

Title	Philosophy for Everyday Life
Author(s)	Janning, Finn
Editor(s)	
Citation	Journal of Philosophy of Life. 2015, 5 (1), p.1-18
Issue Date	2015-07
URL	<a href="http://hdl.handle.net/10466/14558">http://hdl.handle.net/10466/14558</a>
Rights	

[Essay]

## Philosophy for Everyday Life

Finn Janning\*

### Abstract

The aim of this essay is two-sided. The first is to illustrate to what extent philosophy can contribute to our everyday living. The second is to illustrate how. The implicit thesis that I try to unfold in this experimental essay is that these two sides—what and how—constantly intermingle. Although the philosophical approach takes its inspiration from the French philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Michel Serres, as well as from modern secular mindfulness, the main consideration in any philosophy that contributes to our life must be the coherency of our approach to life. Philosophy is a way of relating to life, which, among other things, requires awareness. This essay, therefore, does not present a single way of living that is beneficial but instead advocates a form of life that is philosophical.

You aren't my *teacher*. I'll give you this much: is it satire, as you'd say?  
Is it poetry? It's fantasy, always. —But, I beg you, don't underline any  
of this, either with pencil, or—at least not too much—with thought.

Arthur Rimbaud, *Letters: The Artist as Critic*

### 1. Introduction

What is a philosophy for everyday life? It is a practical philosophy that can help us transform our images of thought. It is a movement from thinking about life to letting thought be *thought* by life.

A practical philosophy, not just the one presented here, can help us get better in touch with what happens, strengthening our relationship with life. It is an on-going love affair with life.

To a certain extent, a philosophy for everyday life is a philosophy of the saucepan—I will use the saucepan as an ongoing metaphor throughout this essay. The philosophy, of course, does not fit or stay within a saucepan. Indeed, the

---

\* Independent philosopher. E-mail: finnjanning[a]gmail.com

metaphor is useful precisely because ingredients pass in and out of the saucepan: they enter and leave. It is the same with life. No one owns his or her life. It passes through us. Sometimes we may be able grasp it and then pass on certain parts of life to others. However, in order to do so, we must pay attention to life as it takes places right in front of and around us. I also adopt the metaphor of the saucepan because our taste for living and for life is crucial. A philosophy for everyday life aims at tasting life in all its richness, even when we encounter setbacks. It is a way of engaging with life as positively as we can.

A philosophy for everyday life is, among other things, an investigation of taste that can be distinguished from other experiences. It does not refer to any specific object or subject but instead tries to embrace the event where everything happens. To taste, therefore, is not to impose a judgment on our lived experience. Each taste is a new taste. Rather than judging, taste is a question of becoming—it is always in the midst of being formed. We can develop our taste by, for example, noticing more flavors in a soup.

A philosophy for everyday life is, in other words, an investigation of the raw reality of life, taking in all of life's many ingredients. Such a philosophy is necessary because—this is my claim or thesis—we still have not tasted life in all its richness. We tend to cling on to certain norms or ideals in a way that does not honor our own experience and intuition. At worst our life becomes an imitation, image or representation of more authoritative ideals. An image is a copy, that is, a simulation of the real reality. We have lost contact with life because we follow ideas or images of how life should be. To paraphrase Jean Baudrillard (and swapping his territory with life), life no longer precedes our moral map, nor does it survive it. Instead, the moral map now precedes life and engenders it.<sup>1</sup> We live our life as an imitation of a moral model, as if such a model was not just another human artifact.

A philosophy for everyday life tries to overcome seductive simulations and beliefs that the truth is certain, unchangeable, and universal. Instead, a practical philosophy, as presented here, views each step as a courageous act because it

---

<sup>1</sup> Baudrillard (1983), p.2: “The territory no longer precedes the map, nor survived it.” I use Baudrillard to emphasize how moral categories represent an unquestionable truth that is just an artifice. However, unlike Baudrillard, I do not believe that there is an origin or a nature to begin with. All there is becoming. Therefore, it is not simulation but the transcendent that is the problem. Deleuze and Guattari (1994) address this critique in another way, showing how immanence is not immanent “to” something; rather “immanence is immanent only to itself and consequently captures everything, absorbs All-One, and leaves nothing remaining to which it could be immanent” (p.44).

invents the ground it steps onto. The point is to make philosophy, in every movement, concrete rather than abstract (or transcendent). As Michel Serres says, “We don’t talk about *anything*, we don’t think *anything* if we don’t think *something*.”<sup>2</sup> Like Serres’ philosophy, a philosophy for everyday life is *relational*. It favors direct contact.

Similarly, a philosophy for everyday life does not believe that reality is a social construction. Rather, the metaphysical thesis is that life is changing. It is impermanent and fluctuates. Therefore, nothing remains static, not even our moral maps. It is through our awareness that we may become capable of experiencing what is in the midst of becoming something else. Our language is not sufficient to grasp what happens, although we can try to make it more poetic.

