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# The Philosophers on the Market Square. Philosophical Modernism from Vienna to Uppsala

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**ABSTRACT:** The logical empiricists in Vienna and their Swedish counterparts in Uppsala shared a scientific ethos that underlined the philosophical academics as representatives for universalism, disinterest, professional loyalty, organized scepticism and public interest. Rudolf Carnap, Axel Hägerström and Ingemar Hedenius regarded themselves as intellectuals, offering their philosophical tools to society. However, when the scientific ethos was articulated by Robert Merton in 1942, the circumstances had drastically changed. The European tradition was left behind. However, the claim is that neither the professionalism, nor the specialized epistemology in analytical philosophy necessarily alienated the philosopher from the public. The gap occurred when the epistemology ceased to be cultural meaningful, as a part of the spirit of the time. The modernistic spirit promoted the ethos of intellectuality. In the 1960s a new ethos took over: the philosophers as purely academic professional experts, in US and Sweden.

The image of the academic philosopher is a well established cliché. The philosopher - mostly a he - lives a professional life occupied by deep thoughts, undisturbed by the busy world around.<sup>1</sup> For most lay people, philosophy represents the core thoughts about the existential meaning of life. The philosopher is the true sage, an image dating back to Socrates. For more initiated persons, the philosopher is a professional expert, performing his subject in a highly specialized manner, sometimes with the help of a formalistic language and mathematical formulas. According to this view, understanding present academic philosophy requires professional training. It is not comprehensible for the interested general reader. However, both attitudes share a common symbol, namely, the ivory tower. Sage or a mathematically influenced specialist, in both cases the academic philosopher lives in a domain, detached from common life.

The view of the philosopher in the ivory tower seems to be a self evident view. A review over the great classical philosophers, Socrates, Plato, Descartes, Leibniz, to Wittgenstein

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<sup>1</sup> Rodin's sculpture "The Thinker" depicts the image. Another popular image among contemporary philosophers is to illustrate the mind with the physical brain.

confirms the general opinion. However, the image of the detached scholar has a story that illustrates that it is one among several images of the relation between society and philosophy. Plato's view of philosophy was challenged by his student Aristotle. The different standpoints are immortalized in Rafael's famous painting *The School of Athens* where Plato points to heaven and Aristotle to earth.

Here I will tell a modern story about a shift in philosophical ethos that occurred during the middle of the twentieth century. The shift in scientific ethos was common for several academic disciplines, but the philosophers are in the front in the universities to articulate the shift. My thesis is simple; the European modernist beliefs and the scientific ethos shared cultural meaning that encouraged the university academic to be public intellectual the first part of the twentieth century. The post war period involved a change in scientific ethos.

In Sweden and US philosophy became an intern occupation emphasizing scientific professionalism. If the philosophical room earlier was populated by a motley assembly of academics, some with preference for intricate special field, others with a more public orientation; from the 1960s and onwards the space was dominated by a more homogenized variety of *homus philosophicus*. The story can be epitomized in a single phrase: From the market square to the ivory tower.

### **The Intellectuals. An Enlightenment Idea**

The concept of intellectuals is easily associated to France, from Emilé Zola's defense for Alfred Dreyfus to Jean Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir and the French existentialists on the left bank. Still, even today it seems easier to line up characters from the French intellectual establishment than their Swedish and US counterparts. Julie Kristeva is better known than Martha Nussbaum, Jean François Lyotard better known than Daniel Dennett.<sup>2</sup> But what do we mean by an intellectual and how can the phenomenon be described? What differs an intellectual from the researcher, the expert, the politician, the stateswoman and the philosopher? Which historical circumstances contributed to the emergence of the twentieth century intellectuals? Former cultures and non Western governments have political and religious authorities, but the legitimacy

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<sup>2</sup> On *Foreign Policy's* list of the world's 100 leading intellectuals except one, the suggested philosophers are French. The nominated Americans represent a miscellaneous group; 3 of 33 are philosophers.

is built on approval from the dominating power hierarchies. The attempts to be an independent intellectual outside the Western hemisphere often end tragically as a political prisoner.

