

4	<b>ADORNO ON NATURE AND DOMINATION</b> Martin Nyberg
18	<b>HOW 'RATIONAL MAN' FAILED MOTHER EARTH: FEMINIST EHICS AND CLIMATE CHANGE</b> Oda K.S. Davanger
32	<b>SPECIES SELECTION AND TRADITIONAL CONCEPTS IN EVOLUTIONARY THEORY</b> Bendik Hellem Aaby & Hans Robin Solberg
38	INTERVJU MED DAG O. HESSEN <b>DEN RASJONELLE ØYA, MENINGEN MED LIVET OG MENNESKETS FREMTID</b> Dag August Schmedling Dramer & Veslemøy E.X. Kaen
48	BOKOMTALE AV AGAINST MARRIAGE AV CLARE CHAMBERS <b>FOR EQUALITY AND LIBERTY</b> Patrick J. Winther-Larsen
54	FRA FORSKNINGSFRONTEN <b>NATURALNESS AND UNNATURALNESS IN CONTEMPORARY BIOETHICS</b> Anna Smajdor
60	I PRAKSIS <b>WHAT IS IT LIKE TO BE SALMON?</b> Martin Lee Mueller
66	OVERSETTELSE VED MARTIN NYBERG & HENRIK VOLDSTAD <b>TECHNIK, MEDIZIN, UND ETHIK</b> Hans Jonas
70	UTRAG FRA <i>DEN LEKSIKRYPTISKE ENCYKLOPEDI</i> <b>NATURLIGE EGENSKAPER</b>
72	MESTERBREV <b>LISA-SOPHIE LUNDH</b>
73	MESTERBREV <b>MATTIAS DA SILVA BJARTVEIT</b>
74	REISEBREV <b>EN UTRADISJONELL UTVEKSLING</b> Marthe Jæger Tangen
76	<b>QUIZ</b>
77	<b>NESTE NUMMER</b>

# FILOSOFISK SUPPLEMENT

14. ÅRGANG | #1/2018

*Filosofisk supplement* er et studentdrevet fagtidsskrift ved  
Program for filosofi ved Universitetet i Oslo.

*Filosofisk supplement* gis ut med støtte fra Kulturstyret ved  
Studentsamskipnaden i Oslo, Norsk kulturråd, Frifond  
og IFIKK

Trykket hos Renaissance Media, Liertoppen.

Opplag: 500

ISSN: 0809-8222

Org. nr.: 988 784 346

Filosofisk supplement  
c/o IFIKK  
Postboks 1020 Blindern  
0315 OSLO

redaksjon@filosofisksupplement.no  
Manus og artikkelforslag mottas per e-post.

Årsabonnement NOK 180,- (4 utgaver)  
www.filosofisksupplement.no

  
www.tidsskriftforeningen.no

## REDAKSJON

Redaktører: Oda K.S. Davanger  
Henrik Voldstad

Layout: Veslemøy E.X. Kaen  
Joachim Kvamme

Økonomi: Tormod Fjeld Lie

Øvrige  
medlemmer: Håkon Blystad  
Dag August Schmedling Dramer  
Maren Kildahl Fjeld  
Sverre Hertzberg  
Reber Iversen  
Carl W. Korsnes  
Martin Nyberg  
Adrian Kristing Ommundsen  
Inger Bakken Pedersen  
Kristin Kveim Skarholt  
Hans Robin Solberg  
Patrick J. Winther-Larsen

\*\*\*

Omslag: Hedda Larssen

# NATUR

I en tid der mennesket begynner å tenke at det har mestret naturen gjør klimakrisen dramatisk entré. I vår tidsalder viser «Natur» til noe vi har tapt, og som vi kanskje en dag kan gjenfinne. Ikke bare handler diskusjoner om det «naturlige» om økosystemer, landskap og dyr, men også om hvordan vi skal innrette samfunnet. Naturbegrepet brukes gjerne til å berettigede avgjørelser, som når grupper eller arter behandles i tråd med sin angivelige natur. Vi kan strebe etter det naturlige, uten å enes om hva det er.

I videste forstand vil «Natur» si hele vårt materielle univers. I denne forstand *vinner* mennesket natur, heller enn å tape den, i takt med at stadig større deler av jorda bærer vårt preg under «antropocen». Plastemballasje når også de (av mennesker) ubebodde deler av planeten. Kanskje er plastemballasje bare et utslag av den menneskelige natur. Videre, kan og bør nyere teknologi brukes til å justere vår menneskelige natur etter våre behov?

Det ligger ikke på oss i *Filosofisk supplement* å ramme inn den fruktbare filosofiske samtale om «Natur», men vi håper å ta del i denne. Forskere og filosofistudenter som har bidratt til dette nummeret belyser spørsmål og problemstillinger omkring «Natur».

I «Adorno on Nature and Domination», undersøker Martin Nyberg hvordan T.W. Adorno tar for seg menneskets beherskelse av naturen, og i hvilken grad dennes tenkning kan bidra til miljøfilosofien.

O.K.S. Davanger tar i «How 'Rational Man' Failed Mother Earth: Feminist Ethics and Climate Change» et oppgjør med kanonisk etikk for å redegjøre for hvordan et overdrevent fokus på individet gjør det vanskelig for mennesker å motarbeide klimakrisen og takle de utfordringer den byr på. Hun foreslår feministisk etikk som et bedre alternativ, og fremmer en omsorgsontologi der mennesket alltid allerede befinner seg i et relasjonelt ansvar ovenfor andre.

Hans Robin Solberg og Bendik Aaby drøfter i «Species Selection and Traditional Concepts in Evolutionary Theory» muligheten for at naturlig seleksjon foregår på artsnivå. De diskuterer hvorvidt en slik hypotese lar seg forene med vårt syn på evolusjonshistorien, hva et biologisk individ er, og naturlig seleksjon overhodet.

*Filosofisk supplement* ved Dag Dramer og Veslemøy Kaen

har intervjuet Dag O. Hessen, professor i biologi ved UiO. Hessen har lenge vært interessert i forholdet mellom filosofi og biologi, og drøfter i dette intervjuet formidling av bioteknologiske funn og disses påvirkning på menneskets fremtid. Han setter ord på forholdet mellom menneskearten og dens meningssøkende enkeltmedlemmer.

Patrick J. Winther-Larsen anmelder *Against Marriage: An Egalitarian Defence of the Marriage-Free State* (2017) av filosof Clare Chambers (f. 1976). Winther-Larsen mener at verket er et tiltrengt bidrag til diskusjonen om ekteskap og likestilling.

I spalten *Fra forskningsfronten* redegjør førsteamanuensis i filosofi ved UiO Anna Smajdor for rollen (u)naturlighet spiller i bioetikk. Teksten, «Naturalness and unnaturalness in contemporary bioethics» beskriver et fagområde i uenighet over hva som skal telle i spørsmål om før-liv og død, og hvordan «Natur» her gjør seg gjeldende på underforstått vis.

Hvordan er det å være en laks? Om vi ikke kan vite det sikkert, kan vi i det minste forestille oss det. I denne utgavens *I praksis* argumenterer doktor i filosofi Martin Lee Mueller for at det nødvendige svaret på dette spørsmålet må få følger for forholdet mellom *Homo sapiens* og *Salmo salar*.

Martin Nyberg og Henrik Voldstad har oversatt Hans Jonas' «Hvorfor den moderne teknikken er et emne for filosofien» fra tysk til norsk. Teksten er et utdrag fra *Technik, Medizin, und Ethik*, der Jonas skildrer hvordan teknisk makt og teknologisk «fremskritt» har tatt filosofien på senga. Innledning ved oversettere setter Jonas' betraktninger i sammenheng med «Natur».

I *Utdrag fra den Leksikryptiske Encyclopedi* skriver et redaksjonsmedlem om «naturlige egenskaper». To nye mastere i filosofi har skrevet mesterbrev, og en norsk filosofistudent i Colombia har skrevet reisebrev. Det finnes også en «naturfilosofisk quiz» til våre lesere.

Vi i redaksjonen i *Filosofisk supplement* mener at «Natur» fortjener sin plass på dagsordenen. I sammenheng med dette nummeret arrangerte *Filosofisk supplement* debatt mellom professor Arne Johan Vetlesen og postdoktor i filosofi Ole Martin Moen, der de diskuterer mennesket og natur fra to vidt forskjellige standpunkt. Et lydopptak av debatten er tilgjengelig på våre nettsider.

God lesning!

Oda K.S. Davanger & Henrik Voldstad  
redaktører

# ADORNO ON NATURE AND DOMINATION

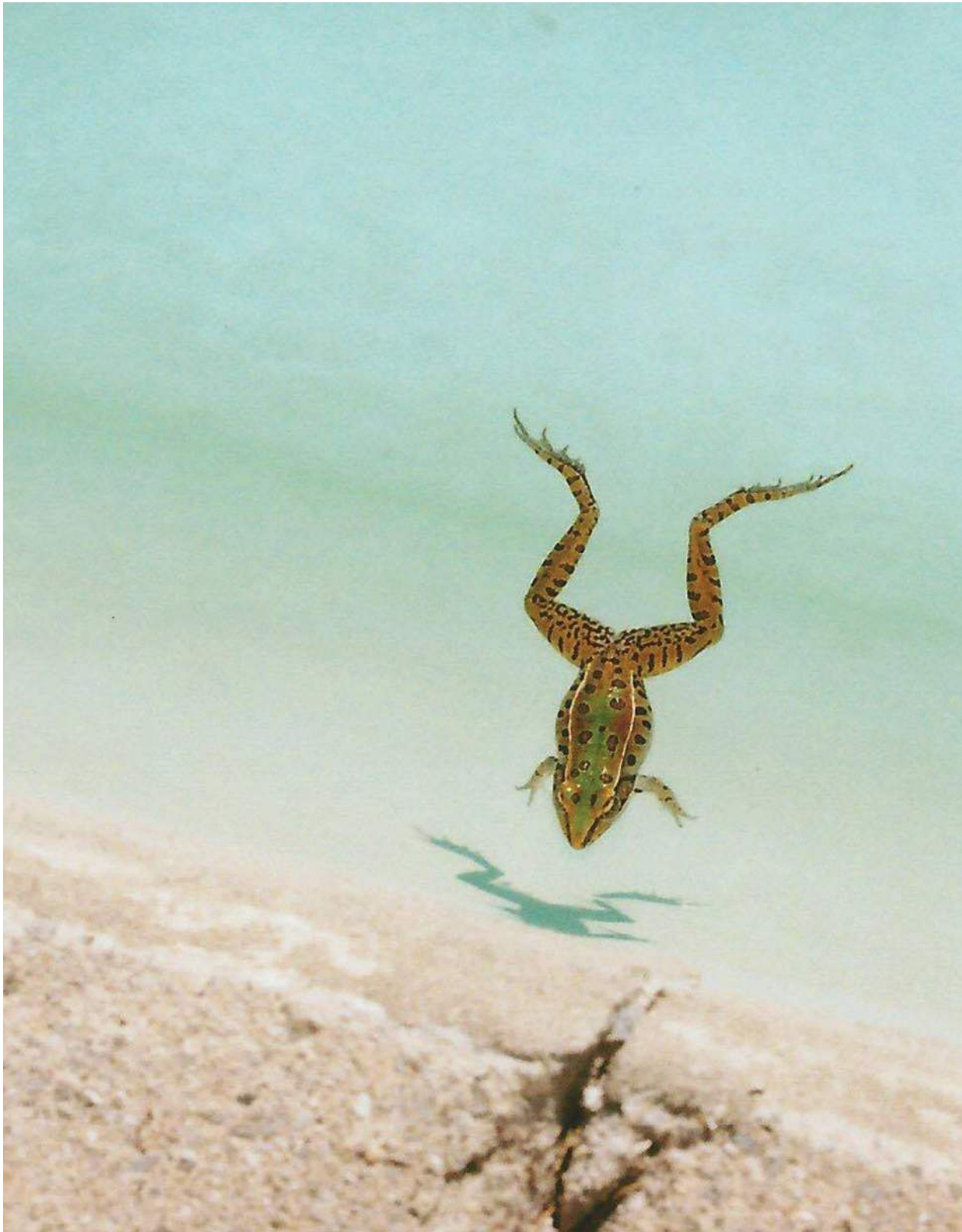
**This paper investigates whether or not there is a contribution to environmental philosophy in the writings of the German philosopher Theodor W. Adorno, a social philosopher at the Institute for Social Research in Frankfurt (later known as the Frankfurt school). Through reading the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (co-authored with Max Horkheimer), I intend to clarify whether their critique of Enlightenment and instrumental reason also contains a positive contribution that can fruitfully inform environmental philosophy. I find that their *Dialectic*, through its social criticism and its understanding of human history as one of domination ('beherrschung'), has much to say about how we ended up in our current environmental crisis; however, I find the positive contributions to be lacking. Thus, to further understand the challenges we face in the Anthropocene era, I draw on other philosophers like Martin Heidegger and Arne Johan Vetlesen, before turning back to Adorno, to his later works. Here, I argue that his idea of 'non-identity' thinking lends itself to a less dominant way of relating and experiencing nature, by stressing the particularity of all entities within.**

*By Martin Nyberg*

Neither Theodor W. Adorno nor the other theorists of the 1st generation of the Frankfurt School wrote explicitly on matters of ecological concern, or environmental philosophy in general. The two later generations, respectively represented by Jürgen Habermas and Axel Honneth, also seem to have failed to develop a robust framework capable of addressing the contemporary environmental crisis. Because of this, looking to the project of Critical Theory for solutions to environmental challenges may initially not seem very fruitful. However, Adorno did frequently address the domination exerted by human beings on nature<sup>1</sup> in the name of progress and enlightenment, as well as touching on the relationship between human beings and non-human nature. In this paper, I will investigate whether there indeed is a contribution to environmental philosophy to be found in his writings, and whether they can shed some light on the destructive tendencies we see today, in the age of global capitalism. In the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* ('*Dialektik der Aufklärung*', hereafter '*the Dialectic*') from 1944, Adorno and Max Horkheimer's aim was to disclose the history of the subject as ultimately and principally driven by self-preservation, thus leading to an all-pervasive domination of nature ('*Naturbeherrschung*'). If this is so, it seems to anticipate parts of our current

predicament.

Throughout my paper, it is the concept of domination that will be my focal concern. In the first part of the paper I assess Adorno and Horkheimer's critique of instrumental reason and attempt to unpack the dialectic between myth and enlightenment. In the third part, I consider the dialectic of domination in more detail, as it is presented in their first Excursus. In part four, I elaborate further on domination of nature by drawing on other thinkers, mainly Martin Heidegger and Arne Johan Vetlesen. In the fifth part of the paper, I attempt to situate Adorno within the field of environmental philosophy, based on *the Dialectic* and later works, and I consider whether and how he contributes to the field in enlightening or novel ways. Making sense of Adorno as an environmental thinker requires an initial understanding of his social philosophy. Therefore, parts of the paper which at first may seem somewhat dislocated in relation to the overarching ecological narrative, later prove themselves salient, as Adorno was principally concerned with emancipation through disclosing underlying sociocultural and socioeconomic mechanisms and tendencies. My reading of Adorno is primarily based on *the Dialectic*, in addition to briefly touching on parts from *Minima Moralia* (1951) and *Negative Dialectics* (1966).



*Illustrasjon av Hedda Larssen*

I assume, like philosopher Arne Johan Vetlesen, that “philosophy is an activity deeply entrenched in the patterns of contemporary culture; for good and bad, it mirrors and helps reproduce those patterns both in thought and in practice” (2015:2). Ideally, then, philosophy today informs ecological practice, just as ecological practices inform philosophical theorising. In other words, philosophy should not wholly detach itself from what it theorises about. An environmental philosophy true to its proper object – the environment, or nature – should be wary not to stray too far into the realms of academic abstraction and advanced philosophical puzzles – especially if we assume the tendency to mirror patterns in culture. However, some of the literature ends up doing precisely that, leading to long-winded discussions about whether nature is intrinsically valuable or not; and while nature suffers, philosophy confines itself to the classrooms (2015:5). In the process of theorising nature, we should be wary not to detach ourselves completely, but to remember how valuing nature in the first place bears on significant, meaningful and situated *experience* of nature – although the possibilities for such experiences do seem rarer and rarer for every passing day, and for every WWF Living Planet report.<sup>2</sup>

Lastly, there are two other points I would like to make here. First, when doing environmental philosophy from a social-critical standpoint, there will always be a risk of sounding utterly regressive. I do not want to make such a case. The goal is not to completely scorn modernity, but to consider the potential drawbacks of what we so often and so easily deem as progress and improvement. Only well informed by such considerations can we conceive of a thinking of society (or culture) and nature that reaches beyond its traditional manifestations. The second point is that I have chosen to mostly criticise where I believe criticism is due: Although destruction of nature is global in scope, much of what I write will mostly pertain to people in more developed and technologically advanced countries, i.e. mainly Western, liberal countries.

### I. The critique of instrumental reason

When speaking of modernity and the modern human's relation to its surrounding world, we often emphasise its *disenchantment* (*Entzauberung der Welt*), a term often accredited to Max Weber. As it often goes in environmental discourse, this disenchantment of the environment, and the desire to wrest it of its secrets, have led to our technological mastery of it. Conversely, it also seems as if mastery of nature may further fuel its disenchantment. Adorno and Horkheimer frame Western history in this Weberian

fashion – from the mythical worldviews to the ‘enlightened’ – as one of instrumental reason and disenchantment, in their *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. In her essay called “Adorno and the Disenchantment of Nature”, Alison Stone offers this tripartite definition of disenchantment of nature in the following way:

(1) [that] we have ceased to see nature as an inherently meaningful order; (2) we have come to assume that nature is devoid of mystery, wholly accessible to our understanding; and (3) ... we no longer find nature ‘sacred’, peopled by divine or demonic beings and worthy of reverence or dread. (2006:231)

Adorno and Horkheimer claim that this socio-historical process is fuelled by ‘Enlightenment’. What they mean by ‘Enlightenment’, is not (at least not *only*) the intellectual movement that dominated Europe in the 18th century, but rather a gradual process driven by a reason which, as they argue, has become a thoroughly instrumental reason. In his seminal work on Adorno, Simon Jarvis defines it clearly:

They use it [enlightenment] to refer to a series of related intellectual and practical operations which are presented as demythologizing, secularizing or disenchanting some mythical, religious or magical representation of the world. (1998:24)

As both Jarvis and J.M. Bernstein emphasize, because enlightened reason is negative and critical, it is inherently *sceptical* (Jarvis 1998:25; Bernstein 2001:76). Not only is enlightened reason sceptical – it is also *totalitarian* (Adorno & Horkheimer 2010:6). However sweeping these characterisations may seem, I shall return to and explain them later. The story of enlightenment is a story of what Adorno, Horkheimer and the other Frankfurt philosophers referred to as domination (*Beherrschung*); the act of us ascribing goals to natural entities which they would not ascribe to themselves. Here, we can also look to Deborah Cook, who writes: “we have imposed goals and purposes on it that are far different from those that it would adopt independently. *We have ignored and suppressed nature's autotelic powers*” (2011:121, my italics). On the Frankfurt School's view, suppression of an entity's goals and purposes leads to suffering (*leiden*). How this applies to *human suffering*, e.g. in an unfree society, is clear to see. If we assume the capacity for goals and purposes in other beings, it would necessarily apply to them too. By extension, the term *Naturbeherrschung* (as ascription of goals) can be ap-



plied to non-living nature as well, albeit in a more allegorical fashion. As Stone remarks, this would simply amount to a shaping of natural entities in light of human purposes; e.g. the shaping of rock into a pillar (2006:233–34). How exactly this amounts to *suffering* is perhaps harder to conceptualise. What is entailed by using the world suffering here is precisely a suppression of spontaneity, an *ascription* of goals onto natural entities, goals which they would not have adopted without us. However, extracting something like a *systematic*, normative argument from Adorno or the other Frankfurt philosophers on why this domination is *bad* is more difficult.

In many ways, Adorno closely follows Freud. The divison of nature is one of them. What Adorno thus means by ‘nature’ (both alongside Horkheimer, and in general) has a double meaning: He refers both to what we “normally” refer to as nature, that is the external environment, or non-human nature, and the instinctual ‘internal’ nature – our psychological dispositions and so forth.<sup>3</sup> To complicate matters for the reader, these senses are sometimes used interchangeably. In addition to this, it is also claimed that human beings are historically separated from external nature by virtue of being cultural and social creatures, nature effectively being the Other. Conversely, human history can be read in this ‘dialectic of nature’, and in our propensity for using nature as a means for our own goals. We have not only dominated (‘*beherrscht*’) ‘outer’ non-human nature, by way of our mastery, but in the process (and following from the dialectic) we have also dominated ‘inner’ human nature. Historically, this domination of ‘nature’ (in this case, ‘inner’ and ‘outer’), is tied to the domination of other human beings, and, in following Freud, Adorno and Horkheimer are interested in how each form of domination relates to the other forms. One can see this throughout the whole work, and it is especially evident in the excursus on Odysseus.

On the opening page of the title chapter, “The Concept of Enlightenment”, we read a passage that not only exemplifies the sense of urgency of the times when the work was written (in exile during World War II), but also their understanding of Enlightenment:

In the most general sense of progressive thought, the Enlightenment has always aimed at liberating men from fear and establishing their sovereignty. Yet the fully enlightened earth radiates disaster triumphant. The program of the Enlightenment was the disenchantment of the world; the dissolution of myths and the substitution of knowledge for fancy. (Adorno &

Horkheimer 2010:3)

The early Frankfurt-thinkers were wholly convinced that social freedom and enlightened thought go hand in hand, Adorno and Horkheimer even admitting to this as being their *petitio principii* (2010:xiii). On their view, then, a totalitarian society runs parallel to a totalitarian (or un-enlightened) reason. Following from this, the central aim of the book is a thorough examination of how, or where, “enlightenment” went wrong. Only by reading history in this critical way, can we make sense of, say, the death camps, instead of resorting to treating them as a singular historical phenomenon, or in other words, as a gruesome effect in an orderly causal chain. Another example of this is the work’s famous essay, which is an attempt at making sense of capitalistic commodity-fetishism by identifying the ‘*Kulturindustrie*’ as mass-deception, and as a prolongation of the workspace (2010:120–167). Their goal, however, was more ambitious than to “just” understand *modern society’s* ‘descent into barbarism’, and how it had betrayed the very ideals of the enlightenment: The goal was a dialectical understanding of the intertwining of myth and enlightenment. In their eyes, the time had come for the Enlightenment to examine itself: the goal not being a conservation of the past, but a redemption of the hopes of the past (2010:xv).

As Jarvis notes, although *the Dialectic* has its narrative traits, reading it as such is a betrayal (1998:22). Adorno and Horkheimer do not read history from ‘left to right’, from ‘ancient’ to ‘modern’, from Odysseus to the 20th century. If you are to understand one of them (say, the modern), this already implies an understanding of the other (the ancient). Hence, their intermingling of terms tied to historical epochs, Odysseus, for example, being described as the *Bourgeois* proto-subject. Jarvis goes on to state that ideas like ‘modern’ and ‘ancient’ converge in their dialectical interdependency: Modernity (the newest) is at the same time also the oldest, in the sense of having lasted the longest, and, conversely, the oldest can only be addressed from a modern standpoint (1998:22). This leads us to why Adorno and Horkheimer claim that myth and Enlightenment are tightly intertwined concepts that coincide, as famously stated: “Myth is already Enlightenment, and Enlightenment reverts to mythology” (2010:xvi). The charitable reader will thus have to read the two theses in conjunction. If one does the opposite and neatly cherry picks, it is easy to read Adorno and Horkheimer as pessimistic, “anti-enlightenment” philosophers, arguing for a reversal of reason and modernity. However, the case is diametrically opposite: It is one of emancipation and

change. They are concerned with how knowledge can come to dissolve dominant practices, rather than simply reflect or affirm them (Jarvis 1998:22). Conformity to the rule has become a doctrine that is almost impossible to criticise and, as they argue, mythical in character. As of now, they claim, myth is simply masquerading as Enlightenment.

## II. Myth and Enlightenment

Although Adorno and Horkheimer do not explicitly define 'myth', a definition is implicit throughout the text. Through the lens of enlightened reason, myth has always appeared as *anthropomorphic* – that is, simply as a projection of subjective qualities onto the world (Adorno & Horkheimer 2010:6). In an enlightened age, mimetic behaviour (e.g., an assimilation of the self in the object; or, man imitating nature) is thought of as mythical, and as a remnant of the past. One can take 'myth' to mean something along the lines of a story of the world or cosmos, shared and accepted amongst members of a group; a projection of meaning onto the world, a framework for understanding it. In mythical times, animating non-human nature and its forces through mimetic behaviour helped make man and nature more similar. No longer faced with a great, malevolent *Other*, but being part and parcel of it, man could even make appeals to nature and its diversity of spirits through shamanistic rituals of mediation. "Protect us from the storm", "bless our hunting grounds" – with myths as his duvet, man could sleep easy at night. Nature understood as animated in the guise of spirits no longer lashed out at random. It now has a will (or wills) of its own, mirroring our subjective experience of nature. This holistic, mythical and mimetic understanding of the world gave meaning to it, and was in this sense enlightening; as Adorno and Horkheimer wrote, it set off the "unending process of enlightenment" (Adorno and Horkheimer 2010:11). However, nature understood not only as anthropomorphic and non-human, but also animated ('*beseelt*'), means it was partly irrational and unpredictable, by virtue of having these separate wills of its own. As Stone remarks, "mythical views partly disenchant nature" (by understanding it), and "partly enchant nature" (by its having a will of its own, thus remaining mysterious and autotelic) (2006:236). This is what made it both mythical and enlightening.

Despite their non-systematic account of the history of enlightenment, Adorno and Horkheimer do allude to at least five major, different phases: from a pre-animistic to an animistic stage, to a mythological, then a metaphysical, and lastly a scientific: "Science can now manage without substance and quality, activity and suffering, being and existence – categories that were abandoned as *idola theatri* of the

old metaphysics" (2010:5). The logical positivism of their times was seen as the culmination of this historical process. From *mana* to animism, from gods to numbers – in the history of understanding phenomena as instantiations of something, one can read a parallel history of better human survival prospects, tied to our grip over nature fastening. As Cook writes, partly quoting Adorno and Horkheimer:

Human history can be traced in our increased violence towards nature: "[A]ll our ideas, prohibitions, religions and political creeds" are tied to conditions that serve either to increase or decrease "the natural survival prospects of the human species on earth or within the universe". (2011:2)

Espen Hammer also notes that for Adorno, the principle of self-preservation has been the organising principle in *all* of human natural history. Language and thought, as well as scientific attempts at understanding, prediction and manipulation, are fundamentally "shaped by the overall purpose of securing the individuals survival...identifying, controlling and organizing a hostile and potentially dangerous environment" (Hammer 2006:45).

Because it is already a disenchanting operation, myth is already enlightenment. Early on in the work, Adorno and Horkheimer define Enlightenment as a sceptical endeavour, by claiming "whatever [that] does not conform to the rule of computation and utility is suspect." Adding to this, they write: To the Enlightenment, that which does not reduce to numbers, and ultimately to the one, becomes illusion; modern positivism writes it off as literature. Unity is the slogan from Parmenides to Russell. The destruction of gods and qualities alike is insisted upon. (2010:6–8)

Herein lies the crux of their dialectic; the Enlightenment, whose highest goal was the dissolution of myths, is in many ways, mythical in itself – and so enlightenment reverts to mythology (the German is suitably more charged: '*schlägt in Mythologie zurück*') (2010:xvi). Instead of reflecting on its indebtedness and relation to mythical worldviews, Enlightenment suppresses it. Enlightenment believes itself to have freed itself from the mythical, yet it wholly depends on the myths that it overcomes and destroys:

Just as myths already realize enlightenment, so enlightenment with every step becomes more deeply engulfed in mythology. It receives all its matter from the myths, in order to destroy them; and even as a judge it comes under the mythic curse. It wishes to extricate itself from



the process of fate and retribution, while exercising retribution on that process. (2010:11–12)

Every prior worldview ends up as falsified, criticised, and succeeded “until even the very notions of spirit, of truth, and indeed enlightenment itself, have become animistic magic” (2010:11, my italics). Every event explained as repetition – what Adorno and Horkheimer call *the principle of immanence* – is what Enlightenment has always held against the mythical (2010:13). However, in this radical rationalization, in the almost unwavering commitment to the scientific fact – understood as a subject-independent, quasi-ontological unit describing what really is – to numbers and to computability, and in the need to classify, subsume, explain, and deduce, we see what Bernstein calls the ‘hinge’ between myth and enlightenment (2001:87). Object, event and property are only cognised insofar as they are brought into the fold, deduced from the hierarchical structure of the natural sciences. This thinking, demanding of unity from ‘Parmenides to Russell’, is precisely what Adorno called ‘identity thinking’: Every particular becomes just another instantiation of the abstract universal, and is thus robbed of its individuality. Additionally, the scientific fact, and its aptness to change over time, seems to be, as Jarvis notes, “regarded as a pseudo-problem” (1998:26). Everything is to be understood on the basis of theory, the dream being the construing of a *subject-independent* science. That which is not measurable and does not stick with the program, is written off as mere fiction. Mythical fate is linked with enlightenment: “Abstraction, the tool of enlightenment, treats its objects as did fate, the notion of which it rejects: it liquidates them” (Adorno & Horkheimer 2010:13). Adding to this, we see Adorno and Horkheimer later writing:

When in mathematical procedure the unknown becomes the unknown quantity of an equation, this marks it as the well-known even before any value is inserted. Nature, before and after the quantum theory, is that which is to be comprehended mathematically...In the anticipatory identification of the wholly conceived and mathematized world with truth, enlightenment intends to secure itself against the return of the mythic. It confounds thought and mathematics. (2010:24)

We can now understand why Adorno and Horkheimer claimed that the Enlightenment is *totalitarian*: It always operates under the pretence of defined goals, dictated by scientific understanding. Analogously to fate, the approach to every possible phenomenon is pre-decided, and herein

lies that “arid wisdom that nothing is new under the sun” (2010:12). As Jarvis remarks, Adorno and Horkheimer want to show that the Enlightenment has become an “enlightenment that carries on the same regardless of its objects” (1998:26). The desire to control nature, and to wrest it of its status as something above or beyond our ability to control – be it through shamanistic rites or artificial light – is still as present as it always was, with control increasing the prospects for human survival. In so many cases, the scientific worldview effectively reduces nature to that which can be *worked on*, and if not, to what can conceptually be represented by numbers. Vetlesen summarizes this as *method* being given primacy over *objects*. Adding to this, he writes: “Form is given primacy over content, the general over the particular, the repeatable over the spatio-temporally situated, the abstract over the concrete” (2015:57).

### III. Domination of Nature: Odysseus

As I have shown above, Adorno and Horkheimer trace the history of our techno-scientific mastery over non-human nature parallel to our conceptual representations of nature improving (that is, becoming more and more suitable for predicting and understanding entities and their correlations). In modern societies, Adorno and Horkheimer also see this identity-thinking as solidifying in exchange relations. The point in question is summarised by Jarvis: “nothing is to be beyond thought; nothing is to be beyond price” (1998:27). The scientific fact becomes the ultimate way to understand nature, now understood as reducible to numbers. It becomes the ultimate way to shape it, predict its behaviour, and thus exploit it for capitalistic purposes: “What men want to learn from nature is how to use it in order to wholly dominate it and other men” (Adorno & Horkheimer 2010:4). The progress of modernity is paid for with the subjugation of nature – representing otherness – either outside the subject by virtue of instrumental operations, or inside the subject by virtue of rationally repressing, say, the bodily-sensuous, the sexual instincts, smell, hair, and so on. In the first two interconnected parts, I intended to clarify how they argue that we have come to dominate nature, and now treat it as a devalued Other. But how is domination of ‘outer’ nature tied to domination of ‘inner’, human nature?

In a somewhat creative turn, Adorno and Horkheimer trace the cunning of this instrumental reason back to the Homeric poem of *Odysseus*, and simultaneously intend to show how their *Naturbeherrschung* is a two-way affair. Here, they claim that we can see Odysseus as the prototype for the modern, Bourgeois subject, the harbinger of instrumental reason. Through his systematic repression of nature,



*Illustrasjon av Vera Gjermundsen*

he brilliantly overcomes the challenge the Sirens pose towards him and his men. He tells his men to bind him to the mast, and to not listen to his pleas of being let loose. They are ordered to plug their ears, keep rowing, and to not look to either side. The challenge posed is overcome by a *binding*, both literally and figuratively: Odysseus navigates through the dangerous waters, and guided by rationality, his men have their wills bound by their Master, as Odysseus himself is mastered by the ropes. The Sirens are as such not defeated, but they are simply made powerless, impotent, by a 'denial of nature' – inner and outer, human and non-human (Adorno & Horkheimer 2010:57). The song loses its pull through the domination exerted by Odysseus, both on his crew and on himself. Spontaneous adherence to his own, first nature would only serve to betray him, and is overcome by his second nature, by *reason*. Reversing the relation, reason is now made first nature; 'inner' and 'outer' nature is made second. Odysseus sees his own nature as an object of domination, something one ought to distance oneself from: "Their [the Sirens] temptation is neutralized and becomes a mere object of contemplation – becomes art" (2010:34).<sup>4</sup>

In Odysseus, what we see at play is a dialectic of domination: In a very Freudian fashion, domination of non-human nature and of other human beings demands domination *of the self in the self*. Thus, domination of nature is effectively paid for by normalizing (or naturalizing) social domination. The whole point of the Odysseus-excursus is formulated quite clearly in a footnote: "Striking one's breast became later a gesture of triumph: the victor shows thus that his victory is always won against his own nature. The achievement is attributed to the ratio of self-preservation" (2010:47–8). Domination of external, non-human nature is alluded to throughout the whole of *the Dialectic*, and also partly addressed, but it is not what they single out their critique for. As social domination comes to the fore, nature fades into the background, and we get a glimpse of the true target of their critique. Domination of non-human nature is used as a springboard for addressing the domination that concerns the Frankfurt philosophers most: Socioeconomic domination which in turn leads to a society of unfree and non-autonomous subjects, unable to criticise the class-division of work, as they come to view it as the natural order of things. Simultaneously, those very same subjects are distracted at every turn by the Culture Industry as the prolongation of the workspace that it is. Ironically enough, the fading away of nature we here see in Adorno and Horkheimer, both empirically and analytically, mirrors precisely what has happened in human history. It seems as if extracting an environmental philosophy from

Adorno (while making sure not to end up in the same anthropocentric maze his successor Habermas ends up in) is left open to us. Having touched on how central a concern nature really is in *the Dialectic*, we should also look at it more broadly within Critical Theory.

The later thinkers of the Frankfurt school – the second and third generation (respectively Habermas and Honneth) – are also apt to be criticised for their tendency for anthropocentrism, and for the lack of analytical tools to properly address nature and its exploitation by humans. Vetlesen calls this a "nature deficit in critical theory" (2015:94–5). Habermas criticises Adorno and Horkheimer for following Nietzsche too closely in demonizing rationality, and for solely focusing their analysis on instrumental reason. Habermas himself posits other spheres of rationality than that which he calls the cognitive-instrumental – namely, a practical-moral rationality, as well as an aesthetical-expressive rationality. He argues that his precursors' analysis ends up as too narrow, and for being too pessimistic and totalizing, the picture painted too damning. It is as if the critical theory of the future has nowhere to turn, now that the foundation of critique is crumbling, as even a thought or linguistic device that escapes the domination which shaped it, is unthinkable. Assessing the disputes Habermas may have with his precursors is not something I will do in this paper, but one thing they have in common is anthropocentric concerns, albeit very much in different degrees. In presenting us with different types of rationality, and their proper domains, Habermas argues that what he calls technical cognitive rationality – i.e. *not* the moral or aesthetical rationality – is the *only* proper attitude towards nature:

While we can indeed adopt a performative attitude to external nature, enter into communicative relations with it, have aesthetic experience and feelings analogous to morality with respect to it, there is for this domain of reality only one theoretically fruitful attitude, namely the objectivating attitude of the natural scientific, experimenting observer. (1984:243)

Habermas would simply have to disqualify experiences of nature, as valuable, beautiful or sublime as *adopted*, and in a way, as non-rational experiences of nature. Furthermore, in claiming that only one attitude is theoretically fruitful, namely the cognitive instrumental, Habermas ends up qualifying nature as a domain ripe for the taking. Value disappears in a causal chain of x's and y's, and Habermas effectively ends up detaching value-discourse from nature. Not only is the possibility for talking about value in nature

shrinking, but so is normativity, as that would go along with practical-moral rationality, something Habermas reserves for the domain of law and morality. Much can be said of Habermas' Critical Theory. It is beyond doubt that he surpasses his predecessors in designing a more rigorous foundation for future Critical Theory to stand upon. His point on their analysis focusing on one type of rationality is also well-taken.

