Til neste nummer av *Filosofisk supplement* søker vi tekster som omhandler noen av disse spørsmålene eller andre filosofiske problemstillinger knyttet til natur. Vi vurderer også tekster som går utenfor tema.

Fristen for innsending av tekster er **mandag, 15. januar 2018**.

*Vil du bidra med en tekst til neste utgivelse av Filosofisk supplement?  
Send oss en e-post på [bidrag@filosofisksupplement.no](mailto:bidrag@filosofisksupplement.no).*

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*Filosofisk supplement* er et studentdrevet tidsskrift basert på frivillig arbeid.  
Takk til alle bidragsytere – bladet hadde ikke blitt til uten dere!