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Utility

Theoretical, Practical and Intercultural Perspectives

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The Trouble with Utility

In this issue of *Academic Quarter*, we focus on the concept of utility. References to utility are ubiquitous in both practical and theoretical settings. One of the most widespread ways of arguing for the initiating of or holding on to a certain practice or activity is that it is useful to us, and appeals to utility are a common and important argumentative move in theoretical discussion. One reason why we so often invoke claims about utility is because the concept of utility is a fundamentally normative concept, as seen in the standard dictionary definition of the term, i.e. 'the state or quality of being useful'. This normativity provides utility claims with their justificatory force. However, the term utility is frequently employed without specifying the framework providing utility with its normative pretensions; in such cases, we use utility as if it is a purely descriptive term, and it comes to appear as if questions of utility are purely factual questions. In this way, the normativity of utility is not justified or challenged, but simply axiomatically enforced. Often, we

seem to be more preoccupied with asking if something is useful or not, and how useful it is, rather than asking ourselves why something is regarded or promoted as useful. The consequence of this somewhat muted discourse is that we might experience discomfort with the term and with what it promotes, simply because we are not in agreement with its implicit or pre-established normativity. At the same time, we lack a platform to express and address this disagreement within a particular discourse.

It is possible to argue that this problem of indeterminacy was present even in the introduction of utility into the modern philosophical tradition. Of course, we find references to utility throughout the philosophical tradition. However, utility only comes to take centre stage with Jeremy Bentham's establishment of the foundation of *utilitarianism* in *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*. This is a theory that – across the various fields of human life – defines right action, the action that is to be done, as the action which succeeds in maximising utility for human beings. In Bentham's work, the question of the nature of utility appears as if it is clearly determined. Being a classical hedonist, Bentham thought that the measurement of utility was to be found in the fact that "Nature has placed mankind under two sovereign masters, *pleasures* and *pain*" (Bentham 1781/2000, 14). That is, he understands utility as that which maximises pleasure and minimises pain and this allows Bentham to give a nice and neat definition of what he terms 'the principle of utility':

By the principle of utility is meant that principle which approves or disapproves of every action whatsoever according to the tendency it appears to have to augment or diminish the happiness of the party whose interest is in question. (*ibid.*)

Nonetheless, even if this way of approaching utility appears neat and definitive, problems arise almost straight away. At the bottom of the very first page of his book, Bentham goes on to elaborate that utility is a property of an object whereby it "tends to produce benefit, advantage, pleasure, good, or happiness (all this in the present case comes to the same thing)" (*ibid.*). The problem is that even despite Bentham's reassuring parenthesis, benefit, advantage, pleas-

ure, good and happiness really does not, or at least not in many cases, come to the same thing.

The problems of determining the normative grounds of utility implicit in Bentham's work, becomes explicit in the work of his philosophical heir, John Stuart Mill. Mill uses the term and the principal of utility in various ways throughout his life. Most famously, commentators note and debate whether the term is to be understood in a quantitative or in a qualitative manner, following an idea of pleasure and pain being of intrinsic value, i.e. the quality of valuable in themselves, and all other actions, activities etc. having extrinsic value, i.e. in quantity adding or subtracting to the intrinsic value of pleasure or pain. Adding to the debate is also the potential disharmony between Mill's claim of the greatest happiness principle and his well-known remark "It is better to be a human being dissatisfied than a pig satisfied; better to be Socrates dissatisfied than a fool satisfied" (Mill 1867, 14). Some commentators are keen on claiming that Mill's usage and comprehension of utility is dependent on the particular topic which he addresses, others try to make a coherent understanding possible by claiming that Mill uses utility as a complex concept, which consist of different variables which can be combined in different ways (Ebenstein 1985). At the end of the day, Mill's indeterminacy, but perhaps at the same time also quite balanced idea, can be summed up in the following quotation from *On Liberty*: "I regard utility as the ultimate appeal on all ethical questions; but it must be utility in the largest sense, grounded on the permanent interests of man as a progressive being" (Mill 1989/1859, 33).

This last Millian move can claim some justification. After all human beings have many diverse and different interests, and many things can thus be considered of utility. However, this also leaves us without any transparent and coherent understanding of utility, and this, amongst other things, moves many moral philosophers in the 20th Century to abandon utilitarianism in favour of other moral theories, mainly focused on conceptions of the good, but also haunted by problems of indeterminacy much similar to those arising with regard to utility. One could ask why philosophers make such efforts to determine the normative framework and justification of utility. Why not simply instead accept that it is a heterogeneous term that involve a large number of very different concerns? There are however at least two problems with relying on a pre-

sumed silent agreement about the nature of utility in particular cases. The first is that no such agreement may exist – the philosophical discussions can be taken as an indication of exactly this fact. The other is that without a clear understanding of utility, we risk – without actively choosing to do so – simply to accept and conform to a given normativity without any critical questioning. That is, we may come to legitimise, promote and /or excise choices or practices, whose underlying normative credentials we are unaware of, and which we would not endorse or would even disapprove of, if we came to understand them properly.

Utility Today

The indeterminacy inherent in the understanding of utility that has haunted philosophy can also be found in references to utility in public discourse. This would not be a problem, if such references were rare, but this is definitely not the case. If we wish to endorse or justify a particular behaviour, initiative or change, utility is a superb concept to apply. We find references to utility in discussions on priorities in the health care sector, in regard to the purpose and structure of education and educational institutions; utility is invoked as a valuable variable in employment politics, in textbooks on organisational change and leadership, in endorsement grants for the arts and the sciences, and in the numerous cost-benefit analyses decision-makers and debaters relay on each and every day. Also in our private lives, utility is present as a principle, a variable or simply as justification. We use the concept when we plan our activities, when we make choices and when we judge on matters at hand, whether it is a question of preparing dinner, buying a second car or not, dressing our children in the morning or making a choice of supporting a particular charity or non-governmental organisation.

However, these employments of utility can be problematic. Because in each and every case, the meaning and reference of utility may be taken for granted and perfectly well accepted, but when we look across different cases, we find that utility can come to denote almost anything. The problem is here that as utility travels across cases and discourses, it may take a particular meaning or conceptualisation with it from one area into a new one. We see this when particular practices or initiatives are being promoted as utile, because conducive to economic growth, in areas where the concern

for increasing wealth may not be our primary concern, such as kindergartens or the arts. Here, we need to make explicit the underlying normative understanding of utility in order to be able to discuss whether economic growth is a justified concern with regard to early childcare or artistic excellence. Another frequent problem is that the object of utility is left unspecified. If we for example argue that a shift from a focus on care to a focus on rehabilitation in nursing homes would result in increased utility, we need to specify, whether utility here concerns the inhabitants of the nursing home, the staff or the budget – or whether it is a lucky case where it is useful for all. Finally, the horizon of utility claims is often unclear. What may give an increase in utility right now, may not contribute to utility in the long run.

These and similar problems of specification are always potentially present when invoking utility claims. This gives cause for a struggle to establish the meaning and reference of utility, which in turn, as in some cases, may lead to altering the originally positive evaluation of the normativity of utility into a negative one. At the end of the day, we, just like the philosophers, get confused about utility, and become uncertain of how to use and how to regard the concept. But at the same time, we cannot seem to escape it or avoid it, and we certainly cannot seem to be indifferent to its forceful nature.

An Issue of Utility

The pervasiveness of references to utility in all areas of life and the problems inherent in such references are our motivation for making utility the central theme of this issue of Academic Quarter with the hope of helping to further a much-needed discussion of the nature and uses of utility. These expectations have not been disappointed: the articles of the issues address the notion of utility from a wide range of perspectives, and they all address the issue of how to handle the slippery nature of utility.

In the issue, we have ordered the articles in three overall groups, according to their way of treating the subject matter of utility. First, we have a group of articles written from the perspective of a theoretical position on utility. In *Freedom of Expression in the Era of the Privatization of Reason* Henrik Jøker Bjerre elaborates on the use and role of free speech. Taking his departure in Kant and Mill, free speech is set in a liberal tradition of public reason, which allows its

normative force to be linked to the utility it brings to the progress of society. Bjerre when addresses the contemporary discussion of free speech in an attempt to utilize the same liberal tradition, looking closer at populism and other forms of collective or shared speech. Søren Engelsen is concerned with practical reason in his article *Emotioners (u)nytte En fænomenologisk analyse af emotioner i praktisk rationalitet*. Through a phenomenological approach, Engelsen shows that emotions play a vital role in practical judgment, and he argues that instead of overlooking or disregarding this emotional component, we should instead make best use of it, seeing the positive cognitive potential of emotions as well avoiding their possibly distorting influence. In this way, the article focuses on the utility of emotions. The last text in this group is Patrik Kjærdsdam Telléus *Discovering utility between the descriptive and the normative*. Telléus looks closer at the concept of utility as it is understood by Mill in his *Utilitarianism*. Here, he emphasises Mill's thoughts on moral reasoning in the sense of a virtuous character, but as such, the role of facts also play a vital part of moral reasoning. Bringing the concept of utility to a more general concern, Telléus uses his reading of Mill to claim that moral concepts, like utility, simultaneously inhabit both a descriptive and a normative nature.

Next is a group of texts that addresses the uses of utility in practical discourses. In the article, *e-learning in the digital age. The utility of the entrepreneurial self*, Birte Heidkamp and David Kergel investigate claims about the usefulness of e-learning in contemporary literature and argue that the discussion is guided by a neoliberal understanding of utility in learning. Here useful learning is that which fosters important skills, understood as that which helps develop the learner according to a neoliberal ideal of an entrepreneurial self. Our understanding of utility of educational methods is also the topic of the next article by Diana Stentoft, *Tensions and co-existence. Exploring multi-faceted articulations of intentions of problem-based learning in higher education*. Here, Stentoft identifies how the intentions behind and the understanding of the utility of problem-based learning are diverse and possibly incompatible. Simultaneously, PLB is being promoted because it supports learning situations, because it furthers important skills and because it ensures the societal usefulness and employability of learners. However, these intensions may conflict, and this leaves unanswered the question of

whether we introduce PBL for the benefit of the students or for a wider societal interest in employable human resources. Finally, in *The utility of psychiatric diagnosis: Diagnostic classifications in clinical practice and research in relation to eating disorders*, Gry Kjærdsdam Telléus addresses the issue of the use and abuse of psychiatric diagnosis. Kjærdsdam Telléus argues in support of the diagnostic system, claiming its usefulness for clinical practise as well as psychiatric research. The case of eating disorders provides an illustrative example, and distinctions between popular and professional uses and attitudes toward diagnosis, and between the validity and the utility of diagnosis, are drawn in order to enhance the understanding of the practise of diagnosis.

Our last collection of contributions gathers around an intercultural perspective. Utility might for some appear as a purely western concept, due to its apparent relation to the economical and sociological thinking and development of our modern western societies. However this idea is challenged by the investigations and clarifications we find in this final section. Prem Poddar, in *The Uses of Kautilya's Arthashastra*, discusses the interpretations and influences of the 4th century BCE Indian philosopher Kautilya on modern western writings on statecraft, especially the ideas of Amartya Sen. Podder traces both similarities and deviations, and by that he adds to the comprehension of an intercultural history of ideas, and simultaneously illustrates the complexity of the utilitarian roots and principles in modern welfare states. In *Den lille og den store nytte – et interkulturelt perspektiv på forholdet mellem nytte og frihed*, Jesper Garsdal and Michael Paulsen also look eastward, and elaborate on connections between western and eastern philosophies, that are stronger than traditionally articulated. By way of classical Chinese philosophy, Garsdal and Paulsen look closer at the modern Chinese philosopher Yan Fu's translations of western philosophy, and especially his reading of Mill. Creating this 'dialectic hermeneutics' enables a reading of utility in, what the authors call, a small version and a large version. By connecting to a similar analysis of the concept of freedom, an argument for a cultivated balance between harmony and conflict is established.

It is our hope that the reader of this issue of *Academic Quarter* will find inspirations for further reflections and, not to forget, uses of the unquestionable questionable concept of *utility*.

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Freedom of Expression in the Era of the Privatization of Reason

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Abstract:

The importance of free speech is beyond dispute in liberal democracy, and is today hardly challenged by anyone, but fundamentalist, religious groups. But which purpose should free speech serve, and how should it be (re)defined and administered in order to fulfill this purpose? I claim that these questions are more important than they may seem, and that they are easily overlooked, if free speech is treated as an end in itself or as something that one should not question at all. In the liberal tradition, freedom of expression was clearly valued for its excellent utility for the progress of society, but not for being an end in itself. In this article, I want, first, to make this point clear (through a reading of John Stuart Mill and Immanuel Kant) and, second, to offer a couple of suggestions for relevant discussions on the restrictions, regulations and reinventions of free speech that might be required today in order to sustain and revive the liberal tradition itself.

Keywords Freedom of expression, public use of reason, populism, Mill, Kant.

Freedom of expression is one of the most sacred values of Western democracies. It is universally defended, and often treated as a kind of crown jewel of democracy. And indeed, it is fundamentally important to democracy, but maybe we tend to forget that in the liberal tradition itself, which is invoked in the solemn declarations of the importance of the “value” of free speech, it is explicitly hailed for its utility, i.e. it is considered as a tool, a means, albeit a massively important one, and not an end itself. In the spirit of the enlightenment philosophers, freedom of expression is an idea that should therefore be developed, improved, and experimented with, much rather than “merely” defended, as if it was above historical change and political needs.

What I would like to do in this article is first to go back and investigate how two of the founding voices of the ideals of free speech in the European tradition, Immanuel Kant and John Stuart Mill, viewed the relation between means and ends in the case of the freedom of expression, and thereby highlight the kinds of discussions, which I think need more attention in order to keep the concept of free speech alive. Secondly, and particularly elaborating further on Kant’s central notion of the public use of reason, I want to indicate a more specific reinvention, which I think is called for in the contemporary political climate, namely a way of revitalizing the idea of a public use of reason in an era where reason seems to have become almost completely “privatized” in the Kantian sense. The revitalization, I will claim, must come from new, collective forms of expression.

Means or end?

When freedom of expression is defended, one should bear in mind that this principle is an excellent means towards a just and prosperous society, but not an end in itself. Or so at least thought John Stuart Mill, and before him Immanuel Kant. To Kant, as it is well known, the only real end in itself is the human being, and therefore any pragmatic or legal principle can only be enlisted as a means to serving this end. One could almost turn around the so-called “formula of humanity” and claim that one should always, according to Kant, “act so, that you treat a legal principle only as a means and not as an end in itself”. Likewise, Mill, in his 1859 classic *On Liberty*, is completely clear and explicit that the freedom of expression is a

means for another end and open for revision. In fact, it must be, since the only real standard for the evaluation of ethical questions, according to Mill, is the contribution, which something makes to overall happiness, and therefore a principle however noble and valuable we might hold it, cannot be an end in and of itself (Mill 1993, 79). The progress of humanity depends on sharing and criticizing ideas, and Mill sees no reason except injury to limit the scope of what might therefore be uttered, but the principle still remains valuable entirely because of its utility, which consists in challenging the “tyranny of the prevailing opinion and feeling” (ibid., 73) and the accompanying unhealthy and reactionary sense of infallibility (ibid., 85).

My claim here is the slightly paradoxical one that lately it has been the doctrine of free speech itself that has become a passively received “hereditary creed” (ibid., 108). Doesn’t this description fit the way in which the notion, if not the reality, of free speech is mostly taken for granted, and thereby the “fatal tendency of mankind to leave off thinking about a thing when it is no longer doubtful,” which according to Mill “is the cause of half their errors” (ibid., 111). A lot of debate is going on about, whether and in which ways the freedom of expression is under threat, (and how we can combat those that pose the threats), but not that much is going on in the field of developing *the very concept of freedom of expression itself*. If freedom of expression is a means, maybe even the essential means, for the progress of society, shouldn’t we consider it with the same scrutiny and openness that we consider any other means – from construction tools to tax regulation? John Stuart Mill, at least, emphasized that having a ready set of principles that are off bounds of discussion is only desirable to “the sort of persons who think that new truths may have been desirable once, but that we have had enough of them now” (ibid., 96).

What appears paradoxical in claiming that the principle of free speech has become a taboo relies precisely on the reduction of the principle to one fundamental proposition with only one possible interpretation. If freedom of expression only consisted in one single, unequivocal dogma that “everything can be expressed without restriction”, the paradox could be formalized in the following way: A. Everything can be expressed without restriction. B. Principle A. may not be challenged. C. Everything cannot be expressed without

restriction. One arrives at this paradox only by maintaining the principle of free speech as such a simple principle without caveats or additional explanations. I claim that this is a misrepresentation of the idea of free speech, historically as well as normatively.

So, what is there to discuss? Firstly, I want to demonstrate that it is in fact almost inconceivable to imagine a completely unrestricted freedom of expression, and that the restrictions, we (must) have, are historically variable. This alone speaks in favor of an ongoing debate about and elaboration of what we consider to be the right concept of free speech. I will claim that there are always both juridical and moral considerations to be made, but also that it is in fact not even clear when we are free to say what we want to say in the first place. Secondly, this leads me to a discussion of Kant's concept of a public use of reason, which I think is in need of new inspiration and experiments.

Limits of free speech

Freedom of expression has always *de facto* been limited, even in the most modern, liberal democracies. Constitutions are usually supplemented by penal regulations that specify how the limitations of free speech are (currently) being defined. This varies over time as well as geography, but restrictions regarding defamation, incitement of violence, racism, blasphemy, etc. exist globally in various forms and degrees. Some restrictions are lifted, but others can be added due to new forms of communication technology, changing social norms or new forms of abuse – or combinations of these. In other words, it is in fact much more difficult to imagine free speech without any legal restrictions than it is to imagine one that is restricted in various ways, and most legislators would probably consider it to be completely irresponsible to lift restrictions without exception. To all, but a very few, it is not a question of whether free speech should be within certain boundaries, but which and where these should be. This obvious fact alone already establishes that the concept of free speech is historically variable and open to scrutiny and debate – or *should be*, on pain of being otherwise considered in a dogmatic, and, ironically enough, un-liberal, way.

The core principle of free speech is always limited by other legal considerations, and the reservoir for discussions and decisions on these considerations could be said to be the wider moral discus-

sions in society about what should be accepted in which situations. In the case of blasphemy, for example, regardless of one's position on the legal question concerning blasphemy, one might still find the moral discussion of it interesting and worthwhile. Even Immanuel Kant argues that there is something right about an image ban, because it creates the appropriate awe towards a highest principle that cannot be spoken in words or drawn in lines – a divinity or a moral principle like the categorical imperative, which lies beyond customary views and legal norms (Kant 1987: 135 [AA 5: 274]). Although this line of argumentation might not motivate one (it does not motivate me) to demand or want to maintain actual laws on blasphemy, the argument itself, I think, does make a lot of sense and does give reason to remind or even reconsider, what our laws are for, and whether or not there is a higher principle than that of legality.

A second example is context, something which is relevant in both legal and moral discussions. Mill himself mentions the sentence "private property is robbery" as an example. When stated in a newspaper, this sentence should be completely legitimate, he believes, as part of the public discussion about economy, but it might be punishable in other circumstances, e.g. when shouted to an excited mob in front of a corn-dealer's house (Mill 1993, 123). Or think of the derogatory names for certain groups of people. In some cases, they are relatively harmless; in others, they can support bigotry and hatred, and maybe even indirectly justify violence. This does not mean that certain words or signifiers must be banned from the language, but that the use of certain words in certain contexts can be blamable, even punishable. (Just like screwdrivers should not be banned, but some uses of them most certainly should).

Thirdly, there are some more general philosophical questions that are less of immediate moral relevance, but nonetheless may throw some light on the issues involved in the very concept of free speech. In the Danish constitution, the section on the freedom of expression is formulated in the way that "everyone is entitled [...] to make public his thoughts". I think this is a wonderful formulation, because it begs the question: What are then *my* own thoughts? Have I thought anything original or new that is really mine, or have I seriously considered some thoughts of others and *made them mine* through autonomous deliberation? Otherwise, what I say might

not really be my thoughts in any genuine sense. I think this is not at all as speculative, as it might immediately sound, because it concerns the very ideal of the enlightenment, which was basically to share thoughts and improve them. When John Stuart Mill talks about the minority point of view, he always talks about the possible insight, truth or value, that is not (yet) accepted by the broader public, but which might precisely contribute to the advancement of society. The ultimate inhibition of the freedom of expression would be the situation, where no new thoughts were being produced. Following again a more pragmatic line in the interpretation of the principle of free speech, the interesting question is not so much the stream of consciousness that is passing through my head, and whether or not I should be allowed to express all of it openly and immediately (again, I think that I should not), but rather the question of how I actually may generate something that broadens the field of what it is possible to think. This might sound a bit solemn, but I think it nonetheless relates to important forms of threats to the freedom of expression other than the ones that one usually discusses within the frame of the prohibition or legality of various opinions within a field of already established boundaries.

Express yourself!

So, what does it mean to express oneself freely; to express one's own thoughts? Can this only be understood in terms of the absence of threats of violence or actual physical restrictions? Or can it be understood also in the way, that we, ourselves, don't even have the means to express ourselves autonomously? That what we say, in many cases, is not our own thoughts in any important sense? The general thrust of Louis Althusser's version of the critique of ideology is precisely that we are always already embedded in ideology to an extent that it is not so much the active restriction of free speech that is the problem, but the normal, non-restricted reality itself which is unfree. Louis Althusser emphasizes how what one could call our spontaneous ideology comes from the interpellation of our surroundings. He called them "ideological state apparatuses" (Althusser 2001), which means all the institutions that reinforce or reproduce the hegemonic picture of the state and its inhabitants: from family and schools to police, government, and of course the media. We are constantly taught how to behave, what to believe – and even

how to see ourselves, which paradoxically includes an ideal of being autonomous, voluntary adherents of the ideology – consumers, for example, who “express ourselves” through our unique choices and purchases, etc., and thereby first of all confirm the ideology, which we inhabit.

We find another formulation of this problem already in Kant’s famous 1784 essay on enlightenment. The essay opens by defining enlightenment as “the human being’s emergence from his self-incurred immaturity” (Kant 1996, 17 [AA 8: 35]) – a slightly paradoxical formulation, for how can you release *yourself* from immaturity? Only by making a kind of modal shift in the way you make use of reason. In a way, we are all subjects of ideological state apparatuses in a very broad sense. Language itself is a gigantic machine for the reproduction of ideas, and it is in and through language that we express our thoughts – or that we *have thoughts* at all. We don’t invent our own language, but assume it, as we learn about the world. But the imperative of enlightenment is therefore not only a suggestion for spreading knowledge and education; it is not simply a question of knowing *more*; it is a practical demand addressed to every single individual: it is not what you know, but how you know it. *Sapere aude!* as it is called: Have the courage to make use of your own understanding (ibid.). This use is certainly not meant to be just any random use that expresses what pops into your mind. On the contrary: It means trying out one’s knowledge, questioning the received viewpoints, and reaching one’s own conclusions through the best possible examination. Kant has a particular name for this procedure: He calls it the public use of reason. It is this concept of a public use of reason that I will take as my focus for a discussion of where we might see the need for new inventions in the field of the freedom of expression, which have both political, moral and philosophical implications.

Public use of reason

Kant develops a distinction between private and public use of reason, which to some seems counter intuitive, but which I think has a significant explanatory power. Reason is of course the very key concept in Kant’s philosophy, and it was thoroughly analyzed in *The Critique of Pure Reason* from 1781. Three years later, however, Kant specifies how reason can be put to use in very different ways, and

he separates those in what he calls “private” and “public” uses of reason. The private use of reason is the one that one makes, when taking care of one’s own interests in the broadest sense, or even the interests of the public, but in ways that reaffirm one’s own standing in society. Reason in this way may separate humans from animals, but only in the sense that humans are more intelligent, understand complex situations and seek the most beneficial solutions. In other words: One makes use of the general capacity for reasoning and understanding the world in ways that correspond with the prevailing order that one is part of. One obtains a salary, for example, for performing a certain function. When a policeman regulates traffic or carries out an interrogation, he is making private use of reason. Paradoxically, therefore, much of what takes place in the “public domain”, in the streets, in schools, in hospitals, on TV, are really forms of the private use of reason.