However, what is won by Habermas concerns inter-human relations, not the culture-nature relation. His systematic differentiation of rationalities, and their proper domains and actions, leads to an abstract generality, which already takes human interest as its starting point: Habermas seems toothless when it comes to addressing human exploitation of nature in our age. He ends up being more limited than his predecessors, in the sense that he lacks the conceptual tools to deal with nature qua self-sufficient nature. Whereas Adorno and Horkheimer's critique may have been too general, Habermas' ends up being too rigid and too anthropocentric; as he addresses human communicative relations through his discourse theory, he loses sight of nature. In a way, he falls under the thrall of late capitalism, and his theory pushes human domination of nature into the background. There seems to be a rationality and nature deficit not only in the historical movement we have identified as the Enlightenment, but also in Critical Theory. Conceiving of a thinking that breaks with dominant practices is a complex task, and more to the point, one that Adorno (and Horkheimer) merely hinted at in the critical Dialectic. In the later, mutually supporting works *Negative Dialektik* and *Asthetische Theorie*, an attempt can be found. However, before I address this – what Adorno calls 'non-identity thinking' – I want to explore the themes of technology and abstraction. Technology and its role in the contemporary human-nature relationship will therefore be discussed and informed by drawing on Heidegger's *Die Frage nach der Technik* (1953). I also use Vetlesen's discussion on technology and abstraction to further my own reading. Abstraction, I argue, alienates humans from nature, and leads to a decay of experience.

#### IV. Domination of Nature: Technology and Abstraction

So far, I have shown how Adorno and Horkheimer conceived of the sociohistorical process of disenchantment. A paradigm of modern science is that we abstract away from object to concept. In our attempts towards a fully mathematical generalisation of the world, the subject distances herself from the object, effectively winning distance:

The distance between subject and object, a presupposition of abstraction ('Voraussetzung der Abstraktion'), is grounded in the distance from the thing itself which the master achieved through the mastered ('[Distanz] die der Herr durch den Beherrschten gewinnt'). (Adorno & Horkheimer 2010:13)

It is hard to find a single culprit for this tendency, but it was undoubtedly facilitated by Francis Bacon's dreams of human mastery and effectiveness, and the dualistic schism René Descartes drew between humans and non-human animals (or 'automata'). This was, in effect, a schism between mind and body, and between man ('res cogitans') and world ('res extensa'). Nature became quantifiable, and animals were refused a status as anything but machines, as subjective experiences were restricted to human beings.

The conceptual and factual domination over nature leads to abstraction away from the particular phenomena by appealing to what is already known – treating an entity as an instantiation of a general kind drains it of its particularity. Not only is non-human nature stripped of any claim to value in itself, but also of the possibility of being spontaneously experienced – or its aura. On this gradual decay of aura, the Frankfurt philosopher Walter Benjamin wrote: "The destruction of the aura is the mark of a perception whose sense of the sameness of things has grown to the point of where even the singular, unique, is divested of its uniqueness" (1985:250). When we lose the ability (or motivation) to represent nature in its particularity, we have fully succeeded in distancing ourselves from it; nature, the historically superior Other, now lies ready for man to plough over in the name of advancement. However colourful Adorno and Horkheimer's genealogy is, we have seen that it ends up somewhat general. Man's relationship to technology must also be put under the looking glass. What they write on the distance won between subject and object, and the ensuing abstraction of phenomena, should be informed by a further discussion of technology.

Much of this distancing between subject and object, and the role played by technology, is illuminated in Heidegger's famous *Die Frage nach der Technik*. Here, Heidegger inquired about the essence of technology ('das Wesen der Technik'). The everyday accounts of technology are not sufficient, he claims, as they are only instrumental and/or anthropological. Technology is presented as either (i) a means to an end (the instrumental), or as (ii) something man-made (the anthropological). For Heidegger, the 'essence' of technology is something different from technology itself; analogously, the essence of 'tree' is not itself

something that can be encountered in the forest among the trees (Heidegger 1977:4, 29). To question the essence of technology, will be to interrogate and attempt to reveal ('enthüllen') a technological way of Being, implying that its being is in some way hidden from us. In light of current purposes, the account of Heidegger on technology must be kept short. Heidegger famously states that technology, deeply ingrained in modern society, enframes the world (in his typical, neologistic fashion, Heidegger uses the German 'Gestell', a word one can use both for 'framework' or furniture, say, a shelf of a kind). The technological 'Gestell', its way of revealing entities, is to reveal them as a standing-reserve ('Bestand'):

Enframing ('Ge-stell') means the gathering together of that setting-upon which sets upon man, i.e., challenges him forth, to reveal the real, in the mode of ordering, as standing-reserve ('Bestand'). (1977:20)

In a technological age, the upshot is that all entities – be they human or non-human, organic or not, exploited or pristine – are enframed and revealed as resources for the taking, ready to be worked upon: as potential means-towards-ends (Vetlesen 2015:161). What Heidegger writes on the essence of technology is salient precisely because it illuminates ways in which the relationship between modern man and nature is coloured by technology: Nature turns into workable matter, and technology into a force in itself – streamlining, optimizing, and disclosing entities as things for the taking. What Heidegger's analysis aims at, is making technology intelligible as technology, something essentially different to man and different to us in our everyday being.

Hitherto, we have seen that the notions of technology and enframing that Heidegger discusses do inform Adorno and Horkheimer's genealogy, and that they cover some blind-spots in their general discussion. However, one must point out that the definition of technology given by Heidegger also is somewhat vague – at least in light of him admitting that both (i) and (ii) are partly correct definitions, and it seems as if everything ever made by man qualifies as technology. Instead of following Heidegger further, and before we return to Adorno, some more recent discussions by Vetlesen and Albert Borgmann may prove more illuminating for highlighting abstraction as a result of a technologically mediated reality.

Today, most people in technologically developed countries almost instinctively know how to work everyday technology, like computers or a touch-screen; as we often say, we simply "have it in our fingertips". Vetlesen reco-

unts an encounter of his with a logging vehicle on a walk, and how what stole his attention as he tried sitting down in the seat was not the window directed out towards the forest, but the computer placed above the steering wheel (2015:147–48). Even though one has to learn how to control the vehicle, it would be a quick process – especially compared to the many hundreds of years it took that specific tree to grow – and a highly automated one – one he could carry out with the utmost ease. In the case of the logging vehicle, what Vetlesen points to is technology's role in the much aforementioned process of abstraction.

Technology like the logging vehicle removes the subject from the object in question. No longer approached, the particular tree is now "experienced" from over-here, echoing what Adorno and Horkheimer said on the "Voraussetzung der Abstraktion." It is not only that we are no longer sensuously experiencing a particular tree as constitutive of its own particularity – and in the case of chopping it down, its own physical 'challenge' – but the fact that there no longer is any contact at all. The bodily engagement and the feedback received from it, is now replaced by utilizing a machine, a machine that does the job in the matter of seconds. This represents a substitution of relationships: The more primordial man-outer phenomena relationship is substituted by a man-technology relationship, machine doing the work for man (2015:149). Our relating-to nature is what is at stake here. In keeping with Heidegger, if one were to step out to have a closer look at the "scene" in view, it would doubtfully be experienced much different, the activity already being enframed. The understanding ('Verstehen') of the activity and its significance in terms of a towards-which ('Um Zu') would already be predefined.

Vetlesen goes on to evaluate technology and the ensuing abstraction by seeing how it pertains to the significance of spatiotemporal barriers – or what used to be barriers. As barriers shrink through our techno-scientific mastery, the significance of the when and where of one's own being also fades. And whereas distance and the rhythms of nature earlier were paramount in planning a day – sunrise marking a time of openness and the doing of one's business, nightfall marking a time to sleep – we now overcome the barriers of the natural world with the utmost ease. In an age of artificial light and automated heating, the shifts in nature from cold to warm, from night to sunrise, no longer carry significance for our everyday dealings – a shopping mall open at night, with artificial heating and lighting, being a prime example (2015:155–57). Vetlesen also points to another apparatus, namely the oven, to exemplify this loss of relatedness to shifts in nature. The ovens we used just



a few decades ago were undoubtedly technological win-  
nings, but still required personal, bodily involvement, thus  
marking daybreak when they were lit on cold mornings.  
Now they (and much of our other technology) are auto-  
mated – out of sight, out of mind. In a material world that  
is becoming increasingly technologically mediated, subject  
is distanced from object, true to the tendency of enlight-  
ened reason Adorno and Horkheimer commented on.  
Vetlesen summarises it as modern man increasingly enco-  
untering only himself; either directly through the products  
of a technologically mediated reality, or indirectly through  
the damages on the nonhuman environment (2015:149).

We see technology evolving in the direction of favour-  
ing distance over involvement – this is obvious if we take  
drones as an example (be they for everyday, scientific or  
military use). It is not necessarily so obvious in the case of  
more hands-on types of technology, e.g. the incredible abi-  
lity a user today has to bring closer whatever one desires,  
through simply accessing a smartphone and connecting to  
the Internet. Again, to scorn and utterly criticize techno-  
logy is not my goal, but rather to highlight the potential  
losses vis-à-vis nature in this age of abstraction. In the age  
of global capitalism and mass production, no product is  
beyond reach, and every-thing commodified is available  
in an instant, serving the demand for instant gratification.  
As a consequence, “the world has become bigger only by  
becoming smaller” (2015:155). The shrinking of barriers  
leads to destruction of aura, as any pre-existing particulari-  
ty and historicity is lost on us. After all, the object in front  
of me is just one of thousand other mass-produced objects.

Adorno would likely concede that man is now the pri-  
mary force in bringing about planetary change in an ut-  
terly disenchanted world, echoing the notion of us having  
entered the Anthropocene era. The narrative seems to be  
a many-headed beast at its core, in terms of the gains and  
losses of progress: Man and technology now shape reality,  
not the self-sufficient nature which we used to depend on.  
What little remains of wilderness in our age, is not somet-  
hing out of human grasp. If we desired to, we could have  
destroyed and colonised the entire planet in one sweep.  
Wilderness, nature, and something outside of human  
beings persisting “will be at the mercy of our decision to  
allow it to still exist – be it an island in an ocean of domes-  
ticated nature” (2015:149). To sum up how abstraction  
leads to loss of aura and relatedness, Vetlesen writes:

Technology works by fragmentation and isolation,  
splitting and reduction; it is anti-holistic, disruptive  
of and destructive to the dynamics of connection,  
relatedness and interdependency – of belongingness

to a particular place – intrinsic to all life in nature.  
(2015:157)

Since the destruction of aura pertains to the exploitation  
of nature, and we also have seen that the modern subject is  
increasingly distanced from nature, it is hard to see a way  
out. Nature experienced as reified, the loss of value is com-  
plete. In attempting to offer an alternative – an alternative  
to what Adorno himself would deem dominant practices  
and identity thinking – we can look to Borgmann, and  
his concept of Deictic discourse. Borgmann has written  
extensively on technology and nature as its counterpart,  
self-sufficient as it is. In Deictic discourse, we point from  
ourselves to the other, to the entity in question as being  
the proper point of reference, or a focal point in itself  
(Borgmann 1984:198–99). Vetlesen frequently uses a  
bird in flight as an example. Although this action of poin-  
ting-to might seem somewhat trivial, Deictic discourse is  
strongly opposed to the identity-thinking Adorno was so  
critical of, the ‘objectivist’ mode of thought where nature  
turns to instantiations of general kinds, numbers, and the  
scientific fact. Also disputed is the so-called ‘subjectivist’  
position, as the act of pointing to an entity as a focal point  
in itself is not a matter of exclaiming an ‘I think that x ap-  
pears as x’, but rather a ‘have look at x’-statement. When  
the entity in question is allowed “to address us in its own  
right”, the simple act of observing a being completely dif-  
ferent from ourselves is valuable. Paraphrasing Borgmann,  
Vetlesen writes:

Deictic explanation...elicits active assent in us to what  
it helps disclose to us. It moves us to act, teaching us  
what to do by telling us what is. In doing so, it diso-  
beys the is/ought and fact/value dichotomies handed  
down to us by the tradition of Western philosophy at  
least since Descartes. Deictic discourse rests its case not  
by subjective (though presumably universally shared)  
standards à la Hume’s introspective summoning of our  
feelings of attraction or disgust... Deictic discourse  
is... a form of philosophical realism. (2015:158)

If we look back to what Habermas says regarding nature  
and a cognitive-technical rationality as the only fruitful  
way to approach it, his claim now appears somewhat ab-  
surd. The closest we can get to experiencing nature as va-  
luable would be to ‘adopt a performative attitude’ towards  
nature, and have ‘feelings analogous to morality’ with re-  
spect to it. In stark contrast, a Deictic discourse permits  
both valuable and rational experiences of nature, while  
pointing to the particular entity in question as intrinsically

valuable. It focuses our attention to the particular and self-sufficient, and thus seems to break with 'Beherrschung'.

## V. Conclusion: Adorno and Ecology

So far, I have given a detailed analysis of some of Adorno's perspectives, supplementing it with other thinkers to shed light on aspects that were either lacking or were too general. Most importantly, I have shown how Adorno conceives of human history principally driven by self-preservation, and how tightly embedded the domination of nature is in socioeconomic practices. I also pointed to how the Heideggerian notion of 'Gestell' may inform Adorno's account, and how Vetlesen conceives of some technology as abstracting away from bodily-sensuous phenomena. We often confound progress with increased freedom and as something universally good, but I want to stress the importance of highlighting how progress often has been bought at a price. To show this, through the lens of Adorno, has been the purpose of this paper; not arguing for reversion into the Stone Age. To attempt a serious consideration of Adorno as a thinker with something to offer the ecological movement, one must presuppose the possibility of critical thought not shaped by the domination it addresses. In turn, this thinking could inform the ecological movement, but the Dialectic merely seems to hint at it. In aphorism 18 of *Minima Moralia*, Adorno writes that "wrong life cannot be lived rightly" (1974:39). How is critical praxis to be conceived of, if life is already damaged beyond repair? In the chapter "Problems with praxis in Adorno", Cook insists that his seemingly pessimistic prospects for radical social change are "well-grounded in arguments culled from decades of both theoretical and empirical research on the character and limits of collective action in twentieth century" (2011:153). Although it may seem harsh, it is only through understanding what currently impedes the effectiveness of collective action, activism, and prospects for radical change, that these can be improved. Of course, activism may serve as a wake-up call for others. But, if we in Western societies, as of now are effectively 'contained' (to borrow a term from the Frankfurt philosopher Herbert Marcuse [Marcuse 2002]) with no choice but to conform, then leisure activism and individualistic, optimistic hobby endeavours will do little to nothing but affirm and duplicate the very domination it rebels against. On the other hand, staying quiet arguably seems like a worse alternative, as doing nothing may help the roots of the dominant practices to grow even deeper. To summarize this point, Cook claims that "those who seek radical change must chart a difficult course between the Scylla of quietist withdrawal and the Charybdis of pathological forms of collective ac-

tion" (2011:153–54).

On a more positive note, Hammer assesses the potential for Adorno lending himself to different ecological platforms. Marxism is quickly written off as a serious option, as there is little to no concern for nature in Marx: The metaphysical 'essence' of man is confounded with work, and is thus seen as 'natural'. Also, we saw that universal essences were something that Adorno and Horkheimer "vehemently denounced" (Hammer 2006:172).

As I have shown above, nature is not the most central concern in Critical Theory either – especially in the later generation – and domination thereof merely seems to function as a springboard for addressing inter-human domination. Although Habermas criticised Adorno and Horkheimer for being too totalising, he has very little to offer the ecological movement himself. Perhaps this is where the two earlier thinkers did not go so wrong: Although the Dialectic does not offer a rigorous alternative, they do not negate the possibility of there being one – which both opens the door for interpretation, and for the later Adorno.

To assess whether Adorno could lend himself to ecological thinking, Hammer also considers him vis-à-vis the Deep Ecology of Arne Næss. A general gloss of Deep Ecology serves well as an example of a holistic, ecological platform that one may take to be unselfish, compassionate, and 'good'. Hammer does claim that the deep ecology-movement has, at times, perceived an ally in Adorno. Recalling what Adorno has said on unity and identity thinking, it would be an uneasy friendship, even though they are both sceptical of modernity – however, Deep Ecology is more opposed to modernity than Adorno is, often sometimes being so radical that it seems almost anti-humanist (Hammer 2006:173–74). Instead of differentiating us from nature, Deep Ecology seeks reconciliation through identification. It takes as its basic premise that everything is ultimately One, and that our relation to nature suffers by us not identifying with it. Realisation of the self, then, bears on identification with nature and everything in it – both living and non-living. Transcendence of the self is thus realising one's natural relatedness to other beings and non-beings. Deep Ecology can be said to advocate nature as the highest authority. In this regard, Hammer remarks that Adorno would maybe even regard it as fascistic (2006:173). What is certain is that for Adorno, Deep Ecology would be yet another system that disintegrates the particular into the abstract unity he so strongly opposed, and re-enchants nature in the wrong way; it simply conceals domination. Also commenting on Næss and Adorno, Cook claims that contra Næss' stance, the Adornoian

stance would be to embrace our capacity for differentiation from nature, and to nurture this capability. We can recognize our affinity with nature, while simultaneously emphasizing our difference from it, through which we can begin to mend the relationship. This somehow echoes what Adorno and Horkheimer write on the possibility of a “remembrance of nature in the subject” (2010:40).

In *Negative Dialektik* – which I will not be able to address in full detail here – Adorno argues for his conception of non-identity thinking, to balance the scales in the face of the dominant identity thinking, with which men have sought to dominate nature, both conceptually and materially. One can say Adorno’s negative dialectics takes as its starting point the preponderance of the object – understood in the widest possible sense – over the concept. In a way, it is the attempt at assessing the purported unity – or identity thinking – “from Parmenides to Russell” – and in the process, to recognize the damage done to the particular. It is a thinking

...suspicious of all identity. Its logic is one of disintegration... of the prepared and objectified form of the concepts which the cognitive subject faces, primarily and directly. What it aims at disintegrating is the preponderance of the concept that moves between subject and object, the concept which seeks to turn the particular to a universal, and thus block the individuum ineffabile. (Adorno 1973:146)

In this way, then, thinking in non-identity is a determinate negation of the weighty concept. Cook states that: “Negative dialectics tries to disentangle the conceptual from the non-conceptual, to disclose the lack of identity between universal and particular, concept and object, even as it reveals their affinity” (2011:158). Thus, negative dialectics aim at what has been a key theme through all of Adorno; making thinking – or the concepts – more rational. This is done through a determinate negation. Adorno is known to have stressed the importance of education after Auschwitz, and the importance of critical self-examination both in the subject and in the collective. As Cook argues – also resounding in Bernstein – non-identity thinking may not only perceptually open us to the particular, but also has an ethical dimension (Cook 2011; Bernstein 2001). It can emphatically orient us towards the particular way of being of the entity: to whether it realises its potential, or not, and to whether its spontaneous nature is disturbed, or not. This again mirrors the Frankfurt ideas of ‘Beherrschung’ and ‘Leiden’ that I discussed to begin with: Non-identity thinking should enable us to observe actuality

and potentiality, and more importantly, otherness. With regards to nature, this would mean not to shove otherness into the category of the malevolent, suppressing its autotelic powers at the same time, but to be sensitive to it. Here, we see that Adorno’s non-identity thinking lends itself to be identified with the earlier mentioned Deictic discourse. The value of the other entity lies in its being a focal point, a counterpart. It is seen in its particularity and difference, not through the lens of fixed concepts. Both non-identity and Deictic discourse aim to move us to address the being or entity in question on equal terms of differentiation.

Although sometimes at the risk of sounding overly pessimistic, I have hoped to show Adorno as offering a critical corrective to the ecological movement. If not by properly assessing the positive aspects in the later Adorno, I have attempted to show the scope of our current predicament, now that we have entered the Anthropocene, with parts of nature persisting at our mercy. In an age where late capitalism masquerades as reason (and as the obvious choice in an arguably false dichotomy); an age where watered-down environmental policies focuses on the paradoxical idea of ‘sustainable development’; where the green movement increasingly faces the risk of being commodified; where “conservationists are forced to speak the language of those who they oppose” (Vetlesen 2015:160 [quoting R.P. Harisson]), one might be tempted to use a Nietzschean “catchphrase” – it seems as if “a re-evaluation of all values” is in order. In an age of a technologically mediated reality, Vetlesen’s idea of a shift from theorizing nature to experiencing nature in our technologically enframed age is a welcome one, and partly echoes some sentiments of Adorno that I have emphasized. It is beyond doubt that we face a serious challenge of time running out: The more we destroy of nature, the more alienated we are from what we destroy; conversely, the more alienated we become, the less valuable does nature appear. Experiences of nature and its entities as focal points – as intrinsically valuable in the way that Deictic discourse and non-identity thinking seem to hint at – will be less likely to occur the longer we stray down a path of destruction. So not only is it a spatial dimension to the problem of destruction – that is, there are fewer and fewer places where one can experience pristine nature – but also a temporal aspect, in the sense of the experiences alluded to eventually becoming harder and harder to have. As long as what ultimately drives you and me forward is our interest in self-preservation, we may paradoxically enough damage our prospects for self-preservation as a species. Adorno is beyond any doubt vague in these regards, but he anticipates a responsible thinking in the subject, and stresses critical practice. Even invoking the Socratic ‘Know Thyself’-maxim at one point, it may seem as if self-know-

ledge may be the way out for Adorno (Cook 2011:161). His conception of natural history not only shows how damaging the human disenchantment and reification of the world has been to nature, but also how tightly interwoven it is with social domination. “A redemption of the hopes of the past”, could thus amount to letting nature flourish; through accepting nature in its otherness – stemming from its preponderance over us – we may take a step towards “overcoming the tyranny of the One to reveal the astounding profusion of the Many” (Cook 2011:162). Revealing this profusion would be through restoration of the aura and of experience. Perhaps this restoration of auratic individuality could mark the start of a reconciliation between man and nature.

## LITERATURE

- Adorno, T.W. 1973, *Negative Dialectics*, Seabury press, New York.
- . 1974, *Minima Moralia: Reflections from Damaged Life*, trans. Jephcott, E.F.N., Verso, London.
- Adorno, T.W. & Horkheimer, M. 1979, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. Cumming, J., Verso, London.
- Borgmann, A. 1984, *Technology and the Character of Contemporary Life*, University Chicago Press, Chicago.
- Benjamin, W. 1985, *One Way Street, and Other Writings*, trans. Jephcott, E.F.N. & Shorter, K., Verso, London.
- Bernstein, J.M. 2001, *Adorno: Disenchantment and Ethics*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Cook, D. 2011, *Adorno on Nature*, Acumen, Durham.
- Habermas, J. 1984, *The theory of Communicative Action*, Beacon Press, Boston.
- Hammer, E. 2006, *Adorno and the Political*, Routledge, London/New York.
- Heidegger, M. 1977, *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, Harper, New York.
- Jarvis, S. 1998, *Adorno: A Critical Introduction*, Polity Press, Cambridge.
- Stone, A. 2006, “Adorno and the Disenchantment of Nature”, in *Philosophy & Social Criticism*, 32 (2):231–51.
- Vetlesen, A.J. 2015, *The Denial of Nature*, Routledge, London/New York.
- WWF 2014, *Living Planet Report 2014: Species and spaces, people and places*. WWF, Gland, Switzerland.
- WWF 2016, *Living Planet Report 2016: Risk and resilience in a new era*. WWF International, Gland, Switzerland.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Since this paper focuses on environmental philosophy, I shall mostly discuss ‘nature’ as that which environs us human beings; that is, in a general sense, non-human, external nature – both living and non-living. As we shall see later in the paper, the term nature is a bit more complicated for Adorno. For him, domination of ‘outer’ nature and ‘inner’ human nature, and of other human beings, are all interconnected.

<sup>2</sup>The Living Planet reports are useful sources for empirical data on climate change and its catastrophic ecological impact. See WWF. 2014. *Living Planet Report 2014: Species and Spaces, People and Places*. WWF, Gland, Switzerland; and WWF. 2016. *Living Planet Report 2016: Risk and resilience in a new era*. WWF International, Gland, Switzerland. See also this report from 2017, showing a 75 % decrease in the biomass of flying insect populations in German national parks over the last 27 years: Hallmann, Caspar A., et al. 2017. More than 75 percent decline over 27 years in total flying insect biomass in protected areas.

<sup>3</sup>Regarding Adorno’s conception of what he himself termed ‘natural history’ (*‘Naturgeschichte’*), Deborah Cook says the following: “Philosophy is tasked with demonstrating that human history is linked inextricably to both our own internal, instinctual, nature and non-human nature. But philosophy also shows that nature is historical, not just because nature evolves and constantly changes, but because it has been profoundly – often negatively – affected by human history” (2011:1).

<sup>4</sup>The comment on how the Sirens become an object of art is interesting, and indirectly relates to parts of this paper. It relates to Adorno’s conception of *Mimesis* and his later *Aesthetic Theory* (1970). Here, he argues that artworks do potentially have, through imitating and framing a piece of nature, a ‘proleptic dimension’. In turn, this might remind the subject of affinity with nature, and relates to his conception of non-identity thinking as an attempt at conceiving of a less dominant thinking.

<sup>5</sup>I will only briefly address Habermas’ position, and I am not able to devote space to address Honneth’s.

<sup>6</sup>In making sense of what Walter Benjamin meant when he posited the account of ‘Destruction of Aura’, Bernstein is helpful. In Adorno, *Ethics and Disenchantment*, (2001:111–12), he writes: “For Adorno and Benjamin, the destruction of experience is always connected with the destruction of aura... Aura is the apprehension of an object in its uniqueness, a uniqueness that is temporally and spatially bound... the decay of aura is the process through which the uniqueness of things is lost.”

<sup>7</sup>Although Adorno and Heidegger may not have been the best of friends, and there being plenty of differences between the two, one can trace a shared scepticism towards modernity through their works. Whereas Heidegger insisted that we have forgotten the meaning of the ‘Seinsfrage’, and in later works began to question aspects of it like technology, Adorno’s concerns were more socio-political, focusing on a modernity going off its hinges, i.e. the domination addressed above, and the possibilities for emancipation.

<sup>8</sup>What the essence (*‘Wesen’*) of technology has to reveal, is the mode of Being of technology (the Being constitutive for *Dasein* for example being *‘In-der-Welt-Sein’*). Being is here understood as a way of disclosing the world; a way of making entities intelligible by revealing them against the background of a network of significance and intentional involvements, or as Heidegger puts it, a clearing (*‘Lichtung’*). What is to be understood in the case of technology, then, is how technology reveals the world (Heidegger 1977). As Vetlesen writes, “the essence [...] lies in its coming to pre-structure the very way in which ‘subjects’ relate to ‘objects’” (2015:161).

<sup>9</sup>Cook also briefly discusses whether Adorno’s position amounts to nominalism (2015:158), concluding it does not, citing *Negative Dialectics* (1966:49). Here, Adorno somehow claims nominalism ends up as capitalist ideology.

# HOW 'RATIONAL MAN' FAILED MOTHER EARTH:

## FEMINIST ETHICS AND CLIMATE CHANGE

**Relying on much of the work done by feminist care ethicists such as Carol Gilligan, Virginia Held and Eva F. Kittay, I work from the presumption that much established, traditionally acclaimed ethical theories have failed to take that which is connected to the 'feminine' into consideration. Due to this exclusion, dominant strands of ethics may have contributed to our now estranged relationship to nature. Effects of this exclusion have led to theories making presumptions about the human condition; that we are independent, autonomous, and voluntarily enter into relations with others. In a climate framework, I analyze issues for ethics in a climate context such as the motivation problem and the coercion/voluntarism dichotomy, and some alternative solutions provided by feminist care ethics. I argue that a paradigm shift toward feminist care ethics would be useful in tackling current and upcoming challenges connected to climate change.**

*By Oda Karoline Storbråten Davanger*

Climate change will indubitably come to affect all human beings, some in worse ways than others, and it is an issue that everyone will at some point or another come to grapple with. My premise is that we are obligated to do work to attempt to curtail or prevent a drastic climate change that will impact the world in horrific ways. I presume that climate change is caused by human actions, and that we on a large scale are, and have been, aware of this for several decades already. I will argue that traditional ethical theories from the philosophical canon are ill-suited to prevent and tackle challenges related to climate change. I have gathered these dominant moral theories under an umbrella, which I dub the 'Rational Man' ethics. Climate change is an ethical issue because of the potential consequences lack of action will have on future generations, but also on the lives of human beings currently affected by the early stages of climate change. Several feminist ethicists and care ethicists have already argued that feminist ethics provide theories better suited to tackle complex and concrete issues than what I refer to as 'Rational Man' ethics. I rely on these arguments to defend the thesis that feminist care ethics are better suited to tackle climate change than 'Rational Man' ethics. My argument is based on four points, namely, that feminist care ethics (1) are more concrete and less abstract; (2) are less individualistic and more adaptable to collective notions of responsibility; (3) operate with a care-ontology that functions as a call for action

instead of inaction; and (4) adept to tackle global issues. I conclude that if we look at ways to prevent and tackle the effects of climate change through a lens of feminist care ethics, then we will be better equipped and more successful in meeting these challenges. Before I launch my argument, I will briefly introduce the differentiation between feminist care ethics and most other traditional and dominant or mainstream ethical theories.

### **I. A Brief Introduction to Canonical Ethical Theories and Feminist Care Ethics**

Although many may object to my apparent sweeping generalizations, namely, the swift grouping of many various ethical theories into one concept in such a short paper – after all, there are definitely substantive differences between them – I cannot take credit for the generalization. Although I have dubbed these theories 'Rational Man' ethics, the distinction between canonical ethical theories on the one hand – such as contemporary liberal theories, deontology, utilitarianism, and to some extent virtue ethics – and feminist care ethics on the other hand, is not my invention and this distinction has already been defended by many philosophers. Virginia Held, for instance, finds certain similarities between contemporary liberal theories, such as those presented by John Rawls and Alan Gewirth (1993:40–41), and ethical theories such as deontology and utilitarianism (1993:50), which she contrasts with



feminist care ethics. One of the main objections from feminist care ethicists concerns their valuation of perceived 'masculine' qualities such as reason, independence and the abstract over 'feminine' qualities such as emotion, dependence and the concrete. This paper is intended to build on that distinction, and it is thereby not particularly devoted to defending it, as this has been done by several ethicists already. A brief introduction to the discourse may be useful to those who wish to understand my argument in regards to climate change ethics (if such a thing can be said to exist), climate change politics and political philosophy.

According to Carol Gilligan's study of morality, there is a gendered correspondence between contextual and categorical morality, where women generally operate contextually with principles of care, and men operate categorically with abstract principles of justice. The contextual outlook based on care corresponds to the premise that humans are relational. It finds that responsibility is more closely related to responding to a particular need and to act caringly, instead of focusing on justice as mainly entailing the holding back of aggression toward others. This view on care stands in contrast to individualistic views where agents' actions are limited by principles of ethics in order to prevent harming others (Gilligan 1982:66–67). Dominant 'Rational Man' models rely on the premise that people – "assumed to be free, equal, autonomous individuals" – can agree on "certain impartial, abstract, universal principles of justice" (Held 2006:156). In other words, this is the belief that certain abstract principles will provide the correct guide for moral action in any given real, lived or particular situation. Whereas moral theories in the philosophical canon have often focused on applying the abstract to the particular, by appealing to the "rule of reason" in moral questions (Held 1993:50), Gilligan's results indicate that a 'feminine' morality makes more room for context and the consideration of concrete situations that involve relationships and felt relational obligations. This is a far cry from the autonomous and independent rational agent typical of canonical 'Rational Man' ethics, who resides in the public domain and who is as involved in an issue as he has voluntarily agreed to be.

Caring for others is a perceived 'feminine' trait, and is often done in the home or in the private sphere. When it is institutionalized, it is often a line of work still held primarily by women. Caring for others is work that is often underpaid – if paid at all, and likewise also devalued or ignored in most ethical theories (Kittay 1999:41). A brief clarification may be appropriate here – although I refer to femininity and masculinity, I in no way hold that

femininity and masculinity exist in some ontological or metaphysical sense beyond social construction, or that femininity and masculinity are somehow essentially connected to gendered bodies or 'womanhood' or 'manhood.' Instead, I use these concepts to refer to the often implicit – albeit very pervasive – gendered and hierarchical connotations in language and philosophy. (The gendering of philosophical concepts are sometimes very explicit, as is the case with the Pythagorean table of opposites.) The care/reason distinction is, for instance, aligned with the femininity/masculinity dichotomy, although it does not necessarily have to be this way, and it does not follow from that alignment that women are necessarily better carers or that men are better at reasoning. The tendency, or the grand narrative, however, is that whatever bears connotation to the 'feminine,' such as care work and the private sphere, is often devalued in favour of that which bears connotation to the 'masculine,' such as independence and the public sphere.

Beyond being a 'feminine' trait, Gilligan's insights teach us that care, despite being devalued, is also an outlook, perspective or even ontology. If this is correct, as Held maintains it is, "there is more to an adequate morality than can be seen from the point of view of the autonomous individual agent as such, the rational man of liberal theory" (1993:40). In other words, an ethical theory is flawed if it can operate only within one particular perspective or framework of presumptions, such as the presumed independence and autonomy of human beings. In this manner, feminist ethics of care is a philosophical position that juxtaposes itself against the dominant strain, because it appears in response to a common lack that it perceives in those dominant theories, and challenges them. I believe, in line with feminist ethicist and political philosopher Joan Tronto, who writes extensively on politics and global conflict, that we as political beings would benefit greatly on a global scale if we encouraged a paradigm shift toward feminist ethics of care (1993:157). Instead of residing within the current paradigm of 'Rational Man' ethics, a grand-scale move toward a feminist ethics of care may prove to be useful and valuable in preventing and tackling issues related to climate change.

## II. Abstract and Concrete: Two Lenses of Ethics

Abstract principles and maxims are not, I find, well suited to tackle climate change as a complex, concrete issue that stretches across time. A prime example of the valuation of the abstract in 'Rational Man' models is perhaps Kant's Categorical Imperative, a deontological universal moral principle "by which rational beings should be guided" (Held 1993:49). Feminist care ethicists have reacted to

the general reverence of the abstract and the exaggerated valuation of justice principles in 'Rational Man' ethics. They suggest that this results in an inadequate ethics that cannot properly deal with the concrete and the particular, which often involve collaborative work and an analysis of structures instead of individual moral behaviour. In analysing the generality of dominant ethics, Held identifies three questionable aspects of what she calls "the bias in the history of ethics" (1993:49). These biases are the valuation of reason over emotion, the exclusion of the private and the natural from ethics, and the "masculine concept of self." It is by overcoming these aspects that we can hope to come to a theory of ethics more suitable for many of our lived, concrete experiences and the challenges we face, such as the issue of climate change.

In this section, I will discuss how feminist care ethics is better suited than 'Rational Man' ethics to prevent and tackle climate change. This is because, like Gilligan observed, a care perspective is more sensitive to particular contexts, structural problems, and concrete realities like those I presume are of central importance in climate change issues. Drawing inspiration from Held, I base my argument on the following counts: Feminist care ethics (A) account for what has been relegated to the natural and private sphere in moral theory, thereby making it possible to explicitly include climate change in ethics; (B) presume an interrelated and dependent agent instead of an autonomous and independent agent – typical 'masculine' qualities – which makes it harder for the agent to be disengaged and apathetic to climate change; (C) recognize emotion as an ethical element as well as reason to avoid categorical principles and enhance context sensitivity; and (D) transcend the divide between voluntarism and coercion, which highlights our ambiguous moral relation with climate change instead of rendering involvement a personal choice. Together, I believe that these four characteristics may provide us with an ethical theory more adept to grapple with climate change issues based on what, according to Gilligan, is a perspective more sensitive to concrete realities and complexities.

