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## PHILOSOPHICAL MUSINGS ON BEING, CULTURE AND EXPERIENTIALITY

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### ABSTRACT

Being is like a large looking glass, reflecting nested levels of existence. The idea of mirroring also implies a series of recurring reflections. A culture contains an image of itself that repeats its totality in the form of a diminished image. Internationality and nationality need each other. A one-sided emphasis on one's own history directs the gaze excessively inwards and simultaneously the future is closed off. Nevertheless, internationality needs a core of nationality. Understanding the importance of respecting the past and valuing a diversified future produces a harmonious image in the mirror of time. Being continues uninterruptedly from the bygone into new ages. Even though the harsh wind of change gusts across the landscape of humanity, there is nevertheless a place of shelter to be found in the essence of culture. It is an essential element in delivering a quality ideal of hospitality. It requires in-depth professionalism to be able to function so that selfness remains as selfness and otherness as otherness. Without mutual respect it cannot be done. At the banquet of life, everyone is an invited guest. How then do we read the signs of the times? How do we interpret the messages of the mirror of being? Life is a present tense narrative in whose words temporal dimensions reside. Language means being at home and in the world. Philosophy speaks the language of being. Each and every one of us should pause to listen to it.

### THE WIND-RIPPLE OF BEING

1986 saw the posthumous publication of Pentti Saarikoski's book *The Philosophy of Poverty*. It includes the dramatic texts 'Loon Field', 'First Spring Catch' and 'Maria and Methodius', as well as a preface written by Saarikoski's widow, Mia Berner. From the perspective of our current deliberations, the key characterization can be found in Berner's shortish introductory chapter: "The name of the radio play *Loon Field* refers to the calm area of a lake's surface that is untouched by a breath of wind. The call of the loon echoes above the play's oppressive denouement "(Berner, 1986, p. 7.) Although a storm rages elsewhere, the essential core remains calm, unrippled, and perhaps even silent. This is a good place to start.

It's as if Kalastajatorppa, Fisherman's Croft, has two dimensions: the innermost part is Finnishness and the outermost part internationality. So, according to *mise en abyme* thinking, you could say that Kalastajatorppa is gazing into a mirror. Within the outer circle there is a smaller circle which repeats the pattern of the outer circle. In other words, submerged within the international Kalastajatorppa, there is immersed a smaller national Kalastajatorppa. And this gives rise to Kalastajatorppa's existential-spatial depth of being. (For more on the idea of *mise en abyme*, see also Makkonen, 1991, pp. 17–21; Rojola, 1995, pp. 32–65; Tiede, 2016.)

Yet the dimensions are not separated from each other, rather they inextricably reflect one another. Without national excellence, there cannot be international superiority. Or, to reverse the expression, national brilliance is not possible without international distinction. Without the past, the future dries up. Yet, the past in itself cannot create a present or future distinguished by a high level of hospitality and vocationally-refined professionalism. A blustery fringe has thus to be created around the tranquil centre. In other words, when you have the ability to look inwards, you can also turn your gaze outwards, beyond the horizon.

Perhaps it would be worthwhile also adding the dimension of double consciousness to that *mise en abyme* idea. Language alone is clearly not enough to give an in-depth characterization of the whole idea. It feels absolutely necessary to include a photograph.



**Photograph 1:** The camera that sees timelessness.

Photograph One shows the wind of time as it whistles its way across the water's surface. Somewhere, amidst that frantically forward-rushing ripple, there is a tranquil point: the loon field. There is also an element of dual consciousness associated with it. The researcher knows he is using the concept of the loon field in a symbolic sense. He is also aware of the fact that simple word-conveyed reality results in an overly vague expression of the situation. Therefore, I too have endeavoured to choose photographs rich enough in content. In other words, I have consciously put myself in the place of both narrator and reader. My author's roguish bravado leads me to make this kind of postmodern choice. So, in addition to writing, I am also able to comment on the role of the narrator and reader. The procedure means that at one and the same time I am researcher, narrator, reader, as well as recipient. By acting in this way, I might also be able to appear simultaneously as an employee and customer of Kalastajatorppa.