By “public use of reason”, on the other hand, Kant understands the use, which a person may make as a learned person in front of “the entire public of the world of readers” (ibid., 18 (AA: 37)). The public use of reason is that which you might make at home, in your armchair, when you are writing a letter to the editor or a book or even a letter to a colleague or a friend, where you discuss certain matters. While this might seem secondary, it is in fact this ability that separates the human being, not only from animals, but even from itself in the sense of being able to rise above the immediacy of its surroundings and contemplate what would be more *right*. Enlightenment depends completely on this second use of reason. Kant gives an example: If you are serving in the army, you are obliged to follow orders without debating their usefulness or legitimacy. However, as a citizen, the soldier might afterwards debate, whether the army is fulfilling its purpose or indeed whether having an army at all serves a legitimate purpose. Teaching philosophy is another example, (mine, not Kant’s), which I think highlights some of the issues concerning free speech today. Obviously, teaching philosophy must be about teaching students how to think for themselves, what counts as a valid argument, where philosophy can provoke thinking or contribute to a better understanding of our predicament as human beings, etc. Nonetheless, fulfilling the function of a teacher clearly also shares many traits with the one of the soldier: You are in the service of the state, performing a specific function for which

you obtain a salary and certain benefits, like social standing, “cultural capital”, etc. Performing your role, you have to abide by the exam regulation and take into due consideration the interests of your employer or funder, which more and more exclusively means focusing on the *employability* of the students, as it is so poetically called: The question is not, whether they will contribute to the ultimate aims of humanity, but whether they will get a job, any job, and pay taxes. Maybe this increased focus on the outcome of teaching, how to promote the relevant competences for the job market, is concretely changing the way, you teach students - or maybe you will insist that training their public use of reason is the best preparation for any occupation, they could get. But even so, it becomes more and more difficult to distinguish, whether, when teaching or testing students at exams, you are in fact making a public or a private use of reason. And what are they?

The pragmatic line in interpreting the principle of “making public one’s own thoughts” relates to this question of a public use of reason. Performing well within already given frames and (implicitly or explicitly) confirming the overall picture of social norms, etc., would usually fall within the “private use of reason”, while the “public use of reason”, the capacity for critical and independent thinking, must rely on other spaces. One could talk about concerted efforts to promote the public use of reason in various kinds of teaching, research, arts, media, etc., which have traditionally been supported by government funding with the explicit aim of furthering independent thought at “arms length” from the funders themselves. To promote public use of reason requires time and an environment of experimentation and scrutiny that has come under severe pressure within recent decades. What I call the privatization of reason is the general starvation of the public use of reason. We find it in universities, newspapers, public service media, political parties, NGO/lobbyist work, advertising, etc. We find it in New Public Management, in the standardization and objectification of learning, in the austerity politics of the “Competition State” (cf. Cerny 1997; Pedersen 2011), etc, etc. Everywhere, compartmentalized experts and professionals are moving forward, and more and more, public use of reason is marginalized or made doubtful, as if the common belief in the very existence of a public use of reason has evaporated (“she is just saying X, because she really wants to promote Z”).

In Kantian terms, what we risk losing with the privatization of reason is the sense of the human being as part of what he calls a “kingdom of ends”, i.e. a realm of universal reason, where everyone participates in virtue of their capacity as reasonable creatures alone. The ends that this kingdom serves are and can only be human beings, not doctrines or rules or nations. Not growth rates or employability. Making public use of reason thus entails not only that you distance yourself from your immediate interests and tasks in society, but also that you consider your fellow humans as someone who can appreciate an observation or an argument about a certain state of affairs. By making public use of reason, you treat your fellows as ends in themselves – as someone who can be addressed as rational creatures who are able autonomously to set their own ends and not only follow their immediate inclinations or orders, regardless of their interests, identities or mores.

The liberal principle of freedom of expression thus relies on the principle distinction between the universal subjectivity that can be ascribed to any individual, and the concrete, embodied existence of our cultural identity. Any human being contains both aspects – a universal and a particular, if you will. In other words, the liberal tradition distinguishes between an empty subject (the subject of enunciation) that upholds a right to express its thoughts and which can be addressed as such, and the concrete identities and interests, which one might simultaneously have (the subject of the enunciated). If one does not accept the “empty”, universal subject as a politically relevant concept, one does not agree with the liberal idea of free speech. I think this is where the real division between the liberal tradition and right wing populism can be found. When the latter proclaim the right to free speech, it is usually a strategic, rather than a principled stance. They will insist, for example, on the right to criticize Islam, use derogatory language about foreigners, etc., but not on the right to ridicule their own national or religious symbols. Therefore, they are actually not for freedom of expression in Mill’s or Kant’s sense, because they do not agree philosophically with the idea of the universal human subject. The empty subject is a theoretical fiction in the eyes of right wing populism, because the human being is always embodied, placed in a culture, endowed with a particular set of traditions, values, etc.

Collectivization of the freedom of expression

The distinction between the subject of the enunciation (the “empty”, universal subject) and the subject of the enunciated (what we tell about ourselves, our values, etc.) is important to keep in mind, before I move to the concluding point. For I nonetheless think that a certain kind of populism is necessary to make it possible to enunciate new kinds of political solutions and reinvigorate the concept of a public use of reason.

Populism is the political movement that claims to speak on behalf of the people (*populus*), and ideally that would imply a kind of enunciation that cannot so easily be reduced to “private interests”. When public debate has been so thoroughly privatized, as it has today, it may be time to experiment with the very idea of the public, i.e. to “open spaces”, if you will, where it is possible to speak again as a public and to a public – in the best interests of mankind in general, as Kant and Mill would have put it. What is required is a new form of free speech that fosters genuinely new thoughts and enables a reinvigoration of the public use of reason. The right wing populist movements, however, do not contribute much to this ambition, as they are emphasizing certain forms of well-known content (what Jacques Rancière has called “archépolitics” (Rancière 1999, 65)), much more than they are really contributing to political progress, neither on the formal level, nor on the level of contents.

Nonetheless, I think that some of the movements and parties that have emerged since the global financial crisis in 2008 have brought interesting new experiments in the struggle for raising voices that were very recently considered utopian, irresponsible or impossible, but nonetheless rely on strictly democratic ideals and methods. I think it is reasonable to suggest that what many of these movements are trying to answer is the question: “How does one reinvent the public use of reason in an age of almost complete privatization of reason and of the so called “politics of necessity”? “How does the public emancipate itself, when it has been almost completely disempowered by the prevailing economic order?” As space does not allow me to go into any empirical detail and analyze e.g. Occupy Wall Street in the US, Podemos in Spain, or Syriza in Greece, I will instead attempt a more formal definition of my point, maybe just mentioning in passing that one of the characteristics of these movements is precisely that they experiment with more democratic

forms of decision making, voting, institution building, etc. (See e.g. Zechner/Hansen, 2015).

In right wing populist movements, the people (in the sense of a general subject of enunciation with the right to decide for itself) is not enunciating a new content. Rather, an old content is identifying the subjects that are mobilized to repeat it as “the people”. The difference is, whether you move from a particular content, regarding for instance national identity, and “backwards” toward the position of enunciation, demanding that all speaking subjects must be shaped in “our” picture, or whether you move from the empty, universal subject to an experiment or an act that risks the articulation of what *we* could want to say. In the first case, collectivity is established as a homogenizing effect of definitions and initiatives from a political elite; in the second, collectivity is an emergence of something new from a more or less spontaneous act of a group of otherwise very different individuals. Maybe one could distinguish between collectivity through assimilation to a pre-established identity versus collectivity through a unification of the non-identical in a demand for new political ideas.

In any case, the limit of populism, which must be kept firmly in mind, if one wants to stay within the broad frame of the tradition of the enlightenment, (and I think one should stay within the broad frame of the enlightenment), is the right to disagree with it, as well as the right to express this disagreement.

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Emotioners (u)nytte

En fænomenologisk analyse af emotioner i praktisk rationalitet

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Abstract

The article offers a genetic phenomenological account of the basic role that emotions play in prudential rationality. It is suggested that feelings are the original mode of presentation of value, and that this point can make intelligible that emotions in some cases have a substantial utility with regard to the apprehension of practical matters and in others are distorting of practical awareness. It is argued that the problematic nature of some emotions in practical contexts is an unfortunate bi-product of their important functional role of being sources of value reception.

Keywords Emotioner, praktisk rationalitet, fænomenologi, værdi

Introduktion

Den vestlige tænkning har ofte hæftet sig ved emotioners negative indflydelse på evnen til at tænke praktisk rationelt, dvs. at tænke fornuftigt i et handlingsøjemed. Er et subjekt fx opslugt af had eller irritabilitet, bliver hun ude af stand til at ræsonnere og handle hensigtsmæssigt. Empirisk forskning har også bekræftet denne pointe (Haidt 2001). På den anden side peger en del nyere emotions- og

værdiforskning på, at emotioner spiller en central rolle i basal værdiforståelse (Roeser 2011, Tappolet 2012); en pointe som også klassiske fænomenologiske teoretikere har fremført (Scheler 2007, Husserl 1988), og som har spillet en fremtrædende rolle i den sentimentalistiske tradition i filosofien (Wiggins 1987). Selvom analyser af praktisk fornuft ofte har fokuseret primært på intellektuelle evner, procedurer og modeller for rationelle valg, er der i den filosofiske og psykologiske litteratur en tradition og ikke mindst fornyet interesse for også at tematisere følelseslivets nyttefunktioner. Skal vi forstå emotioners rolle for den praktiske rationalitet er det på denne baggrund afgørende at analysere, hvorledes emotioner i nogen praktiske sammenhæng er nyttige og unyttige i andre.

Artiklen bidrager til at belyse 3 basale aspekter af praktisk fornuft: Dels redegør den for, hvordan følelser er fundamentale for konstitutionen af praktisk mening; dels viser artiklen, hvordan følelsernes funktioner og dysfunktioner kan betragtes som en naturlig konsekvens af selve den følende natur, der karakteriserer værdierfaringer i deres oprindelige præsentationsmåde. Og artiklen viser i forlængelse heraf på hvilken måde, emotions-regulering er afgørende for praktisk fornuft.

Dannelsen af værdibetydning er betinget af værdi-følelser

Det skal i det følgende illustreres på baggrund af en analyse af værdierfaringen i dens oprindelige præsentationsmåde, at der er en nødvendig sammenhæng mellem dannelsen af værdi-betydning – dvs. begreber og meninger om, hvad der på et basalt plan er godt og dårligt for os, og dermed selve målestokkene for hvad vi må anse for nyttigt – og det at have *følt* dette indhold for den praktiske fornuft. Tesen her er neutral hvad angår værdiers ontologi samt begrundetheden af specifikke værdidomme. Derimod siger tesen, at følte emotioner har en afgørende nyttefunktion i dannelsen af værdimæssig *mening*, og afledt heraf har følelser også afgørende funktioner i evnen til at foretage praktiske vurderinger.

Det basale argument herfor er genetisk-fænomenologisk: En genetisk-fænomenologisk analyse rekonstruerer nødvendige relationer mellem typer af erfarings-genstande og erfarings-måder: Erfaringen af komplekse erfaringsgenstande analyseres som konstieret

af erfarings-indhold givet i simple erfaringer. Således kan vi give mening til erfaringen af komplekse genstande ved at rekonstruere hvilke erfarings-måder – eller i klassisk fænomenologisk jargon, hvilke *givetheds-måder* – der betinger fremtrædelsen af dem samt hvilke typer erfaringsgenstande og -kvaliteter, der gives i bevidstheden i disse simple former for erfaring. Edmund Husserl viser i sine konstitutionsanalyser (Husserl 1988, 1999), hvorledes simple før-refleksive sanselige erfaringer er nødvendigt betingende for dannelsen af teoretiske domme og for prædikative domme i det hele taget. På parallel vis kan vi i henhold til dannelsen af praktiske og vurderende domme rekonstruere genetisk-fænomenologisk, hvilke simple erfaringer der betinger disse. Dette er tilgangen i det følgende. Jeg vil ikke levere en dækkende fænomenologisk analyse af værdidommes genese, men fokusere specifikt på dannelsen af basal værdi-betydning i relation til følelser.

Parallelt til det forhold, at vi må anerkende, at primærfarvers betydning er betinget af en nødvendig relation til et subjekt, der enten aktuelt ser eller har set disse, er pointen, at et vurderende subjekt ikke kan give mening til primære værdier uden at det satte værdibegreb har en nødvendig relation til enten en aktuel eller en forudgående bestemt værdi-følelse i subjektet (Engelsen 2016). Med værdi-følelse mener jeg her basalt den affektive følelse af, at noget (på et utal af mulige måder) har en valens, dvs. at noget er givet for bevidstheden som positivt eller negativt (Köhler 1966, 59; Klawonn 2007, 168-69). Hermed hævdes ikke, at alle værdiers betydning nødvendigvis er følte. Det er *basale* eller simple værdikvaliteter, vi taler om – dvs. alle værdi-betydningers grundlæggende 'byggesten': Komplekse værdibegreber er fænomenologisk betragtet sammensat af simple værdikvaliteter.

Det synes principielt umuligt at forklare en person, der er født farveblind, hvad rødhed er. Men hvorfor? Netop pga. den nødvendige forbindelse mellem dannelsen af primærfarve-betydning og det at have en særlig type erfaring; det synes at være en nødvendig betingelse for dannelsen af et adækvat begreb om en given primærfarve, at man visuelt har erfaret den (Jackson 1986). Farven må med andre ord være *anskuelig* for at give mening. Hertil kunne man indvende, at vi kalder ting for røde, selv når denne farvekvalitet ikke aktuelt erfares visuelt, hvorfor anskueligheden ikke kan være nødvendig betingelse for at give mening til sådanne propositioner:

Jeg kan slukke lyset, og det vil stadig give mening at kalde min taske for rød, selvom den aktuelt i mørket ser grå ud. Egenskaben 'rød' tillægger vi altså ikke kun ting, der aktuelt erfarer som sådanne, hvorfor det er oplagt at analysere farvebetydning i dispositionelle termer: En ting kan meningsfuldt kaldes 'rød' for så vidt den har en særlig disposition til at give subjekter bestemte responser. Denne indvending rammer dog ved siden af som kritik af den fænomenologiske pointe, for vi kan ikke analysere farve-betydning *adækvat* i dispositionelle termer, hvilket kan vises ved en fænomenologisk kritik: Der mangler en nødvendig komponent i den dispositionelle analyse, nemlig henvisningen til en særlig slags subjektiv respons, selve det man kan se, når man erfarer farven oprindeligt. Når jeg dømmes min taske rød i mørket, er det med andre ord underforstået, at den under normale lysforhold af normalt seende væsner vil *erfares visuelt* som havende en særlig givet rødheds-kvalitet. Et visuelt givet erfaringsmateriale er med andre ord medforstået, tavst eller eksplicit. Og således kan vi plausibelt hævde en nødvendig sammenhæng mellem dannelsen af farvebetydning og en bestemt givetheds måde, nemlig den visuelle perception. Vi skal ikke fortabe os i farve-analyse, pointen tjener som nævnt til at vise en parallel til analysen af værdibetydning i relation til følelser:

Grundpointen er altså først og fremmest en pointe om forholdet mellem simple værdier eller det, vi kan kalde primær-værdier og følelser (i analogi til primær-farver og synet), hvorfor analysen må tage udgangspunkt i erfaringen af simpel værdi. Tager vi som det første et helt simpelt æstetisk værdi-eksempel: Sukkeret kan meningsfuldt prædikeret som 'sødt', selvom intet subjekt aktuelt smager det. Men en tilstrækkelig forståelse af, hvad denne dom egentlig indebærer, forudsætter et adækvat begreb om sødhed, som igen forudsætter at man har *følt* sødhed (ved at smage og dermed erfare denne *prima facie* positivt valente smagskvalitet). Denne værdibetydning har i og med den oprindelige værdi-følelse sedimenteret sig i erfaringshorisonten og muliggjort re-præsentationen af sødhedskvaliteten i en ikke-affekteret givetheds måde. Et menneske født uden smagssans kan godt lære at *dømme* sukkeret som sødt, men har i realiteten intet dækkende begreb om, hvad dette indebærer i forhold til dens valente karakter, da vedkommende ikke har følt det – akkurat ligesom den blinde kan kalde postkassen for rød uden egentlig at forstå og registrere, hvad dette præcist indebærer

(se også Prinz 2009 pp. 38-42). Vi kan altså fremhæve en nødvendig sammenhæng mellem at give mening til den simple værdi, vi kalder en smagskvalitet, fx sødhed, og det at have følt noget med sin smags-sans, en pointe der vel ikke i sig selv lyder så kontroversiel. Den har imidlertid stor betydning, når vi udvider analysen til mere komplekse værdi-genstande, hvis mening konstitueres af de simple værdi-betydninger, og når vi betragter følelsernes kognitive nytte-funktion i en praktisk sammenhæng, som vi vender tilbage til.

Lad os rekonstruere sagen fænomenologisk med et lidt mere (men stadig forholdsvist simpelt) komplekst eksempel: Dannelsen af betydningen af værdien af et måltid mad. Måltidet fremtræder som: Et velsmagende og tiltrængt måltid i venners lag. Vi kan rekonstruere denne værdigenstands værdi som konstitueret af et kompleks af simple følte værdikvaliteter, der i en unik sammensætning præger subjektet på en bestemt måde: Jeg erfarer måltidets kvalitet som en kompleks værdifuld smags-*Gestalt*: Den udgør en kompleks irreducibel helhed af simple skelnelige smagskvaliteter, fx bitterhed, sødt, surt, stærkt etc. Måltidets smagsværdi fremtræder ikke som konstrueret af min subjektive dom herom, men som del af et passivt givet erfaringsmateriale, som min værdi-dom (bl.a.) handler om, når jeg aktivt retter mig mod måltidet for at vurdere det; den er givet i bevidstheden som rettesnoren for enhver korrekt dom om måltidets smagsværdi for mig. Smagsværdien indgår ligeledes i et større værdikompleks af sammensatte erfarings-givne kvaliteter, som vi kan rekonstruere fænomenologisk, det være sig kvaliteter i relation til måltidets eventuelle sociale funktioner – det spiller fx en rolle for mig som fokuspunkt for socialt samvær, der fremtræder vigtigt og meningsfuldt for mig – og det være sig måltidets funktion at stille min sult, som fremtræder presserende for mig her og nu. Disse ligeledes analysérbare kvaliteter konstituerer en unik højere-ordens helheds-værdi af måltidet som sådan: Samværrets karakter og sulten sætter præg på smagskvaliteterne, ikke blot i form af en kausal forbindelse, men i selve kvaliteters fremtrædelsesmåde, dvs. selve den værdi-mening, som måltidet som sådan er givet med. Både sulten og den sociale kontekst forstærker værdien af maden, ligesom også den auditive og visuelle præsentation af maden gør det. Pointen er nu i relation til følelsen, at måltidets helheds-værdi er givet i og med en sammensætning af en myriade af rekonstruérbare fremtræden-

de værdikvaliteter – og de simpleste og således mest fundamentale af disse kvaliteters mening er kun givet *i og med kvaliteternes følbarhed*: Vi med-forstår i erfaringen af måltidets værdi en række simple følte valente kvaliteter, fx smagskvaliteterne, samværsfølelser, følelsen af at få stillet sult osv.

Sagt i mere almene termer har dannelsen af værdi-mening ligesom farve-betydning en nødvendig relation til en bestemt type reception: Hvor den visuelle perception er meningskonstituerende for farvebetydningerne, er værdi-følelsen – følelsen af at noget er positivt eller negativt på en bestemt måde – betingelse for tilegnelsen af primære værdibegreber. Følelsen er således ikke *blot* en art affektion, men har den fundamentale kognitive funktion, at den *præsenterer* subjektet for, at noget er godt eller dårligt på en bestemt måde: Følelsens fænomenale indhold er et konstituerende værdi-materiale, der 'sedimenteres' i subjektets erfaring (Scheler 2007, Husserl 1988); dvs. værdikvaliteten kan i og med følelsen af den internaliseres som en del af subjektets forforståelse og begrebslige habitus. Dette har også afgørende betydning for dannelsen af etisk og moralsk mening (se Engelsen 2013).

Den genetisk-fænomenologiske pointe om en nødvendig relation mellem det at føle og dannelsen af simple værdibegreber kan bidrage til en afklaring af følte emotioners nyttefunktioner i det praktiske liv, som vi skal se. Dermed kan analysen også have en praktisk relevans i forhold til at forstå vigtigheden af at kultivere bestemte emotionelle kapaciteter og dispositioner, også hvad angår mere komplekse og sammensatte værdigenstande og værdikomplekser.

Emotioners nyttefunktion i den praktiske rationalitet

I kraft af følelsers afgørende rolle i dannelsen af værdibetydning drager et modent subjekt aktivt nytte af følelsernes fænomenale indhold. Hvad end et internaliseret følelsesindhold, værdi-materialet, ledsages af en aktuel affektion eller ej, kan det fx bruges til at præsentere type-identiske kvaliteter: Det er mulighedsbetingelsen for, at subjektet kan *re*-præsentere et værdiindhold i andre præsentations-modi end den oprindelige følelse: Jeg kan gen-kende værdien (fx måltidets velsmag), erindre den, forestille mig den, glæde mig til den, ærgre mig over at være gået glip af den osv. Og et sedimenteret følelsesindhold er mulighedsbetingelse for, at jeg kan gen-kende værdikvaliteter, der ikke blot relaterer sig til egne indre til-

stande, men også til andres. Således er min emotionelle erfaring medkonstituerende for min evne til at forstå, at andres følelser kan have praktisk relevans. Dette er konsistent med fremherskende teorier om forståelse af andre, der vægter, at der er et 'konstruktiv' eller simulerende element i enhver forståelse af andres indre liv, omend anden-forståelse næppe kan reduceres til simulation (Husserl 1975, Goldman 2008, Zahavi & Overgaard 2012).

Følelsernes menings-dannende funktion kan også gøre den pointe forståelig, at intentionale emotioner også ofte 'sporer' (*track*) værdi (Tappolet 2012, Engelsen 2011): Emotioner kan netop ses som responser på positive eller negative værdi-fremtrædelser i en given situation, ofte i periferien af opmærksomhedshorisonten, en fænomenologisk pointe konsistent med såkaldte *appraisal*-teorier om emotioner i psykologien samt 'kognitivistiske' teorier om emotioner i det hele taget (Shaver & Mikincer 2007, Roeser 2011). Dette har vigtige sociale nyttefunktioner, og pointen kan rekonstrueres med et simpelt eksempel: Min medfølelse overfor en ven i sorg er min kilde til den information, at der er noget galt med hende: I medfølelsen trækker jeg (associativt i 'periferien' af bevidstheden) på negativt værdiindhold præsenteret i egne tidligere personlige erfaringer af sorg. I en bevæget empatisk identifikation overfører jeg denne sedimenterede værdibetydning til min vens tilstand. Jeg erfarer herigennem værdi-typen præsenteret i min vens sorg og forstår betydningen af dens negativitet i og med selv at blive følelsesmæssigt berørt. Min medfølelse er en værdi-følelse, da det er i og med at blive berørt i medfølelsen, at jeg får information om selve den negative værdi i situationen.

En sådan emotionelt baseret værdi-reception kan sagtens foregå som en mere eller mindre uklar fornemmelse i 'periferien' af ens bevidsthed. Jeg kan fx i samtalen med min ven have en fornemmelse af, at noget er galt uden selv at være tematisk opmærksom på det. Dette kan bekræftes i et fænomenologisk rekonstruerende tilbageblik: Dagen efter mødet med min ven bryder hun i telefonsamtalen ud i gråd, og jeg bliver nu tematisk opmærksom på, at hun er ramt af en dyb sorg; samtidig går det op for mig, at denne opmærksomhed netop udgør en bekræftelse af en fornemmelse, som allerede var til stede i mit sind i vores møde ansigt-til-ansigt i går, men som blot ikke var i fokus af min bevidsthed: I går var det en uarticuleret og indistinkt følelse af, at noget negativt var på færde, at der

var noget galt; i dag er det udviklet til en forholdsvis klar forståelse. Allerede min tidlige indistinkte følelse havde altså en receptiv nyttefunktion i den forstand, at den var del af en opmærksomhed, som mit intellekt først senere fik bekræftet og veldefineret. Igen er parallellen til perceptionen illustrerende, idet jeg på lignende vis kan sansе noget i periferien af min opmærksomhedshorisont, som jeg først senere kan sætte begreb på og evt. få bekræftet af andre videnskilder ("ok, det var dét, jeg så!"). Den slags fornemmelser er selv-sagt fejlbarlige (som alle forståelsesmåder), men udgør ikke desto mindre vigtige informationskilder til vores praktiske vurderinger.

