

Philosophy as Estrangement

Raffnsøe, Sverre

Document Version
Final published version

Publication date:
2013

License
CC BY-NC-ND

Citation for published version (APA):
Raffnsøe, S. (2013). *Philosophy as Estrangement*. Copenhagen Business School [wp].

[Link to publication in CBS Research Portal](#)

General rights

Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the public portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

Take down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us (research.lib@cbs.dk) providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

Download date: 01. Dec. 2021



PHILOSOPHY AS ESTRANGEMENT
Sverre Raffnsøe

MPP Working Paper Series WP 2/2013

ISBN 978-87-91839-36-8
ISSN: 1396-2817

www.cbs.dk/mpp

PHILOSOPHY AS ESTRANGEMENT

Sverre Raffnsøe

Professor

Department of Management, Politics and Philosophy
Copenhagen Business School

Philosophy because I can and could not help it ...

I never became interested in philosophy primordially or originally. There is no source event or transformation that I can recall as being *the* defining moment. Stating 'It began here!' would be misleading... I am not even certain that I originally attained an interest, or even that I still am interested in philosophy as a privileged object of investigation and investment - an aim in itself.

There are, however, moments and situations in my life where an interest in philosophy has appeared or is necessarily forced upon me; these are times when philosophy appears as a seemingly unavoidable and essential questioning of fundamentals, - as a 'basic' need. This being said, it can be annoying as well as cumbersome. Philosophy as a 'basic' need makes itself felt as an estrangement that has always already taken place. It takes the form of a "Schritt zurück" in which one pulls away from, problematizes and reconsiders the given, including the given sense of community, its presuppositions and even the given self. As now, where I find myself writing this at a seaside hotel and consider whether I would prefer to stroll to the restaurant and chat with friends rather than continue taking pains to scrutinize and reflect. Incidentally a well-known 'philosophical' 'solution' or resort since Hume. Concurrently, however, I sense that this latter choice may be lacking in philosophical substance. In such situations, philosophy becomes equated with a tendency towards seclusion - even with being secluded from myself.

At times, the tendency to philosophize goes too far and may even become insurmountable, or result in a doubt too great to master. *In extremis* this is a state that gives rise to not only an experience of alienation, but also to feelings of isolation, loneliness, insecurity and despair, as is evident when Descartes describes how he finally reaches for the bottom without reaching rock bottom and finds himself suspended at the beginning of his second meditation: "The Meditation of yesterday has filled my mind with so many doubts, that it is no longer in my power to forget them. Nor do I see, meanwhile, any principle on which they can be resolved; and, just as if I had fallen all of a sudden into very deep water, I am so greatly disconcerted as to be unable either to plant my feet firmly on the bottom or sustain myself by swimming on the surface." Still, the experience of problematization may disappear again, only to be replaced by a sigh of relief that it (hopefully) transpired without incident, but also leaving an uncertain longing for what it could have been or might have led to.

So, I probably never became "primordially interested in philosophy", so as to retain a constant and unproblematic thirst for knowledge, concerning philosophy in its

entirety or even its parts. Rather, I seem to have become 'originally', i.e. unconditionally, incontrovertibly and repeatedly fascinated with philosophy as an activity, into which I am placed in the here and now of things. This occurs willingly and reluctantly, again and again, only for the motivation to loose its intensity, and then to force itself upon me again and again once more.

Overall, I do not find myself working within philosophy as an established field. I experience myself as being simultaneously within, outside and then within once more. I am constantly on the edge of philosophy, relating to it. On points of uncertainty, I am challenged by it and attempt to locate an opening, as if having to step across a boundary or threshold, which I sense I am doomed never to cross. I therefore 'live' in a phase of the 'original' emergence and destruction of philosophy. In relating to philosophy, I therefore constantly encounter my own limits and insufficiency, often coupled with a sensation of never being finished, of never arriving at one's destination.

Being asked why I became interested in philosophy therefore leaves me with at least two answers: firstly because I can and have been able, and secondly because I couldn't help myself.

In this sense the first answer is exceedingly simple: I take and have taken an interest to philosophy both because I can and have been able to. If you cannot, it is obviously not possible. I seem to have had the capacity to overcome the inherent challenges to thinking philosophically. Also, what I have done apparently rang a bell with others, which made it meaningful to push on. Indeed, this was in no way or manner obvious, a choice that was mine to take, or even a course of events that I was in command of. Apparently, however, I was always willing to live with philosophy as described above. As a friend's love of a more basic of wisdom, a love which is so modest and generous that one need not be a master of it, or own the object of desire. This is a love, which has a price and has a slightly grandiose humility about itself.

