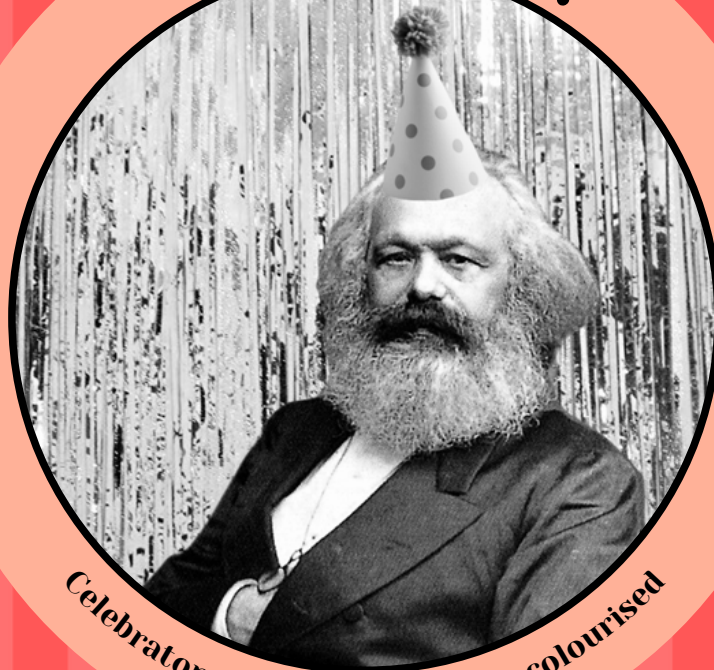


et cetera.

symposion's digital gazette

december edition

WELCOME!



Celebratory Karl Marx, 2023, decolourised

Welcome to the first edition of Et Cetera, Symposion's shiny new digital gazette. Produced by the Broadcast Committee, this quasi-newsletter is a way for us to inflict our opinions on the public on a monthly basis. Book reviews? You bet. Song suggestions? The nicher, the better. Movie recommendations? *Certainement*. A page exclusively dedicated to weird photos we've taken this month? Goes without saying. And of course, the best part: we're open for submissions! If there's a blossoming media critic in you, this is the place to be; see page 9 for details. Happy reading!

- Anna, Broadcast Committee Chair

book review

A Manual for Cleaning Women

This collection of short stories is a delightful journey through the everyday, where vacuum cleaners become instruments of revelation, and dusting shelves reveals more than just cobwebs. Lucia Berlin's writing is like a friendly chat over coffee—warm, genuine, and filled with laughter.

The characters in these stories are not just cleaners; they are the unsung heroes of our domestic dramas. From the spirited to the endearingly eccentric, each character comes to life with Berlin's witty and observant writing. You'll often find yourself chuckling at their silliness and nodding in recognition of their relatable idiosyncrasies.

What makes 'A Manual for Cleaning Women' especially charming to me is Berlin's ability to find beauty in the ordinary. She peels back the layers of daily life to reveal the poetry in a well-scrubbed floor or the wisdom hidden in a well-worn mop. It's a celebration of the small victories and the quiet triumphs that often go unnoticed.

The stories themselves are like snapshots of life, capturing moments that are both humorous and heartwarming. Whether it's an unlucky accident in the emergency room or a comical encounter at a laundromat, Berlin weaves tales that resonate with the universal experiences of joy, sorrow, and everything in between.

Her prose is straightforward yet rich, like a perfectly brewed cup of tea. There's a simplicity to her storytelling that makes it accessible to everyone, inviting readers to kick off their shoes and join the cleaning brigade with a smile. You'll find yourself taken in by the rhythm of her words and charmed by the authenticity of her voice.

It's a book that welcomes you into its pages like an old friend, ready to share a good laugh and a heartwarming tale. So, if you're looking for a lighthearted escape with a touch of wisdom, grab a copy, sit back, and let Lucia Berlin sweep you off your feet—broom and all.

-Mike

Literally "poetry in a well-scrubbed floor."



movie review

Blade Runner



Rick Deckard stars in 'Napoleon'.

With the release of a new movie by Ridley Scott (“Napoleon”) it is interesting to rewatch and savour what is his (in my humble opinion) best and most renowned oeuvre — “Blade Runner” (1982). Young-ish Harrison Ford embodies Philip’s K. Dick’s character Rick Deckard; a cynical detective, the average man of the dystopian society he lives in. Rick is charged with the elimination of “replicants”, fake artificial humans; they're rebellious, powerful and dangerous — yet still less problematic than Deckard himself.

So how does the director explore the depths of humanity by comparing us to androids?