### *The Devaluation of the Feminine, the Natural, and the Private in Ethics and Politics*

The philosophical tradition that has valued the abstract has tied it to masculinity and the public sphere, and correspondingly relegated nature and the concrete to femininity and the private sphere. The connection in this tradition between nature and the feminine might explain the mismatch between an ethics based on the masculine abstract,

and a complex, contextual, concrete and feminine issue involving 'Mother Earth' such as the climate crisis. Climate change is very much a concrete and complex issue. If also considered feminine, a connotation that has been rejected by 'Rational Man' theories, it is no wonder that our ethical paradigm has not succeeded in adequately tackling climate change challenges. Held quotes Genevieve Lloyd on the historical connection of woman and Earth:

From the beginnings of philosophical thought, femaleness was symbolically associated with what Reason supposedly left behind—the dark powers of the earth goddesses, immersion in unknown forces associated with mysterious female powers. The early Greeks saw women's capacity to conceive as connecting them with the fertility of Nature. As Plato later expressed the thought, women 'imitate the earth.' (1993:44)

By connecting the feminine to nature, and ethics to reason, whatever is natural is outside the realm of ethics. In that sense, one could even argue that climate change itself is not 'rational': If nature is connected to the female and to Unreason, then climate change is in some sense female and unreasonable, and thereby not of any significance in 'Rational Man' ethics or politics. In the dichotomization of nature and culture, nature is aligned with femaleness, the private, emotion and the Other while ethics is connected to culture, the public sphere, and masculinity. The association may to some seem far-fetched – indeed there are many 'reasonable' women and men who not only believe that climate change is real, but who recognize the human causes behind it and acknowledge the responsibility of humans to prevent it. Nevertheless, climate change is to some extent shrouded in mystery. Many doubt its validity, which is made easier to do perhaps in part because nature is implicitly connected to unreason. In this way, the devaluing of the feminine has grave consequences.

If nature is associated with 'woman' and the private, and 'man' with the human and the public (Held 1993:44), then it might not be surprising that issues of nature have somehow been construed as a private matter. According to Held, the theories that I have dubbed 'Rational Man' models have often supposed as their foundation the "transcendent, public domain," while the "natural" was connected to femaleness and privacy, and therefore not part of ethics (Held 1993:45). For instance, politicians have to a large extent relegated climate responsibility to the private sphere. It mostly remains a personal decision whether or not to recycle, whether or not to use

reusable material, or whether or not to drive an electric car. The political focus on climate change is often geared toward the individual responsibility and the goodwill of citizens. Much more seldom are politics concerned with the structural changes and paradigm shifts necessary to prevent and tackle the challenges of climate change. Many politicians refrain from taking a very strong stance on the matter and the climate is seen as a peripheral issue in politics. In connecting the public to the masculine, we may understand tendency of environmental concerns having lower priority in politics than those in favour of perceived 'masculine' qualities such as domination, and overemphasizing the military (Held 2006:161). In other words, according to 'Rational Man' models, if nature is connected to the female and by extension the private, it does not deserve to be taken seriously in ethics or politics.

This exclusion of the perceived 'feminine' serves to make any ethical theory that does so inadequate. Examples of this are found in political and ethical theories such as those put forth by Kant, Hegel, Rousseau and Hobbes, where the 'feminine' must be overcome if knowledge and morality are to be achieved (Held 1993:47). The marking of things as either masculine or feminine and then devaluing femininity is the "nearly uniform reflection in philosophical and ethical theory of patriarchal attitudes." These androcentric terms render ethics ignorant to any area of life that can be deemed 'feminine,' and is therefore not adequately representational of real, concrete lived experiences. The adequate tackling of climate change challenges will not happen in an ethics and politics that are anchored in a philosophical tradition that ties nature to the 'feminine' and then valorises the masculine above the feminine. The female and the private are rendered natural and thereby beyond the scope of traditional ethics. In the case of climate change I find that we might also see the reverse. The climate – because it is part of nature – is rendered private, feminine, and thereby beyond the scope of traditional ethics and by extension, serious politics. In this way, the patriarchal attitudes of 'Rational Man' ethics that devalue what is connected to the 'feminine' hinder the capabilities we might have had in preventing climate change. Another such 'feminine' quality that is devalued in 'Rational Man' ethics is dependency.

### *The Relational Self is Dependent and Interconnected*

Care ethics does not presuppose or even require individuals and objects of care to be free, equal or autonomous, compared to for instance the Hobbesian archetype of the autonomous agent that spring from the Earth "like

mushrooms" and come to full maturity, without any prior relations to others (Held 1993:46). Held argues that this is not only false, but also misrepresentational of the actual experience of human beings in the world, whose selves are anchored in relationships with others (1993:47). The Hobbesian man constructs his identity through opposition to others, whereas an ethics that is more representational and geared toward real life and the concreteness of the real world must replace the "traditional liberal myth" of the "self-made man" with the "feminist relational self" (Held 2006:47). Tronto argues that the expectation of autonomy in morality leads to perceiving dependency, which is connoted with relationships and femininity, as weakness (1993:123). She notes that since dependence implies that a caretaker wields power over the dependent, it "has been anathema to liberal notions of individual autonomy," and so we do not want to see ourselves as dependent on other human beings or on the climate (1993:162). These perceived 'masculine' qualities of domination and devaluing interdependency and vulnerability, however, are not suitable methods for tackling climate change – simply because the magnitude and complexity of the problem demands cooperation and collective action.

With climate change in mind, it may be wise to acknowledge and presuppose, in contrast to 'Rational Man' theories, that human beings are dependent and interconnected with one another, and also with the climate itself. I find that if we extend the notion of dependency and connectedness in feminist care ethics to include non-human entities as well as human beings, we will be able to encompass the interconnectedness between humans and the climate. In this vein, I find that it is helpful to conceive of actions that are preventative of climate change as a form of Eva Kittay's notion of 'dependency work.' Kittay argues that 'dependency work,' the often unequal and unchosen task of attending to dependents, is characterized by care, concern, and connection (Kittay 1999:30–31). This relationship between the carer and the dependent, like many others, is often unequal and unchosen. The carer often has more power than the dependent, and neither the dependent nor the carer may have chosen voluntarily to engage this relationship. Rather, it is a necessary relationship. This means that the dependent has a need, and the carer recognizes that the need must be responded to regardless of one's actual volitions. In this relationship, ties of affection and concern may "bind [the] dependency worker and her charge" (1999:53). Kittay uses the word "charge" to signify the one receiving care. Kittay's use of the word 'charge' can be very useful in a climate context, because the word

does not necessarily refer to something human. Although Kittay's definition of a charge is a person (1999:31), I maintain that we can extend the notion to include nonhuman entities as well, by for instance making the Earth our charge – that is, the one who receives our care. This would mean changing the viewpoint of humans as dependent on the Earth, into one where we see humans and the climate as interdependent. I argue that feminist ethics holds the possibility for including not only other humans affected by climate change in this interdependency, but also the climate itself. We are dependent on the climate, and because climate change is connected to human activity, the climate is also dependent on us. This also suggests that human beings have some sort of responsibility toward the Earth. I can maintain this in part due to Kittay's acknowledgement that interdependencies of caring relations may be reciprocated simultaneously, such as in the case of human beings caring for the climate, and the climate in return providing 'care' of sorts for human beings in terms of remaining stable and suitable for our living conditions. Kittay finds that understanding of the relationship between the dependency worker and the charge "relaxes our own boundaries of self" in ways that permit the serious consideration of the needs and wants of a charge (1999:36), instead of a competitive notion of the self, based on opposition. If we posit the Earth, or the climate, as a charge, Kittay's words take on another dimension and blur the line between the material and the *cogito* – that is – between the man/nature and mind/body dichotomies. If we remove the notion of individual persons as positioned in the place of charge and dependency worker and "relax our own boundaries of self" while retaining the notions of care as labour, the vulnerability of the charge, and the intimacy and affectional ties between the parties (1999:31), we can see that this relates to the relationship between human beings and the Earth in the circumstances of climate change. In this way, if we accept feminist care ethics instead of 'Rational Man' ethics, we can open for affection and concern for the climate in a way that allows us to engage with the concrete issues of climate change, such as sea-level change, mass migrations, and mass extinctions, among a long list of other issues, which make us experience the call for action concretely and more urgent than an abstract, rational argument that one can choose to ignore.

### *Emotion as an Ethical Element*

An important part of relaxing the boundaries of the 'masculine' self is the acknowledgement of the role of emotion in feminist care ethics. It is difficult to approach an ethical understanding of mutual dependencies and responsibili-

ties that are, like the mother and the chronically ill child, *neither* completely voluntary *nor* simply obligatory without an analysis of the role of emotion. Having emotion be a central part of moral theory may seem strange, especially because, as Held says, the notion "of rationality guiding responsible human action against the blindness of passion, has a long and influential history" (1993:43). Emotion is another perceived 'feminine' characteristic, and has also typically been excluded from 'Rational Man' models that contrast emotion with reason and favour rationality. The advocacy of reason controlling "unruly emotion" and guiding responsible human action is widely known and accepted. Canonical models do not pay much heed to particular contexts and situations. This is in order to 'protect' morality from unreliable emotions and passions (1993:50). The reason/emotion dichotomy legitimizes categorical principles, which devalues emotion. Tronto finds that the rejection of context to exclude emotion from ethics is seen as strength in 'Rational Man' models. For those who advocate for universal principles in ethics, maintaining ethics 'above' context protects clear notions of right and wrong from the befuddlement of politics or culture (Tronto 1993:148). Despite the variety of different conceptions of reason from Plato, Aristotle, Hobbes, Rousseau, Kant or Hegel, they all share the "common the habit of ignoring and disparaging the experience or reality of women" (Held 1993:46). In this way, the cost of this exclusion is that many concrete, lived experiences are rendered of little importance to ethical theories, particularly those where emotion play a large role.

Held, however, argues contrarily that emotion is highly relevant for ethics. She does this by arguing that in *mothering* – which is perceived as a 'feminine' activity much like feeling and has typically been excluded from ethical questions and rendered private and natural – both reason and emotion are needed to be successful. She uses *mothering* as an example because one cannot engage in *mothering* by strictly adhering to abstract principles of justice – emotions are at least equally relevant. Arguing that morality has its place in *mothering*, identifiable as the basis of the relationality of human beings, Held claims that 'feminine' qualities such as emotion and trust have just as much importance in morality as reason (1993:52). She links the "mutually disinterested rational individuals of the liberal tradition" to apathy by asserting that this framework works poorly in terms of caring enough to take action when it comes to issues such as the environment and the care of the future people of the world. This is because they are unable to represent more complex relations such as *mothering*

(Held 1993:53–54). For Held, *mothering* is not done by following universal rules but is motivated and shaped by reflective feeling and relatedness to the Other, whether it is a child or the environment (1993:77). Held's analysis of mothering demonstrates the relevance of emotion for ethics with a focus on climate change, not instead of reason but as well as reason, in a complementary way.

### *Transcending the Voluntarism/Coercion Distinction*

The acceptance of our status as interdependent and the acknowledging burdens that exist regardless of our choosing to accept them impacts another powerful distinction in much traditional ethical theory, namely, the split between voluntarism and obligation. This means that one is able to seriously acknowledge calls for action beyond that which is articulated by reason, principles or categorical imperatives. According to Held, ethics of care do not presume "as do the dominant moral theories, that moral relations are to be seen as entered into voluntarily by free and equal individuals," but find that they can be unequal and unchosen, much like the relationship between a mother and their child (2006:156). Because traditional theories of morality typically understand association as voluntary and falsely presumes an abstract idea of individual-based equality (Kittay 1999:72), a feminist ethics of care is better suited for issues that have plural participants, involve asymmetrical relationships and need moral selves that can care non-voluntarily and yet also non-coerced (Kittay 1999:53). This means that involvement in a moral issue such as climate change is neither deemed to be one that one voluntarily engages in, nor an issue that one is forced to engage in, but rather one where one's involvement transcends this dichotomous rendition of individual choice. This engagement is able to transcend the voluntarism/coercion dichotomy in part because the 'a-relational' individual is not the starting-point in feminist ethics of care.

One such very concrete reality about climate change is that those who cause and have contributed mostly to climate change will not be those to suffer most severely from its effects. It is often the world's poorer nations who are the first to feel and experience first-hand the drastic effects of climate change. Because climate change will undoubtedly have local consequences that will drastically affect the lives of those in local communities and specific societies, an ethics that is to be successful in guiding action on these issues will have to account for concrete and lived realities specific to those contexts. Because feminist ethics of care refrain from adhering to overarching, abstract principles,

it can be more sensitive to the particularities and concrete concerns of different groups of people (Held 2006:164). In an ethical theory that sees the individual as independent and removed from relations except those the agent voluntarily engages in, the unlucky fate of poor souls across the globe are regrettable, but the autonomous agent bears no responsibility for the impact of climate change on others.

Held argues that theories that place justice and individualism in the centre, instead of care and interrelatedness, focus more on constraints toward others than obligations. Here, the central principles are that individuals have rights to pursue their own interests, but are constrained against infringing on the rights of others (2006:156). Held notes that traditional 'Rational Man' moral theories assume that people are motivated by self-interest, and that it is legitimate to satisfy these self-interests within those boundaries that ensure the equal rights of everyone (1993:84–85). The problem here is that it seems that as long as you are not doing anything wrong and constraining the rights of others, you are doing things right. I do not believe, however, that the second follows from the first. Feminist care ethicists argue for a different approach to the human condition. According to feminist ethicist Joan Tronto, who works on the political relevance of feminist care ethics, "humans are best described as interdependent" because they are each sometimes autonomous and sometimes dependent on care (1993:162). In care ethics individuals are presumed already in a state of moral engagement and connectivity with others, which differs from the assumption that individuals start out in a condition of detachment (1993:164). Likewise, Kittay writes that humans are connected in a 'relational web,' which is a fundamental condition for human survival. Because of this starting point, instead of thinking of humans as simply autonomous individuals with no prior moral relation to one another, Kittay recognizes that moral obligations that are placed on us as a consequence of need and connectedness (1999:68–69). In other words, we are always already engaged in moral relationships with others that imply more than constraints from infringing on their rights, but obligations toward them as well. A theory that presumes human interrelatedness and dependency may transcend the voluntarism/coercion dichotomy in ways that can be useful in combatting climate change.

The impediment of thinking of individuals as either on the one hand freely choosing to engage in a relationship, or on the other hand being coerced into an engagement neglects to consider the very common instances of asymmetrical relationships. This asymmetry can refer either to



the unequal relationships between people – a consideration often neglected in ethical theories that focus on the ‘public sphere,’ ‘autonomous agents,’ and social contract theory – or even the unequal relationship between human beings and the Earth. Much like Gilligan’s position, Kittay underscores that an ethics of care is better suited to understand the moral subject as relational, and that moral reasoning is contextual and responsive instead of derived from abstract principles removed from concrete situations (1999:53). Dichotomizing coercion and voluntarism like ‘Rational Man’ ethics do, fails to account for the complexities and particularities of moral responsibility. According to Anita Silvers, who writes about disability in a framework of feminist care ethics, the glorification of “the free acceptance of moral duty” needs to be traded in for an acknowledgement of caring responsibilities whether or not we have chosen to be accountable for them (1998:335). Similarly, Kittay argues that many moral obligations are not voluntarily chosen or agreed on, but not necessarily coercive either (1999:60). Her acknowledgement of the fundamental human condition of engaging in asymmetrical relationships allows feminist care ethicists to locate a middle zone between obligation and voluntarism where care work is situated (1999:72–73). I find that, much like Kittay’s understanding of the necessity of care work, the necessity of contributing to the prevention of climate change is a moral obligation that cannot be ‘merely’ voluntarily chosen, but which is not, on the other extreme, coercive either. A morality that focuses on individual voluntarism versus coercion is not useful for issues such as climate change. In this way, we can conceive of action to prevent or tackle climate change as a responsibility we may not have undertaken completely freely or out of the goodness of our hearts, but neither is it a duty forced unfairly upon us. This responsibility is located beyond the voluntarism/coercion dichotomy, which in many ways is an abstract discourse, and is helpful to think of in terms of concrete, particular situations with asymmetrical relations, perhaps much like a mother’s long term caring for a sick child.

Feminist care ethics, therefore, seems more appropriate for real-world situations and conflicts such as climate change, where people are not standardly autonomous agents, which acknowledges interdependency and unequal relationships – fraught with ambiguous issues that are neither simply voluntary nor obligatory – and emotion as integral parts of morality. These are elements of an ethics more fitting and representational of a concrete world with complex climate challenges, rather than theories that seek to simplify complexities under abstract principles. In fe-

minist care ethics, both reason and emotion are combined in morality to reflect interconnectedness and incite action. Unlike what we might expect from, say, deontology in particular, emotion plays a central part in moral action and motivation, which will be discussed in the next section. I find that by allowing emotion as well as reason in morality, exemplified by ‘reflective feeling’ in Held’s notion of *mothering*, the impetus to act is much stronger.

### III. Individualism, Collectivism, and the Diffusion of Responsibility

Because of the dangers we are facing as a result of climate change, it has become all the more necessary to have at our disposal an ethics that can motivate action and incite a feeling of responsibility in those with power to do something to prevent or lessen the effects of climate change. In my view, what we need is an ethics that is suited for articulating a *collective* notion of responsibility, because I fear that traditional notions of *individual* responsibility have not been productive enough in preventing or subduing climate change. I find that feminist ethics of care can achieve this. Because ‘Rational Man’ theories have conceived the public space as a space for “free, equal, rationally self-interested beings” (Kittay 1999:41), problems arise in terms of the diffusion of responsibility. One problem for ‘Rational Man’ theories occurs when trying to find responsible parties for preventing and tackling the climate issues we now face; if the answer is ‘everyone’ it is also no-one. If there are others who are likewise capable of meeting someone’s needs beside myself, in an individualistic account of morality, it seems suspect that I am obligated to meet those needs instead of others who are capable as well (Kittay 1999:56). The sentiment is that I might lose out or fall behind on the pursuit of my own interests if I burden myself by acting in the interest of preventing climate change if others are not. Nor can I be singled out for not having acted to prevent climate change – it would be unfair to blame only me. Kittay addresses this when she brings attention to issues faced by those who do care work in society, such as raising children, or caring for a sick or disabled family member. As individuals in the public sphere, these care workers are at an unfair disadvantage compared to others who do not engage in care work. They are in a disadvantaged position because they are committed to spending time and energy on care work in ways that the others in the public sphere do not (Kittay 1999:45–47). I find that the same goes for those who engage in work against climate change. Analogous to Kittay’s analysis of the problem of the diffusion of respon-



*Illustrasjon av Rasmus Kjelsrud*

sibility in liberal philosophy and economic theory, those who concern themselves with working to prevent or limit climate change may find themselves falling behind in pursuits of their interests and rendered at an unfair disadvantage compared to others. It is often cheaper and easier, for instance, to choose whatever non-green option there is, such as buying diesel car instead of an electric one. It is no wonder, then, that people might want to avoid accepting responsibility for the climate.

The problem of diffusion of responsibility is well-known beyond the scope of its relation to climate change or care work, and well documented by psychologists (Darley & Latané 1968). One famous example is the 1964 murder of Kitty Genovese in New York City. The murder was witnessed by many, who all assumed someone else called for help, and which led to widespread bystander inactivity. Psychologists found that those who do not report an emergency – unresponsive bystanders – are not necessarily apathetic or indifferent, as one would initially think (Darley & Latané 1968:381–382). Rather, they found that for those who knew that there were others present and who shared the responsibility of calling for help, “the cost of not helping was reduced” (Darley & Latané 1968:382). This effect, known as the “bystander effect,” explains that the diffusion of responsibility among several people reduces the obligation, and motivation, of each individual to act, even though they think it is immoral not to help. Despite obvious differences between the global climate change problem and the murder of Genovese, we can conceive of climate change as harm done to the Earth with a great mass of individual bystanders. Perhaps this helps to explain why we have been so slow to respond to climate change, namely that the cost of not helping is severely reduced by the sheer number of people involved. I find that the bystander effect sheds light on how the focus on individual responsibility actually impedes a sense of responsibility for the individual in a group setting and paves the way for diffusion of responsibility when it comes to issues with group responsibility, such as climate change. This could explain why it seems to be so challenging to incite significant and sufficient action to prevent climate change.

I understand the current global grand-scale inactivity toward the climate change crisis as a form of bystander effect. It is not necessarily that people are apathetic, but that responsibility is diffused among them, and no one feels particularly responsible as individual people, or as individual states. To change general response from a form of bystander effect to something more productive, a change

in ontology is needed – a paradigm shift. We must think differently about responsibility and motivation. If diffusion of responsibility is a problem for ‘Rational Man’ theories, an ethics better suited for climate change would have to address some sort of collective responsibility. I believe feminist care ethics may have a viable solution to this problem. Motivation to act functions differently if seen from a ‘Rational Man’ standpoint than from that of an ethics of care, because I think the risks of responsibility diffusion are greater in ‘Rational Man’ ethics. The motivational problem inherent to responsibility diffusion can be solved partly by feminist ethic’s concentration on care.

I find that the problem of motivation in ethics is fundamentally and implicitly addressed in feminist care ethics because care presumes action. Joan Tronto claims that there are two main parts pertaining to care. First, care reaches out beyond the self – addressed in the previous section, which Kittay calls a relaxing of the boundaries of the self – and second, care suggests action (Tronto 1993:102). Dependency implies care – it necessitates care. Care implies work. Care is already action, and successful care involves recognizing the particularities and localities relevant to complex and concrete issues, such as climate change. A care-ontology, in this way, may provide a solution to the problems that impede action against climate change, occurring from the voluntarism/coercion distinction and motivation issue that arises from the diffusion of responsibility. In this vein, Tronto finds that inattentiveness toward or ignoring others can be understood as a form of moral evil (1993:127). In this way, attentiveness is an important ethical element. We are not ‘neutral’ if we refrain from taking a stance on climate change, but rather, we are committing a moral evil by choosing to ignore or be inattentive to an important need. In order to be attentive to others, Tronto points out, a sort of absence of will is needed. One must “suspend one’s own goals, ambitions, plans of life, and concerns” in order to focus one’s attention on someone else’s needs (1993:128). One can no longer think of the self as first and foremost pursuing own interests within the limits of not infringing upon the rights of others. One may say that feminist ethics is more ‘active’ than the ethics of the ‘Rational Man’, which concentrates on inaction toward others as a form of respecting their rights and freedoms. In care ethics, one is not seen as responsible solely for oneself, but a more wholly responsible self who perhaps bears unchosen moral obligations toward others. This ontology – care ontology – renders the self aware of its fundamental interdependency and more inclined to accept responsibility and involvement,

which lessens responsibility diffusion. This means that one is more open to accept responsibility for things less attached or attributable to you specifically, such as climate change. Instead of rendering this responsibility something you have placed on yourself voluntarily or something that has been coercively placed on you, it entails recognizing that one's responsibility merely exists as a matter of fact, and that this responsibility calls you to action.

In addition to attentiveness, I find that feminist care ethic's recognition of fundamental *mutual* dependency, or interdependency much like Kittay's 'relational web,' may be useful in confronting the problem of responsibility diffusion in regards to the climate change crisis. Interdependency means, among other things, that one is not simply in relation to different individuals, but that one can interact with a group over time. In the web of relations, one might not be reciprocated to from the same party with which one interacted with (Kittay 1999:67). Instead, having previously provided care for instance, the care one receives in return may be given from a completely different party. One relinquishes the guarantee of equal reciprocation found in a trade, and instead trusts that when the need arises, others will recognize that need as a call for action to care. Kittay here describes a specific notion of reciprocity; rather than an exchange, connection-based reciprocity is built on a more encompassing social cooperation (1999:67–68). Connection-based reciprocity invokes "nested obligations," which describes the chain of obligations that links members of a community together in a way that places responsibility on those able to care to do so and likewise when one is in need of care that those who can, will respond. Kittay's notion of reciprocity is not simply a form of altruism, but is based on a notion of equality grounded in connectivity and obligations that arise from being situated in a web of relations (1999:68). Instead of thinking of reciprocity as an event, such as where one good is traded for another of equal value, Kittay's theory sees reciprocity as an ongoing process over time. This is very suitable for a climate context, where we might not be able to expect that the work we do will be reciprocated directly and instantaneously. These notions of connection-based reciprocity and nested obligations have the potential to change how we regard reciprocity and connectivity in the public sphere.

A 'Rational Man' ethics that operates with an ontology that presumes self-interested individuals engaged in a public competition for success is ill-equipped to handle collective responsibilities. This often leads to the problem of not having a responsible party if there is no culpable

party, exemplified in bystander effect in the murder of Genovese. Instead, by recognizing our nested obligations toward the climate and those most vulnerable to it, and trusting in connection-based reciprocity, feminist ethics of care provides a strong alternative to the handling of collective responsibility that could be successful in prevention and management of climate change. This alternative involves the recognition of care as action, and an ontology of moral attentiveness and reciprocity. The fundamental assumption of human beings as interdependent creatures reinforces the moral relevance of care, attentiveness and reciprocity, which functions as a deterrent to the diffusion of responsibility – a problem that the climate crisis is especially vulnerable to.

#### IV. Care and Action: Acknowledging One's Burdens

In a way that 'Rational Man' models might not, a care-ontology transforms moral ideals into action because care itself implies action (Tronto 1993:154). Tronto points out that care semantically signifies an acceptance of a burden, and in so far as care is central, so the burden is central – not the self, which is typical of 'Rational Man' ethics. I find that we can view climate change as a form of acceptance of a burden. Tronto claims placing care acts in the centre of morality leads to "human (and other) survival" (1993:154). In this case, the 'and other' would aptly refer to natural processes currently threatened by climate change, and in a climate context 'survival' quite literally takes on the meaning of the survival of species or ecosystems as well as human beings. Tronto emphasises that care is more than an emotion or viewpoint, but that it entails practice and involves taking the needs of an Other as a starting point for action (1993:104–105). In a climate context, this means that one needs to stop thinking that one is saving the planet for one's own sake, which can be hard to do if one is living a relatively comfortable and carefree life. Therefore, I think Tronto's emphasis on care as a practice and a general "habit of mind" (1993:127) suits the climate change context.

Not all forms of care ethics, however, are as easily applied in a climate context. Sara Ruddick's model of care ethics, for instance, is not sufficiently inclusive of nonhuman entities. Two of her features of maternal practice, namely preservative love and fostering growth could however, be translatable in a climate sense, but her focus on social acceptance is less transferable (Ruddick 1989:17). Many other versions of care ethics are more easily applied in a climate context. Kittay, for instance, approaches socialization and suggests that in some circumstances it is more produc-

tive to work to change elements of society itself (1999:70). Care ethics in a climate context will most assuredly have to involve changes to society – both structural and institutional as well as addressing “hearts and minds.” Furthermore, Tronto’s definition of care directly includes mention of the environment and can be read in a climate context:

...a species activity that includes everything that we do to maintain, continue, and repair our ‘world’ so that we can live in it as well as possible. That world includes our bodies, our selves, and our environment, all of which we seek to interweave in a complex, life-sustaining web. (1993:103)

Although the use of ‘world’ here could pertain to the immediate social environments, cultures and situations of individual people, ‘world’ and the use of environment in the definition can also be taken in the literal sense to mean our planet Earth and ecosystems, in which care is directly relevant to climate change. Because Tronto’s definition of care opens for relations between human beings and nonhuman entities, climate change issues can be included in her ethical framework on a much larger scale. I believe that feminist care ethics in particular can be successfully applied to the climate change crisis because of its explicit and fundamental willingness to accept the burdens we are brought into, for reasons other than a competitive self-interest, and because this ontology has the potential to change structural elements of society. Feminist care ethics operate with a mode of morality that goes beyond interpersonal relations, and may therefore be easily adaptable to global issues such as climate change.

## V. Feminist Care Ethics: Well Suited for Global Issues

Thus far, I have argued that an ethics of care is better suited for issues related to climate change than canonical ethics of justice. I hold, furthermore, that an ethics of care is indispensable for successfully working with issues related to climate change. With that in mind, post-colonial feminist philosopher Uma Narayan contributes to the discourse on care ethics in a refreshing and cautious way. In an article on colonialism and care discourses, she reminds us how a narrative of care can be used not only for good. It is not too hard to imagine a new form of colonialism rise up under the name of environmentalism; one that forcibly conserves the environment in poorer states, forbids development in the name of protecting the climate, while also defending its own rights for less environmentally friendly development. This could be a new form of the paternalistic caring indicative of the “white man’s burden” (1995:135). Therefore, she claims that a consideration of justice may be

necessary for adequate caring policies (1995:140). For Narayan, who refers to Gilligan’s care-justice distinction, a well-working ethics cannot advocate care *or* justice, but must incorporate the two (1995:139–140). Held, too, concedes that care ethics must be attentive to neo-colonial insensitivities and be attuned to the actual effectiveness of specific care acts (2006:165). Care ethics will benefit from justice as a check-and-balance system for the care narrative. This is necessary to protect against paternalism, and because there is something to be said for the *rights* of human beings to live in a peaceful world, where natural resources are distributed on the assumption that individuals (should) enjoy basic equality.

An ethics that can mobilize, incite proactive action on collective terms and include nature in its scope would, I hold, improve the ways in which we are currently grappling with climate change on a global level. Tronto argues that we must place an ethic of care in a full moral and political context in order for it to take full shape (1993:125). For Tronto it is a waste of time trying to decide between an ethics of care or one of justice because it results in a battle over an epistemological position (1993:148). It is a problem well known that overly focusing on theory unintentionally impedes action. This is why she, not unlike Narayan, advocates an ethics that considers justice as well as care, and holds that the justice-care dichotomy is false (1993:166). Tronto believes that the world “will look different” if care was central and not peripheral to human life, and that a shift in moral boundaries toward care will lead to a shift in political theory as well (1993:101). Like Tronto, Held believes that ‘Rational Man’ models are unequipped to address realities and the values of relations in a global context (2006:157). Additionally, ‘Rational Man’ models are too limited in scope and fail to fully recognize relations with distant and nonhuman others on a global scale. For these models, acting on others’ needs that are distant from the self is a greater challenge. Nevertheless, the problem of partiality, Tronto concedes, will always be present in either form of ethic (1993:146). Therefore, it is of great importance to recognize that we are all interdependently connected – whether or not we want to be. This is crucial for an ethics to be able to tackle climate change on a global level and to avoid diffusion of responsibility. Held quotes Carol Gould:

...care translates into a responsiveness to the particular needs and interests of individuals or groups at the social level. It also has a political parallel in the concern for providing the economic and social means for the



development of individuals and not only in refraining from impeding their choices. (2006:160)

This means that, far from simply constraining individuals from harming one another, ethics of care places responsibility on people and societies in terms of collective care for one another in ways that acknowledge the inequalities we are thrown into. It places responsibility on everyone to become aware of their relative position in the world as members of a society and the global community, and to act in ways that acknowledges how others are directly, and also indirectly, affected. Instead of focusing on limiting free actions, ethics of care places expectations on people in terms of caring. As Tronto states, it is not enough merely to have good intentions. Furthermore, any action is not necessarily care; care acts are going to have to work in order to be care (1993:136). This underscores the importance of measuring the effectiveness of our care work on the climate, to evaluate whether or not our care work is actually care and actually working. In the same vein, Held argues that an ethics of care incites society to hold itself responsible to the future and others who are dependent on it (2006:159). I think the future is reflected in Held's ethics because of her *mothering* perspective, and can include both human beings and the environment. It is precisely the future, not only the present, which is what is at stake in climate change: being responsible for and providing for future generations that are now dependent on us, and the climate itself. Like the role of reflective feeling in *mothering*, our emotional impulse to act when we care is excellent for motivation, but it is the reflective element of emotion that guides what kinds of actions we should take. Our care acts must be constantly evaluated in terms of what the needs are, with regards to the climate itself and the people affected by its changes, and the actions to prevent and tackle it. I believe, therefore, that further research should be done in order to accommodate justice in any global care ontology in order to incorporate defences against socio-political elements of paternalism, colonialism and co-optation of green policies into other less ethically sound agendas.

## Conclusion

The point of ethics and moral theory is to guide human decisions and their actions. This is something sorely needed in the climate context – on global, structural and local levels. Climate change is also a very concrete and real issue, and is in need of an ethics capable of recognizing necessary collective efforts. I have attempted to show that an ethics of care, mostly in line with points presented by

Virginia Held, Joan Tronto and Eva Kittay, would be more successful than 'Rational Man' models on four accounts: (1) it would be better suited to grapple with concrete and contextual situations demanded by the complexities of climate change, because (a) it includes the private and the natural in moral theory, (b) it presumes an interrelated and dependent agent, (c) it recognizes emotion as an ethical element and (d) it transcends the voluntarism/coercion distinction; (2) it provides a defence against the diffusion of responsibility, while also providing non-coercive and non-voluntary obligations to act; (3) it can allow for distant and nonhuman others in its scope; and (4) it is an ethics which may incorporate global perspectives and guide collective action on a global scale. Finally, my argument is based on an assumption that I share with Held, namely, that human beings can

...and do care—and are capable of caring far more than most do at present—about the suffering of children quite distant from them, about the prospects for future generations, and about the well-being of the globe. (1993:53)

My stance is partly based on the psychological observation that unresponsive bystanders are not necessarily apathetic or indifferent. Even though there will always be some who will be privileged and detached enough to be indifferent to climate change, the expectation to care and the interconnectedness, commitment and responsibility that care ethics demands makes it harder to turn one's back on the climate crisis. I believe, in line with Tronto (1993:157), that we would benefit greatly on a global scale if we were to engage in a paradigm shift away from the presumptions of independence and disengagement of 'Rational Man' ethics, and toward a feminist ethics of care. If we move from a paradigm of 'Rational Man' ethics toward a feminist ethics of care, we will be better equipped to prevent and tackle issues related to climate change.

## LITERATURE

- Darley, J. M. & Latané, B. 1968, "Bystander Intervention in Emergencies: Diffusion of Responsibility", *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 8:4, 377–383.
- Gilligan, C. 2002 (1982), *Med en annen stemme. Psykologisk teori og kvinners utvikling*, Vestli, M. (trans.), Gyldendal Akademisk, Oslo.
- Held, V. 1993, *Feminist Morality. Transforming Culture, Society, and Politics*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, IL.
- . 2006 *The Ethics of Care. Personal, Political, and Global*, Oxford University Press, New York, NY.
- Kittay, E. F. 1999, *Love's Labor*, Routledge, New York, NY.
- Narayan, U. 1995, "Colonialism and Its Others: Considerations on Rights and Care Discourses", *Hypatia* 10:2, 133–140.

- Noddings, N. 1984, *Caring. A Feminine Approach to Ethics & Moral Education*, University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA.
- Pettersen, T. 2008, *Comprehending Care. Problems and Possibilities in the Ethics of Care*, Lexington Books, Lanham, MD.
- Ruddick, S. 1989, *Maternal Thinking*, Beacon Press, Boston, MA.
- Silvers, A. 1998, "Disability" in *A Companion to Feminist Philosophy*, Jaggar, A. M. & Young, I. M. (ed.), 330–340, Blackwell Publishing, MA.
- Teigen, M & Eggebo, H. 19.12.2017, "Vikeplikten", *KLIMA – Et magasin om klimaforskning fra CICERO* [online]. URL: <<https://www.cicero.uio.no/no/posts/klima/vikeplikten>> [19.12.2017].
- Tronto, J. C. 1993, *Excerpts from Moral Boundaries. A Political Argument for an Ethics of Care*, Routledge, New York, NY.
- Schleussner, C.F., et al. 2016, "Science and policy characteristics of the Paris Agreement temperature goal", *Nature Climate Change*, 6, 827–835. doi:10.1038/nclimate3096.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>There are at least two ways of thinking of climate change as an ethical issue, either because climate change will affect humanity as a whole and that large numbers of people in the world will suffer. Another option is to think of the climate as something that holds value and is worth protecting in itself, and that exerting violence on the climate is wrong.

