

Danish thinker Andreas Simonsen explores what he considers the three most fundamental problems in ethics: free will versus determinism, happiness versus duty, and humanism versus humility.

“These problems have been pondered throughout history, often with great perspicacity and wit. However, every generation must take its own position on them so that new experiences are included in our understanding of life, not only directly but also indirectly through changing interpretations and practices of past wisdom. Just as wisdom cannot simply be adopted, it cannot simply be dismissed. ... Fruitful independence does not consist in starting from scratch.”

Simonsen attempts to untangle the inevitable contradictions “attached to everything human and conditioned by a basic paradoxical duality in our essence and existence. ...

“Humans are spirit and nature, creating and created, cause and effect. This paradoxical condition must be reflected in our view of life. We must have a paradoxical understanding of humans as both free and conditioned; a paradoxical view of ethics as both duty and happiness; a paradoxical understanding of God as both immanent and transcendent. We are facing a special form of contradiction and interdependence: complementarity.”

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Edited & Translated by Per K. Brask

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