

Bibliotekarstudentens nettleksikon om litteratur og medier

Av Helge Ridderstrøm (førsteamanuensis ved OsloMet – storbyuniversitetet)

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Paradoks

(litterær_praksis) Fra gresk for “utrolig”. Det som sies med et paradoks, inneholder tilsynelatende noe umulig, ulogisk, ikke forenlig. Et paradoks skal ikke tas helt bokstavelig, men tolkes slik at det gir mening og sier noe sant og fullt av visdom. Det “umulige” ved et paradoks skal avsløre en ikke åpenbar sannhet.

“Ordet paradoks kommer af græsk *paradoxos*, af *para-* og *doxa* ‘mening’. [...] bruges dels om en ufattelig tanke, fx den kristne tanke om Treenigheden, udtrykket “et Judaskys”, dels om en påstand, som tilsyneladende er selvmodsigende, fx kvantefysikkens påstand om, at lys både har bølge- og partikelegenskaber. I logikken betyder paradoks eller antinomi et selvmodsigende udsagn; ord, sætninger og begreber med “indbygget” modstrid benævnes *oxymoron* (fx “frygtelig dejlig”). I filosofi og logik benyttes paradokser til at vise, at visse teorier er umulige. Således søgte den græske filosof Zenon i 400-t. f.Kr. at vise, at bevægelse er umulig. Paradokser kan inddeltes i *ægte* paradokser og *tilsyneladende* paradokser; sidstnævnte kan der i *princippet* altid findes en logisk forklaring på. Flere af de klassiske paradokser har spillet en vigtig rolle for moderne filosofi og logik. Et eksempel er løgnerparadokset; man kan spørge, om sætningen “Denne sætning er falsk” er sand eller falsk. Hvis den er sand, siger den, at den er falsk, altså er den falsk. Hvis den er falsk, er det falsk, hvad den siger, altså er den sand.” (http://www.denstoredanske.dk/Sprog,_religion_og_filosofi/Filosofi/Logik/paradoks; lesedato 09.10.15)

“The rhetorical paradox criticizes the limitations and rigidity of argumentation; the logical paradox criticizes the limitations and rigidity of logic; the epistemological paradox calls into question the process of human thought, as well as the categories thought out (by human thought) to express human thought. Paradox deals with itself as subject and as object, and in this respect too may be seen as both tautological and paradoxical.” (Rosalie Littell Colie i <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/j.ctt183phdz.4.pdf>; lesedato 03.02.21)

“A paradox can usually be read by understanding one or both of its terms in special contexts or senses. Thus in *Ash Wednesday* [T. S.] Eliot writes, “Teach us to care and not to care,” and we assume that the prayer is to care for some objects, such as God, or in some ways, such as caritas, but not for oneself anxiously. Of course, no

paradox can be completely resolved; the contradiction continues to activate the mind to discover new meaning. But when in “Every-man’s Library” [poeten John] Ashbery writes, “there is no freedom, and no freedom from freedom,” the figure is not paradoxical. It is an oxymoron; opposite assertions, each possibly true, are brought into conjunction and cancel each other.” (Perkins 1987 s. 625)

“Løgnerparadokset” innebærer at en person sier at “det jeg sier nå, er løgn”. Har vedkommende da sagt noen sant eller usant? Hvis setningen er sann, så er den løgn. Er setningen løgn, så er den sann. Den polsk-amerikanske filosofen Alfred Tarski var spesielt opptatt av logikk, og kom fram til at løgnerparadokset verken er sant eller usant, men meningsløst. Tarski viste at sannhet kun kan beskrives i setninger som *ikke* allerede inneholder et utsagn om deres egen sannhet (Nielsen 2010 s. 59-60).

“[T]he Liar paradox is, literally, speculative, its meanings infinitely mirrored, infinitely reflected, in each other. The Liar, in various forms, is one of the most persistent of logical paradoxes, ubiquitous partly because of the economy of its formulation. The problem it presents is a special case of all “speculative,” or self-referential operations” (Rosalie Littell Colie i <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/j.ctt183phdz.4.pdf>; lesedato 03.02.21).

Gresk-ortodokse kristne “har en oppfatning om at ethvert utsagn om Gud må være preget av to ting: Det må være et paradoks – og det må føre til stillhet” (Karen Armstrong i *Aftenposten* 10. august 1995).