<sup>2</sup>I will refer to and use some examples of information related to climate change that I do not cite, on the basis that this is general knowledge readily available in newspapers, social media, and media in addition to the academic journals and platforms of the scientific community.

<sup>3</sup>Granted, there are many differences between mainstream and traditional ethical theories and many disagreements among them. This paper, however, builds on generalities and the similarities between these theories that distinguishes feminist care ethics. Undoubtedly, there will be many useful solutions to climate change issues proposed by these traditional ethics and 'Rational Man' theories that will not be discussed in this paper. Instead, I argue that they are ill-suited compared with feminist care ethics to tackle climate change issues, based on general shared presumptions in these theories, such as the independence and autonomy of human beings. For a more comprehensive discussion on these generalities, see for instance Held (1996) or Gilligan's *In a Different Voice* (1982).

<sup>4</sup>This nomenclature is inspired by the perceived 'masculine' traits such as rationality and independence of the autonomous agent typically featured in ethical and political theories in the philosophical canon. These include theories connected to for instance Hobbes, Kant, Rousseau, utilitarianism, contemporary liberal theory, and to some extent virtue ethics.

<sup>5</sup>See for instance Noddings (1984), Held (1993 & 2006), Kittay (1999), Ruddick (1989), Tronto (1993), Pettersen (2008).

<sup>6</sup>Exceptions include ethics presented by D. Hume and A. Smith.

<sup>7</sup>One need only consult some of US President Donald Trump's claims that the climate change is a hoax to find examples of this.

<sup>8</sup>The 2016 Paris Climate Accord is perhaps the best example of politicians taking the climate crisis seriously. It is the largest collaborative initiative against climate change, but the scope and goals of the Accord will not be sufficient to stay below the 2°C temperature rise necessary to prevent drastic climate change. Besides, many scientists believe that it is too little too late (Schleussner, Carl-Friedrich., et al. 2016).

<sup>9</sup>Teigen and Eggebo (2017) have written an article on the parallels between gender equality and climate protective policy in politics. Both issues are acknowledged in the political sphere, but the tendency to prioritize other issues such as securing the oil industry above gender or climate policies is pervasive.

<sup>10</sup>In this essay I argue as if I presume that change in climate and eco-

systems and the extinction of species is harmful to the Earth. It could also not be, seeing as the planet will continue spinning and the sun will continue to rise every morning no matter the changes of the climate. The planet, in this way, isn't dependent on human beings at all. It is, however, dependent on our actions if it is to continue with its current environmental functions in ways in which we know the Earth to be and in ways that contribute to the thriving of animals, plants, and human beings.

<sup>11</sup>Think only of Pacific Island nations that have bought land elsewhere for 'dignified migration,' the crisis in Syria that has been fueled by decline in agriculture and overflowing cities, or Bangladesh, which faces perhaps one of the largest migration challenges in history, because of rising sea-levels and the effects it will have on Bangladeshi land.

<sup>12</sup>One need only watch documentaries like Al Gore's "An Inconvenient Truth" or Leonardo DiCaprio's "Before the Flood," a title all the more unnerving in Norwegian: "Før Syndeffloden," which translates to something like "Before the Flood of Sin," referring to the Deluge in the biblical story of Noah's arch.

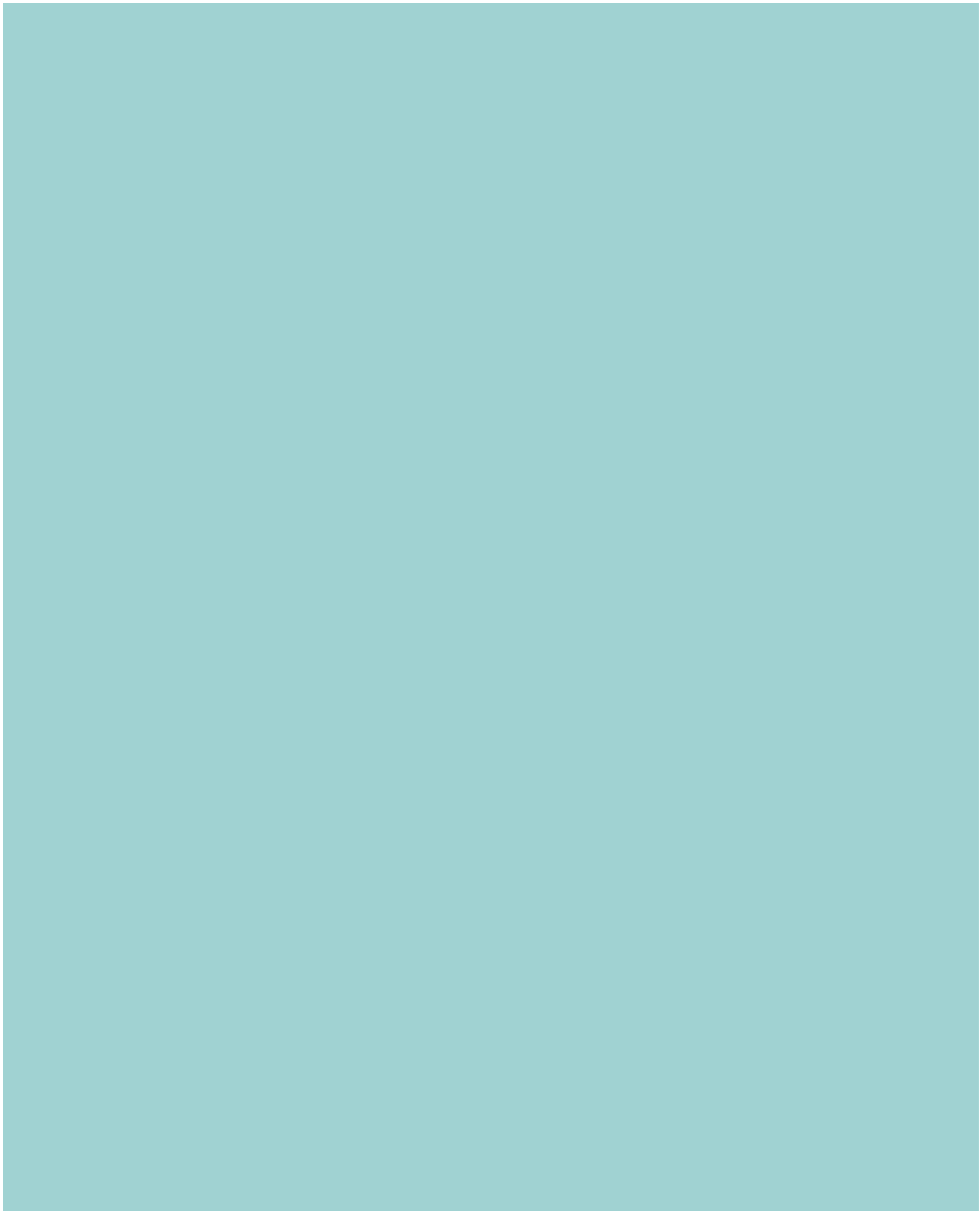
<sup>13</sup>A now infamous story on this issue, which has sparked much research on the problem of responsibility diffusion, is the murder of Kitty Genovese. She was brutally murdered outside her apartment building in 1964 while 38 people witnessed the attack from their apartment windows. The story of Genovese's bystanders has been contested several times, but the exact circumstances of her murder are not relevant to this paper. The relevance rather lies in the psychological experiments conducted on diffusion of responsibility as an effect of the event of her death.

<sup>14</sup>Tronto identifies four ethical elements for care: 1) attentiveness; 2) responsibility; 3) competence; and 4) responsiveness (1993:127–136).

<sup>15</sup>Held refers to Annette Baier several times in her writings, and finds that hers is a crucial observation – that trust is "the fundamental concept of morality." According to Held, "[i]f we only go so far as to think with her [Baier] that trust is a central concept of morality, consider how it is overlooked by the reasoning of the autonomous agent as such" (1993:37–38).

<sup>16</sup>In her discussion on institutionalized care and nested obligations, Kittay opens for the possibility that care work can be done without emotional investment, even though care ethicists generally argue for the relevance of emotion in morality. I argue that Kittay is opening for the possibility of structural care, something which would be very relevant in a climate context. The institutionalization of care can function as a guard against the fallibility of individualistic ethics.

<sup>17</sup>There is an aspect of parochialism in care, (Tronto 1993:146) but it is a greater challenge for an ethics of the 'Rational Man' if it fails to recognize inequality and interdependency. Tronto finds that parochialism functions as a way to "excuse the inattention of the privileged" (1993:146). This may explain the propensity in the West to ignore climate change.



# SPECIES SELECTION AND TRADITIONAL CONCEPTS IN EVOLUTIONARY THEORY

**The idea of species selection is that species as wholes act as units of selection, which results in species with lower extinction and higher speciation rates. The idea is controversial among biologists, both conceptually and empirically. In this essay we look at the idea of species selection in connection to three other important concepts in evolutionary theory, namely natural selection, biological individuality, and the tree of life. In light of this, we end by discussing the prospects for theorizing about and studying species selection as a macroevolutionary phenomenon.**

*By* Bendik Hellem Aaby & Hans Robin Solberg

Natural selection has been *the* central concept for evolutionary biologists since Darwin's formulation in *The Origins of Species* in their explanations of the immense biodiversity of life on earth. But what is it that evolves? Is it genes, organisms, populations, or species? For Darwin, individual organisms stood central. It is the organisms that feel the selection pressures, and it is on the basis of their struggle and reproductive outcomes that evolution occurs. The rise of population genetics with the modern synthesis (e.g. Fisher 1930; Huxley 1942) during the 20<sup>th</sup> century shifted the focus to populations and the frequencies of genotypes and phenotypes in those populations. On this view, it is populations that undergo evolution and the genotypes present in these populations.

Both Darwin and the population geneticists hold that evolution is gradual (commonly called *phyletic gradualism*), that small incremental changes eventually lead to larger conglomerate phenomena in higher taxa (e.g. species, families, orders). In other words, gradualist views hold that micro-evolutionary phenomena add up to macro-evolutionary phenomena and that with enough knowledge about the underlying micro-evolutionary causes, we could reduce macro-evolutionary phenomena to the dynamics of genotype frequencies in populations (i.e. micro-evolutionary phenomena).

Species selection, the view that species themselves can undergo natural selection, is decidedly a macro-evolutionary

phenomenon. However, can we explain the proliferation of distinct species appealing only to micro-evolutionary causes, in particular, the fitness distributions of the ancestors of the species' current members? According to some biologists and philosophers of biology, this cannot be done (see for example Lloyd and Gould 1993; Jablonski 2008). They contend that in order for species selection to be something more than just "species sorting" and for it to have explanatory power, we most probably also need to appeal to how certain "species traits" have led to differential speciation and extinction events favoring the types of species we currently see around us. An example of such a trait is variability in itself (Lloyd and Gould 1993). The thought is that species with a higher degree of variation among its members, clearly a species-level trait, will be more robust against unforeseen changes in the environment over geological time. As such we should expect differential speciation-extinction values favoring species with a higher degree of variability. Furthermore, a high degree of variability in a species is likely inherited across speciation events, when those occur. Similar arguments have been proposed for geographical range as a species-level trait (Jablonski 2008).

In this essay, we explore how traditional evolutionary concepts, namely *natural selection*, *biological individuality* and *the tree of life*, are related to the concept of species selection in non-trivial ways. In the end, we raise some po-

tential epistemic biases that work against the exploration, discovery and acceptance of species selection.

## 1 Species selection and definitions of natural selection

In order for species selection to be a potent evolutionary force or process, we need an account of natural selection acting at the species-level. This could be done by showing that there is differential speciation and extinction due to species traits that have some degree of heredity. In this section, we account for three definitions of natural selection and evaluate if either can provide a formulation of natural selection coherent with species-level phenomena. First, we go through the infamous formulation of Lewontin (1970), which has subsequently been regarded as the standard account of natural selection. Second, the replicator-interactor view, made popular by Richard Dawkins (1976; 1982). And finally, the minimal account of natural selection due to Godfrey-Smith (2009).

In his classic paper, *The Units of Selection*, Lewontin (1970) provides an account of the requirements for populations to undergo natural selection:

1. There is phenotypic variation among individuals that comprise a population (where phenotype includes morphological, physiological, and behavioral differences).
2. The variation among the individuals of a population must lead to a difference in individual rates of survival and reproduction, i.e. there has to be differential fitness.
3. There is a correlation between the fitness of parents and offspring, i.e. fitness is heritable.

If all these conditions are met, then there will be evolution by natural selection.

A different characterization of natural selection is the so-called *replicator-interactor* view (Sterelny and Griffiths 1999:55–61; Okasha 2006:15–16). On this view natural selection occurs when environmental interaction leads to differential replication. A replicator is an entity that is accurately copied, and interactors (individuals) are cohesive wholes that interact with their environment in such a way that it causes differential transmission of replicators (where the primary candidate for replicators is genes).

Finally, Godfrey-Smith (2009) argues that a *minimal concept* of natural selection involves so-called Darwinian populations. A Darwinian *population* is a collection of causally connected individual entities (Darwinian *individuals*)

that vary in their characters. This variation in characters leads to differences in reproductive output and is inherited to some extent (Godfrey-Smith 2009:39). This minimal characterization of natural selection is an abstraction from the requirements laid out by Lewontin (1970) above.

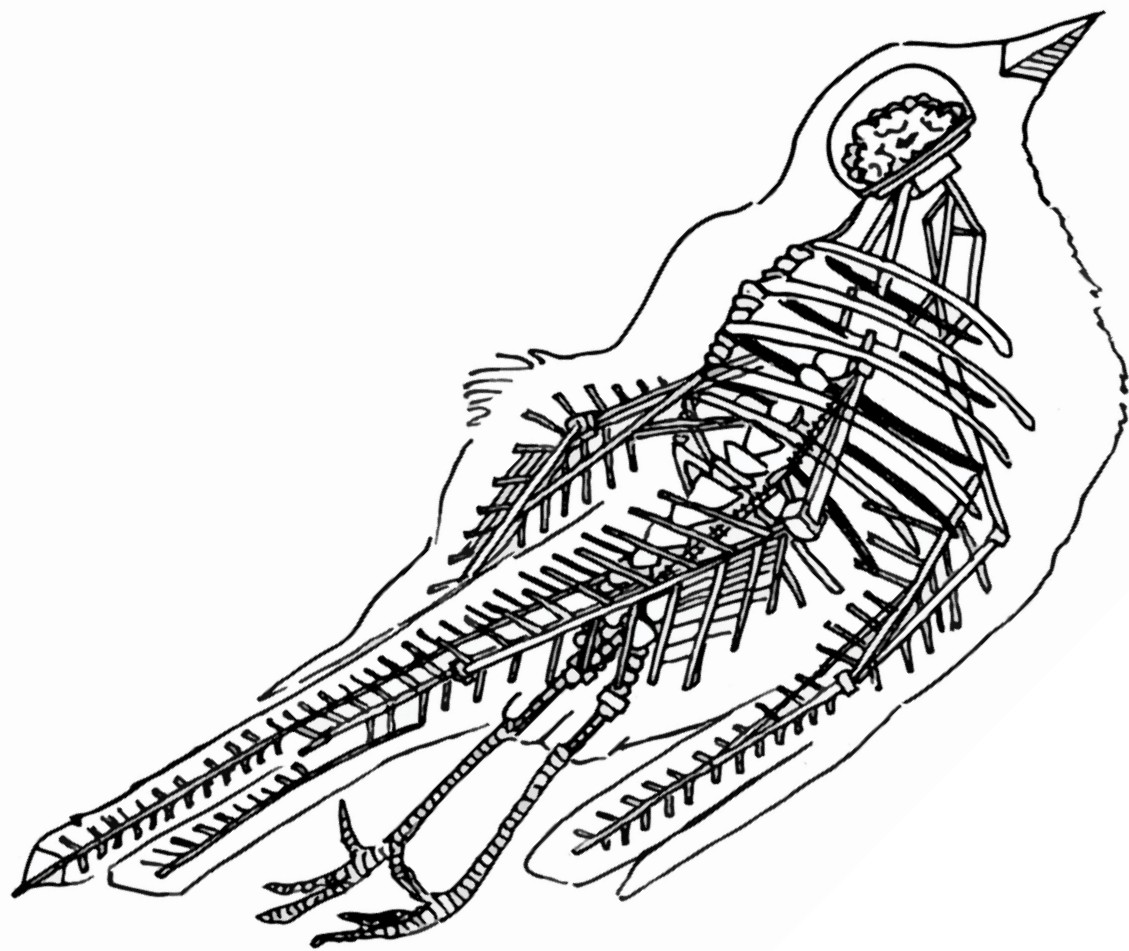
So, for us to discuss whether species selection can be more than a conglomeration of micro-evolutionary phenomena, we need to evaluate the possibility of ascertaining species-level conceptual *counterparts of phenotypic variation of traits* and *differential fitness*. This will make it clearer whether it is conceptually coherent for there to be species selection.

On Lewontin's view and the minimal concept it seems possible to provide such species-level conceptual counterparts. We can coherently talk about species-level traits (cf. variability); these species can vary in their traits, they can produce daughter species, many of which traits are inherited from the mother species; and it is at least conceivable that there could be differential fitness due to these traits. However, according to the replicator-interactor view, it might not be conceptually straightforward for there to be species selection. The main reason is that species as a whole are too geographically and ecologically dispersed to act as interactors. On such a view, only traits of local representative populations can be selected for.<sup>1</sup>

So, the notion of species selection is not neutral between different conceptions of natural selection; it requires a sufficiently abstract characterization. Of course, there are independent arguments for preferring Lewontin's view or the minimal concept over the replicator-interactor one, but note that if species selection seems plausible, this can add further reasons to abandon the replicator-interactor view. In sum then, species selection requires a sufficiently broad notion of natural selection to be spelled out, and might in turn, if instances of species selection are discovered, further support the acceptance of such abstract characterizations.

## 2 Species selection and biological individuality

An upshot of the discussion so far is that for the most plausible conception of natural selection to be acting on the level of species requires that species be counted as individuals. This is plausibly at odds with the folk concept of individuality. If it is necessary of an individual entity that it is highly integrated, maybe even spatiotemporally contiguous, then species as wholes are not individuals. This folk-view fits with the paradigm cases of biological individuals, but just as with natural selection individuality might need to be construed more broadly. In fact, the folk-



*Illustrasjon av Rasmus Gaare*



view of individuality might give rise to epistemic biases that are not helpful in biological theorizing.

An alternative approach is to think of biological individuality as something that comes in degrees, and which might occur at different levels in the biological hierarchy. Such accounts have been developed by Godfrey-Smith (2009) and Clarke (2013). According to Godfrey-Smith, Darwinian individuality<sup>2</sup> can be measured by three factors: bottleneck (a narrowing that marks the divide between generations), germ-line (reproductive specialization within the entity) and integration (including division of labor, mutual dependence of parts, and boundary maintenance). Species score badly on the two latter factors: firstly, they have nothing equivalent to a germ-line – that is, there is no specialized part (say, sub-collection of members of the species) that has as its function to speciate under certain conditions, any large enough part sufficient to guarantee further reproduction will do – and secondly, they lack a high degree of integration. But species do better regarding the first factor: they do often result (are in a sense “born”) from bottlenecks, where for different reasons parts of a mother species will become reproductively isolated and form a daughter species. Because of this Godfrey-Smith’s approach allows for species selection, but he notes that collections of species will be Darwinian populations only in a very marginal sense (to a low degree) due to the considerations above (2009:105).

Clarke (2013) argues for an even more general conception of biological individuality. According to her functional definition of biological individuality an object is a biological individual if and only if it instantiates mechanisms that suppress within-object selection (policing kind – for example, regulatory mechanisms in charge of cell-division and growth in multi-cellular animals) and mechanisms that increase between-object selection (demarcation kind – for example, physical barriers keeping organisms apart). It is sufficient for something to count as a biological individual if it instantiates both kinds of mechanisms. Although Clarke does not comment on the potential individuality of species themselves, it is eminently plausible that her account will cover them as well.

Some candidate mechanisms are sexual reproduction and ecological specialization. Sexual reproduction has been argued to be a species level trait that evolved to enhance variability in a species by enforcing free flow of genes in the within-species gene pool (Sterelny and Griffiths 1999: ch. 9.4). Whatever the merits of this account of the evolution and persistence of sexual reproduction, sexual reproduction can be seen as both suppressing, to some extent,

the within-object selection of species (since the output of a reproductive union is not the result of a single individual but two, advantageous innovations will spread more quickly in sexually reproducing species), and help demarcating the species from other species (allowing increased between-species selection). Ecological specialization has also been speculated to increase, under certain conditions, fitness at the species-level, increasing the rate of speciation and allowing specialists to outcompete generalists within some clades. Under such conditions, then, ecological specialization can increase the competition among sister species, acting as a demarcating mechanism. If both these traits are instantiated by a species, and the description here of how these mechanisms work is right, that species will be an individual to some degree according to Clarke’s definition (for a fuller list of species-level traits to consider for the same treatment, see Jablonski 2008:505–507).

The conclusion is the same here as in the last section; species selection—together with a sufficiently abstract characterization of natural selection—requires a broad notion of biological individuality to be spelled out (probably one of degrees). In turn, if instances are discovered, species selection will also support such a broad characterization of biological individuality.

### 3 Species selection and the tree of life

The last concept we discuss in relation to species selection is the tree of life, and here the relationship between the two concepts is more suggestive. Species selection is meant to be an autonomous process from the process of natural selection at the level of organisms (or populations, depending on your view), and might come into play at time-scales and during events quite different from traditional organismal evolution, namely geological time and catastrophic events. As such, different views of the tree of life support the notion of species selection to different degrees.

As we mentioned in the introduction, the traditional view of *phyletic gradualism*, the view that the evolution and proliferation of distinct species and higher taxa across time and space is explained in virtue of accounting for the micro-evolutionary causes that led to these macro-level phenomena, does not allow for species selection to be an active evolutionary process. However, some have argued that gradualism cannot account for the rate of evolution according to our findings in the fossil record (Eldredge and Gould 1972). Their view, that speciation occurs through *punctuated equilibria*, is that there are static periods, where there are few instances of speciation, and dynamic periods, in which speciation occur at a high rate allowing for evolu-

tionary processes to act at the level of species (perhaps even higher taxa), i.e. cases where macro-evolutionary phenomena are not necessarily reducible to micro-evolutionary phenomena. So, in order for species selection to be a potent evolutionary force with explanatory value, we need to account for the history of the tree of life in a way that allows for the independence of macro-evolutionary processes.

If it were discovered that the relative increase in disparity of the tree of life over time was approximately equal at all times and only gradually increased absolutely, it would suggest a negligent amount of species selection. On the picture of phyletic gradualism, there would be little to no differential fitness-values at the species level, as each species begets approximately the same amount of daughter-species. It would be, according to Gould, the picture to expect if we extrapolated from micro-evolution to macro-evolution (Sterelny and Griffith 1999: chapter 12), making macro-evolutionary phenomena entirely epiphenomenal.

On the other hand, if the tree of life has highly variable increases and decreases in disparity over time, and shows more of a discontinuous variation, it would suggest higher differential fitness values among species, and a wedge between the micro-evolutionary and macro-evolutionary processes. There is some paleontological evidence for this view of the tree of life, but both the accuracy of the fossil record and how to interpret the findings we do have is a controversial matter. In particular, it has been suggested that mass extinction events are symptoms of such divergence between micro- and macro-evolution. As such, wide-spread and drastic changes in the climate or geology of earth, rare events, might often work its selective pressure directly on species-level traits. For example, Stidd and Wade (1995) discuss how monomorphic traits, traits shared by all or close to all members of a species, might come under selective pressure at the species-level (it cannot do so at the sub-species level, according to Stidd and Wade, because selection requires variation and by fiat the only variation to be found in the case of monomorphic traits is at the species-level). It seems reasonable to say that under catastrophic changes in the environment (like a sudden drop of the oxygen level in the atmosphere) monomorphic traits can come under selective pressure, and certain species will be favored over others.

In return the reality of species selection together with the thesis that species are individuals would help cement the view that the tree of life is not just a highly idealized analogy for the history of life on earth, but a more substantial model that approximates actual spatio-temporal entities and their lineages over time.

#### **4 A brief summary of the discussion so far**

Here we briefly summarize what we have discussed so far. First, we have seen that the notion of species selection is in need of counterparts to the traditional concepts invoked in characterizing natural selection (i.e. species as individuals, species-level traits, and variation among these traits that allows for differential fitness values for distinct species) in order to account for how natural selection can act on species. Second, the notion of biological individuality would require potentially significant revision for species to be treated as individuals. Finally, we have seen that some depictions of the tree of life are compatible with species selection and the independence of macro-evolution from micro-evolution (e.g. punctuated equilibrium), while some are not (e.g. strict phyletic gradualism). However, how we can view the structure of the tree of life need not be thought of as a dichotomy between gradualism and saltationism (the view that evolution operates by the sudden development of novel species or biological traits from one generation to the next), but a continuum with these two at each end, and species selection is compatible with a range of structures for the tree of life, given that it is not reducible to strict phyletic gradualism.

#### **5 Prospects for theories of species selection**

In conclusion, we speculate that there are some interesting reasons for why the widespread study and acceptance of species selection will require further discussions and rethinking of central concepts in evolutionary theory, even if it is a real and causally efficacious phenomenon. The conceptual connections we have explored in this essay provide ample reason for such a conclusion.

First, to provide an account of natural selection at the level of species require a more abstract account of natural selection and its related concepts. The second issue, as we have seen, is how to best characterize species as individuals. Here also we required a more abstract and general conception, which our folk-intuitions about individuality might be epistemically biased against because our own frame of reference (for example, contiguity, size, and duration). The common factor, then, for these concepts is a reconceptualization in direction away from their more concrete content towards a higher degree of abstractedness and generality. This might make it harder for theorists to discover such processes, as certain epistemic biases will often favor micro-evolutionary phenomena.

On the other hand, species selection fits well with a quite concrete understanding of the tree of life as an actual picture of evolutionary history. In fact, if the tree of life

is thought of in this way, empirical discoveries about the structure of the tree of life can be used as crucial evidence for or against the reality of species selection as an independent macro-evolutionary process. The upshot of this is that investigations into the reality of species selection and the actual structure of the tree of life can benefit each other and be mutually illuminating.

We believe future developments in the theory of species selection and its relationship to other central evolutionary notions can help us provide more accurate methods and scientifically useful concepts. This would increase both our understanding of and access to macro-evolutionary phenomena. We hope to have pointed out fruitful areas in which to begin further investigations.

## LITERATURE

- Clarke, E. 2013, "The Multiple Realizability of Biological Individuals", *The Journal of Philosophy*, Vol 60 (8), 413–35.
- Damuth, J. 1985, "Selection among 'Species': A Formulation in terms of Natural Functional Units", *Evolution*, Vol 39 (5), 1132–46.
- Dawkins, R. 1976, *The Selfish Gene*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- . 1982, 1982b, "Replicators and Vehicles", in *Current Problems in Sociobiology*, edited by King's College Sociobiology Group, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 45–64.
- Eldredge, N. & Gould, S.J. 1972, "Punctuated Equilibria: an Alternative to Phyletic Gradualism", in Schopf, T.J.M. (ed.) *Models in Paleobiology*, San Francisco: Freeman, 82–215.
- Fisher, R.A. 1930, *The Genetical Theory of Natural Selection*, Clarendon Press, Oxford.
- Godfrey-Smith, P. 2009, *Darwinian Populations and Natural Selection*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Huxley, J. 1942, *Evolution: The Modern Synthesis*, Reprinted (2010) MIT Press, with foreword by Piglucci, M. & Müller, G.
- Jablonski, D. 2008, "Species Selection: Theory and Data", in *Annual Review of Ecology, Evolution, and Systematics*, Vol 39, 501–24.
- Lewontin, R.C. 1970, "The Units of Selection", in *Annual Review of Ecology, Evolution, and Systematics*, Vol 1, 1–18.
- Lloyd, E.A. & Gould, S.J. 1993, "Species selection on variability", in *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the (U.S.A.)*, Vol 90, 595–99.
- Okasha, S. 2006, *Evolution and the Levels of Selection*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Sterelny, K. & Griffiths, P.E. 1999, *Sex and Death: An Introduction to Philosophy of Biology*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago.
- Stridd, B.M. & Wade, D.L. 1995, "Is species selection dependent upon emergent characters?", in *Biology and Philosophy*, Vol. 10 (1), 55–76.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Damuth (1985) calls these local populations 'avatars', for more see Okasha (2006:210–11).

<sup>2</sup>Strictly speaking, we are talking about the degree of Darwinian individuality for collectively reproducing entities, that is, entities which can reproduce, and also have parts that can reproduce (examples are multicellular organisms, colonies of organisms, and maybe species themselves).

# DEN RASJONELLE ØYA, MENINGEN MED LIVET OG MENNESKETS FREMTID

## ET INTERVJU MED DAG O. HESSEN

Av Dag August Schmedling Drammer & Veslemøy E.X. Kaen

Dag Olav Hessen (f.1956) er professor i biologi ved Universitetet i Oslo, og har gitt ut en rekke populærvitenskapelige bøker, om alt fra karbonets rolle for livsløpet på jorda, til hvordan vi mennesker har utviklet oss til å bli de sosiale vesenene vi er i dag. Prof. Hessen er utover den biologiske forskningen og populariseringen av den, kjent for å være interessert i filosofi, filosofiens rolle for biologien som fag, og har vært spesielt interessert i tenkningen til filosofene Arne Næss og Peter Wessel Zapffe. I dette intervjuet tar vi opp biologien og filosofiens uøselige forbindelse og gjensidige avhengighet. Videre blir menneskets rolle i klimakrisens tidsalder tatt opp, genforskningens innflytelse og, i tillegg til det, mulighetene for utviklingen av mennesket gjennom teknologi, en retning kjent som transhumanisme.

*Du er biologiprofessor her ved UiO, men du er interessert i myelddu er interessert i ting på en veldig bred måte, og du ble tidlig eksponert for filosofien – hvordan har det det artet seg?*

For mitt vedkommende begynte det med en slags undring over livet og døden, uavhengig av biologien, vil jeg si. Etter hvert leste jeg Zapffes *Barske glæder* – fabelaktig skrevet, sammensetningen er et språklig artistteri. Deretter leste jeg enda mer

av Zapffe – *Om det tragiske* – der fant jeg en slags klangbunn. Jeg mener nok at Zapffes biosofiske metode er ute på viddene, at den i seg selv ikke gir så mye. Men det var en klangbunn rundt eksistensielle spørsmål, så de kom for så vidt først for min del: Hva er meningen med livet? Når vi skal dø? Zapffe ble likesom aldri ferdig med det, og det drev ham som en mare hele livet. Men så kom jeg til biologien, og ble interessert i evolusjon, som har en naturlig link til filosofi. Man kan vanskelig være interessert i evolusjon, erkjenne at mennesket er en del av et evolusjonært forløp og en evolusjonær historie, uten å se de filosofiske spørsmålene det reiser. Som ung biolog leste jeg *The Selfish Gene* av Dawkins, som indirekte reiser klassiske spørsmål som «hva er egentlig et menneske?», et sentralt spørsmål også for Zapffe. Hvor mye natur er vi, hvor slutter naturen og hvor overtar kulturen? Kan vi tenke oss at, om vi ikke er styrt, så er vi i hvert fall påvirket av genene våre i betydelig grad, samtidig som vi har fri vilje? Det er en veldig naturlig link mellom biologi og filosofi. Jeg har aldri skjont dem som kan drive biologi og bare være opptatt av prosessene, uten å se det større perspektivet.







*Hva vil du da si til at Stephen Hawking sier at filosofien er død? Behøver vi ikke det han ser på som spekulative metafysiske rammeverk?*

Det er jeg uenig i, jeg vil heller si som Claude Levi-Strauss, der han i dialog med seg selv spør «tror du det fortsatt er behov for filosofien i dagens verden?». Svaret hans er «ja, men bare dersom filosofien også tar innover seg de nyvinningene som naturvitenskapen har kommet frem til». Opprinnelig var jo alt som hadde med spørsmål om menneskets plass i naturen å gjøre, dels teologiens domene, dels filosofiens, og man så det hele ovenfra og ned. Så kommer biologien med sin reduksjonistiske input. Det er klart at et eller annet sted i spennet mellom det at vi kan karakterisere mennesket som våre 3,2 milliarder basepar og dette overordnede perspektivet ligger svaret på hva et menneske er, eller svarene – for det finnes ikke ett utfyllende svar på det spørsmålet. Ulike fagfelt og tilnærminger bidrar med ulike svar. Det ville være en åndsfattig verden uten filosofien. Naturvitenskapen er som kjent ikke normativ, selv om den godt kunne engasjert seg henimot flere normative spørsmål. Naturvitenskapen åpner opp for stadig nye erkjennelser, og bruksområder som angår mennesket, som er filosofisk relevante. Nye generasjoner trenger den filosofiske innsikten, og å stille de filosofiske spørsmålene. Selv om for eksempel Aristoteles kanskje stilte de grunnleggende spørsmål, og formulerte mye som fortsatt er allmenngyldige sannheter, så betyr jo ikke det at man ikke skal gjenta dem, eller utarbeide og diskutere dem for kommende generasjoner.

*Det er interessant, for noen filosofer har en mer ahistorisk tilnærming til filosofien, men du vil likevel si at vi kan lære av historien, kanskje til og med noen universelle sannheter som presentert av Aristoteles og andre?*

Det normative springer jo ut av en slags evolusjonær intuitiv forståelse av hva som er rett og galt – vi skjønner det er galt å slå ihjel, vi skjønner det er galt å lyve og alt dette, selv om vi selvfølgelig kan gjøre det i visse sammenhenger. Aristoteles' og andres grunnleggende konklusjoner bygger på innsikter som jeg tror har vært uskreve sosiale kjøre-regler og innsikter lenge. Ja, selv lenge før vi ble bevisste, spurte vi oss selv «hvem er jeg?» eller «hvem er vi?» og dannet oss en kultur, så lå mange mo-

ralfilosofiske føringar hos oss som en sentral forutsetning for et sosialt liv. De tidlige filosofene satte ord på mange av disse føringene. Da det etter hvert gikk an å nedfelle normative regler og rettsregler skriftlig, da ble de også mer autorative. Moralske regler bør ikke begrunnes med «det er sant fordi Aristoteles har sagt det»; det blir nærmest som å hevde «det er sant fordi Darwin sa det». Derimot finnes det personer i historien som har målbåret noen relativt allmenngyldige sannheter, enten det er biologi eller filosofi. Så sann sett er jo historien med oss hele veien.

*Så du mener altså at moralen lever, uavhengig av autoritetsfigurer som forfekter moralske regler?*

Ja, jeg tror som sagt at dypest sett så bringes det videre en gryende erkjennelse som har vært der så lenge vi har vært homo sapiens og sosiale individer. Og det igjen bringer jo biologien og filosofien sammen, for jeg tror veldig mye av dette, i alle fall så lenge vi snakker om moralfilosofi, og mer generelle normer, bygger på en slags intuitiv og evolvert forståelse av hva som er rett og galt, hva et menneske er, osv. Så skjer det selvfølgelig en utvikling der rettighetstankegangen etableres og forsterkes så det normative blir sterkere både gjennom rettsregler og mer skrevne/uskreve normative regler. Jeg synes Steven Pinker beskriver dette godt: at vi har beveget oss, her i vesten i alle fall, i en bedre retning. Ikke nødvendigvis kanskje når det gjelder antall drepte i kriger, men i en mer humanistisk retning, og det katalyseres, tror jeg, av blant annet allmenn opplysning og filosofisk tankegang om normative spørsmål.