The emergence of an independent intelligentsia is a Western invention and closely connected to another Western phenomenon, namely the idea of progress. Arthur M. Meltzer claims that the relation between the intelligentsia and the idea of progress is a historical necessity. If the belief in progress disappears, the intelligentsia will also disappear. The conviction that the growth of knowledge and its dispersal in society is the superior guide to progress was invented during the European Enlightenment. The idea of progress was articulated by “Les philosophes”, a new rootless class of high educated young men making a virtue of the necessity to earn a living by creating their own jobs.

If the scene was build in the eighteenth century it was ready to put in use at the beginning of the twentieth century. What then, were the characteristics of the twentieth century intellectuals? Firstly, they associated themselves as crucial contributors to a new ongoing historical process, which demanded both an affirmative and critical attitude – represented in the same person. Secondly, Meltzer asserts the intellectuals are caught by the vision that their inner mental world forcefully public articulated can influence societies further development. It has not only a private interest. The intellectuals embody the Western belief in individualism as the superior historical force.

From a historical and non Western perspective the public intellectuals represent a rare tripartite dimension of belief in progress, reason and independence. Maybe another necessary prerequisite should be mention, namely the demand for truth. The mission is to expose the public falsehood, as it hinders the societal progress. Truth and rationality are two intertwined collective phenomena; political corruption followed by disintegration is the constant threat. The threat was a strong motive for the interwar periods intellectuals to engage in the public life. The philosophers of antiquity with Plato as the prime represent saw it as meaningless to fight in the public against the political corruption. The rational philosopher could not spread his reason, therefore he must reign. The view is immortalized in the famous phrase from *The Republic*: “If not the kings can be philosophers, the philosophers must be kings.”

Hence, the modern view of the relation between reason and public represent a fundamentally new phenomenon that assign the intellectuals a crucial societal task: to be the independent truth tellers, and serve the rational progress. Their analytical and scrutinizing

intelligence grant them a moral and public authority. Another necessary guarantee for their independent position is the Western political liberalism. The knowledge that power corrupts, expressed by Montesquieu in *The Spirit of the Laws*, enforces the intellectuals to be truth tellers and critics. Otherwise they would be the entertainers: *the show men* for the political establishment.

During the first decades of the twentieth century the researchers from the expanding natural sciences incarnated several of the distinctive features of modernism. The physicists, the chemists, and the biologists were free from idealizing historical thinking, less compromised by connections to traditional political and religious authorities. The scientist became an icon for rational truth seeking in the new era. If we turn back to philosophy, reason's own science, it quickly became a stage for the new anti idealistic philosophy.

### **The Logical Positivists in Vienna and Uppsala**

The first generation of logical positivists – or logical empiricists shared a conviction that philosophy of science mattered beyond the academy. The position has been stressed in recent research about the logical empiricists. Still the judgment sounds astonishing as their theoretical position is usually associated with a formal philosophy void of cultural and social engagement.<sup>3</sup> The core circle of logical empiricists consisted of Moritz Schlick, Rudolf Carnap, Kurt Gödel, Philipp Frank (brother of Joseph Frank), Otto Neurath, Hans Reichenbach, and Carl Hempel.<sup>4</sup> They repudiated parts of the existent academic philosophy, claiming it as a collection of mainly non-testable propositions, infused by metaphysical assumptions. They viewed their task as philosophers of science to design conceptual tools to evaluate knowledge claims. They considered their philosophically elaborated criteria of meaning, testability of facts and theories to be applicable beyond the academic circles. They valued their philosophies as useable tools in the public to fight back superstition, political persecution and antidemocratic movements, present in Europe in the 1920s. The positivists were radicals viewing science as an allied to create a better future. All of them more or less, forged their institutional connection to various cultural and political commitments.

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<sup>3</sup> See Ronald N. Giere & Alan W. Richardson 1996, Michael Friedman 1996, Michael Heidelberger & Friedrich Stadler 2002.

