

1700-tallet”. Hansteen, født i Norge og utdannet i København, pleiet tette forbindelser med vitenskapsselskapet i København også etter opphevelsen av dobbelmonarkiet. Samtidig vendte han seg mot Stockholm og kong Karl Johan når det viste seg vanskelig å få finansiert bokverket og atlasen med norske penger alene. Tradisjonelt var forbindelsene til Tyskland svært tette i Danmark-Norge, noe som også kan forklare hvorfor bokverket ble utgitt på tysk og for en stor del distribuert fra metropolen Hamburg. Valget av språk voldte imidlertid visse problemer: Den ledende forskeren Jean-Baptiste Biot i Paris behersket ikke tysk, og Hansteen fikk ikke mye gjennomslag i Frankrike.

Enebakk og Voje Johansen har produsert en vakker publikasjon. Fargeillustrasjonene er smakfulle og relevante. Hele tre portrett av hovedpersonen er det blitt plass til, samt reproduksjoner i utbrettformat av sentrale kartblad fra Hansteens atlas. Underveis refereres det til en imponerende mengde arkivalia. Korrekturlesingen er dessverre ikke feilfri, og man kunne ønsket seg en strammere struktur i teksten, hvor for eksempel en del lokalhistoriske detaljer ble henvist til fotnoter. Boken kan imidlertid trygt anbefales for alle med interesse for skandinavisk vitenskapshistorie i brytningen mellom syttenhundredtallets kosmopolitisme og de nye nasjonalstatenes nasjonsoppbygning.

*Per Pippin Aspaas*

Peter Forsskål, *Thoughts on Civil Liberty: Translation of the Original Manuscript with Background* [*Tänkar om borgerliga friheten: originalmanuskriptet med bakgrundssteckning*], ed. by David Goldberg, trans. by Gunilla Jonsson et al. (Stockholm: Atlantis, 2009). 40+39 pp.

‘The more a man may live according to his own inclinations, the more he is *free*. There-

fore, next to life itself, nothing could be more dear to man than freedom.’ With this brief comment on the principal importance of his subject, the Swedish naturalist, orientalist, and philosopher Peter Forsskål (1732–1763) began his controversial series of reflections on the role of liberty in contemporary society, *Tänkar om borgerliga friheten* (*Thoughts on Civil Liberty*), first published in 1759 and available now in a bilingual edition based on the original uncensored manuscript.

In this short pamphlet, Forsskål anticipated Mill (and echoed Locke) in arguing that the freedom of individual conduct can legitimately be constrained whenever such conduct is liable to cause harm to others, but he remained far removed from Mill’s more radical claim that the potential for harm is in essence the only justifiable constraint. Whereas Mill would come to adopt the hedonistic view that the well-being of society is commensurate with the greatest potential happiness of each of its members, a state which could only be attained by allowing every individual to freely satiate his own desires in the absence of any binding moral obligation to benefit others, Forsskål espoused the more classical republican precept that the freedom of the individual is circumscribed at its most basic level by a more primary duty to the general good, and that whatever vices and errant passions may be present in the individual must give way to civic virtue and social responsibility, an argument that places Forsskål in line with contemporary proto-communitarian writers on liberty such as the English clergyman John Brown in his similarly titled *Thoughts on Civil Liberty, on Licentiousness, and Faction* (1765). Civil liberty, according to Forsskål, ‘means that no one is prevented from doing that which is proper and useful for the community, that every honest person may live in safety, obey his conscience, use his property, and contribute to the well-being of society’ (p. 13). Every man should be free to live as he pleases, so long as his pleas-

ures do not conflict with the communal principles of propriety, utility, and virtue.

But if Forsskål remained somewhat reserved in his determination of the philosophical basis of liberty in general terms, he was more insurgent in his discussion of how liberty should be manifested in particular areas of civil life. Unlike Brown, Forsskål was opposed to the notion that freedom of expression runs counter to the common good, and that society is best served by the strict regulation of thought and opinion in the public sphere. At the centre of the pamphlet he placed an impassioned defence of the freedom of the written word. Part of his argument, aimed at persuading the ruling powers to dissolve the office of the Censor Librorum, was expressed in terms of political expedience: Violent uprisings can often be prevented by allowing dissidents to vent their grievances in writing, whereas censorship often serves to produce desperate men compelled to take increasingly desperate measures to express their discontent. The core of his defence, however, was grounded in a belief in the curative power of human rationality. Drawing on the deep wellspring of optimism that characterized much of the Age of Reason, Forsskål argued that public opinion is self-correcting when it is allowed to develop through the free and open exchange of ideas by rational individuals. No one with a stake in truth, he assured his readers, has anything to fear from public debate: 'Divine revelations, wise fundamental laws and the honour of private individuals cannot suffer any dangerous damage by such freedom of expression. Because truth always wins when it is allowed to be denied and defended equally' (p. 16).

The remainder of the pamphlet discusses various reforms that Forsskål felt should be implemented in Sweden to ensure that the basic preconditions for civil liberty were met, including the more equitable distribution of private property, the dissolution of privileges for the hereditary nobility, means-based taxation,

and state-funded vocational training open to all citizens.

The text is accompanied by a preface by David Goldberg, an introduction by Gunilla Jonsson, and a background essay by Thomas von Vegesack, who does an admirable job of placing *Thoughts on Civil Liberty* in the context of Forsskål's life and the political climate of eighteenth-century Sweden.