“In summary, there are three types of paradoxes:

- (1) logico-mathematical paradoxes (antinomies),
 - (2) paradoxical definitions (semantical antinomies),
 - (3) pragmatic paradoxes (paradoxical injunctions and paradoxical predictions)”
- (Watzlawick, Bavelas og Jackson 1967 s. 190).

Paradokser krever en dypere forståelse enn den en finner på den språklige overflaten. Det umulige er mulig gjennom en tolkning av paradokset.

Paradokset rommer noe tilsynelatende ulogisk, som står i motsetning til erfaringen av verden, men som samtidig peker mot en viktig eller fruktbar sannhet (Souiller 1988 s. 200). Det er vanskelig å være helt likegyldig til et paradoks, fordi paradokser gjør oss urolige, morer, stiller indirekte spørsmål til oss (Peyrouzet 1994 s. 77).

Litteraturforskeren (nykritikeren) Cleanth Brooks hevdet at “paradox is the language appropriate and inevitable to poetry.” Ofte skal et modernistisk dikt utføre den paradoksale oppgaven både å utsi en mening og å skjule den (Friedrich 1988 s. 178).

Eksempler på paradokser:

Den dagen varte lenger enn et år.

Den som unnskylder seg, anklager seg.

Dovne mennesker har alltid lyst til å gjøre noe.

Den som aldri begår dumheter, er ikke så fornuftig som han selv tror.

Mennesket er det høyeste og det laveste i Guds skaperverk.

Jo mer et menneske skammer seg, jo mer respektabelt er det.

“Fattig er den som teller sine penger.” (fra diktet “Til en misantrop” av Arnulf Øverland)

“At være sig selv, er: sig selv at døde.” (Knappestøperen i Ibsens *Peer Gynt*)

“[D]en stærkeste mand i verden, det er han, som står mest alene.” (Doktor Stockmann i Ibsens *En Folkefiende*)

“Evig eies kun det tapte!” (presten Brand i Ibsens *Brand*)

“Den som prøver å sikre sitt liv, skal miste det. Men den som mister det, skal vinne det.” (Lukas-evangeliet kapittel 17 vers 33)

Barnet ermannens far.

En 1600-tallsdikter som bruker spesielt mange paradokser, er den engelske barokkdikteren John Donne. Han skrev om kjærlighet at “to enter in these bonds is to be free”. Hos andre engelske “metafysiske” poeter på 1600-tallet er det også vanlig med paradokser i tekstene.

“A truth in Art is that whose contradictory is also true.” (Oscar Wilde sitert fra Worth 1983 s. 66) Wildes aforismer har blitt kalt “Oscarisms” (Worth 1983 s. 150).

“Paradox is generally understood as seemingly contradictory statement that may nonetheless be true! For instance, “Standing is more tiring than walking.” Paradox exhibits inexplicable or contradictory aspects or it may be an assertion that is

essentially self contradictory, though based on a valid deduction from acceptable premises. Paradox, in logic and mathematics, means an apparently contradictory conclusion derived from apparently valid premises. Many paradoxes prove to be based on false premises or arguments, or on incomplete presuppositions. Other paradoxes are more difficult to resolve, and their study has contributed to the development of modern mathematics. Semantic paradoxes depend on language structure, and the paradox is often used as a rhetorical device in epigrams and poetry.

Rosalie Littell Colies bok *Paradoxa Epidemica: The Renaissance Tradition of Paradox* (1966) “is a broad-ranging critical study of Renaissance thought, showing how the greatest writers of the period from Erasmus and Rabelais to Donne, Milton, and Shakespeare made conscious use of paradox not only as a figure of speech but as a mode of thought, a way of perceiving the universe, God, nature, and man himself. The book consists of an introduction (historical and topological) and sixteen chapters grouped according to broad types of paradox: rhetorical, theological, ontological, epistemological. Within this framework the author interprets individual writings or art forms as parts of a rich tradition.” (<https://press.princeton.edu/books/hardcover/9780691650487/paradoxa-epidemica>; lesedato 03.02.21)