Thus, we need to cultivate our senses as well as establishing trust in our intuition. Sometimes something happens that we may not be able to put into words. Yet it still happened. Life is virtual—a potential or force that needs to be actualized (or lived) to become visible. “The virtual is opposed not to the real but to the actual. *The virtual is fully real in so far as it is virtual*. Exactly what Proust said of states of resonance must be said of the virtual: ‘Real without being actual, ideal without being abstract.’”<sup>3</sup>

The guiding question for such a practical and curious philosophy is: What is the potential that is yet to be actualized in each moment? The answer lies in the approach. That is to say, the question requires that each moment is experienced fully without our habitual armor of abstraction.

## **2. The Weakness of mind**

In *Une Saison en Enfer*, Arthur Rimbaud writes: “The morality is a weakness of mind.”<sup>4</sup> The weakness of the mind shows itself when we try to label the potential of a life within the framework of the good, the bad, and the ugly—or simply within the dichotomy of good and bad. It is a weakness to think that we can control or even organize chaotic forces by putting them aside in already pre-prepared boxes and systems. The boxes cannot be prepared beforehand.

---

<sup>2</sup> Serres (1995), p.200. This also stresses that consciousness is not about something, it is something.

<sup>3</sup> Deleuze (1994), p.208. To actualize the virtual, therefore, is not the same as realizing something possible. The virtual is the past that we carry with us at every moment, something yet to be actualized in the sense that we can never narrate our own story, only explore or examine it (i.e., actualize it).

<sup>4</sup> Rimbaud (2003), p.213.

It seems that we have not only lost the taste of life but also the taste for life, as we allow our lives to be dominated by ideals, norms, and values defined by others. In this way, we have neglected our own capacity to act—to contribute to the nurturing of life. We have forgotten that attention and awareness are ordinary human qualities.<sup>5</sup> How come? Apparently it is comfortable to cling on to the hegemony of controlling ideals, probably because of a growing anguish of being dropped from “good” company, of losing our identity, or of being confronted with unclassified others. The unknown scares us instead of being seen as a source of wisdom. It seems as if we seek the already classified recognition that turns our tongues into senseless knots. The result is a moralistic life wrapped in good and bad tastes—a life without thinking. Tasteless. So it seems.

Philosophy is a love of wisdom, a wisdom that is not given but rather gained by intervening with life as such. To know in philosophy is not to possess certain knowledge about something given, but rather to know that one’s self is perishable. Still, we take care of ourselves in order to go on living and becoming wiser through overcoming the struggles of life. There is a balance between getting to know oneself and taking care of oneself. The better you take care of yourself, the more you will know, and the more you know, the better you can take care of yourself.<sup>6</sup> This understanding of philosophy is found in philosophers from Plato to Foucault, Deleuze, and Serres (leaving aside their many differences). It is a practice that encourages unrestricted thinking, refusing to accept hierarchies or dichotomies in knowledge. Love in philosophy is, like love in any other matter, an unlimited power that transcends all rationalist boundaries. As Spinoza has emphasized, one cannot love oneself because self-love does not make any sense.<sup>7</sup> One can take care of and show compassion for oneself, but love is external and related to others. It originates outside. Love is defined by Spinoza as the increase of joy, since joy, as well, has an external cause. As Serres says: “Enthusiasm for the philosophical life has never left me. If I had to name (perhaps immodestly) the dominant sentiment that is always with me, I would not hesitate a moment: joy, the immense, sparkling, indeed

---

<sup>5</sup> Kabat-Zinn (2014), xv.

<sup>6</sup> Of course, at times we gain knowledge through not taking care of ourselves, e.g. extreme or addictive lifestyle, however, such experiences – if one takes a pause and becomes aware of what is actually taking place – will often lead to a more conscious or mature approach. Also, one can’t know for sure whether a certain lifestyle is good for us (unless we go to the extremes), one needs to explore. To put it simpler: One learns from one’s experiences gradually improving one’s way of relating with life.

<sup>7</sup> See for example Deleuze (1988), p.27.

holy joy of having to think—a joy that is sometimes even serenity.”<sup>8</sup>

The philosopher—in this context—is the one who does not believe in anything other than love. He or she follows the direction of love to the end of the world because it is love that enriches life, making it beautiful and light. Philosophy is the joy of being alive because life itself is full of wisdom. Wisdom is integrated in life, and life is fluctuating around us, in us, and through us. For this reason, our contact with life is vital.