If we want the camera to achieve timelessness, it must look at the landscape from above: the bird's eye view. Then the camera is like the sky over the landscape during the cosmic age: it sees everything, and in it the full scope of being is mirrored. The structure could be called the intersection of time levels. From the perspective of service-mindedness and hospitality, it could also be termed the golden age of professional expertise or ideal presentness. In "loon field" terms, it would mean that even though the ideals of hospitality vary in different ages, there is always a windless core of quality. Without it, excellence vanishes. Then nothing else is required because non-existence always means ineptitude. (On the theme of time, see e.g. Itkonen, 2016a; 2016b; 2017.)

The Finnish version of Göran Schildt's interesting book *Diana's Island* was published in 1977. It contains a memorable description of Elysium or the ideal time. Schildt's text raises a whole host of other thoughts: "The Garden of Eden and the paradise of the blessed, happiness of the past and greatness of the future are mental pictures whose content originates in the misery of the present. They readily blend into one, so that the future transmutes into a return to the fountainhead. Just as for Christians sinlessness is dimly visible at both vanishing points of the time-perspective, Marx teaches us that mankind's starting point and terminal stage is a classless, collective society of happiness. [...] Someone sufficiently dedicated to the search for paradise cannot but understand the present only as a temporary, insignificant and degenerate by-product, resembling the shadow of a cloud passing over the landscape" (Schildt, 1977, pp. 229 and 233.)

Photograph One was taken in 1964. It's like a beautiful existential idyll, entirely free of evil, ugliness and dissent. If each moment of examining the picture means – to extend Schildt's thinking - the vanishing point of the time perspective, the beginning and the end are revealed in the picture. Nevertheless, I wouldn't regard the image's present moment as a mere "degenerate by-product" of temporality. On the contrary, I would argue that in every present moment there is the eternity of enlightened professionalism to be discovered.

### **TIMELESS KALASTAJATORPPA**

According to postmodern or metafictional thinking, the choice of "Timeless Kalastajatorppa" as the main heading and title of this subsection was deliberate (for interpretation, see e.g. Haapala, 1991). The choice could also be considered a tribute to Peter von Bagh, and especially to his beautiful film reportage *Helsinki Forever* (2008). It's a story displaying a touching urban utopia, where existence is restored to some kind of "dreamlike original state" (docpoint, 2017; see also elonet, 2017). In Photograph One, Kalastajatorppa is in a timeless original state, which at the present moment in no way means transience. It is more of a question of permanence with which new presents are compared.

It is possible to claim that cohesion and wholeness is the ideal state of being. At different times, it must be possible to attain this ideal state of being in different ways. In other words, you have to know the tradition and believe in it. In addition, you must also be able to act as the herald of a new age: as a messenger of the future who is clear about things even before they arrive in the present. However, in describing the present moment I would nevertheless deviate from Schildt's use of 'vanishing point' and would instead use the phrase 'point of fulfilment'. It's true, though, that constant and fast-paced ephemerality belong to the nature of the present moment. Transience also means that the new is only new for a fleeting moment and in the very next moment will become old. Timelessness means the ability to create something in reality that is inaccessible to change. It is, of course, not beyond the passage of time, but it is able to remain fresh regardless of various fluctuations. Perhaps the appropriate term in this context would be "ever-currency" or "ever-verdancy". It perhaps also means the idea of upholding quality or a high level of quality. However, it cannot mean complete self-identity because being identical would mean that something earlier is precisely replicated sometime later. It could be a matter of also restoring the spirit. Then people would have the chance to come face to face with the spirit of a place – Kalastajatorppa – amidst freshly-felt present moments.

The impressive milieu shown in Photograph One could be a symbol of the whole essence of the hospitality ideal, while nevertheless also including features of an idyll. This is indeed how it has to be. A high level of excellence includes the possibility of some kind of yearning or enthusiastic anticipation. Then, in each and every present, the past and the future must be included as strong existential elements. Alongside observation, there always exist the dimensions of longing and dreaming. It opens up the way to go beyond everyday life: to experiencing something that gives strength to face difficult times. It's called an experience, a Kalastajatorppa experience.