“Classical examples of the genre (called “Wondrer” in George Puttenham’s domestication of the Greek term) are Gorgias’ praise of Helen [...] In the mass of humanist publication there were many collections of paradoxes, ancient and modern, to demonstrate the popularity of paradoxes among the learned who made them up and the educated who were amused by them – defenses of the ant, the flea, the fly, the ass, the fool, and folly; of the pox, of bastardy, of debt, of imprisonment, of tyranny; of hair, of baldness, of drunkenness, of incontinence. The titles of such compendia, usually ponderously long, are evidence that paradoxes were undertaken *serio ludere*, as exercises of wit designed to amuse an audience sufficiently sophisticated in the arts of language to understand them. One such collection, Caspar Dornavius’ *Amphitheatrum saientiae socratae jocoseriae*, is the most useful of all to the scholar, since its paradoxes are organized according to subject matter, so that one can trace the folly paradoxes, for instance, from antiquity to 1619, the date of the book’s first edition. [...] Though it is called a “rhetorical” paradox, the paradoxical *encomium* raises a question in logic which is of the most profound importance: can a thing unpraisable in fact be praised? If it can, then it is not unpraisable; if it cannot, then a vast number of pieces of paradoxical prose do not exist. From this it follows that the rhetorical paradox is also always a logical paradox, a contradiction within its own terms, a self-contradiction.” (Rosalie Littell Colie i <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/j.ctt183phd.z.4.pdf>; lesedato 03.02.21)

In English literature two forms may be distinguished. One is Particular or Local and the other is the General or Structural. Examples of the first are short pithy statements with verge on epigrammatic such as;

1. "I must be cruel to be kind". Shakespeare in Hamlet
2. Milton's description of God; "Dark with excessive bright thy skirts appear".
[...]

The second kind is more complex both in prose and poetry. For instance there is paradox at the heart of Christian Faith that the world would be saved by failure.
[...]

Death be not proud, though some have called thee,
Mighty and dreadful, for, thou art not so....

Alexander Pope in his Essay on Man combines a general statement about the paradoxical condition of man and nature with a series of particular paradoxes.

In doubt his Mind or Body to prefer
Born but to die and reasoning but to err . . .
Created half to rise and half to fall;
Great lord of all things, yet a prey to all,
Sole judge of Truth, in endless Error hurl'd:
The glory, jest, and riddle of the world,

In modern times Georg Bernard Shaw, Bertrand Russell and few others including G. K. Chesterton are regarded the great spinners of paradoxes. Here are some pieces of with from Bertrand Russell (1872-1970), British philosopher:

1. In America everybody is of opinion that he has no social superiors, since all men are equal, but he does not admit that he has no social inferiors.
 2. Ethics is in origin the art of recommending to others the sacrifices required for cooperation with oneself.
- [...]

G. K. Chesterton (1874-1936) was also a gifted author often using paradoxical language.

1. An adventure is only an inconvenience rightly considered. An inconvenience is only an adventure wrongly considered.
2. A stiff apology is a second insult. ... The injured party does not want to be compensated because he has been wronged; he wants to be healed because he has been hurt.

3. One may understand the cosmos, but never the ego; the self is more distant than any star.” (<http://www.netvert.biz/wordpower/paradox.html>; lesedato 28.12.11)

En pariponoian er innen retorikken en ytring som er sterkt ulogisk, f.eks. “Herr X hadde alle de udugeligheter som hans jobb krevde” (Suhamy 1995 s. 119).

Den irske 1800-tallsforfatteren Oscar Wilde likte paradokser. I en samling aforismer (“Phrases and philosophies for the use of the young”) skrev han:

“The first duty in life is to be as artificial as possible. What the second duty is no one has as yet discovered.

Wickedness is a myth invented by good people to account for the curious attractiveness of others.

If the poor only had profiles there would be no difficulty in solving the problem of poverty.

Those who see any difference between soul and body have neither.

A really well-made buttonhole is the only link between Art and Nature.

Religions die when they are proved to be true. Science is the record of dead religions.

The well-bred contradict other people. The wise contradict themselves.

Nothing that actually occurs is of the smallest importance.

Dullness is the coming of age of seriousness.

In all unimportant matters, style, not sincerity, is the essential.

In all important matters, style, not sincerity, is the essential.

If one tells the truth one is sure, sooner or later, to be found out.

Pleasure is the only thing one should live for. Nothing ages like happiness.