<sup>4</sup> Reisch 2005.

In Sweden Axel Hägerström in the 1920s, well repudiated philosophy professor at Uppsala University, affiliated with the Social Democratic Party, was the first within the academic philosophy to pick up the new radical trends from Vienna circle. He conquered a public space for the Swedish philosophy at the beginning of the twentieth century. Philosophy and the Swedish Social Democratic party shared the spirit of the time: the modernistic and an anti-metaphysical attitude with a scientifically influenced belief in progress.

The Uppsala version of the Viennese circle distinguished itself for analytical truth seeking, focus on scientific epistemology and a belief in the cumulation of scientific knowledge. In the search for a unifying scientific principle the natural sciences were the allies, which distanced the philosophers from reactionary nationalistic historians. Hägerström is famous for his “value nihilism”, i.e. that judgments about good, bad, right or wrong could not be judged false or true. Values were expression for emotions, not objectively true. They belonged to metaphysics. Hägerström’s motto expressed rhetorically his standpoint: “Metaphysics ought to be destroyed.”<sup>5</sup> The similarities between the Vienna circle and Hägerström didn’t stop at the hostile attitude against metaphysics. The members of the circle viewed the natural sciences as a forceful weapon against the reigning obsolete idealism in humanities. However, the task of the philosophers were not limited to clean philosophy from out dated beliefs in philosophy, but to change to common mind. 1929 Rudolf Carnap wrote in the preface to *Aufbau*:

Whence then our confidence that our call for clarity, for a science that is free from metaphysics will be heard? It stems from the knowledge or, to put it somewhat more carefully, from the belief that these opposing powers belong to the past. We feel that there is an inner kinship between the attitude on which our philosophical work is founded and the intellectual attitude which presently manifests itself in entirely different walks of life; we feel this orientation in artistic movement, especially in architecture, and in movements which strive for meaningful forms [Gestaltung des menschlichen Lebens] of personal and collective life, of education and of external organization in general. We feel all around us the same basic orientation, the same style of thinking and doing... Our work is carried on by the faith that this attitude will win the future.<sup>6</sup>

Rudolf Carnap and the Viennese philosophers viewed their task to design philosophical tools intended to sort out useable knowledge from irrational metaphysics. According to them Europe more than ever needed criteria for meaning, facts and truth to defend political and social liberty

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<sup>5</sup> Quoted from Nordin 2004, p. 43.

<sup>6</sup> Quoted from Galison “Construction Modernism: Cultural locations of *Aufbau*,” in Ronald N. Giere & Alan W. Richardson 1996, p. 34.

against anti-democratic movements. They were radicals who considered the sciences as their allies to create a better future.

### **The Neo – Kantian heritage**

The Vienna circle and Axel Hägerström were influenced by the neo-Kantian Marburg school, founded by Herman Cohen in the 1880s, continued by Paul Natorp och Ernst Cassirer.<sup>7</sup> The focus was on the mathematics and the sciences. Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* was read as a philosophical interpretation of Newton. From the beginning the differences were distinct against the other of neo-Kantian school, the South West school, founded by Wilhelm Windelband and developed by Heinrich Rickert. The latter schools emphasis on the distinctiveness of the humanities (Geisteswissenschaften) is well known.

The neo-Kantian schools shared the Kantian view that knowledge about the "Ding an sich" was not possible.<sup>8</sup> The transcendental world was not accessible in its pure form, neither its reality, nor its objectivity could be confirmed. The position emerged a common problem for both schools, namely how should the road from a stream of original sense impressions to structured knowledge be explained?