Either way, this ability or willingness is not merely a matter of choice or intent in any traditional sense of the word. It also contains an aspect of doubt: Will I be able, will it resonate, and will I be willing to endure the ordeal the next time? The next time, which is always already in the process of coming about – right now! Will it be worth it? Will I be able to overcome the challenge? In so many words, the 'exceedingly simple' ability or art of performing philosophy will never be a matter of course, but always challenged and challenging. Although it continues and is found in extension of that which came before, it must also begin anew every single time.

Consequently, the other answer is, in and of itself, also rather simple: I do philosophy because I have always already commenced this endeavour and because I am constantly being guided into it. It is therefore not merely a matter of being able, but also a matter of inevitability – of not being able to stop.

Philosophy considered as a tendency to problematize and "go behind" the basis for common sense assumptions is, as far as I see, an extension of everyday life, since this involves a tendency to problematize itself and common sense (doxa). It is therefore an integral aspect of 'usual' life that it is in itself a process of constant learning; that one is constantly inclined to view the given at a more basic level. Philosophy is therefore not merely done out of desire, ability or intellectual surplus, but out of need, distress and necessity. You do it, because you are pushed into the tendency to philosophize - because you cannot avoid it.

The present and its ethos

In philosophy as I practice it, the constant and rudimentary tendency to problematize the present daily life takes centre stage is intensified and given support. When navigating historical and social practice, we seem constantly to distance ourselves from a given, communal normativity which has been passed on to us and to which we have been committed. We therefore seem to be leaving an ethos or customary practice all the while its normative requirements still apply as the dominant conception for society.

Currently, we are committed to and guided by the auspices of freedom to such a degree that we are obliged to constantly promote it. It seems absolutely necessary to be able and willing to overcome what confronts us, to such an extent that we may relate freely and independently to it. However, it may well be that we do not ourselves carry the responsibility for the limitations that surround us and the dependencies that we face; and yet we ascribe each other responsibility regarding how to take these issues upon ourselves. At first we might not be at the centre of the world and its challenges, but this does not mean that we can avoid the responsibility of setting ourselves up as the centre of our own lives.

For a long time, such a commitment has become increasingly important. Today we are therefore confronted with the call and the challenge that Kant formulated 200 years ago in *What is Enlightenment*. Enlightenment was the requirement for man to leave behind the apparently easy state of "tutelage" and "self-incurred immaturity", which he constantly brought upon himself when, due to "laziness" and "cowardice", he submitted himself to "alien guidance." Against this, Kant proposed the motto of the Enlightenment: *Sapere Aude*, namely to renounce the easy, lazy and gutless dependence on external circumstance and instead to courageously seize power through independent reflexion. Today we are all challenged by the call to move beyond this and instead become self-reliant by daring to take responsibility, to relate and reflect independently. Freedom - as a coming of age - must constantly be established. It is an offer you cannot refuse and a huge commitment. Indeed, our greatest fear is not being able to will: not being able to ensure own and communal willingness to overcome tutelage and challenges - not being able to want and to will (freedom).

Insofar as an *ethos* has been passed down to us and still constitutes a common frame of reference, [...] and although we may be leaving it behind, it risks being given the status of a 'idée fixe', a static and obsessive idea, that repeats itself, no matter what else happens. In this case it becomes a continuous lie, since it reduces the differences that created it - it represses what might have otherwise appeared. In ancient Greece one had to fulfil a normative requirement to stand out and be noticed. Today, each and everyone should be able to want and to will this. The challenge has become generalised to the extent that even social clients must develop a plan for future activities, even deeply depressive psychiatric patients must exhibit agency by actively participating in treatment. Even the homeless must be empowered and the pupil at school must evaluate own learning. One must be competent and able, which in turn requires wanting to will; and where one borders on the farthest limits of one's abilities, it becomes utterly important to will (again).

The examination of a contemporary ethos distinguishes itself from a sociological or historical analysis in any traditional sense of the word. The aim is not to give a complete description of how we actually relate and what happens. Describing the pretensions of an age is less comprehensive than describing reality. The aim of the project is 'merely' to examine the level of normativity and prescriptivism. However, one hereby examines how guidelines are established. Indeed, these are guidelines that determine how we view ourselves and the world we inhabit - how we come to influence the world and leave traces on it. In this sense the level

of ambition is higher in this kind of investigation. This is because the level of normativity determines what we are able to perceive, conceive and implement and thereby what can become real and attain existence in a wider sense. As such, the level of normativity takes precedence over the factual; it is more important than the real and more essential than the being.