To follow the directions of love is to dive into the boiling saucepan—the metaphor I introduced earlier—where different ingredients are mixed together; each flavor or spice gets its particular taste from its proximity to the other ingredients. In these zones of proximity—or of neighborhood—we may be able to distinguish two or three specific flavors, but at the same time something new is created and new forces of life emerge. The cinnamon tastes different in a chili con carne than in an apple pie. The joy of thinking is the joy of experiencing a new taste. “Thought is creation, not will to truth,” as Deleuze and Guattari say.<sup>9</sup>

A philosophy for everyday life is, therefore, an investigation of how *what* takes form, where this “what” is that which is in the process of becoming.<sup>10</sup> Thus, when different spices are mixed together, the different forces of each spice interact with each other with the result that a new taste of and for life may appear. Such forces can only be grasped by using our senses. It is during this process of paying attention to the present moment that we may experience the joy related to becoming wiser. This is the flow that Rimbaud did not want to stop with moralistic values or norms, preferring instead to suck life down to the bone.

Although it is customary to judge something by reference to taste, one does not taste through judgment. To taste is not to confirm one’s habits, traditions, education, or idiosyncrasies. That is just confirmation. On the contrary, taste is linked to openness and to an exposure and perceptibility to “others” and to strangeness, whether these refer to people or to the various ingredients of the saucepan and to the forces that emerge when mixed. The unspecific other is the

---

<sup>8</sup> Serres (1995), p.42.

<sup>9</sup> Deleuze and Guattari (1994), p.54.

<sup>10</sup> Another way of saying this is that “consciousness is the passage, or rather the awareness of the passage,” that causes us more or less joy or sadness, see Deleuze (1988), p.21. Philosophy as a form of life deals with each thought that appears in us, and how this thought functions in relation to other people or ideas circulating in our life. It is based on our experiences with life that we can act in a more fruitful way, e.g., minimize the kind of relationship with life that causes more sadness than joy.

“whoever” that is often, unfortunately, reduced or elevated by our everyday assumptions, for example, when valued or labeled within certain preferences such as habitual identities, traditions, norms, and ideals. This labeling is convenient because it is a quick way to judge what is happening, a quick way to create a union or membership of think-a-likes, and even a quick way to create a foundation for our decisions. Time is money is the morale. However, the sad fact is that such labeling reduces our openness and exposure to an event; the criteria are instead used as predefined guidelines for interpreting what happens. The map precedes the territory, as Baudrillard has said.

A simple example of the use of a restrictive identity label is found in gender debates where women are often defined by men. Another example is in our contemporary business society where status, prestige, power, and recognition bestow identities on people. Although all identities are restraining, most people use them to distinguish who is worth more or less, as if some people’s taste is tastier as a result of their title. Here it can be useful to remember Foucault’s question: “What difference does it make who is speaking?”<sup>11</sup> Nothing, of course, but at the same time everything, it seems. Who said this or that is, of course, of no importance. Only how and what is said matters. If only more people could see beyond title, status, gender, race, and money, then we might really see (that is, taste).

What matters, therefore, is what possibilities an approach opens for, what one’s awareness makes possible, and what relations paying attention actualize. The more relations the better, here one tries to approach the world in all its complexity, which gives one more ways of acting constructively according to one’s own experiences.

A philosophy for everyday life, as presented here, shares some of the ideas of mindfulness. The word *mindfulness* is probably the most influential used term derived from Buddhism. “The word *sati*, of which ‘mindfulness’ is the most common translation, is generally acknowledge and recognized as a key feature in arousing health in mind .... The original word is derived from the root ‘to remember.’” However, within the context of Buddhist meditation “it is described and encompasses far more than this, including the notion of awareness, and being alert to events occurring in the present, whether in the body, the feelings,

---

<sup>11</sup> Foucault (1991), p.120. Foucault emphasizes that the challenge for the author is to create a space where the writing subject disappears.

the mind or the interplay between all three.”<sup>12</sup> Mindfulness is the cultivation of our awareness through paying attention deliberately, in the present moment, and without judgement—just as Jon Kabat-Zinn describes mindfulness.<sup>13</sup> It is a practice. To taste the richness of life, of being alive, one has engage with life. Right here and now. This is all there is.<sup>14</sup>

The challenge for mindfulness (due to its tremendous popularity) or any other approach to life is for it not to turn into yet another ideal, becoming the guarantee of an authentic form of life that people then use to add moral status to their life. Here one can learn from Kierkegaard’s remark that philosophy as a form of life works in silence. “You aren’t my *teacher*,” Rimbaud said.<sup>15</sup> Or as Kabat-Zinn stresses, “Anybody who is imitating somebody else, no matter who it is, is heading in the wrong direction.”<sup>16</sup> Our experiences do not serve as universal moral codes but as one actualization and one route among many others. Perhaps this is also the reason why Deleuze and Guattari emphasize, “philosophy is not contemplation, reflection, or communication .... Contemplation, reflection and communication are not disciplines but machines for constituting Universals in every discipline.”<sup>17</sup> These universals function as imaginary masters, insisting, for example, that one should be mindful about something specific or that people should contemplate x rather than y in order to become wiser. Philosophical creation, on the contrary, is always singular. It depends on one’s relation with life and not on abstract categories or universals that “explain nothing, but must themselves be explained,” as Deleuze and Guattari point out.<sup>18</sup> Not only philosophers do philosophy. Non-philosophers do so as well, since philosophy is about responding creatively and innovatively to what life presents us with.<sup>19</sup>

---

<sup>12</sup> Shaw (2014), p.27.

