

Øjvind Larsen

Curriculum Vitae

Øjvind Larsen is a visiting fellow from Copenhagen Business School where he is a professor of philosophy and sociology.

Academic Profile

Øjvind Larsen's topics are first of all ethics, political philosophy and moral sociology.

Throughout his career, he has studied ethical problems from many perspectives. He started as a theologian where his main interest was the ethical consequences of Christianity from an existentialist perspective. Influenced by the social and political movements in 68, his scope changed to a social perspective and here he found it difficult, not to say impossible to sustain this new perspective on the grounds of a theological justification.

Strongly influenced by Marx's theories on politics, economy and history, he went on with studies in sociology and history. In the end, this Marxist perspective became a cul-de-sac and therefore it was a help to study Max Weber's sociological theory and especially his studies of the protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism. This became Larsen's way to a new perspective because Weber could explain the rationalization and the modernization of society not only as a process of change in the production relations but also as a change in the horizon of understanding of social relations and society.

In his dissertation *The Right to Dissent – The Critical Principle of Discourse Ethics and Deliberative Democracy*, Larsen set about studying Habermas's theory of communicative action as a critique of Weber's limited understanding of rationalization, which is a technical-instrumental form of rationalization of European society. Habermas claims that modern society has potential for a more fundamental form of rationalization, which consists of empowering the good argument in dialogue. This potential has a huge impact on the understanding of modern communicative ethics, politics and deliberative democracy.

However, Habermas has been criticized for having a too-optimistic understanding of the possibility of attaining consensus in modern society. Larsen develops the philosophical notion of an ethics of dissent through a new interpretation of the communicative ethics and political philosophy of Habermas. He turns Habermas's notion of consent into a concept of dissent, dissent with good reasons. This concept emphasizes freedom, the right to dissent, and thoughtful critique. This critical perspective is integrated in a broader interpretation of Habermas' theory of communicative action and relates to the classical traditions of political philosophy – Plato, Aristotle, Kant, Hegel, Kierkegaard, and Rawls.

The right to dissent includes both the right to speak about what is right and wrong and the moral obligation to provide good reasons for a particular assertion. In a modern democratic society, the right to dissent is one of the most fundamental rights. Inherent in the

right to dissent, we find the paradoxical morality of modern society, which consists of a critical assessment of what should be deemed right or wrong. The right to dissent has to be secured through the civil rights of participation in political deliberation and the cultivation of these legal rights in the public spheres of a deliberative democracy.

In his upcoming research projects, Larsen intends to develop further the notion of dissent by studying how dissent is recognized, understood and managed in areas such as ethics, politics, civil society, public administration and business organizations. This sociological perspective focuses on customs, rules and legal rights in the US and Europe as well. On the other hand, the philosophical perspective focuses on the development of a relevant form of ethics, the mediation of ethics in institutions, and the significance and value of ethical justifications in global society.

Academic Employment

1997: Associate professor in Philosophy and Sociology at CBS – Copenhagen Business School.

1993 – 1997: Assistant professor in sociology at Aalborg University, Denmark.

Education

2005: Dr. Phil. Habil. - Dissertation: *The Right to Dissent – The Critical Principle of Discourse Ethics and Deliberative Democracy*.

1986: Ph.D. - Dissertation: *Ethik und Demokratie (Ethics and Democracy)*.

1986 – 1987: Sociology (Cand. Scient. Soc.) at Copenhagen University.

1982 – 1984: Certificate of Competency as Shipmaster (Captain of Cruising Yachts up to 100 GRT - Gross Register Tonnage).

1974 – 1980: History and History of Religion (Cand. Mag.) at Copenhagen University.

1976: Practical Pastoral Education at Institute of Practical Pastoral Education, Copenhagen.

1966 – 1973: Theology (Cand. Theol.) at Copenhagen University.

Research and Visiting Fellowships

Institute of Public Knowledge, New York University (2008)

EHESS -École des hautes études en sciences sociales, Paris (2008)

LSE - London School of Economics (2004-2005)

Institut für Philosophie, Goethe Universität, Frankfurt (1986)

EHESS -École des hautes études en sciences sociales, Paris (1985)

Union Theological Seminary, New York (1982)

Institut für Evangelische Theologie, Freie Universität, Berlin (1976)

L'université de Poitiers, France (1965-66)

Working Languages

Danish, English, German, French, Spanish, Latin, Classical Greek and Hebrew.

Publications (English and German only)

Books

* *The Right to Dissent - Critical Discourse Ethics and Deliberative Democracy in a Divided*

Global World, Museum Tusulanum Publishers, Copenhagen 2009.

* *Administration, Ethics and Democracy*, Ashgate Publishing, Aldershot 2000.

* *Ethik und Demokratie*, Argument Verlag, Hamburg 1990.

Articles

* *Modern Reflexive Leadership*, in: Mikael Carleheden & Michael Hviid Jacobsen (eds.), *The*

Transformation of Modernity: Aspects of the Past, Present and Future of an Era. Ashgate,

Aldershot 2001.

* *Imaginary Democracy*, in: Danish Yearbook of Philosophy, p.31-54, Volume 33, Museum

Tusulanum Press, Copenhagen 1998.

* *Auschwitz und die Notwendigkeit der Erinnerung*, in: Christine Kulke und Gerda Lederer,
Der gewöhnliche Antisemitismus, Pfaffenweiler 1994.