This approach prolongs and renews a long tradition of metaphysics and critique of metaphysics. The issue is to examine the conditions for the world's appearance and attaining being. Note however that this is done so as to attain a distance from the already given limitations, which is not the same as disregarding them, since there are good reasons for their being in effect.

Philosophy with passion

Such thinking opens a fissure in regard to posited and persistent contemporary totalities. Philosophy therefore attains the character of what Theodor W. Adorno from the Frankfurter School would call 'mourning'. Philosophy mourns the loss of an 'ideal' totality that has never been. It does this by constantly showing its insufficiency by questioning it in various ways. Hereby, philosophy repeatedly re-opens wounds from past ruptures. All the while, philosophy affirms this rupture making it possible to think the – as of yet - unthinkable. In so many words, philosophy creates a space in which the subjected, the minority or the other can appear.

It is exactly in force of philosophy focusing upon and strengthening an already existing deficiency in the social, as well as an ability to comprehend what appears in this fissure between given categories that it may open up possibilities and thereby cherish a hope. This hope implies an expectation and even anticipation of something, which has a character that is still unknown to us. For the sensation of wonder to come about, one must be acutely aware of one's own ignorance while having an initial spark of understanding and the hope to understand.

Philosophy is therefore also an *exodus*: an affirmation of leaving the world as you know it and entering one you do not yet know. Philosophy, as I view it, partly *forces me into exile* all the while this exile is also something I seek. This places me in a strange limbo, in a temporary state of parting, since I am forced to leave my homeland, without ever completely cutting all ties. An uncertain period of awaiting a decision or resolution is inflicted upon the pagans and philosophers that did not accept Christ, at least according to Dante. This limbo, however, still yields the promise of something more (Raffnsøe, 2009), of being able to go somewhere else even though one may never fully arrive in a new and promised land.

Insofar as philosophy is working with, and the workings of, an existence that is already *problematic* and even *problematizes itself*, there are *social* as well as *existential* components to philosophical thought. Thinking initiates a social, historical and personal existence, which it relates to and seeks to transform. For this very reason, philosophy is endowed with an existential effort that reaches beyond the merely cognitive. Philosophy, understood as an *amplification of daily (self-)problematization*, is therefore also a *burden*. It is connected with an effort and maladjustment of thought, wherefore it includes an *askesis* for, limitation of and restraint for existence.

To the extent that philosophy is a desire or even a lust, this lust is not immediately given, but rather mediate and conditional. It appears, as described by the German, Enlightenment philosopher Immanuel Kant, in connection with the sublime. When we relate to and reach for the sublime, our desire is – according to *The Critique of Judgment* –

closely related to and alternates with pain or displeasure. This is a displeasurable pleasure and a pleasurable displeasure, since it happens in circumstances that are almost too great to be contained. Perhaps this is why the challenge is so tantalizing, but also dysphoric, oppressive and burdensome. Even when existence proves able to conceive and retain what it seeks, this happens in spite. It is as if displeasure transforms into pleasure by my being able to transcend previous limitations, until I once more encounter and experience my limitations, and is prompted to reach out beyond myself...

Perhaps powerful emotions such as sorrow, hope, happiness, worry and ecstasy are more appropriate in describing the emotional range encountered in the philosopher when he does what he does. Sorrow, worry and anxiety for oneself are experienced as existence meets its limitations and is sent back to ponder upon itself in isolation. It may then, at times, be replaced by an overwhelming happiness felt when transcending the boundaries just experienced. This may be described as a hope and enthusiasm, which borders on the ecstatic. With a number of thinkers, such as Nietzsche, Heidegger and Foucault, philosophy is related to a subdued *Verrücktheit*, an ecstatic release and forgetfulness of the self. In return this has a sorrowful dimension to it, insofar as the self is torn from itself and turns out to be a di-vidual, an ec-static existence, which contains its own memento and thereby melancholia. Perhaps the experience of such a self-transcending happiness, ecstasy and liberating melancholia is a vital component in taking up the challenge of performing philosophy.

For all these reasons, it is misleading to consider philosophy an immediately useful activity that contributes to and improves its surroundings. Philosophy is certainly not an absolute or unambiguous value, a goal that must be pursued on its own conditions. As Wittgenstein and Cavell emphasize, philosophy is something that must be taken up judiciously and with an eye on when to begin and when to finish. The unfathomable and insurmountable task of thinking his way beyond metaphysics cost the German philosopher and social-diagnostician Nietzsche his mind in the latter half of his life. This included headaches and dizziness until he finally collapsed. Although Nietzsche was aware of the ambivalence in philosophy - that it was not at all an absolute or univocally positive activity - he was not able to moderate his thinking. He did not practice *sophrosyne*: healthy-mindedness and control with regard to philosophical thought, and consequently, had to incur the costs.