<sup>13</sup> Kabat-Zinn (2014), p.xxvii.

<sup>14</sup> Mindfulness is a crucial part of Buddhist meditation practice; however, since the 1970’s, especially in the US, there has been a growth in a more secular mindfulness. It is not my aim to debate whether mindfulness without Buddhism is problematic. For one reason, I have no faith in the existence of one true origin, as pointed out by Shaw (2014) in her book on *The Spirit of Buddhist Meditation*, then the Buddhist meditative tradition is based on a rich variety of writings. Moreover, if a non-Buddhist cannot benefit from mindfulness, then a non-Christian cannot benefit from reading Kierkegaard. Personally, I have experienced the contrary.

<sup>15</sup> Rimbaud (2003), p.365.

<sup>16</sup> Kabat-Zinn (2014), p.25.

<sup>17</sup> Deleuze and Guattari (1994), p.6.

<sup>18</sup> Deleuze and Guattari (1994), p.7.

<sup>19</sup> A philosophy for everyday life is a kind of non-philosophy.



A challenge for all philosophies, including one for everyday life, is: How do we avoid the mass seduction of a particular taste? The only way to defend taste is to confront all tastes in order to create room for our own. This requires a courageous form of liberation away from hegemonic ideals of what the good, the bad, and the ugly should taste like.

### **3. The Meal as a Social Event**

Let me continue with the saucepan as a guiding metaphor and take the meal as an example. A meal is a social event consisting of individuals who connect differently to the various dishes and tastes at hand. One might assume that the reason why some guests connect differently to the dishes is due to differences in taste, but—if this “reasonable” assumption is correct—this does not clarify what taste is or whether or not taste really is individual. A meal could consist of people from different parts of the world. Each person would be different from the other due to his or her biology, but also due to how he or she has been affected by culture, religion, habits, and traditions, etc. All of these people can, therefore, only really taste and enjoy the meal if they put down their armor. To taste is to expose oneself and to accept one’s vulnerability, for example, “being caught” liking the wrong dish. This means to really pay attention to the meal, suspending one’s judgment and letting go of one’s previous experiences during the course of this particular meal. And encourage the other guests to do so as well. This is for most people a challenging experience because we put ourselves at risk when we put our powers of judgment aside for a while.

Let us approach the question of mass seduction in another way. If we chop up and mix these ingredients, then—perhaps—a social event like a meal might not consist of differences due to taste but rather of something else. Such a possibility is often viewed as a social problem because for many people difference is seen as a problem, even as a danger to the order and harmony of society, although such a predefined order is an imaginary creation. Differences in taste—like any kind of difference—only become a problem if anyone believes that harmony, order, or homogenization are the solutions that we are seeking. Norms are often the source of conflict. Norms are a part of the metaphysics of being, insisting, for example, that there is a right way of being. By contrast, I propose that the only correct way of being is being aware of what is constantly becoming other—including oneself.

Order or homogenization both favor the creation of a comfortable network of think-a-likes that excludes anyone who diverts from the controlling ideals. Such networks do not, unfortunately, produce new paths or lines of taste because no one dares to question the norms that seem to organize everything, including taste. Have we all forgotten that philosophy was once to question the obvious?

The basic assumption of this so-called problem of difference is that difference in taste is just as natural as the color of your hair or the structure of your bones. Therefore, there is nothing that the host, the chef, or society can do other than continue serving dishes that someone has already clarified as tasty. This is convenient because the chef or host can then claim that he or she has done his or her best. However, without the excuse of referring to differences as something static—and it is an excuse, just like any other assumption is, especially when it affects our behavior—the solution emerges through a direct interaction with the taste of the guest.

What is it that the guests do not like? What does this particular taste do? What possibilities does it open for? Does the dessert produce anything other than a craving or lust for more—nausea perhaps? Is it the salad, the beef, the wine, the sauce, the dessert, the company, the decorations on the table, the table and chairs, the temperature in the room, the location, the light bulbs, the faces of the other guests, the conversation, or the music that makes the difference? Perhaps it is a mixture of all these things and their interdependence with each other? How does this specific taste emerge? There is no right answer because taste does not have an origin. Instead, it is an assemblage of intersections.

