INTENSION

FOR THE IMPORTANCE OF PHILOSOPHY IN OUR TIMES

No 2 2021



THE MANY ROADS TO PHILOSOPHY
Five philosophical journeys, from beginning to today

STUDYING PHILOSOPHY – HOW DO YOU ACHIEVE THE BEST RESULTS?

NORDPHIL 2021
A Nordic Conference

– Meet the conference speakers and find out what NordPhil is about

BY PHILOSOPHY STUDENTS AT SWEDISH UNIVERSITIES

EDITORIAL STAFF

With a few exceptions, this issue of Intension is entirely in English. This is due to the current issue's Nordic target group.

Jesper Olsson
Easygoing and calm MA student at Stockholm University (SU), with an interest in "covert language." Apart from that, he's just a person.



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MA student at SU. Because of her interest in history, she has recently started to learn ancient Greek. Or, to be more precise: she has recently started to sing the Greek alphabet in the shower.



Anita Nyman
Untamed undergraduate student at Gothenburg University, currently entangled in some mathematical philosophical problems.



Do you want to be part of the team? Contact: info.intension@gmail.com!



Ellen Davidsson
MA student at Lund University. As the newest non-SU originated editorial member, she fights to protect Lund's (and the rest of non-capital Sweden's) philosophical interests.

EDITORIAL

"Why do you study philosophy?" is a question that has a multitude of answers. The follow-up question "What can you work with as a philosopher?" is a lot harder to answer. Maybe a degree in philosophy is a degree in thinking? But do you need a degree to think? Is everyone who thinks a philosopher? Who can truly call themselves a philosopher? In this issue, our newest addition to the editorial staff, Ellen Davidsson from Lund University, tries to shed some light on this last question.

Ellen will also appear as one of the speakers during this year's NordPhil conference, taking place in Stockholm. In this issue, you will be able to read a presentation of her and the other selected speakers. NordPhil is dedicated to acting as a Nordic philosophical platform – fostering connections between Nordic students of philosophy. Swedish philosophy is a true subset of Nordic philosophy, which in turn is a true subset of Western philosophy, and all these sets are worthy of attention. Seeing how the release of this issue coincides with the conference, we thought it would only be appropriate to give the conference an introduction here.

For this issue, we have also put together a series of interviews with professional philosophers from Umeå in the north to Lund in the south, highlighting the many roads that can lead to a philosophical career. Here, Rut Vinterkvist debuts as a writer for Intension, representing Umeå University, and returning as a writer is Anthony Öhnström from Uppsala University.

For readers interested in pursuing a philosophical career, this issue also includes an article by Sama Agahi, student counselor at Stockholm University. His text tackles the question "How does one become better at reading and understanding philosophy?" and provides us with some fruitful study techniques.

Lastly, as students of philosophy we can often be found with our noses in books, and this is reflected in this issue of Intension. Alice has read and reviewed Henrik Lagerlund's book about becoming a philosophical foodie. Jakob has also been busy with reading Lars Tidholms book *Bortom skogen*, and you can read his review along with the returning story of Mr Gruyère (part II).

Hopefully this issue will inspire you in your future studies and careers. Now, go out there and find questions worth asking. Someone might want to pay you to do it one day.

Filip Westling,
with the editorial staff

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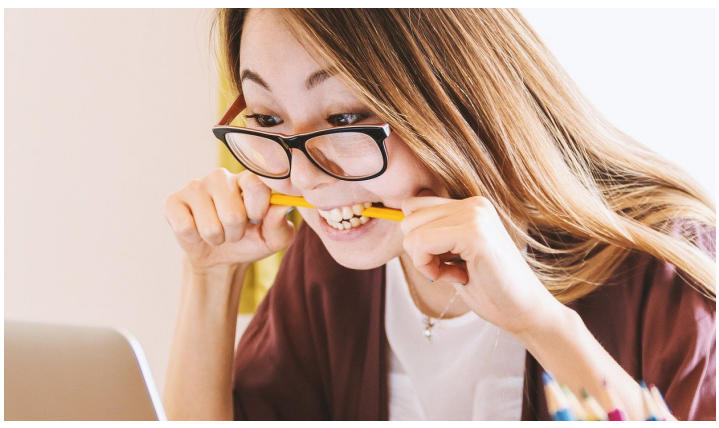
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Contribute to the next issue of Intension!

Are you a philosophy student affiliated with a Swedish university? Are you interested in contributing with an article, an essay, an illustration, a poem, a photograph, an interview, or something similar to a magazine about philosophy? Send it to Intension!

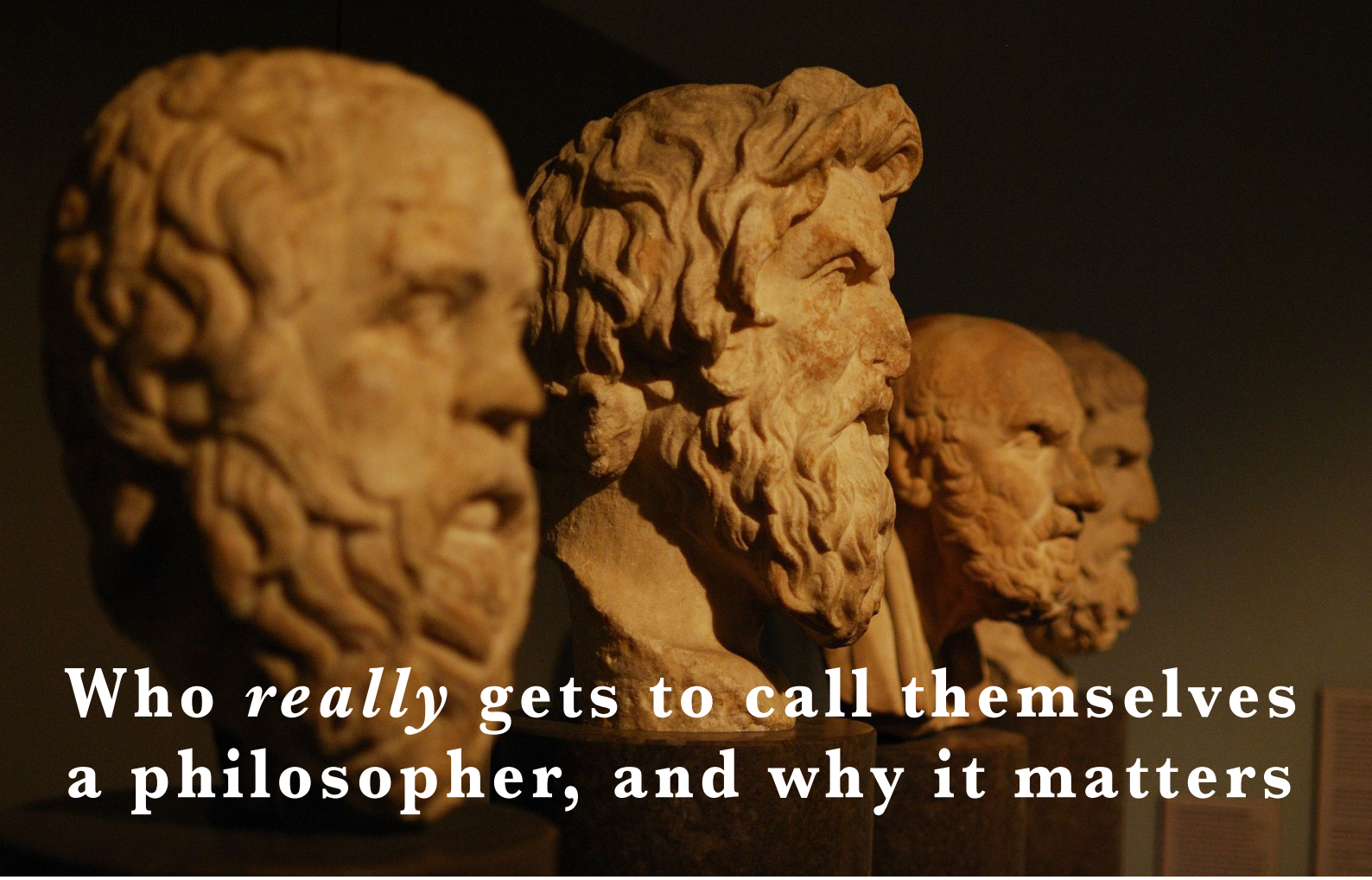
Guidelines:
Intension welcomes submissions of any kind, as long as it is about philosophy. For the next issue, we will prioritize submissions on the following topics: Whales, choices, elections, and politics. **The deadline is January 31**, and the issue is planned to appear in the middle of next semester.

If you want to submit an essay, the limit is 30 000 characters, including blank spaces. But shorter texts are appreciated.

All submissions must be in .pages or .docs format, we will not accept pdf:s.

Submissions can be in Swedish or English.

Send them to **info.intension@gmail.com**!



Who *really* gets to call themselves a philosopher, and why it matters

The weekend after I completed my bachelor degree in philosophy, me and my fellow mentor-colleagues took the first-year philosophy students out for drinks in Malmö, to have a good time and celebrate, or mourn, the end of the semester and our parting. A couple of beers in, one of my colleagues turned to me with a thoughtful face.

"I have been wondering", he said. "What do you think? When can one really call oneself a philosopher?"