Subject-areas and transcendence

As implied above, I find it difficult to point out a special discipline within philosophy which I adhere to in particular. In previous publications I have been concerned with 'special areas of interest'. These include philosophical aesthetics (Raffnsøe 1989, 1996/1998, 2009); history of philosophy and ideas (Raffnsøe, 2002); metaphysics and ontology, philosophy of language and philosophical semantics in regard to the humanities and their status (Raffnsøe, Gudmand-Høyer, Thaning 2008/2009/2010); method and analytical strategies in the social sciences, but also social philosophy and the philosophy of law (Raffnsøe 2002, 2002a); medicine and medical history, knowledge and knowledge society (Johnsen & Raffnsøe, 2008). I have given interpretative introductions to various philosophical authorships (Rendtorff, Raffnsøe, Diderichsen 2003; Raffnsøe & Gudmand-Høyer & Thaning 2008/2009/ 2010), all the while I have studied phenomena such as rule following (Raffnsøe 2002; Leth & Raffnsøe 2009) and the linguistic turn (Raffnsøe 2002); experience and event, trust and power (Thygesen & Vallentin & Raffnsøe 2008/2009); welfare, happiness and prosperity, economy, gift economy and social exchange (Thygesen, Vallentin, Raffnsøe 2008/2009). At the present I am concerned with

leadership and self-management (Raffnsøe 2010), which in turn involves the philosophy and history of management in terms of social contracts, -ties, -diagnostics and -criticism.

However, it is difficult to ascribe any one of these areas of research a privileged role in my work. I am not able to view these subject-areas as self-contained objects, which can be taken up in isolation. Rather, I have sought to articulate and reflect upon them, by considering them in a wider context and in relation to each other. At the same time, I have sought to trace their connections with other areas outside philosophy and regular spheres of science. My most important contributions therefore consist in demonstrating *the insufficiency of treating these areas as delimited and isolated, by showing how* they upon closer inspection transcend their own boundaries and point towards a wider context.

In this way, I have sought to open the previously mentioned fissure in regard to given totalities of our time, so as to avoid an ever-present inclination towards totalitarianism, precisely by establishing a difference in what is taken to be obvious and factual. My 'original' interest in philosophy may be spurred on, not through a univocally constructive, but rather reconstructive effort, which has been fuelled by pointing out the possibility of transcending as an option already present by further commemorating and reflecting upon it.

Taking this into account, I have not treated any subject-area as a limited field (of interest) that could be manoeuvred so as to possess, cultivate and develop, review or manage them. Such a terminology could predispose one towards a certain and vile territorial possessiveness and even know-it-all attitude that has been a part of philosophy's self-affirmation since Kant confirmed and argued for the division of knowledge into various "Felder", fields or units of knowledge and validity, which one took into possession and asserted sovereignty of. This feudal approach to philosophy is related to the idea of philosophy as an only seemingly humble aid (to society) within "my specialist field", even though at first glance these may seem opposed. Dissociating myself from a possessive approach, I have sought to concern myself with a contradictory constellation of opposing forces, which I as philosopher was inscribed within and therefore should dedicate myself to experiencing and understanding. By experience I mean an event, which occurs for and which happens to the cognising individual (Raffnsøe, 2002). As I understand it, experience is therefore not merely the cognition of an object, but also a self-transformative moment for the self.

For this reason, I do not consider my contribution to the subject-areas as a univocal mode of problem solving. I relate to the particular field so as to insert the given issue into a wider and more comprehensive context, such that its overly obvious character is shifted and transformed. This kind of meditation on what is more essential in and to an apparently isolated event must be viewed as a core challenge in philosophy.

From my first book on aesthetics (Raffnsøe, 1996/98) over my doctoral thesis (Raffnsøe, 2002) and until today, it has been important for me to show that one can only properly understand what is at risk within certain disciplines when transcending specialisation. It has been necessary to examine and show how these areas are constituted as core objects that confront us with certain problems in force of their location in a juncture. On the one hand they are constituted through an extended history, all the while we are already in the process of leaving that historical commitment behind us, such that it no longer seems so obvious, but rather takes on the format of a problematical history. In this regard, it has been important for me to show that, if one wants to understand what is at risk within the field, one cannot merely consider what happens within these disciplines as an answer to received problems, but rather comprehend it as a contemporary contribution into a wider social

context, which it wants to partake in altering or recreating. This is all done to think through and reconsider these fields of study and as a way of thinking differently, even more generally.

