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The Philosophical Facilitation of a Professional Practitioner's Worldview

Filozofska facilitacija o svetovnem nazoru strokovnega delavca

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The Philosophical Facilitation of a Professional Practitioner's Worldview

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Abstract

In this philosophical paper, I review different perspectives on the world-views of professional practitioners. I describe how a philosophical facilitator might help a practitioner adopt a coherent world-view through harmonising their way of being by bringing their actions and thoughts in line with their character.

*In Ancient Greek thought, cosmology was capable of orienting human action only as *theoria*. This means that *theoria* is a person's world-view, which unfolds in the character of that person as their way of being. My main question is, how can a person's *theoria* or world-view become refined and harmonised in that person's thoughts and *praxis*?*

A world-view is a synthesis of a person's wisdom and their ethical, aesthetical, practical and metaphysical reasoning about meaning in life. There will always be conflicts between these different forms of reasoning inside a human being, but the ideal is the Platonic metaphor of the harmonic and energetic soul as a person driving a chariot pulled by two horses.

A philosophical facilitator helps a person to know themselves by directing them towards questions about their world-view. There are many tools to accomplish this goal, such as pointing out logical inconsistencies, using metaphors and analogies, theory orientation or by drawing on art, culture and nature. I will raise philosophical questions and use the art of Edvard Munch to mediate on the character of being.

Keywords: *reflection | question | orientational knowledge | art mediation*

Filozofska facilitacija o svetovnem nazoru strokovnega delavca

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Povzetek

V filozofskem prispevku avtor preučuje različne poglede na svetovni nazor strokovnih delavcev in opisuje, kako lahko filozofski facilitator pomaga strokovnemu delavcu sprejeti skladen pogled na svet, tako da dejanja in misli uskladi z značajem in s tem harmonizira svoj način bivanja.

Stari Grki so menili, da je kozmologija sposobna usmerjati človekovo delovanje zgolj kot *theoria*. To pomeni, da je *theoria* človekov svetovni nazor, ki se v njegovem značaju odraža kot način bivanja. Avtorjevo glavno vprašanje pa je, kako se lahko *theoria* ali človekov pogled na svet izpopolni ter uskladi v njegovih mislih in praksi.

Svetovni nazor je sinteza človekove modrosti ter njegovega etičnega, estetskega, praktičnega in metafizičnega razmišljanja o smislu življenja. Med različnimi oblikami razmišljanja v človeku so vedno prisotni konflikti, vendar pa je ideal platonska prispodoba harmonične in energične duše kot osebe, ki vozi voz, v katerega sta vprežena in ga vlečeta dva konja.

Filozof človeku pomaga spoznati samega sebe tako, da ga usmerja k vprašanju o svojem pogledu na svet. Za doseg tega cilja obstaja veliko orodij, kot so opozarjanje na logične nedoslednosti, uporaba metafor in analogij, usmerjanje v teorijo ali črpanje iz umetnosti, kulture in narave. Avtor bo zastavljal filozofska vprašanja, za mediacijo o značaju bivanja pa bo uporabil umetnost Edvarda Muncha.

Ključne besede: refleksija | vprašanje | orientacijsko znanje | umetniška mediacija

Introduction

To facilitate means to be an external aid in another person's life. In this paper, I will discuss what, if anything, philosophy has to offer the study of facilitation in the service of a professional practitioner. The painting by Edvard Munch in Figure 1 can be used as a metaphor to provoke thought on this question. The facilitator can be seen as the workers providing knowledge (the burden) to a practitioner (the horse). Or, the facilitator can be like the horse removing burdens or wrong thoughts from the practitioner. The facilitator might even be the soil. If we understand the horse as the practitioner's will and the men as the practitioner's reasoning, the facilitator's actions become the soil the practitioner's reasoning picks up and delivers to the will.



Figure 1. Edvard Munch: *Digging Men With Horse and Cart* (1920)

Philosophy as facilitation has a long tradition and is still alive. One of the first cases we know about is Plato, who went to Sicily to facilitate a tyrant's pursuit of the studies necessary for becoming a good statesman. However, Plato understands this facilitation as difficult because it is not possible to rely upon verbal recipes in the search for good statesmanship:

There does not exist, nor will there ever exist, any treatise [handbook on statesmanship] of mine dealing therewith. For it does not at all admit of verbal expression like other studies, but, as a result of continued application to the subject itself and communion therewith, it is brought to birth in the soul on a sudden, as light that is kindled by a leaping spark, and thereafter it nourishes itself. (Plato, Letter 7, 341 c–d)

Plato does not believe that a philosopher can convince someone else to be a good ruler through words or that a human can write a handbook on statesmanship telling the statesman how to lead their own life and the 'polis'.