That was not the first, nor the last time I encountered this question. I have gotten it at family dinners and dates, and at seminars and parties. I have discussed it with friends, fellow students, teachers and random dudes from Tinder. And it arose again when the editorial team met to discuss the topic of this issue of Intension. So what is it that makes it so difficult to answer? Is it even worth raising? Well, yes, of course it is. It's ancient wisdom that there are no (or perhaps just a few) stupid questions. The difficulty lies in finding an answer that provides us with what we actually want to know.

If you google 'philosopher' you get about 692 000 000 results in 0,67 seconds. On the top of the page, Wikipedia defines the term, from the Ancient Greek φιλόσοφος (romanized: *philosopho*s, meaning 'lover of wisdom') as "someone who practices philosophy" and credits Pythagoras as the first person to use it. And according to *Dictonary.com* a philosopher could be either:

1. A person who offers views or theories on profound questions in ethics, metaphysics, logic, and other related fields.
2. A person who is deeply versed in philosophy.
3. A person who establishes the central ideas of some movement, cult, etc.
4. A person who regulates his or her life, actions, judgments, utterances, etc., by the light of philosophy or reason.
5. A person who is rationally or sensibly calm, especially under trying circumstances.
6. *Obsolete.* An alchemist or occult scientist.

Thus the Internet has spoken and provided us with one very broad definition: all the lovers of wisdom, and several more or less narrow ones; academics, influencers, cult-leaders, cult-followers and just all the stress-resistant people out there. Not to mention that it has, sad-

ly, ruled out all alchemists and occult scientists. But, however amusing, are any of these criteria actually satisfying? All definitions above seem to have in common the execution of the activity labeled as 'philosophy'. To investigate if the performance of that activity might be a sufficient or merely necessary condition for the label 'philosopher', let's take a closer look at what it might contain.

Again, Wikipedia provides. According to it, philosophy is "the study of general and fundamental questions such as those about existence, reason, knowledge, values, mind, and language". *Britania.com* puts it as "the rational, abstract, and methodical consideration of reality as a whole or of fundamental dimensions of human existence and experience". Being a simple woman myself, I propose something in the way of 'thinking about complex things, in a critical and open way'. But whichever words you use to describe it, you need only two things to actually do it. First, your mind – you need to be able to *think*, and more specifically, to think *openly* and *critically*. Second, of course – you need things *in* your mind to think *about*, preferably or at least traditionally, questions that are difficult to answer in another way (as by conducting physical experiments).

Depending on the complexity of the questions that you would like to think openly and critically about, I am the first one to admit that *education* in specific matters might also be a great help. I am also keen to regard thinking in this open and critical way as a skill, which, like most skills, can be improved with practice. Practice which is usually most rewarding when led by someone more skilled at the art in question than the one practicing; more education. Still it is, in theory at least, fully possible to imagine a philosopher as the most commonly known stereotype portrays him (her, them): someone whose formal education remains undisclosed, sitting somewhere in silence (perhaps on a stone, preferably with his head in his hands) doing nothing but thinking. Alone.

This picture is of course quite inaccurate in many ways. Some (many, perhaps all) philosophers actually love to talk and discuss things at length, with anyone who wants to listen, or is merely unable to flee. The point, however, is that it seems that the core activity of

"We might all be born with the innate abilities required to become philosophers"

philosophy is relatively accessible. It does not require any tools or any specific knowledge of things most people don't know of, nor is it restricted to any specific places in space or moments in time. It is (almost) always accessible. In this view, it is an activity of possibilities, inviting unexpected contributions from unexpected contributors. And, an activity closely tied to human nature. Aristotle once deemed that man was 'the political animal', but might she in fact be the *philosophical* one? Well, perhaps. We might all engage in philosophy from time to time, and we might all be born with the innate abilities required to become philosophers. This does not, however, mean that we should all label ourselves so. Why not?

First of all, because if that were the case the mere word 'philosopher' would not exist since there would be no need for it. It's whole purpose is to distinguish some people from others on some kind of criteria based on their activities and abilities, not to be a synonym to 'human'. So, there has to be something more to it. But what is it? And what is it that vexes me when I introduce myself to a person who replies:

"Oh, so you study philosophy? How interesting! *I* am something of a philosopher *myself*"?

Why do I just want to say "Oh, really", to this completely fictional person. "So, where did you study? What degrees do you have? What subjects have you written about? Is anything of it published? Where?"

Maybe we can find some clarity by pretending that I am a student of medicine instead. What if this, still completely fictional, person I introduced myself and my occupation to then replied: "How interesting! *I* am something of a doctor *myself*!" No matter how unlikely such a reply would be, let's further pretend that means



something in the way of that he likes to practice the 'activity of medicine' and also has the ability to do so. Ergo: he diagnoses his friends with (usually quite rare) diseases based on anecdotal evidence, some course in biology and things he has read online. Would anyone in that position even think to credit themselves with the title 'doctor'? And even so, would any *actual* doctor or student of medicine find that comment to be anything other than very insulting? I guess I don't even have to ask if it would be a remotely correct use of the term.

There is obviously a strong tension in the particular case of the practice conducted by philosophers. Its simplicity, accessibility and the endless possibilities that it offers is what makes it beautiful and compelling in the eyes of many. On the other hand, the same qualities are degrading to its professional standing. If anyone can do it, where is the merit in putting time and effort into philosophical work? And where should the line be drawn between happy amateurs and hardworking professionals? Who should get to call themselves what?

Well, before I had any philosophical aspirations I nursed some kind of vague artistic such. In high school, I studied both music, drama, art and dance. While struggling with the latter, which was mandatory if I wanted to do the former and not something I was particularly interested in pursuing, my dancing teacher told me quite optimistically that "anyone can dance". This was not only very annoying but also (depending on how you define the activity), true. I could dance. I did dance. However, this does not mean that I am now, was then, or will ever be a *dancer.* At least, I would not dream of labeling myself so.

Because regardless of my theoretical and technical knowledge of dance and my physical ability to actually put some of it into practice, I am *comparatively bad at* and *very uninterested in* dancing. And while I, due to this lack of aptitude and interest, gave up any dancing aspirations at an (very) early stage, others, often more talented or at least more determined people, have chosen to spend hours, days, weeks and years at training, working, trying, failing, succeeding, progressing and *committing* to their dance. With the usual result of some quite accomplished, technically advanced and beautiful dancing. As we have determined, philosophy, just like dance, is an activity, or rather a craft. You *practice* it. Nevertheless, you can practice it *badly,* and you can practice it *well.* You can be more or less *suited* for it, and you can *work* more or less hard at improving your skill.

Now, if my studies in metaethics has taught me anything, it is that adding value concept to any mix is usually a risky endeavour. For an activity to 'be done well' it has to stand in relation to some kind of property 'goodness' (and/or a goodness-making property), which distinguishes it from other performances of this activity who are lacking such properties. Meaning that, if A is a good/bad/beautiful/ugly dancer but B is not, there is *something* to A's performance that is lacking in B's, and so on. As I am sure many of you are aware, the mere existence of values (in this case goodness) is tricky to prove, and thus remains well disputed throughout the philosophical community dealing with metaethics.

But let's for now pretend that we all get along and accept such properties, no sceptical questions about their potential nature asked, and thus that 'good dancing' or 'good philosophy' also exists. How then, does a good philosophical practice differ from an ordinary, not-good, one?

Understandably, the scope of that question is, well, big. Answering it would require opinions on value theory and on the practice of philosophy which I do not want to claim to possess. *Commitment*, on the other hand, might be a less normative concept and hence less problematic to define. As I see it, it means putting time and effort into doing something, often including sacrificing other things by prioritizing them away. That being said, I think it is time for the big reveal of how I actually answered my colleague that night at the bar.

"Maybe", I said, if I remember correctly, "'philosopher' is not something one gets to call oneself at all but something one gets called by others. At least for the first time?" And then I might even have added: "Is it not a label worthy of pride only when it is put on you by someone whose philosophy you actually admire?"

Of course, I see now in the gloomy light of sobriety that this answer faces some minor problems like arbitrariness and circularity, as long as 'good philosophy' is not satisfyingly defined. But what can I say, I was drunk. And I do remain open to the possibility of such a definition to indeed be found someday, even if not by me and not in this text. I also realise that it might sound a little flat, trite or even sentimental to appeal to self-knowledge and humility. However, it is my firm belief that hard work and big efforts, whether that of yours or others, and whether accompanied by natural skill or not, demands appropriate respect. And accordingly, the only conclusion I dare approach without further investigation is that any label indicating that you have committed to a craft requiring this, be it philosopher, medical doctor or dancer, ought to be used responsibly, whether it is self-referential or not.

Ellen Davidsson,
Lund University



Some insights, expressed in logic

Key

P = philosopher
A = annoying
L = alchemist
O = occult scientist
B = obsolete

$$\neg\forall x(P(x) \rightarrow A(x))$$
$$\exists x(P(x) \wedge A(x))$$
$$\neg\forall x(A(x) \rightarrow P(x))$$
$$\exists x(A(x) \rightarrow P(x))$$

$$\neg\forall x(P(x) \rightarrow L(x) \vee O(x))$$
$$\neg\forall x(B(x) \rightarrow P(x))$$
$$\exists x(B(x) \wedge O(x) \wedge P(x))$$

Logic by *Anita Nyman*,
Gothenburg University



NordPhil 2021 Selected speakers

NordPhil is a series of student-led conferences in philosophy, which aims to highlight and provide a platform to young philosophers from the Nordic countries. The conference prioritizes students on a bachelor or master level, and gives them an opportunity to express and examine their ideas together with their peers. Active students (as of 2020) affiliated with a Nordic University were eligible for selection, and they were welcome to submit an abstract on any philosophical topic.