Specialisation and isolation of certain subject areas, often associated with a very specific mode of scientific thought, can constitute a sound outset, but it likewise risks becoming a drawback, which must be overcome in order to think philosophically. If this is not done, it is no longer possible for philosophy to follow Hegel's dictum to think concretely rather than in abstract terms. Should that be the case, philosophy risks reinforcing a contemporary propensity to abstract simplifications, which predisposes to prejudice and rejection of the Other. Philosophy will remain ignorant, if it is not willing to understand and reconcile with interaction, by exploring its place and role within a wider context - by recognizing and accessing its limited claim to truth.

The relevance of philosophy - philosophy and other sciences

The ability to remain concrete while thinking comprehensively - rather than letting the matter remain in abstraction and isolation - is a hallmark of philosophy. This feature may concern life as such, but also "other sciences". However, we must avoid equating philosophy with the widespread misconception that it should live up to the requirements in the modern conception of natural science. The willingness to research and explore are more important to philosophy than the requirement to stick with some previously defined scientific method or conception in order to gain legitimacy. On the contrary, it is an essential feature of my approach to thinking that it inquires into, reflects upon and problematizes modes of justification at a fundamental level, as these apply not only to the sciences, but also philosophical and societal methodologies. Exploring modes of justification has been a common feature of my work. I have examined which modalities (self-)substantiation may take in a situation where the traditional approaches to legitimisation are no longer obvious and often even appear to be insufficient. Philosophy cannot become scientific on its own terms before it takes up a problematizing approach to its own justification and that found in other forms of practice.

Traditional scientific activities that concern a certain subject, in abstraction and in its own right as isolated from its surroundings, risk confirming specialization and parcelling of cognition, only to become overly abstract narrow-minded and short sighted. This is obviously true for one specific, presently canonised mode of science such as economy. This highly abstract science is so self-evident that it has become a modern metaphysics, which does not know its own limits, but rather assumes that it can disclose an unmediated reality, without noticing *that* it misses something and *what* that something could be. Philosophy has an important task in regard to such naturalized sciences, namely to penetrate them and articulate the constituent assumptions or conditions of possibility from which they set out and spring into existence. When philosophy points out an area's limitations and gives an indication of its potential for self-transcendence, it reaches for something concrete, namely the particularism inherent in that science that at one and the same time gives it its limitation, perspective and connectivity.

Thinking the particular, concrete and controversial in given sciences is an important challenge and opportunity for current philosophy. In some regards, philosophy has had a tendency to write its own history over and against individual sciences as an on-going history of loss. Emphasis has been upon how philosophy has played a lesser role, since it constantly lost territory through the birth of independent sciences and areas of study. What is left for philosophy is allegedly very limited. I am, however, inclined to view this development

from the opposite perspective: not as an on-going loss, but as a continuous growth and addition. Establishing new modes of cognition is a challenge, which spurs philosophical thought. There is for instance a contemporary need to examine the philosophical and social conditions for economy, so as to rethink this science, which all too evidently, influences society without its basic assumptions ever being sincerely questioned. All in all, the requirement for empirical validation in scientific cognition and social praxis often confirms the status quo, at the cost of what could have been.

Philosophy as a praxis and historical activity

For me philosophy diverges from 'normal science' in force of not identifying with, working from or contributing to a given or closed field. Rather, philosophy is a kind of scientific practice that is allied with and committed to concrete areas of knowledge by looking into their placement and basic assumptions. As a result, philosophy cannot merely perceive science as praxis, but must view it as a response, reflection and contribution to some activity. Philosophy as I practise it, is concerned with theory as thinking and therefore as a considered practices. It must grasp the practice of theory and the theory of practice. This may seem a slight shift of approaches, but it is decisive, because it changes everything. Cognition is therefore not the contemplation (theoria) of circumstances and what is the case. It is rather given the status of practical consideration. This is how I understand my most important contributions to philosophy in its current form. It has been important to retain how philosophy speaks to its time and context, but it has likewise been important to indicate how this has had implications for its own being. Philosophy is a historical activity and this should influence the role it takes and how it expresses itself. It is characteristic of modern continental philosophy that it not only relates to time and history as external conditions for its ability to speak the truth, but also that it has reflected upon time and history as its own internal conditions of possibility as well as upon the consequences this has for its own truth telling. From Husserl to Heidegger, over Derrida and Foucault, philosophy has examined and reflected upon its own historical modality or historicity; if philosophy is to play a central role in its time, then reflection upon philosophy's own time and temporality and their implications for constitutive conditions of philosophy is still an important challenge to take up.

For these reasons, I may have been especially provoked by and interested in fields of study that obviously had something incomplete or non-terminating about them. At the very least, I have sought to emphasise and reopen their incompleteness or non-terminating features.