*Hvis du tenker at det fortsetter å utvikle seg i en positiv retning, hvor tror du at vi er om 100 år, da? Tror du at det hadde vært mye bedre, eller tror du det hadde vært marginale forskjeller, men at disse igjen hadde korrigert det som er feil i dag, eller forbedret dem?*

Jeg tror ikke det er en rettlinjet utvikling vi er inne i, jeg ser for meg flere grunner til at vi ikke kan ta en utvikling til det bedre for gitt. Allerede nå ser vi konturene av en vanskeligere verden: vi blir flere mennesker, vi har større miljøproblemer – klimakrisen først og fremst – som antakelig vil motvirke de positive tendensene vi har hatt til nå. Vi risike-

rer knapphet på vann, mat og areal, og kan risikere massive folkeforflytninger og klimaflyktninger. Historien er kjennetegnet ved pendelutslag, utviklingen kan godt svinge tilbake, og på mange måter kan det hende vi lever på en slags rasjonell og optimal øy i tid og rom akkurat nå. Vi tror det vil fortsette, men det behøver det ikke å gjøre. Det kan godt være litt som med istider og mellomistider.

*Så det kan være syklisk?*

Ja, jeg tror mange deler av historien kjennetegnes av sykluser, ikke lovmessige sykluser, men reaksjoner og motreaksjoner. Kulturer og imperier vokser og forvitrer for eksempel.

*Tanken om fremskritt er ganske utbredt i filosofien. Å tro og håpe på utvikling, vil du si at det er en nødvendig del av det å være menneske?*

Ja, det kan godt hende vår tenkning har betydelige elementer av livsløgn i seg, som jeg tror kan være nødvendig. Opprinnelig ble også evolusjonsteorien oppfattet litt naivt; selv om Darwin var påpasselig med å advare mot dette, så er det fortsatt vanlig å tenke seg at alt som utvikler seg implisitt må utvikle seg til noe bedre, eller mer komplekst. Det er ikke nødvendigvis sann.

*Det bringer oss inn i grunnproblematikken i utviklingsbiologien. Det viser seg, slik som du hintet til, å være overraskende vanskelig å snakke om høyere og lavere organismer hvis det ikke er noe som er bedre eller verre. Kan du si litt om det?*

Jeg mener at man ikke skal relativisere. Det må være lov å mene at noe er bedre og at noe annet er verre. Kanskje vil det være kultursnobberi å si at en konsert med filharmonien er bedre enn en rockekonsert, men på noen områder er det noe som er objektivt bedre, eller i alle fall kognitivt mer komplekst, enn noe annet. For å holde oss til biologien så mener jeg at det er klart at man kan snakke om høyere og lavere organismer — det er det ingen som helst tvil om. Man kan si at bakteriene er de mest suksessfulle fordi det er de som dominerer i henhold til biomasse, foruten algene. Hvis vår målestokk var mest mulig biomasse, ville bakterier og alger vært de mest vellykkede organismene. Blant insektene ville det ha vært biller og maur. Men vi

må jo ha lov til å hevde at særlig kognitive egenskaper er noe som er kvalitativt viktig. Så jeg vil si at det er en fundamental forskjell mellom ikke bare et menneske og en amøbe, men også for eksempel mellom en elefant og en torsk.

*Så litt artssjåvinisme er lov?*

Ja, det mener jeg, og det er også viktig når det gjelder artsbevaring. Det er ikke slik at man kan hevde at 10 000 torsk tilsvarer én elefant — det finnes ikke noen sånn normering. Det at vi implisitt legger mer vekt på å bevare avanserte dyr tenker jeg i og for seg er naturlig. Jeg synes ikke det er galt å snakke om høyere og lavere dyr. Vi gjør det i biologien, og man skal ikke alltid rynke på nesen av det. Det blir ikke som å snakke om høyerestående og laverestående raser: Det er et helt annet område, og et område hvor biologien har bragt gode nyheter. Den har gått fra å være på raseinndelingens side, til å slå fast at det ikke finnes noe entydig grunnlag for raseinndeling. Vi er alle svært nære slektninger, rent genetisk, og de mentale ferdigheter mellom etniske grupper synes svært like.

*Ja, biologiens funn er blitt lettere å fordøye. Men kanskje har offentligheten fortsatt problemer med å forstå dem. Har ikke folk blitt i overkant gira over et funn, ta for eksempel CRISPR1? Eller folk kan tenke at funn de kun hører litt om er forferdelige.*

Ja, det er jo et kjempeproblem som i noen grad er utnyttet av forskere selv. Ikke så mye i den norske vitenskapstradisjonen, men kanskje særlig den amerikanske. Der er det viktig å selge funnene og å markedsføre seg. Det gjør at man kanskje lett «hyper» opp funnene. Så forsterkes jo hypen hos media, der det typisk blir hetende «genet for...», hvilket gir inntrykk av en sterk genetisk determinisme. Og CRISPR kan være et godt eksempel her: Noen har inntrykk av at CRISPR kan løse alle problemer og redesigne mennesket, mens andre ser på den nye bioteknologien med sterk angst for at mennesker skal leke Gud. For noen er dette et religiøst problem, den kjente «tukling med naturen»-bekymringen, mens for andre vekkes Frankenstein-assosiasjoner. Begge ting tror jeg kan skyldes manglende innsikt i hva CRISPR er og hva den kan gjøre. Det gjelder også disse «gen-funnene». Det

er liten tvil om at det meste av egenskaper, mentalt som fysisk, har en sterk genetisk komponent, men det er som regel vanskelig å slutte entydig fra enkeltgener til egenskaper. Fra den enkle, naive forestillingen om at genene ligger som perler på en snor, og slik kodet og determinerte én og én egenskap, har vi gått over til kunnskapen om at dette er et ekstremt komplekst samspill – noe som også bør mane til en nøkternhet når det kommer til hva genredigering, selv CRISPR, kan brukes til.

*Det kan være vanskelig å ha tilgang til egen DNA-informasjon.*

Mange har med god grunn advart mot at man ukritisk skal genteste seg selv. For straks du får vite at du har en økt sannsynlighet for en viss disposisjon – som jo alle har, ingen har et perfekt genom – så slutter du å tenke på deg selv som frisk, og starter heller å tenke på deg selv som potensielt syk. En interessant ting som Daniel Kahneman skriver om i *Thinking Fast and Slow* er hvordan det er fokus på negative ting i media, ettersom vi er mer gira på å oppfatte risiko. Vi tenker på 10% sannsynlighet for å bli syk som en viktigere beskjed enn 90% sannsynlighet for å forbli frisk. Det gjelder både nyheter og for så vidt også gentesting. Jeg har ikke gentestet meg selv. Også fordi at i det øyeblikket jeg gjør det vil det implisitt ligge mye informasjon om mine barn og søsken også.

*Et underliggende tema her er biologisk determinisme. Kan du si litt om det?*

Alt har en årsak. Sann sett er alt determinert, og det finnes noen fysikere som leter etter «a theory of everything». Siden alt er årsakssammenhenger og kjeder, så kan du i prinsippet forutsi nøyaktige livsløp, osv. På et teoretisk plan stemmer det nok, men det er så mange kausale tannhjul som griper i hverandre at kompleksiteten gjør at spådommer om det meste er og blir gjettværk. En kan så klart gjøre enkle kausale rekker av typen «slipper jeg dette arket så vet jeg at det faller ned», men å trekke noen særlig mer langtrekkende årsakssammenhenger ut av det er ikke mulig. Vi liker klare svar: Enten er alt tilfeldig, eller så er alt skjebne, eller så er alt fysisk eller biologisk determinert. Men sannheten er jo at ting er skrudd sammen av så mange komplekse årsakssammenhenger at ideen om at man kan for-

utsi allting veldig presist er absurd. Værvarselet er et godt bilde på dette – der har du tilgjengelig alle de fysiske dataene som du så kan putte inn i supercomputere. I prinsippet skulle man da kunne tenke seg at man, gitt jordplatenes og himmellegemenes bevegelse, skulle kunne forutsi alt været på et visst punkt – også hundre år frem i tid, men det skjønner vi er fåfengt, enda man i teorien kunne ha gjort det.

*Så dette med kausalitet og forutsigbarhet siver kanskje ut av nettopp dette at vi kan skille ut en liten bit av virkeligheten om gangen, og så får vi ideen om at vi kan forutsi alt.*

Ja, når det gjelder genetikk så er det klart at alle er født med en gitt genetisk disposisjon. Jeg kunne for eksempel ikke ha blitt verdensmester i sjakk, og jeg kunne antakelig ikke ha blitt verdensmester i langrenn – du er født med et visst genetisk rammeverk som gir noen begrensninger, men selvsagt også muligheter. Men så kommer jo livets tilfeldigheter inn: Vokser du opp i Sør-Sudan er det klart at dine sjanser her i livet vil være mer begrenset enn om du vokser opp i Norge. Verden er full av folk som gjør helt banalt arbeid, og mange av disse har antakelig evner som potensielt sett langt overskrider de fleste professorers. Men litt tilbake til dette om man skal ha angst eller ikke for CRISPR og andre teknologier: Jeg tenker det også er en del av det menneskelige prosjekt å alltid ville gå videre. Hvis vi sa at vi nå var fornøyd og ikke ønsket å finne opp eller ut noe mer, så ville det ha vært fundamentalt i strid med den menneskelige natur.

*Ja, det blir nærmest absurd å tenke at vi skulle si oss ferdige, at «nå skal vi stoppe».*

Ja, jeg tror hele meningen for mange ville opphøre dersom vi ikke kan tenke oss at vi skal utvikle oss videre. Om vi ikke nødvendigvis skal utvikle menneskene selv, så i alle fall den teknologien vi har til rådighet. Men det er klart at vi nå med større grunn enn før kan si at vi står på spranget til en ny potensiell æra, også fordi ting utvikler seg eksponentielt. Nye innsikter genererer stadig nye innsikter: Det gjør at både erkjennelsene og mulighetene øker eksponentielt, i ulike varianter av Moores lov. Ikke bare når det gjelder transistorteknologi og prosessorkapasitet, men på mange andre

områder – bioteknologi inkludert. Men, som sagt, i utgangspunktet tenker jeg at en viktig del av det menneskelige prosjekt er å ville gå videre. Vi startet jo som en problemløsende art, og det var noe av det som ble vår suksess: at vi kunne løse praktiske problemer, at vi kunne lede vannet hit og dit, at vi kunne foredle planteslag, temme dyr osv. Denne praktiske problemløsningen har ført oss i retning av at vi stadig har forbedret ting, og etter hvert har dette blitt en slags drivkraft i seg selv.

*Vi nådde et nivå der problemløsningen levde sitt eget liv.*

Ja, mye av dette skriver Thomas Hylland Eriksen og jeg om i boken vår om konkurranse, *På stedet løp*. Den omtalte prosessen spiller nå på lag med markedet. Det finnes opp stadig nye ting som vi for få år siden ikke visste at vi trengte, men som vi nå er helt avhengige av, og som vi selvfølgelig forventer at skal videreutvikles og til en viss grad i noen tilfeller integreres i den menneskelige kropp. Det startet som praktisk problemløsning, og så ble det til at det å finne opp nye ting er blitt en integrert del av hele den menneskelige tilværelse – noe som er en god indikasjon på at biologi og kultur glir sømløst over i hverandre.

*Vi er blitt vant til å skulle forbedre våre omgivelser, og nå har det snudd seg mot oss – der biologien og bioteknologien gjør det mulig å «perfeksjonere» oss selv.*

Ja, da bikker vi over i transhumanismen som er det ultimate uttrykket, tror jeg, for denne forbedringsideologien når det ikke gjelder bare menneske, men også koplingen menneske-maskin. I og for seg kunne man si at i 1960 så tenkte folk her til lands at de hadde nådd himmelen i motsetning til de som hadde levd under krigstiden og førkrigstiden, vi hadde alt vi trengte, ingen sultet, vi hadde relativt like muligheter og fri utdanning. Men vi har ikke stoppet der – i stedet har vi denne evige forventningen om at ting skal utvikle seg, og da utvikle seg til det bedre og noe lettere.

*Problemet er at man lager ting man ikke visste at man skulle komme til å trenge, og er det da for sent å gå tilbake?*

Ja, vi er litt fanget i dette. Det er en egendynamikk som ingen sitter og bestemmer. Det er et avgjøren-

de spørsmål om denne utviklingen av mennesket nå er i ferd med å nå en terskel der den bikker over i avviklingen av mennesket.

*Spørsmålet om selvestruksjon: Det at vi har denne voldsomme produksjonsevnen ser ut til å være kombinert med problemet «infinite growth, finite resources», som ser ut til å være direkte knyttet opp til klimakrisen. Spørsmålet er: I hvilken grad er det en del av vår natur å være selvestruktive?*

Det er noe jeg har spekulert og ment veldig mye om. I og for seg er åpenbart ikke noen organismer selvestruktive med det som mål, men poder du for eksempel gjærceller i et sukkermedium får du allikevel den enkleste modellen for et selvestruktivt system. Det finnes ingen bremses der, de vil doble seg inntil de dør av enten mangel på næring eller etanolforgiftning. Så kan man jo stille spørsmålet om dette er en forenklet modell for mennesket. For selv om vi rasjonelt kan erkjenne dette, makter vi ikke helt å forholde oss til det. Vi er veldig flinke til å utnytte mulighetene her og nå, til å utnytte ressursene, mangfoldiggjøre oss og til å gjøre livet enklere. Men vi er dårligere til å tenke noen generasjoner fremover og legge begrensninger. Vi er veldig gode til å trække på gasspedalen, men ikke like flinke til å finne bremsepedalen når det trengs – noe jeg tror henger sammen med denne forventningen om at alt skal bli raskere, smartere, enklere og mer problemfritt. Som konsekvens overutviner vi ressursene. Den malthusianske tankegangen om en øvre ressursgrense ble opphevet gjennom den grønne revolusjon og stadig nye energikilder, men problemet består. Selv om vi skulle kunne tappe energi helt problemfritt fra solvinden, noe jeg tror er en realitet om noen tiår, så vil jo ikke det bety at vi kan fortsette å vokse i det uendelige. Vi vil trenge mat. Vi vil ha et fotavtrykk på planeten på varierte og voksende områder. Jeg tror det er den menneskelige akilleshæl, og den biologiske svakheten ved mennesket, at vi overfladisk sett kan minne litt om gjærceller i et sukkermedium.

*Ja, la oss gå tilbake til biologien som fag. Den har hatt en voldsom vekst, og dens tenkemåter har endret seg. Genforskningen heller jo mot reduktivisme, men selv tenker du holistisk. Hvordan er samspillet nå? Dawkins vil bruke sin memteori for å forklare sammenkoplingen mellom natur og kultur, men mange vil da igjen anklage ham for å være reduktivistisk i*

*sitt syn. Selve teorien om memer vil på et vis utgjøre et mem.*

Ja, han går selv i rette med sin meme-theory, det er Susan Blackmore og andre som har tatt den teorien helt seriøst og videreutviklet den. Idéen er god: Den kulturelle utviklingen styres ikke bare av gener. Der vil jeg si at Dawkins har vært ganske edruelig. Han hevder ikke at alt er gener, du har kulturelle fenomener som sprer seg uten at det nødvendigvis er adaptivt for organismen – det kan være moter eller hva som helst, også negative trender. Du kan for eksempel snakke om selvmords-memer dersom det sprer seg som en kulturell epidemi i ekstrem forstand, eller andre selvdestruktive memer. Jeg synes ideen rundt det er interessant. Ser du på utviklingen av biologien som fag, så har den beveget seg i to retninger – noe man kan se godt på vårt institutt. En sentral del av biologien har alliert seg veldig tett med medisinen, det biomedisinske, som selvfølgelig også er menneske- og nytteorientert. Så har du den mer opprinnelige biologien som er mer natur-opptatt (økosystem). Midt imellom disse ligger jo evolusjonen, enda evolusjonen hører mer hjemme i den holistiske biologien. Nå bruker vi alle genetiske verktøy for å forstå evolusjon og for å konstruere evolusjonstrær, eller for å se hvordan miljøeffekter påvirker genuttrykk. Genetisk analyse i hele sin bredde har blitt et avgjørende verktøy, uansett hva du jobber med innen biologien. Vi har likevel denne faglige todelingen – og dette reflekterer vel det de fleste fag har gått igjennom: Du har fått mer og mer spesialisering og slik fått en atomisering av fagene. Folk graver seg mer ned og kan mer og mer om mindre og mindre. Dette tror jeg er noe som går igjen i alle vitenskapsdisipliner, og spesielt i de naturfaglige, hvor trenden har pekt bort fra holistisk tankegang. Det kan man tydelig se ved at det er vanskelig å få finansiert prosjekter som favner bredt. Det er vanskeligere å få artikler ut og å gjøre karriere – som jo er viktig i bunnen – ved å jobbe tverrfaglig. Det som premieres, og som da selekteres frem i fagene, er spesialisering der du kan produsere mange artikler på kort tid om et tema du etterhvert blir spesialist på. Den reduksjonistiske metode har vært en enorm suksess i naturvitenskapene, men den har hatt sine kostnader ved denne ekstreme spesialiseringen. Det er for det meste folk utenfor mainstream-akademia, eller folk sent i karriereløpet, som kan gå utenfor

boksen. Selv prøver jeg å ri to hester, for jeg er interessert i veldig mye, og jeg synes det er viktig som fagperson å være interessert i mye, bruke faget og ta del i samfunnsdebatten. Et stykke på veien har den store naturen blitt borte, og det som teller nå er gener og proteiner, for å sette det på spissen.

*Det er litt vakkert også: Gener og proteiner er like i alle deler av naturen. Det viser slektskapet mellom alt levende. Samtidig forsvinner noe ut av bildet når man bare fokuserer på bestanddelene – noe jeg føler henger sammen med denne trangten til å få et klart svar.*

Som du sier, det samme proteinet finner du igjen i andre organismer i en litt modifisert form. Da forstår du sammenhengen, så den reduktive metoden har jeg veldig sansen for. Den er nøkkelen til suksess innen naturvitenskap, og til dels innen andre disipliner, så jeg vil ikke si noe vondt om den. Problemet er hvis den får bli enerådende, og det har jeg vært litt bekymret for. Noe jeg lenge har hevdet, og mener veldig sterkt, er at gitt de utfordringene vi står overfor i dag så kan vi ikke unnlate å ta del i debatten og engasjere oss i miljøspørsmål, framfor bare å bekvemt sitte tilbakelent og jobbe i det små – enda også dét er interessant og viktig. Med dagens utfordringer er det et moralsk anliggende å engasjere seg. Natur og miljø må tilbake, særlig i utdanningen, men også som en integrert del av forskningen.

*Jeg [Dag] tok et emne i miljøfilosofi med Arne Johan Vetlesen. Der var det en student med PhD i molekylærbiologi. Hun sa at da hun oppdaget miljøfilosofi-emnet til Vetlesen, som tar for seg de store problemene – som fremmedgjøring fra naturen – så kjente hun på at jo, det er en form for glemsel. Forskeren begynner med hvor spennende det er med at alt vokser og gror, med «the great outdoors», men ender med proteinsyntese.*

Jo, det er en god beskrivelse av det, sånn tror jeg at det har vært med veldig mange. På NMBU tror jeg nok at man har vært bedre på dette, slik at de unge menneskene som vil være med på å redde verden – og ære være dem for det, det skulle vært mange flere – gjerne ender på Ås. Hvis de vil endre verden ved hjelp av teknologi så ender de på NTNU – mens jeg mener at flere burde ende hos oss! Det jobbes mye med dette ved UiO, men vi er ikke flinke nok til å synliggjøre det. Det finnes ikke et viktigere spørsmål enn hvordan vi skal bevare planeten med



levelige forhold for oss selv og andre arter. Jeg ville følt det som helt uutholdelig om ikke menneskeheten skulle fortsette. På en måte har jeg akseptert min rolle som en brikke i det hele: Mening i livet er jeg ekstremt opptatt av, men mening med livet har jeg resignert litt angående. Uansett, at menneskeheten skal fortsette i uoverskuelig fremtid, ser jeg som det aller mest meningsbærende prosjektet, og det er en grunn for å engasjere seg i miljøbevegelsen. Ikke bare å overleve, men å overleve under vilkår som gjør at man kan realisere seg selv som menneske. Jeg tror ikke at mennesket vil gå under som følge av klimaendringer, men det kan jo bli så jævlig at det blir mer snakk om å eksistere enn å utvikle seg. Det er viktig at tanker som transhumanismen diskuteres, for der kan man på mange måter se menneskets utviklingsbaner videre – der kan man se for seg hvordan man tar i bruk CRISPR og andre verktøy for å genredigere. Videre tror jeg CRISPR er en fantastisk mulighet for å rette på genfeil, det har allerede blitt brukt på humanembryoer. Visjonen om udødelighet, dette med kryopreservering, virker som en ren illusjon. Og man må jo også spørre seg: Hvem skal leve evig, skal alle leve evig? Hvem skal bli født? Er problemet at vi er for få mennesker?

*Disse spørsmålene må stilles i samtalen om transhumanisme. Blander man ikke det deskriptive og det normative, i en slags antagelse om at jo mer vi vet om menneskets sammensetning, desto mer bør endre den? Det transhumanistiske prosjekt har sine grunnpremisser: Død = dårlig, lidelse = dårlig, nytelse = bra osv. Dermed slutter man fra grunnpremissene til masse rart.*

Jeg kan i og for seg ha sympati med det utilitaristiske målet å redusere verdens lidelse, som er et transhumanistisk mål, men hvis du leser hva Max More, en av transhumanismens sentrale forkjempere, hevder er transhumansimens mål, så går det jo mye lenger. Han vil eksplisitt utvikle mennesket til noe annet enn et menneske, så han går sømløst over fra transhumanisme til posthumanisme, og er også ivrig på dette med sammensmeltningen av menneske og maskin. Da går vi mot avviklingen av mennesket, slik vi kjenner det. Det kan umulig være et mål – for meg er ikke det meningsgivende, men tvert imot meningsødeleggende hvis vi tenker oss at vi avviker mennesket. Jeg er ikke i mot å

redusere lidelse – selv om Norge ikke akkurat er det landet i verden der vi trenger det mest, så må man også stille seg det som er et klassisk filosofisk, men også et biologisk-hormonelt spørsmål: Må ikke alt godt kontrasteres med noe ondt? Kan vi tenke oss at vi ligger der oppe på et evig lykkenivå? Det tror jeg ikke. Jeg tror at for å oppleve lykke, må man ha opplevd det motsatte. Sult er ganske viktig for å verdsette et godt måltid. Så jeg tror lidelsen er en viktig del av det menneskelige, selv om visse typer lidelse er det bra om man kan avskaffe. For all del, jeg synes det er helt utmerket om man kan bruke CRISPR til å avskaffe genetiske lidelser. Hvis man kan kutte ut den fatale biten av kromosom 4 og fjerne Huntingtons sykdom for eksempel, så er det klart at man skal gjøre det. Så det er dumt å være mot bruk av genteknologi og disse nye innsiktene, som jeg absolutt er for, og jeg ser på det som en viktig del av videreutviklingen av det menneskelige prosjekt. Transhumanismen beskrives jo ofte som å sprengte de menneskelige rammene, men det har vi jo gjort siden vi startet med kultur. Det blir en litt annen sak hvis vi tenker oss at vi gjør det genetisk på kjønnsellenivå, det er jo en fundamental endring i og for seg. Man kan godt gjøre det på arvelige sykdommer – en endring som er fundamental, men til det gode.

*Idet man skal fjerne reelle problemer ved bruk av teknologi, kan man plutselig fikle med ting som ikke var et problem i utgangspunktet. Men så må man nesten fortsette: Når vi har avskaffet det å løpe sakte, så må man bare løpe fort.*

Dét øyeblikk det foreligger en ny mulighet så er det veldig vanskelig ikke å gripe den, og særlig hvis det er etterspørsel på markedet. På noen områder har vi sagt nei. Kloning av mennesker er teknisk mulig – man har klonet andre primater. Det er bare snakk om å trimme metoden, så kan man drive storskala kloning av mennesker, noe det sies allment nei til av etiske grunner mer enn av tekniske. Mens når det gjelder bruk av CRISPR til å ikke bare fjerne genetiske lidelser, men til forbedring, så tror jeg det er vanskelig å se for seg et allment nei, for der er grensen mer flytende. Individkloning er en mer absolutt ting. Det øyeblikk det kommer firmaer som tilbyr dette, akkurat som det nå er firmaer som tilbyr gensekvensering, så tror jeg dette er en utvikling det er vanskelig å stoppe. Det er det

Harari skriver ganske dystopisk, men innsiktsfullt, om i *Homo Deus*. Han løfter debatten på en veldig bra måte. Første gang jeg leste den tenkte jeg at dette er «hype», og at dette er «far-fetched», men det er ikke det. Han peker på noe som reelt kan skje. Og da er det kanskje greit å ha tenkt litt på det på forhånd.

*Der har du filosofien igjen.*

Nettopp. Det er et godt eksempel på at filosofien fortsatt har en rolle å spille ved sånne spørsmål. Men igjen, det er veldig vanskelig å se for seg det at, idet muligheten foreligger, så har vi lett for å gripe den. I mitt eget fag er utviklingen i meget stor grad drevet av teknologi. Plutselig en dag foreligger det et fabelaktig nytt instrument, som kan gjøre ting man tidligere ikke trodde var mulig, hvilket generer nye hypoteser. Der vi tidligere først begynte med et problem, og så konstruerte man et instrument som kunne analysere eller gjøre den oppgaven for deg så er det nå litt motsatt «Jøss, kult. Hva kan vi bruke dette til? Jo, vi kan jo ...» Litt sånn tror jeg det er med transhumanisme og teknologi.

*Her er vi ved skillet mellom kan og bør igjen. «Kan» forøkes hele tiden, mens vi bruker tid på å finne ut av hva vi «bør».*

Ja, jeg tror dette forsøket på å konstruere et vanntett skille mellom kan og bør, eller mellom det deskriptive og det normative har forspilt seg. Naturretten springer jo ut av ting vi føler. Vi føler jo implisitt at det naturlige også er det riktige.

*Mange, kanskje særlig filosofer, har vært opptatt av å overkomme skillet, og har beskrevet hvordan etikken springer ut av vår natur.*

Ja, jeg har jo skrevet en bok nå som heter Vi der jeg bruker mye tid på akkurat de spørsmålene. Selv om det ikke er noen filosofisk bok, tror jeg akkurat den diskusjonen der er ganske viktig. Det er kanskje en menneskelig tilbøyelighet til å grabbe til seg det største kakestykket i et selskap, eller for menn å forgripe seg på kvinner – at det kan være en underliggende tilbøyelighet der – men vi behøver ikke noen rettsregler for å la være å gjøre det. De fleste mennesker skjønner at i en sosial setting er dette

galt. Galt både med tanke på at man påfører seg et dårlig rykte, men også overfor den man antaster. Så jeg tror at det ligger innebygget i oss. Vi har en normativ føring, som vi har vært inne på, som ikke er forankret i skriftlige rettsregler

*Det kan være en fordel å skrive ned og lovfeste det som allerede er naturlig i oss. Men i samtalen om menneskets fremtid ønsker noen å omskrive den menneskelige natur.*

Det er ikke nok at vi har en iboende følelse av hva som er rett og galt. For med mindre den også er forankret i rettsregler og det normative, så er den lett å overstyre, og ting kan bikke i både positiv og negativ retning i kulturer, det ser vi jo. Så jeg tror i og for seg at både påbud og forbud, rettsregler og normer er ekstremt viktige for å forsterke og nettopp dyrke frem disse gode tilbøyelighetene som vi har. Så det er på ingen måte nok med de biologiske føringene, men de ligger der, og det er ofte utspringet til det normative. For så vidt er dette også et område der jeg tenker at biologien har noe relevant å bidra med, hvor du finner veldig tette koblinger mellom biologi og filosofi. Rett og galt koker jo, hvis vi igjen skal gjøre det reduksjonistisk, ned til hormonsystemer i hjernen. Men jeg tror at grunnen til at samfunnet har utviklet seg i bedre retning er nettopp fordi vi har brukt rettsregler og normer for å forsterke de positive tilbøyelighetene. Vi har jo negative tilbøyeligheter òg, bevare meg vel, men vi har forsterket de positive og det som skal fungere godt i et sosialt felleskap. Så jeg tror det er helt avgjørende at vi har den typen normative, bevisst skrevne regler – for så vidt også sanksjoner, ikke bare tap av anseelse og dårlig rykte, men også sanksjoner i form av straff.

*De såkalte «New Atheists», som Richard Dawkins, hevder at religion er på vei ut, til fordel for en mer fornuftdreven, vitenskapelig måte å tenke på. Mens andre igjen ser på religion som en systematisering av de bedre sidene ved vår natur. Hvordan stiller du deg til vitenskap versus religion?*

Jeg er jo ateist, men ikke en anti-teist som Zapffe var. Zapffe var jo et paradoks, han brukte hele livet på å argumentere mot noe han ikke trodde på.

*Det er noe poetisk der.*

Ja, det er det. Jeg ser jo behovet for å tro, jeg har venner og gode kolleger som er troende, og jeg har ikke noe i mot det så lenge de har et rasjonelt fundament. For meg er det helt greit med en troende som aksepterer evolusjon, men en troende som er kreasjonist, vil jeg jo bekjempe. I hvert fall påstandene. Å være troende og akseptere rasjonell vitenskap er fullt mulig, de fleste troende i Norge gjør vel det. Men, som jeg var inne på tidligere, kan det hende vi befinner oss på en rasjonell øy i tid og rom. Det er fullt mulig at verden svinger i retning av mer religiøs tro, og for den saks skyld mer religiøs dogmatikk. Mennesket er jo dypt irrasjonelt på mange områder. Ingen naturlov tilsier at verden beveger seg fra opplysningstid og mot det stadig mer rasjonelle, der holder jeg alle muligheter åpne. Men jeg håper jo at det rasjonelle vil vinne frem og at religion blir mer pragmatisk og moderne, uten tendensen til å dogmatisere

*Det er et eksistensielt valg å søke til religion. Når livet ikke har nok mening. Der kommer transhumanisme inn: «Livet mitt har ikke hatt nok mening den tiden jeg har levd, så jeg må leve litt lenger, utrette litt mer.» Kroppen går jo gjennom en syklus, og blir borte etter hvert. Det kommer noen og erstatter deg.*

Noen mener at det hadde vært best at menneskeheten forsvant; jeg syns det hadde vært et forferdelig tap. Selv om vi er dyr, mener jeg som biolog at vi på mange måter er et unikt dyr. Og mening for meg er å bidra til at mennesket skal kunne fortsette å utvikle seg og å ha gode vilkår på planeten. På en måte har jeg slått meg til ro med at mitt liv er endelig, og selv om jeg har fått barn, så har jeg også tenkt at dersom jeg ikke fikk barn – før var jeg veldig opptatt av det å bringe genene videre – kunne jeg fortsatt være med på å bringe memene videre, noe som kan være like viktig.

*Så individet er ikke så viktig i den store sammenheng?*

Så verdifulle tror jeg tross alt ikke at mine egne gener er. Jeg er glad for at jeg har fått barn, og det gir jo en form for mening som er ganske konkret. Samtidig tenker jeg at hvis jeg hadde funnet opp et eller annet som hadde vært epokegjørende for menneskeheten, eller klima, eller hva det måtte være, så ville det vært et mye viktigere bidrag enn

det å få barn. Selv om det ene ikke utelukker det andre. Selv om man ikke oppnår den ultimate, grensesprengende endringen, i form av at man har funnet opp CRISPR eller noe sånt, så tenker jeg at så lenge man har jobbet for det så gir det en mening som er grei nok.

*Mening oppstår i forskjellige tidsperspektiv, der transhumanismen blir mer fremtidsrettet enn å skulle være med familien sin, forsikre seg om at de har det bra, i nuet.*

Det å ha som sitt ultimate mål å bare skulle berike seg selv eller være sånn ekstrem hedonist, å leve et hedonistisk liv frarøvet lidelse, tror jeg at ikke hadde gitt noe sjelefred når man var på sitt siste, i hvert fall ikke for meg. Men da jeg var 14-15 år hadde jeg min mest akutte dødsangst. Dette var mens jeg leste Zapffe. Den gangen tenkte jeg at hvis jeg kunne fryses ned – om hundre år, femti år, eller når jeg lever – så kommer det sikkert en kur som gjør at man kan leve evig. Det kan man klamre seg til. Sånn tenkte jeg altså, men ikke nå lenger.

*Kanskje er dødsangsten og mening nettopp uløselig forbundet, ettersom det ligger i bevissthetens natur å ville transcendere seg selv. Vissheten om at vi skal dø retter oss mot fremtiden. Kanskje er det en slik sammenheng?*

Ja, jeg tror faktisk det. Zapffe skrev et sted at «vissheten om døden ligger som en fossedur over dalen», at den ligger som en mørk sky over deg. Så kan man snu litt på det og si, kanskje ligger det der en mer eller mindre mørk sky, som en erkjennelse, som maner til dåd underveis, så man kan snu det til noe positivt.

# FOR EQUALITY AND LIBERTY

Review of

*Against Marriage: An Egalitarian Defence of the Marriage-Free State*

Clare Chambers

(Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017)

By Patrick J. Winther-Larsen

Despite being a topic scrutinized by a significant number of well-known figures from the history of philosophy (e.g., Plato, Aristotle, St. Augustine, St. Aquinas, Hume, Kant, Hegel, Mill and Beauvoir), a sentiment shared by some scholars is that marriage remains undertheorized in philosophy. In fact, Bertrand Russell's *Marriage and Morals* of 1929—a book which proved to be so controversial that his professorial appointment at the City College of New York was revoked—remains to this day one of the few philosophical works on marriage nearly ninety years after its original publication. In recent decades, a number of feminist philosophers have sought to correct this lack of discussion on marriage in philosophy, particularly in the area of political philosophy. John Rawls, for instance, dedicated few words to the subject throughout his many works. Because of this, feminist political philosopher Susan Moller Okin criticized him (among others) in her *Justice, Gender and the Family* (1989), where she argued that theories on justice ought to be applied to the family (which has traditionally been relegated to its separate sphere) in addition to the state.

Fast forwarding to the current decade, a number of philosophical books on the subject of marriage and gender equity have appeared, such as Elizabeth Brake's *Minimizing Marriage: Marriage, Morality, and the Law* (2012), the volume *After Marriage: Rethinking Marriage Relationships* (2016) edited by Brake, and Clare Chambers' newly published *Against Marriage: An Egalitarian Defence of the Marriage Free-State* (2017). The purpose of the present review is, in the main, to briefly exhibit the main arguments and comment upon the contents of Chambers' book. The structure of my review will closely imitate that of her book.

*Against Marriage* is divided into two parts, the first of which—consisting of Chapters 1 through 3—makes the case against state-recognized marriage, because it violates

equality and liberty. Chambers sometimes refers to a society in which marriage is recognized by the state (that is to say, in which a legal status is granted to married couples) as a 'marriage regime'. The second part—consisting of the remaining three chapters—defends the thesis that personal relationships should be regulated in a 'marriage-free state', to wit, one which neither recognizes nor endorses marriage. Such an "ideal of a state", Chambers argues, would be preferable to the practice of granting a privileged legal status to married people in marriage regimes (2017:2). Chambers' project is not to formulate the exact content of regulation that would be imposed in this state (nor the transition from the one to the other), but "rather to propose a form or structure of regulation" (2017:3-4). By this, she means formulating a framework of how relationships between unmarried people are to be justly regulated in the marriage-free state. The same form of regulation will then be applied to the rest of its citizens.

To clarify, Chambers does not argue against the practice of marriage, but against the notion that it should have any sort of legal significance. Hence, weddings ceremonies may take place, and marriages may exist, in the marriage-free state. In this state, then, the term 'marriage' would no longer denote a legal relationship, but instead become comparable to terms like 'friendship' or, I assume, 'partnership' and 'companionship', all of which refer to unique bonds between people (2017:2-3). Chambers is not committed to, nor interested in, taking marriage away from those who enjoy being married, or those who wish someday to marry, but rather in proposing a regulatory framework for relationships that would uphold equality and liberty, which she claims that current regulations of marital relationships fail to achieve.