Assumptions such as “they are not used to x” or “when they get used (i.e., adapted) to x everything will become better” become controlling due to the implicit presence of a norm. Taste does not operate with a goal or a utopian aim; it just *happens*. Most people have experienced that on some mornings the coffee fails to agree with their taste. The comfortable relief that comes from finding evidence for one’s assumptions is—as Rimbaud pointed out—a result of the weakness of the mind, since the mind apparently stops thinking when it relies blindly on well-defined good and bad distinctions. It is like memorizing the answers in a quiz show. The same is repeated. Best practice becomes best practice because we neglect many other ways of practicing. Repeating best practice is a form of laziness. Difference in taste, therefore, needs an inverse explanation, an unwrapping of all these fabrics that prevent us from coming into real contact with life. We must get our hands a little dirty. Furthermore, and most

unfortunately, the explanations always operate within well-known criteria, even though the meal itself might have opened up possibilities for new criteria. Take the burning sensations on the tongue when we taste something. Explanations do not say anything that we did not know beforehand. Thus, it is not only a new language that we need but an attack on so-called good taste. Every human being is obliged to create his or her own taste.

A good meal can make one forget all about time. Indeed, it seems as if it is only taste that has this *time-forgetting* quality—as if it is out of time. This time-forgetting quality, in which the taste appears, can, of course, appear in many other settings as well, such as reading literature, watching an interesting movie, listening to a piece of music, or meditating. All moments of life carry this capacity. It only requires our full attention. In the process of engaging with these activities, we might lose ourselves in the sense that we forget ourselves and time. Willingly or unwillingly, we drift away through all the possible lines of escape, creating new ideas, new thoughts and feelings, and new structures of taste. Each moment is already a virtual vibration waiting to be actualized.

“The law can only be transcended by virtue of a principle that subverts it and denies its power.”<sup>20</sup> If one really tastes, then this experience can help show us the absurdity of the law of good taste. The law is, after all—and as Lacan says—the same as repressed desire.

What does all this say about taste? If something arouses my taste, it awakens me. I might see new possibilities emerge because I allow myself to be carried away in and with the concrete moment. This, of course, has nothing to do with my taste being special. For instance, it is not necessarily a matter of good taste when I start swapping my Marilyn Manson CDs for Mozart. It might not have anything to do with my taste at all because the values and ideals (i.e., the law) that classify Mozart higher in the hierarchy makes it obvious that I should swap Manson for Mozart in order to get access to another and better social identity. I could, in other words, just as easily be pretending to have tasted Mozart’s richness, although I was just following the authorities.

A more obvious example—within the metaphor of the saucepan—is when people storm the same restaurant because of its reviews, or when they read the same books or watch the same movies. This does not make either Mozart or the restaurant or the specific book worse, but following the herd has nothing to do

---

<sup>20</sup> Deleuze (1999), p.87. Here Deleuze appears to agree with Rimbaud when he says that, “suffering is not the cause of pleasure itself but the necessary precondition for achieving it” (p.89).

with good taste. Similar, one can also choose to follow a niche or minority interest (e.g. experimental music) for reasons that have nothing to do with good taste. Thus, it is not just following the herd but also avoiding the herd that is problematic. To oppose a position still confirms the position that one is opposing. What I aim at is philosophy as a kind of pre-position.

If you only feel and think what you have been told to feel and think, then you have not yet experienced what it is to be thought or felt—that is, to be touched by life. “To see the richness of the present moment, we need to cultivate what has been called ‘beginner’s mind,’ a mind that is willing to see everything as if for the first time.”<sup>21</sup> Taste, therefore, is connected to a creative way of being. Developing taste has something to do with being open, acting and living without ideals or norms that only serve to judge or to criticize.

In other words, an everyday philosophy is about daring to expose or uncover oneself in order to receive the meal, the book, or the film as it is. Each present moment as it is. One has to invest time in order to forget time. Only then can one change direction and transform, as one chooses to follow life, not a map of life. There is, therefore, no need, while one is experiencing something, to relate the experience to anything else, such as a review of the restaurant. Instead, we should stay present with whatever the experience itself opens us up to. Being here is always becoming more.

To return to the question of taste, this implies that taste will remain just a habit, the habit of liking this and not liking that, unless we *dare* to experience a meal, a book, or a piece of music that might take us away from our own judgmental framework. Such openness literally takes our individuality away so that we become a neutral *whoever*. In that moment, when we are open for anyone, anything, and any taste, something always happens.

#### 4. Exploring empathy

“Knowledge is not seeing, it is entering into contact, directly, with things; and besides, they come to us .... Sensation is a generalized sense of touch.” Serres, writing in *The Birth of Physics*.<sup>22</sup>

“I mean that you have to be a *seer*, mold oneself into a *seer*. The Poet makes himself into a *seer* by a long, involved and logical *derangement of all the*

---

<sup>21</sup> Kabat-Zinn (2014), p.24.