Reconceptualising the social ties that bind us

The mentioned approaches and outsets are already emphatically present in my early works on aesthetics, which appeared in extension of my degrees in philosophy and literary science. Among these is found my prize-winning dissertation (Raffnsøe, 1989) and *Filosofisk Æstetik* (*Philosophical Aesthetics*, 1996 and 1998). Through these studies it became apparent how the concern with a limited field of study was taken up as a contribution to a wider social and political context. Aesthetics and philosophical aesthetics first become autonomous fields in an effort to retain a common normative denominator as a starting point where this is no longer possible as such. Rather, it must be taken up in a circumvention, namely via the aesthetical route. Therefore the aesthetical becomes a field or a level where one seeks to present a common social commitment in the form of a continuous search for that very social commitment.

What had been the case for the aesthetical becomes even more marked in the doctoral thesis *Coexistence without Common Sense I-III* (Raffnsøe, 2002). Here I build upon and develop a number of established sciences and fields of knowledge, spanning jurisprudence and history of law, history, sociology, political and social science, literature and literary science. The basic aim being to illuminate an overall shift in the nature of current social ties. Insofar as this is a re-writing of various forms of science perceived as contributions to a general social issue, I view the thesis as an important documentation of a consistent effort in my philosophy.

The shift in current social ties suggests that we are no longer able to construe ourselves as belonging to some overarching unity, as was the case when we were searching for agreement on certain basic values. Instead, we seem to be connected by various unities in a variety of regards. Different threads weave the social fabric, among which are law and order, systems of discipline, welfare and negotiation etc. These each appear as constructions that can be taken up and altered, but they cannot be taken up all at once. Such a social fabric unites us, since it determines how we relate, but also how we relate to ourselves.

The aim of mapping such a multitude of social connections is not to remind us of a commitment to them, but rather to articulate them, such that we can counteract becoming their unknowing propagators. This makes it possible to reflect upon and relate to what constantly disposes us towards certain actions. It thus becomes possible to counteract the overarching danger of men, in Thoreau's words, becoming: "the tools of their tools", meaning that man becomes a tool for technologies that we use in relating to each other. Here we risk dehumanising man in making him subject to an alien logic, thus only reaching the level of the less than human or subhuman. Insofar as it is possible to reflect upon and relate independently to such logic, man may recreate himself anew.

Foucault and contemporary diagnosis

A thoroughgoing analysis of how a number of social tools or ("dispositives") come about through our interaction and comes to determine how we relate can be found with the French philosopher Foucault. His main aim with such an analysis and approach was to challenge the all too determinate character of such dispositives. In fact, this determination occurs already before we are aware of it: Its workings happen unnoticed. Foucault's mode of analysis and authorship therefore play a comprehensive role in the previously mentioned thesis.

Along with my co-authors, I have attempted to give a more basic insight into Foucault's thought by writing a book about his authorship (Raffnsøe, Gudmand-Høyer, Thaning 2008/2009), which has been published in German (Raffnsøe et al. 2010) and is in the process of being prepared for publication in English. In extension of Nietzsche and Kant, we seek to show that Foucault attains the character of a contemporary diagnostician, insofar as he seeks to determine how contemporary tendencies influence us. Since such engaged, situated and normative thought examines the yardsticks in the making, it likewise points out other yardsticks, which must be precluded in the analysis. The work is therefore given the character of an on-going articulation of a previously implicit normativity.

While we demonstrate the strengths in such an approach, we also show how it raises a number of new questions and issues. Insofar as the normativity in contemporary diagnosis is characterised by a continuing shift, it becomes difficult to give a definite point in time for its beginning and conclusion from which one can speak and justify one's analysis and which gives clear contours of the analysis and its precise commitments and effects.

Present research project – managing self-management

The nature of contemporary social ties is studied in a four-year research programme: *Management of Self-Management*, which is based upon 6.4 million kroner (0.86 mio. Euro) financing from *Velux Fonden*. In collaboration with 8 other researchers from my department, I have examined how modes of management, theories and organisation in modern work-life build upon, assume and promote employees and managerial staff's ability to manage themselves. At the same time, self-management and developing independence has become a mainstream social contract through several hundred years of pre-history: the previously mentioned social contract is developed as a norm for both social and personal existence, as it occurs in the social encounters that extend from basic schooling's teacher-, pupil-, parent-meetings to the treatment plans that are included in rehabilitation programmes for the mentally ill. However, this is also included in normal careers, when one signs and further develops agreements with the manager as a norm for social and personal existence. Life hereby tends towards an endless self-examination, in which *Bildung* or personal character development not only occurs within the settings of educational institutions, but has been generalised through an ever present transformation process of reconstruction as we strive for perfection, which conditions us to want to be able and to will.