However, through continued study and communication on subjects such as philosophy and mathematics, the statesman might nourish what is good in themselves. The philosophical facilitator can orient them on the subject and ask questions to create a dialogue until the student has gained enough power to be capable of directing their own actions without the aid of the instructor. For Plato, this means that the soil of facilitation is unchangeable knowledge, which nourishes the person's soul or inner life.

Today, we have a different kind of philosophical facilitation (Fatic and Amir 2015). One philosophical facilitator working with professional practitioners in Denmark is Finn Torbjørn Hansen. He uses non-therapeutic methods to coach nurses, priests and leaders, focusing on Socratic dialogue to promote open wonder about specific topics (Hansen 2018). In Norway, Anders Lindseth (2020) has written on the use of philosophical reflection to improve the professional practitioner's knowledge-in-practice. My thoughts are influenced by Hansen and Lindseth's perspectives on philosophical facilitation, but my work is directed towards the professional practitioner's world-view and character of being. I will elaborate on what soil we should unearth and not on how to provide the soil to the practitioner.

Worldview and character of being



Figure 2. Edvard Munch: The Pathfinder (1912–1913a)

Lindseth (2020) understands philosophical reflection as a method of improvement through action. But he does not understand this improvement as something one can learn through handbooks. He implicitly understands improvement as the human ability to commit fewer errors through continual reflection on why something went wrong. I find this perspective too problem oriented. Instead, I suggest that the purpose of philosophical facilitation is to help others become more in tune and accept themselves. To become more in tune with oneself might improve

one's actions, but the purpose is to be in balance. In virtue ethics, balance or harmony is understood as human well-being.

To be virtuous is to acknowledge one's character of being in practice. A human's character of being is their identity, and a person's actions reveal that person's identity or character of being in action. This is not connected to one specific situation but is a synthesis of many. The character of one's being is a holistic path that sums up one's specific way of life. This way of life is what a person stands for and includes the person's virtues, esteem, energy and motivations. If a person can express some of the path, they can understand some fragments of what directs their own action. The form of being that a person shows in action is not only individual but has more universal human characteristics, such as being courageous, truthful, just and prudent. The synthesis of these characteristics comprises a person's world-view.

Does reason motivate action?

Philosophy is closely connected to the human ability to think as an interaction between the individual and the world in a specific situation. This could involve reading a book on philosophy, enjoying literature or art, or concrete experiences, such as living through a pandemic or playing football. Philosophical thinking is a resonance or dialogue with the world. By incorporating art into this article, I bring forth a distinct form of knowing that might mediate the reader's experience of what I intend to unfold in a different way. The purpose is to nourish the reader's character and will to action.

If philosophy has anything to offer a practitioner, thoughts and reasoning must motivate action. Reason must be able to guide the intrinsic will like a man guiding a horse in the forest (Munch 1912–1913a). If the guidance is good, the will (the horse) will follow without any hesitation, resistance or distrust. There might be different paths to follow, but only the man has the ability to know the purpose and the goal of the trip. The horse might be motivated just by being with the man, but humans can be motivated by subtle meaningful purposes to direct our action.

If this philosophical facilitation is possible, we must explore what form of knowledge has this influence on the will to action. Molander (2015) differentiates between technical and orientational knowledge. Technical knowledge is reasoning that makes it possible for a person to master a specific task. Technical knowledge is understood as competences or life skills. This

kind of knowledge does not explain why the person decided to do a specific task or develop specific skills but how they did it. Orientational knowledge can help orient humans in what kinds of purposes and tasks they will direct themselves towards. Technical knowledge provides humans with a plan to follow, but orientational knowledge guides one's will towards that plan. Orientational knowledge is the deep, inner ground of human action. Molander (2015) elaborates five different key terms expressing orientational knowledge. His main discussion focuses on (logically) assessing and (morally) justifying goals and perspectives, but critical penetration, identity and reciprocal ego-formation are also connected to orientational knowledge. All of these different perspectives on orientational knowledge are part of a person's virtue and character of being.

To a large extent, orientational knowledge is a synthetic understanding of the relationship between a human and their world. It is a person's worldview and world-feeling that orients and motivates. This world-view contains physical, ethical, aesthetic and metaphysical reasoning. One's world-view is

revealed in paths of action, and at the same time, one's actions are motivated and orientated by one's world-view. A person can improve their technical knowledge, but orientational knowledge is necessary to bring the person more in tune with themselves and the world.