Det affektive aspekt af emotioner er vigtigt at tage med i betragtning, når vi beskriver deres nyttefunktion i praktiske sammenhænge: Værdier givet i affektive præsentationsmåder motiverer til at handle på bestemte måder, men motivation er samtidig en prægning af subjektets opmærksomhed og har således en nyttefunktion for erkendelsen: Ligesom min opmærksomhed rettes mod X, når jeg hører en lyd kommende fra X's retning (Husserl 1999, §21), så bidrager emotioner til at rette min opmærksomhed hen imod positive og negative forhold i en given situation. Min vens sorg og det negative ved det, hun sørger over, tiltrækker min opmærksomhed *i og med* at jeg har medfølelse med hende. Jeg motiveres til at tage hendes situation alvorligt – og potentielt at danne mig relevante praktiske handle-mønstre og domme om situationen. I modsætning til følelsers funktion i formationen af værdibegreber er følelser dog næppe i alle konkrete praktiske sammenhæng nødvendige betingelser for konkret værdireception, eftersom et internaliseret værdimateriale som nævnt kan danne grundlag for præsentationen af værdi i andre præsentations-modi end intentionelle emotioner. Dette udelukker dog ikke, at emotioner i mange praktiske sammenhæng spiller en helt afgørende rolle som kilde til indholdet for den praktiske fornuft.

Nyttige og unyttige emotioner

Når vi vurderer emotioners praktiske nytte, må vi som nævnt også have blik for, hvordan emotioner spiller negativt ind på den praktiske dømmekraft, som så ofte pointeret i faglitteraturen om praktisk rationalitet (fx Haidt 2001). Vi kan på baggrund af den forudgående analyse give mening til, hvad det er, der fænomenologisk betragtet går galt, når følelser står i vejen for den praktiske fornuft: Følelsers

forstyrrelse af den praktiske fornuft kan analyseres som et uheldigt 'biprodukt' af netop deres værdireceptive funktion. For at forstå dette, må det understreges, at værdiindhold, hvis mening følelser bidrager til at konstituere, ganske vist er en nødvendig betingelse for dannelsen af enhver praktisk dom, men det er stadig afgørende at have blik for de intentionale følelsers fejlbarlighed (fx: ikke alt, hvad jeg frygter, er egentligt frygtsomt). Derudover giver det meste af det, vi føler som værdifuldt, ikke kategoriske grunde til at handle på bestemte måder. Det er netop dette forhold ved vores mere intense følelser, som gør dem problematisk unyttige i rationelle kontekster: Følelsers affektive intensitet disponerer ofte fejlagtigt det følende subjekt til i den givne situation at tro, at den i emotionen satte værdis vigtighed i relation til andre værdier, svarer til intensiteten af følelsen.

Når jeg føler kraftigt for noget, fx i en stærk indignation, er noget givet for mig som værdigt for denne følelse, noget fremtræder som havende negativ værdi. Men i og med min meget intense følelses-tilstand foranlediges jeg nemt til at overdrive det negatives vigtighed i forhold til en bredere praktisk sammenhæng. Sagt anderledes kan vi forstå emotionelt motiveret irrationalitet som udtryk for, at bestemte intense følelser mere eller mindre har 'overtaget' subjektets perspektiv: Subjektet disponeres til kun at fokusere på det specifikke værdimateriale, som emotionen retter sig imod. Dermed negligerer subjektet nemt andre relevante værdier. Er man eksempelvis i sin indignation emotionelt bevæget på en meget intens måde, abstraherer man mere eller mindre automatisk fra andre praktisk relevante forhold i situationen, hvilket kan forhindre det for en rationel betragtning nødvendige bredere perspektiv, fx i form af manglende blik for de langsigtede konsekvenser af ens handlinger eller i form af helt at negligerer andres perspektiver. Den intense følelse kan altså på én og samme tid være den primære kilde til forståelsen af en given positiv eller negativ værdi, men samtidig erfares så intenst, at den bliver til 'emotionel støj': Dvs. at det bliver umuligt for subjektet at indtage et praktisk rationelt perspektiv, der kan give mening til en større tidslig og rumlig sammenhæng af emner, der giver grunde til handling.

Emotionsregulering og praktisk fornuft

På baggrund af det foregående er det i et praktisk-rationelt perspektiv næppe hverken hensigtsmæssigt generelt at 'lægge låg' på sine følelser eller generelt at undlade at 'holde hovedet koldt'. Tværtimod giver analysen mening til den pointe, fremhævet både i psykologisk teori (Shaver & Mikincer 2007) og i teori om fornuftig forvaltning af egen velfærd (Tiberius 2008), at det ofte er nyttigt i velfærdsoptimerende øjemed, at man i følelseslivet under nogle omstændigheder evner at op-regulere intensiteten af sine emotionelle responser, positive som negative, og under andre omstændigheder evner at ned-regulere dem. Prudentiel rationalitet er med andre ord betinget af en emotionel modenhed, der kræver en veludviklet selvkontrol i form af passende emotions-regulering og ikke mindst en veludviklet kontekst-sensitivitet. Vi kan i den forbindelse skelne tre basale typer emotions-regulering, som vi kan sammentænke med forståelsen af værdierfaring præsenteret i det forudgående (Bargh & Williams 2007): Situationsselektion, opmærksomhedsparathed og revurdering.

Er man situationsselektiv evner man at op- og nedregulere sine affektive responser ved at foregribe situationer, der skaber upassende responser. Et eksempel herpå kan være simpelthen at udtrykke sine følelser på en passende måde. Hermed skaber man bevidst en situation, der kan motivere ens omverden til at forholde sig til følelsen og dens værdiindhold – hvilket igen kan motivere medmennesker til at bidrage til realiseringen af det, der gives som havende positiv værdi i den givne følelse eller, hvis det er en negativ emotion, til at annullere eller undgå det, der præsenteres som havende negativ værdi.

Opmærksomhedsparathed er evnen til fleksibelt at omstille sit opmærksomhedsfokus ved at distrahere sig selv eller ved koncentration. Man kan argumentere for, at evnen at koncentrere sig om og engagere hele sin væren i én eller flere præsenterede positive værdier, og dermed intensivere sin egen emotionelle respons, er meget afgørende i et prudentielt-rationelt perspektiv (Tiberius 2008 hævder en lignende pointe). Nære sociale relationer er fx muliggjort af bl.a. en evne til at fokusere på at være nærværende om fælles positive oplevelser i konkrete sociale interaktioner. Et velundersøgt fænomen som *flow* synes også at være en nyttig kilde til velfærdsoptimering (Csikszentmihalyi & Nakamura 2001): Når et

subjektet er i en psykologisk tilstand af flow, koncentrerer og engagerer det sig netop med hele sit følelsesliv om bestemte værdier og opgaver i en sådan grad, at det glemmer tid og sted, hvilket kan være kilde til stor tilfredsstillelse og en følelse af mening i nu'et. Evnen til at distrahere sig selv emotionelt fra et præsenteret værdimateriale er i andre sammenhæng afgørende: Udtrykket at 'holde hovedet koldt' betegner netop denne evne og eksemplificerer den førnævnte vigtighed af ikke at lade følelseslivet blive til et tunnel-syn, der er ude af stand til at se tingene i et bredere perspektiv.

En revurdering, der fænomenologisk betragtet kan være udfaldet af et opmærksomhedsskift, er et *Gestalt*-skift i den samlede vurdering af den værdi-sammenhæng, man befinder sig i. Man kan fx indoptage mere information om emnet, hvilket kan udvide den værdimæssige horisont. Jeg kan fx præges af en stærk forargelse over min vens opførsel i en social sammenhæng og i og med denne emotion præsenterer hendes adfærd som stærkt upassende. Men ved at rette opmærksomheden mod motiverne bag hendes opførsel genovervejer jeg, hvad der får hende til at gøre netop dette. Jeg regulerer på denne måde min emotion ved fx at rette opmærksomhed på hendes psykologisk ustabile tilstand, der måske ikke ligefrem undskylder opførslen, men sætter den i en mindre forargelig belysning. I en given situation kan emotionsregulering ved en revurdering af situationen være en mulighedsbetingelse for en passende overbærenhed eller et nyttigt indgreb i adfærden, som min stærkt forargede følelsetilstand gjorde mig ude af stand til.

Afsluttende bemærkninger

Jeg har i det foregående argumenteret for, at følte emotioner spiller en fundamental rolle i en nytteoptimerende fornuft, i og med at de udgør den mest basale præsentationsmåde for dennes indhold, dvs. for de primære værdikvaliteter, der i det hele taget er med-konstituerende for målene for instrumentel rationalitet. Analogt til at farver oprindeligt må præsenteres visuelt, må de basale værdikvaliteter præsenteres i følte emotioner. Dette udelukker vel at mærke ikke, at det, der præsenteres som værdi i følelsen, efterfølgende kan re-præsenteres i andre erkende-modi, i mindre følelsesladede, 'kolde' attituder. Teorien om følelser som basale givetheds-måder for værdibetydning implicerer anerkendelsen af et dilemma givet den prudentielle fornufts egen natur: Selve det at være emo-

tionelt åben for værdi kan i visse situationer disponere for at tænke og handle unyttigt, da det kan disponere til et tunnelsyn, men emotioner er samtidig nødvendige betingelser for selve denne åbenhed for værdi, dvs. for selve dannelsen af meningsindholdet af den prudentielle fornuft. Teorien kan således forklare emotionernes dobbeltsidede status i den praktiske tænkning og handlen som et udtryk for selve værdireceptionens natur, og den kan give mening til det forhold, at evnen til emotions-regulering under passende omstændigheder er en helt afgørende egenskab at have, hvis man vil agere rationelt. At være prudentielt rationel er betinget af en emotionel modenhed.

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Discovering utility between the descriptive and the normative

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Abstract:

In the article the moral notion of utility is examined. By reading John Stuart Mill's *Utilitarianism* the paper argues that moral concepts, like the application of utility, incorporates both normative and descriptive elements, i.e. it is both abstract and factual in nature. Therefore the paper claims that facts are a vital part of moral behavior; and that descriptive elements are essential for normative judgment and moral reasoning. The paper supports its claim by showing that the moral conceptualization of utility includes the incorporation of facts, and that the density, or quality of that incorporation is equivalent to the certainty and comfort by which the conceptualization is articulated.

Keywords: moral reason, utilitarianism, facts, conceptual deliberation

A concept called utility

The standard dictionary definition of utility is 'the state or quality of being useful'. In general the notion finds itself in two forms of discourse. First in ways of referring to systems, structures and/or

materials providing services and/or goods, such as electricity, water, sanitation, heat, that meets certain basic needs for the modern human way of life. The utility of these services and/or goods are more or less taken for granted, and the rational concern about them is not focused on if they ought to be provided, but on how they can be provided. This seems reasonable, since living in a modern urban environment do call for sewers, power plugs and tap water. Referring to the establishment of these services and/or goods as utility appears to us as truthfully descriptive; perhaps even in the way of a natural kind. It seems 'natural' that these provisions are useful, since we, from a 'natural' point of view, do seem to need what they provide.

However, the notion of utility also finds itself in discourses concerned with if something particular is useful or not. 'How can we use it?', 'What are its uses?', 'What's the use?', 'Use it like this!', 'It has many uses!', 'Make yourself useful!' etc. These discourses address a broad range of modern human life, and it might apply to consumer goods, education, leisure activities, art and craft, as well as parking lots, fashion design and a North London Derby. On another note, the particularities, brought into concern about their usefulness, could also be institutions, procedures, and sometimes even human beings themselves.

In this second type of discourse the notion utility is often applied as an instrument for claiming the acquisition or dismissal, preservation or change of the particular item in question. In these cases, the reason behind the notion utility, is not simple descriptive, i.e. referring to whether the item is useful or not, but equally normative in nature, stating something about what ought to be done to the item, i.e. regarding its possession, improvement or disbandment. Here utility emerges not just as an epistemic epithet allowing the particular a dominion of knowledge (e.g. as a natural kind), but also as an ethical indicator, turning the particular subject in question into a moral issue.

The state or quality of being useful is conceptualized as something valuable. The utility possessed by the particulars addressed in the first discourse, is a utility by necessity (or by naturalness). Therefore the value of the items is not in question. We might even say that it is a simple fact, and our dealings with them have a pure rational (or technical) concern.

In the second discourse however, the utility possessed by the particulars, or better said the value of the items, is exactly what is at stake. It is not a necessity, and therefore not taken for granted, but something that calls for an ethical deliberation, that can show itself in form of moral reasoning, maybe even as ethical arguments or calculations, and sometimes, it comes in the form of – what Mill called – transcendent facts. (Mill, 2008/1871: pp. 45)

The point I want to make is that when we conceptualize, that is, when we are applying notions in situations to things and actions etc., we can, individually and collectively, be more or less certain of the legitimacy of the concept in use. The certainty and uncertainty gives reason for some form of deliberation on the concept, therein we try to justify or question the concept further. This deliberation can involve elements both on the particular application of the notion at hand, i.e. a form of practical comprehension, as well as on the notion itself, i.e. a form of abstract comprehension. Often these elements are hard to tell apart, since they interact with each other in the process of conceptualization.

Elsewhere, I have argued for reading significant parts of Wittgenstein's philosophy as a conceptual deliberation. This is to be understood as a process in which certain core concepts are identified, that on the one hand a) appear as a form of flipside coins, being both descriptive and normative at the same time; and on the other hand b) (to use a metaphor) grows into you as a form of bone structure, and, although having an empirical genesis, in practice emerge as an a priori condition, becoming certainties. (Telléus, 2013)

A notion like utility is particularly interesting from this wittgensteinian perspective. It is a good example of a concept, that in order for us to be comfortable in using it, to be certain of its meaning, has to be able to ground or relate the concept in a particular practice (the descriptive part of the concept), as well as be able to recognize and deliberate on the application of the concept's abstractly justified value (the normative part of the concept). If something is referred to by the notion utility, that doesn't simple mean that we can use it for the time being, in this particular setting, for this particular purpose; but also that when we use the notion, we find comfort and certainty in our usage, by drawing strength and meaning (moral value) from an *per se* a priori idea (or belief) of 'useful things being good things'. So the notion of utility has this flipside feature, and

thereby the certainty by which we conceptualize utility is dependent on our capacity to adhere to and incorporate both of these two aspects more or less as one. This is the case in the 'natural point of view' in the application of utility from above; a view that also include the notion of 'fact' in terms of articulating this certainty, making the moral and the factual almost equivalent – but more on this later. In cases, where we are more uncertain and uncomfortable in applying the concept of utility, we are at the same time more clear on the distinction as well as the interaction between the normative elements and the descriptive elements.

With this in mind, I'd like to look closer at how the notion of utility is conceptualized when it is declared as a moral concept, facing explicit demands on stating what value is promoted into what things and actions, and what better place to look than in John Stuart Mill's *Utilitarianism*.

Reading Mill's *Utilitarianism*

Coining the term utilitarianism as an attempt to label his moral philosophy, Mill obviously brought the notion utility to the attention of moral philosophers. Due to Mills great interest in subjects such as sociology, economy and politics, utility quickly spread into these scholarly areas as well. Utilitarianism became a school of thought, centered on consequentialism, practical (factual) matters, and a calculative approach, paying tribute not only to Mill, but also to his father James Mill and to Jeremy Bentham.

Already in 1900 Leslie Stephen established this representation, when he wrote a comprehensive 3-volume introduction to the school, or what he called, sect of scholars. (Stephen, 2009/1900) One interesting aspect of Stephen's book is that he chose not to give a logical, theoretically coherent interpretation of *The English Utilitarians*, but embedded their thoughts, principles and theories in the social structure and historical circumstances of their time, thereby presenting a more variable and contextual philosophical paradigm, than what is normally appreciated in the tradition of philosophy.

Mill, his moral philosophy and in particular his famous book *Utilitarianism* has ever since been the subject of much interpretation and debate. From the perspective of some interpreters Mill is an act-consequentialist aiming for maximizing the greatest happiness principle, while others argue against such readings applying a rule-

consequential view or the standpoint of what is normally called a multilevel moral theory. (Berger, 1984; Brink, 1992; West, 2004)

There is much evidence of Mill's ambivalent or pliant or sometimes even reluctant affair with the term and paradigm of utilitarianism (Jakobsen, 2003), and reading the book *Utilitarianism* would not allow many readers a clearer or more decisive view. But putting these debates aside, at least explicitly, in this paper I focus on reading the concept of utility.

The scholar Shiri C. Kaminitz (2014) has written an interesting paper with a similar intent. She argues that it is important to understand the concept utility in order to understand how Mill applies the notion with regard to his moral theory and his political economy respectively. Kaminitz's claim is that Mill in his very early economical thinking negligibly subscribed to a quantitative conception of value, an almost mechanical concept of utility, exemplified by the term *homo economicus*. However, this view changed with Mill's later intellectual development and especially his friendship and admiration for the romantic philosopher and poet Samuel Coleridge. Therefore, in his moral philosophy, Mill developed a qualitative concept of utility "that was both more humanistic and more complex than that which Mill had inherited from Bentham." (Kaminitz, 2014, p. 244) What Kaminitz wants us to become aware of is that anyone applying utility as a consequential calculation of quantified data, e.g. analyzing economic statistics, while claiming or justifying the normative value of this conceptualization of utility in reference to Mill's utilitarianism is basically wrong. The nuances of the qualitative value of utility are lost, and thereby the moral value of utility loose its meaning as well as changes its reference. To put it simple, the politics of utility should be alert to the difference between applying an economical utility judgment and a normative utility judgment. The latter incorporating an idea of humanity and emotional sensitivity that the former is lacking.

Alasdair MacIntyre, in his Tanner lectures at Princeton in 1994, delivers a somewhat similar look on Mill. (MacIntyre, 1995) MacIntyre does not talk about utility as such, but of the concept of truthfulness, or truth-telling. In regard to this paper the interesting aspect is that he begins his lectures by placing, as tradition holds, Mill as a representative of an act-consequentialist utilitarian position according to which the rule of truth-telling is bendable due to specific

(personal) cases and circumstances in order to insure the outcome as a greater good (this in opposition to a Kantian position of absolute rule-following). But he then looks closer at Mill's actual account and finds something quite different. Mill, in MacIntyre's reading, emerges as a rule-utilitarian, not allowing more than very few (just one example is put forth) exceptions to the rule of truth-telling. The reason for this is Mill's argument for the value of truthfulness. The normativity of this concept is based on the development of character, of become virtuous. Virtue (as part of happiness, which Mill argues in chapter 4) is the warrant for truth-telling, not specific benefits and personal well-being. The virtuous upholds truth-telling for the sake of civilization, Mill argues, and MacIntyre makes a long interpretation of the significance of that statement. By civilization Mill, according to MacIntyre, refers to the capacity of being civilized, not to the historical society of e.g. 19th century England, and to the qualitative values "acquired only by extended intellectual, moral, and emotional enquiry and education." (MacIntyre, 1995, p. 330) What MacIntyre is doing is building a claim justifying Mill's moral position based on an idea of man as a bearer of qualified social reasoning which carries traces both to the romantics (such as Coleridge) but also to the vital philosophical figure – and originally positioned opponent – Immanuel Kant. Mill, in MacIntyre's reading, is therefore developed into a spokesman for a moral reasoning that places virtues within the life of practical enquiry. However, as MacIntyre concludes, "this account that I have given remains deeply at odds with Mill's consequentialism." (MacIntyre, 1995, p. 358).

Through their conceptual analysis' both Kaminitz and MacIntyre revise the view of Mill as an 'empirical quantified data' calculation consequentialist, and allow for a version of Mill to emerge that has a greater focus on, and understanding of, the richness of human life, the qualitative development of individuals, and the promotion of a complex moral reasoning. In doing this Kaminitz and MacIntyre has to a certain degree to disembark Mill from the paradigm or school of utilitarianism, and to some extent even from other aspects of Mill's own philosophy. Going back to Stephen's presentation of Mill's philosophy, the conceptual approach might not be that irrelevant or estranged, since Stephen to some extent also replaces or abandon 'reading a theory of utilitarianism' (in his case however in favor of a contextualized approach).

Reading Mill's *Utilitarianism*, with a conceptual analysis of utility in mind, I'm inclined to agree with Kaminitz and MacIntyre. Especially chapters 2, 3 and 4 carry numerous references to a qualitative approach to happiness, included the idea of greater happiness, to emotional sensitivity for moral principles, especially the idea of consciousness, to social awareness, to development of character, and so on. On the basis of this, what I like to emphasize here, is how the concept of utility come to arrange itself in terms of the moral reasoning that Mill, and perhaps the 'millian' version of utilitarianism, advocates.

There are two important issues to present. First, what actually counts as facts, and what role do they play in terms of the rationale of utility; and second, how does utility express itself in regard to a personal and a common good (or benefit). The simple answer might be something like: on the first issue, facts are empirically measures quantities, used as components for calculation of maximization; and on the second issue: utility is a principle, which application to the personal and common is determined by the particular consequential range (the outcome) of the particular act. It is this simple answer that the conceptual reading of Mill will complicate.

In the text *Utilitarianism* Mill uses the word 'fact' 27 times. Mostly he uses it to present some account as commonly recognized, indisputable or taken for granted. In this sense he talks of something that we might call an empirically established sociological fact, or perhaps better psychological fact – which is the one definition used by Mill himself on 3 occasions. To support his clear epistemic use of fact, Mill defines 'facts' on a few occasions in terms of authentic, familiar and simple, all indicating something unquestionably known to us.

He also, famously, talks of transcendent facts. This as part of recognizing a moral reasoning that establishes itself on an ontological premise not empirically described, such as God. However, although Mill does not dismiss the transcendent ontology, he makes it explicitly clear that a normative judgment cannot solely rest on such transcendence. First, he points out, such a judgment or moral obligation has to be urged by a subjective feeling, it has to be recognized in and by our minds. Following Mill's argument on this matter, it seems clear to me that, in this text, for this purpose, he doesn't distinguish between empirical and transcendent fact, in terms of what role the play in moral reasoning. It is simply a matter of onto-

logical taste or preference. Regardless, we still need and use facts in our moral concerns, to anchor and enforce our normative judgment and opinion.

There is also another very interesting occurrence of the notion fact in Mill's *Utilitarianism*. At the end of chapter two, Mill acknowledges that the withholding of facts (the two examples he gives are empirically described human behavior) can be a sufficient reason for valid moral exceptions to, as he calls it, an otherwise sacred rule. This passage is often used to point at Mill's consequentialism, since it basically allows for someone to tell a lie in order to save someone from harm – a desirable consequence overrides a morally acknowledged principle. However, what I'd like to emphasize is that once again we see that facts are necessary components in moral reasoning. Here they appear as epistemic 'touchstones' recognized and applied through the experience of particular and real situations. In this sense, facts come to inhabit or vacate, or perhaps play out, the normativity of e.g. a moral opinion, a moral principle, a moral obligation, etc. In a way, the fact makes the moral real, first and foremost in an epistemic sense, i.e. make it reasonable for the moral agent, but also in an ontological sense. Mill of course, through the main number of examples, emphasizes an empirical reality, or much better said an experienced reality.