This research is found in extension of previous work into various modes of social truth and cohesion. All the while the previously mentioned issues are here found in a heightened or at least intensified form, because it is an examination of how freedom as a commitment to transcend oneself in collaboration with others can be a strangely insubstantial, but also highly efficient and manageable social tie (Raffnsøe, 2010). How to account for the fact that Kant's and the Enlightenment's centuries old encouragement to leave the "self-imposed tutelage", has not only become a widely accepted challenge, but also a common obligation that binds us together? How is such a seemingly paradoxical social connection based upon the connectivity of freedom even possible? What does it imply? What consequences does it have for the individual and society of which one is a part? In addition to managing the project, I am personally interested in examining the normative guidelines for how every individual's self-management is connected with that of others' - this is its *ethos*. Here, concepts such as freedom, welfare and perfectibility, but also liberalism and the totalitarianism of freedom play an important role.

With such new social ties, the humane is ascribed a position of hitherto unknown importance for social cohesion. Humanity – a mode of existence that in Kierkegaard's word is a relation that "relates to itself" and which can first become itself by transcending its immediate form - is less and less an incomprehensible, marginal phenomenon, as it becomes a central actor in the social, an actor, which must be understood, cared for, treated and promoted.

While the research programme is coming to its end, the implications of this transition of the social bond is being studied within a wider context in a new three-year research programme *The Human Turn* that started in 2012. Based upon 5,57 million kroner (0,75 mio Euro) financing from *Velux Fonden*, this programme involves researchers from major Danish Universities, among others Professor Kirsten Hastrup (University of Copenhagen), Professor Anne-Marie Mai (University of Southern Denmark), Professor Uffe Juul Jensen and Associate Professor Morten Raffnsøe-Møller (both Aarhus University), and Assistant Professor Marius Gudmand-Høyer (Copenhagen Business School) (Raffnsøe 2013).

With the human turn, the humane also takes up centre stage in shape of the trans-humane. While I previously noted that there has been a threat of the humane regressing

to the sub-humane, the humane is now confronted with the task of having to live up to the trans-humane: having to live on the edge and occasionally pass the hitherto known optimum for both the species and the individual. With this kind of trans-humanism, man comes into focus as that which no longer knows itself and its core, but which must re-invent himself or herself on the edge of that very same self. It is therefore an important task to examine and to manage this (trans)-humanity.

We are in a society where the greatest defect is, in the words of Proust: *Ne pas savoir, ne pas pouvoir "vouloir"*, not knowing and not "wanting". And the metaphysics of will is, according to the German ontologist Heidegger, the final implication of metaphysics...

In order to facilitate such a critical inquisition into the current social situation, I view it as a challenge to develop new kinds of critique that may replace the out-dated, external, supercilious and lecturing modes of analysis (Raffnsøe 2011b). This could be a critique that took its outset in the German philosopher and literary critic Fr. Schlegel's indication of the true critic not being a judge, but an "Author in der zweiten Potenz". He is an author to the second power, since is productive and seeks to contribute in re-creating and realising the substantial in the work, by following its existing trends to their logical conclusion.

Within the said programme, I examine how the humane in the given sense of the word appears not only in management theory and leadership practice, but also in an even wider context as something unavoidable and essential over the last centuries (Lopdrup-Hjorth/Raffnsøe 2012). Indeed, this is true for a number of sciences at other faculties that previously did not have the humane as a central interest.

In extension of these considerations, the programme *The Human Turn* examines the implications for the humanities – both their situation and character in a wider sense – when the humane takes centre stage in this particular manner. The sciences that investigate and reflect upon the human and on humanity thus attain a new relevance. The humanities may attain a Pyrrhic victory in the process, since they risk increasingly being transformed into human resource management, all the while their strength consists in being so much more. The human sciences can for instance examine which challenges occur, when the creation of value depends on and is required of independent, self-realising beings, while they are asked to do more and qualitatively different things than what was expected of them. Likewise the human sciences can examine what human existence and social cohesion is in the process of becoming, when man is constantly posed the task of transcending the self in his or her immediate form, only to realize him or herself as an authentic being on the border of him or her self.

In a context where man is set the assignment of finding the self by relating to and transcending the self, philosophy may have a special role to fill. This is because the inquiry into man's place in the world, with an outset in non-obvious relations to the self, has played a decisive role since Socrates and possibly even since the pre-Socratic philosophers. Philosophy has been coupled to the aim of giving an account of the self and the other, and for oneself in relation to others, ever since. I simply cannot appear as a self before I am able to account for my Self and my relationship with others and thereby come into existence as a responsible being.

