## A Word of Introduction

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**Professor Quentin Skinner Receives an Honorary Doctorate**

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A WO.RD OF INTRODUCTION

As has been the case every year, this Philosophy Newsletter maintains and even possibly strengthens the link between the Institute of Philosophy and its many alumni and alumnae spread throughout the world. Many collaborators have ensured that the great and small events of the life of the Institute throughout the academic year of 2003-2004 have been recorded in fascinating interviews and detailed overviews. In this way these worldwide distances can even be bridged. Besides, these are not only spatial distances; they are also temporal. In the series of volumes of this Newsletter – the number that you have in your hands is the thirteenth – you can find and read the evolution of the philosophic activities of the Institute, and perhaps of philosophy itself, that have taken place over the last year. Who knows – maybe one day this series of Newsletters will prove an important source for historians who want to describe the evolution and changes of the intellectual life of this university and this Institute.

This volume again devotes much space to instructive interviews in which researchers who visited the Institute, whether to give a Thursday Lecture or to participate in congresses and colloquia, share with us their work and insights.
These interviews bear witness once more to the diversity that characterizes the philosophical life and the understanding of philosophy. I would like to mention two interviews in particular. In the first place we have the interview with Professor Quentin Skinner, who on the 2nd of February 2004, at the proposal of the Institute of Philosophy, received an honorary doctorate from the university. In the second place there is an interview with Professor Jan Aertsen, who gave us the Thomas Lecture in 2004. By the way, this academic year the Thomas Feast celebrations assumed once more their traditional form. After the Eucharistic celebration, lecture and a reception, students again had the chance to demonstrate their musical and other talents during a talent show that was open to all.

With great regret we see also within these pages that our last academic year was also one of departures. We mourn the loss of Professor R. Van Driessche, who for many years and with great attention to his students took care of philosophical education at the Faculty of Economics and Applied Economic Sciences, and who was possibly known by some of our older alumni, because of his commitment to the international students of our university. Much too early Kevin O’Brien, an alumnus of the Institute, has also departed from us.

Finally there was a farewell celebration on the occasion of the succession to emeritus status of Professor Herman Parret. For him this was no occasion to mark the beginning of a more restful way of life! He remains after it still indefatigable as he travels around the world to give lectures and thus to promote the name of the Institute.

As we have already indicated, this Newsletter would never see the light of day were it not for the efforts of many. Renée Ryan has taken on the general leadership and responsibility of the Newsletter. She has throughout been able to count on the invaluable help of Ingrid Lombaerts and Erwin Blendeman, and of the students, professors and visitors who have willingly contributed to producing interviews. We owe them many thanks. Without their efforts we would not be able to maintain this link between the Institute and its alumni and alumnæ. As always I want to leave you with the wish that everything may go well in your personal and professional lives. Know too that you are all always welcome at the Institute and that we would like to hear more from you. The pages of this publication also lie open for you!

By Professor André Van de Putte,
Dean of the Institute of Philosophy.
PROFESSOR QUENTIN SKINNER RECEIVES AN HONORARY DOCTORATE FROM THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF LEUVEN

Professor Quentin Skinner (Faculty of History, Cambridge University) received an honorary doctorate from K.U.Leuven on the 2nd of February, 2004. Professor André Van de Putte was Professor Skinner’s promoter and gave the following address at this event. Professor Skinner is Regius Professor of Modern Philosophy at Cambridge University. His numerous publications span his research and interests in both Philosophy and History, including works on Renaissance culture and seventeenth century political philosophy. He was a guest at the H.I.W. on February 3rd, giving a lecture on “Philosophy and Laughter” and a seminar on “Thomas Hobbes as a Theorist of Representative Government”.

Laudatio for Professor dr. Quentin Skinner, given in Leuven on the 2nd of February, 2004, by Professor André Van De Putte, Promoter.

Your Eminence,
Rector,
Your excellencies,
Colleagues,
Ladies and gentlemen,

With this ceremony, we want to honour today an eminent scholar who occupies a very special place in the landscape of the human sciences.

Professor Skinner was born in 1940 in Oldham and trained as an historian in Cambridge. From 1979 to 1996, he was professor of Political Science there and since 1996 he has been the Regius Professor of Modern History. He resided from 1974 to 1979 at The Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, has occupied a number of prestigious chairs, and is holder of five honorary doctorates, including one from Oxford. He is a member of the British Academy, the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, the Academia Europaea, and is Pro-Vice-Chancellor of his university.

Professor in political science, Regius Professor of Modern History, and a laudatio by a philosopher: this reflects the rich multi-faceted nature of the research of Professor Skinner and indicates that he exercises his profession in a renewing way, and transcends its boundaries.

According to a traditional conception, historians of political thought have to select from
the past those texts that are of enduring importance for the eternal questions of philosophy. Professor Skinner’s work originates in dissatisfaction with this conception of what is relevant, that makes history a mirror and a confirmation of our convictions and questions. Indeed, it is not at all certain that the most important political writings of the past are always concerned with the questions we pose. Therefore, primarily, the historian has to have an eye for discontinuities and conceptual change. Like an archaeologist, he has to excavate values we no longer endorse, questions we no longer ask. What Skinner argues for is a more historical approach to intellectual history. The work and the ideas of an author must be re-situated into their intellectual context. Only in this way can we understand what the authors wanted to do with their texts when they wrote them. To develop an argument is always to argue with someone for or against a state of affairs. We must do more than focus on the meaning of an atomized term or text. By means of an holistic approach, the performativity and intertextuality of texts must be taken into account.

The theoretical background of Skinner’s approach is formed by recent developments within epistemology and philosophy of language that he has not only applied but also has helped to refine. I have in mind his considerations on the rôle that ideas play in behaviour, his observations about intentionality; his attention for rhetorical strategies and for relations between language and power in the social construction of reality. But above all, he has applied his principles in a magisterial and exemplary manner in his major historical studies of political thought of primarily early modernity, which are now obligatory reading for everyone in the specialty.

But also in these historical studies, he went beyond the strict field of study. Allow me to clarify this by a short evocation of the way in which Skinner has influenced the contemporary philosophical debate on political freedom.

In an almost self-evident way, we understand freedom as the absence of external physical and legal coercion. According to the defenders of this negative conception of freedom, any other use of the term is incoherent. It is confusing to say that individual freedom can only exist in a self-governing community. It is not who makes the laws that counts but how many there are and how much freedom remains. Nor can one say that freedom as positive freedom, according to the defenders of negative freedom, subjects the individual to a conception of human perfection with coercive content and destroys negative freedom.

It is to Professor Skinner’s credit that he broke this deadlocked debate open by confronting the participants with the “unfamiliar” and forgotten theories of the neo-Romans, who contrast freedom with slavery and not only with coercion. They point out that it is perfectly conceivable for a skilful slave to escape all external coercion of his master and nevertheless remain un-free: his master can always intervene. He remains dependent on his grace. Translated in terms of society, this means that the presence of both discretionary power and systems of patronage destroys freedom. For the neo-Romans, it was coherent to bind individual freedom to a particular kind of society, as res publica. Moreover, because relationships of dependence always re-emerge, for the neo-Romans the price of liberty is eternal vigilance, and freedom is bound to public service and virtue but without a conception that human perfection has to be imposed.
One of the criticisms of Skinner’s more historical approach to the history of political thought was that it is irrelevant, merely scholarly antiquarianism. The above demonstrates that nothing is less true. Skinner confronts us with a world that has become alien to us, in which freedom is not only a predicate of our actions but is also an existential condition. Thus, he makes us aware of our spontaneous use of terms and thus of our present moral and political world. He liberates us from the tendency to think that the ways of thinking that have been left to us by the mainstream of our intellectual tradition are the ways of thinking about these themes. Professor Skinner, of course, knows that our thinking and action are restricted language and our intellectual tradition. However, he refuses to make this insight into a principle and to submit to it. “We may be freer than we sometimes suppose”, he states somewhere. Intellectual history must give us a broader sense of possibility so that we can distance ourselves from our unconscious intellectual commitments and wonder what we have to think about them. A work that succeeds in generating this critical sense deserves our highest appreciation.

For all these reasons, I ask you, Rector, on the recommendation of the Academic Council, to grant the honorary doctorate of the Catholic University of Leuven to Professor Doctor Quentin Skinner.

**Professor Bart Raymaekers Interviews Professor Skinner**

Shortly after Professor Skinner had received his honorary doctorate, he and Professor Bart Raymaekers had the opportunity for a conversation. Excerpts of their discussion follow.

First of all I want to congratulate you once again! One of the interesting things I thought this morning was that you spoke in the fields of political science, history, and philosophy, and I wonder, do you feel at ease between these three disciplines; or are they just one for you?

I think that I’m really the product of the particular background from which I came in Cambridge. There was no department of politics in the university until the 1980’s, so if you were interested in political philosophy or in moral and social philosophy and their history, to a remarkable degree this subject was taught in the history faculty. The philosophy faculty’s tradition had stemmed from, among others, Bertrand Russell and G.E. Moore and those who followed, and was as a result enormously much centred on questions of epistemology and philosophy of science and founded on logic. So although when I was a student I thought of reading philosophy and after the first part of my degree I thought of changing to philosophy, that would not have been the kind of philosophy I could have done at all well and it wouldn’t very much have interested me. The kind of philosophy that interested me paradoxically, I was able to get within the history faculty. And the history faculty in Cambridge in those days was enormous. It’s still enormous, but that’s to say it held I think about seventy teachers – very large faculty, still is an enormous faculty, and we still have something like that number. But among those there was a big tradition of teaching political theory and its history.

When I held the chair of political science instituted by the Rockefeller Foundation, which I did from 1979 until 1996, I only ever taught intellectual history and political theory; and I
didn’t always teach political theory in an historical spirit. I used to give lectures about the theory of democracy. I gave courses about the theory of the state. I frequently lectured about theories of freedom – and did that in a relatively philosophical sort of spirit. But on the other hand all the work I did was historically based and that was expected, and that was what we called political science. But now if I visit the United States I’m never invited by political science departments. In the United States if I was lecturing I would almost always be invited by philosophers, not by historians. But the other strangeness really is that my position as professor of modern history is itself an anomaly. I don’t think I would have been thought a strong candidate for a chair in modern history normally, but in Oxford and Cambridge there is still one professorship in the traditional disciplines of the university, which is appointed by the crown, and that is the so-called Regius professor. That is an honorific appointment, so if it were not that we have a crown that still makes appointments, I would be still a professor of political science. So I still think of myself as doing this kind of junction between philosophy and history. It was a very great honour for my subject that they should have chosen someone doing that subject for the Regius professorship, because that had never happened before. This would almost always be given to someone who was a political historian. So I was very thrilled to be given that.

Historians have a meticulous way of reading texts, while philosophy is more a speculative, even wild, kind of thinking. Do you ever feel any opposition between being a historian and being a philosopher?

Oh I do! I very much do. I am, existentially speaking, an historian – no question about it.

And my original training, of course – as of any academic in England of my generation – included the classics; then history was what I studied as an undergraduate. So my formation is as an historian and, insofar as I am an historian, what I am an historian of is texts. Many of my colleagues will tell you that I’m not really an
historian at all. That’s to say, I have done some archival work, but that’s not primarily the sort of history that I do. But I have the historian’s sense that what matters is, as it were, trying to approach these texts on their own terms as far as we can, just as an historian of medieval economy would try to approach those questions on their own terms and try to avoid the kind of speculation that you speak of. So, yes, I’m very much an historian in that way, but this particular kind of historian where what I’m interested in is the history of ideas. I mean I’m interested in people’s beliefs.

At a certain point in one of your texts you compare yourself, if I may say so, with Thomas Kuhn. I think you discuss The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, and speak of looking for changes, changes in paradigms in a certain period.

I didn’t mean to compare myself with him. He was a very great scholar of stupendous originality. But that was a book which came out of course in 1962, just when I was first beginning to think about these things. It had an enormous impact on my generation, and I am particularly interested historically in moments of rupture, as the French say – that is to say, questions about conceptual change have always been historically interesting to me.

So “conceptual change” is the phrase we’re looking for?

Yes, some point where some concept comes under some kind of pressure, either because it is used pejoratively, whereas it hadn’t been before; or conversely, so that people’s attitudes towards what is being described are invited to be changed; or else because its range of reference changes and people start to think in new ways about what the concept denotes. And some of the theories that I’ve written about – I suppose it’s no accident – are very obvious names in the history of Western thinking about politics. I’ve written about Machiavelli because I was really interested in the whole development within Renaissance Philosophy of the recovery of the classics, especially the recovery of the Roman classics, the whole idea of citizenship, the free citizen, the virtuous citizen, the active citizen. This analysis of civic virtue that became central to their way of thinking about morality, and then Machiavelli’s attempt to turn that completely through a prismatic lens and make us look at all the same concepts but in this completely different way, very much excited me. These moments of conceptual change are very interesting, but they also excited me methodologically, because one of the things I’m always trying to say as an historian is that it’s always more interesting to ask what these texts are doing than what they say. For me the exciting moments are those when there’s some huge debate, the terms of which we may have lost, but the terms of which can be reconstructed so that you can understand the text in a new way.

That’s why the other philosopher in the Anglophone tradition I’ve most studied is Hobbes. With him you have the revolutionary moment where you get a theory of the state for the first time in Anglophone political theory. Hobbes answers the question of whether the true subject of sovereignty is the sovereign or is the people negatively. He says it is this fictive person called the Leviathan, which doesn’t exist except as words on a page until we animate it. So he gives us this whole theatrical account of what the state is. It’s this animated persona that doesn’t exist except for us and yet controls us. The huge paradox, which is the modern theory of state, that we are ruled by a fiction, is Hobbes’s invention. And so in writing about Hobbes it’s that
moment which has most excited me.

One of the things that strikes me is that you question all those historians or philosophers who try to look for some chain from Hobbes, then onto, for example, Hooker, Locke and then the Federalists and so on. You really question this kind of looking for the "great chain of being".

I suppose there’s a more general piece of polemics there, which I’m sure I learned from my teachers to a large degree, which is that one should not think of any history as simply linking together great names. Nobody would seriously try to write political history in this way now. We want to sociologize political history, and that’s been done for generations. I suppose that what I wanted to do was to sociologize intellectual history and to say, “look, the study of the discourse of a society and how it talks to itself about its moral and its social and political questions is an activity. It’s an activity no less real than the activity of banking or farming or any of the things that economical social historians talk about, and it should be studied as an activity”. But if what you do is you take these texts out of the contexts in which they were written, which is an intellectual as well as a social and a political context, and then link them together, you cease to have any kind of history, and you also cease to be able to have the right kind of dialogue with them. I’m not pleading for a kind of historicity that cuts us off from this tradition. I’m pleading for us to reconstitute it so far as we can in its own terms and then for us to enter into dialogue with it. Often we learn the most from people who are most unlike us. I suppose the underlying polemical thought is that we shouldn’t link all of this together as interesting only because these people were asking our questions.

One of the things you’re very clear about is the kind of surprise you have in reading those forgotten texts. They come up with questions and insights that may even have been forgotten, and so they have strange effect on us. But at the same time one could ask, if they are so strange, how can they talk to us?

I’m certainly not a conceptual relativist. No historian, on the other hand, can be anything except a bit of a relativist. One needs to remember that these societies are extraordinarily different from us. It was very different living in these societies; they had different social organizations, they had different beliefs, and trying to get on terms with all of this is an exercise of translation. We have here some relationship to the alien, and there’s a kind of soft relativism involved in wanting to treat them on their own terms, which are not our terms.

Don’t we have the feeling that we understand them in one way or another?

Well, it may all be an illusion, but we believe in processes of translation both in the narrow and in the broad sense. A lot of the texts were not written in the English language. I study texts that were written in ancient Latin and in Renaissance Tuscan, and in romance. We believe that we can translate those languages. And then, we believe that in the wider sense of translation we can recapture their experience. We don’t of course believe that we can get back into their heads, but we do think that we can find out the concepts they used and what they did with them and we can in that way re-enact their experience, and in a way that we can understand. The whole effort of the historian, like that of the anthropologist, is one that at once tries to do justice to the extreme difference of the societies and yet is not relativist about it. If we were conceptual relativists we wouldn’t think that we
could learn anything from them. So why would we study them?

You have written about Berlin’s classical distinction between negative and positive liberty. Do you consider that your conception of republicanism actually breaks apart this hard distinction, so as to bring it back again into a kind of creative discussion? How do you evaluate it at this moment?

I am concerned with the Berlin distinction. The truth is that I think that Berlin was right to think that there are two concepts of liberty, in that he isolated out a positive concept of liberty. I understand that he meant by this that there were philosophers who used the term “freedom” to designate a particular state of people’s being – that is to say, morals of realization, and some even stronger than in the Kantian sense. Furthermore they would say that if and only if you attained that state of being you could be said to be a free person, through the notion that service of God might be freedom. Now that’s a very peculiar notion. It’s almost on the edge of our understanding to say that that’s what freedom is. It’s the idea that the recognition that you are free is the recognition that you have achieved a certain end state. That seems to me to be a deeply interesting claim, not one that I would wish to endorse at all, and I can hardly articulate it clearly – and certainly Berlin did not articulate it clearly.

In my thought and writings I’ve tended to set all that aside and focus on Berlin’s discussion of negative liberty, and what I want to say here is that this is a complete mess! What I most dislike about contemporary discussions of the theory of freedom is the idea that there is only one way of coherently thinking about the notion of political freedom – namely, as absence of constraint upon an agent, where constraint is understood as the active interference of some agency. That involves too the idea that the law operates by coercion; coercion takes away freedom; so there you have the whole liberal dilemma about the individual and the state. That is the whole framework of the liberal way of thinking about the individual and the state, and of course Berlin was simply repeating those liberal pieties.

I think that I’m on Berlin’s side in that I don’t think that’s the only coherent way of thinking about freedom, because, as I’ve said, I think you can think coherently about freedom in a positive way – even though I wouldn’t necessarily agree with Berlin’s way in the end. I think Berlin is completely wrong about the theory of negative liberty. That is, I would deny that any coherent theory of negative liberty has to be a theory about non-interference. I haven’t yet published anything sufficiently clear about this, but have now done a lot more work on this. I think this theory really became important in the Anglophone tradition in the English revolution of the 17th century, where the radicals and the parliamentarians all wanted to oppose the crown with a particular understanding of the freedom of citizens. This was a republican ideology, and it used a distinction we don’t make now when talking about freedom, which is that they distinguish with a tolerable degree of consistency between possessing your liberties, on the one hand, and being what they call a free man on the other. (They always use the male gender here and I shall have to therefore.) But now the distinction is this, that they were mostly concerned with worries about tyranny and therefore exercises of power by executives, or in their case the crown, which actually undermined people’s freedoms in the straightforward sense that it interfered with their capacity to
act at will, by putting them in prison without trial, or taxing them without consent, or all sorts of what both we and Berlin would take as paradigm cases of infractions of individual civic liberty. Of course, this is what the historiography of the English Revolution is about – that it was a struggle against the crown's infractions of freedom.

But I have come to see that that really wasn't what they most of all worried about when they worried about freedom. They thought that what mattered was to be a free man and they thought that what it was to be a free man was not of course something other than being in possession of your rights and liberties. They thought that what it was to be a free man was to be in full possession of those rights and liberties, but in addition to hold them in a certain way, and the certain way that distinguished you as a free man was that they were not held by the grace of, at the mercy of, subject to the arbitrary will of, anyone else. This then is the paradox they like to play with. You can have all your rights and freedoms completely; nothing terrible is happening to you; there's a rule of law; everything is going along fine; but you're not a free man. And the reason that you're not a free man is that it's all going along fine but you have an absolute ruler. I've come to see that the historiography of the English revolution has to a remarkable degree pointed in the wrong direction. When the English abolished the institution of monarchy they didn't just execute a king. The act of March 1649 gives their reasons for abolishing the monarchy and it says that the rule of kings enslaves the people. It doesn't say it interferes with their rights and liberties. It says that the very idea of having a monarch means that we're not free men.

Berlín is sort of aware of this tradition, but he goes on to ask if there could be a case where I'm unfree although there is no interference with any activity of mine? He says you can't make sense of that, but I'm trying to say that that's exactly what they tried to make sense of. They didn't say that you're unfree just because you're subject to a person's power, but because that fact shapes how you can behave. There are then certain things that you cannot do, not because you know what will happen, but because you don't know what will happen. So maybe you can say to the sultan that you really don't like his new clothes. Maybe you can tell the emperor that he's not wearing any clothes. But maybe – and that's what's really deep about that little myth about the emperor and his new clothes – it's only the completely innocent person who's not part of the political system who can say that the emperor is not wearing any clothes. Nobody else can say that. It's not that people don't know or that they haven't been told. They just don't know what would happen to them if they said that. Maybe nothing would happen to them. That is the theory of freedom that I'm trying to get people to see. I'm really trying to contribute the emperor's new clothes to the debate!

Do you see any interest by contemporary politicians in this new kind of new thinking about freedom, about the republic? Do you see any moments or any particular places where politicians and academics find each other?

I think that in Great Britain they're not interested in this kind of debate for two separate reasons. One is that this theory of freedom that I'm talking about asks a lot more of the state. It asks that people should be free not merely from interference but from the possibility of arbitrary interference. It asks far more than liberalism does. And the liberal state hasn't been able to offer us what it promises, namely freedom.
and security. We’ve never felt so insecure. The liberal state has failed us, and that’s the agony of Americans at the moment; they are no longer secure. The idea that more can be asked of the state is not something that politicians want to hear. A second reason is that this theory of freedom is a genuinely democratic freedom in that it insists that people are free. That’s to say they are not subject to arbitrary interference, if and only if they are in some strong sense self-governing. The liberal state is not interested in forms of government. It takes the view that the fewer the laws, the more free you are. Liberals would want to say that what it is to be a free citizen would presuppose a far more robust civil society, in which there would be real demands made upon politicians by citizens. It isn’t only that we have to take to the streets if we don’t want a war, but that there should be real mechanisms of debate within parliament. I would also say that in Britain there’s a third reason, which is that any political theory which takes the view that I’m taking about the relation of freedom to rise is one that takes the notion of a politics of deference very seriously. It’s democratic in the sense that it sees all deferent relations, all relations where there is obvious prestige on the one hand and dependence on the other, as inimical to democratic social relations within civil society – and so it’s republican. It’s inimical to monarchy. Monarchies set up systems of honour. Systems of honour set up systems of deference.