To summarize this point on facts in Mill's book, let me quote three passages from chapter four. Here Mill writes:

To be incapable of proof by reasoning is common to all first principles; to the first premises of our knowledge, as well as to those of our conduct. But the former, being matters of fact, may be subject of a direct appeal to the faculties which judge of fact – namely, our senses, and our internal consciousness. Can an appeal be made to the same faculties on questions of practical ends? Or by what other faculties is cognizance taken of them? (Mill, 1867, p. 52)

And he continues:

The only proof capable of being given that an object is visible is that people actually see it. The only proof that a sound is audible is that people hear it; and similarly with

the other sources of our experience. In like manner, I apprehend, the sole evidence it is possible to produce that anything is desirable is that people do actually desire it. (Mill, 1863, p. 52f)

And a little further on:

And now to decide whether this is really so; whether mankind do desire nothing for itself but that which is a pleasure to them, or of which the absence is a pain; we have evidentially arrived at a question of fact and experience, dependent, like all similar questions, on evidence. It can only be determined by practiced self-consciousness and self-observation, assisted by observation of others. (Mill, 1867, p. 58)

These three quotations are all part of Mill's argument for the doctrine of utility being understood as a first principle of happiness, and claiming this principle as the final and fundamental premise for moral justification. Again putting that aside, what is important here is that Mill introduces us to a normativity that exists as a form of moral reasoning. What constitutes moral is a reasoning using both facts and principles as they manifest themselves for a particular subject and within a particular experience. This ensures that, even though, we to some extent can regard Mill's moral philosophy as a form of principlism, it is not as such deductive in nature. On the contrary it is always contextualized, affirmed and arrived at through the actual lives of ordinary people. We might say that utility is the common moral suggestion (or in Mill's vocabulary principle) that all the existing desires, virtues, preferences, motivations, obligations etc. seemingly, i.e. evidently, appear to evoke and make use of.

Obviously it is a challenge for Mill, not to create his moral philosophy as a subjective or egotistic normativity. Somehow he has to ensure that the moral reasoning that is dependent on the particularities of real life, and subjectively carried out, still maintains and enforces an objective moral stance. Famously we have his principle of maximization as an attempt to do so. But throughout the text, it seems that Mill, more like Kant, rather puts his faith in rationality

itself. It is man's ability to reason that gives cause for abstracting from the personal benefit to the common good.

But Mill also recognizes that we are humans with emotional lives and fallibilities, giving us causes and motivations for action that may not be rationally supported and altruistic in nature. This is why it has to be the consequences of actions that are the marks of morality and not the state of mind. This door swings both ways, as Mill clearly states that an unselfish motivation is just as amoral as a selfish one, since it is the consequences that counts for the goodness of the deed.

However, in order to secure as much goodness as possible and as much moral behavior as desirable, the perfect match is of course when the moral agent through his own moral reasoning comes to claim and fulfill an objective normativity for the benefit of all. Mill gives a similar account when talking about politics and the development of society in *On Liberty* (1989/1859), pointing out the endorsement of reason over opinion in regard to the political life. (Mill, 1989/1859, p. 40) In *Utilitarianism* there are a few indications of how moral reasoning can be argumentative, flexible and somewhat uncertain, but in general he seems to support a clear and distinct rationale, that confidently affirms its principles. At any means it seems to emerge a slight touch of idealism, in Mill's otherwise quite ordinary and realistic moral philosophy.

As between his own happiness and that of others, utilitarianism requires him to be as strictly impartial as a disinterested and benevolent spectator. In the golden rule of Jesus of Nazareth, we read the complete spirit of the ethics of utility. To do as one would be done by, and to love one's neighbor as oneself, constitute the ideal perfection of utilitarian morality. (Mill, 1867, p. 24f)

Gathering thoughts

In this paper I have looked at Mill's moral philosophy by reading his book *Utilitarianism*. I have looked at utility, finding it a principle that together with facts (of all kinds) come to shape a situated moral reasoning that seems to be at the center of Mill's idea of morality. All though morality in Mill's view is something different than knowledge, it is clear that the structure that supports and consti-

tutes morality bear many similarities to the acquisition and foundation of knowledge, where experience and the relationship between subjective reason and objective judgment are vital. In *On Liberty* this point is also presented and of vital importance; e.g. "No one, indeed, acknowledges to himself that his standard of judgment is his own liking; but an opinion on a point of conduct, not supported by reasons, can only count as one person's preference" (Mill, 1991/1859, p. 27).

In her 1982 paper "Anything but argument?" Cora Diamond criticizes the idea that morality can be argued by way of a logical reasoning composed of acknowledged principles and empirical facts, establishing a rational and objective moral. She is also skeptical to an intuitive or transcendent moral, although the 'philosophical' moral is her main target. Instead she tries to purpose a moral reasoning, or better said moral learning or maturity that is founded in the particular attentions that we find in our experience of life. One, or perhaps the way this morality shows itself is in fictional works, such as Henry James', Wordsworth's and Dickens'. (Diamond, 1982)

A long way I agree with Diamond, but I would like to accentuate a stronger element of reasoning, and also introduce concepts as an alternative to tentativeness to situations and phenomena. Much inspiration for this is found in Wittgenstein, and therefore reading Mill, who in popular thought certainly could be characterized as someone Diamond attacks in her paper, by way of Wittgenstein made a lot of sense.

In the paper I invite the reader to try to understand Mill's account by viewing his thoughts on facts and how they appear as a form of certainty in human, rational behavior; as well as think of Mill's struggle to comprehend utility both in terms of an abstract norm or normative principle and in terms of descriptive desires and interests. The core idea in Mill's *Utilitarianism*, i.e. utility, can be seen as a core concept in Wittgenstein's terms. One of those concepts that are both descriptive and normative, that we both experience and which also constitutes our experience, and sometimes is taken for granted and sometimes needs further consideration, or perhaps deliberation; or as Matthew Pianta puts it in his reading of Wittgenstein's moral philosophy:

What we generally discover, where there is a strong difference in moral opinion, is that there are other striking differences in the "worlds" of the disputants which are not simply "emotional" differences, but deep disparities in perspective – in our views about which facts are relevant and in the concepts we employ to describe the facts. (Pianalto, 2011, p. 260)

Conclusion

The presented conceptualization of *Utility*, regardless of whether it reflects the use of the notion in ordinary language, or Mill's exemplary use in *Utilitarianism*, tells us that normative notions ought to be approached as concepts that disclose and represent essential ways of moral reasoning. Utility is a moral concept that stretches our perspective from subjective hedonism, to an objective or common good, from the outset and output of our own capacities. However it requires that we take the concept into deliberation, that we recognize its simultaneous descriptive and normative nature. And it certainly forces us to recognize and scrutinize not just emotions or values, but also, perhaps even to a larger extent, the facts relevant for the case in which the concept is applied.

With Mill in mind, the same deliberation could be made in terms of a public affair, through public reason. We can discuss and debate the meaning of utility and collectively reason about its particular application, and at the same time agree on its *per se* value. It is often not utility that is the source of disagreement, but rather it is the certainty and the comprehension of the relevant facts, that constitute and is constituted by the conceptualization of utility.

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e-learning in the digital age

The utility of the entrepreneurial self

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Abstract

In the article we reconstruct the logic of utility and apply this concept to contemporary e-learning discourses. One main thesis is that a concept of neoliberal utility functions as a subtextual topic which influences these discourses: Not the objectives and needs of the actors define the utility of e-learning strategies, but neoliberal logic and its narration topoi. According to this neoliberal utility, anything that fosters the skills of the learner is considered as utile. The actor who actually defines why the skills are of vital importance is replaced by the discursive topoi of the neoliberal ideal-image of an *entrepreneurial self*.

In a first step, the logic of utility will be reconstructed. Subsequently the influence of neoliberal logic on contemporary e-learning discourses is analysed via a discourse-analytical orientated approach.

Keywords e-Learning, Web 2.0, neoliberalism, entrepreneurial self, connectivism, utility.

The article discusses the neoliberal embedding of contemporary mainstream e-learning discourses.

One consequence of this embedding is that the practical demands of actors in e-learning, such as teachers and learners, vanish in a neoliberal underpinned understanding of e-learning. This understanding of e-learning defines, what is utile for contemporary e-learning.

One thesis of the article is that the logic of e-learning discourses needs a reflected premise, i.e. an argumentative starting point which represents the goals of a contemporary e-learning. With such a premise it is possible to detach e-learning discourses from its neoliberal embedding and develop an appropriate meaning of 'utile e-learning'. As digital change proceeds, learning and teaching are becoming increasingly digitalized and their characters are shifting: "it is true that the Internet and the use of ICT in distance education have changed significantly the look and feel of the learning experience" (Elloumi 2004, p. 70, *cf.* also Kergel & Heidkamp 2015). The process of digitalization is more than simply a technical issue. The new technologies facilitate new structures of learning and teaching in a dawning digital age. This has led media-educational researcher Stephen Downes to describe new digital capabilities as a social revolution: "For all this technology, what is important to recognize is that the emergence of the Web 2.0 is not a technological revolution, it is a social revolution" (Downes 2007, para. 26).

The emergence of so-called 'User Generated Content Technology' (*cf.* Lehr 2012) has placed the user in a position to become inter-actively involved in the internet. The ability to generate digital content enables the user to 'inscribe' themselves on the internet: He or she can easily write articles on Wikipedia, maintain a blog, or record podcasts. Thanks to the technical possibilities of the medium, users can communicate with each other instantly. Unlike earlier mass media such as television, through which the user receives a message but cannot answer it (uni-directional communication), social networks like Facebook or Google+ provide a platform for internet-based dialogues. In consequence, an increasingly user-centered internet, based on poly-directional-communication, is evolving. O'Reilly (2002) termed this poly-directional internet the 'Web 2.0'.

With the rise of the Web 2.0, the possibilities of digitally based learning, or e-learning, changed profoundly. Before its interactive potential had been developed, e-learning was – at least within the field of higher education – generally a rather passive mode of organized learning. At universities, students downloaded teaching material, such as literature, from so-called learning management systems (LMS, e.g. Moodle or Blackboard).¹ They could enrol for examinations online and had access to the course schedule. This kind of passive e-learning is still practiced. Learning Management Systems function mostly as Content Management Systems (CMS): Students receive material and information but have little opportunity to engage in collaborative learning processes within the LMS. It does not provide the interactive spaces available with Web 2.0 tools. Collaborative interaction spaces based on Web 2.0 technology include collaborative writing tools such as Google Drive, Etherpads, Padlets or Authorea. Shared writing platforms of this type make it possible to produce texts collaboratively, synchronously and asynchronously.

Technical developments have not stood still since the emergence of the Web 2.0 concept. At the time of writing, young people in Germany mostly access the internet by smartphone (*cf.* Feierabend, Plankenhorn & Rathgeb 2014) – the internet has turned into an internet `to go`: a mobile internet. Web 2.0 tools are increasingly accessible through smartphone applications. A mobile Web 2.0 opens new possibilities for learning in a digital world.

If a multitude of changes – from the Web 2.0 to the mobile internet – are to be negotiated successfully, e-learning must develop appropriate pedagogical concepts and strategies. In this context it is important to clarify, alongside the technical possibilities for contemporary e-learning, how contemporary e-learning can be defined theoretically.

- What should contemporary e-learning achieve?
- What are the goals of modern e-learning (beyond the truism that it should provide/mediate knowledge)?

One way of locating contemporary e-learning theoretically is to use the concept of utility as a term of reference when analysing the discourses involved.

The Logic of Utility

A logical argumentation represents the formation of a systematic relation of arguments which lead to a conclusion. Starting with a premise other arguments can be derived. This scheme can be used to develop a logical approach towards the notion 'utility':

Utility can be thought of as an intermediate concept: Something is utile when it fulfills the demands of the actors. The demands of the actors are based on their objectives. We can describe utility as when a strategy, phenomenon, circumstance etc. is judged as a means of fulfilling goal-based demands. In employing such an understanding of utility, it is of vital importance to identify the actors of e-learning, who define the goals. The following subsections set out the thesis that the practical demands of actors in e-learning, such as teachers and learners, vanish in a neoliberal understanding of the field.

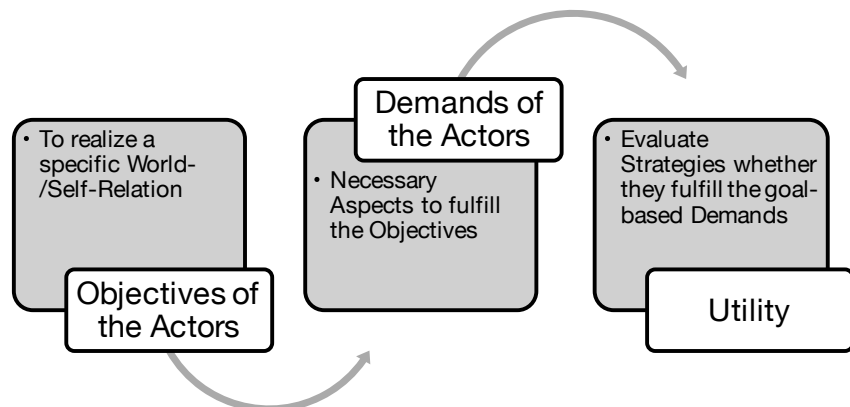


Fig. 1 Reconstruction of the 'utility-logic' (own figure).

The entrepreneurial learner: neoliberal thinking in education

Originally developed in the economic field, neoliberal approaches increasingly affects other societal sectors. An essential feature of neoliberal thought is the premise that a free market, deregulated to the greatest possible extent, is the best platform for people to unfold their potential:

For neoliberals, there is one form of rationality more powerful than any other: economic rationality. Efficiency and

an `ethic´ of cost-benefit analyses are the dominant norms. All people are to act in ways that maximize their own personal benefits. Indeed, behind this position is an empirical claim that this how *all* rational actors act. Yet, rather than being a neutral description of the world of social motivation, this is actually a construction of the world around the valuative characteristics of an efficiently acquisitive class type. (Apple 2006, 60f.)

Neoliberal thinking has increasingly come to shape social policy in western countries such as the United States, Britain, and Germany. Beginning in the Ronald Reagan-era United States, a roll-back of the welfare state also occurred in Britain with the Thatcherism of the 1980s, and spread to Germany in the early years of the new century (*cf.* Biebricher 2012). Critique arose alongside the implementation of neoliberal policies. Sociologists like Bourdieu (2003) analyse the negative effects of neoliberal politics on social cohesion. Political movements like Attac and Occupy protest against the spread of neoliberal politics and thinking.

The expansion of neoliberal thought has carried it into the educational field and the specific area of e-learning in higher education: “in the neoliberal climate of the day, the emergence of for-profit university corporations and the need to ensure value in order to gain and retain public support, compels university administrators and faculty to examine the means by which value is created and retained by their institutions” (Elloumie 2004, 63). In this climate “the Internet has intensified the competition and rivalry among post-secondary institutions [e.g. universities], especially in distance education, where the pressure to enhance efficiency and effectiveness is intense” (Elloumie 2004, 70, for a critical approach *cf.* Selwyn 2014).

Neoliberal social policy and discourses draw on complementary narratives, discursive topoi of the neoliberal way of living. The sociologist Bröckling has analysed the construction of such neoliberal narratives in several works (*e.g.* 2003, 2005, 2015). He identifies the metaphor of the *entrepreneurial self* as the societal interpellation (which can be explained as a normative societal requirement towards the individual, *cf.* Althusser 1970) directed at the individual to act as a neoliberal entrepreneur. Such discursive conceptions construct the neoliberal individual. This view would hold that the

“ideal model for the future is the individual as self-provider and the entrepreneur of their own labour. The insight must be awakened; self-initiative and self-responsibility, i.e. the entrepreneurial in society, must be developed more strongly” (Bröckling 2015, xi).

A crucial point is that interpellations to act as an *entrepreneurial self* are seldom explicitly articulated. Bröckling uses the metaphor of the *entrepreneurial self* to condense a discourse, or rather discourses, which actualize the narrative topoi of neoliberal thinking across different social fields. For an example of neoliberal interpellations that discursively actualize the concept of an *entrepreneurial self*, one might refer to the neoliberal re-organization of unemployment benefit in Germany. It was legitimated with the slogan “challenge and encourage” (“Fordern und Fördern”) by then-Chancellor Gerhard Schröder. The unemployed were to be empowered by this re-organization process to transform themselves into so-called Ich-AGs (I-incorporated). The expression Ich-AG denotes the possibility that an unemployed person could become self-employed. This example demonstrates how the ideal of the *entrepreneurial self* has been shaped discursively in German social policy.

From a methodical point of view, Bröckling’s metaphor of the *entrepreneurial self* can be used as a heuristic strategy to identify narrative topoi which actualize the concepts of neoliberal thinking. Applied to the field of e-learning and its conscious discourses, the metaphor enables us to identify the neoliberal narrative patterns which shape them.

The central findings of this analysis are summarized in advance for the sake of clarity: The analysis reveals that contemporary e-learning strategies and pedagogical approaches such as PLEs (Personal Learning Environments) actualize topoi of the *entrepreneurial self*. These approaches seem to depend on the neoliberal principle which states that the individual learner should act as an entrepreneur. This principle holds that competencies, like self-directed learning, self-organized learning, and the learner’s own self-management etc. should be fostered by appropriate e-learning strategies.

Following this logic, utile e-learning strategies are those which foster the skills of the *entrepreneurial e-learner*. This criterion of utility is not advanced explicitly, but structures the pedagogical discourse of the e-learning discipline. Viewed in this way, the concept of neoliberal utility functions as a subtextual topic which develops its im-

pace by structuring the discourse. This neoliberal conception of utility does not refer explicitly to the demands of the actors. Anything that fosters the skills of the learner is considered utile. The actor who defines why the skills are of vital importance is replaced by the discursive topoi of the *entrepreneurial self*. Not the objectives and needs of the actors define the utility of e-learning strategies, but implicitly neoliberal narration topoi. Consequently, one effect of neoliberal thinking is that the so-called *entrepreneurial self* is more or less explicitly an educational goal in e-learning. One goal of e-learning has become to cater for the development of the *entrepreneurial self*. There are aspects which signify neoliberal acting, for example efficacy and self-empowerment. These aspects are more or less explicitly considered as utile within the mainstream e-learning discourse. But which demands on the part of which actors are fulfilled by this strategy – a crucial aspect of the logic of utility – is left open. Crucial texts feeding into this analysis are sketched out below.

Personal Learning Environments – the construction of the organizational learner

The appearance of Web 2.0 tools has encouraged discussions on how the learners can organize their digital learning appropriately. Atwell (2007) introduced the concept of so-called personal learning environments. A PLE can be understood as the integrative and systematic use of Web 2.0 based applications in formal learning processes. A PLE embraces “all the different tools we use in our everyday life for learning” (Atwell 2007, 4). Atwell stresses that the pedagogical concept of the PLE changed how education is understood and envisaged: “The development and support for Personal Learning Environments would entail a radical shift, not only in how we use educational technology, but in the organisation and ethos of education” (Atwell 2007, 5). This change is increasingly focused on the (self-)organisational dimension of learning: “Indeed it may be that PLEs offer considerable potential for knowledge development and sharing and what has been called organisational learning” (Atwell 2007, 8).

The PLE concept is increasingly bringing self-organisation into the focus of educational technology discussions. Metonymically this concept articulates the relevance of the ability to organize and manage one’s own learning and, in doing so, focuses on skills such

as 'self-organisation' and 'self-management'. "The idea of a Personal Learning Environment is also based on being able to aggregate different services" (Atwell 2007, 5). The utility of PLEs consists in the fostering of the autonomy of the learner, as PLEs require a high degree of independent organisation. The discourse surrounding PLEs actualizes the ideal of an autonomous learner able to organise their digital learning and aggregate different services.

Here, the ambivalence of a neoliberal re-definition of freedom becomes visible. On the one hand, there are typical narration topoi of the self-emancipation of the learner. But on the other hand, a self-emancipation of the single learner fosters the topoi of an individual which empowers itself to become a self-responsible autonomous *entrepreneurial self*.

Neoliberal freedom is a freedom of a self which acts autonomous and self-responsible. Neoliberal freedom neglects social embedment, and overemphasize aspects like self-responsibility (*cf.* Bourdieu 2016). Such a neoliberal meaning of freedom influences at least to a certain extent e-learning discourses. That is, even if authors like Downes and Attwell focus on the emancipatory aspects of learning (e.g. to empower learners to build their learning networks or extend them beyond the curriculum), they actualize with their epistemological emphasis of the single learner a neoliberal notion of freedom.

Web 2.0 – the premise of the single learner

In the PLE approach, Atwell (2007) provides a model for contemporary e-learning which integrates the "growing ubiquitous nature of internet connectivity with the development of wireless and GSM networks, as well as the spread of broadband, resulting in connectivity becoming available almost everywhere in the future" (Atwell 2007, 3). These fundamental considerations about PLEs is the ignition for ongoing discussions about the possibilities and limitations of PLEs (*cf.* Buchem, Atwell & Tur 2013).

In reference to the increasing mobility of the internet via smartphones, Atwell modifies the understanding of digital learning put forward by Downes (2005) as *e-learning 2.0*. Faced with the polydirectional and productive possibilities of the Web 2.0 (in which the user is able to generate digital content) e-learning must turn into polydirectional and productive e-learning 2.0:

The e-learning application, therefore, begins to look very much like a blogging tool. It represents one node in a web of content, connected to other nodes and content creation services used by other students. It becomes, not an institutional or corporate application, but a personal learning center, where content is reused and remixed according to the student's own needs and interests. It becomes, indeed, not a single application, but a collection of interoperating applications – an environment rather than a system. (Downes 2005, para. 33)

The concept of a 'personal learning center', prefigures Atwell's PLE model. Both approaches focus on the single learner even when the single learner connects with other learners in a learner-network. From this point of view, the learning network is still conceptualized as a connection of single learner and not as a supra-individual, collaborative learning process.

This description of learning shows no appreciation of the inter-subjective learning which unfolds in dialogical co-construction processes (cf. Gergen 2001 and Ryberg et al. 2010) based on Web 2.0-tools.

Nodes: All the single learners

Despite the potential of Web 2.0-based collaborative learning processes, the focus of both Atwell and Downes is confined to the single learner meeting other single learners in temporally limited interactions. These temporally limited encounters and interaction processes are conceptualised as 'nodes'.

The node metaphor, representing contemporary, digitally based learning, can be traced to Siemens's model of *connectivism* in learning theory. In *connectivism*, Siemens seeks to provide a theoretical learning model for the digital age:

Behaviorism, cognitivism, and constructivism are the three broad learning theories most often utilized in the creation of instructional environments. These theories, however, were developed in a time when learning was not impacted through technology. Over the last twenty years, technology has reorganized how we live, how we

communicate, and how we learn. Learning needs and theories that describe learning principles and processes, should be reflective of underlying social environments. (Siemens 2005, 1, for a critical approach towards Siemens interpretation of learning theories *cf.* Jones 2015)

For Siemens, learning “is a process of connecting specialized nodes or information sources” (Siemens 2004, 5). Like Atwell and Downes, Siemens too focuses on the single learner: “The starting point of connectivism is the individual” (Siemens 2004, 6).

The epistemological starting point of the ‘single learner’ neglects the social embedding of learning. One could say that learning is a social process in which the learner unfolds himself or herself within social collaborative dynamics. From this perspective the assumption or concept of a single learner fosters the ideal-image of a self-responsible individual which is a typical topoi of neoliberal narrations.

The learning process appears to become a process of information management, not realized by a supra-individual learning community, but by a single learner in an encounter with another single learner. The learner *uses* ‘learning communities’ for his or her individual aims, without engaging in a collaborative learning effort (*cf.* Gergen 2001): “In Connectivism, learning occurs when a learner connects to a learning community and feeds information into it” (Sahin 2012, 442). In focusing on the importance of decision-making, Siemens stresses the autonomy of the learner. Connectivism therefore envisages (more or less explicitly) the learner as an autonomous actor obliged to *manage* their learning process. Unlike constructivist approaches in learning theory, which stress the interactive dimension of learning processes, connectivism interprets learning as a management process, conducted by the individual autonomous learner: “Decision-making is itself a learning process. Choosing what to learn and the meaning of incoming information is seen through the lens of a shifting reality. While there is a right answer now, it may be wrong tomorrow due to alterations in the information climate affecting the decision” (Siemens 2004, 5).

Although Atwell, Downes, and Siemens frame their pedagogical and theoretical approaches with reference to the learner and changing technology, they actualize discursive topoi which give life to the

metaphor of the *entrepreneurial self*. Atwell, Downes, and Siemens concentrate on the fostering of skills and a learning attitude which are considered to be utile. Why they are utile, however, is not discussed. A counter-example serves to illustrate what is left open in mainstream e-learning discourses: Critical pedagogy articulates the concept of the self-determining learner who is able to emancipate themselves from repressive power relations through learning (cf. e.g. Freire 1970).