### For whom is marriage beneficial?

*Against Marriage* opens with an overview of famous, feminist objections to the institution of marriage provided by philosophers such as John Stuart Mill and Simone de Beauvoir, and later feminist theorists and philosophers like Betty Friedan, Juliet Mitchell and Susan Moller Okin. Some of the arguments should be familiar to most readers with knowledge of feminist objections to marriage or in gender equality generally, but in an attempt to place readers on an equal footing, I will briefly rehearse some of them here. Using these as evidence, Chambers argues in the first part of Chapter 1 that the institution of marriage has historically been used to give the oppression of women a legal underpinning (or as she puts it, marriage “was a legal instrument of gender inequality”), and that the institution has thus violated equality (2017:19).

Chambers provides numerous examples of how women's oppression has been supported by laws and how marriage traditions have informed social norms that, likewise, have proved not to be favorable to their welfare. As noted, some of the objections to traditional marriage presented here are provided by historical figures such as Mill, who protested to the marriage laws in the England of his day. Although Harriet Taylor and he did eventually marry, Mill was vocal about his worries concerning their arrangement. At the time, the laws were such that marriage would leave her short-changed in terms of rights, because wives did not, among other things, retain rights over the property that they owned prior to marriage (2017:14). Although this particular injustice was rectified with an Act introduced in 1882, the oppression of English and Welsh wives did not end. As Chambers points out, married women were treated as lower-rung citizens even in the century to follow, as marital rape was not made illegal in England and Wales until as recently as 1991. That the institution of marriage has indeed been used as a devious legal device to oppress women, should be apparent from the above examples, which represent only a fraction of the examples provided by Chambers.

Subsequently, Chambers points out that marriage has negatively affected women not only in that it has provided husbands with the leeway to abuse their legal standing, but also in that it has formed how they should behave. As Beauvoir noted not long ago, women who experienced sex and motherhood outside of marriage were met with what Chambers calls “punishing social disapproval” (2017:15). (This norm, of co-

urse, persists to this day in certain societies.) To sum up the first part of Chapter 1, Chambers makes a convincing case that marriage has, historically at least, proved not to be favorable to married women, especially if we consider their legal standing. The question is, are these concerns still relevant in the West?

In the second half of Chapter 1, Chambers discusses the current state of married women, and argues that the institution of marriage has not changed significantly over the last centuries. She argues that despite the introduction of numerous laws that have helped improve the welfare and legal standing of married women, their oppression persists. In her own words, “[t]he end of legal inequality in marriage has not meant the end of actual inequality” (2017:19). According to Chambers, the harmful effects that marriage regimes have on individuals are not exclusive to married women either. The harms in question are divided into two categories, the first being practical harms (inflicted on married women), which include gendered division of labor (meaning “women earn less and are less independent than men”), domestic violence, and so on. Symbolic harms, which is the second category of harms, make individuals feel that they are “inferior or worthless,” and instances of these include the case of unmarried women, who may become sad or shameful if they fail to marry in their youth (2017:19-23). In her explanation on this concept, Chambers points out that marriage is often portrayed in popular culture such as films and self-help books as something that all women must secure. Although the examples she provides are sufficient in communicating the idea behind this concept, I do think she could have pointed out that there are a staggering number of magazines dedicated to aiding women in planning their dream wedding, or to find the perfect bridal gown, available in most bookstores, at newsstands and similar outlets. From what I gather, these types of magazines could equally well contribute to ‘symbolically harming’ many single women exposed to them. For instance, they may feel that they are missing out an enjoyable experience particular to their gender, namely that of being a wife.

Chambers also argues that the gays and lesbians (and, I should point out, the bisexuals) of certain societies are treated as inferior because they are barred from marrying. In addition to the aforementioned sexual minorities, marriage regimes may oppress those in non-monogamous relationships, that is, polyamorists (2017:24). Although the move of legalizing same-sex marriage may appear promising, in that it would make the practice available to individuals of any (monogamous) sexual orientation,



Chambers argues that extending eligibility of marriage to such groups would not rectify the institution's discriminatory past nor remove the arguably equally significant hierarchy between married and unmarried individuals that it reinforces (2017:42). Chambers' focus throughout Part 2 of *Against Marriage* is on the latter problem, which concerns the practice of a state providing a host of benefits exclusively to married parties because of their privileged legal status. These benefits pertain, perhaps most pertinently, to various health, tax, estate, and immigration privileges. The point in contention is whether it is unfair of a state to uphold this status-based practice.

The argument made in the subsequent chapter is that state-recognized marriage violates liberty, or more specifically the principle of liberal neutrality, which holds that a liberal state should not endorse a particular conception the good (2017:56-57). Marriage regimes are guilty of this, Chambers argues, by way of three things: the historical and current understanding of marriage which imparts certain discriminatory assumptions about the concept's meaning; the bundling of rights and duties that are conferred on married couples; and the hierarchy erected between married and unmarried persons referred to above. Since the second and third objections are given detailed scrutiny later on in the book, I will only focus on the first one here.

The objection goes that traditional marriage has a social meaning which involves shared assumptions about what marriage typically entails, such as that it is reserved for different-sex couple. Same-sex couples clearly do not fit this mold, and on the view of at least one defender of this ideal, the "sacramental status of Marriage" should not be granted to their unions (2017:58). This understanding of marriage, then, entails that same-sex marriage is not truly marriage, but something different altogether. Chambers argues based on the pervasiveness of this understanding of marriage, which is linked to state-recognize marriage, is non-neutral, and hence that this practice violates liberal neutrality. Although the debate on the concept itself is highly relevant in the context of same-sex marriage, Chambers discusses here only challenges to its heterosexual norm. Other important assumptions that the common meaning of marriage communicates, for instance that a marriage is essentially dyadic or monogamous, or that procreation is one of the main functions of marriage unions, are unfortunately not given their due attention in this section, but only to a rather small degree in the book's final chapter. My concern, at least as far as it pertains to polygamy, is that although the question of whether a marriage should be between a man and a woman may have

some force, the question of whether a marriage should be between a man and a woman seems equally valid to pose.

In Chapter 3, Chambers assesses five "potential, liberal justifications of state-recognized marriage," based on "communication, gender equality, caring relationships, the interest of society, and children's interests," offered by various scholars such as Brake, Stephen Macedo, and William Galston (2017:77). I cannot hope to cover each argument in detail here, but the arguments (roughly put), run as follows. Firstly, state-recognized marriage can communicate that two individuals are in a unique covenant, the social meaning of which is generally shared by those who understands what the label 'marriage' refers to. As many people want to marry particularly because they want to express that they are in this relationship, it would be illiberal to deny them this opportunity. Secondly, state-recognized marriage appeals to gender equality in one of two ways: on the radical version, marriage could be re-branded such that income and labor would be distributed equally among spouses. On the moderate version, marriage can undermine discrimination against same-sex couples and protect people, especially women, who in some societies (such as England and Wales) can be vulnerable outside of marriage, if they do not work outside the house. In England and Wales in particular, a partnered woman (that is, a woman with a partner and not a spouse) is dependent on "her partner's goodwill and the survival of the relationship" in order to get by (2017:88).

The third argument is offered by Brake, who argues that the state can support 'caring relationships'—that is, people in essentially 'marital relationships that are not necessarily romantic—by extending legal benefits to them. Fourthly, the liberal state has a legitimate interest in promoting policies that encourage people to marry, because married couples provide their offspring with a better upbringing and because stable commitments are generally good for people. Finally, state-recognized marriage is beneficial to children, because stable relationships can provide them with improved wellbeing and future prospects. Briefly put, all of these liberal justifications of state-recognized marriage hold that the practice of conferring a status on marriages are beneficial to members of marriage unions, third parties (particularly children), or society as a whole. Chambers refutes the above arguments, and concludes that although state-recognized marriage may bring indeed yield the benefits mentioned above (which she suggests may very well carry over into the marriage-free state), it widens the inequality gap between married and unmarried people referred to in the book's two preceding

chapters (2017:112). This suggests that the framework of marriage regimes ought to be replaced in the interest of furthering equality for all people, and not just for married people.

### Marriage in a marriage-free state

If we are to believe Chambers, state-recognized marriage violates both equality and liberty. If this is the case, then it seems that some form of regulation should be introduced to replace it. In the *Against Marriage's* fourth chapter, the first of Part 2, Chambers argues that relationships contracts are not the sort of legal regulation that should replace state-recognized marriage, pace a number of theorists who advocate this move. "Instead," she says, "the marriage-free state should implement a series of default directives setting out the rights and duties of parties engaging in various relationship practices" (2017:116). The form of regulation proposed here, which is described in detail in Chapter 5, will be sketched shortly.

Chambers notes that some feminists have defended relationship contracts because they promote equality and liberty. Anyone (different-sex or same-sex couples) can make them, and they can be formulated to accommodate the particular needs of the relevant parties. She argues, however, that such contracts do not straightforwardly promote either value, as contracting parties may not be in an equal position when they enter into a contract and the contracts may instantiate "unequal or excessively freedom-limiting terms" (2017:122-123). For instance, someone may enter into a relationship contract while her judgment is clouded by romance. On the basis of these objections, Chambers argues that relationship contracts should not replace marriage as we know it. Instead of going the route of reshaping marriage, she is proposing that the institution ought to be replaced with the regulatory framework sketched below.

On the form of regulation Chambers is proposing, regulation of private relationships are not bundled (or holistic), which involves creating a status and conferring "upon people a bundle of legal rights and responsibilities" (2017:118). The problem with this sort of regulation, she argues, is that it privileges a particular form of relationship format. That is to say, it is assumed that certain relationship practices should be unified, as opposed to engaged with individually. In the marriage-free state, regulation would be piecemeal, meaning the state would regulate the different practices or activities of a relationship—such as cohabitation, property ownership, child custody, and so on—separately (2017:147). Unlike bundled regulation,

then, this form of regulation does not assume that all relationship practices "coincide in one relationship". In this manner, Chambers argues, a diverse range of relationship formats may be accommodated, because the state would recognize "that individuals form relationships with different people for different functions," for example that some chose to live with an elderly parent while co-parenting with a former partner (2017:147).

Regulation of relationships in a marriage-free state is practice-based and thus unlike status-based regulation in marriage regimes does not involve creating a status. In arguing that the holistic, status-based regulation of traditional marriage (or marriage regimes) ought to be replaced with piecemeal, practice-based regulation in the marriage-free state, Chambers defends an approach she believes "allows state regulation and protection to take place on a more inclusive basis [...]" (2017:152). She objects to status-based regulation because this form of regulation excludes the relationships of individuals who do not have the relevant status, as they need to acquire it in order to receive protection. Unmarried people, that is, do not profit from benefits that couples receive only when they register their marriage. Practice-based regulation, on the other hand, closes the aforementioned gap between relationships of different legal status, because regulation is contingent on whether couples perform certain practices. So if a relationship is functionally identical to a marriage, even though the parties have chosen not to register it as such, their relationship may still be regulated by the state in the same way as that of a married couple. In a marriage regime, a couple 'opts in' to receive legal status and accompanying benefits, but in the marriage-free state they would need to 'opt out' of the legal regulations if they do not wish them to be imposed on their relationship.

*Against Marriage* is bookended with a discussion on the marriage practices of religious groups and the various structures that marriages may take in the marriage-free state. A marriage, be it religious or secular, which is performed and practiced in a marriage-free state, is what Chambers dubs a 'private marriage' (2017:171). Private marriages may be problematic for a number of reasons; for instance, a member may have been forced into one, or a religion may refuse to marry same-sex or different-race couples. In brief, Chambers notes that some problems found in marriage regimes may persist even in a marriage-free state if it was realized. The difference between them is that the form of regulation imposed in marriage-free states allows for greater variety in how relationships are composed, and furthermore, promises to the secure protection of

every kind of relationship.

The various marriage structures Chambers discusses in the final chapter include child marriage, polygamous marriages, and (to a lesser degree) incestuous marriages. All of them are controversial, but to varying degrees, seeing as at least polygamy has recently garnered support from a number of feminist philosophers such as Brake and Cheshire Calhoun, both of whom argue that polygamous marriage ought to be recognized by the state. Chambers claims that there would be nothing wrong with child marriage (an adult and a child marrying) in “a possible future world, where marriage neither involves a sexual relationships nor restricts autonomy” (2017:173). However, in a marriage-free state where marriage retains the social meanings it has today, she claims, the practice should be impermissible. As for polygamy and incest, Chambers is sympathetic at least to the suggestion that not all private polygamous marriages in the marriage-free state ought to be criminalized (2017:175–176). To conclude, she is suggesting that the marriage-free state should be laissez-faire about what may be called ‘marriage’, but not about what goes on within relationships to which this term is applied.

### **Happily ever after?**

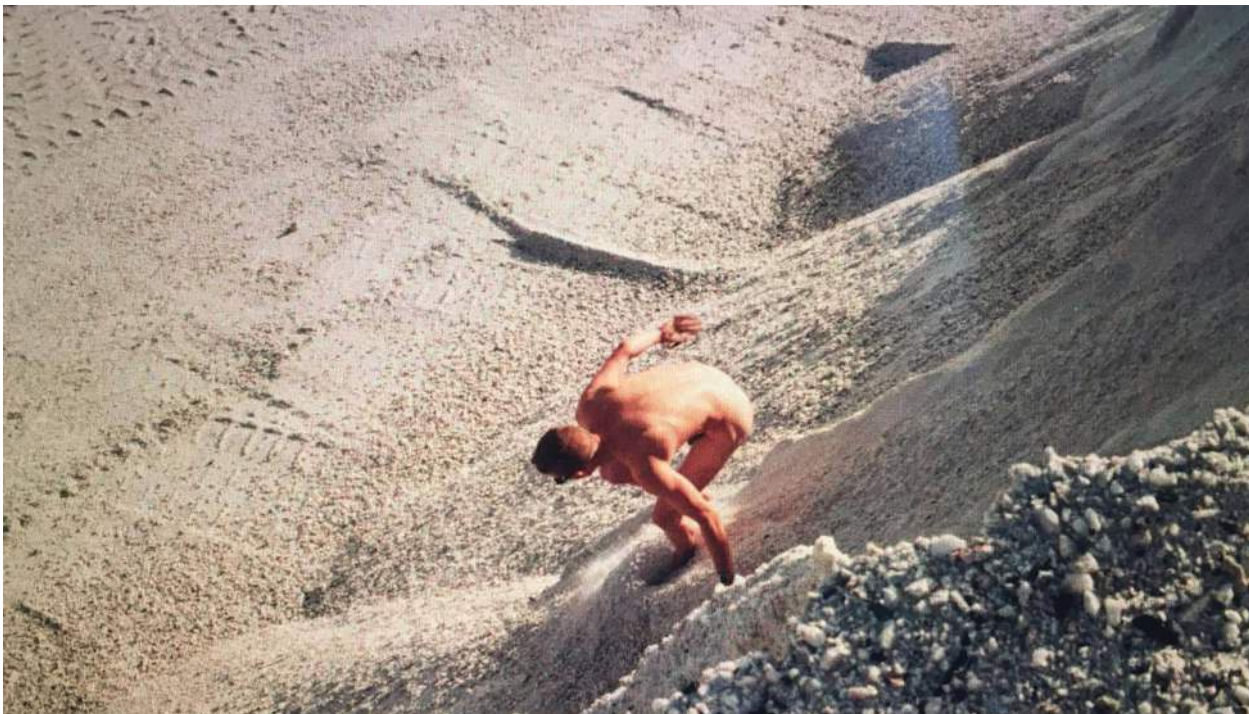
*Against Marriage: An Egalitarian Defence of the Marriage Free-State* is a welcome addition to the growing list of philosophical works on the subject of marriage and gender equity, and a thought-provoking book in its own right, particularly because of its emphasis on the gap between marriage and non-marriage. The staunchly conservative reader who wants the institution of marriage to retain its status will presumably not be swayed by the book’s main arguments (indeed, Chambers anticipates that this will be the case), but this modestly long piece of work should be an interesting read for those with a penchant for feminist philosophy.

### **NOTES**

<sup>1</sup>Despite giving this argument, Chambers claims that she is not a “political liberal”; rather, her position may be labelled ‘feminist egalitarianism’ (2017:49, 2).

<sup>2</sup>I borrow parts of this formulation from Cheshire Calhoun, ‘Who’s Afraid of Polygamous Marriage?: Lessons for Same-Sex Marriage Advocacy from the History of Polygamy’ in *San Diego Law Review*, Vol. 42 (2005), 1030.

<sup>3</sup>*Against Marriage* is not a work in jurisprudence, but as the use of ‘default directives’ (a compound of some of the few legal terms that Chambers does employ) in the above quote illustrates, it is not entirely jargon-free. That is not to suggest that the arguments made in her book are bogged down by ‘legalese’, to wit, technical jargon understandable only to those working in law or adjacent fields. Still, the legal vernacular employed particularly in the fourth and fifth chapters of the book will presumably render those parts challenging to some readers.



*Illustrasjon av Rasmus Kjelsrud*



# FRA FORSKNINGSFRONTEN NATURALNESS AND UNNATURALNESS IN CONTEMPORARY BIOETHICS

This is a shortened version of a report published by The Nuffield Council of Bioethics in 2015.

By Anna Smajdor

*When we seek to understand the world of nature, we do so at least partly in the hope that this will enable us to live within it more comfortably.* (Frankfurt 2004)

Bioethics is often concerned with novel processes and entities. IVF, genetic modification of crops and animals, reproductive cloning and xenotransplantation are examples of the actualities and possibilities with which bioethics must grapple. These developments give human beings the possibility of changing things that were previously beyond their control. Accordingly, it might seem it is precisely the ‘unnatural’ that generates the need for bioethical enquiry. It is paradoxical that despite this, bioethics is so polarised with respect to the moral significance of the natural. The birth of Dolly the cloned sheep is a good illustration of this. Dolly’s cloning was hailed variously as a benign breakthrough of modern science (McLaren 2000:1775–80), and an assault on nature (Kass 1998:3–61).

Many influential bioethicists who regard themselves as quintessentially rational thinkers repudiate any suggestion that ‘naturalness’ can or should play a part in moral evaluations. Others hold that nature is an important consideration in moral deliberation. The motives for the use of, or avoidance of, appeals to nature in bioethical reasoning, are coloured by an array of disciplinary, territorial, religious and political convictions.

This paper explores the ways in which concepts of the (un)natural feature in contemporary bioethical reasoning.

It sets out the bioethical issues that tend to generate most explicit discussion about the role of nature, and shows the ways in which the concept of nature feeds implicitly into other aspects of bioethical discourse. It considers the ways in which the use of, or repudiation of, concepts of nature, are associated with specific epistemological or value-based standpoints. The paper also considers how nature features in moral arguments and concerns raised in the media.

There is controversy about what constitutes bioethical methodology (Harris 2004:4). Nevertheless, there is general agreement that bioethics is an interdisciplinary field that can allow for a variety of academic approaches (Smajdor, Ives et al 2008:16). Because of this, people from many different academic and professional backgrounds may contribute to the bioethics literature. This is partly what makes bioethics such a rich endeavour. However, it has drawbacks too. Bioethicists, even when speaking to each other, cannot always assume an in-depth knowledge of any particular academic field on the part of their audience. They must therefore avoid jargon, and complex arguments or references to arcane sources, theories or concepts. In some instances, however, grappling with deep philosophical problems is an inescapable part of the project of bioethics. This is especially true of an analysis of the role of nature in bioethics: every line of enquiry leads to complex and sometimes bitter disputes, whose roots are entrenched in epistemological, theological and metaphysical problems.

### Meta-ethical and methodological considerations

Nature appears in bioethics in a number of guises and contexts. At the most basic level, people may feel that it is morally wrong to alter, distort or subvert natural processes. Leon Kass, for example, argues that an intuitive recoiling from interventions such as cloning that distort or fragment the natural processes of reproduction, is a powerful indicator that such interventions are unethical (1998:3–61). These are perhaps the most obvious occasions when nature plays an explicit role in informing moral reasoning in bioethics. However, there are many other ways in which nature colours the concepts and themes employed in bioethical deliberation. For example, bioethicists may be concerned with the natural world, or nature, especially in terms of our moral responsibility to the environment. Nature also plays a part in determining the ways in which bioethicists believe society should be constructed and in which legislation should function. Ideas of what is natural for individual humans, for families, and for states often play into arguments about disease, healthcare, and our moral rights and responsibilities towards one another.

The role of nature in bioethical deliberation cannot be understood without considering the wider philosophical debates about how if at all nature can inform ethical analysis. These meta-ethical questions about the relationship between morality and nature are particularly pressing for bioethics, given the subject matter of bioethical enquiry. Moral beliefs vary widely even within cultures, and they change over time. It has been suggested that a fear of moral relativism may impel bioethicists to seek absolute and universal moral principles (e.g. Buchanan et al 2000: 372).

Consequentialists too have to grapple with questions of objectivity and external truth, since even if they agree that the task of morality is to maximise the good, there is still the problem of ascertaining what is the good – and whether there is any objective or natural answer to this. Another way of seeking objective moral truth is through natural law theory – which explicitly endorses the idea that morality is immutable, and discoverable and can be found through contemplation and reasoning (George & Tollefsen 2007) (Tierney 1997:1150–1625). Natural law theory is also often associated with natural rights, which on some views are also deemed to be discoverable and objective (rather than constructs negotiated by human beings). The Catholic Church adopts a natural law approach to bioethics, deeming that it can offer a ‘complementary relationship of faith and reason’ (Hehir 1996: 333–6). Most of the bioethicists who apply natural law theory in their writings have religious affiliations.

### The is/ought distinction and the naturalistic fallacy

*There is no great invention, from fire to flying, which has not been hailed as an insult to some god. But if every physical and chemical invention is a blasphemy, every biological invention is a perversion. There is hardly one which, on first being brought to the notice of an observer from any nation which had not previously heard of their existence, would not appear to him as indecent and unnatural.* (Haldane 1924)

Peter Singer and Deane Wells state categorically that “... there is no valid argument from ‘unnatural’ to ‘wrong’ (2006:9–26). Similar views can be found in the work of many bioethicists. A report on the ethics of grafting human brain tissue into primates (whose authors include a number of mainstream bioethicists<sup>1</sup>) asserts: “...stipulating that research is “unnatural” says nothing about its ethics.” Gregory Pence dismisses those who would argue that natural gestation is morally important because we evolved that way: “Unfortunately, authors who argue this way usually commit (what I call) the Evolved Implies Ought fallacy which states that because human evolution to date involved practice X, therefore, practice X is moral” (2006:78).

There are two ways in which this supposed fallacy can be understood. G.E. Moore’s use of the term ‘naturalistic fallacy’ rests on the idea that terms such as ‘good’ or ‘right’ are not reducible to other properties (1993)<sup>2</sup>. Hume’s is/ought distinction<sup>3</sup>, on the other hand, refers to the habit of deriving a normative conclusion from a statement of fact. For example, even if it is a biological fact that human teeth have evolved to eat meat, it does not follow that it is morally acceptable for humans to kill and eat animals. In bioethics, both Hume’s and Moore’s points are often conflated into a single term: the ‘naturalistic fallacy’ (De Vries & Gordijn 2009:193–201).

Wilson, Dietrich et al note that it is the Humean version that is usually referred to in evolutionary psychology as the ‘naturalistic fallacy’ (2003:669–682) and the same is true of bioethics. That is, as R. De Vries and B. Gordijn note, it is popularly accepted in bioethics that to move from a statement of biological fact to a normative conclusion is fallacious. It has been suggested, however, that those bioethicists who invoke the naturalistic fallacy may be interpreting it wrongly, and that it is only a direct move from biological fact to normative conclusion that is problematic. Laurence Landeweerd acknowledges that the is/ought distinction and the naturalistic fallacy certainly pose some serious problems for those who want to argue



from nature. However, he suggests that "...this does not mean that there cannot be a relation between descriptive accounts of our nature and ethics. It simply means that these relations are difficult to construe as causally inferable" (2004:17–23).

If one accepts Landeweerd's contention, not everyone who argues from nature in bioethics necessarily falls foul of the naturalistic fallacy. Provided that the aim is to show how the relation between nature and ethics can be construed and applied, rather than simply to move directly from is to ought, even the most critical of mainstream bioethicists might be able to find some common ground with those who argue from nature.

### Religion and rationality

*We live on the other side of a religious age. [...] The central strength and weakness of the West is precisely that it believes in nothing* (Engelhardt 1985)

The widespread dismissal of arguments from nature means that those bioethicists who adopt a natural law approach, where the appeal to nature may be more nuanced, are marginalised and demonised, according to David Oderberg<sup>4</sup>, in a piece whose bitterness and anger with 'mainstream bioethics' is evident from his choice of invective (2008:98–109). Newman is also critical of mainstream bioethics, and what he sees as its postmodern insistence on "...devaluing nature and natural distinctions". For Newman, religion is an asset to bioethics, as the religious perspective "...is less fearful of and therefore less deferential to science" (2009:101–35).

The dichotomies discussed here are largely those that exist in the English speaking world, and in the Western analytical tradition. There are, of course other approaches to bioethics, though they might not be considered mainstream. Ryuchi Ida for example, espouses a bioconservative standpoint: "in Japan, we respect the view of 'As it stands' ... This attitude expresses respect for Nature and for the natural state of the baby... Ethical appeals to the human welfare or individual happiness to justify the use of science of technology may have intuitive force in the West, but may seem alien to a non-Western audience" (cited in Bostrom & Savulescu 2008:5).

As suggested, in the West, those who openly endorse the idea of values inherent in nature are often religious – and often pro-life advocates. Bioethics is deeply divided on this point; those whom Oderberg regards as the 'mainstream' may be dismissive or openly hostile to approaches that are perceived as lacking rigour or rationality. If

Oderberg is correct that the most powerful players in bioethics set the agenda in ways that make it difficult to argue from nature, then it may be that some potential discussion of nature and its role in bioethics is stifled or discouraged at the outset, leaving only the bravest or most ardent to articulate the minority position.

The overall picture as it stands seems to be one in which mainstream bioethicists talk to each other, applying a variety of methodologies which do not openly argue from nature, and whose conclusions rarely if ever challenge certain accepted moral positions. It is significant to note that the three dismissals of variations of the naturalistic fallacy cited earlier do not ascribe these supposedly fallacious views to any specific individual; nor are they contextualised to any particular argument. The 'appeal to nature' is treated as a free-floating straw man.

This may explain the relative dearth of open debate on the role and relevance of nature in mainstream bioethical literature. This is worrying for the state of health of bioethics, since opportunities for cross fertilisation and enrichment of the academic bioethical debate are constrained, but perhaps of equal concern, the unwillingness of mainstream bioethicists to engage with arguments about naturalness may also result in a disconnect between bioethics and public moral discourse.

### The scope of 'nature' or 'the natural'

*These days, there are few notions more derided [...] than "nature" and "the natural." The term is sometimes handled by bioethicists and policy analysts, but then only with rubber gloves* (Newman 2009)

Even if one believes that 'x is bad because it is unnatural' could be true, it would be necessary to define and agree what was meant by 'unnatural' before any use could be made of this approach to bioethical reasoning. The difficulty in defining exactly what we mean by nature is not a new phenomenon, though arguably, it becomes more challenging as human beings expand their spheres of agency to include space travel, virtual intelligence, genetic modification, and other endeavours that have become possible in the past hundred years or so. John Stuart Mill suggested that there are two ways of understanding nature. Firstly, as a collective name for everything which exists (in which case everything is natural), and secondly, as a name for everything which exists/occurs independently of human intervention (1904).

Mill's point shows that either way, the term 'nature' is not on the face of it very useful for normative purposes.

Either it is devoid of content, since everything is natural, and therefore we can accept everything that human beings do. Or it cuts out too much, since it implies that building houses, or treating diabetes is unethical. Peter Singer and Deane Wells touch on this when they state '[t]here is no appropriate sense of "unnatural" in which respirators for premature babies are natural but ectogenesis<sup>5</sup> is unnatural' (2006:9–26).

Despite the reluctance of mainstream bioethicists to appeal directly to nature, it is possible to find implicit or covert appeals, assumptions and concepts in many instances. Indeed, it may be that one cannot escape this, since as discussed, assumptions about nature are already imbued in many of the moral theories and methods adopted by bioethicists. Moreover, many core concepts and themes relate at some level to ideas of nature. Some of these concepts and themes are outlined below.

### Human nature

*We unanimously rejected ethical objections grounded on unnaturalness or crossing species boundaries.* (Greene et al. 2005)

Many strands of moral reasoning rely at some level on concepts of human nature. This is therefore a significant point of enquiry for anyone attempting to explore further the question of how nature and bioethics relate to one another. Virtue ethics is one of the clearest examples of a moral framework that seeks to derive answers to ethical questions through an examination of what it means to be human, and from this, what is good for humans. For Aristotle, the morality of human behaviour cannot be separated from human nature. A good person will flourish, and flourishing is in itself a part of what it is to be good (Nussbaum 1988:32–53).

Yet one of the difficulties for bioethics is precisely the question of what is human nature. Marc Hauser argues that the underlying basics of morality are universal, not culturally dependent. He suggests that humans are in some senses hard-wired for morality: it is part of our essential nature, in the same way that language, or the capacity for language is – that is, the content is not entirely fixed, but the capability and some of the structure, is (2006). This might be thought to corroborate some aspects of the Aristotelian view of human nature as something fixed and immutable from which we can ascertain the requirements for our moral flourishing. But biomedical technology enables us to envisage ways in which we might change ourselves – perhaps in ways so fundamental that any connection

between human nature and bioethics would be severed. It would then be up to us to determine what sort of creatures we want to be.

Ingmar Persson and Julian Savulescu embrace this possibility, arguing in favour of moral enhancement, by means of technological interventions, if this should ever become possible. For them, whatever the current state of human nature, there is no reason to stick with it if we believe we can improve on it. For example, perhaps we could alter our genes to increase our capacities for altruism, empathy, or justice (2008:162–77). Interestingly, this is a point on which 'mainstream' bioethicists diverge; John Harris is strongly opposed to the prospect of moral enhancement, which he regards as incompatible with freedom – something which for him is a profoundly important part of human nature (2011:102–11). Harris specifies that we should be satisfied with the existing means we have for improving our moral behaviour: socialisation, education, etc., and here he strongly implies that there is a morally significant distinction between these 'natural' methods of moral enhancement, and the unnatural interventions proposed by Persson and Savulescu.

### Nature and need, correction and enhancement

One of the challenges for bioethics is to distinguish between health and disease, between needs and desires, and between correction and enhancement. This is difficult when new medical procedures and technologies are being developed that blur previously existing boundaries and call previous assumptions into question. In all of these distinctions, concepts of nature play a role, though it is not usually explicit.

One field in which these distinctions appear is that of germline engineering (making genetic changes that would be inherited by future generations). Some bioethicists argue that this is permissible if the alterations are genuinely therapeutic, rather than for example making people taller or more attractive. Marc Lappe argues that the distinction between correction and enhancement is the key to establishing the appropriate use of medical technologies. "Only the first is squarely within the domain of orthodox medicine", he asserts (1999:157).

Another way of expressing the health/disease and correction/enhancement dichotomy is the concept of normal species function. Christopher Boorse is one of the most emphatic proponents of this approach. For him, health is the absence of disease – and disease is defined by its negative impact on what is normally expected of a species (1975:49–68). On his view, homosexuality can indeed be

seen as a disease; it would clearly be detrimental to species survival if all the species members were homosexual, therefore normal species function is heterosexuality. The appeal of this approach is that it takes disease and health to be empirically discoverable, and value free, avoiding the pitfalls of the naturalistic fallacy as discussed above.

As Ian Wilmut observes, however, “[n]ot everything that happens in nature can sensibly be seen as an adaptation that truly enhances survival. Nature is quirky” (2000:52). T.H. Engelhardt is also sceptical. He points out that Boorse seems to think there is a single natural design for humans, that each individual ‘should’ match, while in fact the species may rely on a multitude of characteristics and variations, some of which we might characterise as defects or diseases but which in fact are beneficial to the species as a whole (1985:79–91). Engelhardt’s argument is that any attempt to derive health/disease boundaries through appealing to nature will not work, unless one identifies the goals that are being pursued. Boorse takes the species to have a goal – but does not clearly specify what that is. But Engelhardt suggests that we cannot escape the value component of determining health via normal species function, since the very choice of a goal is value-laden. Engelhardt’s analysis seems to embrace the blindness of natural selection, in just the way that Newman regards as being nihilistically postmodern (2009:101–35).

It may be that those who are most sceptical about natural distinctions between health and disease hold different moral commitments to the purpose of healthcare, and definition of need itself. Those who have a primarily consequentialist standpoint may not see value in the correction/enhancement distinction, and may deny that the concept of medical need has any special moral significance. If the underlying aim of medicine is to improve wellbeing, it is unimportant whether the person being treated is ‘sick’ or not. In stark contradiction to Boorse’s view, the World Health Organisation defines health as “a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity”.<sup>6</sup> This implies that one does not necessarily have to demonstrate a clinical pathology in order to have a claim for medical treatment. Therefore, the reliance on natural or biological facts as a basis for determining need, or for distinguishing between correction and enhancement, is diminished.

## Conclusion

*Whether there is wisdom in it or not, disgust at ‘violating nature’ has a long history. ‘We should not mess around with the laws of nature’, insisted one respondent in Life*

*magazine’s survey on reproductive technologies when IVF was becoming a reality in 1969. These attitudes need probing, not simply ridiculing.* (Ball 2014:1964–65)

Hannah Landecker has suggested that bioethicists missed the point about Dolly the sheep: the real revolution was not the prospect of reproductive cloning, or the possibility of producing pharmaceuticals in milk, but the fact that something had happened which “alters what it is to be made of cellular biological matter – a change that is very much still pertinent to the present and the imminent future” (2007:225). It is this that seems to be the most significant aspect of where the unnatural fits in bioethical reasoning. There seems to be an important moral difference between the natural and the unnatural when the distinction is construed in this way. As suggested earlier, biotechnology gives us new spheres of moral responsibility. Moreover, with these developments the decision not to use newly-possible techniques is also transformed into a moral choice.

The relation between the natural and the artificial, between intervening and not intervening, is complex. Many human endeavours are aimed at countering the course of nature, and often we may have strong moral reasons for doing so. However, the temptation to rush from this to moral conclusions needs to be resisted. Those who tackle the question of what is natural or unnatural and its relationship with ethics have tended to arrive at very strong conclusions and these are often at polar opposites of the spectrum, i.e. either that there is no moral problem whatsoever, or that the unnatural is so obviously unethical, that its rejection requires little deliberation. This report attempts to show that on the contrary, deliberation is very much required. Whether or not one can derive moral answers from nature may still be a moot point, but it seems evident that human attempts to control nature generate many moral questions.

## LITERATURE

- Ball, P. 2014, “Unnatural reactions”, *The Lancet*, 383, 1964–65.
- Boorse, C. 1975, “On the distinction between disease and illness”, *Philosophy & public affairs*, 49–68.
- Bostrom, N. & Savulescu, J. 2008, “Human Enhancement Ethics: The State of the Debate”, in Bostrom, N. & Savulescu, J. (eds.) *Human Enhancement Ethics*, Oxford University Press: Oxford.
- Buchanan, A. Brock, D.W., et al. 2000, *From chance to choice: genetics and justice*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge.
- De Vries, R. & Gordijn, B. 2009, “Empirical ethics and its alleged meta-ethical fallacies”, *Bioethics*, 23:4, 193–201.
- Engelhardt Jr, H.T. 1985, “Looking for god and finding the abyss: bioethics and natural theology”, *Theology and Bioethics*, 79–91.