Kant's own well known answer was that the knowledge object didn't exist independent of our judgments, but was made up by logical a priori categories. According to Kant, the transcendental analytical logic required an independent faculty of pure intuition to intermediate into the spatio-temporal representations.<sup>9</sup>

Kant's solution was rejected by both the neo-Kantian schools.<sup>10</sup> The dualism between logic and intuition was discarded, but what did the connection look like? Michael Friedman asserts that the answer draw the dividing line between the two schools. The Marburg school followed Kant's path and made mathematics and physics as prototypes for objective knowledge. In Ernst Cassirer's *Substanzbegriffs und Functionbegriff* the logic became the representative for pure universal knowledge. The empirical reality was indefinite and unknown. The task of epistemology was to describe logical relations within the system and how the natural empirical

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<sup>8</sup> See Michael Friedman 1996, p. 57.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 55.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.



world can be interpreted within logic. The solution implied a “logicization” and the position of the school was entitled “logical idealism.”<sup>11</sup>

The contrast is striking against the South-west School that keeps logic and knowledge apart. In an argument 1911 Natorp claimed that the numbers belonged to logic, not to intuition or psychology. Rickert stated the opposite thesis, namely that numerical concepts can not be deduced from logic. In order to be logical signs the number must be in a serial order. The numbers needed to be situated in a context. The original Kantian problem remained; how to relate the logical concepts to the spatio-temporal reality?<sup>12</sup> Both the schools acknowledged that knowledge and thinking was bound to time and history, but the proposed different character of the relation produced new schools within philosophy. From the Southwest school the phenomenology emerged. Husserl’s and Heidegger’s philosophies have their root here.

Axel Hägerström’s philosophy corresponded in all essentials to the Marburg school. Like them he looked for a founding principle to guarantee objective knowledge and found it in the logical universe of the sciences. The title on his magnum opus is informative: *Der Prinzip der Wissenschaft* (1908). The claim made is to have broken with residues of Kant’s transcendentalism, and transformed it to an logicism. Kant’s apriorical categories are given absolute validity by the logical relations. The solution is strikingly close to the logical idealism of the Marburg school.

If reality has a logical character, the step is close to consider moral as subjective, without any theoretical truth claims. Among his contemporaries Hägerström became known for his “value-nihilism”. In articulating that position Hägerström found a question of public interest that coincided with the modernist spirit. He could be the philosopher on “the market square, leaving out the subtleties of neo-Kantianism.

The philosophical mission included to communicate the new radical philosophical knowledge to the educated public. In 1898 Hägerström wrote a popular philosophy book *About the Importance of Philosophy for the Human Being*.<sup>13</sup> It presents philosophy as central among the

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Both Husserl’s and Heidegger’s philosophies connects to the problem. Husserl’s answer in *Logische Untersuchungen* (1901-13) was that phenomenology was not a variety of empirical psychology, but a logic philosophy that examines the logic of mind, its apriori structure. Heidegger regarded the solution as a variety of essential idealism. Against a logical structured mind he launched in *Sein und Zeit* (1924) the concept “Dasein”, a historically situated mind subject.

<sup>13</sup> Hägerström, Axel. 1898. *Om filosofiens betydelse för människan*. Uppsala.

humanities. The arguments are two; philosophy analyzes the nature of knowledge and the motives for human action. In his inaugural lecture *About Moral Values* 1911 the message was that a belief in an objective ethic legitimates political and religious fanaticism. It obstructs tolerance.

### **Philosophical Ethos in Vienna, Uppsala and USA**

The new continental trends within Swedish philosophy were far from any “lebensphilosophie”. In this sense, to fight active against reactionary politics and religion, disguised to philosophy, Hägerström is in line with his German and Austrian brothers until their forced emigration. Rudolf Carnap, Philippe Frank, Hans Hahn, Otto Neurath and Hans Reichenbach represented a left-winged influenced modernism. In their manifest *Wissenschaftliche Weltauffassung* 1929, the philosophical attitude was radical:

One group of combatants, holding fast to traditional social forms, cultivates traditional attitudes of metaphysics and theology whose content has long since been superseded; while the other group... faces modern times, reject these views and takes its stand on the ground of empirical science .... We witness the spirit of the scientific world conception penetrating in growing measure the forms of personal and public life, in education, upbringing, architecture, and the shaping of economic and social life according to rational principles."<sup>14</sup>