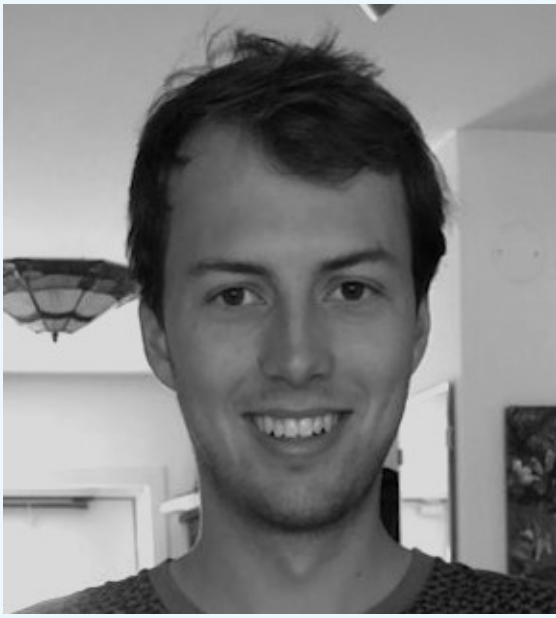
This year's NordPhil is hosted by Stockholm University, and over the course of two days in November, nine speakers will present their philosophical projects to a crowd of around 40 guests. The conference will also include a keynote presentation by Stockholm University's Erik Angner, and be interspersed with seminars and social events.

Here, we've asked the nine selected speakers to write a short presentation of themselves and select a picture that they felt was representative of them.



My name is **Sofie Birkedahl Scheel**, I am 26 years old, and I live in Copenhagen, Denmark. This summer I finished my MA degree in philosophy from the University of Copenhagen. Ever since the modest beginnings of my BA, I have been interested in the moral and political aspects of different branches of philosophy. During my MA I particularly found interest in such aspects of *knowing*, rendering *social epistemology* my area of expertise.

The topic of my talk at NordPhil concerns *epistemic trust*, i.e. a way in which we are epistemically dependent on others. In the talk, I discuss the role of trust in knowledge acquisition and how *normative* aspects of our knowledge practices may provide justification of beliefs. More specifically, I aim to revive the view that we are *default entitled* to trust the word of others (absent defeaters), a view that is debunked within prominent literature – an explanation of the source of said entitlement is needed, some argue. In the talk, I aim to do so by suggesting that moral obligations that the speaker has to the hearer render the hearer default entitled to trust the word of the speaker. My suggestion is not hassle-free, hence, it faces problems of which I hope to discuss with my peers at NordPhil.



My name is **Vidar Bratt**, I am originally from Falun in Dalarna. I moved down to Lund for university three years ago and have just finished my bachelor degree in theoretical philosophy. The topic of my talk is best introduced by a quote from the French philosopher and physicist Pierre Duhem:

> Between two contradictory theorems of geometry there is no room for a third judgment; if one is false, the other is necessarily true. Do two hypotheses in physics ever constitute such a strict dilemma? Shall we ever dare to assert that no other hypothesis is imaginable? Light may be a swarm of projectiles, or it may be a vibratory motion whose waves are propagated in a medium; is it forbidden to be anything else at all? (Duhem, 1954[1914])

We often interpret scientific theories as giving us an approximately true explanation of the phenomenon the theory describes. The core insight, that challenges this interpretation, described by Duhem above is that you could imagine that there exist multiple theories that describe the same phenomenon equally well. A modern version of this issue is the problem of empirical equivalence. Could there be multiple different theories that give rise to the exact same empirical predictions? What does this possibility mean for our interpretation of science?



My name is **Ellen Davidsson**, and I am in the middle of my MA-studies in Practical Philosophy at Lund University. The BA-thesis I wrote last year investigated epistemic problems following a kind of moral error theory, which claims there are no irreducibly normative moral reasons. It sums up what has been my favourite topics pretty well: metaethics, value theory and epistemology. But I am also very fond of virtue ethics and political philosophy, and lately I've found myself reading more and more about topics in philosophy of mind, such as emotions and self-consciousness.

That will show in my talk at NordPhil, which originates from a book report I wrote after reading *In Defense of Shame: the Faces of an Emotion* by Julien Deonna, Raffaele Rodgono and Fabrice Teroni. The aim of the talk will be to outline their theory of shame and show why I, while I think it has many merits, am sceptical to the final conclusion that true shame is never social, and gets all its moral significance from being autonomous. Instead, I will argue that shame is highly social in nature, possibly even heteronomous, but still morally relevant since it's closely linked with empathy and self-consciousness.



My name is **Hubert Hågemark**, I live in Lund and have mostly studied theoretical philosophy but also psychology and some practical philosophy. I have recently finished a one-year master's program in theoretical philosophy and started with cognitive science. My interest in philosophy mostly concerns language philosophy and communication.

In my bachelor thesis, I investigated how we should understand the concept of communication and especially what successful communication involves. My master's thesis followed the similar interest but focused on the notion of *speaker meaning*: what we, as speakers, mean by what we are uttering, which also will be the topic of my presentation. Compared to linguistic meaning, speaker meaning is often understood to be constituted by the speaker's intentions while uttering something. I will argue for an alternative conceptualization, where speaker meaning is instead understood in terms of what the person says or would have said given certain conditions.



My name is **Johan Jacobsson**, and I'm currently studying practical philosophy at Uppsala University. Previously, I studied philosophy, politics and economics at Lund University and I'm interested in topics related to all three subjects.

The topic of my presentation is value superiority: the idea that some or any amount of a value bearer can be better than any amount of some other value bearer. Value superiority has historically been held by philosophers like John Stuart Mill and has recently gained attention for the role it might play in solutions to apparent paradoxes in population ethics. In an article from 2005, Gustaf Arrhenius argues that value superiority has counterintuitive implications in cases where we can span the difference between a superior value bearer (call it a) and an inferior one (call it z) with a sequence of value bearers (a, b, c … z) such that the difference between every consecutive value bearer in the sequence is marginal. Superiority between a and z in such a sequence implies superiority between some consecutive value bearers. Arrhenius considers the latter to be counterintuitive. In my talk, I will try to criticize this sequence argument.





My name is **Frederik T. Junker**, and this summer I graduated with an MA in Philosophy from the University of Copenhagen. Throughout my time as a student, I have been engaged in organizing weekly presentations as part of the Philosophical Student Colloquium. For the past two years I have been part of the interdisciplinary research group Cognition, Intention and Action. My academic interests lie at the intersection of philosophy and cognitive science. Lately, one of the hottest approaches in this area has been Predictive Processing. According to this framework, the brain generates and updates an internal model of the world based on which it generates predictions about sensory input which are then compared to actual sensory input.

Predictive Processing is sometimes presented as a grand unifying theory of brain function. My talk concerns some of the challenges this framework faces. I will argue that there are forms of attention that are hard to accommodate within the framework and that these exemplify some more general problems with explaining mental action and motivation. I will present some possible solutions to these problems as well as the general picture of the mind that Predictive Processing implies where all neurocognitive phenomena are explained in terms of the same fundamental principles.

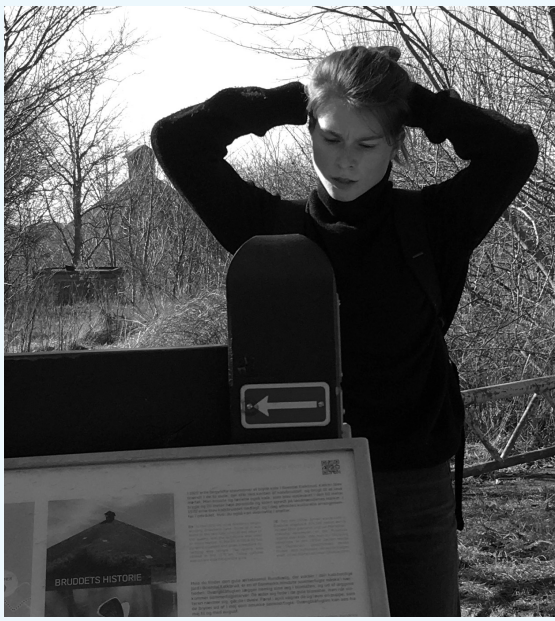


My name is **Matias Moisio**, and my philosophical interests include phenomenology, philosophy of language and philosophy of science. And especially their intersections. Currently I'm focusing on the work of Wilfrid Sellars and Edmund Husserl.

In my talk I explore a controversial issue conjoining transcendental phenomenology and sellarsian philosophy: Does transcendental phenomenology commit to the Myth of the Given? To answer the question, I clarify both the nature of transcendental-phenomenological inquiry and the scope of the Myth of the Given. I present, against arguments offered by Carl B. Sachs and Dionysis Christias, that transcendental phenomenology indeed does evade the Myth, as there is a fundamental difference between the sense of epistemic claims made in the natural attitude and transcendental-phenomenological results.