When Ridley Scott wrote the script he had just lost his brother, so it is not by accident that this movie focuses less on life and more on death, circling the terrifying question: is it merely the awareness of our imminent end that makes us human, or is there something more?

The essential plot point of this movie is the “Voight-Kampff” test, designed to detect the abnormal reactions of the replicants in order to differentiate them from flesh-and-bone humans. In this dystopian fiction, the replicants are capable of emotions, effortless small-talk (difficult for most of us humans), silly jokes (even more tedious), but most importantly self awareness; think about the deeply touching scene when the replicant Rachel discovers that she is not actually human. They are not humans, yet they have all the philosophically acclaimed human characteristics - so much so that even they can't tell the difference. Humans and replicants are indistinguishable, two peas in a pod, both inside and outside, so what is it that makes them two different species?

Paradoxically, the elimination of the rebel replicants seems inhuman — we are killing machines, but is it really a machine if it is moved at the sight of a puppy?

The “Voight-Kampff” tests do not measure any type of emotional response. They test for something very specific — empathic response (Adam Smith would approve, and I am not entirely sure this is a good thing).

Replicants and humans are differentiated by their ability to put oneself in another's shoes in a situation that entails human suffering. In the contemporary times of universal alienation, empathy becomes an emotional response that we suppress with horrifying automatism. While scrolling past picture reports of wars, natural disasters, famine or epidemics, it is quite clear that we risk losing that "fundamentally humanising" ability... are we already all replicants? As much as I hope that we're not, during the movie the audience inevitably becomes sympathetic to the plight of the replicants, rather than the men that hunt them. Replicants are curious and introspective, fully entangled in the quest for an existential direction. They represent Kierkegaard's existentialist view on the human condition, and his human characters are the sad outcome of Weber's disenchantment and Marx' alienation.



Descartes operates a Voight-Kierkegaard machine.

Replicants discover the dizzying angst of human freedom, the intoxicating power of possibilities and finally the weight of responsibility in a world of free will (haven't we all gone through this at 14?).

Humans in this film are lost, empty figures that lose themselves to labour, with no interest in self discovery or the mystique of life. All they (we) have left is a world explained by reason and ruled by technology, where nothing is left to the imagination, nothing is left to infantile exploration, all is grey, all is set.

This movie has way more layers and inputs for philosophical discussions than I have addressed in this short review (as all great works do), so I hope I have not done it a disservice, and most importantly have influenced someone to watch this masterpiece tonight! So let's be nice to robots and not forget to touch some grass in between classes :)

-Bene

P.S: As the good philosophy students you all are, you probably have immediately grasped the similarity between the name of the detective and the 17th century thinker Descartes. As a kind Reddit user put it: "the name Deckard, for instance, echoes that of seventeenth-century French philosopher René Descartes, who asked whether it was possible to distinguish, without direct access to their minds, a human from an automaton".

song review

White Winter Hymnal



Revolutionary fox.

It's winter; the perfect time to stay in and light a few candles. And the quintessential song to have playing in the background: *White Winter Hymnal* by the Fleet Foxes. Ranked by Pitchfork Media as the #2 song of 2008, this folksy, melancholic ballad has it all: beautiful harmonies, a tambourine, and infuriatingly vague lyrics. According to the lead singer, Robin Peckhold, the song is "lyrically fairly meaningless", though that hasn't stopped a wide range of interpretations emerging.

Is it a nostalgic recollection of a childhood memory? A song about gang membership ("I was following the pack") and subsequent violence? An allusion to the French Revolution (scarves were a symbol of the 'blood of the bourgeoisie', and Michael - obviously - is getting guillotined)? That might seem a bit of a stretch, but if you check the song's Genius page you'll find that theory, along with several others like it. In my opinion, this song is best enjoyed mindlessly; you won't find an answer in the lyrics, so focus on the melody (and the fact that Pentatonix covered it, so it must be good).

- Anna H

Cold, Cold Feeling

Winter. You either love it or you hate it. There are exceptions to every rule, but in my experience, opinions on winter are always polarised. However, there is one song that just might unite winter lovers and haters.

Cold, Cold Feeling by Albert Collins (1978) is a beautifully smooth and magnetic piece of music. But there is more to this song than its delightfully bluesy feel. For those of you who are too caught up in your dislike for cold weather to be able to enjoy winter (and trust me when I say I understand...) I advise you to listen to this recommendation and let yourself be caught up in Collins's sweet melodies.