The previous year Rudolf Carnap had expressed the same ideas in *Der logische Aufbau der Welt* (1928), which A.J. Ayer appointed to the main book of logical empiricism.<sup>15</sup>

Whence then our confidence that our call for clarity, for a science that is free from metaphysics, will be heard? It steams from the knowledge or, to put it some more carefully, from the belief that these opposing powers belong to the past. We feel that there is an inner kinship between the attitude on which our philosophical work is founded and the intellectual attitude which presently manifests itself in entirely different walks of life; we feel this orientation in artistic movements, especially in architecture, and in movements which strive for meaningful forms of personal and collective life, of education and of external organization in general. We feel all around us the same basic orientation, the same style of thinking and doing... Our work is carried on by the faith that this attitude will win the future. <sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Quoted from Galison 1996, p. 33.

<sup>15</sup> See Giere, Ronald N. & Richardson, Alan W. 1996, p. 338.

<sup>16</sup> Quoted from *ibid.* p. 34.

The Vienna circle and Axel Hägerström were right in their convictions: their philosophical positions represented the future. The declaration of the death of metaphysics, the focus on the philosophy of science and the insistence on an objective moral represented the themes of a philosophical modernism that pervaded the coming twentieth century philosophy.

However, even if the philosophical orientation encompassed a scientific *ethos*, which underlined the philosophical academic as a representative for universalism, disinterest, professional loyalty, and organized scepticism a tension existed to the European tradition, viewing the academic as a public intellectual.

Hägerström is known for his influence on the Swedish climate of ideas, in the Social democratic circles during the 1920s. Gunnar Myrdal in *Vetenskap och politik i nationalekonomin*, (1930) discussed how values and politics permeated the political economy, veiled by the scientific vocabulary. The scientific standard was challenged, by the use of value judgment.<sup>17</sup> For several of Hägerström's students it was evident to continue on the same path; to represent a scientifically oriented philosophy that excluded the human man as moral being and simultaneously engage in the public media debate.

When the Vienna circle was forced to emigrate and the exile in US, the presuppositions drastically changed for their European modernist philosophy. It lost in relevance. US was the promised land of modernity with the world's most advanced science and technology combined with a political liberalism, far away from the European nazis and fascist movements. In US existed already a new urban architecture materialized in sky scrapers, industrial buildings and in apartment blocks. In Frank Lloyd Wright's architecture modernism was combined with naturalism.

In an ambitious attempt to transform the philosophy of the Vienna circle to the new world, the immigrants started a new journal. It aimed to substitute the European journal left behind, *Erkenntnis*. The project was a joint commitment by Otto Neurath, (who stayed in Europe), Rudolf Carnap and the US physicist Charles Morris at Chicago University. They had met at an international European philosophy conference in Prague 1934. Morris recommended them to prepare an emigration by publishing in English. When the immigrants arrived to US Morris used his network to help them to find academic positions. But the task was not easy. Even the most well known among them, Rudolf Carnap, had difficulties to find an academic job. At last he got a

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<sup>17</sup> Myrdal 1972 (1930).

position at Chicago University. Hans Reichenbach had another impressive CV, at last got a job at UC Los Angeles.<sup>18</sup>

1938 the first annual edition of *The International Encyclopedia of Unified Science* was published in US.<sup>19</sup> Before the emigration annual international conferences were arranged by the organisation for an "Unified Science". The first was held in Paris 1934. The thematic sessions were about a scientific philosophy, induction, probability, logic, the philosophy of mathematics, the history of logic and science, and the unity of the sciences. Next conference was in Copenhagen on the philosophy of physics and biology. Niels Bohr hosted the conference located in his home in Fredrikberg, nowadays a well known academic meeting place, owned by the Danish Carlsberg foundation.