<sup>22</sup> Serres (2000), p.107.

senses.” Rimbaud, writing in a letter to Paul Demeny.<sup>23</sup>

The sense of taste comes to us when we dare to open ourselves up and expose ourselves; it is then that our senses develop as we allow ourselves to be imprinted by the forces of the world. We cannot judge anything beforehand, but only afterwards based on our experience.

Do we ever eat anything other than the taste of this world? No, of course not, and yet we may still ask: Why do we keep wrapping the world in moralistic values? Are we afraid of tasting life and losing ourselves?

Perhaps we need to look elsewhere to understand the *poetic* approach to life that is needed to grasp the intimacy of taste and sociality. For example, the chef’s poetic relationship to the ingredients, the guest’s poetic relationship to the meal, and the host’s poetic connection to the guests and the setting rely on an empathy. Empathy is the capacity of *becoming with* another person, understanding his or her feelings and thoughts.<sup>24</sup> Empathy is itself neither morally good nor bad, it depends on how our understanding of the other may affect our actions, that is whether our understanding opens for a greater sense of interconnectedness. Also, one should be careful that empathy does not become a moral characteristic of one’s own narrative self. For this reason, I see empathy as a way of exploring or examining life as such. Questioning our own ignorance. Becoming more intimate with what happens. “Exposed in all direction ... wandering without belonging.”<sup>25</sup>

An explorative empathy is an ethical gesture because one takes on or carries the burden of the other; one allows oneself to become a *seer*, to have *direct contact* with life without any pre-given assumptions. This is done by being radically open and exposed, becoming an impersonal *whoever*, who—through empathy—melts into the flow of life. This empathy is not guided by norms or assumption. Instead, it is linked with the nakedness of our senses.

---

<sup>23</sup> Rimbaud (2003), p.367. To be a poet “is to know himself completely; he seeks his soul, inspects it, tests it, learns it.” And then, he “arrives at the *unknown*.” Encountering the unknown is a collision with our own assumptions, habits or ignorance, the encounter awakens the poet – make him into a seer.

<sup>24</sup> Often empathy is defined as “stepping into” the other (see Krznaric (2014)) this upholds a positional or systemic difference, as if the human being was a closed entity. Also, the others (or what is unknown in life) are hereby referred to something or someone “out there.” I am advocating for a preposition, which is to view or interact with the world from nowhere. The other basically melts with us; she and I become indistinguishable because the others form me. As Serres (2000) writes, “Sensation is a generalized sense of touch. The world is no longer in the distance, it is nearby, tangible” (p.107). Why should we only empathize with human beings, why not become empathic towards animal, nature, and machines?

<sup>25</sup> Serres (1997), p.25.

In the book *Anti-Oedipus*, Deleuze and Guattari put forward an ontological pre-comprehension of desire as life. “Everything is desire,” they claim in the beginning of the book, along with other ontological claims such as “everything is a machine ... everything is production.”<sup>26</sup> Desire is a machine, production; the human being is a desiring-machine, a potential that produces more life by actualizing it. What there *is* (in this world) is *becoming* qua being a desire that is produced by and produces life. As Rimbaud might have said, we have to dare to be thought to witness the beauty of life and to make it tastier.

Deleuze “defines his philosophy as a search, not for the conditions of possible experience, but rather the conditions of *real* experience. Such is the formula of immanence.”<sup>27</sup> For this reason, at least for Deleuze and Guattari, the concept of desire is a purely immanent concept. Desire is not defined by an image or by the representation of a perfect universal idea.<sup>28</sup> This touches upon the concept of time, not as a linear concept rather as something actualized. The subject is constructed by one’s encounter with life. In other words, the notion “I am thinking” is an empty form through which life passes. We constantly become because something passes through our body. We are thought; we are felt – touched by life. If nothing passes, I am no one. Something is actualized due to my encounter with the world. We bring our past experiences and memories with us, but at the same time we cannot cling on to them, for example, as being authentic or true our ourselves, since the we are constantly moved by the movements of life. Our memories are also changing as we explore our relationship with life. “If you want to become everything, accept being nothing.”<sup>29</sup>

There is something healing in really being able to taste. “It is less about *curing* and more about *healing*, which I define as *a coming to terms with things*

---

<sup>26</sup> Deleuze and Guattari (2000), pp.1-4.

<sup>27</sup> Smith (2012), p.281.