### **PROLEGOMENA: THE CLOSING WORDS OF THE CLOSING WORDS**

In 1945, the future professor of philosophy, Jussi Tenkku, published an interesting book entitled *Naked Man through the Looking Glass of a Time of Flux*. In it he commendably ponders the nature of technology and technicized culture. In particular, Tenkku seems to pay attention to the problematic nature of replicated recurrence: "The harsh battle of life has often forced people to value highest what is useful and economical. It is precisely here where the main focus of the whole of technical culture lies. Intellectual life is assigned to be a means to serve practical living. According to this, science and art must be evaluated from the perspective of their practical benefit. It is best to standardize furniture and produce works of art as serial products. Science and art are thought to be generated by money or by authoritative commands that can predict even the results in advance." (Tenkku, 1945, p. 108.)

The idea of self-aware being is now becoming evermore multilevelled and complex. The heading of this section, "Prolegomena: the closing words of the closing words", also points to the same thing. If the timeless essence of Kalastajatorppa was embedded in Photograph One, then included in these closing words of the closing words is a thumbnail picture of the whole idea of experimentation, of the closing words themselves and of the researcher's postmodernist role. It is nevertheless not just a matter of hedging the issue with the emphasis on wasteful self-efficacy. The aim is rather to do justice to the importance of Kalastajatorppa. An additional goal is to bring art and science closer together. This will only succeed through the development and diversification of the scientific mode of expression.

If hospitality is your profession, is it then at all possible to fall into the trap of technicization? If the national symbol of the accommodation business becomes part of an international hotel chain, is there then a risk that those lived moments will turn into a serially-produced experience? Here, too, the crucial role is probably the one

played by people: the one who is the customer and the one who serves the customer. Of course, it is true to say that when hospitality is a profession, there are also important economic factors involved. Still, a high level of quality cannot be achieved with money alone or with high-handed dictates. It is also true, though, that people are willing to pay for quality. However, it is not a simple fact that money or cost automatically leads to a spellbinding restaurant or hotel experience. Much more is needed.

There is only one Kalastajatorppa. Which is why there is also a unique Kalastajatorppa spirit. Continuing Tenkku's train of thought, I would argue that life and the art of hospitality are able to meet face-to-face at Kalastajatorppa. For this reason the most important value in the lived culture of customs and usage indeed lies in focussing on the person rather than on a mode of existence shaped by technology. In addition, achieving a high level of quality has required an existential polyphony, which has managed to survive across the decades only because we have fostered the ideal of quality in diversity. Popular culture and high culture, art and science, the domestic and the international, war and peace, past and future: all those dualities of being have found, are finding and will continue to find for themselves a harmonious and hospitable home in Kalastajatorppa.

### POSTSCRIPT

In 1957, the famous psychologist and professor C. G. Jung published *Gegenwart und Zukunft* (The Undiscovered Self) dealing with the subject of intellectual culture. The Finnish version, *Nykyhetki ja tulevaisuus*, was published in 1960, translated by Kaj Kauhanen. Jung's book, written during the Cold War, was concerned with humanity and would also aptly describe modern times. I quote from the English translation: "What will the future bring? From time immemorial this question has occupied men's minds, though not always to the same degree. Historically, it is chiefly in times of physical, political, economic, and spiritual distress that men's eyes turn with anxious hope to the future, and when anticipations, utopias, and apocalyptic visions multiply. One thinks, for instance, of the chiliastic expectations of the Augustan age at the beginning of the Christian era, or of the spiritual changes in the West which accompanied the end of the first millennium. Today, as the end of the second millennium draws near, we are again living in an age filled with apocalyptic images of universal destruction. What is the significance of that split, symbolized by the "Iron Curtain," which divides humanity into two halves? What will become of our civilization and of man himself, if the hydrogen bombs begin to go off, or if the spiritual and moral darkness of State absolutism should spread over Europe?" (Jung, [1958]/1960, pp. 5–6.)