Figure 3. Edvard Munch: Forest Cathedral (1909–1911)

An example of how orientational knowledge can be motivating appears in survivors of the Holocaust. Victor Frankl (2011) argues that the ability to reflect on meaning and maintain hope are essential for the ability to survive under harsh circumstances. In addition, Aaron Antonovsky (1987, p. 18) understands meaningfulness as a necessary part of a person's sense of coherence. 'But 'making sense' of the

world is as much a metaphysical process as an emotional one'. The ultimate meaning or purpose that allows a person to make sense of a concentration camp enough to survive it is based on a world-view that has a metaphysical dimension. It is connected to an inner realisation that there is more to life than what humans can empirically know. Empiricism, together with historicism and social constructivism, ends in an atheistic world-view that implies an almost nihilistic relation to the world. This may be the most widely expressed world-view of the modern age, yet it makes it difficult to have meaningful goals in and perspectives on life. It is also important to understand that this attempt at a purely rational world-view has a metaphysical ground that turns people into epistemological dogmatists who believe that human senses are capable of recognising all that is real.

Habermas (1987) argued that our modern world is post-metaphysical and implies that modern humans can be reasonable and motivated by reason without necessarily holding a metaphysical world-view. But Habermas' attempt to prove through logical argumentation that the sphere of reason exists does not exclude human life and action from metaphysical speculation. On the contrary, the form of reason that motivates action has metaphysical goals in one way or another. Humans might escape religion, but not theological questions about purpose in life or the meaning of life. In *Forest Cathedral* (1909–1911), Munch portrays the theological experience of being in a forest. His expressionism invokes a deeper nature of being, like a sensation of holiness humans can grasp in nature. To do so, one must use all of one's senses to search nature's sources (Munch 1912–1913). In other words, to paraphrase Hartmut Rose (2019), humans must be in resonance with the world and not only try to control and master the world.

The sources from which world-views arise

Humans draw on different sources to develop aspects of our world-views. Specific questions are important to reflect on, but a philosophical dialogue can also use other mediating sources. We can orient ourselves on a philosophical topic, survey theoretical perspectives or use metaphors, parables, fables or other kinds of stories. It is also possible to use poems, visual art or being in nature to reflect on oneself and one's own relation to the world. Munch tries to verbalise some of his ideas in scrapbooks, but his paintings are his best expressions of his own world-view (Stenersen 1945). In this pa-

per, I am not able to dig or dive into all these different sources. However, I will explore what questions must be embraced to experience one's own world-view while, at the same time, using Munch's art to mediate my explorations. His art is an example of a source humans can drink from, like a life-giving spring that awakens one's inner life or soul.

Reflection needs direction. A reflection without a direction is like a diluted remedy (Æsøy 2015). The more one reflects without direction, the less fruitful the reflection. In Æsøy 2015, I argued that reflection should have an existential dimension directed towards what is, how we know what is and what kinds of goals or meaningful purposes humans are connected to. If this is true, the practitioner needs theoretical knowledge about these existential questions. Hansen (2018) focuses on existential, ethical and philosophical questions in the dialogue between philosophical and professional practice. His main intention seems to be keeping humans wondering.

All of these questions are directed towards world-views. The foundational question is, what exists? What kinds of sources provide humans with the ability to experience being? To have such an experience, we must also reflect on what being human means and what knowledge is. Furthermore, humans need moral orientation on what comprises a good life or well-being, what defines meaningful purposes in action and what makes one moral. The aesthetic dimension directs the questions towards one's own feelings. What did I feel when performing a given action, and what kinds of feelings did I discover through that action? The final question involves searching for the ultimate meaning of being and asking, how does everything come together? These questions are important for developing a more holistic view on being.



Figure 4. Edvard Munch: The Source (1912–1913b)

To orient oneself around one's own character of being, a person must reflect on the paths available for action and thought. The reflective part of a human soul can take orientation from how a human is like a pathfinder, guiding our horse through the forest in a good manner. Based on these reflections, we can critically penetrate our own actions, asking whether we should do what we are doing, and in some cases, deciding to follow new pathways or do more of what we experience as good. In all these cases, it is important to reflect on how one's surroundings react to and interact with one's character of being. Sources are both the inner life of a person and their interaction with the external world.

What kind of situation provides insight into one's own world-view?

To reflect on one's own world-view and character of being, one must begin in a real situation where one is emotionally activated and not when one is withdrawn from the world or has philosophical questions with no relevance to one's situation. It is possible to be alone in this situation – for instance, when one does something daring in interaction with the world. In a real situation, a human is always in relation to something. This could be other people or animals, but also technology, art, culture or natural things.