You were talking about the demands of a firm civil society. Isn’t this a trap for Europe, when we talk about the European political community, because the demands there are so huge? It’s almost a kind of utopia.

I hope not. I’m a great European in sentiment. I think these nation-states are tremendously robust. If you try to get into Europe now as an immigrant all this stuff about the end of the state looks ridiculous to you. They’ve closed their borders; they won’t have you; they won’t employ you; there are no unions to look after you if you get there. These states have never flexed their muscles as much as they have in the last ten years. They’re incredibly robust, so that I don’t worry about a European super state. But I hope that we shall manage to integrate ourselves into Europe. I mean not that we shall have a single culture, because we have very different traditions, and if we have somewhere like Turkey in the union, then we shall have to reconsider all these relations of religion to the state. But I don’t see why we should not have something in the form of a united states of Europe. And I would welcome it because it would be a great force in the world and the huge states of Europe, especially France and Germany, are also a force for peace in the world now. It was very striking over Iraq. Germany is really a pacifist state. The British really haven’t learned this lesson properly, but you can’t really get France and Germany to become interested in wars now, and that’s a wonderful thing, and I think that a European Union could be a force for peace and for the kind of civility which, if we could forget the horrors of the 20th century, is Europe at its best. Also we would become the largest capitalist economy in the world and we should become in that way more prosperous. That’s part of the answer to the questions that the Rector was putting¹ – not just that there should be more start-up companies in Bruges or somewhere, but that we should get together, pool our wealth, and then we should be able to look after each other better by generating more wealth.

¹ That is, in the proceedings during which Professor Skinner received his honorary doctorate from K.U.Leuven.

Would you consider yourself a historian of philosophy or a philosopher using history to shed light on contemporary problems?

As a matter of fact I am an historian of philosophy, but at the same time I think my inquiry has a philosophical, systematic relevance. It is not only a kind of mental archeology – digging out something – but I regard medieval philosophy as highly relevant for my life and also for the cultural situation in Europe, so it is not purely historical I would say.

What do you find as being worthy of importation into the current philosophical milieu? What is it from medieval philosophy that you would want to import into current philosophical issues?

Well, maybe two things, especially with regard to Thomas Aquinas. I think that for Christian people, for religious people, it was my personal experience that Thomas was a help for the religious person to be a philosopher, so there is not a gap between religion and philosophy but faith seeking understanding. For a kind of Christian thought, Thomas Aquinas in particular was for me a huge help. That is the first thing you can say, and it applies only to Christians. But another aspect, I think, is a metaphysical approach to philosophy. I always experience with my students that they are not interested in the small talk, but the big questions: What is truth? What is goodness? What is beauty? What is human happiness? With respect to those questions, Thomas Aquinas and medieval thinkers in general can give a very good orientation for your own personal stance. So, my interest in Aquinas is motivated by two main issues: Christian thought and a metaphysical approach to problems.

Certainly in your work the transcendental approach to medieval philosophy is a recurring theme.

Yes, sure. It has been my main theme for the last ten to fifteen years.
Do you think that it is essential, in order to appropriate medieval discourse into contemporary issues, that medieval philosophy must be understood as essentially transcendental?

Yes. Of course when you speak of transcendental philosophy you immediately think of Kant. But it is interesting to see that Kant himself refers to “the transcendental philosophy of the Ancients”. The birth of transcendental philosophy was in the Middle Ages. That is my thesis. Of course there are huge differences. But this kind of thinking started in the Middle Ages. And there is a connection with what I said just before. The Transcendentals have to do with philosophical keywords: being, truth, goodness, unity. So it is interesting that in transcendental thought these key notions are brought together into a certain coherence, into having something to do with one another. So there is also a connection with the great metaphysical questions. It was one of the points that interested me from the beginning: the question of being, the question of truth, the question of goodness.

And you find that of assistance in addressing the big questions your students have?

Well, in the German university system you have to give Vorlesungen or lectures. Most of my lectures deal with one of these issues, the question of being, the question of truth, the question of goodness. My experience is that students are interested in these questions, not necessarily in my answers. [Laughs.]

What do you think is the greatest misunderstanding about medieval philosophy today?

That it is only theology. Of course, it is in a certain sense theology. Thomas’s main work is the Summa Theologica and Thomas as well as all the other medieval thinkers understood themselves as theologians. So there is a hermeneutical problem in many discussions about medieval philosophy. Can you speak of a medieval philosophy? But you have to realize that when the medieval authors speak about theology, it is something different from theology today. Theology in the Middle Ages is always based on a certain type of philosophy and it is essential to see this philosophy. I think it is possible to reconstruct this philosophy – and you must reconstruct it in a certain sense. Thomas never wrote a Summa Philosophica, but there is a kind of autonomy of philosophy. It is, of course, a hermeneutical tour de force to find this philosophy, but there is something. I think many people – Norman Kretzman is a good example in the United States – discovered the philosophical dimension – maybe that is the best expression – of these theologies. And I believe that the doctrine of the Transcendentals plays a central role in the philosophical dimension of medieval theology.

So your perspective on the Transcendentals is that they are a way of overcoming that basic misconception.

Yes, and of course there is also a theological relevance. But it is a basic philosophical doctrine. The doctrine has to do with the first conceptions of the human intellect. Everybody uses these conceptions. The doctrine of the first conceptions of the intellect designating features of reality itself is not a doctrine alongside many other doctrines. It is something fundamental. That is my thesis.

A question about that: you have said that the transcendental starting point of Thomas’ epistemology is a critique of knowledge.

In a certain sense, yes.
Could you elaborate? How is it different — it is obviously different — than Kant’s project of trying to destroy reason to make room for faith? It is a different kind of critique. Yes.

Can you elaborate on the kind of critique it is and what transcendentalism is for Thomas and Kant in that critique of knowledge?

Well, that is not easy to say in a few sentences [laughs].

Can you describe the entirety of Western philosophy in a few sentences?

Yes, that is the hard part. [Laughs.] But let me start in this way. The usual picture of medieval transcendental philosophy is that it is ontological and Kant’s approach is cognitive or epistemological. Now, it was a surprise to me to see that the Transcendentals are described as the first conceptions of the intellect. They have a cognitive relevance. So, the opposition between the medievals and Kant is not simply the opposition between an ontological and epistemological approach. The first conception of the intellect is being. Everything we conceive we first conceive as a being. The next question then is what kind of being is this first conception of the intellect. Bonaventure develops an argument that the first conception of the intellect must be the most perfect being, God. Thomas criticizes this view for several reasons. God is not the first object of the intellect, but being in general. It makes a tremendous difference when you say the first conception of the intellect is the most perfect being, the fullness of being; or if you say that the first conception of the intellect is being in general and the knowledge of the first being is not the first conception of the intellect but the end of our inquiry. So, already at the beginning there is a rather decisive difference. Thomas criticizes what one could call the parallelism in, for instance, Bonaventure and also in Henry of Ghent — parallelism insofar as a first conception of the intellect concerns the first being, the highest being, the most eminent being. His criticism has to do with the limit and scope of the human intellect. And this is also a point in my lecture tonight: you can say that there is a certain critique of knowledge in the Middle Ages. What is proper to Thomas is that he is very critical of the possibilities of philosophy. Thomas, in contradistinction to Henry of Ghent and many others, says that a knowledge of God’s essence or a quiddative knowledge of God is impossible for human reason. Thomas is an exception here. His basic argument is always that man’s intellectual knowledge is dependent on the phantasms — sense knowledge. Now, returning to our point of departure, I found it very interesting to see that the doctrine of the Transcendentals has something to do with cognitive problems, with the first conceptions of the intellect. Of course, there is also an ontological dimension, but it is not the only dimension to the medieval doctrine. So that is a very extensive answer to a short question.

Short questions are always the dangerous ones.

Indeed. [Laughs.]

Well, here is a long question, so perhaps we will have a short answer: the natural desire for God, which is what you are going to be talking about tonight, is an inherently paradoxical position, it seems to me. How is it that humans can, by their nature, desire what can only be given by grace, by what transcends that nature? That is seemingly a paradoxical position.

Absolutely.

And secondly, in what sense is this paradoxical position
relevant for an unbeliever? It seems that a Christian could find a lot of comfort in that paradoxical position, that we are waiting for the transcendence to come. But to an unbeliever, is this meaningful discourse?

Well, of course there is common ground. The natural desire for knowledge is in fact a natural desire to know the causes of things, as Aristotle says. Then what is most desired – the most desired object, so to say – is then knowledge of the first cause, the final cause, the highest cause. That is consistent with Aristotle. That means that the natural desire to know ultimately is the desire to know God. Take for instance Boethius of Dacia. In his De Summo Bono, he defends this view and his conclusion is that only philosophers can be happy. Thomas criticizes that. Human happiness cannot only be for the happy few, for the philosophers. In terms of a critique of reason, what is the highest philosophical knowledge? What knowledge of God can philosophers attain? It is very limited. So here we are on common ground, so to say. Thomas then goes a step further. The final end of the natural desire is the vision of God, but that knowledge is supernatural and that is the difference. Aquinas’s view is controversial. Tonight I will mention a critique of Duns Scotus, who regards Aquinas’s position as completely unintelligible. Thomas at least tries to render it intelligible. You are right, there seems to be a paradox. At least, you can say there is a certain tension there. How can there be a natural desire for a supernatural end? There can be a natural desire for a natural end, but a supernatural end? That is a problem. The problem is in a sense the discontinuity. On the other hand, the natural desire in itself, the phenomenon, suggests a kind of continuity: a natural desire cannot be in vain. So the end must be possible for man to attain. But I will not deny that there is a kind of tension here: on the one hand continuity and on the other hand discontinuity.

In your transcendental approach to Thomas, how does that transcendental approach fit into his own dialectical approach to the truth?

What do you mean by dialectical?

Dialectical in the sense of Aristotle’s Topics, where you take received opinion, weigh received opinion, and come out with probable knowledge. Your beginning with the Transcendentals as an epistemological starting point is very much a scire, a science as opposed to probable opinion.

Well, Thomas is always looking for truth, not for dialectical probability. I hear a little of Mark Jordan in your question. You can see it in the quaestio structure of the Summa Theologica, arguments pro and contra. In most of the cases Thomas decides the question. He is looking for truth. Of course, Thomas welcomes everything. He is very benign. If there is an element [of truth] within Aristotle or Plato then he always welcomes that. I do not agree that his intention is dialectical. He is looking for truth. Perhaps in modern times we are not comfortable with the term “truth”. How dare we speak about truth? I remember the book by Mark Jordan on the hierarchy of discourses, but I’m not sure that is Thomas.

[René Antoine] Gauthier, when talking about Thomas’s hermeneutics, says it is Aristotle, again Aristotle, always Aristotle. But there is another question behind that in whether it is the Aristotle of the Topics and the Rhetoric or the Aristotle of the Posterior Analytics. Perhaps sometimes he takes up the notion of dialectic put forth in the Topics and at other times it is a syllogistic Aristotle.

Yes, but I think the Posterior Analytics are prevalent. Of course Aristotle himself uses the term
“dialectic” in the discussion about the ancients. But I would say that it is not in general the approach followed by Thomas Aquinas. Of course in certain questions, like in the question of the eternity of the world – where there are strong arguments for the eternity of the world but they are not demonstrative in a strict sense – we cannot decide the question. My reading of Thomas is not dialectical.

In one of your first books¹ you talk about the way of thinking of Thomas. Is Thomas’s thinking more than a resolutio, which as I understand that term is an analysis, a pulling apart?

That is certainly a very important element in Thomas – to make precise distinctions. He mostly solves problems by making distinctions. And certainly this is important, to make the right distinctions. But I think it is not only that. There is also a kind of synthetic power in Thomas. He is of course a master of distinctions and analysis. His commentaries on Aristotle and the anonymous Liber de Causis are masterpieces of analysis and penetration. But he also possesses a synthetic power which is not always easy to discover. That is the disadvantage of the quaestio structure. There is always a concrete question that is determined by the master on the basis of certain principles. But the principles are not always explicit. For instance, in question 2 of the Summa, the famous quinque viae are based on a certain understanding of causality that is presupposed but is not made explicit. The notion of participation is central to Thomas, but there is not a treatise on participation. You have to gather that from his works. That is the disadvantage of the quaestio structure.

One last question. Since we are in the building of the Husserl Archives: in your book on the Transcendentals and Thomas² you talk about the intentio and how the intentio for Thomas is not in any way a subjectivistic notion. It is a translation from Avicenna and it means more or less ratio or logos.

In this context, yes. But there is also in the context of the will the notion of intention.

Is it anachronistic to look back and find an intentional act in Thomas?

Of course that is in Thomas, but the occasion for this comment was Umberto Eco’s book on art and beauty in the Middle Ages. It contains a chapter on the beautiful as a Transcendental, in which he refers to medieval terminology. Transcendentals are the same in subjecto or in re, but they are different qua intentiones or ratio. Eco interprets intentio as a subjective element, but that is completely wrong. What is meant is that there is a material identity – that which is being, is one, true, and good – but there is a conceptual difference. The notion of being is not identical with the notion of truth. There are different intentiones and it had nothing to do with subjectivity. That was the concrete occasion. This was a very restricted discussion of intentio because intentio is a very complicated concept in Aquinas.

Interviewed by Matthew Kostelecky

Interview with James Dodd

Professor Dodd paid a short visit to the Institute of Philosophy on the 24th of March 2004, as our Husserl Memorial Lecturer. His paper was entitled “Some Remarks on Husserl’s Notions of Einströmen and Innerlichkeit”. He teaches at the New School University, New York, where he is also the director of the Husserl Archives. Some of the figures within his area of specialization are Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger and Jan Patočka. His book entitled Idealism and Corporeality: An Essay on the Problem of the Body in Husserl’s Phenomenology was published as Phaenomenologica 140.

Could you tell us a bit about your background?

I began my studies in philosophy at Boston University with Erazim Kohak and Krysztof Michalski. I actually began studying anthropology, and only turned to philosophy later in my undergraduate career, after which I went on to pursue graduate studies in philosophy. My dissertation was on Husserl and the problem of the body. Afterwards, I became interested in a number of other areas in the history of philosophy, in particular Kant’s Third Critique and some aspects of German Idealism which I found to be very interesting and very important. I had begun at the time a project on Schelling’s philosophy of art, which I hope to return to quite soon, since the field of Schelling studies is beginning to become more and more exciting, if you will, in the English speaking world of philosophy.

Currently I am an Assistant Professor at the New School University and the Director of the Husserl Archives there. We are not really an “archives,” of course, but more of a research center. We do have a copy of a selection of transcriptions of the Husserl Archives, quite old actually. I am in the process of arranging to update our collection, and to organize the materials together in a way that is more accessible and easier to use. I am also trying to get some research activities off the ground at the New School. One step in this direction is something I call the “Husserl Seminar”: every spring I give an advanced graduate seminar on some aspects of Husserl’s phenomenology, and try to invite scholars to come visit us and have them get involved in the research activities at the New School. That is something that is really just beginning; I am, after all, still rather new to the New School. I am just half way through my second year there, and it has gone by very quickly. It is a very exciting place to be.
I have recently finished a book that is being published by Kluwer on Husserl’s *Crisis of the European Sciences*. This was for me a very important book – the *Crisis*, I mean; my own book is probably not so important. The *Crisis* was in fact the book that got me into philosophy. It is the one that moved me the most, and convinced me that something like serious work in philosophy was still possible, that is, that it was not just an historical phenomenon, not just something interesting, but rather it was something that one could pursue. So writing this book was an attempt to say something concrete about where I think philosophy could go, what kind of future it could have. It took a while for me to write it, and it took a lot of me to write it, but I am very happy that it is finished and is coming out. My next large project might have something to do with Schelling, but I am still of two minds about it.

*We know that as you were working with Professor Kohak, you had a considerable degree of exposure to the Patočkaan discourse. Jan Patočka is unique in the sense that he has this emphasis on the Noematic in the context of an “a-subjective Phenomenology”. Compared to the essentially Noetic-Noematic structure of the Husserlian notion of constitution, this a-subjective Phenomenology seems to be a wooden iron. What do you think about Patočka’s project as such?*

I actually have a lot of warm, nostalgic feelings for it, because I started reading Patočka right from the beginning, right when I started studying Husserl and Heidegger. My first teacher in phenomenology was Erazim Kohak, who had a large number of translations of Patočka’s manuscripts in his office at Boston University. He basically gave me this box of manuscripts, some of which I later edited and published with Professor Kohak. It was very important for me to read Patočka, because what is unique about Patočka is that he genuinely attempted to read Husserl and Heidegger together, to give them equal weight and equal emphasis. So when I first started studying phenomenology, I became very interested in the relation between Husserl and Heidegger, and how to understand the two options represented by each respectively. I still think to this day that this is something that remains to be fully understood. I do not think the story of these two options has been fully articulated in the way that it should be, despite some excellent attempts. I think in part this is because Husserl and Heidegger were two philosophers who in the end simply did not understand each other, even if Heidegger was clearly influenced by Husserl, and despite the fact that one could also argue that in many ways Husserl is very much influenced by Heidegger. They simply saw past each other. But nevertheless it is the case that these are the two principal options within classical phenomenology, so to understand the potential dynamic between them is imperative. There are real philosophical differences between the two, but I do not believe that a true dialogue was ever initiated either between Husserl and Heidegger, or among the students of Husserl and Heidegger, despite the best efforts of thinkers such as Eugen Fink and Jan Patočka, who are perhaps the best to have outlined, if you will, the conditions for dialogue between these two approaches to phenomenology.

This notion of an “a-subjective phenomenology” is in my mind the result of a very deep reflection on the options that are represented by Husserl and Heidegger. In a way, the notion is still rather undeveloped, but some things are clear. On the one hand, Patočka tries to recognize the importance of some role of the
subjective dimension. So it is not anti-subjectivism, but a-subjectivism. If we are going to understand the structures in accordance with which human experience is constituted or set, then some conception of consciousness needs to be invoked in order to supplement any existential analytic. However, the manner in which consciousness is to be conceived needs finally to break itself away from any kind of Cartesian determination of conscious life as ego-life. And though I think this is something very interesting, in the end it is really more of a compromise than a new direction. The notion of an “a-subjective phenomenology” is still a compromise between a philosophy of consciousness and a philosophy of existence, to invoke the common titles for these two approaches. And like all compromises, there is something rather flat about it. There are manuscripts and analyses where Patočka proves to be much more interesting and original, precisely where he keeps alive the opposition between these two approaches, and does not try to compromise between them. His best contribution to philosophy was to chart out the territory of this engagement between Husserl and Heidegger, but I am rather skeptical about whether a-subjective phenomenology is a viable alternative, because like all compromises it tries to take the best from the two sides and loses something in the process.

Indeed Patočka shines in his significance as a figure between Husserl and Heidegger. Within this same light another accomplishment which could be attributed to Patočka is his emphasis on the body (Leib), which is not explicitly dealt with in the Heideggerian discourse even though it is a major theme in Husserl’s project. This emphasis on the body is also very vivid in current phenomenological approaches with an eye on establishing inter-disciplinary communication. Keeping in mind that the paper you have presented here was very much within the transcendental perspective, do you think that this perspective can supplement the emphasis on the body in circles where people take their point of departure from the “myth of the non-embodied mind” within an inter-disciplinary context? Can we communicate the transcendental approach such that it would be meaningful within an inter-disciplinary framework which puts an emphasis on the body?

I think one of the truly original contributions of Patočka to this is that he turns to the theme of the body as something that can shed some light on the history of philosophy. The idea is that the body, more often than not, becomes important when philosophers need it to help them understand something else. In order to make a certain advance, in order to understand, for example, the relation between spirit and nature, the relation between experience and consciousness or self-awareness, the theme of the body often plays a key role — and in very different ways. Moreover, it is not limited to one school or camp within philosophy. It is rather something that is shared by all philosophers, which by itself makes it interesting for understanding the history of philosophy. So it is not just that, well, there is this phenomenon called the “body”, and we need to understand it; rather, the body forms a kind of testing ground for a number of philosophical ideas, above all for attempts to link such ideas to larger themes, such as the whole of human life and human existence.

For example, take what you referred to as the “myth of the non-embodied mind”. This move of calling the non-embodied mind a myth is clearly tied to the thesis of the situatedness of consciousness. The question of the body helps to establish a response to the counter-argument, or the question: what can we get from thinking about embodied consciousness that we cannot
get from thinking about the mind in the, let’s say, formal schematic sense? Why not simply outline a kind of formal schema of functions, a kind of machine, and say that captures what we mean by mental activity? Why is it that somehow embodiment offers us another set of intellectual opportunities in order to understand what we mean when we say something is minded, or certain behavioral activity is minded? Why isn’t the machine just as useful in the sense of just giving us a kind of framework for thinking about a number of different types of cognitive phenomena? Husserl’s phenomenology of the body is very interesting within the scope of these questions, because it shows how the body-as-experienced can essentially play the same role that the notion of the body-as-machine played in early modern philosophy: it can help reveal the horizon of a certain conception of mind or consciousness.

Now the other part of your question is more complicated, namely this notion of a transcendental framework, because for Husserl the turn to the body was made precisely in order to understand or to flesh out what he meant by “transcendental consciousness.” So the two are connected, at least for Husserl: the transcendental ego is “embodied”; there is such a thing as a transcendental body. Now whether or not that is a useful notion for other disciplines, for non-philosophical disciplines, is something I would probably doubt. Because I think for Husserl what was important about the theme of the transcendental was that it defined the sense in which phenomenology was more than just a phenomenological psychology, more than just a kind of descriptive eidetics of lived-experience. The theme of the transcendental in Husserl defines the sense in which phenomenology is a philosophy. It is even for Husserl the defining moment of all philosophy, the content of which is not always purely philosophical. Rather, philosophy represents a particular perspective on the body, on the mind, on knowledge, on truth, on logical concepts and foundations, and so on and so forth. As for the question of whether or not this perspective qua philosophical is of use for other disciplines, such a question could be raised only to the extent to which the content of these other discourses is philosophical. And it may be that cognitive science or even cognitive philosophy has no interest in being philosophical, and therefore would have no interest in taking a transcendental perspective. But there are of course a whole series of analyses, the “results” of phenomenological investigations, if you will, which could be very useful in the context of cognitive science.