Raffnsøe, Sverre (1989): *Der ønskes en filosofisk diskussion af begrebet om det autonome kunstværk med særligt henblik på Heideggers kunstfilosofi og Adornos æstetiske teori*. Århus.

- Raffnsøe, Sverre (1990): "Udlægning af den idealistiske æstetik". In *Philosophia* årgang 19, nr. 3-4: Århus, pp. 91-123.
- Raffnsøe, Sverre (1992): "Intet sprog er en ø..." In Erslev Andersen, Jørn; Madsen, Carsten; Raffnsøe, Sverre: *Afskrift – om og af Jacques Derrida*. Forlaget Modtryk: Aarhus, pp. 27-45.
- Raffnsøe, Sverre (1995): "Det danske samfund under forandring". In Kühn, Gunver: Carlsbergfondet. Årsskrift 1995. Carlsbergfondet: København, pp. 16-23.
- Raffnsøe, Sverre (1996/1998): *Filosofisk æstetik*. Museum Tusulanums Forlag: København.
- Raffnsøe, Sverre (2001): *Moralens evindelige genkomst*. Gyldendal: København. German edition 2007.
- Raffnsøe, Sverre (2002): *Sameksistens uden common sense. Bind I-III*. Akademisk Forlag: København.
- Raffnsøe, Sverre (2002a): "Order Ordealed. Norms And Social Coherence In The Age Of Law". In *Readings in Philosophy And Science Studies, Vol. 1, 27*: Roskilde.
- Raffnsøe, Sverre (2003): *Sameksistens uden common sense. Oplæg til forsvar for den filosofiske doktorgrad*. Filosofi og videnskabsteori på Roskilde Universitetscenter: Roskilde.
- Raffnsøe, Sverre (2005): "Æstetisk overskridelse". In Thyssen, Ole: *Æstetisk erfaring*. Forlaget Samfundslitteratur: København, pp. 71-108.
- Raffnsøe, Sverre (2008): "Qu-est qu'un dispositif?". In *Symposium. Volume 1*. pp. 44-46.
- Raffnsøe, Sverre (2009): "The exile of art". In Brems, Bodil: *Exil*. Art Centre Silkeborg Bad, Silkeborg, pp. 46-47).
- Raffnsøe, Sverre (2009a): "Prekær velfærd". In Sløk, C.; Villadsen, K.: *Velfærdsledelse. I den selvstyrende velfærdsstat*. Hans Reitzels Forlag: København.
- Raffnsøe, Sverre (2010): "The Obligation of Self-Management: The Social Bonds of Freedom". Villum Foundation & Velux Foundation. Annual Report: København.
- Raffnsøe, Sverre; Gudmand-Høyer, Marius; Thaning, Morten (2008/2009): *Foucault*. Samfundslitteratur: København.
- Raffnsøe, Sverre; Gudmand-Høyer, Marius; Thaning, Morten (2011): *Foucault*. Wilhelm Fink Verlag: München. Forthcoming in English.
- Raffnsøe, Sverre (2011a): "The Five Obstructions: Experiencing the human side of enterprise". *Ephemer*, vol. 11(2), www.ephemeraweb.org: 176-88.
- Raffnsøe, Sverre (2011b): "Kritikkens kritiske stilling i kritikens tidsalder". In Kjældgaard, Lasse Horne (red.): *Kritik 200*. Gyldendal: København: 38-48.
- Raffnsøe, Sverre (2013): "A New Agenda For The Humanities". Villum Foundation & Velux Foundation. Annual Report: København: 72-77.
- Leth, Jørgen; Raffnsøe, Sverre (2009): "At spænde ben for det perfekte". *Turbulens*: København, pp. 79-91.
- Leth, Jørgen; Raffnsøe, Sverre (2011): "Tripping Up the Perfect". *Ephemer*, vol. 11(2), www.ephemeraweb.org: 189-203.
- Lopdrup-Hjort, Thomas; Raffnsøe, Sverre (2012): "Udenfor er afgørende. Værdiskabelsens nye grundbetingelser og erhvervsøkonomiens status". In Raffnsøe-Møller, Morten (red.): *Kapitalismens ansigter*. Philosophia: Aarhus
- Rendtorff, Jacob D.; Raffnsøe, Sverre; Diderichsen, Adam (2003): *Fransk filosofi*. Politikens Forlag: København.
- Thygesen, Niels; Vallentin, Steen; Raffnsøe, Sverre (2008/2009): *Tilliden og magten – om at lede og skabe værdi gennem tillid*. Børsens Forlag, København.