My name is **Lia Nordmann**, and I'm a MA student at the Berlin School of Mind and Brain at the Humboldt Universität in Germany but I just spent a semester at the University of Copenhagen. For a long time, questions about my area of interest made me panic. My research interests developed slowly and very much not in a linear way, from philosophy of mind to empirical research on the brain, to the intersection between neuroscience, ethics, and metaethics. This cluster of debates is also the focus of my NordPhil talk.

In particular, I will discuss an empirically-informed objection to fitting attitude theories of value in metaethics. According to these views, if we want to define values such as beautiful, sad, or funny by reference to the emotions we ought to feel in response to these values, then we sometimes we have to say there are things we ought to feel. This, however, seems to clash with the common understanding of oughts as limited to the sort of things we can control, like actions rather than emotions (hence the familiar principle that 'ought implies can'). I suggest a way for such views to deal with this conflict.



My name is **Andrea Sebro Rasmussen**, and I study philosophy to develop a language for the complexity and meta-problems that keep me up at night. So far, it is going so-so, but I'm definitely not quitting this easily. I am interested in other fields besides philosophy too, and I hope someday to be able to apply the methodological rigor to one of them - maybe computer science or biology.

In my NordPhil presentation, I will discuss longtermism, which is a relatively new philosophical paradigm winning influence in the Effective Altruism community. I will show how many (not uncontroversial) assumptions lie behind the longtermist program, touching upon population axiology and presenting the decision theory that longtermism hinges upon. Concerning the latter, I attempt to show how much weight the assumption of expected utility calculus carries and point to reasons why it should be questioned in the particular case of longtermism. If I do well, listeners will leave the talk with a sense that we should be cautious before dedicating all of our resources to mitigating x-risk. Mostly, though, I look forward to meeting other engaged students and learning about the problems on their minds. See you in Stockholm!

The Many Roads to Philosophy

Have you ever wondered what the road to becoming a philosopher looks like? Or what it is like to be one? Intension has met with five philosophers: Cathrine V. Felix, Richard Dawid, Anna-Sofia Maurin, Elisabeth Schellekens Dammann, and Ethan Nowak. They are all active, in different ways, at Swedish universities. We asked them about where their philosophical journeys began, how they ended up where they are, and last but not least if they have any advice for aspiring philosophers.

When did you begin to study philosophy, and why? Did someone or something, in particular, inspire you to do so?

Cathrine: I didn't plan to become a philosopher, but maybe I always was? I have always dreamt a lot (while sleeping), and as a kid I went to the library and asked to get all the books on dreams and dreaming. That led me to reading Freud and Jung when I was quite young. I also always loved reading and writing in general. I wanted to be some kind of writer when I grew up, an author maybe. That is why I started studying literature at the university in Oslo. But you had to study more than one subject, so I took philosophy on the side. After a while, I realized I spent more time on that than on my literature studies so I switched. I especially remember reading Kirkegaard during that time, it was an amazing eye-opener for me.

Richard: I never did an actual university degree in philosophy. I did attend some philosophy classes on the side, both in Vienna and Munich and also in Berkeley later on. I also joined a weekly discussion group of philosophy students on analytic philosophy in Vienna. So I did have interest and some degree of knowledge in philosophy as a student but I had no intention of becoming a philosopher.

Anna-Sofia: After finishing school, my main goal in life was to become an actor. To have something to do while waiting to get into one of the acting schools, I went to (Lund) university. In line with my then main passion in life, I first studied a subject called drama-theatre-film, and I soon decided to do a PhD in film. I first needed to complete my masters, however. While contemplating what to supplement my drama-theatre-film studies with, I happened to be visiting my parents. One evening, we went to a local jazz club, where I met my philosophy teacher from high school. He suggested I study philosophy. I don't know if 'inspired' was the right word, but I was out of ideas, and he provided me with one.

Elisabeth: I was introduced to philosophy in high school when I was 16 or 17 years old. I went to a French- speaking school in Brussels, and every student had to read some of the classic French thinkers, like Diderot, Descartes and Rousseau. I then started studying philosophy at the University of Edinburgh in 1993.

Ethan: I started to take evening courses in microbiology and chemistry which I thought was really cool, so when I went to the university I had applied for studying biochemistry. The first year we weren't allowed to take any philosophy classes except logic. I didn't know what it was about, and I hated math before, but I thought it sounded cool. So even though I didn't even know what it was about I picked it and it blew me away! I thought it was so great and I just walked around wanting to solve these logic problems so I changed my course. After that I took as many philosophy courses as I could, a lot of ethics and political philosophy.

Cathrine V. Felix



Born: In Oslo 1977.

Family background: Mother was a school cleaning worker, became a store manager, and finally a kindergarten teacher. Father is an electrician. He worked in his field for 15 years, before becoming a full time trade unionist, and was the head of the Norwegian El and IT Union for 14 years.

Philosophical biography: Has teached on almost every philosophical topic there is, from human rights, epistemology, critical thinking and applied ethics to aesthetics. Did her MA in Oslo and her PhD in Lund, both on philosophy of action, more specifically on mistakes. Her research has concerned, apart from that, topics like epistemology, philosophy of technology and friendship. She has worked at both the University of Gothenburg and Lund University. She currently teaches a little bit at Lund University and is between full time positions at Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU) and Inland Norwegian University of Applied Science (INN).

Interviewed by Ellen Davidsson, Lund University

Richard Dawid



Born: May 9th 1966 in Vienna.

Family background: Father worked in banking, mother at the German embassy in Vienna before she had children.

Philosophical biography: Works on the philosophy of physics and the general philosophy of science, with a focus on philosophical aspects of contemporary fundamental physics. After entering philosophy, he worked with his own research projects at the philosophy department in Vienna, and at the Institute Vienna Circle. He then spent a few years at the MCMP in Munich before he came to Stockholm University in 2016 as an associate professor, and was promoted to professor two years later.

Interviewed by Jesper Olsson, Stockholm University

If not straight away, what have you done before?

Cathrine: Before studying I worked as a secretary at the fiction department at Aschehoug, a Norwegian publishing agency. I also worked as a secretary at the Norwegian Climate and Pollution Agency. I have always had jobs on the side while studying. I have worked with serving, cleaning, with packing at storage units, as a training instructor and many other things. I get bored easily, so I like to keep myself busy. For many years I did not have a TV, for example. They gave me one for my 40th birthday, but I did not install it. I sit still only when I read and write, otherwise I prefer being out and about in nature.

Richard: I studied physics and did my PhD in theoretical physics in Vienna and Munich. After my PhD, I spent 2 years as a physics postdoc at Berkeley before switching to philosophy.

Anna-Sofia: I went straight from school to the university, and apart from a very brief stint in Stockholm taking drama classes during the days and working as a croupier at night, I have stayed there since.



Anna-Sofia Maurin

Born: In Stockholm, Jordbro, 1969 (but grew up at Österlen, in the utmost south of Sweden).

Family background: Father is an artist, a painter. Her mother worked her whole life as a teacher, but also wrote and directed plays and poetry. They met in Paris, where her father went to art school.

Philosophical biography: Works almost exclusively on issues in metaphysics. Did her PhD in Lund in 2002, on a then little known theory of properties – trope theory – and retains an interest in the metaphysics of properties and related issues to do with the metaphysics of concrete objects and of states of affairs, to this date. Most recently she has started exploring how her interest in the levelled conception of reality, grounding, and metaphysical explanation can be applied to the special case of what exists in the social realm. Since 2012, she has been a professor in theoretical philosophy at the philosophical department at the University of Gothenburg.

Interviewed by Anita Nyman, Gothenburg University

Elisabeth: I worked as a photo-model the year between high school and university, and continued to do so throughout my studies, and even after I started my PhD. I worked in Stockholm and London, but also Milan, New York, Athens and other places, so there was quite a lot of traveling during the school holidays.

Ethan: I left high school when I was 16. I thought it was boring and hierarchical, I couldn't handle being told what to do. I guess it was immaturity, but I felt like school and homework was soul-destroying and something they just forced us to do to keep us occupied. And there was a little trouble, so I was asked to leave the public school system. Instead I went to a special and progressive school. They had a plack that said "the fatal pedagogical error is to throw answers like stones at children who have not yet asked a question." The idea could have worked, but the problem was that the children were not mature enough. We smoked cigarettes outside instead. We also did a lot of pranks on each other, so I got into disciplinary problems again and I left to start working as an assistant to a carpenter. I almost always had an extra job. I have also worked at burger king, a fruit stand and as a motorcycle salesman.

When did you know that you wanted to continue working with philosophy? Have you ever considered doing something else?

Cathrine: I think that since I have always been reading and writing, doing philosophy feels like home to me. And you can bring it with you everywhere! I have met a lot of quitters though, who have left because it is hard to continue in academia, and a lot of philosophers on sick leave due to stress. It's hard to find a full-time position. You get a lot of rejections, both when applying for jobs and trying to get papers published. We are in the business of rejection, and some say it is not worth it. But for me it definitely has been. I am thankful every day that I get to do this. It has been a bit hard at times, though, not to know how much money I would earn in the next six months and the economic situation has been difficult sometimes. But it was never so hard that I wanted to quit. If I would ever do something else it would be to work in or run a cyclist store, because I love mountain biking! I get instantly happy as soon as I get on a bike. But maybe someday I can do both!