In the 1970s, there was talk of the Helsinki spirit. At the time Kalastajatorppa played an important part in efforts to promote the ideals of peace and humanity. The all-important term was *détente*: reducing international tension. Now, in the 2010s, once again the existential climate has been tightening alarmingly. Would there be any chance, we wonder, of finding the spirit of Finland or Europe? Of course, the most desirable thing would be to discover the spirit of globalness. If, to follow Jung's choice of words, humanity splits into two halves, then the nighttime of humanity will begin, or at least the twilight of humanity. Or should I already use the word 'when' instead of 'if'? Asking this question evokes a bleak view of existence. Can the light of being somehow be rekindled?

Yes, the light of being can be rediscovered and re-ignited to shine brightly. The future does not contain merely apocalyptic prospects. There is also the possibility of dreaming and believing in a happy future. It is to kindle a positive attitude to life that we need magical places like Kalastajatorppa. There, hospitality and the feeling of being looked after with genial warm-heartedness will push aside possible sorrows, somewhere out of reach of the passing moment. The reality of hosting and entertaining could be a key element of an education centred around culture, values and democracy. The culture of accommodation and food would be capable of promoting mutual understanding and the goal of conflict-free coexistence. In this ever more multicultural Finland, Kalastajatorppa would be an excellent implementation of peace education. Then perhaps a suitable motto might be the question: "Could food become the highway to open-minded world citizenship?" Why then couldn't we deck the table of being within the warmth of Kalastajatorppa for a celebratory meal of humanity, an occasion where we could think of all the guests as dignitaries. It would be a Kalastajatorppa celebration of being.

### APPENDIX: ACTUAL CLOSING WORDS

I have consciously acted in the spirit of Søren Kierkegaard, and Immanuel Kant. For this reason, the closing words of the closing words have been placed before the actual closing words. Perhaps the process also reveals a hint of the experimental and impish ideal. Here we have indeed travelled a little further along the road than some of the more reputable philosophers: the space reserved for the introduction has been taken by the closing words of the closing words. This supplementary section will then, reversedly, present the actual closing words. A more thorough examination of the topic requires the illustrative and expressive power of two images.



**Photograph 2:** Time seen from the outside.



**Photograph 3:** Time seen from the inside.

Again, I need the support of Göran Schildt's discerning vision. Schildt completed his doctoral dissertation on art history in 1947. He had spent the period 1934-1935 studying in Paris at the renowned Sorbonne University. It was also in 1947 that the book *Cézanne*, a more popularized version of his dissertation, was published, with an impressive Finnish translation appearing in 1995, the result of Rauno Ekholm's excellent work. Schildt's deliberations on the dilemma of romanticism – dividing the observation of reality into two modes - are interesting. At the same time, he also looks at the concepts of 'everyday self' and 'ideal self'. Schildt's thoughts are also important in terms of the theme of timelessness: "Its roots lie in an aesthetic attitude towards life. We have grown to admire Great Art and learned to look at nature, society, history, and our neighbours from an artistic viewpoint. What then is more natural than to regard one's own self, one's own existence in the same way? But no one can look at themselves aesthetically, i.e., from the outside, and go unpunished. The inevitable result is that life fragments into two, the aesthetic half, which is absolute and where the ideal self dwells, and the practical half, which is relative and houses the everyday self. The person living in this dichotomy will try either to become like the ideal self or defiantly to dissociate from the everyday self and thus to identify with the ideal self." (Schildt, 1995, p. 25.)

It could perhaps be noted that time and Finnishness also gaze into the looking glass of being. To make a link with food culture, it might be interesting to talk about a time-pan, a chronological casserole. Perhaps it could also work to call it a lidded temporal tureen. An important point here is also the shape, namely its roundness or curvedness. Then the elements of convexity and concavity also combine to form the whole. In other words, the significant point is the direction of the gaze: time seen from the outside or from the inside. The place is also of great significance: Photograph Two shows Vyborg's Round Tower and Photograph Three the Round Room at Kalastajatorppa. In this pair of images, the past and the present meet, as do memory and observation. Probably the dimensions of longing and anticipation are also present.