So do you think that as a phenomenologist operating within the transcendental perspective, one should acknowledge and
come to terms with the inevitable modification her discourse undergoes when it translates itself into the perspectives of other disciplines?

Yes. But also realizing that whatever insights one takes from phenomenology, when they are cut off from the transcendental, philosophical perspective, then a falsification takes place. But it is a necessary one. Whenever one field borrows from another field there is a necessary sort of falsification or translation, if you will, which takes place. And that is what intellectual life is all about, right? If you do not have this flexibility to take an idea, introduce it into another context, and deal with that idea in terms of that other context, if that flexibility is not allowed, then everything turns into a kind of transcendental vacuousness. For me, and I think that this is also true for Husserl, the transcendental really has its traction, really has its impact within the scope of the traditional question of what makes a philosophy a philosophy, and not just another thoughtful reflection on human existence.

Or not another science among sciences.

Right!

Do you think that there is another limitation for the phenomenological project due to its methodology based on reflection? Reflection is supposed to be a purely thematic accomplishment without reconstituting its objective correlate like other independent acts of consciousness. Do you think that there is a limitation here due to reflection’s constitutively modifying character that might have been overlooked by Husserl?

I do not think it was overlooked by Husserl. I think he accepted it, and I think it represents a commitment to the idea that thematic accomplishments, ideas, have a certain priority in our experience. The idea is that somehow an experience really comes into its own to the extent to which it can be expressed. I am not saying that I agree with this! I am just saying that Husserl’s case is not one of having overlooked the fact that our reflection, or the way we thematize things, changes the shape, character, and feel of the experience of experiencing. I think he was very much aware of that, and even saw that effect as an inevitable side-effect of the essentially important accomplishments of understanding. So understanding does change the shape things had had in the state of a pre- or proto-understanding of experience. This is true. But it also raises them to a level of clarity and insight that could not have been the case otherwise. I think that is something he simply accepts head-on and argues for. But nevertheless, he is also the philosopher who does not reduce or restrict his focus only to those elements of our experience that are the products of explicit intellectual thematisation. So he is an intellectualist of a certain sort, that is, he is interested in the way in which intellectual structures are shaped, formed, constituted, and how they belong to the concrete context of human existence. He is interested in the life of concepts, not just concepts. Still, for Husserl, when a concept becomes a concept, there is a certain kind of coming into its own and completion, even perfection; this is a notion he very much defended. There is thus a sense in which he remained a rationalist to the bitter end, in that he valued complete thoughts as opposed to vague feelings.

So the pre-conceptual experience essentially undergoes this intellectualization when it is reflected upon.

Indeed! This is why he is committed to the notion of thinking of phenomenology as a descriptive science. The idea is that a descriptive concept is still a concept; it is an intellectual thematisation, but it is structured and
carried out in such a way that it has enough, as it were, internal nuances to be able to capture the flow and movement of development of an understanding of a particular given in lived-experience. But still, the idea is to capture pre-understanding, to develop a conceptuality, a conceptual language appropriate for it. This was also true of Heidegger in *Being and Time*. The idea was to develop a conceptual language that could capture the richness of a pre-conceptual understanding without, as it were, pretending to somehow replace it. The goal was always to recognize its roots, to recognize its genesis in this pre-intellectual “understanding”. But even in Heidegger, this pre-intellectual understanding is an understanding; a *Verstehen*; it is pre-ontological, to be sure, but still an understanding. It is not something outside of the understanding that possesses a set of rights and values which are independent of understanding. It is still a movement towards understanding. This is the same with Husserl. Of course, in Husserl we have more of an insistence that we should not see the conceptual elaboration of the pre-conceptual understanding as somehow weaker. This is the sense one gets in Heidegger: for him, the moment of clarity is a decision that takes place on the level of pre-understanding; it is not on the same level of theoretical understanding. But for Husserl, that movement to the theoretical is itself a decision, and a completion; and, if you will, it is something that has more value than what was present in the pre-understanding, which is merely an anticipation. In a way, Husserl is much closer to the project of German Idealism than Heidegger.

In your presentation, you told us that this conceptual elaboration is an open-ended project which needs to be supplemented by a historical analysis of tradition and what Husserl calls “poetics” [Dichtung]. Or in your words, “for a history that operates on the level of the descriptive, both the historical reflections on the tradition and the reinvention of the history of philosophy progress in a very particular way. The project here is tentative, the goal elusive — history, poetics, and description, oriented by the instreaming of transcendental inwardness, constitute an intellectual posture that is inherently experimental”. Can you tell us more about this supplementation of description by history and poetics.

In Husserl, this poetization is not the poetization of experience, and it is not a poetics in the Heideggerean sense as something that belongs immediately to the lived-experiences of the current historical situation with respect to the history of Being. So it is not poetics in the sense of a self-articulation of an understanding that is equally original to thinking; nor is the idea that philosophy and poetry are two modes accomplishing the same kind of originary insight. For Husserl, the point is that the theoretical, phenomenological description of lived-experience in its immediacy needs to be supplemented not so much by poetry as a reflection on the history of philosophy. Now the reflection on the history of philosophy can take place only as an interpretation of texts. What we get from such an interpretation of texts can influence and be a factor in our description of our immediate experiences only by, if you will, having a kind of inner poetic dialogue with what we imagine we have glimpsed in pursuing our interpretation of a Kant or a Hegel or whomever. So it is a peculiar kind of historical poetization, one that very much is linked to the necessity of finding some way in which to open up a reading of these texts in order to find common ground with our descriptive terms, which are oriented to the immediacy of the given.
Making these texts ours...

Right! “Ours,” meaning part of the manner in which we approach our own lived-experience. So it is a real supplement, one that is supposed to take place along the lines of a blending of descriptive terms. This rests on a number of insights. One is this idea that our lived-experiences lend themselves to a certain kind of description; they are intrinsically descriptive. Another is this notion of a supplement through a historical reflection on the tradition, culminating in the poetization of the history of philosophy. The idea is that, however much it may lend itself to being described, there is not enough suggestiveness that belongs to our immediate lived-experience that enables us to penetrate it. Thus the need for this supplement of historical tradition and a philosophical literature representing a store of accomplished articulations, or partial articulations, of what is implicit in lived-experience. The philosophical space of the thinker is extended considerably in Husserl’s later works, such as the *Crisis*, to include not a confrontation with the tradition – as in the hermeneutical confrontation of the tradition in Heidegger – but rather an engagement with the achievements of sense implicit in the tradition. This includes an appropriation of the idea of science, as well as a peculiar kind of engagement with philosophical texts, one which is again not meant to somehow situate oneself within history in Heidegger’s sense, or to connect to original experiences, but rather to provide a suggestive basis of inquiry that arises from a reading that mirrors or reflects or somehow has an impact on the way in which we approach lived-experience.

This is actually just a deepening of a mode of reflection Husserl had always engaged in. For example, in a text like the *Ideas*: we begin with a set of traditional prejudices about what we mean when we talk about “thinking,” “knowledge,” “truth,” and so on. Then we break through that to get to an originary experience. The idea in Husserl’s later work is, why don’t we go back and maybe look at one of these misunderstandings in order to catch clues of what we hope to find when we return to lived-experience? The reading of the history of philosophy is one of the central aspects of the *Crisis*, and in a mode very different from that of the *Ideas*, though not wholly incompatible. And what we have in writings that are not in the *Crisis* itself but in working manuscripts is the idea that such a reading can really have impact only if it is given this “poetic” quality. In other words, a factual reconstruction of a theory, from which we can then step back as scientists and judge whether or not it is accurate or inaccurate, valuable or not valuable, is of no use here. We must engage them in a more flexible fashion, in order to make the connection between the ideas articulated in the texts and the experience that we are. Poetry is useful here, because it is something that leaps over gaps, makes connections that one really does not have the right to make,
given what the historicist has established is actually present in the text. So we make these jumps, and jump over these gaps in order to reconnect insights and make them once again alive for us. It sounds somewhat mystical, but I think Husserl very much thought along these lines.

This supplementation of the descriptive by the historical and the poetical can then be seen as a broadening of the horizons of human experience as a theme of phenomenological analysis.

I think you are right to invoke a broadening of horizons. In my paper I mentioned two modes in which this broadening could occur. One is a reflection on tradition as an implicit horizon belonging to the world, in a rather direct sense. It belongs to our cultural surrounding world that we have these traditions. The idea then is to engage them in a reflective manner that brings out the implicit horizons contained within them. The other mode is the poetizing of the history of philosophy. What is interesting here, and unique for Husserl, is that it refers explicitly to the experience of reading a text. This is very different from the first mode; what is of concern here is not so much the text as a document that belongs to a tradition. One could of course read Euclid in a particular way as belonging to a tradition of mathematics. Here the idea is to take seriously the subjective, limited scope of the moment in which one Friday afternoon I am reading through Kant’s *Third Critique* and something hits me. That’s what we need to capture; and I believe that is very much what Husserl is trying to capture. I take myself outside of my normal focus of my experience, and I enter into this other world, one that is a special kind of world. It is a literary world, but from the perspective of that strangely exposed privacy of reading. Of course the world of tradition is also literary, but Husserl’s reflections on tradition in texts such as the *Origin of Geometry* emphasizes its embeddedness in the historical reality of the cultural world. This other world of reading has very different characteristics, a different set of horizons, if you will. Here we really have a kind of intermingling of horizons, if one wants to think of philosophers such as Gadamer in this context. Then the question arises whether or not these horizons can be managed in such a way that they could be as transparent as the transcendental horizon that is usually the main focus in Husserl’s writings, both early and late. Related to this is the idea of a transcendental horizon, which is apodictic and fixed, does not lend itself to a multiplicity of different interpretations. It is something rather direct, while the horizon of this poetics is something rather indirect.

To come back to your earlier question about the transcendental method: if we are thinking about method here – after bringing in all these different notions of horizons into our description – can it really any longer be governed by the central notion of a transcendental subject? I think the role of such a subject is something that is very much open to question in Husserl’s later writings. The result is that one finds a very different kind of method. It is not quite hermeneutics, but it involves for sure a much more elastic conception of theoretical discourse than what one finds in the earlier works. In fact, this elasticity opens up what I think is probably the most important legacy of Husserlian phenomenology: a radical reflection precisely on the meaning of method in contemporary philosophy.

Interviewed by John Noras
Interview with Merold Westphal

Merold Westphal is Distinguished Professor of Philosophy at Fordham University. His interests are far-ranging, but focus on the development of continental philosophy from Kant to the present time. He has published books on Hegel, Kierkegaard and, more recently, on the subject of onto-theology. Professor Westphal received his PhD from Yale, where he subsequently taught for eight years. The full list of his activities, honours and appointments is too lengthy and diverse to give here — he has been President of the Hegel Society of America, President of the Søren Kierkegaard Society, and visiting professor at Harvard Divinity School, to name just three. In March of this year, the Institute of Philosophy had the pleasure of welcoming Professor Westphal to Leuven, in connection with the project of “Religie: Heen/Terug [Religion: There and Back]”. He gave a series of lectures under the theme of “Transcendence and Self-transcendence”.

You might well be described as a “Christian philosopher”. Would you accept this description, and what do you see as the rôle of the Christian philosopher today?

I would certainly accept that description. When I was first introduced to philosophy, the notion was that for the Christian philosopher, philosophy is what it was in the Augustinian, Anselmian, Aquinas traditions — faith seeking understanding. I’ve since come to feel that every philosophy is faith seeking understanding — not necessarily a religious faith, but a pre-understanding of the world, a pre-reflective, pre-philosophical interpretation — and that philosophy is reflection growing out of that, trying to understand it. This occurs in a hermeneutical circle in which those pre-understandings get altered, at the same time as they’re providing a heuristic guide for reflection and interpretation. So I think there’s a sense in which being a Christian philosopher in the mode of faith seeking understanding just means that one is doing what all philosophers do — in a case where the pre-philosophical pre-understanding of the world derives from Christian faith.

Hegel and Kierkegaard are two figures who seem to lurk in the background of much of your thought. Do you regard

Professor Westphal contemplates questions from his audience.
them as closer together in tendency than might at first be expected?

No, I don’t. I think that they are much more an either-or than a both-and. I think that the antipathy between their thought is deep and pervasive. The one sense in which I could agree with the suggestion and the question is that Kierkegaard was immersed in Hegelian thought and took over some elements from it in a very formal way. So, for example, a teleological suspension is structurally the same thing that Hegel calls an *Aufhebung*. You take something that can be seen as standing alone and as self-sufficient; then you re-contextualize it by putting it in a larger frame of reference of which it’s not the organizing principle. You don’t abolish it, but you dethrone it, you relativise it; it continues on but it doesn’t have the final authority and the autonomous meaning that it had at first. So, that’s a very formal kind of an agreement, but at the substantial level, it seems to me, the disagreements are deep and profound.

In regard to the influence of Kierkegaard on your work, you often mention the notion of sin as an “epistemological category”. Does this form part of what you call the hermeneutics of suspicion and/or the hermeneutics of finitude?

First of all, let me say that the notion of sin as an epistemological category comes to me not only from Kierkegaard but from Augustine and Luther and Calvin — and Marx and Nietzsche and Freud, who I take to be the great secular theologians of original sin. Ultimately it comes from St. Paul in the Epistle to the Romans, where he says that in our unrighteousness we suppress the truth. So there’s a broad spectrum of influences there, of which Kierkegaard is indeed an important one. In the terminology I use, that belongs to the hermeneutics of suspicion. We have reason to be suspicious of our belief and practices because in ways that we manage to hide from ourselves, inordinate desires often shape our judgments, distort them and misshape them — in ways that mere finitude doesn’t. We are finite because we are created, and we’re not God; because of those limitations our intellect and our wills can go astray. When we go astray out of finitude, we make bad judgments in the realm of theory and practice. When our will, or our intellect, goes astray by virtue of sin, that’s a different story. Now we have to hide from ourselves the fact that our errors are the product of wrong desires.

In your more recent work, you have dwelt on the issue of Post-modernism, and its potential as a resource for Christian, religious thought. Do you also perceive any latent dangers in post-modern lines of thought?

What I deal with, postmodernism if you like, is an *Aufhebung*, or a teleological suspension. I think some postmodern arguments and analyses are cogent, that they’re not tied to the secular or atheistic context in which one finds them, that they can be lifted out of those contexts and re-planted in a context of Christian thought and provide illumination — can help Christian thinking discover things about itself that it might otherwise overlook, and so forth. So, there is a sense in which I don’t think post-modernism has anything to teach Christianity that it doesn’t already know, in the most fundamental sense. But it has new ways of seeing finitude, and it has new ways of seeing fallenness. Its new vocabularies bring new perspectives that illuminate Christian thinking, and can be a source of renewal and refreshment of it.

Is there any danger in that? Yes, there’s the danger of not continuing to see how deeply secular postmodernism and Christianity disagree on fundamental issues. Finding some
agreements, one might forget about the disagreements. But there’s another perhaps even deeper danger. Post-modernism pretty much defines philosophy as critique. And the danger is that one could come to think that the task of thought is always to tear down. For Heidegger the term is destruction, or for Derrida the term is deconstruction. For a variety of postmodern thinkers the buzz-word is transgression, where that means violating cultural norms of thought and practice that are taken for granted in a particular context. It seems to me that the danger there is failing to think that, in Kierkegaard’s language, thought should be edifying, upbuilding. There’s a positive task of thought that could get overlooked if one focuses too much on post-modernism as critique.

Your new book, upon which the recent lecture series here at Leuven was based, is entitled Transcendence and Self-transcendence. Clearly, these two are related for you. Could this relation be viewed as the relation between anthropology (self-transcendence) and theology (transcendence)? In this relation, do you see a need to balance the two in a “non-reductive” manner?

I’m not comfortable with “anthropology” as a name for thinking about self-transcendence, whereas “theology” does seem to me a good name for thinking about transcendence. The terms I would prefer for thinking about self-transcendence are “ethics” and “spirituality”. The reason I prefer them is that they make clear, in a way that the term “anthropology” does not, that what we are talking about is something I do. We’re talking about a practice, or perhaps something that I undergo. I think self-transcendence is something we do but not something that we are able to do. So there’s a very complex dialectic of activity and passivity in self-transcendence. But the term “ethics” and the term “spirituality” point to that concept of self-transformation which the term “anthropology” doesn’t capture. You talk about whether these need to be balanced in a non-reductive manner. My way of putting it would be that the test of any theory about transcendence would be to ask what it really means in terms of the modes of self-transcendence that it implies. That’s not so much balancing two theories as it is looking at the implications of one theory beyond itself. One could ask, what are the practices already implied and presupposed in this theory? That would be the way I talk about the relationship.

One particularly suggestive line of thought which you pursue is the notion of a “reverse intentionality”. This could be said to “decentre” the self. But do you think there is a legitimate rôle for the self to play in such a phenomenon, for example, putting oneself into a position amenable to such an encounter?

Well, to me the two paradigms of reverse intentionality in modern philosophy are Sartre’s analysis of “the look”, where the intentional arrows come towards me instead of emanating from me, and Levinas’ analysis of “the face to face”, in which I am seen, the face looks at me, the face speaks, I am addressed, and once again, the intentional arrows come towards me. In both of these cases, my identity is defined by an other than myself. I think that both Sartre and Levinas understand that before you even raise the question of a legitimate rôle for the self to play in such a phenomenon, it’s simply a matter of fact that inevitably the self plays such a rôle. The question is simply what is the self’s rôle. When the arrows of reverse intentionality are shot at me, when the gaze of the other falls on me, when the voice of the other addresses me and puts me in question, what do I do? And, as is well known, in Sartre’s analysis, I defend
myself, I resist this with all my powers, and I either try to look back and objectify, or I try to seduce that look and put it in the service of my fundamental project, so precisely as to neutralize the alterity of that look. He doesn’t purport to be writing an ethics; he doesn’t say that that’s legitimate or illegitimate. It happens. I say, that’s a deep and profound analysis of the meaning of original sin. I want to be a law unto myself, I want to neutralize the alterity of any look that comes towards me, whether it be God’s look, or the look of my neighbour.

Levinas, on the other hand, is doing ethics, and he acknowledges the Sartrean fact that we don’t always welcome the other, but he suggests as legitimate the rôle, the concept, of welcoming — and eventually develops that into the more radical notion of substitution and hostage. Following Levinas’ lead, Derrida explores the concepts of hospitality and forgiveness, as well as that of democracy, as other terms for the welcoming that is involved. He has some nice things to say about the hospitality that doesn’t merely welcome the one I invite, but precisely welcomes the one I didn’t invite — which is the one that both Sartre and Levinas are talking about.

So I think that’s where I want to go with the question what is the legitimate response to an inverse intentionality. It’s the willingness to be decentred. That, it seems to me, can come in two stages. There’s the sort of Kantian stage where I have a sense that it’s my duty, and so I grit my teeth and welcome the other, in a way that the other doesn’t perceive as very welcoming. Moral or spiritual maturity, I think, takes you beyond that to the place where you find your joy in welcoming the other. That, I think, is what it means to love the Lord your God, and your neighbour as yourself.

Although you discuss the concept of onto-theology at some length in your work, it is remarkable that you are critical of an indiscriminate application of the category. Notably, you except figures such as Aquinas and Augustine (and possibly Anselm). Does this put you at odds with the so-called mainstream post-modern tradition?

I think probably so. Heidegger himself includes the scholastic tradition, which would include Aquinas, and perhaps Augustine and Anselm, though they are not central to his critique. But I think he’s mistaken to include them by his own criteria. I think if you take his concept, as he defines it, and apply it to those thinkers, you discover that it doesn’t fit. And I think most people who use the term follow Heidegger in making that mistake, and often do so without paying any very close attention to the details of the concept as Heidegger defines it. They use it just as a kind of generic term of abuse for positions they don’t like, theism in particular.

Is “Natural Theology” still a viable option for modern thinkers? If so, is it in need of some modification and/or re-contextualization?

If I wanted to be picky I would say do you mean modern or post-modern thinkers. But I won’t do that. I don’t find myself tempted to engage in natural theology, and frankly I’m pretty suspicious of the project in a number of ways. However some of my best friends do engage in it, people who are better philosophers than I am, and I don’t find myself wanting to say that they shouldn’t. Let me put it this way. I find myself much more drawn to a Kierkegaardian type of project of showing how Christianity is unreasonable, by showing how authentic Christian faith challenges and does not conform to the patterns of thought and practice which our culture uses to define reason. I think what’s called “reason” tends to be the ideology of the
age. The project of showing that Christianity is reasonable always runs the risk of showing that it conforms to the ideas of the age, and thus of being an instrument in the creation of what Kierkegaard calls Christendom. One can take that seriously into consideration I think, and still say, well look, this theistic way of looking at things makes sense. And doesn’t it make better sense than this or that alternative — for example, naturalism, materialism, atheistic humanism? For example, someone might be impressed, as Derrida is, with the Levinasian notion of an unconditional authority of the other, of an unconditional obligation I have to the other, just by virtue of the other’s being there, prior to any desires of mine or any consent of mine. Suppose someone says that that seems right, that rings a bell. It seems to me that the natural theologian can come along and say, “I agree”. And isn’t it the case that this phenomenon that we agree upon makes more sense in a theistic context than it does in a context in which we are the products of a blind evolutionary force that has no moral significance at all and is completely indifferent to moral values. Wouldn’t it make more sense if the universe at its deepest level of reality was already love?

It often seems to be a commonplace that post-modern thinkers offer a “diagnosis” of the spiritual ills of the present day, sometimes along with a “remedy” of sorts, at least a remedy for “better thinking” about spirituality/religion/the human condition. Though it is doubtless a complex issue, would you care to comment?

I think that post-modern thinkers have taken over from the Enlightenment tradition the notion of philosophy as critique, and I think they are often very perceptive in offering critiques of various aspects of present-day culture — the worship of science and technology, the vacuousness of popular entertainment culture, the role of the media in creating an artificial world and so forth. I think in that respect, there’s something important they have to contribute, and I think that it’s precisely for that reason that part of the major negative reaction to post-modernism comes from people who realize that their toes are being stepped on and they don’t like it. When you talk about offering a remedy of sorts, I think the story is a little bit different. It doesn’t seem to me that secular post-modernism has much that you could call gospel or salvation. They’re often very good at pointing out what’s wrong with us, and here again it may be that the secular theologians of original sin sometimes have a deeper understanding of human sinfulness than many theologians. But in terms of a remedy, it seems to me that the closest thing to a remedy that post-modernism has had to offer is to draw on Levinas and an ethic of absolute obligation, categorical imperative, and so forth, which turns out to be — I’ll put this in theological terms — a theory of law without grace, a theory of command without promise, a theory of imperatives without empowerment. And, I go back to Kierkegaard’s Works of Love, where at the very beginning he says, “I’m going to talk about love, but how would love be possible if You [God] weren’t love, if we weren’t related to You, so that Your love is flowing through us.” It seems to me that anything that wasn’t at least an approximation of something like that would hardly merit the notion of a remedy.