It is only by not paying one's bills that one can hope to live in the memory of the commercial classes.

No crime is vulgar, but all vulgarity is crime. Vulgarity is the conduct of others.

Only the shallow know themselves.

Time is waste of money.

One should always be a little improbable.

There is a fatality about all good resolutions. They are invariably made too soon.

The only way to atone for being occasionally a little overdressed is by being always absolutely overeducated.

To be premature is to be perfect.

Any preoccupation with ideas of what is right or wrong in conduct shows an arrested intellectual development.

Ambition is the last refuge of the failure.

A truth ceases to be true when more than one person believes in it.

In examinations the foolish ask questions that the wise cannot answer.

Greek dress was in its essence inartistic. Nothing should reveal the body but the body.

One should either be a work of art, or wear a work of art.

It is only the superficial qualities that last. Man's deeper nature is soon found out.

Industry is the root of all ugliness.

The ages live in history through their anachronisms.

It is only the gods who taste of death. Apollo has passed away, but Hyacinth, whom men say he slew, lives on. Nero and Narcissus are always with us.

The old believe everything: the middle-aged suspect everything; the young know everything.

The condition of perfection is idleness: the aim of perfection is youth.

Only the great masters of style ever succeeded in being obscure.

There is something tragic about the enormous number of young men there are in England at the present moment who start life with perfect profiles, and end by adopting some useful profession.

To love oneself is the beginning of a life-long romance.”

Winston Churchill sa om Chamberlain-regjeringen: “So they go on in strange paradox, decided only to be undecided, resolved to be irresolute, adamant for drift, solid for fluidity, all-powerful to be impotent.” En annen gang uttalte Churchill at i krigstid er sannheten så dyrebar at den må utstyres med en liggende løgner.

Den franske forfatteren René Barjavel, forfatter av bl.a. science fiction-romanen *Den ubetenksomme reisende* (1944; oversatt til engelsk med tittelen *Future Times Three*), introduserte det såkalte “bestefar-paradokset”: Hvis en tidsreisende person kunne dra tilbake i tid og ta livet av sin bestefar, da ville ikke personen bli født og følgelig heller ikke ha mulighet til å drepe sin bestefar. Det var i et etterord i en utgave av romanen i 1958 at Barjavel formulerte eksplisitt “bestefar-paradokset” (Frank Wagner i <https://journals.openedition.org/narratologie/10641>; lesedato 25.02.22).

Den østerriksk-engelske forfatteren Arthur Koestlers *Darkness at Noon* (1940): “The Party denied the free will of the individual – and at the same time it exacted his willing self-sacrifice. It denied his capacity to choose between two alternatives – and at the same time it demanded that he should constantly choose the right one. It denied his power to distinguish good and evil – and at the same time spoke pathetically of guilt and treachery. The individual stood under the sign of economic fatality, a wheel in a clockwork which had been wound up for all eternity and could not be stopped or influenced – and the Party demanded that the wheel should revolt against the clockwork and change its course. There was somewhere an error in the calculation; the equation did not work out.” (sitert fra Watzlawick, Bavelas og Jackson 1967 s. 201)

Den svenske forfatteren Åsa Moberg har gitt ut biografien *Hon var ingen Florence Nightingale: Människan bakom myten* (2007) om Florence Nightingale.

Adam og Eva var udødelige før syndfallene, men etter å ha spist av treet som gir erkjennelse om godt og ondt, ble de ufullkomne, måtte arbeide og til slutt dø. Det valget Gud stilte Adam og Eva overfor, har blitt kalt et eksempel på “en pragmatisk selvmotsigelse” (Safranski 1999 s. 23). Selve forbudet mot å spise frukten på treet, skaffer den erkjennelsen som er forbudt. Det er som om det stod et skilt med påskriften “Ikke les dette skiltet!”. Når skiltet er lest, har man allerede gjort det som var forbudt. Fordi Adam og Eva har blitt forbudt å spise av frukten fra et bestemt tre i Edens hage, vet de allerede at det finnes noe forbudt og ondt, og dermed har de allerede erkjent forskjellen mellom det gode og onde. I og med forbudet har de fått

den erkjennelsen som Gud sier at å spise av treets frukter vil gi dem. Da er den paradisiske uskylden over – *før* de har brutt forbudet (Safranski 1999 s. 23).

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