For those of us who like the cold, it turns out Albert Collins is not just an outstanding performer with a powerful voice, but a winter lover himself. The musician is known as 'The Ice Man' and it doesn't stop there! Just about everything made by him takes its name after the rainy season; albums (*Ice Pickin'*, *Frostbite*, *Cold Snap*, etc...) , instrumentals (*Sno-Cone*, *Don't Lose Your Cool*) and even his stage name (Albert Collins and the Ice Breakers). This song and its artist will surely bring a smile to any winter lover's face.

-Maria



The Ice Man lives up to his name.

opinion piece

Over de ongelijkwaardigheid van meningen

Binnen de democratie zijn gelijkheid en vrijheid de hoogste principes. Gelukkig maar, anders had ik dit stuk nooit kunnen schrijven. Mede door de komst van het internet zijn deze principes verder uitvergroot en is het idee van hiërarchie in verval geraakt. We hebben alle informatie die je kan bedenken 24/7 binnen handbereik in de vorm van een telefoon, waarmee we ook nog eens altijd onze eigen gedachten kunnen delen. Wij hebben geen tussenpersoon meer nodig om zelf iets te weten te komen. We hoeven bijvoorbeeld niet meer voor elk wisselwasje naar de huisarts, omdat wij onze symptomen ook gewoon even snel kunnen googelen. Je zou kunnen stellen dat we autonomer zijn dan ooit te voren. Het lijkt dat velen hierdoor het gevoel hebben gekregen dat hun mening er altijd echt toe doet.

Nu ga ik iets zeggen dat misschien omstreden is: onze mening is niet altijd evenveel waard. Sommige mensen zijn maar mijn idee toch echt meer gerechtvaardigd om commentaar te geven op bepaalde onderwerpen dan anderen. Hiermee doel ik op experts. Experts zijn mensen die zich gespecialiseerd hebben in een bepaald vakgebied. Nu lijkt het alsof er een tendens ontstaan is dat deze experts enkel hun ongezuete mening delen, waardoor deze mening gelijkgesteld wordt aan elke andere mening en open staat voor commentaar door elk willekeurig persoon.

Een tijdje geleden keek ik naar de talkshow OPI. Er kan sowieso veel gezegd worden over dat programma, maar dit keer werd ik meer geprikkeld dan normaal. Het onderwerp was het vergrote risico op het krijgen van huidkanker door blootstelling aan UV straling.

Aan tafel zaten een hoogleraar op het gebied van huidkanker en een zonnebankstudio eigenaresse. Deze zonnebankstudio eigenaresse had geen enkel verstand over het onderwerp. Ze probeerde een beetje twijfel te zaaien over het wetenschappelijk onderzoek waar de hoogleraar over sprak door allerlei dingen uit te kramen als “in zonnebrandcrème zitten chemicaliën die niet goed voor je zijn”. Ik dacht: hoe kan het dat men een expert tegenover iemand zet die eigenlijk geen benul heeft van waar het over gaat? Moet ik zo’n debat wel serieus nemen? Er zou in de eerste plaats helemaal geen gelijkwaardig debat met Anita van de SunTanstudio gevoerd kunnen worden over dit onderwerp. Moet je je voorstellen dat je een discussie over Duits Idealisme voert met iemand die denkt dat de studie filosofie ‘in een kringetje zitten en praten’ omvat.

Iedereen lijkt tegenwoordig een mening over alles te hebben, zonder het advies van experts voor waar aan te nemen. Experts worden gereduceerd tot een willekeurige mening. Ik stel trouwens niet dat je nergens meer een mening over mag hebben, anders zou ik wel erg hypocriet bezig zijn door dit stuk te schrijven. Ik stel dat meningen van het “gewone volk” niet het advies of de visie van experts mogen ondermijnen door hieraan gelijkgesteld te worden. Nog even voor de goede orde: het kan zijn dat een ondeskundige dezelfde informatie als een expert tot zijn beschikking heeft. Die ondeskundige beschikt echter niet over de methoden en technieken van de wetenschap die een expert toepast. Experts werken binnen bepaalde kaders om er zeker van te zijn dat de kennis die zij vergaren betrouwbaar is. Meningen zijn dus niet gelijk, omdat de mening van een expert over zijn of haar vakgebied op een fundament van methoden, technieken en informatie is gebouwd waar de leek geen beschikking over heeft. Maar goed, ik ben geen expert over de gelijkwaardigheid van meningen, dus misschien moet je deze opinie ook niet zo serieus nemen.

-Anna J

visual curiosities

interesting
font choice...



a place of educational
significance



capri-sun has
a new look?



#aesthetic



fashion
police.



new reaction
image
just dropped!



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