In US the immigrants philosophical ambitions were reshaped. Charles Morris interest was to develop a scientific philosophy void of political aspirations. The philosophical program kept its modernism heritage chiefly by emphasize the natural sciences as the prime philosophical object. The immigrants became philosophers without the access to a public arena. The logical empiricism changed character. True, already in Europe Hans Reichenbach and Otto Neurath had represented different opinions about the relation between philosophy and society. Reichenbach advocated a more scientifically oriented philosophy that turn out to be the winning track.

When the cold war broke out the academic climate became hostile against any subject that used a term as internationalism. Especially threaten the situation might have looked for the immigrants fighting to establish themselves into the new soil. Several of them had a socialistic engagement behind them in Europe. Rudolf Carnap, Hans Reichenbach and Otto Neurath had taught at the Bauhaus school during the twenties, well known as a meeting point for left wing radicals. Otto Neurath was involved in the Bavarian Socialist Revolution 1919, and cooperated with Soviet Union about his ISOTYPE system.<sup>20</sup> Hans Reichenbach's socialist student engagement at Berlin's university blocked any future employment at the university. With this political luggage the immigrants were vulnerable targets when the anti-communist hysteria took its grip over US. This political heritage and to be a Jew in a US, not free from anti-Semitism,

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<sup>18</sup> Reisch 2005, p. 10.

<sup>19</sup> Galison 1996, p. 36f. Thomas Kuhn published the first edition of *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* in the *Encyclopedia* 1962.

<sup>20</sup> Reisch 2005, p. 32. See also Cartwright et al 1996. Otto Neurath was a pioneer in developing a graphic language, "International System of Typographic Pictorial Education", to convey a maximum of demographic and economic information in symbolic pictures.

made the public scene less available. However, to talk about a de-politization of the immigrants philosophy is doubtful.<sup>21</sup> It was not the philosophy that changed character, but the connection to the public that disappeared. Especially the idea of scientific disinterest was in tension to the early modernist intellectual ambition that the philosopher should apply their tools to society, forcefully articulated by the Vienna circle. When the scientific ethos was declared by Robert Merton in 1942, the circumstances had drastically changed.<sup>22</sup> The European modernist tradition was left behind. A decade later it was suspected for crypto communism. However, the claim here is that neither the professionalism, nor the specialized epistemology necessarily alienated the philosopher from the market square. The gap occurred when the epistemology ceased to be cultural meaningful, to be a part of the spirit of the time. As long as the content of the philosophy was articulated outside the colloquium rooms, as long as the philosophers had a self understanding as intellectuals, the exact content mind mattered less. On the public arenas in Vienna and Uppsala the connection between society and philosophy were kept alive. A more proper characterisation would be *de-intellectualisation* that changed the ethos. The philosopher didn't have any market square available anymore. The scientific ethos lost its European heritage of being a public intellectual.

Institutional changes in the US academic system also contributed to change the preconditions for a philosophical market square activity. During the post war period the American universities transformed to research universities and became dependent on external funds. Rockefeller, Fulbright, and Ford grow to important financiers. The space for public engagement shrank. The philosophers' carriers benefited of being exclusively professional researcher characterized by impartiality and professional loyalty. This changed ethos, what it meant to be a philosopher could merged with the prevalent American philosophical scientifically oriented philosophy. Now the logical empiricism developed into a strong part of the analytical philosophy. In the new shape it had a decisive influence on the Western philosophy of the

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<sup>21</sup> The perspective is represented by Reisch 2005. He doesn't discuss the different cultural conditions in Europe and US.

<sup>22</sup> Robert Merton articulates the position in his famous paper from 1942. (1996) "The ethos of science is that affectively toned complex of values and norms which is held to be binding on the man of science. The norms are expressed in the form of prescriptions, proscriptions, preferences and permissions ... These imperatives, ...are in varying degrees internalized by the scientist, thus fashioning his scientific conscience ... Four sets of institutional imperatives – universalism, communism, distinterestness, organized skepticism – are taken to comprise the ethos of modern science." From "The Ethos of Science" p. 267ff.

twentieth century. First during the last years metaphysic has been rehabilitated as legitimate research topic within the philosophy departments in US and Sweden.