Interviewed by Andrew Cummings
Interview with Kurt Salamun

Professor Salamun visited the Institute to give a Thursday Night Lecture entitled “Karl Jaspers’s Conception of the Meaning of Life”. Professor Salamun is President of the Institute for Philosophy at the Karl-Franzens University of Graz in Austria. He pays special attention in his work to politics, the critique of ideology, and philosophical anthropology (especially of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries). He is also editor of a series about the Philosophy of Karl Popper and Critical Rationalism. His numerous publications include several books on Karl Jaspers and Karl Popper. In 1987, Professor Salamun founded the Austrian Karl Jaspers Society and he is still the editor of the yearbook of the same association.

To begin on a more personal note, in 1987 you founded the Austrian Karl Jaspers Society. Could you name some of the reasons that directly or indirectly motivated you to do so?

An early motivation for my interest in the philosophy of Jaspers came from my high school teacher in philosophy. He taught us basic ideas of the philosophies of Immanuel Kant, Karl Jaspers, and Nicolai Hartmann. I was very much impressed by Jaspers’s philosophy of communication at that time. When I was studying philosophy at university, I decided to write my doctoral thesis on Jaspers’s idea of realizing true selfhood in communication. But at that period of my philosophical development I was under the influence of analytic philosophy. Therefore, my doctoral thesis became a very narrow-minded critique of Jaspers, from a positivistic point of view. Many years later I learned to appreciate Jaspers’s philosophy because of its broad perspective. It entails so many interesting ideas concerning different fields of philosophy – like philosophy of science, metaphysics, and philosophy of religion, philosophy of politics, ethics and philosophical anthropology. When I founded the Austrian Karl Jaspers Society, I mainly wanted to get in contact with Jaspers researchers all over the world by organizing symposia, and to edit a periodical. The latter is our Yearbook of the Austrian Karl Jaspers Society, for publication of results of research about Jaspers from around the world. It is still the only periodical dedicated to
research on Jaspers that has remained continually in publication of Jaspers-research, besides the publication of the Jaspers Society of Japan, *Communication*, which comes out in Japanese. My wife and I – my wife is also a philosopher and is co-editor of our yearbook – were amazed to discover something after the foundation of our Jaspers society. Namely, we found out that there was a direct relation between the young Jaspers and our university in Graz. During the first two decades of the twentieth century, a famous scholar for criminal law was a professor in Graz; his name was Hans Gross. He edited a journal for criminal anthropology, and in this journal Jaspers published the main parts of his doctoral thesis on *Heimweh und Verbrechen* for the first time, in 1908.

Besides being a professor with a lifelong interest in Karl Jaspers, you are also a distinguished scholar of Karl Popper. This might strike one as a rather strange combination. Have you ever experienced the combination that way, or would you argue that their philosophical projects enrich or complete each other?

Yes indeed, at a first view you will not recognize any similarities between these prominent philosophers of the twentieth century. Many contemporary philosophers know Jaspers only as a philosopher of existence, communication, religion, transcendence, the encompassing, an Axial age thesis in world history, and so on. But it seems to me necessary also to study thoroughly his writings about politics. We could say that he published these writings in reaction to his shocking experience with Nazi terrorism in Germany, after the Second World War. He wrote *The Question of German Guilt* and *Reason and Anti-Reason in our Time* and *The Origin and Goal of History* and, last but not least, *The Atom Bomb and the Future of Man*. In these writings, we find elaborated basic liberal thought patterns that are also dominant in Popper’s social philosophy – as we find demonstrated in his famous book *The Open Society and Its Enemies*. By criticizing totalitarian thought patterns in politics and dogmatic rational tendencies in conceptions of the sciences, both philosophers appeal to an anti-dogmatic, anti-totalist, anti-monist and anti-fundamentalist concept of reason. And both philosophers point out as a regulative idea, in the sense of Immanuel Kant, a political ideal that should guide political behaviour and activities. Jaspers calls it the idea of democracy, while Popper speaks of it as the idea of an open society. I think that the moral and political framework of both thinkers is a specific liberal ethos of humanity.

Although international interest in Jaspers’s thought has never faded, it has never been widespread or very influential. Do you think it is possible to give an explanation of this historical fact, and to do so without mentioning the name of Martin Heidegger?

In my opinion, one basic reason for the lack of influence of Jaspers’ss philosophy can be found in his genuine idea of the task and method of philosophy. Jaspers rejected philosophical positions that intend to create philosophical systems, philosophical doctrines, and philosophical traditions with fixed ideas. For him, a philosopher must be wary of manipulatively indoctrinating other persons. Therefore, the role of philosophy is to stimulate personal self-reflection and to appeal to individuals in an indirect way to accept certain world-views and virtues in their own lives and personal relations. Because of this opinion, Jaspers refused to be the founder of a philosophical tradition and he also refused to have disciples in the scientific community of philosophers. Another reason
for the insufficient reception of his philosophy may be a historical fact. Jaspers left Germany to Switzerland after the Second World War. As you know, he was called to the University of Basle in 1948. As a consequence, his philosophy was not received and discussed in German seminars and universities. As Otto Friedrich Bollnow told me, when I visited him once in Tübingen, nearly all German philosophers and many other intellectuals in Germany were highly disappointed with Jaspers. They supposed that he was not ready to participate with them in a life of scarcity in post-war Germany. They thought that he left Germany for the sake of a better life in a country of wealth, with plenty of food, and so forth. But these people did not know the true reason why Jaspers left Germany. Part of it was, as Hans Saner — Jaspers’s last personal assistant in Basle — told me, that Jaspers’s wife still had nightmares of being deported with him to an extermination camp by the Nazis. As you know, Gertrud Jaspers was a woman of Jewish origin, and because of this they were in great danger of being deported to such a camp during the Nazi régime.

If we do mention Heidegger and Jaspers together, we can point to their initial bond based on a shared dissatisfaction with academic philosophy in the first decades of the twentieth century, which was predominantly Neo-Kantian. But as each developed his thinking, they found themselves on different grounds. In your assessment, how well did they understand each other’s views on what philosophy is and can do?

Yes indeed, you are right that both were opponents of the dominant philosophical school of those days, Neo-Kantianism. Jaspers himself had great troubles with his colleague Heinrich Rickert at Heidelberg University. This leading Neo-Kantian thinker never respected him as a genuine philosopher. As you know, at the beginning of his career Jaspers had no experience in teaching philosophy. He started his career as a psychiatrist and psychologist. He shared with Heidegger not only an opposition to Neo-Kantianism, but also an appreciation of Kierkegaard and Nietzsche. But later on we find a comment in Jaspers’s philosophical memoir, that he could not recognize the dominant ideas of Kierkegaard and Nietzsche in Heidegger’s interpretation. He claimed that Heidegger was incorporating them too much into the framework of his own philosophizing. Generally speaking, neither understood the philosophical intentions of the other. Jaspers was deeply disappointed by Heidegger’s misunderstanding of his book Psychology of World-views, which Heidegger reviewed. I suppose that he never read Heidegger’s Being and Time carefully, because he rejected Heidegger’s effort to develop a fundamental ontology. Jaspers rejected all sort of ontologies because of his opinion that these lead to dogmatism and to rigid isolations of the transcendental aspects of Being. After Jaspers’s death, Hans Saner collated some fragments of Jaspers’s unpublished writings into the book Notizen zu Martin Heidegger. There we find a harsh critique of Heidegger, especially of the verbal magic mysticism of his philosophizing, the emptiness of his conception of Being, his lack of an ethos of humanity, his ambition to become the leader of the leader (Adolf Hitler), and so on. After the rise of the Nazi régime in Germany, which Heidegger welcomed at the beginning, the two philosophers never met each other again, although Heidegger had been a frequent guest of Jaspers and his wife in Heidelberg during the 1920s.

I must not forget to mention another piece of information concerning the relation between Jaspers and Heidegger. Around ten years ago,
a document was found that made it obvious that Jaspers declined to let Heidegger become a teacher again at a German university just after the Second World War. Jaspers argued that Heidegger could endanger German youth so long as he did not openly declare his conversion from sympathy for the Nazi ideology.

Two of the most important concepts of Jaspers's philosophy, are Vernunft, (Reason) and Existenz. In the twentieth century, other philosophers also dealt with Existenz, but none read Existenz through the eyes of Reason. What do you consider to be the greatest merits of Jaspers's twentieth-century philosophy of Reason?

In my view, Jaspers's conception of Reason, besides all the ambiguities of this term, is highly normative. He combined moral values or virtues, which are significant for his concept of Existenz – that is, his ideas of existential self-realization in boundary situations and in existential communication – with his concept of Reason. Importantly, a consequence of this is that this kind of Reason becomes a strict opponent of those conceptions of reason that in our days are severely criticised as mere technical rationality or technical reason, instrumental reason, mere scientific reason, etc. Jaspers's concept of Reason implies an ethos of humanity, as I mentioned before.

An additional remark is that the normative component of Jaspers's concept of Reason had an important influence on the reception of his philosophy in Japan after the Second World War. As a Japanese colleague and member of the Jaspers Society of Japan has written in an article in our Yearbook, Jaspers's idea of an “existential Reason” was highly welcomed by Japanese philosophers as a critical counterpoint to the mere technical Reason that was dominant in the military ideology of the aggressive super-

power of Japan during the Second World War.

The notion of Transzendenz is one of the hardest to grasp in Jaspers's thought. In your own work on Jaspers, you want to make explicit the implicit values and moral standards of his writings. In what way do you see this as contributing to the understanding of Transzendenz and of its place in Jaspers's writings?

Jaspers stresses again and again the absolute singularity of every human being, as well as the moral dimension of human reason. But his liberal ethos of humanity has nothing to do with those versions of liberalism that have a strong tendency to absolutise individual freedom, or that are grounded on an atheistic denial of God. In Jaspers's view, self-realization as Existenz and the experience of existential freedom are necessarily bound to the experience of Transcendence. For him, individual freedom is not the product of an omnipotent self, but rather a gift from Transcendence. One dominant function of Transcendence in Jaspers's philosophy is to prevent any over-estimation of human capacities. It's an appeal to modesty. The self has to accept that its freedom is not the result of its own efforts but is dependent upon an uncontrollable and unmanageable dimension of Being. Jaspers does not view religious faith in atheistic terms. Rather, he takes a critical position against any concept of revelation that would give an objectively guaranteed proof of the existence of God. Transcendence is a dimension of Being that is in a radical sense unknowable. Jeanne Hersch, the most prominent female disciple of Jaspers besides Hannah Arendt, interprets Jaspers's concept of Transcendence as a deus absconditus.

In the article he wrote for a recent book on Jaspers and the history of philosophy, Merold Westphal detects the now
familiar themes of postmodernism (such as the stubborn Other to Reason, the “deconstruction” of the philosophical tradition) as already present in Jaspers. To what extent would you agree with his designation of Jaspers as a “non-secular post-modernist”?

It is quite easy to find similarities between basic tendencies in Jaspers’s philosophy and some of the basic ideas of post-modernists. I have already spoken about some of Jaspers’s fundamental philosophical attitudes. These are also fundamental elements – a strict anti-dogmatism, anti-monism, anti-fundamentalism, and anti-totalism – of his philosophizing. In close connection with these elements we find a deep mistrust for the spirit of mere rationalism. On this point Jaspers was influenced by Nietzsche’s critique of scientific rationality and by Max Weber’s warnings against rationalising all dimensions of life, in his theory of the general process of demythologization and rationalisation of more and more dimensions of life.

In his youth, Jaspers appreciated Max Weber very much as an admirable person and a great philosophical thinker. He dedicated to him his book Psychology of World-views, from 1919. There we find an idea which has some aspects in common with the idea of deconstructionism of the postmodernists. Jaspers argues there that worldviews are necessary conditions of human world orientation and emotional stability. Everybody needs a categorical framework, a set of rational schemes and categories for structuring the overwhelming complexity of the world. But worldviews tend to become rational systems or iron cages of technical and instrumental rationality that prevent us from existential self-reflection and individual self-determination. For Jaspers, a “rational system” implies a priori strong tendencies to dogmatization, stagnation, rigidity and narrow-mindedness. It restricts creativity, open-mindedness, spontaneous impulses, and free and undetermined activities. It is up to a hermeneutic psychology, or, in the later period of Jaspers’s thinking, up to philosophy, to break up the iron cages of rationality for the sake of giving way to the perpetual dynamic forces of life that are indispensable for realizing true humanity.

But this interpretation of Jaspers shows only one perspective of his philosophy. On the other hand, there are many good reasons to see Jaspers’s philosophy as a continuation of the tradition of Enlightenment – Enlightenment in the sense of Immanuel Kant and Max Weber – but in a revised, new and modern shape. I am sorry that I can’t explicate this perspective on Jaspers in more detail now.

Interviewed by Annelies Jansoone

Interview with Pavlos Kontos

Professor Pavlos Kontos visited the Institute in May, to take part in a conference on “Philia in Aristotle’s Philosophy”. On the 12th of May, as a guest of the Husserl-Archives, the Centre for Phenomenology, and the De Wulf-Mansion Centre, he gave a paper entitled “Phenomenology of Moral Action. From Aristotle to Husserl”. Besides the publications mentioned in the following interview, Professor Kontos is currently writing a book about Kant and morality. One of the first to establish a foothold for Phenomenology in Greece, he is currently a professor at the University of Patras.

To begin, could you tell us, how does it stand with philosophy in modern Greece? What is the current philosophical climate there? Could you characterize the prevailing issues and debates in contemporary Greek thought?

Unfortunately, phenomenology is not the most powerful philosophical movement in Greece. Rather, nowadays you have a lot of Greeks who studied in the United States and England and who do analytic philosophy. I think they prevail now in the Greek universities. We also have many scholars of ancient Greek philosophy, who work hard on Aristotle, Plato, and Plotinus. We have a few people who teach hermeneutics, one teacher of phenomenology, and some people who specialize in the Frankfurt school. I think those are the main topics.

Unfortunately, phenomenology does not have a long-established tradition in Greece. I am the first person to have procured a post in phenomenology amongst all the Greek universities. The most serious problem is that we do not have enough translations of phenomenological works. I have translated Husserl’s Cartesian Meditations and The Origin of Geometry. However, I cannot be solely occupied with doing translations, as it would take up too much of my time. I hope that some students of mine will pursue doctoral studies in phenomenology, but it does not go without saying that they would do so, because they do not always know enough German. I also hope that those teaching hermeneutics – we have two or three good people who teach hermeneutics – could help phenomenology to gain a stronger foothold in Greek universities.

If you could anticipate the reception of phenomenology in Greece, do you think that the Greeks will have their own particular imprint on phenomenology, as the French and the Americans have had? Could you anticipate what the Greek impact on phenomenology might be?

It is hard to say. The Greeks are good at reading ancient Greek texts, and so they could offer a fruitful understanding of the debts phenomenology owes to ancient philosophy. The Greek contribution could concern the relations between Aristotle and Heidegger, between Aristotle and Brentano, and topics on ethics or metaphysics. I think that if they have something new to offer to the phenomenological movement, it will be a matter of treating this relation between ancient Greek philosophy and phenomenology. Moreover, this topic seems to be à la mode, and yet it has not yet been investigated sufficiently. This is because anyone who has tried to find a relationship between ancient Greek philosophy and phenomenology has been trapped by the Heideggerian analysis. They seem to stop there, and do not try to find other solutions for a possible relationship between
ancient Greek philosophy and phenomenology. We may hope that Greek scholars will find new ways of understanding ancient Greek topics from a phenomenological point of view.

Turning to your own work — in one of your more recent works (L'action morale chez Aristote [Paris, PUF (Thémis), 2002], you work out a distinctly phenomenological interpretation of Aristotle. What, in your view, makes a phenomenological approach particularly well-suited for such an endeavor? Is it for you a matter of how phenomenology, for instance as conceived by Husserl, is particularly concerned with, as you put it, “the break-down (répartition) of experience into different domains (regions), each having its own norm of evidence”? Would you thus see yourself as standing shoulder to shoulder with Sokolowski, for whom a central task of the (phenomenological) philosopher is that of making distinctions?

You will have noted that Sokolowski wrote an introduction to my book. I am well-acquainted with his work and have a great appreciation for it. In response to your question, it seems to me that if we can work out a new phenomenology of morals, a new ethics based on phenomenology, it has to be based on the experience we have of moral action. Thus, Husserl can be of great help concerning this topic, because in his Wertlehre, in the chapter on willing, he has tried to describe what the moral experience is about. I think that Aristotle offers something similar to what a phenomenologist aspires to, namely a description of moral action whereby he tries to differentiate moral action from all the other kinds of activities. If we may refer to Sokolowski’s claim about distinctions, we may say that the Aristotelian work on moral action depends on these phenomenological distinctions. How can I understand what moral action is? I can understand it only if I distinguish it from other kinds of activities. I think phenomenology clearly finds a basis in the Nicomachean Ethics. It seems that Aristotle was a phenomenologist avant la lettre.

To be honest, I have some difficulties with Sokolowski’s project, but for the most part I am in agreement with him. This is not the time to get into the differences between my own project and Sokolowski’s, but I hold him to be one of the few scholars working in the phenomenological tradition who has tried to understand Aristotle without using Heidegger. For me, that is an important aspect of his work.
As a side note to the last question — for someone situated outside the phenomenological perspective, for instance for someone with a certain pragmatic point of view, this task of making distinctions could seem to be an endless, and thus somewhat futile, enterprise, since it would seem forever to forestall taking action. What we need — one might claim — rather than more distinctions, more terms and jargon, or more complex world-views, is to the contrary more courage and commitment to action in the face of the exigent matters-at-hand. How would you respond to this idea that a phenomenological “prolegomenon to any future ethics” (ibid., p. 162) may contribute little to the actual crucial instant in which action must be taken?

I would only like to offer my personal opinion concerning this question, and I am not sure whether my standpoint would be shared by other phenomenologists. I do not really think phenomenology is obliged to offer something concerning real action. I am not of the view that phenomenology has to be engaged in certain kinds of political or ethical problems. I understand Husserl’s work on the description of phenomena in the following sense: the only thing phenomenology can do is simply describe moral experience without taking up any sort of engagement with it. I would thus say to the pragmatist that he can use phenomenology in order to understand moral experience, after which he can go on with his own perspective. However, I believe that phenomenological description will at any rate be useful for the pragmatist to evaluate and to work out his own project.

I am not sure whether other phenomenologists would agree with me here. Nevertheless, I do not think that phenomenology can be engaged in current political or ethical problems. It may have to take certain current problems into consideration, but it cannot propose any particular solutions to such problems. Hence, it remains a transcendental philosophy. Transcendental philosophy cannot give tangible solutions.

Something else we can take note of here is that other people might try to change the framework according to which the tasks of phenomenology are conceived, for instance by claiming that phenomenology must pertain to human existence. If phenomenology is an ontology, it describes moral experience. In that case, it is not about existence. It is not about the Hegelian design. It is only about a certain experience, namely moral experience. Nothing changes, no matter whether we speak about perception or moral experience; it is one and the same subject. In the one case, you have perception of particulars or things, while in the other you deal with the perception of moral particulars. From my point of view, nothing changes concerning this perspective. If you understand phenomenology as a kind of ontology — and I think that both Heidegger and Husserl ascribe to this thesis, i.e., that phenomenology is always identified with ontology — then moral experience is not an existential matter. Otherwise, it is very difficult to avoid the Heideggerian distinction between the authentic and the inauthentic self. Yet that is a very dangerous distinction.

In your work, issues concerning perception hold a central importance. There seems to have been a certain evolution in your thinking. In your earlier work, in dialogue with Heidegger, you appeared to be more interested in how the workings of our perceptions exemplify our involvement with, and indeed subjection to, the structures of meaning with which the world around us is imbued. More recently, however, your attention has been drawn to phronesis and its pertinence to the task, in your words, of “each ethical community in particular to submit to a phenomenological analysis the apparent opponents (adversaires présomptifs) of the ethical sphere belonging to its époque”. (ibid.,
Loosely speaking then, in the latter work, perception is something, perhaps like a skill, to be developed on our part, whereas in the former work, it pertains to a passive and ineluctable structure of our existence. Has there been a shift in your interests, and if so how would you attempt to show a guiding thread between them?

I hadn't given much thought to whether or not there has been such a shift, which isn't to say you are wrong to point it out. If I had to, I might explain it as follows: in my earlier work, on perception in Heidegger (D'une phénoménologie de la perception chez Heidegger [Dordrecht, Kluwer, 1996]), the issue was the perception of things, that is, Wahrnehmung or, in Greek, aisthesis. Because of that, I had no other solution than to understand perception as a mixture of spontaneity and passivity, since the perception of external beings necessarily has a component of passivity. In my latter work, concerning Aristotelian ethical or moral perception as prudence or phronesis, the issue was how to describe the spontaneity of the agent as a moral agent. So, perhaps, I might grant that I have not paid as much attention, as I had in the past, to the passivity of moral experience. And I may indeed have to start to work on this, because even in moral experience we can suppose that there is something like passivity. However, my real problem in my more recent work has been how to describe the spontaneity – understood here in Kantian terms – of the moral agent. I have not yet been concerned with the other side of the coin.

There has also been another sort of shift in my work, which does not concern its content as much as its form. With respect to my first work, you will find that it is really quite difficult to read. It uses a lot of Heideggerian terms and a lot of citations and employs difficult arguments concerning special usages of those Heideggerian terms. I do not think it is a very reader-friendly book. By contrast, my more recent work is quite reader-friendly. Not for everyone, of course. Nevertheless, a student of philosophy, even if he has had little or no introduction to the phenomenological tradition, could in my view still follow the course of the argument. The two books are thus different in two different ways.