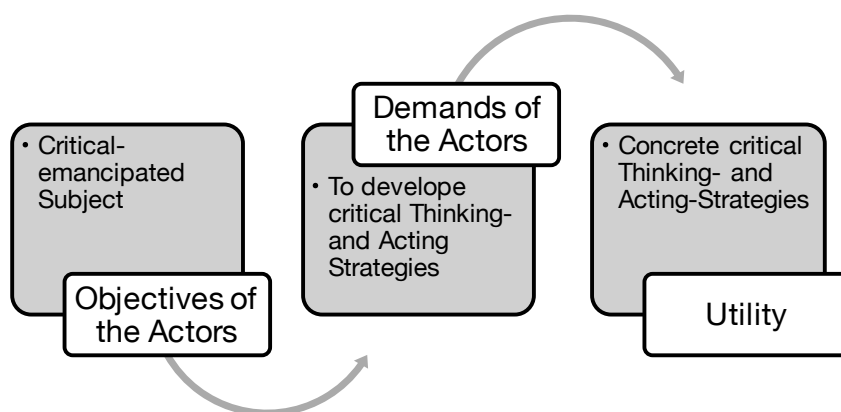


Fig. 2 Reconstruction of the 'utility-logic' of critical pedagogy (own figure).

According to the logic of utility, the educational strategies of critical pedagogy are utile for goal-based demands, i.e. for obtaining/generating emancipative strategies through education. Such a reconstruction along utilitarian lines would seem to fail for mainstream e-learning discourses. One can certainly locate utile strategies within e-learning – the fostering of skills. But the explicit conception of an actor with goal-based demands is not pursued. The actor and his objectives vanish behind a neoliberal discourse of utility. This discourse tells him – so to speak – what is utile.² The discourses of the *entrepreneurial self* make it possible to identify goal-based demands (to be autonomous, self-competent, etc.) without identifying the objectives of the actors in advance. From these (goal-based) demands, it is possible to derive or construct the *entrepreneurial self* as the actor defining the utility of e-learning strategies.

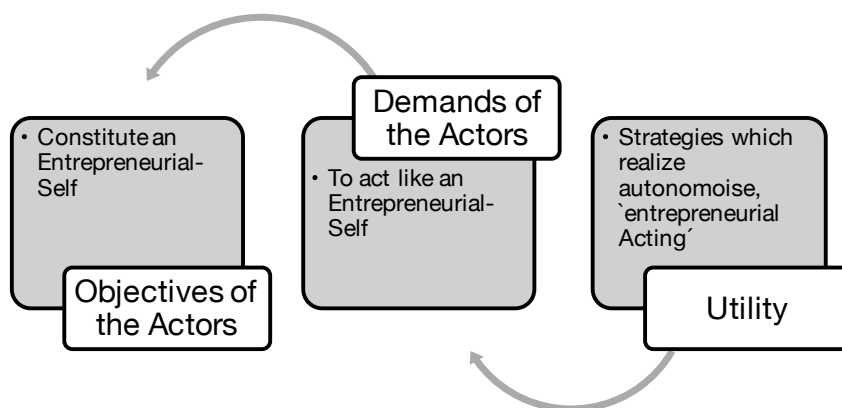


Fig. 3 Reconstruction of the `utility-logic` of contemporary e-learning discourses (own figure). Instead of starting with a premise, the discourse about e-learning only provides a conclusion. From this conclusion the premise has to be constructed.

From this perspective, topoi of the *entrepreneurial self* / neoliberal narrations can obtain the function of an educational program in the field of e-learning – but also in other educational fields such like lifelong learning (cf. Bröckling 2015).

To be an enterprising self is also an educational program. This self must especially learn to continually inspect its investments, and if necessary, to revise. To act enterprisingly does not only mean to utilize one's own resources in a cost-benefit way, but to utilize them again and again as a reaction to innovation. (Bröckling 2005, 11)

With reference to this `educational program` and its educational goals, the e-learning strategies discussed above can be analysed as utile strategies. The point of reference which determines what is utile and what is not, is located beyond the educational field, and is represented by the *entrepreneurial self* as a metaphor for neoliberal narratives. The utility of a neoliberal conception of e-learning lies in the re-production and strengthening of neoliberal tendencies in the field of (e-)education.

Outlook

In view of the issues discussed above, one could conclude that e-learning must reassure itself of its theoretical foundations. What does the ideal e-learning actor look like? To which kind of educational paradigm is e-learning committed (cf. Neumann 2005)? This brings the article full circle: in a time of increasing media change, it is for society to identify what kind of concept of human being should be point of reference and which educational strategies ought to be considered utile for which educational purposes (cf. Horster & Oelkers 2005).

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Notes

- 1 The thesis of a rather passive mode focuses on a 'mainstream e-learning' (cf. Arnold et al. 2013). Besides such a mainstream e-learning, there has always been work and discussions about the dialogical potential of e-learning, e.g. in the field of network learning. When the article traces the underlying neoliberal topoi in e-learning discourses, it is important to mention, that e-learning is not a homogeneous field. Thus there are innovative approaches towards the collaborative dimension of e-learning as well as critical research about neoliberal tendencies in e-learning, e.g. Dirckinck-Holmfeld, Jones & Lindström 2009.
- 2 But it is important to mention that besides mainstream discussions there are innovative approaches which focus on actor orientated e-learning such as network learning, cf. Jones 2015.

Tensions and co-existence

Exploring multi-facetted articulations of intentions of problem-based learning in higher education

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Abstract

This paper raises the issue of articulating intention as a means of positioning education and educational practices as useful and as offering a particular contribution to individuals and society. The paper explores the multifaceted articulations of intentions of problem-based learning, PBL, and the apparent co-existence of articulations of very diverse intentions despite potential tensions. The exploration identifies three distinct yet intertwined sets of intentions of PBL explicated in the articulations of PBL in current books and research papers. One, PBL as supporting the specific learning situation. Two, PBL as a pedagogy enabling students' development of specific competencies. And three, PBL as a pedagogy ensuring the delivery of efficient and employable human resources who are competent to meet broader societal demands. These very different articulations of PBL currently co-exist without much debate, however scratching the surface reveals potential tensions. These tensions for example become apparent when posing the question 'for who do we do PBL'? Do we do it for the students in order to enrich him or her as individuals and give them a stake in their own education? Or do we do it for the state, the company or

the organisation in order to deliver efficient and employable human resources?

Keywords Problem-based learning, higher education, intentions of education.

Problem-based learning in higher education

Although thoughts seemingly resonating with what could today be characterised as underpinning principles of problem-based learning, PBL have been articulated in a multitude of ways over the last century, PBL was not formally brought into higher education until the late 1960's. Drawing heavily on theories and philosophies of experiential learning and the active involvement of students in learning processes (e.g. Dewey, 1916) the formal introduction of PBL was attributed to the medical school of McMaster University in Canada. Here PBL was introduced as a pedagogical strategy intended to offer students possibilities to organise their learning around the situations of patients rather than dissociated disciplines of anatomy, physiology etc. (Boud & Feletti, 1997; Schmidt, 1983). Learning through authentic patient cases was intended to give students new directions for organising complex and extensive information and was assumed to be more fun (El-Moamly, 2010; Savin-Baden & Major, 2004). Since its emergence in higher education institutions around the world have adopted PBL in virtually all fields of education. Consequently, PBL has through the decades undergone considerable adjustments to accommodate the kind of learning associated to a variety of disciplines. Thus while medical education continues to organise PBL around patient cases (e.g. Albanese, 2010; Moust, Van Berkel, & Schmidt, 2005; Schmidt, 1983; Wood, 2003), other educational areas now implement PBL through anything from small scale courses to extensive projects (Kolmos, Fink, & Krogh, 2004). Despite obvious differences in the way PBL is implemented in educational practices there however appears to be some consensus on the key principles underpinning the approach (see for example Barrett & Moore, 2011; Barrows, 1986, 1996; Evensen & Hmelo, 2008; Savery, 2006; Savin-Baden & Major, 2004). PBL can thus be characterised as an approach to learning which:

- Has complex and authentic problems at the centre of learning
- Is centred around student activity
- Departs from the assumption that knowledge is constructed by the learner
- Is assuming self-directed learning
- Requires student activity and reflection to be meaningfully implemented
- Sees the role of the educator as a facilitator or supervisor
- Is based on student collaboration and learning in teams

From these underpinning principles follows some less clear considerations about what PBL might contribute or offer or rather the utility of PBL. This ambiguity is evident in the articulations of the intentions underlying decisions or argumentations in favour of PBL. The perceived utility of PBL thus becomes visible through articulations of intentions of PBL and in observing how these intentions are pointing in particular directions – towards learners, professions, or achievements. The aim of this paper is therefore to explore the articulations of PBL in more depth in order to uncover the breadth of intentions. This is relevant in order to fully comprehend the potential consequences of adopting principles of PBL and to strengthen awareness of potential conflicts and tensions embedded into the articulation of intentions of the approach. Despite the proliferation in institutions adopting PBL principles debates on the intentions of PBL have been more or less absent. Uncovering the intentions of PBL as articulated in research literature may therefore offer a preliminary and timely contribution towards a more open debate about the utility of PBL. The analysis below is thus guided by an overall question of how intentions and motives for PBL in higher education are made visible.

The following pages contain an exploration of the articulations of intentions of PBL as found in contemporary research literature on the approach. In these academic texts the implicit or explicit utility of PBL can be seen as located in the articulations giving reasons for adopting PBL in higher education. This explorative study focus on intentions articulated by researchers and thus does not take into account the articulations of intentions of PBL visible elsewhere e.g. in marketing and communication materials, in settings of teachers and students. The reason for a departure in the research literature is

that articulations provided here are often cited and mirrored in other spheres of communication as giving reasons or evidence for particular perspectives on matters of education, teaching and learning.

Articulating intentions of PBL in research literature

When reading through papers and books on education research few intentions are presented as to the choice and expected outcome of lecture based higher education. One could therefore arrive at the thought that the intention of this approach to teaching and learning through lectures, individual study and the authoritative professor figure is somehow taken for granted and does not stand in need of articulation. This would be in accordance with Wittgenstein's point that it is against an inherited background we come to understand the world (Wittgenstein, 1969). The influence of the tradition and background of higher education could therefore also explain why articulating intentions appeared particularly important at the emergence of PBL as an educational alternative. It was articulations made against this inherited background which made the problem-based approach to learning stand out as a real alternative. In this light articulations of the intention of PBL are not simply informative paragraphs enlightening students, teachers, employers and researchers. These articulations are at the same time serving the role of giving justification, delivering promises of the approach as well as implicitly offering critique of other approaches. In this way, articulations of PBL offer a challenge to the background which we have come to take for granted through hundreds of years of academia. From this understanding analysing articulations of intentions of PBL may offer insights into different ways of perceiving the learner and the very role of higher education.

The analysis below is explorative and is conducted based on research presented in recent introductory book chapters and journal papers in problem-based learning. Selected books on PBL published within the past two decades are included as are the five most recent research papers published in *Journal of PBL in Higher Education* as well as *Interdisciplinary Journal of PBL*. The latter journal covers all educational levels and here the most recent papers addressing PBL in higher education were selected. It should be noted that the relatively comprehensive research into issues of PBL in the field of medicine is reflected in the proportion of the papers analysed.

This paper is however about the need to see and acknowledge differences in articulations within a general educational approach, which spans across all areas of higher education, and medicine here thus only serve as a particularly well-documented example within a much broader debate.

Methodically, what follows is a document analysis undertaken with the desire to uncover how intentions of PBL is articulated in current research and whether tensions or conflicts in these intentions may exist and pose potential challenges to our understanding of PBL in higher education (Lynggaard, 2010). The analysis was conducted by asking an overarching question to each text: What is the utility of problem-based learning? From the results of the initial analysis emerged three distinct ways of articulating intentions of PBL in research which are presented and discussed below. As will be evident these three ways of articulating PBL in the research literature pose very different views on for which reasons and for whom we should adopt PBL in higher education. In his uncovering of the utilities of PBL in business studies through 40 years Rasmussen (2014) touches upon all three articulations of intentions and also acknowledge some of the tensions these articulations present to the understanding of PBL.

Articulation one:

PBL as enhancing students' experiences of learning

The first way of articulating intentions of PBL is centred on the student and his/her possibilities for learning in the specific context of higher education activities. Intentions of PBL are here seen as closely tied to specific learning activities where the approach is contributing towards students reaching the learning objectives of the activity in a pedagogically responsible manner. From this perspective the justification of PBL lies in its contributions towards the learning situation in itself rather than in a greater, long-term outcome to be measured in competencies at the end of education.

Derfoufi and colleagues adopted a case oriented PBL approach in a response to their concern that learners did not appear to reach desired learning outcomes. Their primary arguments for adopting PBL were that PBL offers a student-centred approach where stu-

dents are encouraged to engage with the subject matter and where deep learning is emphasised (Derfoufi et al., 2015).

Similarly concerned with the quality of learning situations Mühlentfelder and colleagues emphasise the need for qualified facilitators adequately trained to support both the process and content issues arising in students' learning processes when working with theoretical and practical conceptualisation of complex problems. They see PBL as a strategy tailored to meet the diverse needs of students in the actual learning situation relating to both their cognitive and meta-cognitive development (Mühlentfelder, Konermann, & Borchard, 2015).

In exploring students' attitudes towards group examinations in engineering Dahl and Kolmos (2015) indirectly articulate PBL as a structure supporting students' learning processes as they argue for the alignment of problem-based project periods and the situation of assessment in the examination. They see this alignment as expressed through the collaborative and group based situation being carried into the final examination.

PBL has also been articulated as an approach fuelling student motivation and thus preventing failure and drop-out in demanding first year computer programming courses. Lykke et al. (2015) emphasise how PBL contributes to students' development of particular skills in collaboration and team work, organisation etc. and how the inductive nature of the approach helps students give meaning to the work that they undertake during their education. It is further suggested that the making of meaning involved in PBL is leading to intrinsic motivation in students. Likewise Sakai and colleagues (2015) avoid engaging in a wider exposition of the intention of PBL and are engaged solely with the advantages and disadvantages of using senior students and experts as PBL facilitators. A similar approach is found in Jin et al's (2015) discussion of students' use of technologies in PBL tutorials and the possible implications for learning processes in health science educations.

When articulating intentions of PBL as supporting students' experiences of learning it could be argued that PBL can be seen as a specific strategy helping teachers and facilitators to organise learning processes. The utility of PBL thus lies in how the principles of the approach accommodate learner needs for fun, meaningfulness or motivation and in the support of the learner to reach education

and course specific learning objectives. Such articulations of intentions are limited to a didactical and pedagogical scope and to instrumental structures supporting learning in specific situations and settings and they thus appear in sharp contrast to articulations two and three presented below.

Articulation two:

PBL supports students developing specific competencies beneficial to the student in his/her professional working life

In these articulations authors extend the scope of the intention of PBL to include intentions beyond the specific learning situation. This means that the utility of PBL is attributed to students' development of competencies which they will come to need in their future professions and job functions.

Comprehending the implications of PBL Barrows lists specific educational objectives which he suggests can be realised through adopting a problem-based approach to learning in its classical case and patient-centred form in medical education (Barrows, 1996). These objectives include:

- The acquisition of an integrated knowledge base
- The acquisition of a knowledge base structured around the cues presented by patient problems
- The acquisition of a knowledge base enmeshed with problem-solving processes used in clinical medicine.
- The development of an effective and efficient clinical problem-solving process
- The development of effective self-directed learning skills
- The development of team skills

As one being involved in the very first conceptualisation of PBL in medicine it is noteworthy how the objectives set out by Barrows are overwhelmingly concerned with students acquiring skills and competencies directly related to the medical profession and less concerned with what PBL could potentially offer the individual student in his capacity as learner in the actual learning situation. In this adaptation a PBL approach becomes a means to reach higher objectives of education reaching well beyond the time spent in higher education institutions to obtain a degree.

Similarly addressing PBL from a perspective of medical education El-Moamly considers an extensive list of competencies which students in PBL arguably acquire to a greater extent than students from more conventional medical educations. These learning outcomes are presented primarily with a focus on the competencies which the individual student has the possibility to develop through his/her engagement with problem-based learning. Less attention is paid to demands and requirements made by the medical profession. Thus El-Moamly focuses on developing competencies of critical thinking, interpersonal skills and strategies for navigating in a stressful and complex working environment with large amounts of information (El-Moamly, 2010). Here it should be noted that although El-Moamly explicitly address the field of medical education the competencies highlighted as outcomes of engaging with PBL are of a general nature not exclusive to the field of medical education. Broadening the intentions of PBL further Mennin (2010) emphasises how students through PBL are offered possibilities to merge knowledge domains through their work in authentic contexts. In this lies a more implicit intention of PBL as a means to support and promote the development of competencies to handle the complexities of cross- and interdisciplinarity in the health professions and also beyond these professions.

As seen above in articulation two intentions of PBL are not limited to the immediate classroom or project situation. Rather the utility of PBL is seen as a strategy which enables students to develop cognitive and meta-cognitive competencies useful in their professional life after completing their educations. From this perspective PBL is not simply a remedy used by teachers and facilitators to ensure a smooth and satisfactory learning environment. Instead the intentions for utilising PBL reach beyond the classroom and into the desires of staff and entire institutions to prepare students for life after their education. From this perspective adopting PBL as an approach to learning also entails taking an active stance on which kind of students an institution aims to educate, and thus PBL institutions implicitly come to play a role in debates of the role and responsibilities of higher education.

**Articulation three:
PBL contributes towards delivering adequate human
resources into society**

Moving out of educational settings and the potential benefits of PBL to the individual student in the third articulation PBL is considered a way in which higher education can support the general development of societal, economic and technological realms.

This intention is evident when Engel articulates how PBL can serve as a way of learning contributing to the development of citizens in possession of the competencies and skills to be active learners through life and as able to handle and adapt to constant and rapid changes both in their professions and other aspects of life (Engel, 1997). This articulation is further seen when Hernandez, Ravn and Valero in their efforts to construct an alternative theoretical understanding of PBL from a socio-cultural perspective in several paragraphs point out how a problem-based approach to learning accommodates current societal needs for interdisciplinarity and competent solving of complex problems. They further suggest that PBL emerged as a response to changes in higher education settings towards new forms of knowledge construction (Hernandez, Ravn, & Valero, 2015).

In medical education Lu and colleagues articulate the intention of PBL in medical education as a means to facilitate development of a patient-centred and holistic approach to medical issues as well as students developing effective strategies for identification and solving of complex and dynamic medical problems (Lu & Chan, 2015). A similar focus on PBL as contributing to the medical profession as a whole is offered by Servant and Dewar in their comparison of tutoring in medical and engineering education. They assert that PBL in whichever of these fields takes into account the need to prepare students to enter into particular professions with ever increasing knowledge domains (Servant & Dewar, 2015).

The third articulation where PBL is seen as supporting development of relevant human resources is primarily evident in research texts addressing PBL in relation to specific professions. This leaves a question of how specific professions contribute towards shaping intentions of PBL – and other learning approaches for that matter. It further suggests that well defined professions may exert some power into the articulations of intentions of higher education as

work functions in these professions are clearly defined. Thus from this perspective the utility of PBL is attributed to the intentions of higher education institutions to accommodate the needs for skills and competencies expressed by professions and society at large.

Tensions and co-existence in articulations of intention of PBL

PBL offers an alternative strategy for organising higher education which breaks with roles of students and teachers well rehearsed over centuries and in research several ways of articulating the intentions of PBL have emerged as seen above. It could be argued that these articulations of intentions have come into existence as responses to an initial and substantial resistance from established institutions to acknowledge the justification of alternative learning principles as a feasible pathway towards university degrees of acceptable quality. Nonetheless, the significant differences in scope and perspectives on PBL demonstrated through the three articulations beg for more research and analysis. The analysis above clearly shows how researchers are not in agreement whether the utility of PBL is limited to a didactical instrument as in articulation one, a tool for enhancing development of particular competencies as in articulation two, or as a remedy whereby universities ensure that they deliver adequate human resources to society and professions as in articulation three.

The three articulations of PBL offer very different explanations of why adopting a PBL approach could be an attractive strategy in higher education and particularly articulations two and three may be seen as representing opposing positions on the role and responsibilities of higher education institutions as they emphasise the preparedness and readiness of students to manage their own lives on the one hand and the delivery of knowledge skills and competencies to satisfy needs of public and private sectors on the other. Thus tensions may exist and may even vary over time as the articulation of intentions of PBL may change. The way a university, a facilitator or a student will position themselves will to some extent depend on the context in which the positioning occurs. A student may well see the intention of PBL as being a learning approach enhancing and enriching his learning environment when he starts university. However when his education is complete he may offer a very dif-

ferent articulation of PBL in his meeting with potential employers. Consequently, the balancing of intentions of PBL against each other is complex and depending on specific contexts. The Danish professor Knud Illeris addressed this balancing act already in 1974 when he pointed out how learning departing in authentic problems on the one hand could contribute towards the needs of a capitalist society eager to employ human resources possessing the skills to dismantle and re-assemble complex problems. Yet at the same time introducing this kind of learning, he argued, also involved raising the awareness of the individual in terms of his possibilities and positioning in society which may open to questions and critiques counter to the desired outcomes of PBL (Illeris, 1974).

The implications of tensions in the articulations of intention of PBL are not well understood as indicated above, however it is safe to say that it is relevant to give some attention to the consequences such different articulations may have both for the understanding of what higher education contributes to society as well as to the individual student. This is also relevant when attempting to understand tensions between staff, students and management in institutions adopting PBL as a key approach. After all ever more universities move in this direction.

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The utility of psychiatric diagnosis

Diagnostic classifications in clinical practice and research in relation to eating disorders

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Abstract

The validity of psychiatric diagnoses has been challenged because of a generally low validity of the existing diagnostic categories. However, it is important to distinguish between the validity and the utility of the psychiatric diagnostics. Although the validity of most contemporary psychiatric diagnoses is generally low and characterized by a low degree of natural boundaries, this does not mean that most psychiatric diagnoses are not useful concepts. The aim of this article is to focus on the utility of psychiatric diagnoses. This utility will be demonstrated with eating disorders as an example.

Keywords: Utility, validity, psychiatric diagnosis, clinical practice, research

Background

The oldest reference to psychiatric diseases appears in the Ebers papyrus, which is considered to be one of the most important medical papyri of ancient Egypt. In the Ebers papyrus, clinical depression is mentioned briefly. In the 4th century BCE, the Greek physician Hippocrates described all diseases as an imbalance of the four

bodily humours (phlegm, blood, yellow bile, and black bile), of which the body was thought to consist. It was believed that variations in the levels of these four fluids, and how they connected, would cause changes to people's moods. Ancient Greek medicine did not include specialised medical terminology. Instead a descriptive style was used to evoke a picture of a disease (Veith, 1981). The early lack of nomenclature in the understanding of diseases reflected a lack of systematic knowledge of the nature of disease (Jutel, 2009). A more systematic knowledge of disease was first achieved by Thomas Sydenham, often referred to as "the father" of classificatory medicine, and his textbook *Observationes Medicae*. The book became a standard textbook of medicine for more than two centuries. *Observationes Medicae* provided a tool to distinguish a disease from all other distempers. The model of classification that Sydenham followed was inspired by the botanical classification tradition but listed the characteristics of diseases instead (Jutel, 2009). In 1808 the German physician Johann Christian Reil was the first to coin the term *psychiatry*. The term literally means *medical treatment of the soul*, and psychiatry refers to the field of medicine that is focused specifically on the mind. In 1812, Benjamin Rush became an advocate for the humane treatment of the mentally ill with the first American textbook on psychiatry, *Medical Inquiries and Observations Upon Diseases of the Mind*.

According to the American Psychiatric Association (APA), the need to collect statistical information was the initial stimulus for developing a classification system of mental disorders. In the US census of 1840, the recording of the frequency of *idiocy/insanity* could be considered the first official attempt to gather information about mental health in the United States. In 1921, the APA, in collaboration with the New York Academy of Medicine, developed a nationally acceptable psychiatric classification that would be incorporated in the first edition of the American Medical Association's Standard Classified Nomenclature of Disease. This system was designed primarily for diagnosing patients with severe psychiatric and neurological disorders. In order to better incorporate outpatient services for World War II servicemen and veterans (e.g., psychophysiological, personality, and acute disorders), a broader classification system was developed by the US Army (American Psychiatric Association). At the same time, the World Health Or-

ganization (WHO) published the sixth edition of The International Classification of Diseases (ICD) which for the first time, included a section on mental disorders.