- Frankfurt, H. 2004, *The Reasons of Love*, Princeton University Press: Princeton.
- George, R.P. & Tollefsen C. 2007, "Natural Law", in *The International Encyclopedia of Ethics*, H. LaFollette (ed.), Wiley-Blackwell: New Jersey.
- Greene, M., Schilkl, K., Takahashi, S. et al. 2005, "Ethics: moral issues of human-nonhuman primate neural grafting", *Science*, 309, 385–386.
- Haldane, J.B.S. 1924, *Daedalus; or, science and the future*, Kegan, Paul, Trench, Trubner and Co: London.
- Harris, J. 2011, "Moral enhancement and freedom", *Bioethics*, 25:2, 102–111.
- . 2004, "The scope and importance of bioethics", in *Bioethics*, Harris, J. (ed.), Oxford University Press: Oxford.
- Hauser, MD. 2006, *Moral Minds: How Nature Designed Our Universal Sense of Right and Wrong*. Ecco: New York.
- Hedgecoe, A. 2004, "Critical bioethics: beyond the social science critique of applied ethics", *Bioethics*, 18:2.
- Hehir, J.B. 1996, "Bioethics and natural law: The relationship in Catholic teaching", *Kennedy Institute of Ethics Journal*, 6:4, 333–336.
- Kass, L. 1998, "The Wisdom of Repugnance", in *The Ethics of Human Cloning*, Kass, L. & Wilson, JQ. (eds.), American Enterprise Institute Press: Washington DC.
- Landecker, H. 2007, *Culturing Life*, Harvard University Press: Harvard.
- Landeweerd, L. 2004, "Normative-descriptive and the naturalistic fallacy", *Global Bioethics*, 17:1, 17–23.
- Lappe, M. 1999, "Manipulating the Human Germ Line", in *Bioethics: An Anthology*, Kuhse, H. & Singer, P. (eds.), Blackwell Publishing: West Sussex.
- McLaren, A. 2000, "Cloning: pathways to a pluripotent future." *Science*, 288, 1775–80.
- Mill, JS. 1904, *Nature, the Utility of Religion and Theism*, Watts & Co: London.
- Moore, GE. 1993, *Principia Ethica*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge.
- Newman, SA. 2009, "Renatured biology: Getting past postmodernism in the life sciences", in *Without Nature: A New Condition for Theology*, Albertson, D & King C. (eds.), Fordham University Press: New York.
- Nussbaum, M.C. 1988, "Non-relative virtues: an Aristotelian approach", *Midwest studies in philosophy*, 13:1, 32–53.
- Oderberg, D. 2008, "Bioethics Today", *The Human Life Review*, 131:4, 98–109.
- Pence, G. 2006, "What's so Good about Natural Motherhood? (In Praise of Unnatural Gestation)", in *Artificial womb technology and the future of human reproduction*, Rodopi: Amsterdam.
- Perrson, I. & Savulescu, J. 2008, "The Perils of Cognitive Enhancement and the Urgent Imperative to Enhance the Moral Character of Humanity", *Journal of Applied Philosophy*, 25:3, 162–177.
- Singer, P. & Wells D. 2006, "Ectogenesis", in *Ectogenesis: artificial womb technology and the future of human reproduction*, Gelfand, S. & Shook, J.R. (eds.), Rodopi: Amsterdam.
- Smajdor, A. & Ives, J. et al. 2008, "Getting from the Ethical to the Empirical and Back Again", *Health Care Analysis*, 16:1.
- Tierney, B. 1997, *The idea of natural rights: studies on natural rights, natural law, and church law*, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing: Michigan.
- Wilmut, I. Campbell, K. et al. 2000, *The second creation: Dolly and the age of biological control*, Farrar Strous and Giroux: New York.
- Wilson, D.S., Dietrich, E. et al. 2003, "On the inappropriate use of the naturalistic fallacy in evolutionary psychology", *Biology and Philosophy*, 18, 669–682.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Tom Beauchamp, Hilary Bok, Andrew Siegel, Ruth Faden, among others.

<sup>2</sup>Not everyone agrees that this is a fallacy per se.

<sup>3</sup>"In every system of morality, which I have hitherto met with, I have always remark'd, that the author proceeds for some time in the ordinary way of reasoning, and establishes the being of a God, or makes observations concerning human affairs: when of a sudden I am surpriz'd to find, that instead of the usual copulations of propositions, is, and is not, I meet with no propositions that is not connected with an ought, or an ought not. This change is imperceptible; but is, however, of the last consequences. For as this ought, or ought not, expresses some new relation or affirmation, 'tis necessary that it should be observ'd and explain'd; and at the same time that a reason should be given, for what seems altogether inconceivable, how this new relation can be a deduction from others, which are entirely different from it" (Hume [1740] 1978:469).

<sup>4</sup>I would not classify Oderberg himself as a bioethicist, though he writes sometimes on bioethical themes. I include his views here partly because they are striking in their attack on bioethics, and because he makes explicit his affiliation with natural law reasoning. Oderberg singles out the most controversial bioethicists, perhaps unfairly; there are many other influential thinkers in bioethics whose outlook is not aligned with Savulescu, Singer or Harris.

<sup>5</sup>The gestation of babies in artificial wombs.

<sup>6</sup>Preamble to the Constitution of the World Health Organization as adopted by the International Health Conference, New York, 19–22 June, 1946; signed on 22 July 1946 by the representatives of 61 States (Official Records of the World Health Organization, no. 2, p. 100) and entered into force on 7 April 1948.

# I PRAKSIS

# WHAT IS IT LIKE TO BE A SALMON?

## AT THE CROSSROADS BETWEEN PHILOSOPHY, ART AND PRACTICE

*By Martin Lee Mueller*

What is it like to be a salmon? What role can philosophy contribute to asking and, possibly, answering this question? How far can language and, by extension thinking, guide us into the perceptual reality of another sentient being? Where thought falters, can we move further still? What is the role of art and music in exploring the charged terrain between self and other? And why does all of this matter at all?

In my recent book *Being Salmon, Being Human*, I approach human-salmon relations from a radically ecological point of view. The book argues for an empirically sound description of reality that understands existence as a complex system of mutual breath, dependency, interpenetration, co-evolution, and also freedom. Through a philosophical, anthropological and ethnographic lens, I demonstrate that for millennia, salmon have done more than merely feed humans with the gift of their flesh. They have also gifted humans with a richer metaphorical and conceptual landscape; feeding our forbears with inspiration, wonder, humility, a sense of place, a sense of belonging; feeding riverside communities even with concrete insights into what economic arrangements and technologies could be maintained indefinitely. Salmon, it seems, have frequently intervened and tutored riverside communities with insights into demonstrably successful, truly sustainable economies. The anthropologists Sarah K. Campbell and Virginia L. Butler (2010) gather robust evidence that prior to the arrival of Europeans to the Pacific Northwest of America, “extremely high human population densities” lived side by side with consistently high numbers of Pacific salmon for at least seven and a half millennia! Crucially, these cultures had technology powerful enough to over-exploit their fish, such as traps that could potentially close entire rivers and drive salmon to extinction within just a few seasons. So how come these people never did, even though they could have?

### **Agency**

One of the key arguments in the book is that the cultural and ecological resilience rested on a fundamental recognition of the fishes’ agency. Like ourselves, so too salmon would have been recognized as experiencing subjects in their own right, participating, as philosopher and biologist Andreas Weber recently expressed it to me; in “the world’s manifold desire to become”, and being recognized in their agency, salmon would have been approached with measures of respect, humility, alertness, and modesty, lest they withdrew their gift-giving abundance and stopped returning themselves as food for humans and other riverside feeders. The ethical stance to recognize these Others in their own right was coupled strongly with a practical sense: The price for denying the fishes’ agency would have been, ultimately, the collapse of their runs, and thereby the erosion of the entire bioregion’s food supply. Self-interest and altruism would have been finely interwoven, each recognized in its complementary relation with the other.

Stories were one way in which the recognition of the fishes’ agency was coded and safeguarded. A rich body of stories from the Pacific Northwest speaks of an “original agreement” between salmon and humans, describing, in rich detail, the cycles of mutual obligation between them. Such stories frequently negotiate both symbolic and practical implications. They invoke respect for the individual who must be killed and consumed. They also suggest that humans must make return gifts to salmon, ranging from careful speech to dances, festivals, or holes left intentionally in weirs, so that some fish could pass through the traps unscathed. And these stories embed human-salmon relations inside a truly more-than-human world. The metaphor of the “original agreement” suggests that salmon not only have a contract with humans alone; they have other obligations to fulfill to bears, foxes, gulls, deer, willow, birch, or spruce.

Closer to home, we discover that same principle of

recognizing salmon in their agency. The Sami too have coded the principle in symbolic expression and in practice, recognizing in it a key component of a functional land ethic. Anthropologists Solveig Joks and John Law (2017) have pointed out that the Sami word *bivdit* can be translated both as “to hunt” and “to ask for something”. In fishing, the fisherman acknowledges the fishes’ freedom to gift themselves or not. Fishing becomes an open-ended negotiation between two autonomous actors, each with their unique intentions and needs. ‘Success’ is the result of a relationship rightly practiced, and of mutuality honored and upheld. Never are the fish mere “resource”, or “object”. They too, like the fisherman, are agents inside an animate world. They too are Earth becoming alert to itself through their sentient, breathing bodies. And that makes all the difference.

### Inside salmon’s topography of meaning

There is a remarkable synchronicity between these indigenous cultures and contemporary biological thought. Biosemiotician Andreas Weber, in his book *The Biology of Wonder* (2016), makes the compelling argument that feeling – the experience of a subjective standpoint, or a distinct inwardness – and the desire to exist are phenomena that lie at the heart of a contemporary concept of biology. It’s a discovery so radical that it’s still only poorly understood, let alone translated into ethically sound economic practices. Farmed salmon are still “exploited captives”, a term first suggested to apply to the fish farming industry by the eminent veterinarian and writer Bergljot Børresen. Their rampant exploitation is still scripted into concepts, practices, infrastructure, and even attempts to create more “sustainable” or “organic” farming practices fail to address the underlying dilemma that is the structural denial of their agency.

Weber points out that the word “intelligence” originally describes the judgment of a distinct self for whom life means something. Derived from Latin *intelligere*, it means primordially “to be in-between, to be able to choose” (2016:151) – it is in that sense that salmon are arguably one of countless expressions of life’s ubiquitous intelligence. They, like other organisms, bring forth value simply in existing. They, like other creatures, feel; they have an inner experience of meaning. They too are beings with intention, pain, desire. They too – like us – are a unique manifestation of the world’s multicentered longing to become. Being salmon would now mean being an embodied intelligence which – who – constantly unfolds into creative imagination. It would mean to ceaselessly emerge and self-

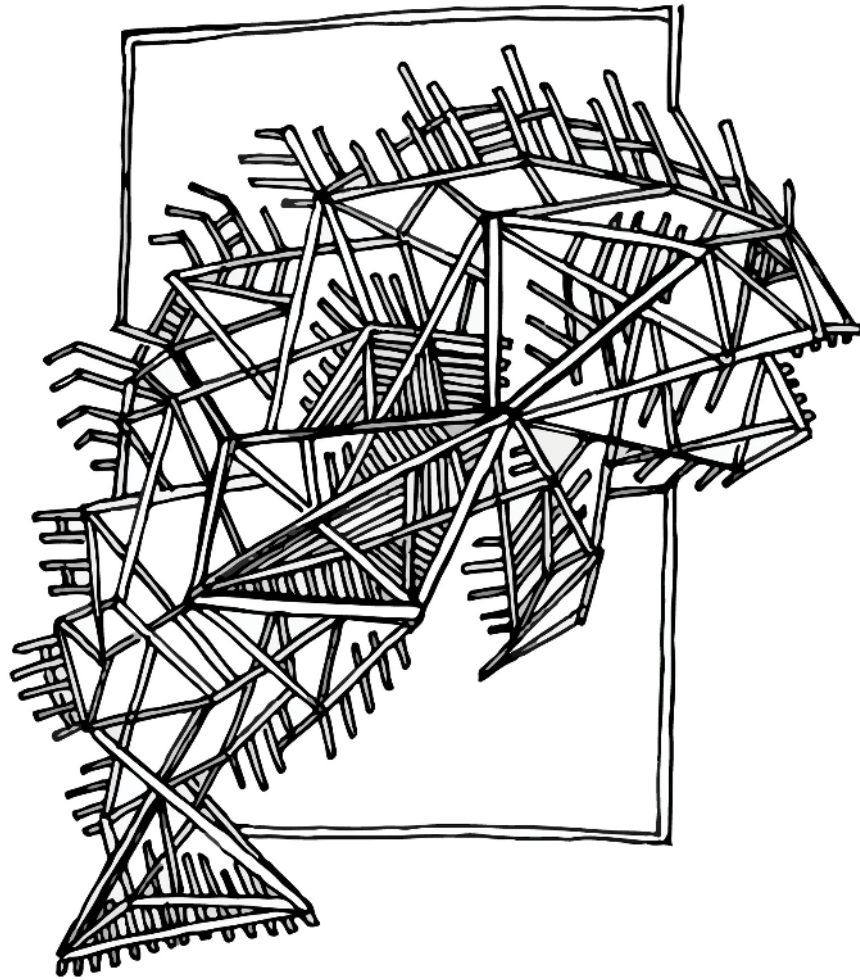
compose from the entanglement of matter and inward experience. Salmon, like any sentient being, has an intrinsic expectation that as she encounters her lifeworld, the world will gradually reveal itself to her in its meaningfulness.

Root tangles that offer shelter, seasonal changes that offer cues and structure for her own metamorphosis from smolt to adult; the planet’s bipolar magnetism that sends shivers of recognition through her cold-blooded flesh: she encounters the land, the ocean, and even the sky, not in their objective calculability, not as an inert or passive “environment”. Everything she encounters is potentially meaningful to her; it stands before her as enigma, challenge, puzzle, problem. The world demands her response, and she accepts the challenge, actively composing the “topography of meaning” that is her lifeworld. She ever uncovers delicate nuances of meaning as she migrates from her birth river to her ocean hunting grounds, and back again when she knows it is time to spawn a new generation. She is an alert agent who navigates inside a world of animate powers, tuning alertly in to tidal forces, lunar cycles, gravity, algae blooms, whale song, or to human activity on the river banks.<sup>1</sup>

Such are some of the conceptual openings the book develops toward moving beyond the notorious epistemological stalemate between Thomas Nagel and his bat. Leaning into the work of phenomenologist David Abram, who in turn is a keen reader of Merleau-Ponty, I suggest that it may indeed be possible to allow our own perceptual horizon to become so porous and permeable that other embodied agencies begin to speak from beyond the porous seam of our own bodies.<sup>2</sup> In other words: it may be possible, after all, to know what it is like, over there. For am I not also a carnal intelligence, with a mindful body fully immanent in the depth of the more-than-human Earth body, alongside sperm whale, rainfall, tidal patterns, leatherback turtle, and migrating salmon? Am I not situated firmly inside this atmosphere, looking up at these clouds, balancing on this rocky mantle of Earth’s crust? And isn’t it possible, then, to develop what Abram (1996) calls “metamorphic speech” – speech that thinks not ‘about’ an ‘object of study’, but that strives to participate in the continuous shapeshifting of the palpable, sensuous world from over there? Metamorphic speech: to encounter – with my own, embodied sentence here inside the depth of the biosphere – salmon in her own depth, over there, in her embodied sentence.

What might this be like, then? Let us tune in for just a moment.





*Illustrasjon av Rasmus Kjelsrud*

To be thinking like the ocean. To be the ocean thinking itself within her. Perhaps this is precisely what it means to reach maturity. She is called into being within the fluid depth of water, which is at once elder, womb, blood. How long has her kin voyaged the arching globe? Six million years. The steady stream of ancestral journeys reaches back into time immemorial, and their shapes are slowly morphing, changing, reworking themselves across this vast curvature of time. She lives inside an imagination that has been molded by glacial advances, by the patient force of trickling water carving deep flanks into flatlands, by a trillion raindrops eroding the mountains. Her sentient body bears within itself the promise for metamorphosis, a creative adaptability within a world that never rests. As she grows, the distant echo of a particular watershed takes shape within – its velocity, its seasonal temperaments, the power of its autumn swells, the complex topography of its arteries. Each quality of the river adds its subtle claim to this body that is her, refining her. Born into a shapeshifting world, it is what she is: a shapeshifter. Swelling rivers, marching glaciers, dwindling mountains, currents that flow on and on, the very ocean: Each remembers itself within her flesh. Each calls itself into being through her flesh, again and again. She is the world birthing itself.

She knows nothing of the furnace deep within the core of the world, of pressure so immense that molten iron will crystalize into a solid. Nor of the liquid iron that flows in a rotational pattern around that innermost core, following the planet's rotation. And yet she can sense the delicate magnetic bands that weave themselves from these frictions and outward, around the spinning axis of the globe, fluctuating most forcefully near either pole and weaving smaller, far subtler bands between there and herself. Earth's bipolar magnetic lure flickers continually within her. This globe's composition and its massive shape rebound throughout her body. That far larger body throbs in her head, all along her lateral line, throughout the varied topography of her flesh. To align herself with true north is to sense a faint, subtle shudder of recognition rush through her. A chill of embodiment. Iron crystals within her, iron crystals within the core of Earth's larger body: beckoning, striving to hear, calling, responding, gesturing, learning to react, aligning themselves, seeking congruence. Ever since she left the river, she has been negotiating the fluctuating semiotics of field navigation. As she has matured from a smolt into an adult, her sense for the larger body has grown keener. Each local variation in the blue expanse – its own field quality. Each region in the ocean – its own magnetic tension. With sustained attention, and if she engages the full range of

her corporeal intelligence, she can distinguish the unique feel of the magnetic field where she first encountered the ocean as a juvenile. No other place sets her nerves on edge quite like that one.

### Philosophy in practice

It seems, though, as if the written word can only accomplish so much. What if such an “ecology of language” (Abram) or “poetic ecology” (Weber) as I practice in my writing cannot help but seem strangely odd and dubious on the printed page, cast as it is under the habitually disembodied scrutiny of the thinking mind? Is it not at least possible that such embodied encounters as the writing invokes might resonate rather differently, given not a literal but an oral style? Questions that have inspired a twin to the book, the performance *Lakseeventyr*.

On stage, philosophy encounters Torgeir Vassvik's joik, as well as Georgiana Keable's and Tiril Bryn's immersive, full-bodied storytelling. Vassvik insists that joik – this oldest European vocal tradition – is never about, say, bear, birch, or salmon. Rather, the joiker's voice, rhythm and vigorous physical presence allow him and his audience to momentarily shapeshift – to experience a sudden dissolution of perceptual boundaries. Suddenly, you find yourself pressing water through your breathing gills, or propelling your cold-blooded body through whitewater rapids with that powerful tail fin, or circling round and round overcrowded feedlot cages, while sensing a growing frustration build up inside, deprived as you are of a lifeworld that helps you compose a coherent topography of meaning, and deprived also of possibilities to translate meaning into action.

In some sense, the stage becomes a laboratory where we experiment with complementary epistemologies that don't often encounter one another eye to eye (nor, for that matter, ear to ear, breath to breath, skin to skin). Call it philosophy in practice. It's risky and open-ended, rich with potential to succeed and to fail. “Success”, here, might mean simply this: a loosening up of expectations; a rehabilitated curiosity for ways of knowing that evoke feelings, the senses, or intuition – in other words, knowledge that lives inside breathing, pulsating bodies.

There is a grim subtext to this collaborative work. There is ample evidence now to suggest that the so-called ecological crisis goes hand in hand with a crisis of reason. Modernity can be read as a narrative of escape, a story that hinges on the notion of a disembodied mind in permanent exile from the sensuous terrain, attempting to

dominate all that it perceives as Other (including our own bodies). But the story of disembodied reason, governing a voiceless and inanimate *res extensa*, is becoming increasingly less plausible during a time when Earth agencies as potent as ocean acidification or climate change are stirring. Earth, long thought to be silent, has begun responding. Some responses are so composite, so brutal, so nonlinear, and point to very deeply into geological time, that they cannot be fully comprehended, nor predicted, contained, or managed. The salmon industry's advocacy of more of the same – more separation, more control, more manipulation – can be interpreted as another sign that the narrative of escape is in crisis. Reason might not be faring so well after a few centuries of self-imposed exile. It might already have calcified and become gradually less able to respond to crisis creatively and resourcefully. Reason might already be in dire need of renewal and rejuvenation, and of being guided back into participation.

If reason is most at home inside the metamorphic depth of the biosphere; if the biosphere is now convulsing with collapse, as it seems to be; and if humans would need to respond to the collapse with the greatest creativity and the greatest resourcefulness, then this spells real trouble. Just when it seems that reason would need to be at the height of its powers, it is instead rather badly stricken. With systemic changes underway, it would be foolish to write this off as a passing phase. The crisis of reason and the ecological crisis appear to be entangled in a cycle of positive feedback: Reason's exile directly causes an impoverished sphere of life, which in turn offers fewer opportunities for reason to be brought back into a more reciprocal participation with the body and with the more-than-human world.

But what if, despite this, the salmon are still laboring to bring the human animal back into a more reciprocal participation with Earth? What if they are already influencing the stricken thinking mind, offering to guide it out of its long quarantine? And what if this is no mere poetic speculation, but a parsimonious and precise observation of a reciprocal exchange still unfolding – as it has for as long back as our collective memory allows us to trace the charged encounter between us and the salmon? What might they be suggesting to us?

*Relinquish that self-centered sense of control and entitlement. Invite that embodied mind of yours to embrace its own vulnerability. Let us feed you on terms our nations have agreed on together, not on terms imposed upon us by you. Recognize us in the uniqueness of our individual lives. Accept that there are times when we choose to feed you, and then there are times when we must hold back. Remember our obligation to feed*

*not only you but many others too. Remember your obligation to make return gifts to us. Give us the gift of your full-bodied attention, your curiosity, your feelings, your intuition. Gather your senses before you decide to take some of us, for then it will be easier for you to celebrate and regulate the links that connect our species. When you use tools to catch us, embed them into social practices that absorb any potential that you might become too proud. Integrate all your actions, and all your tools, fully into gift-giving cycles. Review the complex ways in which we salmon still enrich your embodied mind with metaphors, with concepts, with insight. Gift us with good stories and thoughtful practices, with careful speech, with song, with dance. Reclaim your sense of being an embodied intelligence, here alongside us, inside this living Earth.*

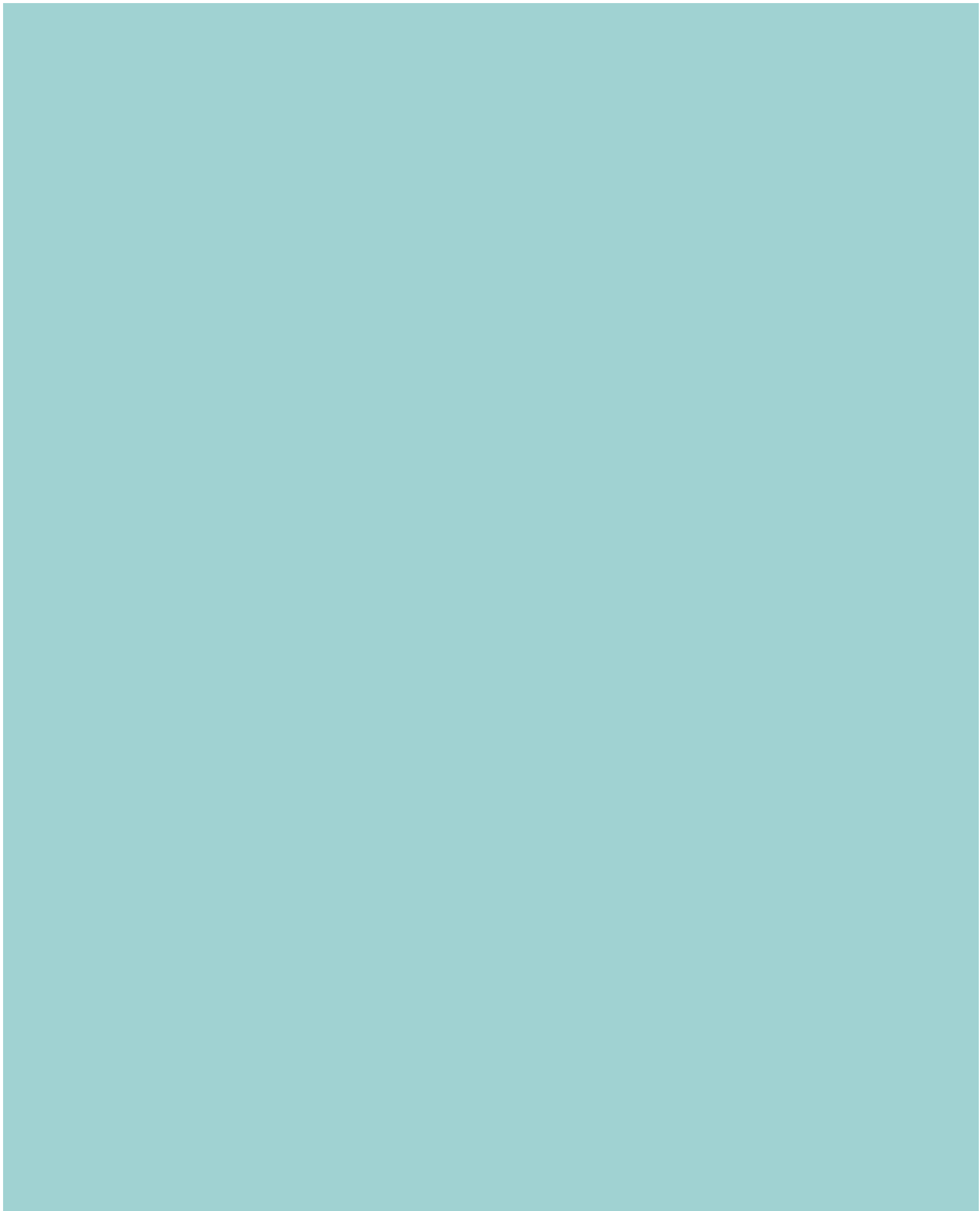
Mueller received his PhD from the University of Oslo in 2016. His book *Being Salmon, Being Human* has been hailed as “a game-changing culture-shifting book, ethical and eloquent, opening the way toward a more mature natural science,” and as representing “the absolute cutting edge of environmental sensitivity”. *Lakseeventyr* premiered at the Tradfest Festival in Edinburgh in spring 2017 and will next go on tours to Sápmi and North America. Mueller and his collaborators are also working towards an annual salmon festival to celebrate the homecoming and spawning of Oslo's Akerselva salmon, as well as towards establishing the non-profit Circumpolar Salmon Alliance.

## LITERATURE

- Abram, D. 1996, *Spell of the Sensuous. Perception and Language in a More-Than-Human World*, Random House, New York.
- . 2010, *Becoming Animal. An Earthly Cosmology*, Vintage, New York.
- Butler, V. & Campbell, S. 2010, “Archaeological Evidence for Resilience of Pacific Northwest Salmon Populations and the Socioecological System over the last ~7,500 years”, *Ecology and Society* 15 (1)
- Børresen, B. 2007, *Fiskenes ukjente liv*. Transit: Oslo
- Law, J. & Joks, S. 2017, “Sámi salmon, state salmon: TEK, technoscience and care”, *The Sociological View*, 65:2.
- Andreas Weber. 2016, *The Biology of Wonder. Aliveness, Feeling, and the Metamorphosis of Science*, New Society Publishers, Gabriola Island.

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup>But she is more than that; she is also food. Being salmon, she must negotiate and integrate two seemingly conflicting ontological concerns: she is at once the radiant intelligence, the stubborn will to live that pulses right here inside her flesh, and she is participant in a life cycle of mass hatching, mass migration, mass spawning, and not least mass-being-eaten. Surviving a full life cycle, from fertilization to spawning, may be nearly as unlikely for any individual salmon as is a human sperm cell's chance of winning that all-or-nothing race toward its egg cell. Being keystone species is as much a part of her being as is her intelligence. She becomes who she already is in the precarious tension between these irresolvable concerns between individual and expression of a larger whole.
- <sup>2</sup>For further reading, see: David Abram. 1996. *Spell of the Sensuous. Perception and Language in a More-Than-Human World*. New York: Random House; 2010. *Becoming Animal. An Earthly Cosmology*. New York: Vintage; [www.wildethics.org](http://www.wildethics.org)



# OVERSETTELSE

# TECHNIK, MEDIZIN, UND ETHIK

## HANS JONAS

**Teknologien i dag later til å være utstyrt med både utopiske løfter og apokalyptiske trusler, og påvirker nå alt mennesket tenker og foretar seg. Derfor har det blitt en sak for filosofien. Slik innleder Hans Jonas det følgende oversatte utdrag, om hvorfor den moderne teknikken er et emne for filosofien.**

*Innledning og oversettelse ved Martin Nyberg & Henrik Voldstad*

Den jødiske og tysk-amerikanske filosofen Hans Jonas (1903-1993) regnes i Tyskland som en av etterkrigstidens viktigste tenkere, og har vært en stor inspirasjonskilde for landets miljøbevegelse. I engelskspråklig academia kan han ikke sies å være blant de mest diskuterte tenkerne. Heller ikke i Norge har han vært særlig i fokus, selv om det de siste årene har kommet noen få utgivelser som i ulik grad diskuterer hans tenkning.<sup>1</sup>

Jonas studerte filosofi og teologi ved universitetene i Freiburg, Berlin og Heidelberg, før han i 1928 fikk sin doktorgrad fra universitetet i Marburg, veiledet av Martin Heidegger. I 1933 forlot han Tyskland, og ble etter hvert aktiv motstandsmann under krigen. Etter krigen flyttet han til Amerika, der han ble boende resten av sitt liv. Det senere bruddet mellom Jonas og hans tidligere lærer Heidegger (grunnet blant annet hans tilknytning til nazistpartiet) står utvilsomt som et sentralt øyeblikk både i Jonas liv og i hans tenkning, men å huske ham først og fremst for dette er et svik. Som moralfilosof øvet Jonas stor påvirkning med sitt sene hovedverk *Das Prinzip Verantwortung* (1979), «Prinsippet ansvar», senere oversatt av Jonas selv til *The Imperative of Responsibility*.

Menneskeheten trer inn i en ny tid, og er i ferd med å bli en sivilisasjon drevet av teknologi. Med dette følger også nye evner og krefter – krefter til å ødelegge livsverdenen og habitatene som omgir oss, til å endre selve «menneskebildet» ved å omskrive livets genetiske kode. I *Das Prinzip Verantwortung* vil Jonas vise hvordan tidligere etiske systemer er uegnede til å gripe fatt i de nye utfordringene som følger av teknologiens inntog. All tradisjonell etikk – og følgelig våre moralske oppfatninger – har vært orientert mot det «nære». Fidjestøl kaller dette samtids- og naboetikk; etikkens tidshorisont har vært nuet, dens objekter våre «naboer». Fordi vi med dagens teknologi kan påvirke mennesker og andre skapninger på den andre siden av kloden – ja til og med i en annen tid – fordrer Jonas

en ny etisk tenkning (Fidjestøl, 2004:91). Jonas utvikler det han kaller en «ansvarsetikk», eller en «fremtidsetikk». Ansvarsetikken er ikke ment for å erstatte all tidligere etisk tenkning, men heller å inngå i et samspill med denne, der det tenkes over problemene i en teknologisk tidsalder. Jonas formulerer et nytt kategorisk imperativ jamfør denne ansvarsetikken: «Handle slik at følgene av dine handlinger er forenlige med fortsatt genuin menneskelig eksistens på jorda [vår oversettelse]» (Jonas, 1984:11).

Det oversatte tekststykket er første kapittel fra essaysamlingen *Technik, Medizin, und Ethik: Zur Praxis des Prinzips Verantwortung* (1985). I denne essaysamlingen forsøker Jonas, gjennom flere praktisk-orienterte essay, å konkret anvende sitt ansvarsprinsipp. Omtrent halvparten av essayene foreligger i norsk oversettelse ved Sverre Dahl. Vi har valgt å oversette fra det første av samlingens essay, «Hvorfor den moderne teknikken er et emne for filosofien.» Flere av poengene Jonas her trekker frem, foregriper allerede i *Das Prinzip Verantwortung*, som for øvrig ennå ikke er skjenket norske lesere. *Technik, Medizin, und Ethik* er likevel en tekst i sin egen rett, som bereder overgangen fra prinsiptenkning til kasuistikk, og beskriver de historiske forholdene som har gjort en ny praksis tvingende nødvendig.

Etter at Jonas innledningsvis redegjør for hvorfor det burde finnes en teknikkens filosofi (fordi teknologien i dag påvirker alt mennesket foretar seg), skilter han tekstens struktur, i et skille mellom «form» og «stoff», mellom teknologiens formale dynamikk og teknologiens substansielle innhold. Under «teknologiens formale dynamikk» finner vi temaer som førmoderne og moderne teknologier, kausalforklaringer, forholdet mellom teknikk og vitenskap; under «teknologiens substansielle innhold» maskinen som bruksgode, kjemi, bioteknologi og den utfordrede metafysikk – for å nevne noen. Vi har bestemt oss for et utvalg som vi mener synliggjør Jonas' bredere prosjekt.

Som Jonas også minner oss på i innledningen, er disse to temaene – teknologiens «form» og «stoff» – analytiske og deskriptive. Det viktigste, sier han, er det etiske – og det neste kapitlet (allerede oversatt til norsk) omhandler hvorfor teknologien er et emne for etikken.

Det kan være fint å avslutte denne innledningen med noen bemerkninger om hvorfor vi har valgt å oversette en tekst om teknikk, når temaet for denne utgaven av *Filosofisk supplement* er natur. Som sagt gjør teknologien nye evner og styrker tilgjengelig for menneskearten, og Jonas mente at tiden var overmoden for filosofisk undersøkelse av både hva disse kreftene besto i, og hvordan de påvirket oss som mennesker. Nå står ikke bare menneskets natur på spill, eller «menneskebildet» som Jonas velger å kalle det, men også alt annet liv rundt oss. Nå som tanken om å bearbeide menneskets natur ikke lenger er vill fantasi, kreves det nye overveielser av hva som er ønskelig og ikke – en «kosmisk oppgave» som han anså samtidens filosofi for å være beklagelig uforberedt på.

*Vi takker Åsne Dorothea Grøgaard for gode kommentarer til oversettelsen.*

### 1. Hvorfor den moderne teknikken er et emne for filosofien.

Siden teknikken strekker seg inn i omtrent alt som angår mennesket for tiden – i liv og død, tanke og følelse, det vi gjør og det vi utholder, omverden og ting, ønsker og skjebne, nåtid og fremtid – kort sagt, siden den både har blitt et sentralt og påtrengende spørsmål ved hele den menneskelige væren på jorden, så har det også blitt en sak for filosofien, og det må finnes noe som en teknologiens filosofi. Denne er ennå i sin spede begynnelse, og den er noe man må arbeide mot. For å kunne gjøre dette må man først forsikre seg deskriptivt om fenomenet selv, og analytisk fravriste det enkeltaspektene av filosofisk betydning, som man så kan arbeide videre med i tolkningen av helheten. Dermed vil følgende bemerkninger utgjøre en begynnelse, idet det spørres etter egenarten til denne nye teknologien, som plutselig later til å være utstyrt med så ekstreme attributter som utopiske løfter og apokalyptiske trusler – i alle fall en nærmest eskatologisk kvalitet.

Den gamle distinksjonen mellom «form» og «stoff» er nyttig for vårt formål her, da den tillater oss å skille mellom følgende hovedtemaer:

1. Teknologiens formale dynamikk, som en fortløpende kollektiv virksomhet som skriker fremover etter sine egne «bevegelseslover».
2. Teknologiens substansielle innhold, bestående i de tingene som den stiller til menneskelig bruk, de evner og styrker den gir oss, de nye målene den åpner eller dikterer, og i selve de forandrede måtene mennesket handler og forholder seg på.

Det første, formale temaet, betrakter teknologien som den abstrakte helhet ved en bevegelse; det andre, innholdsmessige, betrakter dens mangfoldige konkrete bruksområder og dens virkning på vår verden og vårt liv. Den formale tilnærmingen vil gripe de gjennomgående «prosessegenskapene», hvorved moderne teknologi driver «seg» fremover – gjennom våre handlinger, naturligvis – inn i evig påfølgende og overskridende ny-het. Den materielle tilnærmingen vil undersøke de ulike typer nyhet som sådan, søke å klassifisere dem (bringe dem inn i en «taksonomi», så å si), og å oppnå et bilde av den verdenen som er pyntet med dem.

Et tredje tema som er overordnet begge disse, ville være den etiske siden av teknologien som pålagt det menneskelige ansvar, som senere skal komme til orde. De tre temaene som kan tjene som grunnriss for den tilstrebede teknikkens filosofi, blir altså, i systematisk rekkefølge, teknologiens «form», «stoff», og «etikk». Mens det tredje (og viktigste) tema omhandler verdi, er de første, her behandlede temaene, analytiske og deskriptive.