### **The Last Philosophical Modernist: Ingemar Hedenius in Uppsala**

When the professor chair in Uppsala was under appointment, 1931 the Finnish philosopher Eino Kaila wrote in his evaluation report that the philosophers in Uppsala regarded themselves as logicians. Nevertheless they seemed unaware of the whole bulk of research represented by Frege, Russell, Wittgenstein and Carnap. The whole philosophy seemed to be backward.<sup>23</sup> Ten years later that judgment was passed. When Ingemar Hedenius published *Om rätt och moral* 1941 the philosophy of Hägerström acquired a new image, inspired mainly by G. E. Moore's (1873-1958). Moore claimed – as the German Neo-Kantians – that Kant's a priori categories represented an unwanted subjectivism and psychologism that blocked for true objective knowledge. The result was the “naturalistic mistake.” Even if we intuitively know what good is about, it can't be analytically defined. Only ostensible definitions are possible. Without difficulty an action can be singled out as good, but an analytical and complete description of goodness can not be made. His main work *Principia Ethica* 1903 became a source of inspiration for the twentieth century meta-ethics.

After Axel Hägerström's theoretical destruction of the moral categories in jurisprudence, Ingemar Hedenius rehabilitated the moral right to concur with the common sense of justice inspired by G.E Moore's meta-ethical principles. Value terms can be meaningfully true, without being logically related to each other. We know what goodness is, even if a theoretical analysis can't confirm the intuition. The intuition is non definable and logically inconsistent. However, in the last part of his book Hedenius claimed that “the individual ought to believe that the propositions he uses as foundation for his serious meant values are true or probably true.”<sup>24</sup>

The claim is made the core in Hedenius' new “moral of intellectuality”. He introduces a view that theoretical epistemology, regardless of logical coherence and philosophical sophistication, cannot be used if the outcome is a defense for dictatorship and oppression. In his attack on continental philosophy or “higher theories of knowledge” he connects the romantic history of philosophy, Marxism and Nazism with logical disorientation and intellectual

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<sup>23</sup> Nordin 2004, p. 57.

<sup>24</sup> My translation. Hedenius. 1941, p. 143.

opportunism. Hedenius' opinion became a well known common attitude in Swedish analytic philosophy during the twentieth century.<sup>25</sup>

During his long professorship Ingemar Hedenius kept the Uppsala philosophy in accordance with the international trends. Cambridge, Oxford and the US universities developed into the new philosophical centra. When the professor in political science Herbert Tingsten took office as the chief editor for Sweden's biggest daily news paper, *Dagens Nyheter* 1946, he recruited Ingemar Hedenius as contracted columnist. The two professors shared world view. The following decades *Dagens Nyheter* was the nation's most important debate forum against so called obscure ideas and reactionary institutions, exemplified by the monarchy and the church. Also the international politics was in focus. No reader of the newspaper could escape that the intellectual couple Tingsten and Hedenius represented an unconditional support for the Western liberal democracies. A special target was the authors Karl Wennberg and Arthur Lundkvist who represented "the third standpoint." Tingsten regarded the position as crypto communism – to not stand up for the Western political liberal values.

Ingemar Hedenius went on combining his academic position with public commitment. Other academic scholars such as Gunnar Myrdal, Torsten Gårdlund, Jörgen Westerståhl, and Torgny Segerstedt did the same. However, the times were changing. In the sixties a new generations of left winged intellectuals took over the public scene. Herbert Tingsten's successor on the chief editor position Olof Lagercrantz promoted left-winged writers as Jan Myrdal, Sara Lidman, Jan Guillou and P. O. Enquist. With them as spokespersons the left wing movement questioned the liberal political world view. The objective liberal science and its handmaid, the analytical philosophy were put into crossfire. The war cry was: Break positivism!