Does this shift reflect a move on your part away from a predominantly Heideggerian phenomenology?

On the one hand, I would say I am indebted to Professor Taminiaux for this change in the form of my work. Professor Taminiaux always writes in a reader-friendly manner. When he read my doctoral thesis, he was not satisfied with its form. He was satisfied with the content, but not with its form. He persuaded me that I had to change my writing style.

On the other hand, to come back to the problem of moral passivity, there is a kind of passivity in moral experience which seems to concern the dispositions of the agent. The Greek word Aristotle uses here is exis, disposition. If we want to analyze the passivity of moral perception, we have to analyze the relation between this perception – phronesis – and the virtues or dispositions of the agent. I have not yet done this work. I do not know if I will do it later, but you will not find it in my book.

Also in L'action morale chez Aristote, you seem to present a phenomenological understanding of friendship as an alternative to the radical conceptions of otherness which predominate contemporary phenomenological debates on morality and intersubjectivity. In what ways can a conception of the other as friend both highlight and rectify the failings of conceiving of our fellow human beings, with whom we share the world, in their radical otherness?
It is correct to point out that there is a difference between my own understanding of friendship as alterity and other phenomenological understandings of alterity. Admittedly, in the phenomenological movement, Levinas’s perspective is quite dominant concerning the issue of alterity. There is a sharp distinction between Aristotle’s and Levinas’s ethics. If you choose to work on Aristotle, you cannot go along with Levinas. They have diametrically opposed models concerning alterity. This is not an opportune time to get into why I prefer Aristotle’s model, but suffice it to say that for me alterity has to be based on equality. Levinas’s model does not permit this.

Secondly, I think that friendship as Aristotle conceives it gives us a model of alterity which permits us to have privileged relations with someone else, without forgetting our obligations toward all other human beings. Hence, we have – between us, for instance – a privileged relationship of friendship, but that does not mean that we do not respect others. I would like to find a way of putting Kantian respect at the center of Aristotelian friendship. In this way, we would avoid the problem of universalism, which we see in Kantian ethics, and at the same time we would avoid the problem of relativism that one might find in certain forms of Gadamerian ethics. This is difficult, but for me remains the best model on which work can be done.

Unfortunately, the three volumes of the Husserliana on intersubjectivity do not offer much material concerning the moral problem of alterity. You might be able to find a few passages concerning moral relationships, but you won’t find much more than that. Moreover, in Heidegger’s work, you will hardly find anything said about friendship. I think there are only two passages in Heidegger’s Marburg lectures which concern friendship in Aristotle, and that is unfortunate. I think a new phenomenological work on Aristotelian friendship is called for, in order to furnish us with a new phenomenological model of alterity. Let me add, lastly, that on this last point as well I am in total agreement with Sokolowski. He has done similar such work and has written a wonderful article on friendship and moral action in Aristotle.

*Interviewed by Basil Vassilicos*
A Conversation with Tom Rockmore

Professor Rockmore visited K.U. Leuven on May 12, 2004, in order to give a lecture on “Hegel, Idealism and Analytic Philosophy”, which is also the title of a forthcoming book. Professor Rockmore received his Ph.D from Vanderbilt University and presented a Mémoire d’habilitation à diriger des recherches at the Université de Poitiers in 1974, and is currently Professor of Philosophy at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh. His primary research interests focus on German Idealism, political philosophy, and Theory of Knowledge. Throughout his lengthy career, Professor Rockmore has written and edited prodigiously. His most recent publications include such titles as: Hegel, Idealism, and Analytic Philosophy, On Foundationalism: A Strategy for Metaphysical Realism, and The Philosophical Challenge of September 11.

Note: The original interview took place over two hours and has here been abridged in the interests of brevity and clarity. It began with some small talk and some of Professor Rockmore’s personal reminiscences about his own philosophical career. The substance of the interview begins not with a question, but with some of Professor Rockmore’s general remarks on the lecture he was to give the next day:

Since people don’t know the history of philosophy very well, they don’t understand the problems that Hegel thought he was dealing with. I think this is especially true of the analytic approaches to Hegel, where people tend to despise the history of philosophy.

(When I was a graduate student I took a course with someone in analytic philosophy who had the view that the tradition had come into being in 1940.)...One of the things that I like about Hegel is that whatever he’s writing about he’s mastered the extant literature. Imagine what he must have read to arrive at the views he holds. He’s an exception to the analytic view that the history of philosophy is irrelevant. Quine summarizes this view by saying that people go into philosophy for two reasons: there are those that are interested in the history of philosophy and those that are interested in philosophy. I mean, that kind of view has the effect of disqualifying whatever you can do.

Do you think that one can go to the other extreme as well, neglecting philosophy for the sake of the history of philosophy?

It seems to me now [politically speaking] that you have to take into account the changes in the world since 2001. Now I think that one of the results is that most of liberal philosophy turns out to be irrelevant.

Irrelevant?

Irrelevant. I’ll give you an example. It’s widely agreed that the single most important book in English, in political philosophy, in the last hundred years is by Rawls. I put it to you that this book has no possible relevance to the problems we’re facing now. Political philosophy has to be retooled, in a way, to come to grips with this [new problem.]

Sometimes I have the intuition that traditional political categories have shifted, and that traditional notions of “right and left” tend to fail to describe more recent phenomena.

Of course.

The problem, of course, is then that many political actors and thinkers still operate as if these categories applied.
Well, Rawls is operating from the view that you have to do some things from a position of force, because you own all the resources, only if it makes your position better. That won’t solve it. That’s part of the problem.

It seems to me that the very idea of starting in the original position where the relevant facts are unknown describes what philosophers mainly do. A philosopher picks out what’s wrong with philosophy whereas the problem is to find a way to come to grips with the real world, and that involves as much knowledge as we can get to find out what the problem is that we need to analyze. I hold that philosophers have specific techniques which they can bring to bear, but the only way to do this without spinning in the void is to know something about what you’re supposed to analyze.

As opposed to an artificially abstract approach? You give the example of Searle in your book… [Hegel’sCircular Epistemology]

Page 8. He [Searle] says he doesn’t know anything about [the history of the concept of] intentionality and it’s not relevant. This portrays a certain view of how we should go about it [philosophy]. It’s terribly misconceived.

“Those who cannot learn from history are doomed to repeat it”?

You know, Hegel had the further view that “The only thing anyone learned from history is that no one ever learned anything from history.” I think that philosophy often misrepresents itself in pretending to reach truths beyond time and place, unrelated to the here and now, but precisely indispensable to the good life. That seems to me mistaken. I think that philosophy is itself part of the world in which we live. It never entirely leaves it behind. Philosophy can only claim to be relevant by coming to grips with the world. But not by trying to leave it behind. That’s a mistake.

Are you saying that philosophy cannot ever be an end in itself?

Well, I think it’s a misrepresentation of what philosophy is and can be, because even if you decide to leave the world behind and shut yourself off in an ivory tower, you are defined by turning your back on the world which, then, you can never leave behind. But I think that we need to recover a relevance for philosophy …. There used to be a view that philosophy was indispensable for the good life. Who believes that now?

I think that philosophers take themselves too seriously and that they have to find a way of bringing their insights to bear…Now I hold the view which I attribute to people like Fichte and Dewey—namely, that philosophical questions arise in the real world in which we live and philosophers address these in theoretical ways, but they’re trying to solve what are ultimately practical problems. But to think that theory itself is relevant is a mistake. Now Dewey says that philosophy begins in the stresses and strains of existence. (Reconstruction in Philosophy, 1920). Now I think if that’s not true, it should be true.

NOTE: Professor Rockmore and the interviewer here talk about different editions of Hegel’s works, and about Hegel scholarship in general, at which point Professor Rockmore interjects:

I am not really a Hegel scholar. I am interested in certain key ideas which I’m trying to figure out. What my project really is is to try to understand the evolution of the problem of knowledge after Kant. I don’t share the view that the problem of knowledge comes to an end with Kant. I think it’s just beginning. I
think these people like Fichte and Hegel are all looking at various aspects of the problem of knowledge and I’m trying to understand this. So I have written a series of books, all of which focus on various aspects of this… The first book I published was on Fichte and Marx [Fichte, Marx, and the German Philosophical Tradition, 1980] and I raised this notion of singularity and I thought that I found Hegel’s view. Hegel gets it from Fichte, and he works it out – the view that this logical argument is always circular in some way. I’ve written another book on Constructivism [Forthcoming] because I think that all these approaches coming out of Kant are constructivist. I have another unpublished book on “idealism”. Everybody uses the term idealism but nobody knows what it means. My paper tomorrow [“Hegel, Idealism, and Analytic Philosophy”] will in part have something to do with this. I have a book coming out in the fall on this topic. [Yale University Press; December, 2004] and have just finished going over it. It was the longest editing job I have ever been connected with. But there I am interested in the way these analytic philosophers try to come to grips with Hegel. I think it’s good that they’re doing it, but I think it’s bad that they’re doing it under false pretenses.

Under false pretenses? How so?

Well, I think that analytic people who are interested in Hegel come to this with many of the characteristic doctrinal commitments of analytic philosophy. And one of these is a commitment to a strong realism. One can call this metaphysical realism, and that’s the view that to know means to grasp the mind-independent external world as it is. It seems to me that many of these people are reading Hegel in that [realist] way, but that is precisely what Hegel himself wants to deny. And I think further that Hegel and the other post-Kantians are developing one side of Kant’s position, which all of the analytic people miss, which I consider to be the interesting part of Kant. These people are committed to Kant as a kind of a strong empiricist, whereas it seems to me that the empirical realism cannot be discovered from the transcendental idealism. Now, I think that Kant is somebody you either have to have whole or not at all.

Simon Critchley makes a joke to the effect that how you understand Kant depends on which critique you read and how much of it you finish.

Strawson, as you know, wrote a famous book on Kant [The Bounds of Sense, 1966], in which he tried to argue that Kant is a strange kind of empiricist: “It’s true that he has this transcendental idealism, but we don’t have to pay any attention to that.” [Smiles]. It seems to me that that’s typical of a certain way of reading Kant which one ought to stay away from.

Kant of course claims that there is only one true theory, and there can’t be more than one true theory, and his own theory is true, and then nothing about it can be revised, because to revise anything at all would mean that all human reason would fall to the ground. He says that in b xxvii, in the introduction to the first critique. Now, if that’s his view then you can’t have it piecemeal.

Now, I hold that Kant is a great monument, but that most of what he says can’t be accepted. But I think that the project was right. The post-Kantian project, it seems to me, had to make sense. My interpretation of Kant is the following: I hold that Kant is committed to two different epistemological views. One is a notion of representationalism and the other is what could be called constructivism. Constructivism is the
Copernican thesis. Representationalism is the way that the problem is defined in the famous letter to [Markus] Hertz, July 21, 1772. Kant says that the problem is analyzing the relationship of the representation to the object. Now, that calls for representational solutions to the problem of knowledge. I hold that, one, there isn’t any solution if you put the problem that way, because we never know that the representation relates to what it represents. Second, I hold that Kant saw that, so that the presupposition of the Copernican turn is that the representational approach fails, so that the solution he himself provides is an anti-representational, constructivist solution. Now, I think he is right about that, but what he doesn’t do is work it out, and I think that is what the post-Kantians are doing… So I have written in all these sorts of books, some of which are out and some of which are coming out, all of which have to do in some way with this problem.

Do you mean only your more recent publications or throughout your entire body of work?

Well, I have only recently become aware of this [aspect of the problem]. You start off doing it and then become aware of what your doing. And then you have a description you can provide to someone who asks you about it. [Smiles.] I wrote a book on Hegel’s epistemology [Hegel’s Circular Epistemology, 1986] where I became clearer about this problem…

Using the term “epistemology” in reference to Hegel might seem, well, unusual to some people.

A contradiction in terms, yes.

How would you support your claim that Hegel has an epistemology, or react to someone who rejected this interpretation?

Fair enough. I think there are different views as to what epistemology is. The main claim is the claim which is common, certainly to Descartes and Kant, namely that epistemology has got to be a science and that we can know the way the world is. Now, it seems to me that, if we take that normative view, then these other people fall outside it. But I understand epistemology in the wider sense, meaning “theory of knowledge”. Now, I think that’s what the post-Kantians are trying to do. A simple way to put it is that Kant’s Copernican turn is taken with epistemological intent, and that all of them thought that Kant was right, but that his turn had to be completed, carried out – the problem of knowledge was on the agenda but hadn’t been resolved. Now, I take it that what these people are trying to do is resolved according to the spirit but not the letter of critical philosophy. Now, if you grant me that, then they’re all trying, in some way, to understand the nature of the theory of knowledge by carrying this problem beyond Kant—inspired by Kant, but not bound by the strictures of his own way of putting it… As soon as you widen it out it becomes much more interesting. You bring the problem of knowledge into the social context and you realize, in fact, what Kant was doing. Kant tries later to show that epistemological theory is bound by practice. Now, he never succeeds in this. One way to explain it is to say that, starting with Fichte, they invert the relation. They start with the concept of what human beings are, and they try to understand knowledge in those terms, as opposed to what Kant did – understand the subject in terms of the requirements of knowledge. It seems to me really what Kant did is he inverted the problem. And I think they re-invert it and make the approach plausible. I think that any claim to knowledge has to be indexed [in
In your book, you also refer to the circularity of Hegel's epistemology. How or in what way do you understand a circular argument to be legitimate?

The notion of circularity, since Aristotle, has always been thought to be a mistake – it's always been thought to indicate a vicious circle. But starting with Fichte, it was rehabilitated. [In the *Wissenschaftslehre* of 1794]. What Fichte is saying (and I think that Hegel agrees with him) is that any kind of scientific theory must follow from prior principles. Now the problem is whether the principles can in some way be grounded or founded, or whether the principles themselves from which the theory is deduced also depend on the theory. I think what Fichte says is that the principles cannot be demonstrated prior to the theory. And I think what Hegel is saying is that theory is demonstrated in the process of working it out… Now I hold that's what we do do, and that Hegel's right about that. Hegel himself introduces the metaphor of the circle in the third part of the *Differenzschrift*, which is his first philosophical publication. So in a sense Hegel had this idea when he began to work in philosophy. I then hold the view that Hegel was an unusual example of someone who, very early on, had his central insights, who deeply developed them but never abandoned them. There are very few examples of this.

Given some of your published remarks [on the centrality of the *Differenzschrift* and the *Encyclopedia* for Hegel], how do you see the relation of Hegel's Logic to the system as a whole? There are remarks in the Logic where Hegel writes that the Logic should be taken as primary, and that the philosophies of nature and spirit are derivative. How would you reconcile these two contrasting claims?

It's a problem. I think one has to take into account what Hegel says, but one also has to take into account the logic of the argument itself. Now I'm inclined to the view that the basic text is the introduction to the *Phenomenology*. That's where I see him making the fundamental epistemological argument. But it seems to me one can make a similar argument about circularity by looking at the first paragraph of the *Encyclopedia*. There he says that philosophy differs from all other sciences in presupposing nothing. Now a science which presupposes nothing turns out to be increasingly circular. Now it's hard for me to see how to integrate the logic into my theory, but I take that as an important question. It seems to me in order to make sense of Hegel one would have to treat the four books as the four pillars of one central system. Now, I don't myself know of anybody who's done that. I think that people who work in Hegel studies unfortunately treat the books independently. Now, I think that's a weakness.

*Or tends to give emphasis to one aspect over another?*

That's right. Often in the English language people tend to privilege the *Phenomenology*. In Germany there has been a lot of work on the *Logic*. Hegel's theory cannot be reduced to any single slogan. It's much too complex for that, as I'm sure you're aware. [Smiles.] I think that part of the problem is that it's only when you've worked on Hegel's theory intensely that you realize how complicated it is, and how difficult it is to reduce it to a few chosen words. To the extent that that was possible, Hegel already did that. We don't have many of his arguments. What we have, for the most part, are his conclusions. Somebody who wants to take him seriously then has to supply the argument which leads him to these conclusions. Now I
think that part of the problem with coming to grips with Kant, which I take as Hegel’s central concern, lies in making sense of the Copernican turn. Now the Copernican turn is I think constructivist. We have to see how the theory of knowledge can be resolved in constructivist terms, so one of the things I’ve tried to do now is to reread some of the central texts and look at the constructivist parts of the texts. I think that the notion of spirit has a specifically cognitive side and the cognitive side has to do with the construction of the theory which is then tested against whatever’s given to the experience of consciousness.

*It seems to me from our discussion that you would prefer not to be known as a scholar of particular thinkers (Hegel, Fichte, etc.) but rather of a specific set of issues.*

Well, I am trying to understand certain problems as they’re raised in the tradition and I am very interested in the German discussion because it seems to me that there are great riches from the epistemological perspective which have to be brought into the contemporary discussion of the problem of knowledge. So what I have tried to do in that respect is to enrich the discussion by calling attention to these ideas, but I don’t consider myself to be a scholar of anything. [Smiles.] I consider myself someone who is trying to contribute to the discussion but I think that you can’t draw a distinction between the history of the tradition and the problems of the tradition. The two have to be mastered simultaneously. By the same token, we have to live in our own time as Hegel lived in his. The idea of going back to Hegel and understanding him without the intervening discussion would be a mistake. I don’t think it would make sense to try to have Hegel whole now, but we want to understand from our perspective to try to see what is specifically relevant to the ongoing discussion now.

It seems to me Hegel was in many ways far ahead of his time. I think the problem of the history of philosophy is to come to grips with the most important ideas and that when you’re dealing with the few really great philosophers—there are only a handful, mind you—they can’t be understood correctly in their own time, because all of them displace the discussion in a significant way, and they can only be understood over a long period as a result of a process where we build bridges to what they said and we identify ways in which they differ, often we find these in ways that people have gone before. I hold that we’re just in the process of making sense of what they were saying. We spent two thousand years explicating Aristotle. We might spend the next two thousand years explicating Hegel.

*Interviewed by Ralph Palm*
On the 23rd of April 2004, Professor Herman Parret became emeritus. This occasion was marked by a study day at the Institute, Professor Parret’s valedictory address at the STUK, entitled “Beroering en ontroering. Over de zinnelijkheid van het gemoed” [Affections and Disturbances. On the sensuality of the heart], and the closing address by Professor André Van de Putte, Dean of the Institute of Philosophy. The evening closed with a concert of contemporary music and a reception.

On the 26th of June 2003, Professor Parret gave an interview for K.U. Leuven’s Campuskrant paper. The text of that interview is translated and published here, with kind permission of the Campuskrant. Professor Van De Putte’s address of the 23rd of April follows it.

Philosopher of language and aesthetics Herman Parret.

“I feel the emeritus as a punishment
I do not deserve.”

The career of Professor Herman Parret, who becomes emeritus next year, is in some respects rather unusual. To begin with, he teaches two fields of study that at first sight are quite distinct from each other: philosophy of language and aesthetics. Moreover, he has spent something like a total of thirteen years overseas, and he says himself that he never gives more than three hours per week of classes, these being restricted to masters and doctoral students.

Herman Parret’s permanent position – from post-doctoral researcher to director of research – with the National Fund for Scientific Research (now the FWO) allowed him to work on his research and increasingly to move to the places where great breakthroughs were occurring in his fields of study. But it all began with a professor who didn’t really want an assistant.

Parret: “At the end of the 60’s I worked on my doctorate, a comparative study between the view of language in the early Husserl and the underlying philosophy of structuralists such as De Saussure, Hjelmslev and Jakobson. My promoter was Professor Alphonse de Waelhens, the well-known historian of contemporary philosophy. I was, as it happens, sitting in his office when the vice-rector called with the question of
whether he wouldn't like to have an assistant, because with the split in the university many more positions for assistants had opened up. De Waelhens saw immediately that he couldn't quite get out of this, but after some resistance he said 'If I really must, just give me Parret'. (Parret laughs).

"I had a boundless admiration for De Waelhens and I considered him to be a real master. He sent me to Paris for two years and said 'Come let me know every two weeks what is happening there.' It was an exciting time for structuralism in philosophy and in the social sciences, I could follow lectures there by Levi-Strauss, Lacan, Foucault and was passionately involved in May '68...I also met and heard Derrida there then. For that matter, I wrote at the beginning of the seventies the first book about the then still unknown Derrida, at that stage still in Dutch. He has for this remained always very grateful to me. I also met my second teacher, Algirdas Julien Greimas, in Paris in the same period. He was a very rigorous and formalistic semiotic, in fact the opposite of De Waelhens, who was a free and particularly inspired thinker."

Recordholder for trips
Lacan, Derrida, Greimas, these are not the last great names to come in Parret's story. After his "French period" he spent some years in America. First at M.I.T. with Noam Chomsky, the founder of the then revolutionary Transformational Generative Grammar. It was a fascinating time, says Parret, because Chomsky underwent then for the first time fierce opposition from his most gifted disciples. And then Parret spent the next year at the University of Berkeley in California, where John Searle and Paul Grice developed pragmatism and their analytic philosophy.

It seems that Parret always finds himself in the right place at the right time. “As I look back, I find that really to be the case. Thanks to my position as FWO-researcher I could travel a lot, and I had the freedom to study the great discoveries in philosophy of language and science of language at their source. During my first American period, for example, I had for two weeks a conversation with Chomsky about the history of language theories and that is of course an irreplaceable learning experience.

"I look back then also with a great deal of gratitude upon my career; I feel privileged. Creativity is for me connected with mobility, also in the physical sense. Indeed, I heard once that I am the most travelled prof. of the K.U.Leuven. I have given literally hundreds of papers and guest lectures overseas."

Now Parret gives classes in aesthetics as well as in philosophy of language. “I have never considered my interest in philosophy of the aesthetic experience as a departure from my interest in events of language. For one thing it is also in keeping with the evolution that language theory has itself experienced. In the ’80’s, as an extension of my interest in linguistics and philosophical pragmatism I became interested in communication theory. With this I feel that I have landed back again with the aesthetic aspects of communication, such as the quality of the voice and strategies of seduction that speakers employ. I have always found the classic communication theories formulated by the social sciences very impoverished."

"I have sought to join this aesthetic dimension of communication with Kant’s idea of a community that brings subjects together in the aesthetic experience. So I have ended up coming from pragmatics to the philosophy of aesthetic
appreciation in a very systematic way, and later to other points of interest in classical aesthetics.”