Anders Lindseth (2020) focuses on discrepancies between world-views and actions and how a professional practitioner tries to orient themselves through new understandings and the discovery of connections. But challenging situations are not the only routes to emotional activation. Humans are emotionally activated in situations where the practitioner is doing well – in the logical, ethical or emotional senses – and having a great time. Generally, professionals should focus more on doing well and less on looking for problems. Too much focus on problems often turns into personal criticism, and a professional practitioner can become disillusioned and lose confidence in their own actions. Still, that does not mean that we are able to escape discrepancies. When we do experience a discrepancy between our world-view and action, Lindseth says, we need to undertake a thorough exploration of the situation (p. 96). Such an exploration is not a justification but rather a search for understanding and a sense of coherence inside the context of wondering. Based on such reflection, the person uncovers inner evidence or insight. A good situation where a practitioner is doing great things could follow the same path towards insight.

To make my point clearer, I will present an example. Before the example, however, I must warn against too much reflection. Life is worth living, and searching too much for understanding might create a distance between self-awareness and action. To have character and be in tune means to be involved in life and not become a spectator to one's own existence. The dark side of reflection may disillusion a person and even kill them, if we are to believe Henrik Ibsen's drama of the wild duck. This is also a reason why philosophical facilitation should direct its questions towards what a person is doing well. A person's character of being must be nourished in the person's inner self like a light that is, as Plato says, kindled by a leaping spark.

An example: exploring a teacher's world-view

Philosophical facilitation is only a helping position. Reflections on one's own world-view must be carried out by oneself. Nevertheless the professional practitioner can also listen to a team reflect on their world-view, as shown in Sträng et al. (2016). As my example, I will use a narrative of a teacher's good actions in her own classroom, as the leader of the class. I do not personally know the teacher, but I was in the classroom observing her practices and will give a short interpretation of her actions and thoughts just to show how a teacher and leader's actions can be grounded in a world-view. The narrative is my translation of a passage in the book *Lærerpraksis og pedagogisk teori* (Fjeld et al. 2020). The situation concerns a fourth-grade class of 26 pupils. It is in the middle of a station teaching sequence, and the pupils are working together on different learning centres.

Odin is a small boy who sits by himself. The rest of his group are deeply concentrated on the task. Odin has just been diagnosed with diabetes and picks up his insulin meter. He looks around and finds the teacher occupied. Odin heads



Figure 5. Fjeld et al. 2020, p. 47

straight to the teacher and shows her the meter. They stand close together and the teacher lays a careful hand on the boy. The teacher clearly explains that she has talked with the boy's mom. His mom was at school before school started and was told what food the boy should eat at school to regulate his blood sugar. The teacher sits down with the boy; she looks into his eyes and asks mildly, "Do you agree that you should eat this?" She gently rubs his back: "You must know how you feel. Only you know how you feel." The meter is not significantly high. Odin nods quietly. "I will take care of you. I can take the meter and you can relax." (Fjeld et al. 2020, p. 47)

Based on this narrative, the teacher says the following:

To me, as a teacher, it is all about respect. I must take the boy seriously. Listen to him. It's his diabetes, his body, but at the same time, I must be the adult who helps him, who gives him some relief – someone that he can trust. When there is a big upheaval in a child's life, it is not as easy to concentrate on school. The boy must have time to get used to having diabetes before I can demand something of him on the subject matter. (Fjeld et al. 2020, pp. 47–48)

The teacher's world-view is more realistic than idealistic. Feelings and actions are present in the situation, and the teacher accepts this reality. Even though she knows that the ideal action in school is to help the kids learn subject matter, she is realistic, knowing that the child must become more in tune before he can learn. She focuses on the ethical reality and on how the diagnosis changes the boy's feelings. She knows that humans are emotional and tells the boy that the feeling is his own. At the same time, through empathy, she seems to be able to understand that the boy is frightened, and her words and actions makes him more relaxed. The boy is an important source of knowledge, but at the same time, he is a child, and the teacher can relieve him from some of his feelings.

These actions and thoughts express the teacher's character as a leader. In this situation, the teacher shows courage and prudence. She must face the facts of the situation, and in her actions, she is empathic and wants to express respect by taking the boy seriously. To be serious is to participate in another person's life-world as the opposite of objectifying them (Skjervheim 1996). The teacher must listen to the boy, take his words into consideration and be willing to adjust her own behaviour without breaking her own character or sacrificing dignity. This is because of her understanding of what a human is.