During the 1960s the formal logic school dominated Swedish philosophy, mainly in Uppsala, but also Lund was transformed. The technical subtleties and highly developed professional terminology promoted a development towards an internal oriented professionalism. The European tradition to practice philosophy in the public room was superseded.<sup>26</sup> Another promoting factor was the development of research universities, which required specialists to compete for the financial funding. In time it coincided with the cold war anti-communism. It may

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<sup>25</sup> The quotation reads: "Det [laborerandet med högre kunskapsteorier] härstammar från ett för marxismen och nazismen gemensamt stamträd, den romantiska historiefilosofien." Hedenius 1941, s. 127,

<sup>26</sup> Jerry Fodor 2004 discusses the medial popularity of the continental philosophy in *London Review of Books*, and concludes that "something has gone awfully wrong" in analytical philosophy.

have accelerated a specialization that facilitated to distance oneself from public arena. From a cold war position Marxism, existentialism and Heideggerian phenomenology were ideologies veiled to philosophies. They represented an anti-liberal world view and threatened the autonomy of science and the a-political search for the truth. The Swedish philosophers, scientifically and ethically a part of the US and the Western world, took over the positions as professional specialists, more interested to develop the knowledge with the colleagues, than to be at the market square. The scientific ethos was changed into a pure Mertonian version.

## Conclusions

How can we interpret the transformation in Swedish academic life in philosophy in during the post war period? In the 1960s the left winged student movement and the university establishment walked out of step. The new left wing movement claimed that theory and praxis were necessary intertwined. It is striking how seriously the theoretical interests of 1968 student movement was articulated intellectually. New journals were founded as *Zenit* and *Häften för Kritiska Studier* as public places to examine positivism, Marxism and other branches of continental philosophy as existentialism and phenomenology.

The problem about the links between different societal public arenas is an intricate puzzle that has produced different schools in the social sciences as well as in the humanities. In a tentative summary, what can we say about the character of the relation?<sup>27</sup> A claim that Galileo Galilei was an Aristotelian would be logically contradictory. Neither can we assert causality between the anti-metaphysical modernism spirit of the time and the Vienna circle's, Axel Hägerström's and Ingemar Hedenius philosophies. Nor the reversible causality is valid, that their anti-metaphysical philosophies caused the modernist spirit of the time. A claim about a necessary logical connection between the epistemology of logical empiricism and the spirit of the time is incongruous. How should we denote the shared associations that existed between the Vienna circle and the cultural climate – a modernist credo also present in Sweden from the 1920s and onwards?

One suggestion is to use the concept "cultural meaning."<sup>28</sup> The concept is useful to unveil the associative chains between different cultural arenas in the historical period of interest. The

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<sup>27</sup> For the arguments, see Galison 1996.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid, p. 41.



intellectual historian's task is to analyze the historical conditions when it is possible to share cultural meaning. How did the logical positivism and its heir analytical philosophy, combine modernistic beliefs that kept the door open for a public engagement among the philosophers?

In Sweden in the prewar and postwar period philosophy as represented by Axel Hägerström and Ingemar Hedenius hold images about rationality and science that stood in a associative connection with the public. These images had no deterministic content, but on the other hand they were neither arbitrary. A traditional christen cross was too permeated with Christian beliefs to be used as a modernistic icon, but the swastika was not disqualified. Nor is the cultural meaning universally or historically static. The cultural meaning in Hedenius philosophy lost its interpretative force when the radicals of the 1960s questioned modernism and capitalism, taking over the public arena.

A conclusion of the above story is that the philosophical content is not decisive for the public relevance or popularity. The emigrants from the Vienna circle lost their cultural sphere when they arrived to US. Ingemar Hedenius disappeared from the public when the left winged inspired cultural meanings superseded modernism. Nowadays French continental philosophy is considered more available for the public by virtue of its existential dimension, despite its notorious indistinct style of writing. I claim that more decisive for the philosophical popularity is that the French philosophers are present in media. Epistemology and public interest need not to be two sides of the same coin. Instead the epistemology need to be a part of a cultural shared meaning. And that is created in the public by the intellectuals.

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