What free time?
When we asked what Professor Parret will do with his free time after becoming emeritus, he wondered to himself where in fact this free time could come from. “I keep giving guest lectures, among other places in New York, where I teach for six weeks every autumn at Columbia University. I am also organising in November a big colloquium in Brussels about the contribution of Italian thought to European culture, in cooperation with Europalia-Italie, under the direction of Umberto Eco. With him and with the curator Omar Calabrese I have also for some months been preparing the large exhibition *Venus onthuld* (Venus unveiled), about Titian’s *Venus of Urbino*. For that matter, next year is above all an Italian year, because I’m giving a course at the Scuole Dottorale of the universities of Siena, Venice and Rome. In the following years Helsinki, Lausanne and Lisbon are on the programme.

“It’s so absurd that men in full productivity are dispatched into emeritus status. When I tell them this overseas, they don’t understand it. Eco and Chomsky are both in their seventies and they go on as usual. Chomsky said to me recently: ‘I go on as long as I still have something original to say in my doctoral seminar’.

“I feel the emeritus status as an undeserved punishment. For that matter, in the States compulsory pensioning is against the First Amendment: age discrimination. What’s more, if your research remains moderately active, then in our system you lose, quite inevitably and quickly, contact with students as well as with colleagues. Luckily I still have six doctoral stu-
dents and that goes on as usual. Unfortunately, in some faculties emeriti also lose their offices because there isn’t enough space. I shall in any case defend myself like a demon in a holy water font to prevent that from happening to me.” (*He laughs, but anxiously*).

Double degree
Is contact with students really so important for someone who has in the first place been a researcher? Parret: “Most certainly. I have also always combined my research position with part-time teaching. And I was very happy that I could satisfy my hunger for teaching by giving guest lectures at many overseas universities. I have always wanted to be an enthusiastic and communicative teacher. Some colleagues would not agree with this, but I find that senior profs with experience must be prepared to give class without feeling bound to their notes. Students have the right to motivated professors who give interactive classes in the style of a dialogue.

“I hope that I have conveyed my love for art, and moreover for contemporary art. Art theorists often know a lot about art, but aesthetic enjoyment is something different. And more generally I hope that I have conveyed to my students love for philosophy and have given them insight into the importance of the interdisciplinary character of philosophy. Philosophy must break out of her ivory tower, and enter into conversation with other sciences and issues in society. So I have always emphasized that our doctoral students should have a double degree, so that they will not stare blindly only at the history of philosophy.”

*Translated by Renée Ryan*
Professor Van De Putte’s address for Herman Parret

Professor Van De Putte gave the following address following Professor Parret’s Valedictory lecture on the 23rd of April.

Esteemed Rector,
Honorary Rector Dillemans,
Colleagues, friends and family
of Professor Herman Parret,
Ladies and gentlemen.

It would be an exaggeration to say that Professor Herman Parret, of whom we celebrate the admittance (so-called) to emeritus today, has eagerly looked forward to today’s event. In a controversial interview on the Campuskrant of the 26th of June 2003, he only just managed not to say that the status of emeritus is a violation of human rights. “I feel the emeritus status as an undeserved punishment. For that matter, in the States compulsory pensioning is against the First Amendment: age discrimination.” It is thus with a certain recalcitrance that our emeritus, who still feels himself young and driven, accepts his fate and perhaps thus also these ceremonial proceedings.

It really is the case, so he told me recently, that the first months of the emeritus status have altogether considerably exceeded all expectations. It could hardly be otherwise, given the many activities that he has undertaken during the recent months. I will travel through these with you for a moment. Since the beginning of this academic year, our colleague Parret, for the sake of lectures, seminars, doctorates, and so forth, has been in Rimini, Amsterdam, Brussels, Paris, New York, Rome, Palermo, Barcelona, Venice, Beijing, and in the coming months he will be seen and heard in Liège, Paris, Amsterdam, San Marino, Urbino, Siena, New York, Ghent, Mexico and Lisbon. These are names like a beautiful coral reef. And before I forget: he was also in Leuven. Because the Institute, always concerned about the well-being of its members and to this end taking care to soften the punishment of the status of emeritus, asked him this year, once again, to give his course in aesthetics.

The emeritus status thus comes to pass altogether rather well. After all, nothing has really changed in the academic life of Herman Parret. That academic life began sometime in the sixties, when he earned first a masters in philology of the Romance languages and followed this with a masters in philosophy. In 1970 he became, with Professor De Waelhens as his promoter, a doctor in philosophy, with a thesis wherein he undertook a comparative study between the view of language in the earlier Husserl and the underlying philosophy of such structuralists as De Saussure, Hjelmslev and Jacobson. In the same year he was also appointed by the then NFWO as appointed researcher. He completed its full cursus honorum: research leader and research director. Upon the reforms of the FWO, he was then so to speak re-classified as a full professor at the Institute.

The end of the sixties and the beginning of the seventies was the great period for structural-

1 Professor Van de Putte here quotes M. Gijsen, saying in the original Dutch, “Het zijn ‘namen lijck schoon koralen’.”
ism in philosophy and the human sciences, the period of the Parisian masters of thought, Levi-Strauss, Lacan, Foucault, Greimas, Barthes. And thus Herman Parret, already as he was preparing his doctorate, divided his time regularly and sometimes for longer periods between Leuven and Paris, where he also frequented the lectures and seminars of the then still young Derrida.

But that was not all: he was driven by a nomadic urge – you should know, ladies and gentlemen, that according to one of his uncollected writings (what I mean here by his uncollected writings is that they are not included in his academic bibliography), Herman Parret divides philosophers into two categories: farmer-philosophers and nomad-philosophers, thinkers of origin and thinkers of horizon, on the one side Heidegger, on the other Nietzsche, Kant and Schopenhauer. And for those who might still have misgivings about this he entrusts us with these words: “I myself am a nomad and for much of what I am I have that to thank for it. The solitude of constantly changing hotel rooms, the fog of long night flights, the terrace culture in sunny lands, the tables reserved for the regulars in many literary philosophical cafés, astonishing customs in other universities, have constantly summoned in me philosophical wonder and have stimulated me in study and writing”.

Just like Bertus Aafjes, Herman Parret puts it thus: “He who thinks, thinks himself into strange places”. Still, I don’t see Herman going on a walking tour to Rome.

Thus driven by his nomadic urge he struck out presently over the ocean where he studied at M.I.T. with Chomsky and in Berkeley with Searle and Grice. There his interest shifted to Language Pragmatism and subsequently to Communication Theory. So he received attention for the aesthetic aspects of communication and finally for connecting the aesthetic dimension of communication with the Kantian view of community that brings subjects together in the aesthetic experience. In between, research positions took him to Freiburg, Oxford, Stanford, Columbia and so forth; he took up visiting lecturing positions in Brazil, Campinas and Sao Paolo, at the universities of San Diego and Tel Aviv. And again I had
almost forgotten: it so happened that he also taught a limited number of courses in Leuven and in Antwerp. Might I yet add that he filled his remaining time with giving lectures all over the world, being a promoter and jury member for countless doctorates, acting as a member of countless scholarly associations and editorial boards, occupying the Rubens chair in Berkeley and twice the national Franqui chair; and that he was awarded honorary doctorates in the universities of Timisoara and Lima.

Might it ever be that the change to emeritus status proves disappointing, then perhaps Herman Parret could always use his experience to begin a travel bureau with Italian Art cities as its specialty. For that, “the solitude of often changing hotel rooms, the fog of long night flights, the terrace culture in sunny lands, the tables reserved for the regulars in many literary philosophical cafés” have proved inspirational. As the reckoning goes, Herman Parret has published 209 studies since 1962, also counting those in print. Among those that will appear this year, so I am pleased to note, we find *Les Sébastiens de Venise*. Herman’s fascination for the iconography of Saint Sebastian has finally found fulfillment. Along with this we need to add the uncollected writings I have just mentioned and also seven publications in preparation, among which are four books, one of which I will give you the title: *Timbres. Sur la déclaration d’amour à l’opéra*. When he has found the time to write all of these remains something of a mystery. Probably this indicates a rigorous schedule. Something of this is evident at the Institute, where he seldom or never appears in the morning. After midday, probably after a long morning of reading and writing, he makes his entrance and one can find him in his room at the Institute – a room to which he, in spite of long absences, is appa-
miscreant who, after the seven years provided had expired, failed to heed the summons either to request one more year or to let the commission know that he or she was ready to abandon writing a doctorate. Herman Parret wrote and telephoned them himself to frighten them into producing the desired document, ’till before his satisfied gaze the whole doctoral programme extended itself as orderly, well-organised, and aesthetically sound.

One of the initiatives that he took as chairman of the doctoral programme was the publication four times per year of an information pamphlet that included all the necessary information that doctoral students might need, and in particular the list of available doctoral seminars. This excellent initiative continues, although now in an electronic form. It was for Herman Parret the occasion to share with doctorandi, but really with the whole of the Institute, his reveries in a sometimes elaborate preface. For the information of historians to follow: this pamphlet is one of the places where the uncollected writings of Herman Parret can be found. One can read included there a self-written Herman Parret, sitting on a terrace of the Café de Flore in Paris, thinking of the contrast between the philosophy of the farmer and that of the nomad, asking himself if in this age of the internet ramblings are really still necessary. He proffered to us there a number of arguments that seemed to imply that they just aren’t needed any longer. But all of a sudden he takes courage. This is really too radical a thought: “These reflections are actually too radical, I had to concede when I had consumed the last crumb of my butter tart and was already distracted by the way that the slender feminine hand of an otherworldly being nearby me raised her café crème to her lips”. Let us undoubtedly leave this one alone, dear audience, for a butter tart must certainly never be confused with a sandwich!

Herman Parret and terraces. This could be a chapter in itself. So I have a suggestion for you Herman, now that your book about the Sebastians is finished. Why not write a cultural philosophical study about terraces? For this I have one matter of business to suggest, and that is to add a classification of terraces: five slender female hands for the best terrace.

Dear Herman,

To travelers, and this goes too for academic travelers, one usually gives two things. The first is good advice. I know, good advice can be solemn but really, it is my pleasure to give you the following advice in the words of a so-called minor poet.

*A Message to Travelers.* (Jan van Nijlen)*

Never board your train without your suitcase full of dreams,
Then you will find in every place adequate shelter.

Sit peacefully and patiently near the open window:
You are a traveler and no one knows your name.

Look back to the past with the fresh eyes of a child.
Gaze nonchalantly and keenly, dreamily and delightedly.

*The verses that follow are a somewhat loose translation (the translator extends her apologies to the reader!) of the poem “Bericht aan de reizigers”, by Jan van Nijlen. The actual poem is in Dutch as follows:

Bestijg den trein nooit zonder uw valies met dromen,/ dan vindt ge in elke stad behoorlijk onderkomen. /Zit rustig en geduldig naast het open raam: /gij zit een reiziger en niemand kent uw naam. /Zoek in ’t verleden weer uw frisse kinderogen. /kijk nonchalant en scherp, droomig en opgetogen. /
Everything that you see growing in the black earth of springtime
Be assured: it was planted only for you.

Let traveling salesmen say a little word about the film censor:
God smiles and chooses his hour.

Greet the station master affably as he stands behind his green gates,
Because without his signal the train can never depart.

And if the train will not go forward, much to the detriment
Of your hopes and desires and cents bitterly meted out,

Remain calm and open your suitcase; draw from your reserves
And you will never experience even one lost hour.

And as the train arrives in some exotic place,
The name of which you have never heard in your life before,

Then you have achieved your goal, then you have learned for the first time
What travel means for the dullards and for the truly wise....

Above all don’t be surprised that, running alongside the ordinary trees,
A perfectly ordinary train brings you into the heart of Rome.

The second thing that people generally give
is more material. It is something one can drag
along in a bag or a suit-case or a coat, or
something to have in hand there on a terrace
surrounded by otherworldly beings and over-
come with longing for a café crème, something
to thumb through, to glance at and to read:
books.\(^1\) The pure classicists lend themselves to
this better than any others: like the libertine

novels of the eighteenth century, or Diderot
and Stendhal. And one should also mention
Mallarmé, Nerval, Valéry and René Char.

Herman, we wish you many more good
years, many more lectures, many “affections
and disturbances” and above all, many terraces.
Herman, I wish you all the very best.

Translated by Renée Ryan

\(^1\) The dean gave, on behalf of the Institute, Professor Parret some books to mark this occasion.

The dissertation aims at developing an interpretative approach to Cartesian philosophy, focusing on the theological – strictly speaking: apologetic – constituents of Descartes’ thought. This endeavour takes issue with two influential trends within scholarship about Descartes that are related to the problem of the theological legitimacy of Cartesian philosophy and/or to the question of the sincerity of Descartes. The first of these trends understands Descartes’ philosophy as a radical rupture with Scholastic thought, not merely in a scientific and philosophical sense, but also with respect to the factual significance of religious matters. The other trend criticises Descartes as a philosopher who destroys the Scholastic idea about the harmony between faith and reason, and whose incidental personal faith in Christian truth plays no role in his philosophical activity.

In the first part of my dissertation I argue that we should distinguish on the one hand between Descartes’ clear intent of completing a multifaceted reform of the scientific-philosophical thought, and on the other on the evaluation of his comments about the theological and/or apologetic potentials of his philosophy. I firstly argue that being a modern thinker does not necessitate an a-religious or atheistic attitude; and secondly that divorce from the Aristotelian-Thomistic philosophical paradigm does not imply the annulment of Descartes’ essential religious interest. Relying on certain Cartesian assertions from the Rules, I argue that Descartes thought that it was possible to establish a new or ideal synthesis, as I call it, between faith and reason. In this new synthesis two questions gain a very special position. Namely, Descartes asserts that questions of the soul and God are matters that can be legitimately discussed through rational means and on the basis of faith alike.

In the first part I give a short overview of the late-Scholastic debates about immortality that go back to Pietro Pomponazzi’s declaration of the thesis of philosophical mortalism. I discuss the different strategies that appeared in favour of the idea of immortality (physical, metaphysical, moral). In this regard, I emphasise the emergence of the apologetic work of the most popular apologist of the late 16th and 17th centuries, namely, the Flemish Jesuit, Leonardus Lessius. My description of his philosophical apology presented in the De providential numinis (1613) concludes my brief historical overview. I then inquire into the problems arising from the different Cartesian declarations of the apologetic potentials of his philosophy. I conclude Part One by saying that the Cartesian assertions show important parallels with the then-contemporary debates on the issue of immortality, and it is possible to show 1) that for Descartes the metaphysical method is the proper one for defending the immortality of the soul; and 2) that his divergent apologetic-like declarations make up the framework of a considerably complex and sophisticated theory about the question. It
would be quite ambiguous to hypothesise that Descartes developed a sophisticated, and at the same time fallacious, theory regarding immortality. The important question is how we can discover these implicit apologetic potentials of Cartesian philosophy, and how we can mark off the boundaries of a specifically Cartesian apology.

The second part of the dissertation discusses the question of the soul. The proper aim of this part is to understand the peculiar Cartesian paradox (Gilson) concerning the human being. The essence of this paradox is that according to Descartes the human being is the composite of two really distinct substances, the body and the mind (the thesis of real distinction), on the one hand, and he or she constitutes a special and essential union, which makes up a person (theory of substantial union), on the other. In this regard I propose two main theses. Firstly, I argue that in the course of the Second Meditation – which presents the detection of the cogito – we can reveal a very peculiar application of the transcendental term aliqui'. In this matter I rely on Rosemann's interpretation of the Thomistic transcendental aliquid. Rosemann says that the Thomistic aliquid means aliquid quasi aliquid qui; something like "another ‘what’" in relation to another. Applying this interpretation of Rosemann to the Cartesian text (where the self, the “mental”, is first and foremost discovered as an aliquid), I argue that the Cartesian ego is detected as "another ‘what’", namely, in contradistinction to the bodily. Since Descartes identifies the Aristotelian self with the body (strictly speaking, he takes it to be body-dependent to such an extent that, in fact, he can understand it as an entity that is identical with the body), his new self can be discovered as a distinct (diverse entity) in relation to the body (which, due to the Cartesian epoché, is parenthesised). Therefore, I argue that this peculiar dialectic of the aliqui' in the cogito-argument reveals a specific relationalism, which is the prior logical basis of the statement concerning the real distinction between the two entities. On the other hand, I argue that (although Descartes disqualifies the application of teleological reasoning) in his description of the substantial union, we can show the presence of a peculiar teleology, as far as reason’s role in the preservation of the union (and, consequently, in the preservation of health) is concerned.

I apply these two constituents of my analysis of the Cartesian metaphysics of man as possible components of a moderate approach to the Cartesian dualism, where the paradoxical statements about real distinction and substantial union can be understood on their own value. “Relationalism” shows us that this dualism is not so radical as the interpreters often take it (since the ontological dualism itself is explained on the basis of a peculiar relational-dialectic logic); further to this though, immanent teleology lets us see that the Cartesian man is more than the bare fabrication of two substances. It is rather an ontological point of intersection that we can understand in a very complex way. One aspect of this complexity is that it is possible to see the human being as an existent that has a soul, really distinct from the body, which – in consequence of this distinctness – is able to exist without the body (this is a thesis that comes from the detection of the ego as an existing thing while the existence of the “bodily” is parenthesised). This means that Cartesian man is a “two-dimensional” being and it may aspire even to immortality.

The Third Part concerns some specific problems of the Cartesian metaphysics of God. Namely,
I discuss questions regarding the rational and supra-rational, transcendent character of the Cartesian God. The central issue of this study is the problem of divine infinitude and its relation to another key-concept of the Cartesian divine metaphysics, perfection. As important points of reference, I integrate to my analysis Marion's, Clayton's, and Beyssade's respective approaches to the question, and I argue that divine infinitude carries a special surplus, a supra-rational element, which surpasses and – in this way – re-orders the field of rationality. Here I introduce the concept of “inspired reason”. Relying on Anne Ashley Davenport’s studies regarding the matter, I also argue that this supra-rational constituent entails a specific notion of “perspectivism”, which points beyond the structure of rationality and representation.

NATALIJA BONIC. Turning To and Fro. Obviousness, Understanding and Erring in Heidegger. Promoter: Professor Martin Moors.

Heidegger’s question of being is largely an expression of puzzlement at the fact that the meaning of “being” seems perfectly clear, until one is asked to explain it. When that occurs, not only does it suddenly seem obscure, but any attempt to explain it mostly fails. The inquiry of Being and Time therefore sets out to examine the nature of our pre-reflective understanding of being, as well as our failure to grasp it reflectively. These two themes are so closely tied with Heidegger that the question of the nature of understanding is at the same time, and crucially so, a question of the nature of our misunderstanding of the meaning of being. In this dissertation, we look into the way in which Heidegger responds to these questions, and how his response changes from Being and Time to the later works beginning with The Anaximander Fragment.

Part One consists in an analysis of the rôle and meaning of the concept of obviousness with Heidegger. It explores the various methodological, ontological, and existential implications of the statement that the meaning of being is obvious. Obviousness is shown to have a twofold significance for Heidegger: on the one hand, he considers it one of the chief reasons for the failure to raise the question of being (because the meaning of being is obvious, it is usually bypassed), yet, on the other hand, he cites it as evidence for the fact that we “live in an understanding of being” (were it not obvious, we would be unable to perform any meaningful activity, including raising the question of being). In the former case, obviousness is treated as an instance of semblance, whereby it is associated with misunderstanding, covering up, and deception; in the latter case, it is treated as a mode of disclosure, uncovering, and truth. The main task of Part One is to explain why obviousness plays so ambiguous a role in Heidegger, and how precisely it obstructs, or else enables, access to the meaning of being.

In Part Two, we turn to the phenomenon of understanding, that is, of pre-ontological (i.e., pre-reflective, pre-conceptual) understanding, which according to Heidegger renders the world we live in a priori intelligible. We examine the nature of this understanding, its characteristic indefiniteness and indifference, and distinguish it from all definite modes of understanding, whether practical or theoretical. Following Heidegger’s distinctions between indefiniteness-definiteness, possibility-actuality, we propose to view pre-ontological understanding as devoid of content – that is, as not about something – and
thus in a precise sense as tautological. The tautological character of understanding is further clarified by showing how Heidegger grounds pre-ontological understanding in transcendence, conceived as a condition of being constantly beyond the world of actual entities, a condition essential to Dasein’s ontological constitution. The remainder of Part Two tries to determine more closely how to conceive of such being beyond, which eventually leaves us with two very different conceptions of transcendence with Heidegger, each of which provides for a different account of the nature of understanding.

In order to establish which of the two conceptions of transcendence belong to early Heidegger, it becomes necessary to delve deeper into the foundations of Heidegger’s ontology, which is the task of Part Three of this dissertation. Part Three re-examines the issues from the previous two parts in the light of temporality, the basic structure of Heidegger’s early ontology. To that purpose, we discuss the main features of temporality, Heidegger’s “reversal” of the ordinary conception of time, and his substitution of the traditional present-centred time model for an ex-centric, futural one. Although the analysis of temporality resolves our initial dilemma surrounding Heidegger’s conception of transcendence, as well as helps to clarify the distinctions between understanding and misunderstanding, disclosure and covering up, truth and semblance, it also raises the doubt as to whether Heidegger’s ontology provides an alternative to traditional, presence-oriented metaphysics, or rather strengthens it by restoring its true foundations. We argue that it does not provide such an alternative until much later (beginning with The Anaximander Fragment), and even then not completely. Nevertheless, the “turn” in Heidegger’s thought does open up a new way for thinking the above issues, a way that could have been taken in Being and Time was it not for a slight but crucial diversion. We end this dissertation by suggesting what such a way would consist in.


Sometimes it is impossible to judge yourself from an external viewpoint and sometimes it is inappropriate to do so. The standpoint of others can thus be inaccessible in two ways, yet this does not mean that it is not important that such a standpoint be discovered. On the contrary, not to take this standpoint of others into account can often signify to a large extent the way in which one looks at oneself. Our self-recognition seems thus uncomplicatedly dependent on others.

These general propositions form the core of the thesis Self-recognition and recognition of others. They are gradually developed and built up in discussion with extant analytic philosophical literature. The two-fold asymmetry between self-recognition and recognition by others is it so happens often misunderstood by contemporary writers. As such one can speak from a conspicuous and common lacuna in current debates about modesty, pride and vanity.