Richard: For a long time, I viewed myself as developing a career in theoretical physics. My plan to switch to philosophy slowly emerged during my stay at Berkeley. At the time, I followed string theory quite closely (which was a main focus of the department, even though I did not work on string theory myself). I got the impression that there is something philosophically interesting and new about string theory, and I had some ideas as to how to address those points. Since no-one in

philosophy dealt with these questions at the time, I felt that I should do it.

Anna-Sofia: What I found fascinating about philosophy from the get-go was how organized it was. I liked that philosophy provided me with tools I felt I hadn't gotten elsewhere. Tools to make me a better thinker. Interestingly, in the beginning I wasn't really interested in the content of the theses we were set to study. That interest grew gradually over time, though, and now it's what's most important to me. I have thought about doing something else. Mostly during my post-doc years, before landing a permanent position. Nowadays, I sometimes think that life would have been easier if I had chosen to do something else (philosophy is so damn hard), but it's perfectly clear to me that the possible world in which I do is far far away from this one.

Elisabeth: I knew quite early that I wanted to try my hand at academia. Although neither of my parents worked at a university, academic education was very highly valued in my family when I was growing up. As far as any plan B goes, I contemplated going into law as well as pursuing a career working in a think tank. Partly because of the ways in which these careers make use of some of the skills you gather whilst studying philosophy, like conceptual analysis. Once I started my PhD, however, I was set on a career as a philosopher.

Ethan: When I took my logic class I stuck with it and just kept going. But for a lot of years when I did my PhD I thought I wouldn't get a job, the statistics for getting one is really bad. So I was looking into becoming a firefighter, maybe driving the snowcat that makes the ski tracks so I could groom the slope at night and skii during the day. I'm glad I got a job as a philosopher.

Choose three (or more) important moments in your philosophical career. When did they happen, why were/are they important?

Cathrine: It was a great relief when I got my first full time-position at NTNU. Another important moment was when I as a student discovered mistakes as a philosophical topic. I had an amazing teacher in Oslo, Olav Gjelsvik, who taught philosophy of action. During one of his lectures he was talking about mistakes and I got this strong wow-feeling; you can do philosophy about *this*? So, I wrote my masters thesis about it, and applied for my PhD in Lund because Olav told me there were experts at philosophy of action there. And I still think about this topic every day. The third must be when I published my first philosophy paper, in a real academic journal. Then I realized that yes, I can actually do this. Before that I was not really sure. And since then, every published paper is still a highlight. Not because I always like what I write, sometimes I hate it, but it is nice to see all your hard work actually leading up to something.

Elisabeth Schellekens Dammann



Born: 1974, Antwerpen, Belgium.

Family background: Mother worked as a lawyer and her father studied political science and has, among other things, worked for the UN.

Philosophical biography: Have worked mainly in Aesthetics, Ethics and Moral Philosophy, and 18th century philosophy. After completing her PhD in 2003, she worked as a post-doctoral researcher at King's College London (2003-2006) and then as a Lecturer at Durham University (2006-2013). She has been Chair Professor of Aesthetics in the Philosophy Department of Uppsala university since January 2014.

Interviewed by Anthony Öhnström, Uppsala University



Ethan Nowak

Born: In Fremont, California. June 1981.

Family background: Father is a businessman, he distributed scientific supplies, chemicals, small pieces of glass, electronic equipment. Mother is an interior designer. Neither are academics.

Philosophical biography: Did his PhD on technical issues in the philosophy of language and has also done a few papers on language extinction. Is planning to continue with a project on social issues connected to different dialects and sociolects, like the importance of Multicultural London English, and is interested in the development of similar sociolects with different languages in Sweden. Is currently employed at Umeå university and does about 60% teaching and 40% research. Likes teaching but wishes he had more time for research and maybe writing a book.

Interviewed by Rut Vinterkvist, Umeå University

Richard: Having my first ideas about string philosophy in 1999 in Berkeley is the defining moment of my career. Though the details have since evolved substantially, the core thought behind what I am doing still traces back to those ideas. A second important moment was in 2010 when, with Stephan Hartmann, we started developing a Bayesian foundation for meta-empirical confirmation, thereby putting the theory on a more solid basis. A third important moment was in 2013, when my book "string theory and the scientific method" which presented the overall set of ideas of meta-empirical confirmation in a coherent way, came out.

Anna-Sofia: When preparing to write my MA-thesis, I stumbled upon a then little discussed paper by D. C Williams from 1953 called "The Elements of Being". That paper came to inspire both my MA-thesis and – not least – my subsequent PhD-thesis. Finding it was, in other words, very important for my philosophical career. Although I love philosophy, I have always found the process of actually *doing* it rather painful and frustrating. Two things that have helped alleviate at least some of that (not all of it, unfortunately) is, first, receiving my PhD and, second, being appointed professor. Having a platform and some security is freeing and has led me to love philosophy more now than when I started. Having a platform and a secure job also comes with responsibilities, especially for those who don't have either of those things. Another important moment in my career was hence the moment I could afford to see and then try to combat at least some of the injustices facing young (foreign, female) academics in the field. In the future, I hope to be able to focus more on these sorts of issues.

Elisabeth: Leading up to my masters I was planning on writing an essay on Kant's theory of moral law. My supervisor, however, suggested that I look at the connection between morality and beauty in Kant's third and final Critique, so I spent that summer reading *the Critique of Power of Judgement* as well as the writings of Frank Sibley. This was my introduction to aesthetics. After Edinburgh I went to King's College London to research Kant with Malcolm Budd and Anthony Savile. Around that time I also started working on meta-ethics with Peter Goldie and we got along very well. After the first year, I switched supervisor and studied principally under him. I consider myself very lucky to have had that opportunity. Towards the end of my PhD studies, we applied for a couple of research grants together, and so we continued our cooperation until 2006. First, 2003-04, we worked on a project on the philosophy of conceptual art, and then 2004-2006, on aesthetic psychology and empirical aesthetics. I then applied for my current position as Chair Professor in 2011, and was interviewed one year later. My son, Gabriel, was only three weeks old at the time, but it went well all things considered! I then started at Uppsala one year after that, since I had to leave the UK and bring my family over to Sweden.

Ethan: I don't know if I have three but the first one is when I took my logic class, it changed everything. And the second one I think about is when I applied for a scholarship for a project in Russia, during my PhD. It didn't have anything to do with my paper but earlier I had studied Russian so I was interested and wanted to go. Almost everyone told me not to. They said that if I went to Russia in the middle of my PhD I would look unserious, that it would be a career suicide since it had nothing to do with my own writing. But I went since the chances to get a job are low anyway. And I got the tip from a friend that a very influential semanticist, Barbara Partee, lived there. So I wrote her an email and asked if she would meet me. It was a long shot but she answered and invited me to participate in her seminars. And she actually helped me a lot with some issues with my paper that I thought were unsolvable and that I had worked with for years. So in the end it was really good for my studies and my career as well. So this thing that started out as an insane offtrack plan turned into me hanging out with the most important linguist and semanticist in history. All of a sudden I had a perfect story for why I went.

What would be your best piece (or pieces) of advice for someone who wants to work with philosophy?

Cathrine: Enjoy it! And roll with the punches! Because you will get punched. Some seminaries will be like standing in a boxing ring but remember that we all stand in that ring from time to time. Critical thinking is a cornerstone of philosophy. It is all about scrutinizing each other's ideas. So, take yourself seriously but not *too* seriously! And do it because you like it. I believe that if you have the opportunity, you should do the things in life that you enjoy. But if that thing is philosophy, you need to get used to critique, and try to use it joyfully and learn from it.

Richard: Follow your ideas. Maybe more than any other scientific discipline, philosophy is about developing ideas of your own. In my view, the most important quality of a good philosopher is to be capable of striking the right balance between having genuine trust in one's own ideas and confronting them in an open and unbiased way with criticism to develop them further.

Anna-Sofia: Philosophy is hard. It's competitive. It's frustrating. It's fascinating. And wonderful. Even if you love it very much, it will make sure that your love is tested. I never planned my career, and I certainly didn't have a plan B to fall back on. Don't do what I did.

Elisabeth: Deciding to be an academic is a little bit like deciding to be an artist. It's true that only some will succeed and manage to come as far as they would like. To improve your chances you have to be willing to work an awful lot and to sacrifice having clear boundaries between work and leisure. I have never met any 9-5 philosophers! That said, it's incredibly important to try to create a career- private life balance which works for you. You'll need energy, stamina and ceaseless intellectual curiosity to work as a philosopher. I also think one must be able to set aside personal pride and to not think of your academic pursuit as "your personal career" but rather as you doing something to advance human knowledge and understanding. It's the philosophy that matters, not the philosopher! Lastly, be aware of the fact that life doesn't come to an end if you don't succeed in academia. There are plenty of uses for philosophy outside of the world of universities. By studying philosophy you will be able to improve your own ability to understand yourself and others, see connections around you, express your thoughts clearly, and enhance your critical thinking.