<sup>28</sup> This is also where philosophy, as presented here, departs from the transcendent parts of Buddhism that speaks about a “perfect” or “infinite consciousness” where one is released from the cycle of existence and enters the cycle of rebirths (see Shaw (2014), p.121 and p.246). For this reason, I also stress that here we are dealing with a metaphysics of becoming, not being. It is perhaps also here that Deleuze diverts from the more secular forms of mindfulness, because mindfulness cultivates a form of life that can give access to possible experiences, in each present moment, whereas Deleuze more deals with the conditions of real experiences as such, that is, while they happen. For him one can’t prepare or step outside – we are already here, alive, in this world the only one there is. Still, whether there is a difference between Deleuze and mindfulness regarding this issue is an area that needs further investigation, I admit. Perhaps the point is not whether mindfulness is secular or not, but if it is an immanent practice or not.

<sup>29</sup> Serres (1997), p.157.

*as they are* in full awareness. We ... rest in awareness moment by moment without an attachment to outcome.”<sup>30</sup>

If desire is everything, as Deleuze and Guattari claim, and if life is a desiring-machine, constantly connecting one thing with another, then it is obvious that life (i.e. desire) does not lack or need anything. Being aware, therefore, is a productive activity. It connects, it is a relational practice. Nothing exists in itself, only relations or encounters. According to Deleuze and Guattari, need is derived from desire as a counter-product, just as lack is a counter-effect of desire. Lack is created, planned, and organized in and through social production. Things lack something because of an ideal. The French fries lacks salt because we apparently know how they should taste. In other words, we do not taste the French fries; we taste what it lacks according to an ideal (or a past experience that we cannot let go off). Production, on the other hand, is never organized on the basis of a pre-existing need or lack, just as supply is not organized or planned by demand. On the contrary, demand is organized and controlled by supply (which becomes obvious when looking at consumerism). The social production of a look-a-like taste creates a lack in a psychological sense and a scarcity in an economic sense.

The moral of this essay is that those who strive to live life do not lack anything.

The traditional logic of how desire works forces us to choose between desire as either production or acquisition. If we place desire on the side of acquisition, then we make desire an idealistic conception, which causes us to look upon it as primarily a lack: a lack of a real object, for instance the lack of “good” taste. But such “good” taste cannot be thought or bought.<sup>31</sup>

Desire does not lack because it produces. It produces the real as it actualizes through establishing new relations with life. Desire, therefore, cannot be distinguished from its object, nor can production be distinguished from its product. The taste is right here and now, becoming a sense on your tongue. As I asked earlier: Do we ever eat anything other than the taste of this world? If we do, as I believe is the case for many because of a senseless need to fit in, we start generating sensations of lack.

---

<sup>30</sup> Kabat-Zinn (2011).

<sup>31</sup> We can see this in the case of Apple’s many products that appeal to more and more people. However, an iPhone or a laptop does not necessarily provide the consumer with a creative or innovative taste. You may be able to buy an identity as it operates within the domain of the real and the possible but not within the virtual and the actual. Buying an Apple laptop does not actualize anything.

It might remain unclear how taste actualizes itself without any role models. What we apparently need is a cookbook that teaches us how to taste—how to develop a sensual openness. A cookbook filled with tastes rather than recipes. Life is an assemblage of such tastes. Trying to really taste, non-judgmentally, is a way of taking care of oneself, because one enters into contact directly with things, as Serres pointed out. In this manner, care of oneself is both an active involvement in life and with life. One’s explorative relationship with life becomes an ethical approach to life, where one constantly tries to become worthy of what happens.<sup>32</sup>

How do we actualize the potential of life, especially when our taste of it has become so predictable? How do we begin?

The potential of life can be actualized differently. An exploration of empathy can assist in this process. The truth about taste is a becoming or invention, not a discovery. Since we do not know the potential, we cannot know what we will taste. The being or the “what” of any taste does not refer back to any origin or transcendental subject because there are many places from where any subject can produce the same taste. The truth of taste becomes an ethos, as the truth becomes a process, a subjective development of that which is both new and of general existential interest. It is new in the sense that it appears unforeseen at first, until actualized. In order to become, one must participate in life without restrictions and reject nothing. To taste is to become something more than an eater. It is to become wiser. “Sit. Feast on your life,” as Derek Walcott finishes the poem “Love after love.”<sup>33</sup> Celebrate life.

A philosophy for everyday life aims at becoming impersonal. It is a matter of becoming what happens as if one’s life depends on it. And it does, because we are formed by life. It is not a matter of asking whether the taste of the curry or cinnamon is good or bad. Rather, one tries to create more space for experiencing as such, not a specific experience. The challenge is to accept that what is happening is happening. It is a practice of non-doing that allows things to be and to unfold (i.e., become) at their own pace and direction. It is a way to “encourage people to become their own authorities, to take more responsibility for their own lives, their own bodies, their own health.”<sup>34</sup> Similarly, the German

---

<sup>32</sup> Being worthy of what happens is Deleuze’s definition of ethics. See Deleuze (2004), p.169.