According to the American Psychiatric Association, the need for a classification of mental disorders has been evident throughout the history of medicine. However, there has been little agreement on which disorders to include and the optimal method for their organization.

From a medical/psychiatric perspective, the categorization of psychiatric diseases (e.g., psychiatric diagnostics) is emerging from a long historical tradition and expresses a need to understand, assess and treat people who are suffering from mental disorders.

Validity and utility of psychiatric diagnosis as a general concept

The exact meaning of the term *validity* in a psychiatric diagnostic context is unclear, and it has never been adequately clarified (Kendler & Jablensky, 2003). In the 1970s, Eli Robins and Samuel Guze proposed five criteria for establishing the validity of psychiatric diagnoses, namely, i) clinical description, ii) laboratory studies, iii) delimitation from other disorders by means of exclusion criteria, iv) follow-up studies, and v) family studies (Robins & Guze 1970). Later factors, such as molecular genetics and biology, neuroanatomy, and cognitive neuroscience, have been suggested as additional relevant ways to link symptoms and diagnoses (Andreasen, 1995). However, it is generally recognized that the validity of the diagnostic concepts in the classification of mental disorders cannot be taken for granted. Thus, there is little evidence that most mental disorders are separated by natural boundaries, meaning that they are truly discrete entities (Jablensky, 2016). According to Jablensky “most diagnostic concepts in psychiatry have not been demonstrated to be valid in this sense” (Jablensky, 2016). Robert Kendler and Assen Jablensky (2003) emphasize that psychiatry still has to define most disorders by their syndromes. Due to the need to distinguish disorders from each other by differences between their syndromes, the validity of diagnostic concepts remains an important issue (Kendler & Jablensky, 2003).

However, although it may be difficult to do so, it is necessary to distinguish between the extent of validity and the utility of psychi-

atric diagnosis in everyday clinical practice (e.g., assessment and treatment) and research. According to Kendler and Jablensky (2003), the two terms validity and utility should not, as is often the case, be used as though they are synonymous. To determine the utility of psychiatric diagnoses, it is important to define utility in this context. Kendler and Jablensky highlight factors such as information about prognosis and probable outcomes as crucial elements: “[...] a diagnostic rubric may be said to possess utility if it provides non-trivial information about prognosis and likely treatment outcomes, and /or testable propositions about biological and social correlates” (Kendler and Jablensky, 2003).

Paul Meehl (1959) was likely the first to use the term *utility* in the context of psychiatric diagnosis: “the fundamental argument for the utility of formal diagnosis [...] amounts to the same kind of thing one would say in defending formal diagnosis in organic medicine. One holds that there is a sufficient amount of etiological and prognostic homogeneity among patients belonging to a given diagnostic group so that the assignment of a patient to this group has probability implications which it is clinically unsound to ignore” (Meehl, 1959). Thus, Meehl highlights both aetiological and prognostic homogeneity among patients in a given diagnostic group as central to the utility of a diagnosis.

The utility of psychiatric diagnoses can be emphasized in relation to a number of different entities or domains. Diagnoses are relevant to the health professional and clinicians who work with patients suffering from psychiatric disorders, but they also serve as a way to communicate and define the implications of psychiatric difficulties to patients, relatives, and the primary sector (e.g., social service and school). Finally, psychiatric diagnoses may be considered a fundamental prerequisite for research. A precise and explicit definition of symptoms provides an opportunity to examine and compare results between studies. Thus, it is essential to research to confirm that the same conditions are examined and compared. Kendler and Jablensky states that it is “[...] a fundamental requirement of all scientific research that the subject matter of the investigation should be described with sufficient accuracy and in sufficient detail to enable others to repeat the study if they wish to” (Kendler and Jablensky, 2003). Accurate, or at least as accurate as possible, diagnostic criteria and the use of validated assessment tools are essential in

research. Thus, the utility of psychiatric diagnostic criteria is an essential prerequisite for research.

Validity and utility of eating disorder diagnosis

Within the topic of eating disorders, the validity of eating disorder diagnosis has been an ongoing discussion. An eating disorder is characterized by disturbed thinking and behaviour in relation to food, body and weight. Anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa are the most commonly described eating disorders. Anorexia nervosa is characterized by a significantly low weight (or stagnation of natural weight development in children and adolescents) caused by a restriction of food intake, fear of gaining weight or becoming fat despite a low body weight, as well as a disturbed body image. Bulimia is characterized by an intake of excessive amounts of food in a relatively short time, accompanied by the feeling of a loss of control, and subsequently compensatory behaviour such as vomiting to counteract weight gain. A binge eating disorder is characterized by an excessive intake of food in a relatively short time without compensatory behaviour such as vomiting (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). It often takes years to recover from an eating disorder, and between 25-50% of the recovered individuals have a relapse. At the same time, approximately 10-15% of the patients have a chronic course of disease. Anorexia nervosa has the highest mortality rate of all psychiatric diseases (Arcelus et al, 2011) with a standardized mortality ratio of 4.37 for lifetime anorexia nervosa and 2.33 for patients with bulimia nervosa with no history of anorexia nervosa (Franko et al, 2013). When the previous DSM-IV nomenclature (American Psychiatric Association, 2000) was applied, approximately 40% to 60% of people seeking treatment for eating disorders fell into the diagnostic category of eating disorder not otherwise specified (EDNOS). EDNOS has similar clinical features to those found in anorexia nervosa or bulimia nervosa but with different symptom combinations and varying degrees of diagnostic acuity (Fairburn & Bohn, 2005; Fairburn et al., 2007; Peebles et al., 2010). A further limitation of the DSM-IV was that it did not adequately capture eating disorder symptoms in children and adolescents (Bravender et al., 2010).

Several revisions aimed to clarify the previous DSM-IV diagnostic criteria for eating disorders were included in the revised version

of the DSM-5 (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). These revisions aimed to reduce the preponderance of EDNOS and increase the validity of diagnostic groups (Call, Walsh, & Attia, 2013). Findings from extensive literature reviews and field trials formed the basis of the revisions for each diagnostic eating disorder category of the DSM-5. These revisions included, among other changes, the elimination of amenorrhea as a requirement for girls (anorexia nervosa), an increased BMI threshold (anorexia nervosa), a decreased frequency threshold for binges and compensatory behaviour (bulimia nervosa), and a formal recognition of the binge eating disorder diagnosis (American Psychiatric Association, 2013).

Several studies have shown that the DSM-5 criteria led to increased prevalence of eating disorders, especially for bulimia nervosa, and decreased the proportion of EDNOS (Fairburn & Cooper, 2011; Birgegard, Norring, & Clinton, 2012; Machado, Goncalves, & Hoek, 2013; Nakai et al., 2013; Allen et al., 2013). In the debate on the utility of eating disorder diagnostic categories, a key issue is the distinction between the subtypes of eating disorders e.g., anorexia nervosa restrictive subtype, anorexia binge/purge, bulimia nervosa, and binge eating disorders. According to a review by Christine Peat et al. (2009), the data supported the predictive validity of the subtypes and suggested that binge/purge or bulimic subgroups of patients with anorexia nervosa differed in significant ways from patients with restricted forms of anorexia nervosa (Peat et al., 2009). In taxometric studies, which provide empirical means of determining which psychiatric disorders are typologically distinct from normal behavioural functioning, Williamson et al. (2002) found that anorexia nervosa binge/purge apparently occur on a continuum with normality, that the anorexia nervosa restrictive subtype was qualitatively different from the anorexia nervosa binge/purge subtype, and that the anorexia nervosa binge/purge subtype showed evidence of continuity with bulimia nervosa (Williamson et al., 2002). In a longitudinal study of female twins, a latent class analysis (i.e., a statistical model that relates a set of observed multivariate variables to a set of latent variables) placed bulimia nervosa and anorexia nervosa binge/purge in the same class (Wade et al., 2006). However, it was also concluded that lifetime weight ranges and the severity of eating disorder symptoms affected clustering more than the type of eating disorder symptoms.

According to Peat et al (2009), research suggests that pharmacotherapy response data are consistent with subtyping. Thus, those with anorexia nervosa binge/purge do not respond to the same treatments to which patients with bulimia nervosa respond (e.g., fluoxetine); however, these study findings are inconclusive. Peat et al (2009) conclude that the amount of crossover is quite large and suggest that there is generally progression from anorexia nervosa restrictive subtype to anorexia nervosa binge/purge and to bulimia nervosa in a sizeable number of patients even though there is a lack of predictive validity for subtypes.

Eating disorder subtypes have an impact on the evidence for the first choice of treatment. Cognitive behavioural therapy, adapted to bulimia nervosa (CBT-BN), is the first choice in the treatment of adults with moderate and severe bulimia nervosa (Agras et al, 2000; Bossert et al, 1989; Fairburn et al, 1986; Fairburn et al, 1991; Garner et al, 1993). Treatments that serves as a first choice treatment for patients with anorexia nervosa should focus on anorexia nervosa core symptoms and may include family-based therapy (FBT), cognitive behavioural therapy, adapted to anorexia nervosa (CBT-AN), and nonspecific/specific supportive clinical management (NSSCM and SSCM), (Hay et al, 2015; Watson & Bulik, 2013). Subtyping logically seems to have potential clinical utility for assessment and treatment planning. Likewise, subtyping may be considered crucial for eating disorder research e.g., the subtyping scheme may facilitate differential treatment research.

For an eating disorder diagnosis to be made, a comprehensive assessment battery is involved. A common diagnostic assessment of eating disorder symptomatology includes a diagnostic semi-structured interview, typically the Eating Disorder Examination (EDE) version 16 (Cooper, Cooper, & Fairburn, 1989; Wilfley, Schwartz, Spurrell, & Fairburn, 2000), which is conducted by trained health professionals. The EDE has good internal consistency, discriminant and concurrent validity and inter-rater reliability (Fairburn et al., 1993; Williamson, Barker, Bertman, & Gleaves, 1995). This interview contributes sufficient knowledge about the onset and development of eating disorder symptomatology. A specific cut-off, typically a cut-off of 3 on a scale ranging between 0-6, on various items assessing the diagnostic criteria is required to make the diagnosis. At the same time, the EDE makes it possible to

distinguish between subtypes of eating disorders. Furthermore, a somatic examination including a collection of clinical observations and patient-reported somatic symptoms (Hebebrand & Bulik, 2011; Mitchell & Crow, 2006), electrocardiogram (ECG) recordings and clinical and paraclinical assessments is typically performed. Finally, a parental interview to collect anamnestic data is often conducted in children and adolescents. Thus, an extensive and complex assessment is required for an eating disorder diagnosis to be made.

A process similar to that used in the field of eating disorders is standard in several other psychiatric diseases, such as affective disorder, anxiety, psychotic disorders, and other disorders, though other assessment tools are applied. The validation process for an assessment instrument is long and often comprises more than one study. The same applies to the revision of diagnoses and the acceptance of new diagnoses. This process is extensive. Thus, the diagnostic process at an individual level, the process of validating diagnosis and assessment tools, and the process of describing and defining a new diagnosis are complex and extensive.

To have meaningful clinical communication, it is crucial to have a method to distinguish between clusters of symptoms in a meaningful way. This method enables clinicians to speak a common language and to distinguish between normality and a disorder. A more precise language for psychiatric diagnoses contains vital information that is necessary for responsible clinical care (Frances, 2016). Kendler and Jablensky (2003) state that “many, though not all, of the diagnostic concepts represented by the categories of disorder listed in contemporary nomenclatures such as DSM-IV and ICD-10 are extremely useful to practicing clinicians, and most clinicians would be hard put to cope without them” (Kendler & Jablensky, 2003). Jablensky (2016) adds that “[...] whether or not the category in question is valid, as they provide information about the likelihood of recovery, relapse, deterioration, and social handicap; they guide treatment decisions, describe symptom profiles, or guide research into the aetiology of the syndrome” (Jablensky, 2016). Diagnostic classifications satisfy a range of needs, from health data collection to the determination of treatment protocols, public planning, and marketing strategies (Bowker & Star, 1999).

Why diagnosis?

Psychiatric diseases are often, although not always, less visible compared with many somatic disorders. Thus, confirming the presence of the disease is less “clear cut”. The reduced level of separate natural boundaries in most mental disorders and the generally low validity of psychiatric diagnostic criteria, as discussed above, are likely central reasons why psychiatric diagnostics are frequently targeted in repeated discussions. Nevertheless, many patients with psychiatric illnesses suffer tremendously and are in great need of assistance. To treat and/or alleviate psychiatric disorders, knowledge of the conditions in question is central. To treat a psychiatric disorder, it is necessary to obtain sufficient knowledge about various aspects and characteristics of the disorder and the evidence for treatment. The evidence for the treatment of various psychiatric disorders varies significantly. It is thus far from all treatment approaches, whether pharmacological or psychotherapeutic, that has the same effect in the treatment of different psychiatric disorders.

In an article from 2014, Nick Craddock and Laurence Mynors-Wallis wrote, “When used well, diagnosis is a key to assisting patients in making informed decisions about their care. It can ensure a patient gets effective help as quickly as possible and can benefit from the body of knowledge that has been built up from those who have had similar experiences previously. Most people who seek help from mental health professionals want these benefits. When a patient consults a psychiatrist they have a right to expect an expert diagnostic assessment and the psychiatrist has a professional responsibility to provide such an assessment and use it to guide available evidence-based treatments” (Craddock & Mynors-Wallis, 2014). Craddock & Mynors-Wallis refer to the Royal College of Psychiatrists and their *Good Psychiatric Practice*. Within *Good Psychiatric Practice*, diagnosis is mentioned on several occasions, and the text provides clarity about the necessity to use diagnosis effectively as a tool for communication and decision-making; “Good psychiatric practice involves providing the best level of clinical care that is commensurate with training, experience and the resources available. It involves the ability to formulate a diagnosis and management plan based on often complex evidence from a variety of sources. [...] In making the diagnosis and differential diagnosis, a psychiatrist should use a widely accepted diagnostic system” (Roy-

al College of Psychiatrists, 2009). A diagnosis is not an issue of personal choice for a practitioner but a professional responsibility to the patient (Craddock & Mynors-Wallis, 2014). In their article, Craddock & Mynors-Wallis (2014) frame some key elements related to the importance of diagnostics. Well-executed diagnostic work is a way to ensure a standard assessment and treatment based on the best knowledge available at the time.

Alternative approaches, such as *the sociology of diagnosis* from the scientific field of sociology, for example, have challenged the understanding of mental suffering with a fundamental critique of the categorical diagnostic approach. The debate around the sociology of diagnosis first began in the 1970s. Then, Mildred Blaxter called upon sociologists to pay attention to medical diagnosis, both as a category and as a process. Approximately a decade later, in 1990, Phil Brown defined the sociology of diagnosis and wrote “Diagnosis is integral to the theory and practice of psychiatry, yet it is loosely studied by social scientists. [...] Because psychiatry cannot comprehend diagnosis as a socio-political phenomenon, alterations to the existing traditional diagnosis models will not lead to a greater understanding of mental disorder. For that reason, a sociology of diagnosis should be further developed in order to offer a more comprehensive perspective” (Brown, 1990). Brown et al. (2011) define the aim of social diagnosis as follows: “Analyzing the process and factors that contribute to making a diagnosis amidst uncertainty and contestation, as well as the diagnostic encounter itself, are topics rich for sociological investigation” (Brown, Lyson & Jenkins, 2011). Within sociology, as well as the field of psychology, research on diagnosis has attained considerable influence in the past decades. According to Annemarie Jutel (2009), diagnosis is integral to medicine and the creation of social order. Diagnosis organizes illness by identifying treatment options, predicting outcomes, and providing an explanatory framework. Diagnosis also serves an administrative purpose as it enables access to services and status, from insurance reimbursements to restricted-access medications, sick leave and support group membership, among others (Jutel, 2009, p. 278). Approaches such as the sociological approach (e.g., the sociology of diagnosis) as well as those from disciplines within the humanities that challenge the understanding of categorical diagnoses may offer relevant perspectives. In my opinion, howev-

er, the alternative approaches often miss important aspects, such as the extreme pain, debilitating suffering and life-threatening consequences of a psychiatric illness including decreased hippocampal volume, increase risk of dementia and cognitive deficits in depression, and significantly elevated mortality, cognitive insufficiencies, and decreased bone density in eating disorders (Arcelus et al, 2011; Austin et al, 2001; Bachrach et al, 1990; Byers & Yaffe, 2011; Kjærdsdam Telléus et al, 2014; Sapolsky, 2000; Stockmeier et al, 2004; Tchanturia et al., 2011) - just to highlight a few serious consequences of psychiatric illness. A psychiatric disease is much less visible than many somatic diseases and thus has a tendency to be an easier target for debate. The diagnostic categories are based on extensive research and represent a systematic way of understanding, identifying, and classifying psychiatric symptoms in order to understand and treat severe disorders. Thus, psychiatric diagnoses represent the strongest knowledge we have from research and clinical practice, and the intention of psychiatric diagnoses is to offer physicians, psychologists and other health professionals a common language, understanding, definition, and basis for treatment.

A psychiatric diagnosis is not static. In the future, other ways to classify and define mental disorders may be established. A central problem could lie in the conceptualization of a psychiatric disease as a single dichotomous category (Garety & Freeman, 2013); e.g. genetic research has increasingly concluded that schizophrenia has overlap with other diagnoses, which suggests that it may belong to a spectrum of psychiatric disorders and is likely better represented in a number of dimensions (Garety & Freeman, 2013). Nonetheless, the current diagnostic system embodies the best available and most manageable way to organize diagnostic knowledge at present, and it allows the same conditions to be compared in research and builds the base for assessment and treatment.

Conclusion

Psychiatric diagnostic classifications offer useful operational definitions to help clinicians identify patients with mental disorders. Additionally, psychiatric diagnostic classifications offer relevant clinical features to target during treatment. Diagnostic classification also allows researchers to investigate comparable and well-defined groups of individuals as well as produce study findings that are

generalizable and representative. The validity of psychiatric diagnoses has been challenged due to a generally low validity of the existing diagnostic categories. However, it is important to distinguish between the validity and the utility of psychiatric diagnostic concepts. As demonstrated with the eating disorders example, the procedure behind establishing new diagnoses is substantial, as is the effort to specify and define sub-diagnoses and the overlap between them. Likewise, the process of validating assessment instruments and therapeutic procedures is substantial. Both the process of establishing new diagnoses, of defining sub-diagnoses, and the process of validating assessment instruments are based on research. The procedure of establishing a correct diagnosis in a patient is a time-consuming process and not achieved with a brief, self-rating scale. Thus, the reality of psychiatric clinical practice is far from the statement that it is a simple process to establish new psychiatric diagnoses and that they are easy to obtain. The aim of this article was to focus on the utility of psychiatric diagnosis. Although the validity of most contemporary psychiatric diagnoses is generally low and characterized by a low degree of natural boundaries, it does not mean that most psychiatric diagnoses are not useful concepts. In fact, many psychiatric diagnoses are invaluable and useful in clinical practice for patients and clinicians as well as in research.

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The Differential Uses of Kautilya's *Arthaśāstra*

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Abstract

Amartya Sen has at various times referred to the Indian fourth century BCE thinker Kautilya. Kautilya's treatise *Arthaśāstra* (literally the 'science of economy or material wellbeing') explored possibilities of social choice. My paper attempts to delineate the connections between Sen's deployment of (and sometimes dissatisfaction with) ancient Indian rational thought, in particular the ethical implications of Kautilya's arguments about the welfare of the people: "in the happiness of the subjects lies the happiness of the king [i.e. the state] and in what is beneficial to the subjects his own benefit. What is dear to himself is not beneficial to the king, but what is dear to the subjects is beneficial (to him)." How the notion of welfare is defined and what specific measures are advocated and put in place is as central in Kautilya's work as it is *differentially* central to our own times. Ultimately, both Kautilya and Sen are acutely aware that just institutions do not necessarily ensure social justice, however it is conceived.

Keywords statecraft, Kautilya, welfare state, social choice theory, justice, differential commonality, 'Amartya Sen'.

Introduction: utility and social choice theory

For Bentham (1789), Mill (1861), and Sidgwick (1907) to say that one thing has greater utility than another is to say that the former results in more pleasure or happiness than the latter. This classic utilitarian interpretation of utility has one difficulty in that there may not be a single good that rationality urges one to pursue. Utility, broadly conceived, includes all imaginably desirable ends: pleasure, health, knowledge, peace, friendship, etc.; and designating utilities to these ends or options inevitably invites comparison. Contemporary decision theorists typically interpret utility as a measure of preference. Central to this approach is that preferences apply not just between outcomes, that is, amounts of pleasure, or combinations of knowledge and pleasure, but also between uncertain possibilities or likelihoods.

In the words of Amartya Sen: “[s]ocial choice theory deals with the aggregation of some measure of individual welfare into a collective measure. It takes different forms according both to what is being aggregated (interests, judgements, and so on) and to the purpose of the aggregation” (2008). Utilitarian ethics call for maximizing this aggregate, and it is not too far out to suggest that Kautilya, the ancient Indian political philosopher, is setting up something close to a welfare equation even though it is strongly state-centric: “In the happiness of the subjects lies the happiness of the king and in what is beneficial to the subjects his own benefit. What is dear to himself is not beneficial to the king, but what is dear to the subjects is beneficial [to him] (AS 1.19.34).¹

While Amartya Sen’s work has demonstrated that ordinal preferences are insufficient for making satisfactory social choices, one of the most prominent thinkers of social choice theory (or how to gauge a society’s welfare from that of its members), Kenneth Arrow, from whom Amartya Sen draws, held the view “that interpersonal comparison of utilities has no meaning and ... that there is no meaning relevant to welfare comparisons in the measurability of individual utility” (1951/1963, 9).² Going beyond the negative implications of Arrow’s theorem, most social choice theorists today focus instead on the trade-offs involved in uncovering satisfactory decision procedures. In Sen’s work this is the ‘possibilist’ interpretation (1998) of social choice theory.

Preferences can be selfish or self-interested in 'expected utility theory', which attempts to explain how to choose rationally when one is not sure which outcome will result from one's acts. Thinking about forms of behaviour, Sen (1977) has proposed that a person's psychology is best characterised using the scale: (i) representing the person's narrow self-interest; (ii) representing the person's self-interest understood more broadly to explain feelings of sympathy (as in the case of watching another person suffer), and (iii) representing the person's commitments, which could involve acting against her self-interest, also broadly understood. The question that propels Sen's work that Bentham also asks 'what use is it?' is a cornerstone of the modern state's policy formation, and resonant today in ethics and political philosophy. While Bentham holds that even malicious pleasure is intrinsically good, that if nothing instrumentally bad is attached to the pleasure, it was wholly good as well, consequentialists as well as economists like Sen argue against such hedonistic value theory.

The question I ask in this essay is where do we place Kautilya's *Arthasāstra* (a text more-or-less contemporaneous with Aristotle's *Politics*) in terms of understanding his strictures concerning the king's (congruent with the state) self-interest in maintaining, consolidating, and expanding the power of his realm vis-à-vis his subjects?³ A caveat here is not to read him strictly as just a political philosopher as the question of form and genre is central when engaging with old texts postcolonially;⁴ the tradition of *artha* and *niti* (the art of the political) as a realm of theoretical and practical reason is easily lost when rendering it in terms of modern disciplinary boundaries.⁵

While Kautilya does not write about pleasure or sadism, at least not directly, as a writer of statecraft – where utility is configured as both a structure of power as well as a motivation of action – he seems not overmuch concerned about value judgments.⁶ This, however, is not to suggest that he is entirely unethical in his thinking. Commentators defend him as having a "sane, moderate and balanced view" (Rangarajan 1992: 36). He is seen as placing "great emphasis on the welfare of the people. His practical advice is rooted in *dharma* [or justice or that which is just]. But, as a teacher of practical statecraft, he advocated unethical methods in the furtherance of national interest" (36). Amongst the duties of the ruler, for example *raksha* or protection of the state, and *palana* or maintenance of law

and order, it is for Kautilya, safeguarding the welfare of the people (or *yogakshema*) that is supremely important.