Ethan: Take logic! And just do whatever seems cool to you. You can't plan these things, read what you are interested in, go to the places that seem cool to you and trust that you will probably have a good life. You shouldn't go around thinking about what job you are going to end up with, just work on what you think is right and hope for the best. If the road opens up, keep running on it! If you don't get a philosophy job in the end, at least you had fun on the way.

Edited by Ellen Davidsson, Lund University



READING AND STUDYING PHILOSOPHY

Tips and tricks from a student councelor

As an undergraduate advisor I meet many students with varying challenges. Like most Swedish philosophy departments, my home department, the department of philosophy at Stockholm University, makes an administrative distinction between practical and theoretical philosophy. Consequently we offer courses and programs in both specializations. It is possible to study from the introductory level up to and including PhD-programs. With so many students, at different levels and with different specializations I get a lot of different questions. For this short text, I have chosen one of the most important, and unfortunately, most common problems that students have. Study techniques that usually work, seem to fail when students come to philosophy!

Many students contact me, or my colleagues, worried and often surprised that study techniques and methods that previously have served them well give poor results on their first philosophy exam. Some of these students come straight from high-school, but this also happens to students who have studied (and even taken a degree in) other subjects at university. I am not here thinking of students who goof off, or don't work hard. So let us, for the sake of the remainder of this text assume that the student with the surprisingly poor exam-result already has ensured that the ROC-principle is satisfied. (ROC, of course, stands for Rear on Chair-principle. Philosophy is hard, and to succeed you must put in the hours. A lot of hours.)

The kind of student I am thinking of, however, puts in a lot of hours but still does not get the kind of results that he or she expected. In conversation we often discover that the study techniques employed are not up to

par *for philosophy*. The details can vary, but the common theme in these situations is that the students is ingesting the material (text-books, research-papers and lectures) merely as a passive consumer. This is to misunderstand what the expectations on a philosophy students are. It is understandable for being a passive consumer of information is often fine in other contexts. But a philosophy course is, usually, not such a context.

The reading assignments in a philosophy course is, when measured in number of pages, usually quite slim. But the content is often abstract, the wording of the textbook precisely measured and the lecturer expects deep understanding from the reader. A passive reader starts from the first page of the assignment and just reads to the end, taking a mental stroll through the text. The reader allows the inevitable, and often random, fluctuations of their attention-level determine which things they focus on and commit to memory. The resulting understanding of the text is passive, rather than active. This distinction is analogous to that between passive and active vocabulary. The reader might feel as if they have understood every word and every sentence in the text, but will be stumped when asked deeper questions about the material. As an exam-grader you see the results of passive reading in answers, where the student has remembered a salient example or case from the text, but not understood what it was an example of. Or, worse, has remembered a statement, perhaps even verbatim, from the text but not grasped the role of that statement; mistaking the statement of a premiss for a conclusion for example. Merely re-reading the text in a passive way will not solve these problems, except perhaps by chance. The solution is *active* reading.

A detailed protocol for active reading can, if your department does not teach it, be easily found online. The key is to engage with the text, ask questions, and sort and arrange it as you read. Active reading is done with pen in hand (or fingers on keys). Above all, active reading is an activity of thinking and thus is a species of mental work, not a species of consumption. The first step is to recognize that the textbook is just one part of the material that you are expected to engage with. The different parts of the material, textbook, exercises, study questions, assignments, essays, seminar-presentations, lectures etc. should be integrated. Often, the work of integrating them is the students job. Identify the parts of this network that most clearly belong together and engage with them in a structured manner. You should develop your own detailed schedule and protocol. A skeleton suggestion that often works well is the following.

"The key is to engage with the text, ask questions, and sort and arrange it as you read"

Pre-reading: Identify the portion of the textbook that you will treat as a unit. Identify the related material (lectures, study questions, exercises etc.) that are related to this piece of the text, and familiarize yourself with them. Often this is given by the reading assignments from your lecturer. Look through study questions, assignments and so on *in search of expectations*. Which questions are you expected to answer, which exercises will you have to be able to solve? This prepares your mind to find the important parts of the text. Then briefly skim the text. Spend about 30 seconds per page. Your aim is to get a grasp of how the text is structured. Which of the expectations you have identified are answered in the text, and where? This step should be done before any lecture that is tied to that text.

Reading: After pre-reading, you have a grasp of the structure of the text and a good grasp of what you need to find in the text. Now, you can read the text. Do this with pen in hand. As you read, mark all important elements of the text. Come up with a simple notation and write in the margin (if it is your book). Mark definitions, theses, arguments, counter-arguments, important examples. Mark where answers to study questions can be found, even if you cannot answer the question

just yet. Question-marks are wonderful symbols. Use them to mark passages that you do not understand. If something seems wrong, make a note of that. If you do not fully understand an example, definition or argument, don't get stuck. Mark it, and move on. In this way you should try to read through the whole text in a fairly quick manner. How long does it take? That is impossible to say, but remember not the get stuck and give up. Just hang in and move on. This part of the reading should preferably also be done before the related lecture. The lecture will straighten out some of your question marks, it will help you rearrange the material if you have made mistakes, and spot important passages that you might have missed. Also, you can use the lecture to ask good and poignant questions about the parts of the text that you haven't understood.

Processing the text. The third, and often final, reading-stage is *processing* the material. Some students do not regard this as a type of reading, but it is the most important part. Now you go back to your markings and notes from the previous step. Reread the passages that you have marked as important. At this stage you might end up reading some parts of the text very deeply, and completely skip others. You are deliberately focusing your attention on the important parts. Think about what these passages mean, if you agree, if they can be reformulated in interesting ways. What would a stronger version of this statement be? What would a weaker version be? Why hasn't the author chosen any of those versions? Should they have? Try to straighten remaining question-marks. Write down, in your own words, answers to study questions, and so on. At this stage, you might have to use supporting materials and perhaps pose more questions to your lecturer or teaching assistant. This is, unless the text is very easy, usually the most time-consuming part of the reading-process. If done properly, you will have not only committed much of the text to memory, but also, and more importantly, attained a deep understanding of the material.

Something along these lines is more often than not what your lecturer means when he or she asks you to read a chapter of the textbook by next lecture.

Professional philosophers spend a lot of time reading, and more often than not this is the kind of work that



"You will learn more, get better grades, and yes have more time for other aspects of life"

they do. Philosophy departments are not always good at communicating that this is what we expect of you, but I dare promise, that they almost always do expect this. And if you do it, you will learn more, get better grades, and *yes* have more time for other aspects of life. If, by chance, your philosophy department does not expect this from you, you should do it anyway, or find a different department.

Finally, let me make a comment about collaboration. The reader might have realized that many parts of this reading protocol is suitable for collaboration. Sure, much of this work is solitary work, and it is important to do independent work. But that does not preclude talking with fellow students, discussing your markings in the textbooks, bouncing off ideas about structuring the material and trying out solutions to problems with your friends. Most research in philosophy is done individually but most philosophers engage with the material that they work on with friends and colleagues. You should too! Assignments and exams are often individual assignments and your are expected to do them without the aid of others, but everyday studying often benefits from mixing individual work with collaborative discussion.

Good luck with your book, and make sure you have a comfortable chair so nothing stops you from abiding by the RoC-principle.

Sama Agahi,
Student counselor,
Stockholm University





FOOD, PHILOSOPHY

And what to make of the evening post's opinions about it

For this issue of Intension, I was asked by the editorial team to review and attempt to apply the contents of philosophy professor Henrik Lagerlund's new book *Matens filosofi: Hur du blir en filosofisk foodie* (rough English translation: *The philosophy of food: How to become a Philosophical foodie*). 'Very exciting!' I thought. For a long time, I've been interested in food; not so much cooking, but the industry and from a nutritional standpoint. So I was curious to see what a philosophical framework could bring to the discussion about food. For the rest of my assigned pages, I will outline the book, share my own thoughts about it (in dialogue with a recent review of the book), and also describe what happened when I attempted to become a *Philosophical foodie*.

What is a Philosophical foodie? Every day we all make decisions about food: what to buy, what to eat, what to accept, what to decline, what to discuss, to criticize and recommend. Now, the foodie described by Lagerlund is a person who consciously makes these decisions *their own*. She reflects, investigates, decides and takes responsibility. In essence, she is a person who has realized that her food choices *matter.* From that realization the foodie will define her own guiding principles and she will follow them to the best of her ability. Why should we? Lagerlund's answer is offensively simple: because we're human. As humans, we constantly use our personal values and beliefs to decide how to act, but not always consciously. To become a Philosophical foodie, these values that guide our decision-making must be studied, questioned and made explicit. These explicit personal values must then become the guiding principles that define our ways of living with food. But how on earth do we do *that*? Well, according to Lagerlund, by rediscovering some wisdoms from the ancient philosophers, especially Socrates.

For many ancient thinkers, the goal of philosophy

was to find a way of living. In their understanding, a philosopher unfolds theoretical knowledge about the world, but not only that. The philosopher's task is also to develop ideas about how this knowledge should inform and improve our way of life (see pp. 12-13). Philosophy ought to be "practical" – a philosophy of life – in obnoxious words: a *Lebensphilosophie*.

