

Report on Theda Rehbock's Philosophy Residency at Susimetsa

Maja Mateas

April 2nd – April 15th 2025

I had the wonderful opportunity to spend almost two weeks with three other residents at Susimetsa. Having completed my Master's Thesis on Plato's conception of 'mimesis' and AI generated images, I spent my time at Susimetsa exploring new research ideas. In particular, I worked on Plato's dialogues, *Theaetetus*, *Sophist*, and *Republic X*, and focused on the topics of falsehood, being and non being, and their connection to Plato's Theory of Forms. I analysed how these topics build on each other in the *Theaetetus* and the *Sophist*, and across these dialogues. What particularly fascinates me in this context is how skilfully Plato connects all of these conceptions. He takes up the topics that he leaves in aporia in the *Theaetetus* in the *Sophist*, a dialogue which follows chronologically and yet approaches these issues from a completely new perspective.

In the *Theaetetus*, the focus seems to be purely on sensually perceptible objects. The Protagorean relativism, which is discussed there, for instance, gives rise to the example of the same wind being perceived as warm by one person and cold by another. So, it seems that the discussion is about qualities of sensible entities, but it remains unclear how this connects to the forms, which are not mentioned explicitly. In this context, I looked at *Republic X*, in which Plato suddenly presents completely unexpected examples of forms, such as that of the bed. Therefore, questions arise as to what role, if any, the forms play in the *Theaetetus*, how the examples from *Republic X* can be reconciled with the *Theaetetus* account, and how this all fits in with Plato's Theory of Forms in general.

On this basis, my second focus was particularly on the realism-anti-realism debate, i.e., the question of a reality that is dependent on consciousness or independent of it. In Plato scholarship, these conceptions are quite entangled, and my long-term aim will be to work out a coherent Platonic (anti-)realism theory that is consistent across the dialogues and also takes into account the Theory of Forms.

With its focus on realism and anti-realism, the project has taken a rather unexpected turn at Susimetsa and my stay there has contributed greatly to developing this theoretical foundation of my project. The Graduate Workshop in Tartu before the beginning of the residency, where I was invited to present my work and marvel at the projects of the other Susimetsa scholars and graduate students from the University of Tartu, was also particularly exciting. We continued the discussions begun there every evening during the two weeks at Susimetsa, while we worked our way through Theda Rehbock's extensive collection of books and music. I also have very fond memories of my favourite spot in front of the painting of the sea in the living room, where I did a lot of work. It was also a wonderful place to read Theda Rehbock's edition of *The Old Man and the Sea*, which she has marked with many underlinings and notes.

Many thanks to Margit for organising and welcoming us to Tartu and for visiting us at Susimetsa, and thank you, Emily, Jonas and Ozan, for an unforgettable time. I look forward to seeing you again soon!



Residency Period: April 2nd – April 15th 2025
Ozan Altinok, Emily Daly, Jonas Pöld, Maja Mateas