A boy aged 9–10 can express his feelings and thoughts and reveal himself as an active individual on the way to autonomy.

One important fact in this story is the medical diagnosis that threatens the young boy. In this situation, a teacher will have a moral responsibility. The critical moral moment is when the boy disrupts the occupied teacher: should the teacher, as a leader, care, accept these feelings and take some of the responsibility from the boy? The answer seems to be yes. Her character of being *orients* her action in a good direction; her moral core affinity is care. What alternatives could have been chosen? She could order the child to go back to his chair and do his task. This would be a moral orientation towards learning efficiency. She could even become harsh and tell him that he is not allowed to walk around in the classroom without permission. This would be a moral rule-oriented action. She could ask him to handle his diabetes by himself and demand that he accepts autonomy. She could also refuse to have the boy in class, saying that she is not willing to take this responsibility, because her responsibility as a teacher is to teach subject matter. Such counter-factual thinking helps us evaluate actions and understand the moral core of actions.

The aesthetic dimension directs questions towards one's own feelings. What did the teacher as a leader feel when acting, and what kinds of feelings does she examine through the action? Her calm behaviour reveals her prudence. She is in balance. Even though the boy breaks a rule, she is kind. She responds without hesitation. Her feelings are directed towards not only the boy but the whole class. She perceives the whole of the situation. Her action creates a resonance in the classroom that affects all the pupils. The classroom maintains an atmosphere where everybody can be and interact with the world and each other. This understanding of the atmosphere and the whole class directs our interpretation towards metaphysical speculation. We are not able to measure an atmosphere, but everybody knows the impact a situation's atmosphere can have on our actions and well-being. A teacher concerned with atmosphere understands how every human in the class affects and is affected by the others. This effect combines aesthetic feeling with moral practice and the ability to learn subject matter. The teacher's actions in the situation demonstrate her ability to combine these forms of reasoning. The rational connection between logic, ethics and aesthetics can be understood as an existential truth, turning the situation into an existential collision. Habermas (1987, p. 56) points out in his anti-metaphysical work that taste and morality must still be part of the rational sphere. But the

question is whether the teacher can work under such a rational standard if this standard is not present deep inside her as part of her character of being. Her action is not something she could have learned from a handbook or even have become aware of in the situation. It is her own judgement that is connected to this existential truth, that she acts by and that is alive and ablaze inside her. She may not have been able to give a verbal expression of it, but her action reveals her tacit knowledge as her ability to act well for the whole class.

A teacher is a leader with a world-view that is applied in action. The world-view directs the leader's perceptions and choices and provides the teacher with a more holistic rationality in action. This is a rationality that includes logical, motor, ethical, aesthetic and even metaphysical forms of knowing.

Philosophical facilitation

If a facilitation is to be philosophical, it should direct the professional practitioner towards their own world-view. The philosophical facilitator provides the professional practitioner with questions and other sources that help illuminate their inner self. The goal is not to reveal or to control one's own world-view, but to accept and act according to one's character of being.

If human action is motivated by a person's world-view, a professional practitioner must explore their own world-view. Such world-views do not tell anyone how to act; the purpose is to become more in tune with oneself and one's surroundings.

Munch's painting *Horse Team* (1916–1920) can be interpreted through the Platonic metaphor of the soul. The white horse is the moral driving force, while the brown horse is the diverse desires of the human being. The plough driver behind the horses is human rationality, which regulates and balances the other forces.



Figure 6. Edvard Munch: *Horse Team Ploughing* (1916–1920)

The whole horse team is a human world-view that motivates and directs actions in a good direction.

Hartmut Rosa (2020) writes that the driving cultural force of that form of life we call 'modern' is the desire to make the world controllable. Humans are supposed to have external control, mastering not only the world but also ourselves and others. This desire for self-mastery might turn the plough driver against the horses. The human search for self-control and technical knowledge might kill the horses, so the driver has to plough by himself. Such unnatural ways of being prevent humans from unfolding their character of being. People in this condition will end up burned out and aggressive towards the world and themselves. His alternative is resonance as the driving force of the human relationship with the world and oneself. Orientational knowledge might help us explore and gain insight into what we are, what the world is and what our motives should be in relation to this world.

Orientational knowledge is not knowledge that helps humans exploit and control the world, other human beings or ourselves; rather, it generates a resonance between a person and their world. Orientational knowledge might resonate in one's inner self and make us become part of the world. This paper, with its orientation and paintings, is an example of this form of knowledge. Hopefully, the content may nudge the reader's brown and white horses in the same direction, as we saw in the teacher's practice.

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