The key pillars of Lagerlund's philosophy of food grows out of four core aspects of Socrates' view of philosophy (that can be found in *Socrates' Defence*). These are: Intellectual humility, questioning of ones own preconceptions, devotion to truth, and trust in reason (p. 30). To be intellectually humble, you must realize that your knowledge is limited, you must investigate that which you believe to be true, and you must search for the knowledge you know (or come to know) that you do not possess. In doing so you will also question your own preconceptions and habits, pick them apart and examine them. Then, in the search for knowledge, you are to trust in reason and be devoted to truth. To see what is true will be difficult, it always is, but searching for truth guided by reason is the only way to close in on it.

'What has Socrates' teachings got to do with food?' you might wonder. Well, more to do with philosophical reasoning than food. But the goal of Lagerlund's book, as I understand it, is to inform our methods of reasoning about food with insights from this philosophy of life. No doubt, food is central to our lives and the choices we make, as individuals and as a society, affects the world we live in more than we know and in unexpected ways. So when it comes to food, if we internalize this Socratic way of reasoning and being, our lives will truly change, and in the long run the world as well – or at least so Lagerlund argues.

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Perhaps surprisingly, the large part of Lagerlund's book is not concerned with philosophy. This discussion about philosophical reasoning takes the role of both intro and outro, while the intermediate chapters are more concerned with describing and problematizing different aspects of the food industry today. Within these chapters, related philosophical discussions are occasionally mentioned, but for the most part Lagerlund's attempts to philosophize largely non-philosophical topics came across as somewhat forced.

Even so, the structure of the book caught my interest. The aim of these intermediate chapters, from my understanding, is to give the reader relevant facts and discussions to take into consideration when contemplating their own food choices. The chapters are written in an accessible way and in a non-judgmental tone, and often include appreciated tips and tricks – such as which certifications to look for, and what regions to avoid buying certain products from. I started out as a person who thinks she knows stuff about the food industry, but some intellectual humility and disturbing facts later, I really felt that I had gained new meaningful insights.

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Lagerlund's book is about how to start making conscious, well-informed decisions about what you eat, and he concludes the book by compiling a list of principles that he has settled on after a thorough investigation of both his own values and beliefs, and relevant facts about the industry that produces the alternatives to choose from. Lagerlund then encourages the reader to go through this process as well, and he suggests that a form of food diary might be a good way to keep track of the process. So that is what I attempted to do.

After having finished the book I sat down at my kitchen table and tried to summarize what I believe to be important; what kind of food I want to be able to choose. For me, that is

- Food that has not been transported half across the world or continent,
- Food that has generated a living wage for the people who produced it,
- Food that has not been processed into nothingness,
- Food that has not been produced in a way that destroys important ecosystems, and
- Food that makes both cooking and eating pleasurable activities.

After having done that, I reformulated these bullet

points into principles, such as ”I will not buy food that has been processed into nothingness.” That gave me my principles to follow, or at least to try to follow the best I can. Then, before doing anything else, I decided to write down a list of all the things I already do that are in line with my principles. For me it felt encouraging to see that I already have been doing things in accord with my principles, even if not always consciously so. Then, to make this a bothersome ordeal, comparable to an ancient mythical quest, I decided to follow all of these principles for two weeks. I also decided to keep a diary specifying, for every meal: What I ate, why I chose to eat that, and how I felt about it. And now, you might wonder: How did this epic journey end?

To make a long story short, the challenge was time consuming but illuminating. I started realizing how difficult and expensive it can be to get good products, and keeping my principles in mind all the time required energy and was often, quite frankly, annoying. I asked myself many times ’is this what the lives of the ancient philosophers were like?’ Even so, it felt good. It felt good to pick, use and consume nice products, and by following the season and cooking more traditionally I could keep the amount of money spent down. I felt closer to Socrates than I ever had in my life. Getting started required both time and money, but after having changed my habits this new way of reasoning and shopping became, well, *habit.*

*

I must, however, say that the most valuable insight this personal experiment gave me is how outrageously difficult the food industry makes it to choose what you want to choose. It portrays itself as offering all possible alternatives, but in reality it isn’t. This isn’t difficult to wrap your head around when you realize that, e.g., the four largest corporations in the beef sector own 84% of it (see p. 63), and that the conditions look more or less the same in all other sectors. Then it soon starts to feel like my own personal values and beliefs about what I want, how strong they may be, cannot play any role in changing that fact.

This is something that Lagerlund has been accused of not addressing in a recent (rather vicious) review in the Swedish newspaper *Aftonbladet*. The author Margrit Richert, claims that Lagerlund wants to ”change the world” by encouraging us to change our individual lifestyles, but neglects the fact that political struggle is the only option we have that can create *real* change. Being pedantic about food choices is a ”letter of indulgence” for the middle class, it is stated, whether or not we call it ’philosophy’. In this Richert is right. However, being *conscious* about food choices is not the same as being pedantic. Reflecting on your habits and everyday choices, seeking to understand them and what is guiding them is not pedantic, and neither is realizing what choices you want to be able to make for yourself – whether you call it ’philosophy’ or not.

No doubt, only those with the means and the time will be able to act on these realizations, or even read the book (which is yet another disturbing fact about the circumstances we all live in). But that isn’t really something that Lagerlund fails to mention, and neither does he fail to shed light on the systematic way in which the food industry profits on humans, animals and our shared environment. In chapter 2 we can read about how people are treated like slaves within the industry, and in chapter 7 we get to learn how corporations systematically design food in ways that will make consumers (literally) addicted to the product, to take just two examples. What he doesn’t do, however, is to advise us to engage in political struggle, or suggest ways of fighting back (with the exception of suggestions about products to avoid or prefer). Like Richert, I regard that as unfortunate, but at the same time I do not fail to understand that Lagerlund’s book is intentionally structured to avoid political commitments (in the sense that no particular political banner or struggle is recommended). It is from the start about introspection; about finding out one’s own values, beliefs and principles. It is about how the world is, how to examine these facts, and how to find out what you think about it.

Margrit Richert does not seem to take into consideration that people won’t demand change until they themselves have changed – their opinions, worldview, moral convictions, or even lifestyle – and to change in that respect requires not only looking outward at the

system that structures our life and thinking, but it requires looking inward and deciding what you stand for. For an individual to demand change, knowledge about the capitalist structures that shape our world is necessary, but not sufficient. Such knowledge doesn't automatically change the way we think about them. Many writers appear to still believe that simply stating facts, *telling people how it is*, will make them believe in change and demand it, while reality itself constantly proves us otherwise.

The first step towards any change is a step one takes alone, only the second can be taken with a community or other like-minded individuals. Lagerlund's book is concerned with this first step; giving readers tools to look inward, in light of facts, and to define their own principles. Lagerlund's book isn't the best book ever, there are certainly many books on the same topic that provide a richer analysis, but his book is different in interesting ways. A bit of Socratic reasoning cannot do any harm in a world full of facts and "facts" – rather the opposite.

There is nothing wrong with Richert's reasoning; simply changing what you put into your mouth will not change *the world* and the structure of the food industry – only political struggle against it can. Still, becoming part of a political struggle against the industry requires becoming aware of what you put into your mouth. If you want a *Revolutionary* foodie, you'll have to begin by supporting the *Philosophical*.

Alice Damirjian,
Stockholm University



Bokrecension

”Bortom skogen” av Lars Tidholm

• Skönlitteratur • Roman • Filosofisk roman • Magisk realism • Realism •

Simon är en grubblare, Bengt likaså. Den senare är banktjänsteman – han har en villa. Simon bor i ett träd.

De möts i skogen. Simon visar sin koja, en sorts intellektuellt fullproppad fristad: på bokhyllorna finns Platon, böcker i fysik, och Beethoven på CD. Simon har två planscher: Einstein syns på den ena, Louis Armstrong på den andra.

Tidholm briljerar här, i sin beskrivning av Simon. Det är ett livat porträtt. Språket är lekfullt. Vidare är just denna kvalité – alltså de rent prosaiska egenskaperna – det bästa med boken. Visst, tankestoffet som presenteras är intressant (glädjande nog finns hänvisningar till aktiva filosofer). Och visserligen är själva fonden mot vilken de presenteras – Simons utläggningar – i sig ganska medryckande. Men det är inget nytt.

Bortom skogen rekommenderas både för filosofins noviser och proffs. Den senare gruppen finner en välskriven, intressant bok. Den förra likaså – men också, kanske, ett tidigare aldrig påtänkt sätt att betrakta världen.

Jakob Nergårdh,
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Mr Gruyère

Del II

Kaffemaskinen skakade. Mr Gruyère tittade upp. Det fanns en sorts argsinthet i ögonen, och när en liten professor gick förbi, ja, då möttes deras blickar. Detta – alltså själva deras ömsesidiga synande – framkallade hos professorn en liksom obestämd ångest. Han skyndade ut.

En lönndörr slogs upp. Bengt steg in – Gruyères kollega. På huvudet satt en stor, blöt mössa.

”Vilket väder!” ropade Bengt glatt. Han kisade med ögonen.

”Snöat hela morgonen”, svarade Gruyère, men Bengt kunde inte riktigt höra.

”Vad sa du?” ropade Bengt och tog några steg framåt. Ett älskvärt, uppriktigt leende framträdde på hans läppar.

”Det har snöat hela morgonen”, upprepade Gruyère.