Jon Elster concludes his influential study Alchemies of the Mind as follows: “there is a need for analytical work on amour-propre – the need for esteem and self-esteem.” The thesis at
hand affirms this conclusion and forms at the same time a first attempt to meet the above-mentioned need.

PHILIP A. GOTTSCHALK, Between Fideism and Dogmatic Rationalism: The Place of Nicholas O. Lossky in the Legacy of Silver Age Russian Religious Philosophy. Promotor: Professor William Desmond.

Lossky is not as well-known in the West as perhaps he should be, in part perhaps having to do with the character of his philosophy, in part because only a portion of his work has appeared in translation. Because of the relative paucity of informed commentary, and also because certain significant articles have remained untranslated, this dissertation contains two distinct parts: translations of articles by Nicholas O. Lossky and chapters interpreting and interacting with these articles. I have offered the translations to further study of Lossky’s thought. These articles allow a further appraisal of his influence and significance.

While my primary focus is on the contents and themes of Lossky, a word of explanation would be appropriate as to why these articles were chosen. A main reason was because they have not appeared in English translation before; and yet they reflect significant themes which recur throughout his other writings also. These themes include the main areas of discussion covered in this dissertation: Knowing and Intuition; The Soul; God and creation. These articles cover a wide range of Lossky’s thought and show his attempts to interact with significant philosophers and ideas. The articles on Hegel and Husserl concern Lossky’s view of intuition and his attempt to suggest similarities between his own Intuitivism and the thinking of these two modern giants. The article on Leibniz’s view of reincarnation as metamorphosis shows Lossky’s attempt to be a consistent neo-Leibnizian thinker à la his mentor, Alexei Kozlov. The question of reincarnation will be of interest to some contemporary readers and was at least a focal point for attack on Lossky’s system by his critics. The article “On the Creation of the World by God” was occasioned by Lossky’s critique of Serge Bulgakov’s panentheism. Though it was an occasional piece, it shows Lossky’s commitment to defend the purest form of theism. Lossky’s interaction with panentheism and his defense of theism will be of interest to some contemporary readers of this dissertation. The final article on the World as the Substantialization of Beauty was written by Lossky late in his career as he sought to complete his system, having earlier dealt with epistemology, metaphysics and ethics. Lossky saw himself as a coherent system builder. He saw his system as a philosophical defense of theism, while at the same time believing that his views were consistent with his Russian Orthodox beliefs. While Lossky has been criticized by some for developing ideas like reincarnation, Lossky felt that he was developing all the aspects of his system in a coherent and rational manner. Lossky’s views of art and his views of origins and otherness will be interesting to some contemporary readers who have not given up the possibility of “the grand system”.

Our procedure throughout this dissertation will be first to introduce the question of Lossky’s value and place in the history of Russian Silver Age philosophy and compare and contrast his view with that of other representatives of Russian Religious Philosophy. Secondly, we will turn to the first crucial theme in Lossky’s phi-
losophy, namely, knowing and intuition. Having offered a translation of two important articles covering this theme, we will then turn to offer and give chapters of commentary upon these articles. We will cover Lossky’s interaction with Hegel and Husserl, emphasizing Lossky’s view of Intuition and his co-opting of Hegel and Husserl to defend his own view.

The second major theme in Lossky’s philosophy, which concerns us, is the Soul. Thus we will turn to Lossky’s article on reincarnation and follow it with a chapter evaluating Lossky’s use of this concept and its place and value (or lack thereof) for his system.

The third major theme in Lossky’s philosophy turns upon creation and his theistic metaphysics. Thus here we will turn to the articles on creation and art emphasizing the systematic development of Lossky’s metaphysic and his subsequent working out of that metaphysic in the area of aesthetics. We will present a chapter evaluating his metaphysic and the place of aesthetics in his system.

Finally we will entertain a concluding chapter in which we will generally evaluate Lossky’s success at constructing a coherent system. We will specifically look at each area of his thought and evaluate particularly his ideas of intuitivism, concrete ideal realism and reincarnation. Our goal in the final chapter will be to assess Lossky’s value and place in the heritage of Russian Religious Philosophy.

CORNELIUS SSEMPALA. Pragmatism, Conversation and Hermeneutics: The Promises and Limits of Richard Rorty’s Appreciation of Contingency. Promoter: Professor Arnold Burms.

This dissertation is a sustained argument for the inescapable contingency of cognitive, moral and political commitments. The concept of truth cannot be “epistemologically” cashed out in terms of correspondence or fittingness with the Real structure of reality. This argument runs in the wake of the “linguistic turn” and the realisation by pragmatists that the function of language is more like a tool enabling us to cope in the world than a medium through which the structure of the world can be grasped. The impression that “rightness” consists in a correspondence relation with the Moral Point of View is be misleading. Such claims cannot be justified in isolation from the particular ways of life they commit one to and the particular human social practices they do (or do not) make possible or sustain.

The work is divided into two parts. The First Part, which consists of three chapters, is a reconstruction of Rorty’s anti-foundationalism. This reconstruction however, takes place against the backdrop (Chapter One) of a genealogical survey of modern philosophical dualisms: the “particular-universal”, “is-ought”, and “appearance-reality”. A recognition of contingency and historicity effectively allows one to expose the shortcomings of epistemologically-centred thinking, by showing how such dualisms reflect the philosophical attempt to escape the contingent and timely aspects of one’s existence and to approximate a “universal”, “transcendental” conception of moral and political commitments.

Taking Rorty’s Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature as its foundation, Chapter Two, like that work, highlights that analytic and continental philosophers have both described their projects inaccurately, and so promulgated an ideologically distorted and self-serving account of the discipline of philosophy. The second chapter re-constructs a conception of truth fully engaged with the moral life, as the latter is
inscribed within particular social-historical configurations of agency within particular social-linguistic practices of a “way of life”.

Chapter Three develops Rorty’s central realisation that pragmatism is coherent with the central convictions of a liberal society. This realisation becomes more pointed and pertinent in the wake of the rise of modern pluralistic (multicultural) societies.

Chapter Four centres on the charge of complacency. While unapologetic about his philosophically groundless devotion to American liberal democracy, Rorty’s work reveals that his “ethnocentric” allegiance to liberal democracy not only does not preclude serious criticism of the current socio-political order, but that it often requires it. What it does preclude is the sort of political commentary championed by some members of the academic left, who repair to their towers of poststructuralist theory and chastise the American polity in an alien language. The chapter highlights the merits and demerits of Rorty’s “democratic social hope”.

Rorty’s Contingency, Irony and Solidarity presented his readership with the figure of the “liberal ironist” partly in answer to the concerns of ‘democratic social hope’. Against the backdrop of this controversial figure, Chapter Five answers the liberal ironist’s contempt for philosophy by revisiting the issue of “articulacy” in the work of Taylor and Wittgenstein. Chapter Six develops the theme of responsibly assuming one’s cultural stories by gauging Rorty’s alliance with Heidegger. It highlights recent concerns with Heidegger’s category of “retrieval” in the work of philosophers such as Gianni Vattimo. First, Rorty’s reading of Heidegger (and Wittgenstein) are shown to be one-sided, intended to defend a rather disengaged stance of “liberal ironism” at the expense of a hermeneutic that enables one to articulate and re-articulate more faithfully the dynamics that inform the internal conversation of the Western “forms of life” itself. This chapter pretty well sums up the argument of our work by showing that genuine moral and political progress cannot be distanced from an appreciation of historical traditions and the serious task of “retrieval” the same appreciation demands of philosophers. The combined effect of both the critical (Part One) and re-constructive (Part Two) argument of the dissertation is to confirm how a historical view of truth and objectivity demands a new conception of moral philosophy that centres less on “overcoming metaphysics”, and more on “truthfully narrating” who one is.


The wide range and deep power of symbols is quite astonishing. Heirlooms, artifacts, monuments and many other kinds of token transform the fluid indifference of the changing world into a tensile constancy of values. And yet, the symbolic character of things is often ignored or neglected, and even disavowed. My doctoral project was undertaken from a desire to help redress the devaluation by modernity of symbols and of the symbolic, both in philosophical parlance and in the vernacular.

The resulting essay aims at a characterisation of the world and of our place in it which accents the continuity between nature and culture. I pursue this aim by considering the symbolic features evident in and shared by every
kind of community, from aggregates of particles, to our own societies.

The world I depict in its symbolic facet is kinetic, and alive. It is moved by tensions which keep the manifold symbolic communities oscillating. To outline these tensions and motions, there is a basic dichotomy, which I use recurrently, between intensiveness and extensiveness. These terms are adapted from the distinction in logic between the extension and intension of a statement, but my terminology applies to the whole spectrum of symbols and covers a broad variety of tendencies and oscillations through which symbols move. My text comprises a historical preamble, surveying some key thinkers on the theme of nature as conventional, and convention as symbolic, as well as four chapters. The continuity between nature and culture is implicit throughout, but the first and third chapters are tilted towards showing the world as having a thoroughgoing symbolic character, while the second and fourth chapters lean towards showing that our own communities are worldly. The first chapter is focused on the general synonymy of symbol and community. Both can be characterised in terms of participation, and I pursue the notion that the parties to a symbol, being differentiated as much as identified by their shared bond, partake of community rather than unity. Conversely the agreements that hold communities together are expressed in symbols, and in drawing the parties into a common bond, the agreements are themselves symbolic. The second chapter takes up our own participation in community as a matter of attention. Our presence as symbols and amongst other tokens can be a matter of mindfulness, but it can also be simple bodily attendance. Attention also captures the vacillation between initiative and patience which is a common feature of all symbolic community. We may actively pay attention, but our attention may also be held captive.

The third chapter looks at the concomitance of any predication of community as a bond of symbolic agreement, namely the contention which sows dissent and conflict amongst the parties, even as this same tension heightens the values at work in community. The fourth and final chapter reprises the global view of symbols to assert that there is one world of symbols, difference and contention notwithstanding, and that this world is our world. While some theories treat fictions, or works in progress as existing each in a separate world, the kinetic manifold of communities in my view culminates in a shared but crowded world in which they overlap.
RECENT MASTERS THESES
From the International and Flemish Programmes

AILA, MAIMAITIMING, “The Time of the Good. The Ethical Orientation of Time in Emmanuel Levinas.”

AMENT, THEODORE, “Symbol & Myth: Wittgenstein’s Critique of Freud, and Beyond.”


BRODENCOVA, EMILIA, “The Orphic Theme in Nietzsche and Rilke.”

CALLAERT, MICHAEL, “Zijn als gave en niets. Studie omtrent de stemmingen van het fundamenteel bestaansvertrouwen en de angst vanuit de werken van Heidegger en Levinas.” [Being as gift and nothingness. A study concerning the attunements of fundamental familiarity with existence and anxiety in the works of Heidegger and Levinas.]

CALLAGHAN, GEOFFREY, “Always and Everywhere the What Alone. The Philosophy of Arthur Schopenhauer.”

COESEMANS, PAUL, “Het socratisch probleem.” [The Socratic Problem.]


CORTVRIENDT, JEROEN, “Adorno tegen Jazz. Over mythen, kunst en cultuur.” [Adorno against Jazz. On myths, art and culture.]

DAEMS, NATHALIE, “Onvergeten verschil. Heidegger over de zijnsvergetelheid en de ontologische differentie.” [Unforgotten difference. Heidegger on the forgetfulness of being and the ontological difference.]

DE CLIPPEL, DOMINIQUE, “Darwin en Isolde.” [Darwin and Isolde.]

DE GROOF, MATTHIAS, “Europa Mensura.”

DELIE, FILIP, “Friedrich Nietzsche: Van Gods dood naar een nieuwe mens. De strijd tegen een wereldverzakende, levensvijandige en nihilistische traditie.” [Friedrich Nietzsche: From the death of God to a new man. The struggle against renunciation of the world, hostility to life and the nihilistic tradition.]

DE MUNCK, MARLIES, “Het parallellisme in de ontwikkeling van de filosofie en de muziek in de late 18e eeuw.” [The parallel between the development of philosophy and music of the late eighteenth century.]

DEVIJVER, MELISSA, “Dieren en ethiek: een synthese van rede en lichaam.” [Animals and ethics: a synthesis of reason and body.]
DE VLEESCHOUWER, GREGORY, “Het probleem van de persoonsidentiteit bij Witold Gombrowicz.” [The problem of personal identity in Witold Gombrowicz.]

FIELDING, JAMES, “In the Trace of the Yes. Heidegger’s ‘Nietzsche’/Derrida’s ‘Spurs’.”


GILEN, ELISABETH, “Kripkes sceptische interpretatie van Wittgensteins private taalargument.” [Kripke’s sceptical interpretation of Wittgenstein’s private language argument.]

GOKY ARAN, ERDEM, “The Phenomenon of Affection in Edmund Husserl’s Analysen zur passiven Synthesis.”

GOORIS, HANS, “Collectieve verantwoordelijkheid en management.” [Collective responsibility and management.]


GRICOSKI, GREGORY, “Rahner the Onto-Theologian. Applying Heidegger’s Critique of Metaphysics.”

HEYLEN, JAN, “Quine and Kripke over namen, beschrijvingen en modaliteiten.” [Quine and Kripke on names, descriptions and modes.]

HONG, WOO-RAM, “Descartes’ Doctrine of the Eternal Truths.”

HOUMAN, MARIANNE, “Susanne K. Langers Filosofie van het Symbolisme en de Kunst.” [Susanne K. Langer’s Philosophy of Symbolism and Art.]


Kalyniuk, GREGORY, “Bergson’s Social Philosophy. Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Irony and Humour.”

Keirsbilck, BERT, “Recht en juridische oordeelsvorming bij Ronald Dworkin.” [Justice and legal formation of judgment according to Ronald Dworkin.]

Layne, DANIELLE, “A Hellenic Attraction: An Examination of Nietzsche’s Relationship with Modernity, the Greeks and Heraclitus.”


LIEVENS, MATTHIAS, “Fordisme, fascisme en passieve revolutie bij Antonio Gramsci.” [Fordism, fascism and passive revolution in Antonio Gramsci.]

MORTELMANS, AN, “Moraliteit als gebeuren. Zygmunt Bauman’s postmoderne ethiek van de nabijheid.” [Morality as event. Zygmunt Bauman’s postmodern ethics of nearness.]

NAETS, JURGEN, “Copernicus’ nalatenschap en de legitimiteit van Galilei’s telescopische observaties: Waarheid, mathematica en bovenmaanse waarneming.” [Copernicus’s
legacy and the legitimacy of Galileo’s telescopic observations: Truth, mathematics and observations above the moon.] 


PAVO, RAYMUNDO, “Art and Imagination in R.G. Collingwood’s The Principles of Art and Groce’s Aesthetic.” 


RUSSEY, JOHN, “The Role of Imagination in Kant’s Critical Philosophy.” 


SCHRAM, FRANKIE, “Een onderzoek naar een methode en de mogelijkheidsvoorwaarden voor een wetenschappelijk verantwoord spreken over God in de Regulae Theologicae van Alanus van Rijsel.” [A study in the method and the conditions of possibility for a scientifically rigorous language of God in the Regulae Theologicae of Alanus of Lille.] 

SCHRODER, JANTINE, “Medelijden: De ambiguïteit van troost en tragiek.” [Pity: the ambiguity of comfort and tragedy.] 

SPEAK, VISHNU, “Phenomenology of Death: A Confrontation between Heidegger and Levinas.” 

TORMANS, ANNEMIE, “Magrittes werk tussen de plooien van het mysterie.” [Magritte’s work between the folds of mystery.] 

UCAR, MERYEM, “Hegel’s Understanding: The Inverted World.” 


UNGER, JASON, “Beings Together Embodied: Moral Taboos and Concern for the Non-Human Other.” 

UPADHYAYA, DHARMESHWAR, “The Face of the Other: A Metaphysical, Ethical and Social Perspective.” 


VAN ITTERBEEK KOBE, “Kritisch denken als opvoedingsideaal en het probleem van indoctrinatie.” [Critical thought as an educational ideal and the problem of indoctrination.] 

VAN LANGENHOVE, ANNE, “Het hongerende lichaam. Het deficit van de incorporatie bij eetstoornissen.” [The starved body. The deficit of incorporation in eating disorders.]
ALUMNI NEWS

Francis REMEDIOS from Edmonton, Canada, who received his PhD in Philosophy from K.U. Leuven was part of the invited faculty of an Interdisciplinary Graduate Summer School and Seminar run by the Institute of Communication, Lund University, Campus Helsingborg. The conference took place from June 5-8, 2004, and was entitled “The Sciences and Humanities in a Changing world.”
OBITUARIES

We regret the passing away of Em. Professor Robert VAN DRIESSCHE on the 19th of August 2004. Professor Van Driessche was a professor of the Hoger Instituut voor Wijsbegeerte and the Faculteit Economische en Toegepaste Economische Wetenschappen. He was born on the 24th of March 1931.

Reverend Dennis A. BRODEUR, STD died on January 1st 2004, after a long illness. Father Brodeur, a priest of the Diocese of Providence, USA, had completed his philosophical and theological studies at K.U.Leuven and was an alumnus of The American College of the Immaculate Conception. In recent years Father Brodeur was an adjunct associate professor of health-care ethics and health management and policy at St. Louis University and published and lectured widely in his fields of specialty. He also served as a Vice-President of S.S.M. Health Care in St. Louis.

Family, friends and colleagues were shocked at the news of the sudden death of Kevin O’BRIEN on April 18, 2004. Kevin was born in Bradford, England on September 21, 1958, but grew up in Canada. After his university studies as a biology major, he took an interest in philosophy. In 1980 he came to the Institute of Philosophy in Leuven, where, in 1988, he received a Doctorate in Philosophy with a dissertation entitled: “Michel Foucault’s Genealogy of the Subject”.

Philosophy played an important part in his life. He had an encyclopaedic knowledge of the subject but was less preoccupied with purely theoretical questions than with practical issues. For Kevin, the real philosophical challenge was to unmask disruptive and deceptive historical realities. To get to the bottom of truth, one needs to detect the lies; every lie of history conceals a deeper lie.

Among his interests, literature, politics and history figure prominently. His professional life developed throughout the nineties in the field of bio-technology. He worked for Plant Genetics Systems in Gent, AgrEvo in Frankfurt, and, having acquired a degree in finance, he became Chief Financial Officer for Cropdesign. His extended travels put him in touch with the hard reality of developing countries, which brought him to offer his services as a volunteer for the Sehgal Foundation, which aims at improving the living condition of poor people in rural parts of India. Kevin had finally settled in Belgium, with his wife Jo Germonpré and their daughter, Caitlin, whom he loved dearly. To honour and remember Kevin, his friend Victor Brias has created a memorial website (http://www.kevinobrienmemorial.com/), with testimonies of his friends, photos and texts.

In Victor’s words: “If there is a lesson that can be learned from Kevin’s death, it is perhaps that there is no such thing as a complete life, but only a full life. Kevin’s life was utterly incomplete, but it was full to the brim. There was never an idle moment in his life. He worked very hard, he studied very hard, and he played
The Thursday Lecture Series of the HIW began on October 2nd this year with Thomas DUDDY’s (University College, Galway) “The Politics of Delight: A Revolutionary Reading of Burke’s Reflections”. The series continued with Mary Margaret McCABE (King’s College, London) on “Socratic Irony and Knowledge of the Self”; Jacques TAMINIAUX (Louvain-la-Neuve) with “Plato’s Legacy in Heidegger’s Reading of Antigone”; Fran O’ROURKE (University College Dublin) about “Aristotle and the Metaphysics of Evolution”; Kevin WILLIAMS (Dublin City University) with “The Religious Dimension of Cultural Initiation: Has it a Place in a Secular World?”; Kurt SALAMUN (Universität Graz) about “Karl Jaspers’s Conception of the Meaning of Life”; and Tom ROCKMORE (Duquesne University) with “Hegel, Idealism and Analytic Philosophy”.

Professor Quentin SKINNER (Faculty of History, Cambridge University) received an honorary doctorate from KULeuven on the 2nd of February. He was a guest at the HIW on February 3rd 2004, giving a lecture on “Philosophy and Laughter” and a seminar on “Thomas Hobbes as a Theorist of Representative Government”.

On 16th February, Prof. Dr. Roberto Hofmeister PICH (Department of Philosophy, Pontifical Catholic University at Porto Alegre, Brasil) presented a seminar-workshop day at the Institute, entitled “John Duns Scotus’ Conception of Science”. The day began with a lecture on “Scotus and the concept of scientific knowledge”, was followed by a seminar on the themes of the lecture, and then in the afternoon a lecture on “Scotus’ account of contingent propositions per se naturalis”.


On March 9th, the Institute celebrated the Saint Thomas feast, beginning with a Eucharistic celebration in the chapel of the
Leo XIII Seminary. Following this, Professor Emeritus Jan AERTSEN (Thomas Institut, Köln) held a lecture about “The Natural Desire for Knowledge. Philosophy and Human Happiness”. A reception and buffet, and a variety show by students of the faculty ensued.

Professor James DODD (Graduate Faculty, New School University, New York) gave the first “Husserl Memorial Lecture” on the 24th of March this year, entitled “Some Remarks on Husserl’s Notion of Einströmen and Innerlichkeit”. It was followed by a reception sponsored by Kluwer Academic Publishers.

On March 26th, Prof. Agnieszka LEKKA-KOWALIK (Catholic University Lublin, Poland) gave a lecture at the Institute on “The Moral Dimension of Science. Are there Things We Should Not Know?” She also held two discussion groups during her visit to the faculty, on the topics of “Research Ethics: Theory and Practice” and “The Question of Forbidden Knowledge”.

Professor Merold WESTPHAL (Fordham University, New York) gave a lecture series from within the framework of the “Religie Heen/Terug” project in March 2004, on “Transcendence and Self-Transcendence”. He held four lectures. Professor William DESMOND responded to the first, “How Not to Talk about God”, held on the 29th of March. Professor André CLOOTS and Professor Martin STONE responded on the 30th of March to “Cosmological Transcendence” and “Epistemic Transcendence” respectively, and finally on April 1st, Professor Ignace VERHACK responded to the presentation on “Ethical/Religious Transcendence”.

At the invitation of the De Wulf-Mansion Centrum, Prof. Mark D. GOSSIAUX (Loyola University, New Orleans) gave a lecture entitled “Guides of Rome and the Real Distinction Between Essence and Existence”, on the 14th of April.