In Photograph Two, Vyborg's present moment is located in the early autumn of 1941, while Photograph Three's presentness is in the early 1960s. Access to Round Tower time is closed off whereas it is still possible to step into the time of the Round Room. The difference is significant. Round Tower time is included within Round Room time. This is why it is only possible to observe Round Tower time from the outside. Or, adapting it to the idea of a time vessel, Round Tower time can no longer be seen from inside the chronological casserole. Either way, the notion of experimenting with a temporal tureen or time-pan needs to be studied in more detail. The idea of having a lid is a key element. The time of Kalastajatorppa's Round Room is also temporal tureen time. It can be observed both from the outside and from the inside. However, the more significant ingredient is now the dimension of internality.

As the lid of the chronological casserole slides aside, new instants of convexity and concavity are created. And, combined with Round Room time, within the slimmer lid part there can be found moments of expecting, hoping, anticipating, and outlining. They are the time of the future. Then in the actual container section, there are instants of remembering and longing. The Kalastajatorppa gaze gives access to the days of the present as well as to those of the past and future. It's all about the roundness of time divided into two. The situation is the same as when Dr. Schildt describes the ideal self and the everyday self as a partition into two, as dualistic. The lid is like a time vault over being. Into its convexity people's dreams and preliminary plans have been inscribed. Existentially, though, it is narrowly thin because the future is completely open. Plans and drawings may not necessarily be realized in the way they were wanted. Looking ahead to the future, however, is important. In Photograph Two and Round Tower time, the future horizon is missing. It is time whose self and existence are now exhausted and duly chronicled. It no longer has access, neither to the past nor to the future.

The casserole or container section is existentially thick and dense. In it dwell numerous bygones, as well as the memories of private individuals and the shared memories of the whole nation. It's concavity time. There, from, out of a distant past, there blows the wind of time billowing out the spinnaker or balloon sail of the philosophical poem-yacht, and carrying the time-ship – its prow surging through the foaming waves – towards new futures. Perhaps this is also something that should be considered aesthetically, and specifically from an artistic point of view. That's why in its enlightenment the ideal self always chooses Kalastajatorppa's Round Room time. Absoluteness is then not a problem because the person knows he is acting correctly in his capacity as an ideal self. He is sometimes allowed to forget the relativity of his everyday self.

While in this playful mood, why don't we call the sailor aboard the poem-yacht Kalastajatorppari (Fisherman Crofter), for example? When he enters Round Room time, he has the opportunity to be present in Round Tower time as well. In Photograph Three there is a celebration of being. The brutality, ruin and destruction of war, shown in Photograph Two, are present merely as memories. As a guest at the celebration of being, one might even dare to assume the role of the ideal self. As the lid of the chronological casserole once again slides aside, the everyday self also arrives with its divided roundness. Schildt's ideas are only partially correct. The fact is that from time to time it's good to deliberately reject the daily rhythm of the everyday self. The Round Room at Kalastajatorppa is just the place to cross, to transcend the experiential stream of everyday life.

Kalastajatorppari, the Fisherman Crofter, is a Janus-faced experiential subject. Instead of a god, he could be regarded as the essential timedoor or timegate traveller. In the Kalastajatorppa Round Room, he combines the beginning and the end. Vyborg Round Tower time begins with him and ends with him. From him there also begins a fresh future. Thus, from his present moment, the Fisherman Crofter simultaneously looks at both the past and the future. With his dual visage, both of his faces are nevertheless positive: totally devoid of deceit. An aesthetic attitude to life, the Fisherman Crofter as experiential subject, the Round Room at Kalastajatorppa: from these timelessness is born. They create the timeless spirit of Kalastajatorppa. (On being Janus-faced, also see especially Frosterus, 2006.)

Here end my philosophical musings. Any further deliberations are superfluous.

English translation by Glyn Hughes

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## PHOTOGRAPHS

- Photograph 1. *Picture archives of Helsinki City Museum*. Photographer SKY-FOTO Möller, 1964.
- Photograph 2. *Hotel and restaurant museum collections*. Helsinki.
- Photograph 3. *SA picture archives, From the front line to the home front 1939–1945*. Photographer K. Anttila. Available at: <http://sa-kuva.fi/>.