”Jahaja, jo, det är väl fullt tänkbart; under hela min färd hit – och jag steg upp tidigt – har snön piskat ansiktet mitt. Ja, alltså snöns virvlande framför ögonen: det har varit särskilt obehagligt! Plötsligt kom en isfläck. Den var i höjd med stadsbiblioteket, och jag tappade helt balansen – föll nästan omkull. Men hör och häpna – fy! – några vidriga ungdomar gömde sig i dimman. De skrattade något oerhört. Rösternas ursprung liksom doldes av diset, jag kunde inte se.”

Bengt tog en paus. Ett djupt andetag.

”Ikväll är det stormiddag!” Han tittade rakt in i Gruyéres ögon. De var ledsna.

”Men, vad är det med dig?” Bengt satte sig ned och gav Gruyère en stor kram.

”Nejdå, inget!” väste Gruyère.

”Spela inte Allan!” svarade Bengt omtänksamt. ”Ikväll ska du och jag” – och här gjorde han en onaturlig handrörelse – ”partaja med institutionen. Vi ska ju välkomna engelsmännen!”

Bengt fortsatte, nu med en allvarlig blick:

”Engelsmännen tar ju sin filosofi mycket seriöst. Här är det inte tal om utmattande kollokvium vars sammanlagda stoff – och med sammanlagt stoff menar jag såklart själva snittkvalitén på presentationerna – i bästa fall är på samma nivå som någon av de sämre B-uppsatserna. Nej, här fordras sanning och tydlighet.”

Han fortsatte: ”Engelsmännen är ju – och jag talar från erfarenhet – måna om formaliteter.” Bengt anlade ett ett osäkert leende, och när Mr Gruyère synade hans blick, ja då blev osäkerheten än mer intensiv.

”Okej”, sa Mr Gruyère, ”var är den, middagen?”

”På Södermalm, Bondemannagatan. Institutionen pröjsar.”

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Mr Gruyère vadade. Trottoaren syntes inte. Det var snö överallt. Lite längre fram låg restaurangen, i ett pastellrosa stenhus. Snön virvlade alldeles ohejdat runt Gruyère.

Det lyste från restaurangfönstret. Det var ett stillsamt sken, sömnigt vilandes på snöbädden. Där inne var det fullsatt. Gästerna var ihopklämda, glatt pratandes med varandra.

När Mr Gruyère greppade dörrhandtaget hördes ett bullrande skratt. I själva hans rörelse över tröskeln fick han syn på källan. Skrattet kom från en storväxt, rödrosig man. Hans vän hade kastad ur sig en liten kvickhet, något skojigt om a-kassereformen 1987. Skämtet hade verkligen gått hem. Mannen nästan vrålade, bankades hårt i träbordet med väldiga armrörelser.

Men plötsligt – alltså verkligen från ingenstans – övergick skrattet i en olustig hosta. Gruyère såg på – det var obehagligt. Mannen blev rödare i ansiktet. Fast det gick över över ganska snabbt, och efter den sista hostattacken slängde mannen upp armen: Han tecknade: ”Jag är okej.” En lättnadens suck svepte genom rummet. Leendena kom tillbaka. Ett litet barn slutade gråta. Vid ett bord började gästerna till och med att applådera.

Mr Gruyère trängde sig fram. Bengt satt lite längre in, vinkandes och leende. Runt bordet var några andra.

”Gruyère! Jag pratade just om dig! Hann du se herrn där borta? Han satte något i halsen. Ett väldigt oljud. Jag blev ganska skrämd. I alla fall i några sekunder. Men ta en stol då, titta, här har vi en. Har ni hälsat? Till höger: Jones – epistemologi.”

”Hello, nice to meet you”, sa Gruyère, varpå han fick tillbaka ett uppfostrat “Oh!! The pleasure is mine!!”

”Ja, och till vänster har vi Smith. Modallogik mest va?”

”Quite so!” sa Smith.

Bengt fortsatte: “Och här – ja ni känner ju varandra – Ms Stonehenge!” Mr Gruère mötte blicken. Stonehenge kände han från Utrecht, och nu uppstod inom honom, när han tittade på henne, ett sorts intensivt vemod. Han slog sig snabbt ned och började genast prata med Stonehenge.

”Är du i England nu? Hur blev det med den där artikeln?”

”App-app-app!” ropade Bengt, ”Glöm inte Rosenz här!”

Rozenz satt lite undanskymd, upptagen med sin pipa. Han hade missat Gruyère.

”Trevligt att träffas!” utbrast Rosenz självsäkert. ”Bengt har talat så fint om er. Är det sant det där om fågeln?” Gruyère förstod inte vad Rosenz menade, men sa ändå “ja”.

Allt eftersom att kvällen gick blev Gruyère mer och mer varse hur fantastiskt intressant Rosenz var. Han hade sin utgångspunkt i Italien, och hade studerat språk i England. Hans far var svensk, och hade lärt honom språket – det hade varit viktigt tydligen. Men mest intressant var att Rosenz var konstnär. Med slående skärpa hade han lagt ut sin filosofi: “Konst är X, och ifall konst är X då är utställningar Y. Och vi ser ju nu att, via modus ponens, så måste Z gälla om K är en korrekt karaktärisering av museiarbetarnas villkor, ha-ha-ha.”

Gruyère var uppslukad! Rosenz var fantastisk, och hade senaste året levt något sorts bohemiskt liv här i Stockholm. En flickvän som fått hit honom. Det slutade i hjärtesorg. Men nu hade det ordnat sig.

Rosenz hade en gedigen bakgrund som filosof och matematiker. Men han hade helt ratat akademin. Nu var han konstnär på heltid; senast igår hade han muckat gräl med någon snut.

”Jag är inte radikal”, sade han glatt, ”men den där jäveln var för mycket. Spottade på nå-

gon stackare. Ja – det var i tunnelbanan, otrevligt."

När Gruyère frågade vad som hände sen, ja då hade Rosenz fort ropat:

"Jag är pacifist! Polisen skrek och fräste. Han skulle minsann slå ihjäl mig, och allt sånt där. Men jag gick bara därifrån. Hoppas någon filmade. Jag är glad att jag fick säga mitt."

"Förresten", svarade Gruyère, "du får inte röka här. Det är förbjudet." Rosenz hade just tagit fram pipan.

"Äsch då", svarade han leende. "Jag pratade med kocken, tydligen helt okej – 'I shall die if I cannot smoke' eller hur? Ha-ha-ha."

Gruyère förstod inte referensen och vände sig mot Stonehenge. Hon pratade modallogik med Bengt. Den senare försökte intensivt byta samtalsämne.

"Men hur är det med etiken, då? Sartre lärde oss att vi väljer vilka vi är. Hur ska vi förstå det?" sa Bengt filosofiskt. Ms Stoneheng var väl bevandrad i den kontinentala traditionen också. Hon parerade ganska enkelt. Drog ett långt citat av de Beauvoir, varpå Bengt defaitistiskt hällde upp ett stort glas vin, och sedan, ganska okänsligt, vände sig bort.

"Hallå där!" ropade Rosenz spänt "Har du glömt mig, Herr Gruyère?"

"Va, nejdå!" Gruyère kände sig lite dum. Han hade kommit att tänka på Stonehenge, och vänt sig ifrån Rosenz. Den senare utbrast:

"Gruyère, vi går vidare! Det är mitt förslag. Ja. Men först, något mer att äta, eller hur? Aldrig att vi lägger en trehundring på ett sådant där ostron. Nu har engelsmännen gått. Kan vi inte ta en burgare? Olofs 24-timmarsbistro ligger runt hörnet."

*

Kakelgolvet var vitt. Det satt en stor neonskylt utanpå hamburgerrestaurangen. Skylten var lila: två lysande saxofoner.

"En slafsig jazzburgare, om jag får be!" sa Rosenz upprymt. Kyparen såg trött ut.

"Och ni andra?"

"Samma", svarade Stonehenge och Gruyère i kör. De fnissade till lite. Kyparen gick oberörd iväg. På radion spelades George Harrison.

"Jag älskar Harrison", sade Gruyère, "den tyste Beatlen..."

"Visst", sa Rosenz leende. "Men", fortsatte han, "det går inte att jämföra. Harrison har skrivit osannolika låtar. Verkligen. Vilken glädje! Delikat framtoning. Men när det kommer till John och Paul, ja, då är det långt kvar. McCartney är ju en melodiker av rang. En på miljarden! Vilka melodier… Men, låt oss anta – och det är ju egentligen uppenbart – att väldigt få personer fötts med samma talang. Jag kommer att tänka på någon enstaka – kanske Cobain? Han satt ju hemma – alltså, en hel dag – och lyssnade på Magical Mystery Tour. Gång på gång. En yngling; en buse i Aberdeen. Hursomhelst – det var ju egentligen detta jag ville säga - ta McCartney: en gudagåva, men de bästa låtarna var alltid Lennons. De tar tag i dig – kanske någon kort fras – och du tillintetgörs. Lennon skrev Across the Universe, skrev Hey Bulldog… Japp, 'you can talk to me'… Jag tillintetgörs."

Slut på del II

Av *Jakob Nergårdh*, Stockholms universitet.
Illustration: *Anita Nyman*, Göteborgs universitet