I argue that there is a broader idea of utility at work here in terms of the welfare of the king's subjects if we recognise the interdependence (as Sen also stresses) between behavioural patterns and the role of institutions in achieving justice and responsive governance. Not only is individual well-being fundamental to utilitarianism, one can also concede that non-utilitarian views (were Kautilya's vision to be cast in these terms), must be concerned with welfare too if they are affected by the interests of individuals and admit the virtue of kingly or state benevolence.

Arthasāstra: realpolitik and prakṛti

The two-millennia old text *Arthasāstra* (translated variously as 'science of politics', 'political economy', 'treatise on success', and 'treatise on well-being') by Kautilya is a detailed treatise on statecraft and the art of government. The opening folios list the contents of the work, ranging from chapters on the 'Establishment of Clandestine Operatives', 'Pacifying a Territory Gained' to the 'Surveillance of People with Secret Income' and 'Investigation through Interrogation and Torture'. This is perhaps the only complete text on non-religious affairs from early India. The seismic significance of the manuscript's discovery in 1905 was such that it shifted the tectonic plates of Indology that assumed Indians to be singularly spiritual beings. A strategic work with its navel firmly gazing on power and worldly ends, it quickly became the cynosure for nationalists fighting colonialism. Mythological India, as it were, comes into 'sudden history':

...[the] text became a focal point with which to contest every cliché that had been used to define India. A society that allegedly never had a rational state suddenly acquired one; a society defined by a dreamy moralism suddenly acquired a narrative of steely realism; a society without a history of political thought acquired a master text in political theory; a society without sophisticated economic thinking acquired insight into the foundations of wealth; a society without a strategic culture acquired a veritable theory of international relations; a nation with ostensibly

no political identity acquired a prehistory of political unity. (Mehta 2009)

In his famous lecture 'Politics as a Vocation', Max Weber was to declare the book as 'radical Machiavellianism'; compared to it, Weber declared, Machiavelli's *The Prince* is 'harmless'. Juxtaposing the *Arthaśāstra* with other disquisitions on power and politics from its time, especially Plato or Aristotle, it becomes clear how Kautilya departs from them with their steady spotlight on morality. But given its focus on strategies and tactics, it comes as no surprise that it is *The Prince*, that upset ethical and religious beliefs in sixteenth century Europe, that *Arthaśāstra* inevitably gets compared to.⁷

As a theoretical and normative work which features Kautilya's realist statecraft, *Arthaśāstra* (ancient as it is) both converges and deviates from Machiavelli's modern secular ethics. Most readings tend to foreground Kautilya's political-theological ethos even as they compulsively return to his vision of a ruthless realpolitik. Just as his political realism (whether in terms of his contributions to international relations theory or his how-to manual for hanging on to state power) does not go unnoticed, indeed gets firmly foregrounded, his writing gets reduced to an account of brahmanical guile (as Indian foreign policy sometimes gets cast as) sodden with a heavy dose of realism.⁸ There is, however, no repudiating the fact that apart from providing a blueprint of statecraft — familiar yet different from the western models — an innovative theory of conquest, diplomacy and foreign policy (with *atisaṃdhāna* or outwitting at its heart) jumps out from his account. He warns, for instance, against attacking an opponent's capital, and advocates chiselling in from the periphery, surreptitiously. His panoptic eye winks at the use of intellect, wit, cunning, guile, and deceit: 'An arrow unleashed by an archer may kill a single man or not kill anyone,' Kautilya notes, 'but a strategy unleashed by a wise man kills even those still in the womb' (AS 10.6.51). In his typology of allies, he further distinguishes between an ally of 'divers utility' (as one who aids 'in many ways with the products of his ports, villages, mines, forests and elephants') and 'great utility', as one who supplies forces and resources from the treasury (AS 7.9.40).

My attempt here is to make the case that ultimately for Kautilya, political action – not just in times of war – implies optimizing *prakṛti*

(nature or primordial materiality) such that both the power of the state as well as the welfare of the people are insured. *Yogakshema* (prosperity and well-being of the people), Kautilya asserts time and again, is contingent upon the power of a 'strong' state.

Welfare: *nyāya* and *yogakshema*

The Mauryan economy – where Kautilya is said to have served as chancellor and prime minister to Chandragupta (between c.321 and c.297 BCE) who first fuses together the disparate kingdoms of the subcontinent in an empire – arguably came closest to the one outlined by Kautilya. Various historians and political analysts have commented on its structure: it has been called a “socialized monarchy” (Wolpert 1982, 60), a kind of “state socialism” leaving enough space for the individual producer (Basham 1963, 218), and even attributing to Kautilya “...with... [his] ... concept of *Yogakshema*” as having established the first welfare state in the modern sense, and as also having been ignored as a pioneering thinker in this (and other) aspects by foreign scholars (Kohli 1995: xi). Kautilya's economy, in the words of Boersche, is best described perhaps by the anthropologist Louis Dumont who sees the king (with whom the state is taken to be identical) running a “benevolent feudal manor” (Boersche 2002, 67).

Another commentator views Kautilya's advocacy of the king as a father who took care of his subjects as children in terms of a “royal paternalism” (Bandyopadhaya 1927, 64); this ideal reads something akin to a nanny state welfarism where a kindly caring figure “should favour the stricken (subjects) like a father”. It was Asoka the Buddhist emperor and grandson of Chandragupta, and not the grandfather in the same measure, we should note here, who was to live rigorously by this paternal ethics.⁹ “All men are my children and just as I desire for my children that they should obtain welfare and happiness, both in this world and the next, so do I desire [the same] for all men” (in Thapar 1997, 147). While the king, in his administrative benevolence, should “maintain children, aged persons, and persons in distress when they are helpless”, his judges in the kingdom should, Kautilya writes, be cognisant and concerned with the troubles of “women, minors, old persons, who are helpless [even] when they do not approach (the court)” (AS 3.20.22). The centre of this circle of a caring judicial authority thus resides in the king (see

Sharma 1978) where the poor and those who need help to support themselves, are to be given work and “women who do not stir out – those living separately, widows, crippled women, or maidens – who wish to earn their living, should be given work” (AS 2.23.11). After the conquest of an enemy, the king should “render help to the distressed, the helpless, and the diseased” (AS 13.15.11). Animals too fall within the frame of his paternalistic picture: “Horses incapacitated for work by war, disease, or old age should receive food for maintenance” (AS 2.30.27).

While it would be difficult to extricate from Kautilya's text either the idea that his elements of well-being (freedom from hunger, distress and disease, and indignity) are generally measurable as they are to an economist, or that there is any detailed articulation of how they extend people's 'capabilities' (to use Sen's terminology); there is nevertheless a Kautilyan vision of polity, where economics and ethics meet, where preferences apply not just between outcomes of state policy, but between uncertain possibilities as well. That the Rawlsian project of articulating notions of just institutions ideally in order to address social injustice cannot do without economic rationality is the mainstay of Sen's argument; but for Kautilya it is the institutional forms, that only a sinuous state can exclusively provide, that are paramount; albeit in the absence of clear 'public reason' and open debate about values and principles that Sen finds in abundance in India's ancient argumentative tradition.¹⁰

Not wholly consistently perhaps, but Kautilya considered the people – comprising a popular army – as the most important of all to a strong state. “If weak in might, [a king] should endeavour to secure the welfare of his subjects. The countryside is the source of all undertakings; from them comes might” (AS 7.14.18-19). The 'undertakings' of the treasury, the fort, and the army all derive ultimately from the people of the countryside. There are echoes here of a Machiavelli republican army as there is of Mao's idea of a people's war.

Kautilya's *vijigishu* (would-be conqueror) sought power in order not only to control the outward behaviour but also the thoughts of one's allies and enemies (see Boesche 2003: 15). Kautilya emphasises the role of secret agents, whose duty is to find out what the common people are thinking about the monarch. Kautilya stresses the utility of spies, especially as dangerous intentions cannot be altered unless the mind of the formless, shapeless enemy is compre-

hended. Thinking of the utility of force, he seems to be at one with the British general Smith who speaks of a new type of war that we now have entered where coercion and deterrence form a set of malleable objectives, in 'fighting amongst the people', as they relate to the intentions and will of the opponent (Smith 2006). Just as for Clausewitz, however ambiguous, uncertain and risky any developed strategy is, it is the mark of war, and for Foucault for whom politics is the continuation of war, Kautilya too, like his Chinese counterpart Sun Tzu, recognises not only the important objective of capturing the will of the people, but also the role of information in order to decode what the opponent is thinking. This is crucial for the continuation of the state and for keeping anarchy at bay.

A powerless state that does not recognise the use of information and force, in Kautilya's book, ceases to remain a state, and will disintegrate internally and fall back into *matsya-nyāya* (or the state of nature). Since the premise of the Kautilyan state is very much the prevention of backsliding into *matsya-nyāya*, is the premise normative or willfully rational? Maintaining, consolidating, and expanding the power of the state as well as securing happiness for the people, as I have been emphasising, are not mutually exclusive for Kautilya. Paradoxical as it appears, necessity and normativity are at the heart of his thinking: "Material well-being [or *artha*] alone is supreme", says Kautilya. "For spiritual good [*dharma* or ethics] and sensual pleasures [*kāma*] depend on material well-being" (AS I.7.6-7). He makes it clear that for a king who does not exercise political power and pursue material wealth for the kingdom, there cannot be morality in the political realm. A dialectical relationship is set up in his argument between the two pairings: power-wealth and ethics. The rationality of state power resides in the long run in the norm where welfare and happiness of the people are guaranteed. People reduced to poverty where *matsya-nyāya* (diametrically opposed to happiness brought by *nyāya* and *yogakshema*) is soaring or imminent is not a situation favoured by Kautilya, and is, by all means, to be averted.

Conclusion: 'capabilities' and justice

A differential commonality emerges in this reading when examining a rational-materialist text (that at first grasp appears fully illiberal and despotic) from an old Indian tradition alongside arguments

in modern political theory (that are by definition assumed to be liberal). Whilst liberal as well as conservative accounts of the text as an example of Oriental Despotism acknowledge its "reflective self-knowledge" in the same breath as Aristotle's polis and Hegel's European state (Kedourie 1971: 29), postcolonial perspectives present "Kautilya's *Arthasāstra* and Asoka's edicts [as]... the self-evident textual and archaeological refutation of both oriental despotism and Asiatic mode of production" (Singh 2011, 16). There are, no doubt, contemporary critiques of state power available in the works of Arendt (totalitarian), Foucault (disciplinary), and Agamben (biopolitic) that do not take this illiberalism for granted.¹¹ That Kautilya openly describes and advocates the somewhat illiberal machinations of power (and the potentially desirable uses of this) necessarily embedded in statecraft together with "a no-nonsense institutional view of advancing justice" (Sen 2009: 76) only serves as a testimony to his prescience.¹² Admittedly, Kautilya's justice is not exactly a Rawlsian justice. I have been arguing that Kautilya meets Sen half-way in his conviction that justice in actual human affairs (practically-oriented theory of justice as opposed to an idealized theory of society) cannot simply be reduced to questions of "cumulative outcome (what results)" but also of "comprehensive outcome (what results and how it is brought about), as in Rawls' proceduralism" (Bird-Pollan 2010: 106).

Influenced as Sen is by Indian philosophical thought, including Kautilya's, the distinction between *niti* and *nyāya* conceptions of justice is crucial in comprehending both these thinkers. The *niti*, or political ethics conception of justice, in Sen's words, denotes "organizational propriety and behavioural correctness", while the *nyāya* conception "stands for a comprehensive concept of realizing justice" (2009: 20). What Sen is keen on is the realization of justice; he departs from other modern philosophers who obsess about a rigorous definition of the concept. For him, "an approach to justice can be both entirely acceptable in theory and eminently useable in practice, even without its being able to identify the demands of perfectly just societies." (401) Both Kautilya and Sen are aware that just institutions do not necessarily ensure social justice, however it is conceived. But it is not too difficult to recognise social injustices without knowing how a perfectly fair society would organize or justify itself.

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Notes

- 1 AS stands for *Arthaśāstra* here whenever sutra references to the text are cited. I interchangeably use three different translations (Kangle's, Rangarajan's and Olivelle's) as they not only have differences in terms of either being too literal or metaphoric, but also sometimes render concepts in particular ways that do not always underline the tone and tenor I am looking for in my argument.
- 2 Sen has found Kautilya to be a vitally relevant, though not unique, precursor in thinking about measured concerns for human rights and Asian values. He also mentions him as a thinker useful on practical subjects ranging from famine prevention to administrative effectiveness. But Sen does not condone Kautilya's advice to the king as to how he can achieve his goals even if it required the trampling of his adversaries' freedom (Sen, 1977).
- 3 Admittedly, a state in the sense of a modern state does not obtain here, but Indian political thinking argues how prestatal conditions developed into the statal. Sarkar, for example, links the *Naturprozess* of Gumpowicz or the Hobbesian 'law of beast and birds' to the (state of nature) *nyāya* (logic) of *matsya* (fish) (Sarkar 1921: 80-81) The term *nyāya* also has three distinct meanings: (i) denoting a school of philosophy committed to the use of evidence-based methods of inquiry, including observation and inference; (ii) signifying a particular five-step pattern of demonstrative reasoning and (iii) referring to a set of heuristic principles to guide practical reason. Sen, as we will see later, uses the term (2009) but has only the third sense in mind.
- 4 The Chinese thinker Han Feizi lived between 280 –233 BCE and follows Kautilya by approximately fifty years, and is comparable: "If you could assure good government merely by winning the hearts of the people, then [...] you could simply listen to what the people say. The reason you cannot rely upon the wisdom of the people is that they have the minds of little children. If the child's head is not shaved, its sores will spread; and if its boil is not lanced, it will become sicker than ever. But when it is having its head shaved or its boil lanced, someone must hold it while the loving mother performs the operation, and it yells and screams incessantly, for it does not understand that the little pain it suffers now will bring great benefit later" (Han Feizi: 128). I am gesturing, yet again, to the differential commonality in thinking about polity in global history.

- 5 Pollock has argued that *sastra* is a genre, a grammar, that presents a problematic for mutational practices. A hermeneutics of some of the principal genres of disciplinary knowledge, *itihasa* (narrative history), and *kavya* (poetry), he argues, is imperative for understanding India's heavily regulated pre-modern discourses and the truth effects they had (1985).
- 6 The term 'unhappy' subjects does make an appearance in Roger Boesche's commentary (2003: 22) when he refers to the sutra: "Those, however, who are enraged or greedy or frightened or proud, are likely to be seduced by enemies" (1.13.22). Kautilya also advises that: "He [the King] should manage those who are discontented by means of conciliations, gifts, dissension or force" (Kangle, *Part II*, 2000:29).
- 7 Amartya Sen notes: "...it is amusing that an Indian political analyst from the fourth century BC has to be introduced as a local version of an European writer born in the fifteenth century" (2009: xiv).
- 8 Its contemporary utility can be found at least in two spheres: that it is required reading for Pakistani military schools and, like Sun Tzu's *Art of War* it has also become a manual for the world's aspiring businessman. A strategic expert, for instance, is quoted as saying: 'Kautilya is the DNA of India's foreign policy' (Michael 2008, 99).
- 9 Kautilya's ruthless technocratic economism is alleviated by Asoka's use of a Buddhist ecumenism; the Indologist Heinrich Zimmer sees Asoka's governance as consequence of Kautilyan thought which brought this whole historical period into being. Sen has (in his 1986 lectures) distinguished between Kautilya's engineering-logistical approach to political economy and Asoka's more developed ethical-political regime.
- 10 It is not just Sen who spoken about the use of public reason offered by India's traditions. Jonardan Ganeri (2012) in particular draws on Indian theory to explain how identities are formed from exercises of reason; he argues that contemporary debates relating to global governance and superdiverse identities can be enriched from Indian resources that developed within a pluralist ethos. Sadly, for our purposes, he does not offer any commentary on Kautilya.
- 11 That Kautilya advocates fining a person with a boat who refuses to rescue someone from drowning (*AS* 4.3.9) or fining someone who does not have sex with his wife at the right time is reminiscent of Foucault's disciplinary state, and totalitarianism in general; the various aspects of everyday life in *Arthasāstra* "...come in for careful regula-

tion and adjustment, from the cooking-pot to the crown" (Ramaswamy 1994: 32).

- 12 Here's the full quote: "Kautilya's political economy was based on his understanding of the role of institutions both in successful politics and in efficient economic performance, and he saw institutional features, including restrictions and prohibitions, as major contributors to good conduct and necessary restraints on behavioural licence. This is clearly a no-nonsense institutional view of advancing justice, and very little concession was made by Kautilya to people's capacity for doing good things voluntarily without being led there by well-devised material incentives and, when needed, restraint and punishment" (Sen 2009: 76).

Den lille og den store nytte

Et interkulturelt perspektiv på forholdet mellem nytte og frihed

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Abstract

In this article, we expound a distinction between a "small" and a "large" notion of utility. We do this by linking the concept of utility to the concept of freedom. Our suggestions derive from two readings related to the Chinese history of philosophy. First, we develop the distinction in a reading of early classical Chinese philosophy, through a discussion of Confucianism, Mohism and Daoism. Secondly, we explore the relationship between utility and freedom in the meeting between Chinese thinking and modern western philosophy. We discuss Yan Fu's translations of Western philosophy, particularly Mill. Through this discussion, we end up with situating the discussion of utility in the domain of human freedom. Finally, drawing on Schiller, we consider how utility and freedom should be cultivated giving rise to a kind of balance between "harmony" and "conflict" in contemporary global society.

Keywords Utility, Freedom, Chinese Philosophy, European Utilitarianism, Bildung.

Indledning

Vi vil i denne artikel rejse spørgsmålet om, hvorvidt mennesker og samfund bør orientere handlinger og indretninger efter, hvad der har nytteværdi. Anliggendet er at udvikle en filosofisk skitse, der gør det muligt at diskutere dette. Vores ambition er ikke at besvare spørgsmålet, men at vise, at hvis nyttebegrebet sættes i relation til andre vigtige begreber og perspektiver, så fremtræder aspekter og problemer, som ellers er svært vanskelige at artikulere eller få øje på. Den filosofiske skitse, vi folder ud, tager udgangspunkt i fremlæsnings af historiske ansatser, der sætter nyttebegrebet i relation til frihedsbegrebet. Selvom den begrebsrejse, vi drager ud på, kan virke geografisk og historisk vilkårlig, er det vores argument, at den muliggør formulering af en systematisk pointe, nemlig den, at spørgsmålet om nytte først bliver filosofisk relevant og interessant, når det tænkes i relation til mennesket som frihedsvæsen. Komplementært er det vores anliggende at vise, at det er igennem historisk specifikke udfordringer af nyttebegrebet fra andre perspektiver og begreber, at man for alvor kan blive klogere. Samlet leder det os til en argumentation, der går ud på, at nyttebegrebet bør tænkes interkulturelt og dialogisk, for at kunne være nyttigt i en verden, hvor pluralitet (frihed) opfattes som en værdi i sig selv (se Biesta 2012).

Første del: Den klassiske kinesiske nyttetænkning

Vi begynder rejsen ind i nyttebegrebet ved at tage fat på, hvordan nyttetænkningen folder sig ud i klassisk kinesisk tænkning, dvs. "i de stridende staters periode" (475-221 f.Kr.) eller det som kaldes for "De hundrede skolers periode" (Nielsen 2003, Favrholdt 1996). Vi starter med at fremhæve den kongfuzianske anvendelse af nyttebegrebet, for dernæst at se på en daoistisk kritik heraf. I centrum er overvejelser, der placerer nyttebegrebet i en diskussion om, hvad der kan fungere som vejledende (dao) ift. at skabe et harmonisk liv og samfund (som svar på tidens stridigheder). Det spørgsmål, der rejses, er, hvorvidt det er en god ide, hvis borgere og regenter orienterer deres handlinger efter, hvad der har nytteværdi. Vi vil fremhæve fire klassiske svar herpå, der går i hver sin retning.¹

(1) Kong Fuzi: orientering efter egennytte forårsager moralsk fordærv

Det første svar finder vi hos Kong Fuzi (551-479 f.Kr.) i den af hans elever nedskrevne (og senere modificerede) tekstsamling, der går under navnet *Analekterne*.² Ifølge Kong Fuzi er, hvad der gavner og har fordel for én selv, ikke en god rettesnor (dao) at orientere sine handlinger efter. Det er det ikke, fordi det fører til dårlige sociale relationer, splid og et uharmonisk fællesskab. Som alternativ udvikler Kong Fuzi ideen om et ædelt menneske (en junzi), der tænker og handler ud fra *retskaffenhed* (yi) og lignende *social dyder*. At udvikle sig til et sådan dydigt menneske, er en bedre vej (dao) end at orientere sig ud fra nytte, da det kan skabe og sikre et harmonisk fælles liv.

(2) Mozi: orientering efter det alment nyttige opløser stridigheder

Et andet svar finder vi hos Mozi (ca. 470-391 f.Kr.) og den tekstsamling, der bærer hans navn (Watson 2003).³ Hvor Kong Fuzi lægger vægt på det moralsk skadelige i en orientering efter egennytte, lægger Mozi vægt på en social form for nytteorientering, hvor målet er, at mennesker orienterer sig efter at gavne hinanden indbyrdes og gensidigt. Med et udtryk hentet fra oversætteren A. C. Graham (1989) er det vigtigste ifølge Mozi "concern for everyone". Hvis alle tager hensyn til hinanden, drager omsorg for nær som fjern, vil verden skænke menneskene lykke. Også som regent gælder det om at holde sig til princippet om at tænke på hele folket, ikke kun sig selv. I forlængelse heraf foreslår Mozi, at partiskhed og snæversyn skal erstattes med handlinger, som retter sig efter det som forener (jian). Hvordan kan det ske, spørger Mozi og svarer selv: man skal holde op med at skelne mellem eget og andres, dit og mit eller os og dem ift. handlingsmotiver. Hvis individer, familier og stater ikke forsøger at opnå noget på bekostning af hinanden, vil det gavne alle. Gennem dette ræsonnement bliver det tydeligt, at målestokken for handlen skal være almen, og ikke begrænset til hvad der gavner det enkelte individ eller en afgrænset social enhed. Mozi er nok enig med Kong Fuzi i, at egoisme er tidens hovedproblem, men han er uenig i den løsning Kong Fuzi fremlægger. Skåret ind til benet antyder Mozi, at Kong Fuzi ikke for alvor lykkes i at opstille et brugbart alternativ til partiskhed og egoisme, bl.a. pga. den positive va-

lorisering Kong Fuzi giver familieværdier. Det sande alternativ til egennyttens består ikke i at opføre sig retskaffent overfor sine nærmeste, men i en reorientering af menneskelig praksis i retning af en fokusering på *det alment nyttige* frem for det egennyttige. Hvis mennesker handler ud fra, hvad der er alment nyttigt, dvs. hvis de tænker på, hvad der gavner alle og enhver, og hvis de i det hele taget orienterer deres handlinger efter det som gensidigt gavner hinanden, så vil årsagerne til krig, splittelse, kaos, ressourcespild og katastrofer som hungersnød forsvinde, argumenterer Mozi.

(3) Mengzi: Nyttehensyn er ikke det vigtigste, det er moralsk dannelse

Et tredje svar finder vi hos en af de store arvtagere af Kong Fuzis lære, nemlig Mengzi (372 – 289 f.Kr.).⁴ Vi vil her blot fremhæve et af Mengzis argumenter, nemlig det, at nyttetænkning er unødvendig og uduelig som rettesnor (dao). Det er ifølge Mengzi forfejlet at prioritere hensyn til gavnlighed først og retsindighed sidst. Hvis mennesker først og fremmest tænker medmenneskeligt og retsindigt, hvad er der så brug for nyttetænkning til? Lad os koncentrere os i tale og handling efter at blive medmenneskelige og retsindige, så skal det nok sekundært komme alle til gavn. Ud af princippet om medmenneskelighed træder automatisk handlinger, der gavner andre. Den teori om social eller almen nytte Mozi fremlægger, er derfor unødvendig.