#### *Teknologiens formale dynamikk*

Først altså, mens de konkrete følger av teknikken fortsatt sees bort ifra, noen bemerkninger om dens form, forstått som en abstrakt helhet ved bevegelse, som vel må kunne kalles «teknologi». Når det i tillegg dreier seg om den moderne teknikkens kjennetegn, er det første spørsmålet hvordan disse skiller seg formalt fra alle forutgående. Et hovedskille antydes her nettopp i navnet «teknologi»: at moderne teknikk er en virksomhet og en prosess, der den tidligere var en besittelse og en tilstand.

#### *Filosofiske aspekter*

...To korte bemerkninger til de filosofiske aspekter ved det opptegnede bildet, før vi går over til det materielle: Én angår kunnskapens forandrede status innen sjelshierarkiet, den andre forfremmelsen av teknikken til en av mennesketens hovedoppgaver.

Hva kunnskapen angår, er det åpenbart at den gammelverdige adskillelse av «Teori» og «Praksis» er forsvunnet på begge sider. Enn så uforminsket den rene erkjennelsestørst måtte være – sammenfletningen av kunnskap og handling, i livets høy- og lavland, er blitt uoppløselig,



og død er den aristokratiske selvtilfredsheten i å ville søke sannheten for dens egen skyld. Adel har blitt byttet ut med nytte. Kort sagt har det teknologiske syndrom forårsaket en grundig sosialisering på det teoretiske området, og stilt det i de allmenne behovs tjeneste. Samtidig har det, som paradoksalt bivirkning, skapt det nye problemet som er mas-senes fritid. Forvist fra sitt første hjem, kontemplasjonens verden – etter at denne gikk over til ivrig å brøyte vei for vitenskapen –, dukket fritiden opp igjen på motsatt side av spekteret, blant fruktene av vitenskapens bestrebelser: Det ubestemte bruksgode, like mye gitt som påtvunget, i form av et tomrom som man må finne et innhold til. Også denne oppgaven tar vitenskapen – som ikke selv driver lediggang – fatt på, når den varter opp med stadig nye former for tidsfordriv, ja som del av den samme teknologiske innhøstingen som avler behovet for slikt. I dag forventes alt dette av «Teorien» – en gang den høyeste form for transutilitaristisk bestrebelse, som i dag står til tjeneste for ethvert ønske fra omverdenen.

Når det gjelder stillingen til teknologien selv i den menneskelige rangordning, så hentyder jeg kun til dens «prometeiske» prestisje, som leder teknologiens fortalere inn i fristelsen til å ikle dens endeløse virksomhet de mest opphøyede hensikters verdighet – det vil si å oppheve dét som begynte som middel, til mål, og å se menneskehetens sanne bestemmelse heri. I det minste er hviskingen der (skjønt motstemmer har forstyrret den i det siste) og utøver sin tryllekraft på den moderne ånd. Det første skrittet fra makt til makt blir forstått som et menneskelig fremskritt.

### *Teknologiens saklige innhold*

Den «formale» skildringen av den teknologiske bevegelse som sådan har ennå ikke fortalt oss noe om de tingene denne har med å gjøre, deres «materie» så å si. Vi vender oss nå til denne, helt konkret vil det si til de nye typer makt, saker, og mål det moderne mennesket mottar fra teknikken. Teknologiens rekkefølge speiler vitenskapenes: mekanikk, kjemi, elektrodynamikk, kjernefysikk, biologi. Generelt er en vitenskap moden for å omsettes i teknologi når (for å si det med Galileo) «via resolutiva» – analysen – er drevet så langt at «via compositiva» – syntesen – av de slik oppløste og kvantifiserte grunnelementer kan begynne. Først i dag har biologien nådd så langt: Med molekylærbiologien kommer også biologiske formers konstruerbarhet.

### *Bioteknologi*

...Enda et trinn i den teknologiske revolusjon, og kanskje det siste, venter nå på å tre frem. De forrige trinn (her bare delvis gjennomgått) berodde på fysikken og hadde med dét

å gjøre som mennesket kan sette i sin nyttes tjeneste fra den livløse naturs forråd. Hvordan er det med biologien? Og med den som nyttiggjør seg den? Står vi kanskje på spranget til en teknologi som beror på biologisk kunnskap, og som skjenker oss en manipulasjonskunst som har menneskene selv som gjenstand? Ved molekylærbiologiens ankomst, og dens forståelse av genetisk programmering, er dette blitt en teoretisk mulighet – og en moralsk mulighet gjennom den metafysiske nøytralisering av mennesket. Men denne nøytraliseringen, som riktignok gjør alt det vi ønsker å gjøre mulig, svikter oss samtidig i veiledningen mot å vite hva vi skal ønske oss. Når den samme evolusjonslære som har genetikken som grunnstein, har frarøvet oss ethvert gjeldende menneskebilde (fordi alt oppsto uvil-kårlig fra tilfeldighet og nødvendighet), så kan de faktiske teknikkene, når de først er klare, slå innover oss mens vi er merkelig uforberedte på den ansvarlige bruken av dem. Anti-essensialismen i den rådende teori – en som kun kjenner de-facto-utfall ved evolusjonære tilfeldigheter, og ingen bindende egenart som kan godkjennes – overlater vår væremåte en frihet uten norm. Når teknologien på denne måten inviterer den nye mikrobiologien inn, utgjør de en dobbelthet av fysisk gjennomførbarhet og metafysisk til-latelighet. Om vi antar at den genetiske mekanisme er helt analysert og dens skrift endegyldig dechiffrert, så kan vi nå sette i gang med omskrivningen av teksten. Biologer spriker i sine vurderinger av hvor nære vi er denne evnen; få later til å betvile retten til å utøve den. Idéen om «å ta vår utvikling i egne hender» er til og med, etter retorikken hos dens profeter å dømme, berusende for vitenskapens menn.

### *Den utfordrede metafysikken*

I alle fall er idéen om å bearbeide den menneskelige oppbygning, eller å «skissere våre etterkommere», ikke lenger vill fantasi; ennå forbys den likevel gjennom et ukrenkelig tabu. Skulle denne revolusjon inntreffe, skulle teknologisk makt virkelig begynne å pusle med de elementære tangentene, hvorpå livet vil måtte spille sin melodi i generasjoner – kanskje den eneste slike melodi det hele tatt –: Da blir en overveelse av hva som er ønskverdig for menneskene, og hva som skal være bestemmende for et slikt valg – kort sagt en overveelse av «menneskebildet» – mer påkrevd og tvingende enn noen overveelse som hittil har blitt forlangt av dødelige menneskers fornuft. Filosofien, må vi ærlig innrømme, er beklagelig uforberedt på denne – sin første kosmiske – oppgave.

## LITTERATUR

- Fidjestøl, A. 2004, *Hans Jonas*, Universitetsforlaget, Oslo.
- Hverven, S. 2015, *Individets frihet, i fellesskapet, på jorda: Med G.W.F Hegel og Hans Jonas fra dødens ontologi henimot en levende frihet*, Masteroppgave, Universiteter i Oslo.
- 2018, *Naturfilosofi*, Dreyer Forlag, Oslo.
- Jonas, H. 1966, *The Phenomenon of Life: Toward a Philosophical Biology*, Northwestern University Press, New York.
- 1979, *Das Prinzip Verantwortung: Versuch einer Ethik für die technologische Zivilisation*, Insel-Verlag, Frankfurt am Main.
- 1984, *The Imperative of Responsibility* [1979], Jonas, H. & Herr, D. (overs.) The University of Chicago Press, Chicago.
- Morris, T. 2013, *Hans Jonas's Ethic of Responsibility: From Ontology to Ecology*, State University of New York Press, New York.
- Vetlesen, A.J. 2015, *The Denial of Nature: Environmental Philosophy in the Era of Global Capitalism*, Routledge, London.

## NOTER

<sup>1</sup>Her vises det til boka *Hans Jonas* (2004) av Alfred Fidjestøl, kapittel tre i *Denial of Nature* (2015) av Arne Johan Vetlesen, og i avsluttende del av boken *Naturfilosofi* (2018) av Sigurd Hverven. Sistnevnte forfatter skrev også deler av sin mastergrad med tittel *Individets frihet, i fellesskapet, på jorda* (2015) om Jonas. *Hans Jonas's Ethic of Responsibility: From Ontology to Ecology* (2013) av Theresa Morris bør også nevnes som en viktig engelspråklig utgivelse om Jonas fra senere år.

# UTDRAG FRA DEN LEKSIKRYPTISKE ENCYKLOPEDI

**Egenskaper, iboende:** De egenskapene en ting har utelukkende i kraft av hvordan den tingen selv er, uavhengige av andre ting. Formlige egenskaper – som å være rund – er paradigmatisk iboende egenskaper, mens eksterne relasjoner – som å være noens bror – er typiske eksempler på ikke-iboende egenskaper.

**Egenskaper, naturlige:** En postulert undergruppe egenskaper som hevdes å spille en mengde viktige roller i flere deler av filosofien. De naturlige egenskapene er spesielle i at de gjenspeiler naturens struktur og er blant de egenskapene vitenskapene spesielt søker å studere. Naturlige egenskaper assosieres typisk med filosofen David Lewis (1941-2001; se encyclopediens artikkel om Lewis s. 801), spesielt pga. hans *New Work for a Theory of Universals* (1983). Naturlighet regnes ofte som å komme i forskjellige grader, der maksimalt naturlige egenskaper kalles perfekt naturlige. Eksempler på naturlige egenskaper (fra mer til mindre naturlige) er å ha negativ elektrisk ladning, å være H<sub>2</sub>O og å være grønn. Eksempler på unaturlige egenskaper er den disjunktive egenskapen å være grønn eller en del av Vigelands Monolitten, og egenskapen å være en ting som på norsk kan unikt beskrives med bokstavene 'a', 'k', 'd', 'n' og 'e'.

Naturlige egenskaper har en rekke påståtte anvendelser i blant annet metafysikk, etikk, vitenskapsfilosofi, bevissthetsfilosofi og språkfilosofi. For eksempel skal naturlige egenskaper kunne fullstendig karakterisere en verden, f. eks. ved at alle forhold supervenierer på de naturlige egenskapene. Likhetsrelasjonen, altså det forholdet to ting som likner på hverandre står i, kan også typisk redegjøres for med naturlige egenskaper. Naturlige egenskaper kan også brukes i redegjørelsen for de projiserbare predikatene, altså de predikatene som kan inngå i gyldige induksjoner. I språkfilosofi kan også de naturlige egenskapene forklare hvordan visse uttrykk får sin referanse når våre språklige praksiser ikke unikt bestemmer en referent: de mest naturlige egenskapene tiltrekker seg referanse og blir oftere referenter.

Som et mer detaljert eksempel på en slik anvendelse er redegjørelsen for iboende («intrinsic») egenskaper som er foreslått i Lewis' *On the Plurality of Worlds* (1986). La to ting være duplikater i det tilfellet at de har akkurat de samme perfekt naturlige egenskapene og det finnes en korrespondanse mellom delene deres slik at korresponderende deler har de samme perfekt naturlige egenskapene. Omtrentlig og intuitivt er da to ting duplikater av hverandre dersom måtene de er på er helt like. Da hevdes det at vi kan analysere iboende egenskaper som de egenskapene som alltid må deles av duplikater.

Hvorvidt og hvordan man skal redegjøre for eller forklare naturlige egenskaper er omstridt. Man kan typisk holde til naturlighet er primitivt, og derfor at vi ikke skal gi noen analyse, redegjørelse eller avledning fra andre begreper. Andre syn innebærer å holde at de naturlige egenskapene er de som samsvarer med mengder av troper (abstrakte men partikulære objekter) eller med instansene til universalier. A.K.O.

**Egenskaper, primære og sekundære:** Henholdsvis objektive og underliggende (el. fundamentale) egenskaper som form, masse og størrelse, og avledede og sinnsavhengige egenskaper som farge, smak, og lukt. Denne distinksjonen går tilbake til de antikke atomistene (se encyclopediens artikkel om de greske atomistene s. 96), men assosieres sterkt med John Locke (1632-1704; se encyclopediens artikkel om Locke s. 855), under navnene primære og sekundære kvaliteter.



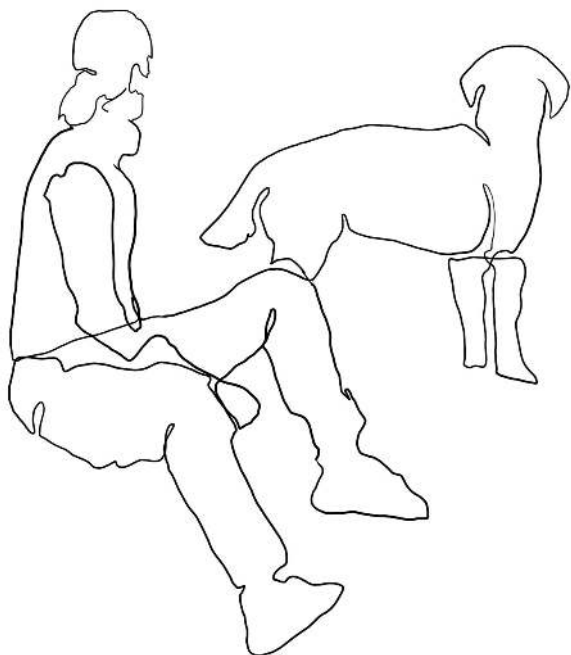
*Illustrasjon av Linnéa Alnæs*

# NATURENS MORALSKE STATUS

## EN UNDERSØKELSE

### AV HOLMES ROLSTONS BIDRAG TIL

### MILJØETIKK



#### MESTERBREV VED

#### LISA-SOPHIE LUNDH

*Hva handler masteroppgaven din om?*

Miljøfilosofi ser ut til å ha kommet til en stillstand der antroposentriske og ikke-antroposentriske teorier hevder den andre tar feil, samtidig som behandlingen av naturen ikke har endret seg. Mer pragmatiske posisjoner innen miljøetikk argumenterer for at spørsmålet om naturens moralske status bør legges til side, slik at fokus kan rettes mot konkrete problemstillinger knyttet til vår relasjon til naturen. Med dette som bakteppe undersøker jeg Rolstons prosjekt. Oppgaven handler om naturens moralske status og jeg undersøker argumentene fremmet av Rolston for en inkludering av naturen i etikk.

*Hva argumenterer du for/imot i masteroppgaven?*

I oppgaven argumenterer jeg for at spørsmålet om na-

turens verdi ikke nødvendigvis har utspilt sin rolle, men snarere har potensiale til å åpne opp for en inkludering av naturen i etikk. Rolston knytter iboende verdi til organismens streben etter fortsatt eksistens, til arters uerstattelige karakter og til økosystemer, på bakgrunn av at slike systemer er grunnlaget for alt liv. Av disse verdiene følger det at moralske aktører har plikter overfor slike naturlige entiteter – ikke betraktet som moralske aktører, men som moralsk berørte parter.

På bakgrunn av at Rolston ikke er tydelig nok på hva som veier tyngst ved en moralsk konflikt på organismenivå – den moralske aktørens preferanser eller grunnleggende behov, eller organismens iboende verdi – gir teorien hans moralske aktører en noe vilkårlig moralsk rettesnor i møte med individuelle organismer. Ikke desto mindre argumenter jeg for at hans bidrag tilfører miljøetikk et viktig perspektiv. Først og fremst fordi en inkludering av naturen i etikk som moralsk berørt part kan bidra til at bevisbyrden skiftes i beslutninger som angår vår direkte og indirekte påvirkning på naturen. Et skifte som vil kunne vise seg å få praktiske konsekvenser ved å følge føre-var-prinsippet, særlig ved fare for irreversible miljøødeleggelser som artsutryddelse eller utryddelse av habitater og villmark. Jeg argumenterer for at Rolstons perspektiv kan bidra til å åpne opp for nye løsninger på dagens klima- og miljøkrise.

*Hvorfor bør andre lese oppgaven din?*

Spørsmål knyttet til naturens moralske status, for eksempel hvorvidt naturen kan sies å inneha en verdi i seg selv eller kun har verdi i kraft av hvilken nytte den har for mennesket, fremstår for meg som viktige spørsmål i en tid der økonomiske og antroposentriske perspektiver dominerer debatten om naturens verdi. Dersom man finner slike spørsmål interessante kan oppgaven min være av interesse.

*Hva er dine planer for fremtiden?*

Nå jobber jeg for Miljødirektoratet. Mine planer for fremtiden er å studere mer, samt skrive flere artikler og få dem publisert i ulike kanaler.

# NARRATIVE IDENTITY IN KIERKEGAARD

## MESTERBREV VED MATTIAS DA SILVA BJARTVEIT

*Hva handler masteroppgaven din om?*

Masteroppgaven min handler om selvet, som presentert i Kierkegaards verker *Enten/Eller* og *Sykdommen til Døden*, og om hvorvidt et narrativt syn på personlig identitet kan passe med det Kierkegaardianske selvet. Utgangspunktet for oppgaven er Anthony Rudds narrative syn på personlig identitet og hans tolkning av Kierkegaards tekster om selvet, hvor Rudd argumenterer for at det Kierkegaardianske selvet er best forstått som et narrativt selv, eller et selv som kan kobles til narrativ identitetsteori. Ved å se nærmere på Kierkegaards tekster om selvet, søker jeg å forstå hva det Kierkegaardianske selvet innebærer og om hvorvidt Rudds narrative tolkning kan rettfærdiggjøres.

*Hva argumenterer du for/imot i oppgaven?*

Jeg argumenter for at Rudds narrative tolkning av Kierkegaard er passende, men kun til en viss grad. Kierkegaards teori om selvet er veldig kompleks, med mange vesentlige aspekter som Rudds narrative tolkning ikke kan ta for seg. Jeg spør hvordan en skal tolke det Kierkegaardianske selvet, grunnet de ulike (samt like) analysene som presenteres i *Enten/Eller* og *Sykdommen til Døden*. Et eksempel som kan trekkes fram er forskjellen mellom estetiske og etiske selv. Her utelukker Rudds tolkning muligheten for det «autentiske»/«fullkomne» estetiske selv, kun på grunn av mangelen på narrativ identitet. Derimot er det tydelig at estetiske individer kan ha en god forståelse om sitt eget selv og ha en stabil personlig identitet som ikke nødvendigvis tilfredsstiller de narrative betingelsene som Rudd argumenterer for. Det må også påpekes at Rudds tolkning av det Kierkegaardianske selvet omhandler mer enn narrativ identitet. Ifølge Kierkegaard er det å ha et selv en oppgave, eller et mål, noe som vi bevisst må rette oss mot for å oppnå. Kierkegaard forklarer at avvik fra denne oppgaven er en form for fortvilelse, noe som viser at en ikke er et «fullkomment» selv. Rudd argumenter derfor for en teleologisk tolkning av det Kierkegaardianske selvet, hvor rettingen mot et telos sies å være i kjernen av et slikt selv.



*Hvorfor bør andre lese oppgaven din?*

Fordi Kierkegaard er kult! Hvis du er interessert i temaer som identitet, selvet og eksistens er Kierkegaard en fantastisk god start. Det er utrolig spennende å se hvordan hans 200 år gamle skildringer av menneskets forhold til sitt eget selv og sin omverden fortsatt er aktuelle i dagens høymoderne samfunn.

*Hva er dine planer for fremtiden?*

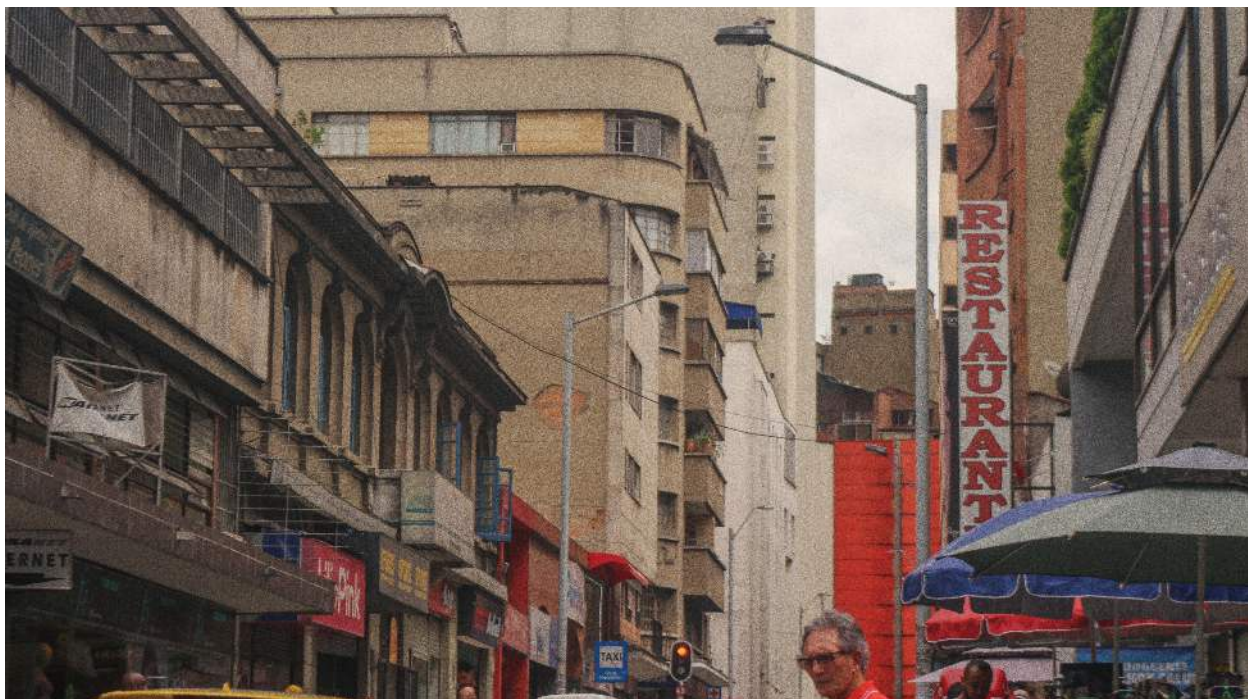
For øyeblikket leter jeg etter spennende jobbmuligheter innenfor næringslivet, hvor jeg forhåpentligvis kan bringe filosofisk argumentasjon og refleksjon med inn i arbeidet. Senere vurderer jeg også å fortsette med studiene og søke etter en PhD-stilling.



# REISEBREV FRA MEDELLÍN, COLOMBIA

## EN UTRADISJONELL UTVEKSLING

Ilustrasjoner av Camila De los ríos Muñoz



Av Marthe Jæger Tangen

En mørk høstdag i fjor, sittende hos utvekslingskonsulentent på IFIKK, ubesluttsom og forvirret over hvor jeg skulle reise på utveksling, spurte jeg om det var kjennskap til utvekslingsavtaler i Colombia. Som filosofistudent var mitt inntrykk at det verken var anbefalt eller normalt å dra på utveksling til Latin-Amerika. Det stemte at det var lite kunnskap om utveksling til andre kontinenter enn Europa og Nord-Amerika. Dette var noe jeg forundret meg over, akkurat som jeg forundret og frustrerte meg over det homogene vestlige fokuset i filosofien. Jeg ville oppleve noe annet enn det eurosentriske og angloamerikanske akademien, og ble presentert for en HF-avtale mest tatt i bruk av SV- og spanskstudenter. Jeg var den første studenten fra filosofi.

La Universidad Nacional, «La Nacho», det største og beste offentlige universitetet i Colombia sprer seg utover landet med opptil 4 ulike universiteter. Jeg endte opp med å velge Medellín, en by jeg så vidt hadde vært innom flere år tilbake, og en by som de fleste forbinder med Netflix-serien *Narcos*. Da jeg sa til mine medstudenter på filo-

sofi at jeg skulle til Colombia, tenkte flere på universitetet Columbia. Nei, jeg skulle til landet Colombia. Å velge Medellín inkluderte å velge bort filosofien, da det er et universitet som ikke tilbyr humanistiske fag. Det betyr ikke at det ikke finnes filosofistudier i Colombia[ i Bogotá er det et stort fagmiljø rundt filosofi, og på det andre største universitetet i Medellín, Universidad de Antioquia, er det en haug av filosofiemner å velge imellom (et universitetet UiO burde fikse en avtale med). Med et interessefelt som strakk seg fra samfunnsfag til filosofi, tenkte jeg det likevel ville bli lærerikt og spennende.

Så hvorfor valgte jeg å dra dit? For meg handlet det om en forkjærlighet for Latin-Amerika, og et ønske om å lære, forstå og sette seg dypere inn i både kulturen, språket og de komplekse politiske konfliktene. Jeg ville bli kjent med de politiske situasjonene fra grasrota, ikke bare gjennom forenklete norske nyheter eller politiske teorier. Jeg ville utfordre meg selv, og gitte sannheter og oppfatninger. Jeg ønsket å se ting fra nye perspektiver, og diskutere og lære med mennesker fra en annen del av verden. Vel vitende

om at jeg kunne dra til et bedre universitetet andre steder, var ønsket om å dra til det latinamerikanske kontinentet sterkere.

Medellín befinner seg i en dal med fjellsider som gjør at byen strekker seg over et stort areal. Medellín er en by som bare for rundt 20-30 år siden var en av verdens farligste, og var en risiko å besøke. Den urbane narkokrigen som begynte på 70-tallet samt den nasjonale borgerkrigen som har herjet landet i 52 år har gått hardt utover sivilbefolkningen. Dette er en del av historien som lett lar seg forenkle og romantisere i en tv-serie med fokus på en narkokonge, penger og kokain, men som lar være å fortelle om både kompleksiteten og omfanget av historien, lidelsene til befolkningen og konsekvensene som fortsatt preger byen i stor grad. På starten av 2000-tallet begynte situasjonen å forbedre seg, men en hverdag preget av vold, drap, forsvinninger og undertrykkelse er en virkelighet som er aktuell for store deler av byens innbyggere.

På den ene siden er dette en virkelighet som for meg som utvekslingsstudent er fjern. Universitetet befinner seg i en annen type virkelighet, der du som student automatisk er plassert i en middelklasse. Du har fått muligheten til å utdanne deg. Campus er relativt lite, men fylt av planter og trær, og gjør selv Botanisk Hage på Tøyen stusselig. I sterk motsetning til Blindern hvor en blir bøtelagt for å skrive eller male på en vegg, er de ulike fakultetene fylt med politiske malerier, sterke budskap og kritikk av regjeringens stadige nye utdanningsreformer. På den andre siden gjenspeiles det at man bor i en by hvor urettferdigheten er stor, og hvor rettighetene stadig er i fare. Små notiser om forsvinninger og drap vil du kunne finne i avisa hver dag, i store deler av byen er det utrygt å ferdes, og på vei hjem i taxi fra byen i helgene vil du kunne se neddoppe tenåringer som bor på gata. Dette er en side av byen du ikke ser på universitetet, men som alltid er der – hvis du har øynene oppe.

Universitetssystemet i Colombia vil gjøre den gjennomsnittlige norske student både stressa, overraska og frustrert. Jeg har ved flere anledninger slått huet i bordet og savna Blindern – for eksempel ved konstant bytting av frister, titalls små prøver som virker meningsløse, professorer som alltid kommer for sent. Ved andre anledninger har jeg blitt sint og frustrert. I en kultur som i stor grad preges av mannssjåvinisme er ikke universitetet et unntak fra dette. Det er ikke unormalt med mannlige professorer som oppfører seg upassende overfor kvinnelige studenter, og karakteren din blir ofte basert på om du sier i fra eller holder kjeft (sistnevnte er mest normalt). Til tross for at universitetet er et sted hvor man kan heve stemmen, hvor

det eksisterer en aktiv debatt og en kritisk front mot regjeringen (i motsetning til de fleste andre samfunnsinstitusjonene), er det også en del av det colombianske samfunnet og dets problemer: Makta ligger hos noen få, og korrupsjon er en del av systemet. Og til tross for at sosiale protester og mobilisering blomstrer, står ytringsfriheten konstant i fare. Mellom La Nacho og det andre store offentlige universitetet, en 10 minutters gange, befinner det seg en stor politistasjon. Tilfeldig? Ikke i denne byen. Den ble plassert akkurat der for å gjøre det vanskelig for studentene å samle seg og demonstrere. Politisk protest er en farlig aktivitet i Colombia. Mellom 1954 og 2011 ble 91 studenter blitt drept (av kriminelle grupper knyttet til staten) grunnet politisk engasjement og aktivisme.

Jeg har også opplevd flere ting jeg har savnet på Blindern. Man har ofte et personlig forhold til profesorene og man får ofte en klem i gangen. Det foregår alltid diskusjoner i timene, og det er forventa at du sier hva du mener, men som utvekslingsstudent som prøver å lære seg spansk kommer man seg heldigvis lett unna. Studentbevegelsene er sterke, og hvis det har skjedd noe i landet, eller regjeringen har foreslått en ny politisk reform eller lov, blir det demonstrasjoner. Ikke minst er majoriteten av de colombianske studentene utadventde og gira på å bli kjent med utvekslingsstudentene, noe som gjør det lett å få venner.

Det ble på alle måter et interessant halvår – såpass interessant at jeg har valgt å bli et semester til. Til en viss grad tror jeg at ved å dra på utveksling, uavhengig av hvor, vil man bli sittende igjen med mye av den samme erfaringen og samme gleden. Selv om jeg gleder meg til å komme tilbake til det norske universitetssystemet, vet jeg godt at jeg vil savne Medellín og Colombia enormt mye. Det er et samfunn som har mange politiske konflikter og sosiale problemer, men også en ekstrem åpenhet og glede. En tilværelse hvor ølen koster 10 kroner, hvor jeg blir vekket av lyden av fruktselgeren i gata hver dag og hvor det alltid er en svett kjeller med en salsafest. En studiehverdag hvor jeg konstant blir utfordret i måten jeg tenker på, og lærer meg å se nye perspektiver som kan være vanskelige å oppdage fra Blindern. Jeg vil sterkt anbefale å ta seg fatt både på den akademiske verden utenfor den vestlige verden og tørre dra på utveksling til kontinenter vidt forskjellige fra vårt eget (vitende om at det finnes andre meget gode universiteter i Latin-Amerika – også med filosofi). Du vil bli overraska, og det vil bli vanskelig å ikke dra tilbake.

# FILOSOFIKUIZ

*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. Hobbes oppkalte to av sine verker etter mytologiske udyr. Hvilke verker er disse?
2. Er allemannsretten, retten til at alle kan ferdes i naturen, nedfelt i grunnloven?
3. G.E. Moore hevdet at det er en logisk feilslutning å utlede moralske egenskaper fra naturlige egenskaper. Hva kaller han denne feiltagelsen?
4. I feministisk filosofi brukes gjerne begrepet “nature” som en motsetning til annet. Hvilket begrep er dette?
5. Hvilken skolastiker knyttes gjerne til naturretsfilosofi?
6. Hva kalles en hendelse der naturlovene oppheves eller som ikke har en naturlig årsak?
7. Hva kalles holdningen at filosofi bør legge seg så nært naturvitenskapene som mulig, eller at “philosophy is continuous with science”?
8. Hvilken britisk filosof mente at mennesket skulle herske over naturen, som mannen hersker over kvinnen?
9. I *Grunnlegging av moralens metafysikk* sammenligner Kant “formålenes rike” med et annet rike. Hvilket er dette?
10. Aristoteles hevdet at dyreartene utviklet seg til å bli slik de er i dag, sant eller usant?

- SVAR
1. Behemoth og Leviathan
  2. Nei
  3. Den naturalistiske feilslutning (“The naturalistic fallacy”)
  4. Nurture
  5. St. Thomas Aquinas
  6. Et mirakel.
  7. Naturalisme
  8. Francis Bacon
  9. Naturns rike
  10. Usant, Aristoteles hevdet at dyreartene alltid har vært som de er.

# NESTE NUMMER PLURALISME

Idéen at 'alt' kan tilbakeføres til et grunnprinsipp har stått sterkt opp gjennom filosofiens historie. Monistiske ståsteder har derimot fått større kamp om plassen i senere tid, for eksempel i tilfellet med moralsk pluralisme. Dette synet hevder at det finnes flere moralske syn, som potensielt kan motsi hverandre, men som likevel har et like stort krav på å bli respektert.

En lignende utvikling—forbundet med politisk liberalisme—finner vi også i politisk filosofi. Som John Rawls hevdet, kan ikke den liberale stat fremme bare én oppfatning om hva det gode er. Fra dette følger det for eksempel at idealet om det monogame, heteroseksuelle ekteskapet ikke kan være den eneste forståelsen av ekteskap en liberal stat kan fremme. Men betyr det derfor at en liberal stat bør anerkjenne alternative ekteskapsstrukturer, som polygami eller incestuøse ekteskap?

Begrepet pluralisme er ikke utelukkende brukt i praktisk filosofi. Pluralisme finner man også i teoretisk filosofi, for eksempel i språkfilosofi. Her kan man finne synet at proposisjoner kan være sanne på flere måter, eller at det finnes flere selvstendige sannhetsbegreper. Tanken er at det rett og slett ikke bare er en enkelt måte proposisjoner kan være sanne på. En lignende idé finner vi i metafysikken. Plural realisme hevder at verden fundamentalt sett finnes på flere måter, måter som ikke nødvendigvis er gjensidig utelukkende. Men gir det i så fall mening å snakke om én verden? Noen filosofer frykter at pluralisme fører til relativisme der den anvendes; enten innen etikken, eller i vår grunnleggende forståelse av mening. Noen mener at det ikke er et problem, mens andre hevder at pluralisme ikke er forenlig med en realismetilnærming i filosofi.

Utover de forskjellige områdene nevnt ovenfor, kan pluralistiske ståsteder også antas innen andre filosofiske områder, som i logikk, estetikk, eller bevissthetsfilosofi. Innen disse områdene reises det henholdsvis spørsmål som: Finnes det mer enn et korrekt logisk system? Kan kunstverk tolkes på flere gyldige måter? Består bevissthet av flere forskjellige substanser?

Til neste nummer av Filosofisk supplement søker vi tekster som omhandler noen av disse spørsmålene eller andre filosofiske problemstillinger knyttet til pluralisme.

Fristen for innsending av tekster er **lørdag, 17. mars 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).*

# BIDRAGSYTERE

## **Tekst**

Bendik Hellem Aaby (f. 1990) er doktorgradsstipendiat i filosofi ved KU Leuven.

Oda K.S. Davanger (f. 1990) er masterstudent i filosofi ved UiO.

Dag August Schmedling Dramer (f. 1993) er masterstudent i filosofi ved UiO.

Veslemøy E.X. Kaen (f. 1998) er bachelorstudent i filosofi ved UiO.

Martin Lee Mueller (f. 1981) er doktor i filosofi fra UiO.

Martin Nyberg (f. 1992) er masterstudent i filosofi ved UiO.

Anna Smajdor (f. 1971) er førsteamanuensis i filosofi ved UiO.

Hans Robin Solberg (f. 1990) er masterstudent i filosofi ved UiO.

Henrik Voldstad (f. 1995) er bachelorstudent i filosofi ved UiO.

Patrick J. Winther-Larsen (f. 1995) er masterstudent i filosofi ved UiO.

## **Bilder**

Linnéa Alnæs (f. 1985) er hobbyillustratør.

Rasmus Gaare (f. 1992) studerer kunst og arkitektur i Aarhus.

Vera Gjermundsen (f. 1995) er bachelorstudent i kunsthistorie på UiO.

Rasmus Kjelsrud (f. 1992) er tidligere filosofistudent ved UiO, og freelancer for ti  
den som oversetter i Berlin.

Hedda Larssen (f. 1998) studerer internasjonale miljø- og utviklingsstudier ved  
NMBU.

Oda Aurora Norlund (f. 1998) har studert kunst, design og arkitektur ved  
Elvebakken VGS.

Camila De los ríos Muñoz (f. 1991) er bachelorstudent i historie ved Universidad de  
Nacional i Medellín, Colombia

***Filosofisk supplement* er et studentdrevet tidsskrift basert på frivillig arbeid.**

**Takk til alle bidragsytere – bladet hadde ikke blitt til uten dere!**