Goldberg relates that no less than nine individuals contributed to the English translation, a remarkable effort for a text running ten pages in print. For the most part, the translators have succeeded in combining precision with general fluency. Care has been taken to locate historically consistent English equivalents for Forsskål's terms, and only in a few instances can the translators' choices be called into question. Yet if Atlantis should decide to continue to publish historically significant works of Swedish thought for an English-speaking audience—and it is the sincere hope of this reviewer that it does—it is recommended that greater care be devoted to style and usage, particularly in the proofing stage. Forsskål composed his pamphlet in an intellectual climate in which the force of an idea was inextricably linked with the force of the language in which it was expressed. Accordingly, the author's arguments lose some of their potency in a translation containing faulty punctuation, pronoun-reference errors, and misplaced modifiers ('The kings of Barbary play unpunished with the lives of their subjects, being regarded as holy.'). Although none of these occasional lapses serves to prevent a coherent reading of the text, one should expect a short translation that has passed through so many hands to have more polish. The remedy for the future is to enlist the services of a professional copy-editor possessing native fluency and adhering to the conventions laid out in an established style and usage guide.

Rough edges aside, *Thoughts on Civil Liberty* is a welcome addition to the library of

eighteenth-century political philosophy in English translation. Goldberg, who instigated the translation, stresses the importance of Forsskål's text in the history of media legislation, pointing to its role in provoking the Freedom of the Printing Press Act in 1766. In truth, the scope of its significance is much broader. The work can be read as a case study in how the evolving idea of civil liberty was received, adapted, and implemented in the northern periphery of the Enlightenment; in this manner, it is capable of giving us a glimpse into a largely overlooked moment in the process through which the Western world became modern.

Matthew Norris

Jens Glebe-Møller, *I kamp mod dumbed og bykleri: om oplysningsmanden general W. H. von Schmettau (1719–85)* (København: Museum Tusulanums Forlag, 2011). 122 s.

For lesarar av dette tidsskriftet er Jens Glebe-Møller kanskje mest kjent for si utmerka bok *Struensees vej til skaffottet: fornøft og åbenbaring i Oplysningstiden*, frå 2007. Den nye boka hans med tittelen *I kamp mod dumbed og bykleri: om oplysningsmanden general W. H. von Schmettau* handlar også om ein sentralt plassert fritenkar. I begge bøkene spelar referat av samtalar mellom hovudpersonen og ein prest ei viktig rolle. Woldemar Hermann von Schmettau (1719–85) er langt frå så kjent som den stadig aktuelle Johann Friedrich Struensee. Det betyr ikkje akkurat at denne riksgreven, generalen og Ridderen af Elefanten var ein perifer person i samtida. I ettertid har det blitt skriva lite om greven og den fritenkande forfattarskapen hans. Den emeriterte teologi-professoren Glebe-Møller sin presentasjon av sentrale trekk ved livet og tenkinga til W. H. von Schmettau er derfor ein pionerinnsetning.

Schmettau stamma frå ei prøyssisk embetsmannslekt og vaks opp i Berlin og Dresden. Han tenestegjorde som offiser både i den keisarlege og den franske hæren før han i 1746 gikk i dansk krigsteneste. I 1764 vart han utnemnt til kommanderande general i Norge. I Norge gav Schmettau ut tidsskriftet *Militærisk Bibliothek* og var aktiv på fleire frontar utover dei militære: Han organiserte teaterverksemd, starta ein fabrikk og gikk inn for potetdyrking. Han vart allereie i 1766 medlem av Videnskaberne Selskab i Trondheim. Schmettau sine kontaktar ved hoffet gjorde at han også hadde ein finger med i spelet for at det fekk namnet Det Kongelige Norske Videnskabers Selskab i 1768 (s. 30). Etter tre år i Norge fall Schmettau i unåde. Han busette seg i Holsten og tilbragte dei siste atten leveåra der, i utkanten av dobbeltmonarkiet.

Glebe-Møller godtgjer i denne boka at det er mange og gode grunner til å vere opptatt av denne eigenarta personlegdommen i den dansk-norske historia: Han brevveksla med framstående litteratar og forskarar (som Voltaire), diskuterte metafysiske spørsmål med kongen, hadde imponerende bok- og myntsamlingar, var ein ihuga frimurar og vart av fleire skildra som ein libertinar når det gjaldt livsførsel. I tillegg var han altså sterkt kritisk til den rådande religionsforma og publiserte fleire religionskritiske skrifter. Eit av dei, *Blätter aus Liebe zur Wahrheit geschrieben* frå 1771, hadde den sjeldsynte æra å nesten bli det einaste skriftet som vart gjenstand for rettsforfølging i trykkefridomsåra. Dei ulike tekstane som Schmettau skreiv om teologiske og filosofiske spørsmål viser at han var sterkt kyrkjekritisk, hadde uortodokse og avstikkande oppfatningar av Gud, men at han på ingen måte fornektet Guds eksistens. Under gjennomgangen av tekstane gjer Glebe-Møller det klart at Schmettau "ikke var nogen stor – og slet ikke systematisk tænkter" (s. 61).

Ut i frå forfattern sin presentasjon av Schmettaus argument for "sjælens udødelig-