Pointen hos Mengzi er ikke, at gavnlighed ikke er et gode, også han vil gerne, at mennesker tænker og handler så det gavner alle og enhver. Pointen er, at gavnlighed ikke kan fungere som et primært mål, men derimod bør tænkes som en sekundær effekt af en primær moralsk dannelse og efterstræbelse af sociale dyder, her medmenneskelighed og retsindighed. Hermed sætter Mengzi dydsetik over nytteetik. Det handler om at gøre noget, der gavner andre og fællesskabet, ja, men netop det opnås bedst gennem en udvikling af en dydig karakter og personlighed, der giver en grund til at handle ærligt, hjælpsomt, høfligt osv. Videre er argumentet, at en sådan moralsk dannelse må starte i ens egen person og nære omgivelser, typisk familien, og vokse frem herudfra som stadig udvidende, stadig overskridende dannelsesproces, hvor ens opøvede og udviklede sociale karakter smitter af på omgivelserne, som ringe i vand, der breder sig.

(4) Zhuangzi: hvad der er nyttigt afhænger af, hvilket perspektiv vi anlægger

Den sidste stemme fra klassisk kinesisk filosofi vi vil fremhæve er den daoistiske tænker Zhuangzi (369-286 f.Kr.).⁵ Zhuangzis svar adskiller sig fra de tre ovenstående svar. Hos Zhuangzi drejer det sig ikke om at argumentere for eller imod nyttetænkning, ej heller om at opstille ét fast standpunkt. Derimod går det ud på at vise, at hvad der er nyttigt eller unyttigt afhænger af, hvordan vi mennesker tænker, ikke mindst ift. hvor fantasifulde eller lidet fantasifulde vi er, hvor forankret vi er i en bestemt orden eller evner at overskride denne og forholde os *frit*. De tre andre tænkere antager, uanset deres forskellige moraler, at det er klart, hvad der er nyttigt og hvad der er unyttigt; de opmåler gavnlighed ift. en eksisterende orden eller det uddannelsesfilosoffen Biesta (2011) kalder for et *kvalifikations- og socialisationsperspektiv*, hvorimod det som Zhuangzi bringer i fokus er et *subjektifikationsperspektiv*. Hvad de andre skoler anser for nyttigt, er ifølge Zhuangzi blot udtryk for en overfladisk og statistisk tænkning. Groft sagt har Zhuangzi ikke meget til overs for de fasttømrede og for ham stive moralsystemer, som Kong Fuzi, Mozi, Mengzi og andre opstiller. De er for umenneskelige og ufleksible for hans smag og verdenssyn, uanset om de peger på den ene rette vej eller den anden. Det er kunstige fikseringer af forskellen på rigtigt og forkert, nyttigt og unyttigt. Zhuangzi udfolder derfor ikke endnu en morallære, men en metafysik, med eksistentia-listiske og epistemologiske perspektiver indbygget. Zhuangzi skelner mellem to planer: På den ene side det plan, hvor vi vurderer om noget er nyttigt og brugbart *ud fra et givent og umiddelbart perspektiv*, dvs. ift. snævre praktiske formål inden for en eksisterende orden. Dette kan kaldes for *den lille nytte*. Her gør vi os bekymringer og frustreres, når noget ikke kan bruges til det vi har tænkt. Her fungerer brugen inden for et afgrænset kontekstuel system, fx det at bruge balsam til at modvirke tørre hænder for at kunne vaske silke om vinteren, for at kunne tjene lidt penge for at kunne købe lidt mad og overleve til det bliver sommer. På den anden side det plan, hvor formålet ikke er at opnå noget bestemt, men derimod at komme fri af alle bestemtheder, og forholde os kreativt og skabende til hvorvidt noget kan bruges til dette videste af alle formål. Det interessante er nu, at hvis vi holder os på det første plan, ser vi ikke den nytte, der kan være af noget ift. det andet plan. Zhuangzi

antyder endda, at det som er mest brugbart i det ene perspektiv er mindst brugbart i det andet. Vil man være fri, skal man bruge det som igennem alle små perspektiver fremtræder som ubrugeligt. Det handler derfor om at kunne skelne lille og stor nytte, hvor den lille ikke giver radikal frihed, er begrænset, fyldt med bekymringer og snæversyn ift., hvad man tror noget kan bruges til og ikke bruges til, hvad der er nyttigt og ikke nyttigt, mens den store nytte er den som fører til frihed, og som fremkommer, når man lader sine tanker vandre uhæmmet.

Anden del: Yan Fu og kinesisk kulturs møde med vesten omkring det 20. århundredes begyndelse

Vi vil nu relatere de klassiske overvejelser over nyttebegrebet til fortolkningen af den kinesiske reception af moderne vestlig tænkning ved indgangen til det 20. århundrede i Kina. Vi gør dette ved at se på, hvorledes den indflydelsesrige oversætter, Yan Fu, i hans valg af tekster til oversættelse og i selve oversættelserne fortolkede datidens nyere vestlige filosofi.

Yan Fu var oprindelig officer i den kinesisk flåde og havde i slutningen af 1870'erne selv stiftet bekendtskab med vestlig modernitet på et studieophold i London. Efter Japans sejr over Kina i den første japansk kinesisk krig 1894-95 begyndte han at oversætte værker af Darwin, Spencer, Huxley, Adam Smith, John Stuart Mill og Montesquieu. Disse oversættelser fungerede i Kina som introduktion til både socialdarwinisme og vestlig liberal politisk tænkning og fik stor indflydelse, og der foregår til stadighed en løbende diskussion af Yan Fu's arbejde i relation til nye udviklinger af den politiske filosofi i Kina.

Der findes flere fortolkninger af Yan Fu's filosofiske position og hvorledes den spiller sammen med datidens filosofiske og særlig ny-kongfuzianske debat i Kina. Vi har i det efterfølgende valgt at tage afsæt i Max Ko-wu Huangs fortolkning af dette forhold, således han fremlæser det i "The Meaning of Freedom – Yan Fu and the Origins of Chinese Liberalism" (2008).⁶

Huang's analyse af Yan Fus filosofiske projekt

Ifølge Huang forsøger Yan Fu at harmonisere "two equally irresistible and precious ideals: a picture of freedom, prosperity, and power offered by the liberal West, and a vision of morality, altruism and

social harmony rooted in the Confucian tradition" (Huang 2008, 259). Ifølge Huang bliver frihed hos Yan Fu ikke blot set som et instrument til at opnå velstand, tværtimod har friheden en selvstændig værdi. Samtidig bliver friheden hos Yan Fu også relateret til et nyttebegreb der forbinder de politiske, erkendelsesteoretiske og eksistentielle aspekter i vores distinktion mellem lille og stor nytte. Huang undersøger dette i et detailstudie af Yan Fu's oversættelse af Mills "On Liberty", hvor der samtidig knyttes an til den idehistoriske kontekst for Yan Fu's arbejde.

Huang opstiller for det første en distinktion imellem et transformationsperspektiv (TP) og et akkommoderende perspektiv (AP, Huang 2008, 40-44) ift. vurdering af samfundsmæssig forandring. I TP anskues samfundsmæssig forandring ud fra en ideelt opfattet mulighed for et perfekt samfund, der ofte vil implicere krav om radikale samfundsmæssige forandringer. I AP vil man i stedet søge at tilpasse idealer og den foreliggende virkelighed til hinanden på en måde, der sigter mod en gradueret udvikling af samfundet.

Huang forbinder nu denne distinktion mellem TP og AP med en anden distinktion, nemlig en sontring mellem den angelsaksiske liberale tradition, som Huang kalder for "Milleanism" (ML) og den franske republikanske tradition, som Huang betegner som "Rousseaunisme" (RS, Huang 2008, 44-55). Han gennemgår her forskelle mellem de to traditioner ved at trække på vestlige og kinesiske forskere, og følger især Joseph Schumpeters "Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy" (1943). Schumpeter argumenterer i dette værk for at mennesker ikke er så moralsk oplyste, som man kunne ønske sig, og ligeledes, at de er for individuelt forskellige til at nå frem til en fælles ide om det fælles gode. Man skal derfor droppe utopiske forsøg på at danne et samfund, men i stedet lægge sig op af en oplyst udgave af Mills tænkning (ML). Huangs pointe er, at dette synspunkt harmoner dårligt med den generelle tiltro til muligheden for udviklingen af menneskets godhed og dannelse af et godt samfund, som man finder i Kinas idehistorie. Dette kan ses som en del af forklaringen på, hvorfor mange nyere tænkere i Kina, uanset om de var orienteret imod TP eller AP, foretrak RS frem for ML.

Imidlertid er Yan Fu modsat denne tendens mere interesseret i Mill end Rousseau og dette rejser derfor dels spørgsmålet om hvorledes vi skal forstå dette, og dels spørgsmålet om, hvorledes

Yan Fu evt. adskiller sig fra Mill. Det viser sig her, at Yan Fu er enig med Mill i hans accentuering af det individuelle menneskes frihed som værdi i sig selv samt af vigtigheden af at få etableret en forfatning med demokratiske institutioner og magtdeling. Men forskellen på de to tænkere viser sig jfr. Huang, når vi ser på deres opfattelser af det, som Huang i tilknytning til Isaiah Berlin betegner som den positive opfattelse af friheden (Huang 2008, 94-95).

Huang griber her an til en tredje distinktion. Det drejer sig om skellet mellem erkendelsesteoretisk optimisme (EO), der betoner muligheden for indsigt i sandheden og erkendelsesteoretisk pessimisme (EP, Huang 2008: 126-141), der ikke mener at dette er tilfældet. Huang hævder, at udviklingen af vestlig liberal tænkning er tæt forbundet med erkendelsesteoretiske diskussioner, der i højere grad integrerer EO og EP end tilfældet er i Kina, hvor man har haft større tiltro til EO og lagt mindre vægt på EP. Mills betoning af ytringsfrihed etc., hænger ganske vist sammen med respekten for individets værdighed, men har også en erkendelsesteoretisk pointe. Netop fordi vi ikke kan være sikre på at vi "har ret" ift. sand erkendelse, så er vi nødt til at lade vore ideer konkurrere åbent med hinanden i den offentlige sfære, for derigennem gradvis at blive klogere.

Selv om Yan Fu ikke var fremmed over for det forhold, at mennesker kan tage fejl, så delte han ikke Mills syn på den principielle usikkerhed i den menneskelige erkendelse. Ytringsfriheden er i stedet vigtig som mulighed for at det enkelte menneske har ret til at udtrykke indre indsigter uden frygt for undertrykkelse.

Om friheden som medierende imellem det ydre og det indre

Dette hænger ifølge Huangs analyse sammen det forhold, at Yan Fu arbejder med en distinktion mellem det ydre og indre, som lå indbygget i den kulturelle grammatik i Kina på hans tid, særlig i embedsværket, og som stammede fra nykongfuziansk filosofi. Yan Fu forbinder denne distinktion, med hvad Huang, i tilknytning til Isaiah Berlin, kalder distinktionen imellem ydre og indre frihed.

Hvad angår den ydre frihed følger Yan Fu ikke Rousseau, men Mills liberale opfattelse af frihedsrettigheder, demokrati etc. Omvendt følger Yan Fu ift. den indre frihed ikke Mills erkendelsesteo-

retiske pessimisme, uden dog, ifølge Huang, at gøre sig klart, at dette bringer ham i modstrid til dele af Mills tænkning.

Dette viser sig ifølge Huang ved at Yan Fu i forlængelse af den nykongfuzianske læsning af den kinesiske filosofiske tradition ser positiv indre frihed som processuelt forbundet til den sociale verdens sammenhængende og interdependente natur, der giver mulighed for skue i det indre, men som samtidig fører til en moralsk forpligtigelse til også at realisere i det ydre. Som antydnet, så giver dette Yan Fu problemer ift. at forstå de erkendelsesteoretiske pointer i en stridbar offentlig diskurs, da uenigheder ifølge hans perspektiv ikke kommer af en principiel fejlbarlighed, men følger af manglende "indre" indsigt hos deltagerne. Man skal dog ikke overse, at hans tilgang på den anden side giver mulighed for at give filosofisk mening til de holistiske erfaringer af "det indre", som nykongfuzianismen i tilknytning til buddhismen også betonedes; noget der ikke ligger lige for ud fra en erkendelsesteoretisk pessimistisk position.

Om forholdet mellem frihed og det nyttige som det gavnlige hos Yan Fu

Yan Fu beskriver sig selv som inspireret af Zhuangzi, og han udgiver da også i 1916 en kommentar til Zhuangzi. Huang kommer med et bud på, hvorledes Yan Fu søger at koble begrebet om frihed sammen med Zhuangzi's begreb om zaiyou, som viser hen til en "independent spirit, the opposite of youdai (depending on something)".

Det er fristende at koble Yan Fu's daoistisk inspirerede opfattelse af frihed sammen med hans afvisning af socialisme, hans positive indstilling til markedsøkonomi, og særligt hans gentagne referencer til laissez-faire. Men disse referencer til laissez-faire skal ikke ses som en henvisning til individualitetens "selviske" udfoldelse; de skal i stedet holdes sammen med Yan Fus (historisk set problematiske) hævde af, at Zhuangzi og Yang Zhu er den samme person. Yang Zhu (normalt 440-360 fv.t.) har siden Mengzis kritik af ham været opfattet som forkynner af egoismens evangelium. I modsætning hertil skelner Yan Fu mellem egoisme og et krav om at "handle til gavn for sig selv". Yan Fu ser sidstnævnte krav som værende forbundet med selvkultivering og indre frihed. Han hævder kritik over for Mengzi, at ideen om først at se på medmenneskelighed og

moralsk dannelse, før det nyttige og gavnlige, som så vil komme af sig selv, som et udtryk for at Mengzi ikke får etableret et skel mellem egoisme og så det at handle til gavn for sig selv i et positivt frihedsbegreb – der minder om Rousseaus distinktion imellem en egoistisk og kulturelt afledt egenkærlighed (amour propre) og en godartet selvkærlighed (amour de soi). Indvendingen mod Mengzi er, at den stærke betoning af medmenneskelighed, hvis den ikke relateres til en sådan distinktion, ikke alene kan føre til "godhedshykleri", men også til undertrykkelse af friheden. Samtidig afviser Yan Fu både eskapistisk-egoistiske former for daoisme og den egoisme som han ser vokse frem i forlængelse af mødet med vesten. I stedet er konklusionen, at hvis man handler til egen gavn i Zhuangzi-Yang Zhu's forstand, så vil dette ikke alene føre til en realisering af de klassiske kongfuzianismes værdier, men også inddrage aspekter af Mozi's ide om universel kærlighed.

Tredje del: Nytte og frihed i et dannesperspektiv

Vi har indtil nu argumenteret for, at nytte og frihed bør tænkes sammen, ikke mindst for at kunne skelne mellem den lille og den store nytte. Indirekte har et omdrejningspunkt været, at dannelse og kultivering spiller en vigtig rolle ift. både nytte og frihed. På den baggrund vil vi afslutte vores filosofiske skitse med at belyse forholdet mellem frihed og nytte i et mere eksplicit dannesperspektiv, mere specifikt ved at starte med at betragte begrebet om kreativitet ift. frihedsbegrebet, og herudfra bevæge os videre over i dannesspørgsmålet.

Kreativitet, det store nyttebegreb og læringsspørgsmålet

Både Mill og Yan Fu hævder betydningen af individets værdi og frihed. Men hvor Mills fortolkning hævder en frihedsopfattelse, man kunne kalde konfliktuel, og som er grundet i lige dele erkendelsesteoretisk pessimisme og individuel kreativitet og som derfor bedst udfoldes i en brydning mellem meninger, der hævder Yan Fu en frihedsopfattelse, vi kan kalde harmoniserende, og som ud fra Zhuangzi er grundet i en erkendelsesteoretisk optimisme og individets mulighed for at handle til eget bedste ud fra en fri selvkultivering, der som en harmoniserende indsigt også medfører sociale dy-

der, og som derfor bedst udfoldes igennem den enkeltes mulighed for at realisere "sig selv".

Hvordan lærer man friheden eller den store nytte at kende?

Det bringer os frem til spørgsmålet om hvorledes vi kan forstå fri selvkultivering? Det er her interessant at Huang gør opmærksom på, hvorledes Mills positive frihedsbegreb hænger sammen med hans fortolkning af Humboldt og den tyske romantiske tradition, og i forlængelse heraf i modsætning til Yan Fu, argumenterer for en stærk modsætning mellem det vestlige fokus på individuel kreativitet og daoismens naturalistisk-holistiske karakter. Vi vil imidlertid ud fra en refleksion over koblingen mellem dannelse og frihed i en læringsfilosofisk tekst i denne tradition, nemlig Schillers Æstetiske Breve (1795/1996) påpege, at denne tradition ikke blot består af ren individuel kreativitet (som hos Mill er kombineret med erkendelsesteoretisk pessimisme) men også kan tænkes helhedsorienteret, særligt socialt og politisk.

Schillers æstetiske breve

Schiller er på den ene side inspireret af det, som Hegel senere så som Kants internalisering af Rousseaus begreb om den almene vilje i det kategoriske imperativ, men er samtidig i højere grad end Kant optaget af at se spændingen mellem det indre almen-moraliske diktum og de selviske naturlige tilbøjeligheder, ikke blot som et etisk spørgsmål, men også som et politisk problem ift. at realisere det gode samfund. Schiller ser i lyset af den franske revolutions rædsler dette problem som tæt forbundet med forsøget på via revolution at indføre et ideal, retsstaten, som imidlertid af filosofisk antropologiske grunde ikke kan finde fodfæste inden for en mere konfliktuel samfundsorden, som Schiller når frem til at kalde den dynamiske stat.

Schillers svar er at pege på muligheden af at erfare et interesseløst "spil" mellem "formdriften" i det kategoriske imperativ og "livsdriften" i den enkeltes tilbøjeligheder, som dette spil kommer til udtryk i erfaringen af "det skønne" gennem det Schiller betegner som "legedriften". For Schiller udgør dette et ubestemt formidlingspunkt, der som sådan er frihedens første mulighed, i tiden, og som derved kan være afsættet for en gradueret dannelse af det enkelte

menneske til den mere almene moralske orden, som findes i en udfoldet retsstat (AP frem for TP).

Vi kan således i den tyske romantiske tradition for det første finde positioner, der ikke blot peger på et legende ubestemt element knyttet sammen med et frihedsbegreb, (som vi har betonet i det store nyttebegreb), men som samtidig i tråd med Huangs udgave af Yan Fu ser det dannelsesmæssige potentiale som orienteret ikke blot mod subjektets egen kreativitet, for så vidt at denne primært forbindes med en fundamental erkendelsesteoretisk fallabisme (Huang's indvending imod at koble Yan Fu og den romantiske tradition sammen), men som forbundet med en fundamental indsigt i det moralsk gode, som samtidig knyttes til et politisk projekt, etableringen af retsstaten.

Det interessante er, at det æstetiske som vejen til dannelse af friheden ikke blot bliver et middel, det bliver samfundsmæssigt også et mål: Schiller opererer i det 27. brev med tre statsbegreber (samfundsordener): den dynamiske stat, den etiske stat og den æstetiske stat (Schiller 1996: 133) For så vidt at æstetikken forsat viser hen til frihedens ubestemte mulighed i tiden, er det nemlig ikke nok en gang for alle at blot etablere "lovens majestæt" i den etiske stat. For at leve op til ideen om det gode/utopiske samfund skal der gives rum for den forsatte ubestemte udfoldelse af det æstetiske i legedriften også mellem mennesker og i de institutioner, der er indbygget i en sådan samfundsorden. Der er med andre ord indbygget en anerkendelsesdimension i tanken om den æstetiske stat som en form for "Gesamtkunstwerk".

Konklusion

Vi har i artiklen rejst spørgsmålet om, hvorvidt mennesker og samfund bør orientere handlinger og indretninger efter, hvad der har nytteværdi. For at svare på det har vi udviklet en filosofisk skitse, der går ud på at forfølge, hvordan nyttebegrebet historisk er blevet sat i forbindelse med frihedsbegrebet, og hvorledes forbindelsen skaber en distinktion mellem den lille og den store nytte. Gennem en fremlæsning af positioner i klassisk kinesisk filosofi har vi vist, at diskussioner her mellem dydsetik og utilitarisme vedrører den lille nytte, forstået som det at tage et bestemt semantisk nytteunivers for givet. Således er begge positioner enige om, hvad der er gavnligt, nemlig at skabe et harmonisk samfund, men uenige om,

hvordan man skal orientere sig for at skabe et sådan: skal man kultivere sociale dyder (den kongfuzianske position) eller skal man efterleve principper (den moistske position). Heroverfor har vi med Zhuangzi problematiseret ethvert forsøg på at etablere en lille nyttetænkning, der på kunstig vis fastlåser en bestemt orden, som eviggyldig. Vi har herudfra betonet den store nytte, der består i det at blive fri af alle ordener, hvilket vi med Biesta har kaldt for subjektifikation som modsætning til de to andre positioner – som lægger op til kvalifikation (moisme) og socialisation (kongfuziansime) til bestemte ordener.

Vi har dernæst foretaget et spring frem til kinesisk kulturs møde med vesten omkring det 20. århundredes begyndelse. Især har vi set på Yan Fus oversættelser og syn på Mill. Herudfra har vi kompliceret forholdet mellem nytte og frihed, for at vise, hvorledes et sådan inter-filosofisk møde afslører yderligere aspekter som afgørende. Vi har her vist, at det er afgørende, om man tænker ud fra hhv. erkendelsesteoretisk optimisme eller pessimisme, og hvorvidt man tænker ud fra en konfliktuel (Mill) eller harmoniserende (Yan Fu) frihedsforståelse. Centralt i disse udredninger er, at både frihed og nytte har en eksistentiel dimension, som vi har kaldt for "det indre", og en samfundspolitisk dimension, som vi har kaldt for "det ydre". Endelig har vi i artiklens tredje del skitseret, hvorledes disse dimensioner kan tænkes sammen ud fra et dannelsesperspektiv. Vores udgangspunkt har her været Schiller, der peger på det dynamiske samspil mellem livsdrift og formdrift og herudfra integrerer "den store nytte" (frihedens ubestemthed) som del af et højere ideal om et godt samfund, således, at dette kan defineres ved også altid at rumme mulighed for det, vi har kaldt for subjektifikation. Vores konklusion er således, at det vigtigste ift. nytte og gavnlighed er at indrette et samfund og kultivere en dannelse, der aldrig fuldstændig forudbestemmer, hvad der er gavnligt, men holder det åbent.

Litteratur

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Noter

- 1 Afgrænsningen har til formål at undersøge centrale syn på nytte i den klassiske kinesiske filosofi. En videre undersøgelse må medindtage flere positioner, især den legalistiske skoles nyttetænkning.
- 2 Som tekstgrundlag for *Analekterne*: se den danske oversættelse af Jørgen Klubin (1955). Engelske oversættelser og den originale kinesiske tekst kan findes på <http://ctext.org>. De tekststeder vi især trækker på er: Bog IV: kapitel 11, 12 og 16; Bog V kapitel 11; Bog XIII: kapitel 17.
- 3 Se især: Mozi Bog 1: Selvkultivering; afsnit 4; Mozi Bog 1: Nødvendigheden af standarder; afsnit 4; Mozi Bog 4: Universel kærlighed III, afsnit 1. Engelske oversættelser og den originale kinesiske tekst kan findes på <http://ctext.org>.
- 4 Som tekstgrundlag for Mengzi anvender vi dels den danske oversættelse (Egerod 1953), dels engelske oversættelser og den kinesiske origi-

nal, der kan findes på <http://ctext.org>. Det tekststed vi især trækker på er: Mengzi: Liang Huei Wang I: kapitel 1, afsnit 1.

- 5 Som tekstgrundlag for Zhuangzi anvendes Watson 2013. Den originale kinesiske tekst kan findes på <http://ctext.org>. De tekststeder vi især trækker på er: Zhuangzi, de indre kapitler, slutningen af kapitel 1. Se også Graham 1989.
- 6 Se fx Schwartz 1964, der også analyserer Yan Fu's møde med vesten, men i mindre grad betoner de idehistoriske og filosofiske aspekter og mere ser Yan Fu som pragmatiker (altså som orienteret imod det lille nyttebegreb). Se også Metzger 1977. I denne bog udfolder Metzger (der også har skrevet et forord til Huang's bog) en generel model for forståelsen af mødet mellem Vesten og Kina ved at kombinere idehistoriske analyser af neokongfuzianismens udvikling med analyser af, hvorledes denne udvikling blev afspejlet i det kinesiske embedsværks kulturelle grammatik på Yan Fu's tid. Huang's bog kan i en vis udstrækning ses som et Metzger-inspireret detailstudie af Yan Fu.