<sup>33</sup> Walcott (2014). Similar, Rimbaud (2003) opens *Une Saison en Enfer*, writing, “Long ago, if my memory serves, life was a feast where every heart was open, where every wine flowed” (p.195). Life is a feast if we have an open heart and mind.

<sup>34</sup> Kabat-Zinn (2014), p.192.



philosopher Byung-Chul Han talks about philosophy as a free time, a time of non-doing.<sup>35</sup> A philosophy for everyday life encourages us to take a pause in order to retune our awareness and our relationship with life. A pause, however, is not the same as stepping out; we cannot step out of life unless we are death. A pause is rather to follow the flow of life itself.<sup>36</sup>

## 5. Concluding Remarks

Does the human being have the courage to live according to its own taste, living a form of life that is tasty and that produces yet more taste? Or would it prefer to let its own taste be guided by moralistic ideals, ideals that often reflect the norms, values, and status anxiety of contemporary capitalist society?

The conclusion lies within these questions. If we wish to flourish and taste life, we have to approach life from a humble position, a position from nowhere, a preposition where nothing is rejected to begin with. It requires an open will and mind that allow us to be formed by whatever approaches us.

The creation of a tastier world for the next generation begins, perhaps, if not around the saucepan in the kitchen, then around the table. First, however, we all need to accept that not everything depends on us alone. No one can control what happens or construct a suitable reality for his or her own purpose. Instead, each one of us can relate better, more fruitfully, to what happens. Awareness is required in order to invent new routes.

Each human being is just one taste among others, all of whom are trying to become tastier together. Everything hangs together like the ingredients in a soup. The experience of everything as being connected is the real premise for a philosophy that works for everyday life. Once one experiences that everything is interconnected, then each moment counts. Our relationship with life is what matters. Gradually, then, it becomes evident that we can decide to liberate ourselves from whatever ideals, norms, or thoughts are preventing us from becoming with life. We act towards living a life that consists of more moments of joy than sadness. Since everything is constantly changing, why not change in attunement with life, instead of following maps that tells us how life should be?

---

<sup>35</sup> Han (2010).

<sup>36</sup> Deleuze & Guattari (1994) speak about philosophical time as “coexistence that does not exclude the before and after ...” (p.59), philosophy as an intervening time.

## References

- Baudrillard, J. (1983). *Simulations*. MIT Press.
- Deleuze, G. (1988). *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*. Translated by R. Hurley. City Lights Books.
- Deleuze, G. (1999). *Masochism, Coldness and Cruelty*. Translated by J. McNeil. Zone Books.
- Deleuze, G. (1994). *Difference and Repetition*. Translated by P. Patton. Columbia University Press.
- Deleuze, G. (2004). *The Logic of Sense*. Translated by M. Lester. Continuum.
- Deleuze, G. & Guattari, F. (1994). *What Is Philosophy?* Translated by H. Tomlinson & G. Burchell. Columbia University Press.
- Deleuze, G. & Guattari, F. (2000). *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Translated by R. Hurley, M. Stem and H.R. Lane. The Athlone Press.
- Han, B-C (2010). *Müdigkeitsgesellschaft*. Matthes & Seitz Verlag.
- Foucault, M. (1991). "What Is an Author," in *The Foucault Reader*, edited by P. Rubinow. Penguin Books.
- Kabat-Zinn, J. (2011). "Some Reflections on the Origins of MBSR Skillful Means and the Trouble with Maps." Special Issue of *Contemporary Buddhism* Volume 11, No.1, pp.282-306.
- Kabat-Zinn, J. (2014). *Full Catastrophe Living: How to Come with Stress, Pain and Illness Using Mindfulness Meditation*. Revised and Updated Edition. Piatkus
- Krznaric, R. (2014). *Empathy: A Handbook for Revolution*. Rider Books.
- Rimbaud, A. (2003). *Rimbaud Complete*. Volume 1: Poetry and Prose. Translated, edited, and with introduction by W. Mason. Modern Library Paperback Edition.
- Serres, M. with Latour, B. (1995). *Conversations on Science, Culture, and Time*. Translated by Roxanne Lapidus. The University of Michigan Press.
- Serres, M. (1997). *The Troubadour of Knowledge*. Translated by S.F. Glaser with W. Paulson. The University of Michigan Press.
- Serres, M. (2000). *The Birth of Physics*. Translated by J. Hawkes. Clinamen Press 2000.
- Shaw, S. (2014). *The Spirit of Buddhist Meditation*. Introduced, translated and edited by Sarah Shaw. Yale University Press.

- Smith, D.W. (2012). "Derrida: Immanence and Transcendence," in *Essays on Deleuze*. Edinburg University Press.
- Walcott, D. (2014). "Love After Love," in *The Poetry of Derek Walcott*, selected by G. Maxwell. Faber & Faber.