The three voluntary scientific collaborators of Prof. Maarten HOENEN gave the following lectures. On 20th April, Najda GERMAN gave the lecture “Von herme-neutischer Deutung zu axiomatischer Analyse: Jan Aertsen and Samuel Ijsseling

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Valter Neckebrouck (Em. Faculty of Theology and Department of Cultural Anthropology, KULeuven)

Der Paradigmenwechsel im frühhochmittelalterlichen Quadrivium am Beispiel des Hermannus Contractus (1014-1054)

On the 21st of April, Donald AINSLIE (University of Toronto) was the guest lecture in a doctoral seminar at the HIW on the theme of “Naturalism and Ethics in David Hume”, based on Hume’s “The Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals”. Prof. AINSLIE spoke about “Character Traits and the Humean Approach to Ethics”.

Also on the 21st of April, Prof. Willem VAN REIJEN (Universiteit Utrecht) was the guest of the Centre for Ethics and Social and Political Philosophy, speaking on “Walter Benjamin. De Logica van de Extremen. Messianisme en Historisch Materialisme”. [Walter Benjamin, The Logic of Extremes. Messianism and Historical Materialism]

On the 23rd of April, Prof. Herman PARRET became emeritus. A study day on the theme of “Beroering and Ontroering. Over de zinnelijkheid van het gemoed” [Affections and Disturbances. On the sensuality of the heart], and his valedictory address marked the occasion. The study day took place at the Institute, and included the following lectures. Sémir BADIR (Université de Liège), Nathalie ROELENS (Universiteit Antwerpen and Universiteit Nijmegen), Valeer Neckebrouck (Em. Faculty of Theology and Department of Cultural Anthropology, KULeuven)


Nathalie Roelens
(University of Toronto and University of Nijmegen),
of the heart.) Prof. André VAN DE PUTTE, Dean of the HIW, gave the closing address. This was followed by a concert of contemporary music and a reception.

A symposium entitled “Rituelen” [Rituals], from within the framework of the “Religie Heen/Terug” project, took place at the Institute on the 24th of April. The day was organized through the cooperation of KULeuven and Universiteit Antwerpen. Prof. André VAN DE PUTTE, Dean of the HIW, gave the welcoming address. The following presentations then took place. Valeer NECKEBROUCK (Em. Faculty of Theology and Department of Cultural Anthropology, KULeuven), “Kerkgangers, berenjagers en maskers. Ritueel en hypocrisie” [Churchgoers, bearhunters and masks. Ritual and Hypocrisy.]; Walter WEYNS (Universiteit Antwerpen), “Mis en Ritueel” [Mass and Ritual]; Wouter E.A. VAN BEEK (Universtiteit van Utrecht and the Afrika Studiecentrum of Leiden), “De Boodschap van het Ritueel” [The Message of Ritual]; Paul CORTOIS (HIW); “De vorm van het ritueel” [The form of ritual]. Prof. Herman DE DIJN (HIW) gave the closing address.

The Wijsgerig Gezelschap of Leuven sponsored a study day on the 8th of May. On the subject of “Taboos, monsters en loterijen” [Taboos, monsters and lotteries], based on the book of the same name by Professor Herman DE DIJN (HIW), the day took the form of various papers, to which Prof. Herman DE DIJN (HIW) responded individually. Papers were given by Maurice WEYEMBERGH (Brussel), Gerard DE VRIES (Amsterdam), and Hans ACHTERHUIS (Twente).

Professor Mark WRATHALL (Brigham Young University, USA), as a guest for the Centre for Ethics and Social and Political Philosophy, gave a lecture at the Institute on May 10th. It was entitled “The Phenomenology of Social Rules”.

The second part of an international colloquium, organized by the De Wulf-Mansion Centrum (K.U.Leuven) and the Centre De Wulf-Mansion (Louvain-la-Neuve), took place
at the Institute on the 11th of May. The conference was on the theme of “Philia in Aristotle’s Philosophy”. The following participants made presentations: P. DESTREE (Louvain-la-Neuve), D. HUTCHINSON (Toronto), Th. GONTIER (Nice), G. FIASSE (McGill, Montréal), C. RAPP (Berlin), T. IRWIN (Cornell), and C. STEEL (K.U. Leuven). The first part of the colloquium took place on the 16th of May and was organized in Louvain-la-Neuve. The following made presentations on that day: C. NATALI (Venezia), P. MOREL (Paris), J.-L. PERILLIE (Montpellier), P. KONTOS (Patras), A. STEVENS (Liège), M. ZINGANO (Sao Paulo), D. KONSTAN (Brown).

On May 12th, Professor Pavlos KONTOS (University of Patras, Greece) gave a lecture at the HIW entitled “Phenomenology of Moral Action. From Aristotle to Husserl”. He was a guest of the Husserl-Archives, the Centre for Phenomenology, and the De Wulf-Mansion Centre.

On the 13th of May, Dr. Ludwig GEIJSEN (VIDI-scientific researcher Holland), as a guest of the Centre for Metaphysics and Modern Philosophy, gave a lecture entitled “Die Unterscheidung im Wesen. Een Archeologie van Schellings Freiheitsschrift”. [The Distinction between beings. An archaeology of Schelling’s Freiheitsschrift.]

Under the auspices of the Leuven Medieval Institute and within the framework of the research project “Translating biological treatises in the Middle Ages: a comparative study of translators and their strategies in the learned language and the vernacular”, an international colloquium on medieval translation of treatises on natural sciences took place at the KULeuven from the 26th until the 29th of May, 2004. The colloquium was entitled “Science Translated: Latin and Vernacular Translations of Scientific Treatises in Medieval Europe”. On the 26th, Ludo MELIS (Dean of the Faculty of Arts) and Carlos STEEL (HIW, Chairman of the Institute of Medieval Studies) gave the opening addresses, and then José LAMBERT (Chairman of the CETRA centre of Science et traduction) offered introductory remarks. Then Joëlle Ducos (Bordeaux) gave the keynote lecture “Traduire la science en langue vernaculaire: du texte au mot” [Translating science into vernacular language: from text to word]. This was followed by a lecture by Craig Martin (Oklahoma), entitled “Translations and Transliterations: A Comparison of the Reception of Scientific Terminology in the Renaissance and Medieval Latin Aristotle”. On the 27th, David LANGSLOW (Manchester) gave the keynote lecture “Translation, adaptation and appropriation: linguistic and sociolinguistic aspects of Latin medical texts”, followed by Tony HUNT (Oxford) with “The Old French Translation of the ‘Four Master Gloss’ (Cirurgia) in Ms. Londone, Wellcome Historical Medical Library 54b”, Iolanda VENTURA (Salerno) on “Translating, Commenting, Retranslating: the medical sections of Pseudo-Aristotelian Problematata and their readers”, Annelies BLOEM (Leuven) with “A propos de la ‘matere esmeue’ dans les ‘Problemes’ d’Evrart de Conty: etude distributionnelle et variationnelle des verbes ‘mouvoir’ et ‘esmouvoir’ en moyen français” [On ‘matere esmeu’ in the ‘Problemes’ of Evrart de Conty: etude distributionnelle et variationnelle des verbes ‘mouvoir’ et ‘esmouvoir’ en moyen français], Orlanda LIE (Utrecht) on “Women Medicine in Middle Dutch”, Marianne ELSAKKERS (Utrecht) about “The Medieval Latin and Vernacular Vocabulary of
Embriology and Abortion”, Outi MERISALO (Jyväskulä) and Päivi PAHTA (Helsinki) with “Tracing the Trail of Transmission: the Pseudo-Galenic ‘De spermate’ in Latin and Vernacular”, and Laurence MOULINIER-BROGI (Paris) about “Les traductions vernaculaires de traits d’uroscopie dans l’Occident medieval: quelques exemples” [The vernacular translations of the texts of uroscopy in the medieval west: some examples]. On Friday the 28th Dirk GEERAERTS (Leuven) gave the third keynote lecture of the conference, “A Map of Diachronic Onomasiology”. Then Charles BURNETT (London) spoke about “Scientific Translations from Arabic: A Question of Revision”, followed by Hiltrud GERNER (Nancy) on “La traduction de quelques termes d’astronomie du ‘Compendium theologicae veritatis’ (c. 1265) dans ‘Le Somme abregiet de theologie’ (1481)” [Translating some of the astronomical terms of the ‘Compendium theologicae veritatis’ (c. 1265) in ‘Le Somme abregiet de theologie’ (1481)], and Silvia TONIATO (Torino) about “Le lexique mathématique au Moyen Age entre latin et langues vernaculaires: quelques problèmes posés par les traductions” [The mathematical lexicon of the Middle Ages between Latin and vernacular languages: some problems posed by the translations]. Two concurrent sessions followed, the presentations of which were: Sarah MARRUNCHEDDU (Torino): “La traduction française du ‘Moamin’ dans ses rapports avec la version latine de Théodore d’Antioche” [The French translation of ‘Moamin’ compared with the Latin version of Théodore d’Antioche]; Francesco CAPACCIONI (Torino): “‘Infiniti ingegni da’ più non saputi’. The First Italian Translation of Pietro Crescenzi’s ‘Ruralia comode’ (Book X)”; Geraldine VEYSSEYRE (Nice): “‘Le Libre des propriétés des choses’ de Jean Corbechon (livre VI), ou les voies de la vulgarisation” [‘Le Libre des propriétés des choses’ of Jean Corbechon (livre VI), or the ways of vulgarisation]; Ilya DINES (Jerusalem): “‘Casus Chyrogrilli’ in the Middle Ages”; Michelle REICHERT (Bruxelles): “Hermann de Carinthie and Robert de Chester, deux traducteurs du XIIe siècle dans la vallée de l’Ebre et de leurs affiliations institutionnelles sur le choix et la dissémination de leurs traductions latines de travaux scientifiques” [Hermann de Carinthie and Robert de Chester, two translators of the twelfth century in the valley of the Ebre and their institutional affiliations of choice and the dissemination of their Latin translation of scientific texts]; Carla DI MARTINO (Paris): “Epitome du Livre du sens et du sensible d’Averroès : étude lexicale et doctrinale de la traduction latine face à face du texte arabe” [The epitome of the book of sense and of the sensible] of Averroes: a lexical and doctrinal study of the Latin translation side by side with the arab text]; José Manuel FRADEJAS RUEDA (Valladolid): “On the Arabic Text and the Latin Translations of the ‘Calendar of Cordova’”; An SMETS (Leuven) and M. TOULAN (Paris): “Les accessoires des faucons et des fauconniers dans les traductions françaises du ‘De arte venandi’ de Frédéric II et du ‘De falconibus’ d’Albert le Grand” [The accessories of falcons and falconers in the french translations of ‘De arte venandi’ of Frédéric II and of ‘De falconibus’ of Albert the Great]. On 29th May, the last day of the conference, Alessandro VITALE BROVARONE (Torino) gave the keynote lecture, entitled “Traduire des mots et transportes des choses: literature savante et experience marchande dans la formation du lexique” [To translate the words and movements of things: learned litera-
ture and merchant experience in the formation of the dictionary]. Maria FREDRIKSSON (Leuven) then presented "What Bird so sings, yet so does Wail?". Bird Names in William of Moerbeke’s Latin translation of Aristotle’s ‘Historia animalium’, then Pieter BEULLENS (Leuven) gave “Aristotle, his Translators and the Formation of Ichthyologic Nomenclature”, Robert HALLEUX (Liège) spoke about “La ‘Mappae clavicula’ et ses originaux grecs” [The ‘Mappae clavicula’ and its Greek origins], and finally Anthony PYM (Tarragona) presented “The Medieval and the Postmodern in Translation Studies”. The colloquium was organized with the support of the Fonds voor Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek – Vlaanderen, and the Faculteit Letteren, Hoger Instituut voor Wijsbegeerte, Department Linguistik and Aristeles Latinus, Instituut voor Middeleeuwse studies, Cetra: The Leuven Research Center for Translation, Communication and Cultures of the KULeuven.

Through the collaboration of Leuven and Nijmegen, a workshop entitled “Private en Publieke Ruimte” [Private and Public Space] took place on the 3rd and 4th of June, 2004. The workshop comprised presentations with responses and discussions. Erik CLAES began with “Bestraffing, Menselijke waardigheid” [Punishment, Human Dignity], to whom Janske HERMENS (Nijmegen) and Bert INGELAERE (Leuven) responded. Louis LOGISTER spoke of “Privaat en publiek in de politieke filosofie van John Dewey” [Private and Public in the Political Philosophy of John Dewey], to which paper Aagje IEVEN (Leuven) and Jos PHILIPS (Nijmegen) responded. Katia VAN HEMELRYCK gave “Couanier van de liberale democratie. Rorty’s Distinction between the public and the private”, responded to by Marinus SCHOEMAN (Nijmegen) and Tim HEYSSE (Leuven). Marin TERPSTRA presented “Religie als publieke zaak. Een bespreking van Ch. Taylors opvatting van religie in het licht van het onderscheid tussen publiek en privat” [Religion as public business. A discussion of Charles Taylor’s view of religion in light of the distinction between the public and the private], to which Helder DE SCHUTTER (Leuven) and Inigo BOCKEN (Nijmegen) responded. Steffan RUMMENS spoke of “Neutraliteit ter discussie. Een deliberatief model van de Grens tussen het publieke en het private” [Neutrality of discussion. A deliberative model of the boundary between the public and the private], responded to by Deniz COSKUN (Nijmegen) and Bart ENGELEN (Leuven). Finally, Machiel KARSKENS presented “Publiek privé-gedrag: ‘civil society’ als handelingsruimte en omgangsvorm” [Public private behaviour: ‘civil society’ as space for maneuver and manners], to which Ronald TINNEVELT (Leuven) and Kees KLOP (Nijmegen) responded.

From the 1st until the 3rd of September, 2004, an interdisciplinary workshop on “Textual Criticism and Genetics – Confronting Methods”, took place at KULeuven and Louvain-la-Neuve. On the 1st of September, P. BARET (chair of the Research Unit in genetics, UCL) welcomed the participants. He was followed by P. ROBINSON (De Montfort University, UK) and C. HOWE (Cambridge University, UK), who gave the introductory lecture entitled “Analysis of an artificial manuscript tradition”. They were followed by M. STOLZ (Universität Basel, Switzerland), with “Unrooted trees and networks. Perspectives in stemmatology”, then A. BOZZI (C.N.R. Pisa, Italy) and M. S.
CORRADINI (Università di Pisa, Italy) with “The DiPhiloS workstation for critical apparatus management: some experiments on medieval provençal texts”, followed by A. LÜDELING (University of Berlin, Germany), with “A database for studying language change of German”, B. ROOSEN (Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Belgium), “How to cope with a large manuscript tradition without a computer?”, A. GRIBOMONT (Université catholique de Louvain, Belgium) with “The edition of a Byzantine magical text, the Treatise of Salomon”, P. CANETTIERI (Università di Roma “La Sapienza”, Italy), with “Two-sided criticism in texts and genetics”, M. VERWEIJ (Royal Library, Belgium) on “Stemmatological problems in small subgroups of the Summa de virtutibus (ca. 1245) of Guillelmus Peraldus”, W. PHILLIPS-RODRÍGUEZ (Cambridge University, UK), about “Editing A Sanskrit Epic: Some Genetic Considerations About Scripts”, and M. DUBUISSON (Université catholique de Louvain, Belgium) with “Prototype of a software for critical editions”. The 2nd of September began with a workshop introduced by A.-C. LANTIN (Université catholique de Louvain, Belgium) and participated in by P. ROBINSON (Leicester University, UK), P. CANETTIERI (Università di Roma “La Sapienza”, Italy), J. NORET (Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Belgium), T. SWAENEPOEL (Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Belgium), C. PEERSMAN (Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Belgium), M. SPENCER (Halifax), H. WINDRAM (Cambridge University, UK), A. DRESS and M. ALBU (Universität Bielefeld). C. MACÉ (Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Belgium) then guided discussion and closed the workshop. A series of papers followed. H. WINDRAM (Cambridge University, UK) presented “Recombination in Manuscript Traditions”, then A. GOFFEAU and B. DE HERTOGH (Université catholique de Louvain, Belgium) spoke of “How biologists read and interpret trees”, followed by P. BARET (Université catholique de Louvain, Belgium) and C. MACÉ (Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Belgium) on “Mechanisms of Evolution of Beings and Texts”, D. VAN HULLE (Universiteit Antwerpen, Belgium) about “Modern authors as genetic engineers”, W. VAN MIERLO (University of London, UK) with “Endogenous and exogenous criticism: James Joyce’s notes for Ulysses and Finnegans Wake”, B. BORDALEJO (Leicester University, UK) on “Part and Whole in the Transmission of the Canterbury Tales”, and A. DRESS (Max-Planck-Institut Leipzig, Germany) with “Static and Dynamic Aspects of (Dis-) Similarity”. Conclusions were given by P. Baret and C. Macé.
The Institute of Philosophy is also the editor of a quarterly journal: the Tijdschrift voor Filosofie. For the last 65 years this journal has published thematic articles and studies in the field of philosophy, as well as studies on the history of philosophy. In addition to this, the journal is also concerned with contemporary trends of thought and current debates, offering a wide range of philosophical voices.

Dutch, English, French and German contributions are accepted. Every article is accompanied by a summary in English (when necessary). Some recent articles in English include:


INSTITUTE NEWS 2004-2005


A conference on “Cosmopolitanism: the Kantian Legacy” took place at the Institute from the 18th until the 20th of November. The following speakers participated in the conference. The keynote speakers were Nicholas CAPALDI, Georg GEISMANN, Pauline KLEINGELD, James MARSH, Thomas MERTENS, and Martin MOORS. Speakers in the parallel sessions were Garth GREEN, Andrew KELLEY, Stephen LAKE, Rebecka LETTEVALL, Liu ZHE, Donald LOOSE, Sylvie LORIAUX, Karel MOM, Tom ROCKMORE, Irmgard SCHERER, Gerrit STEUNEBRINK, Ronald TINNEVELT, Paul VAN DEN BERG. Professor Frans DE WACHTER closed the conference with his valedictory lecture, which

was introduced by Professor André VAN DE PUTTE. An interview which took place after the conference, as well as Professor De Wachter’s address will be included in the next alumni newsletter.

Godfried Cardinal Danneels


On the 1st of December, Prof. Patricia H. WERHANE (De Paul University) gave a paper at the Institute, entitled “Wide Reflective Equilibrium as a Methodology in Applied Ethics”. On the 2nd and 3rd of December, Dr. Raf De CLERCQ and Professor Leon HORSTEN organized a two-day conference on the “Criteria of Identity” at the Institute of Philosophy. The following speakers participated: Delia GRAFF (Cornell), Katharine HAWLEY (Saint Andrews), Hannes LEITGEB (Salzburg), Jonathan LOWE (Durham), Harold NOONAN (Birmingham), David WIGGINS (Oxford), Ted SIDER (Rutgers).

Professor Richard KEARNEY (Boston College) will hold the Cardinal Mercier Chair this academic year. On the 1st of March he will give his inaugural lecture on “Narrating Desire. From Plato’s Symposium to the Song of Songs”. On the 2nd of March he will speak about “Narrating Terror. Philosophy after 9/11”. He will give two seminars, one on the 3rd and one on the 4th of March, respectively entitled “Narrating pain, Trauma and Catharsis” and “Narrating the Sacred. A Poetics of Epiphany”.

On the 8th of March, Professor Martin STONE (Institute of Philosophy) will give the Saint Thomas Feast lecture, entitled “Truth, Deception, and Lies: Lessons from the Casuistical Tradition”.

William Desmond and Martin Stone
Professor Herman DE DIJN (HIW) took part in a symposium entitled “Spinoza Nu” [Spinoza Now] on the 5th of November 2004. The symposium was organized by the “Stichting Koninklijk Paleis te Amsterdam” [The Royal Palace Foundation of Amsterdam], which gives two annual cultural and/or scientific symposia. The hostess of the occasion was Her Majest Queen Beatrix. The honorary guest was the British Professor Dr. Jonathan ISRAEL (Professor in Modern European History in the Institute for Advanced Studies/School for Historical Studies in Princeton). Prof. Dr. Herman De Dijn gave a presentation on “Spinoza on Knowledge and Religion”.

Visiting Researchers at the Institute

2003-2004
Martina Roesner
(Université de Paris IV – Sorbonne)
Lea Takacs (Charles University Prague)
Michela Summa (University of Pariva)
Gabriela Baptist (University of Cagliari)
Önay Sözer (University of Istanbul)
Gina Zavota (Kent State University)
Reza Rokoee Haghighi
(Université de Paris WII)
Aengus Daly (Dublin)
Gordon Wilson
(University of North Carolina, Asheville)
Stuart Rennie (University of North Carolina, Greensboro)

Mark van Atten (Parijs)
Mark Gossiaux
(Loyola University, New Orleans)
Alia Al-Saji (McGill University, Montreal)
Marinus Schoeman (Universiteit Pretoria)
Seong Ha Hong (Woosuk University, Korea)
Brett Lockspeiser (Stanford University)
Tess Hand-Bender (Stanford University)
Antonio Garganou Gargano
(Universiteir Federico II Napels)
Bram Ieden (Universiteit Leiden)

2004-2005
Julien Farges (Université Paris IV-Sorbonne)
Lea Takacs (Charles University, Prague)
Keith Robinson (Central Michigan University)
Ishitiyague Haji
(University of Minnesota, Morris)
Willem van der Merwe
(Universiteit Stellenbosch)
Przemyslaw Gut
(Katolicki Uniwersytet Lubelski)
Valentina Tursini
(Libera Università degli Studi di Urbino)
Arkadiusz Gut
(Katolick Uniwersytet Lubelski)
Elena Nikolajevna Ichtchenko
(Voronezh State University)
Tsuyoshi Teramoto
(Universität Würzburg)
MISSING ALUMNI ADDRESSES

Augusty Joy
Bendixen Arthur
Bertocci Jill
Blackburn Christine E.
Boedeker Edgar
Boelen Bernard
Boyle Jerome Michael
Brockman Michael
Burke Patrick
Caliguiri John
Campbell Shannon
Carella Michael J.
Carlsen Andrea
Cassidy Matthew
Chung Mary
Connally Tom
Crossman Peter
Donnelly David
Dumont S.D.
Elliot Jane
Fennessy John
Fitzgerald John J.
Fitzpatrick Neil
Gangbar Steven
Ghougassian John
Goncalves Teresa
Gorman Kevin
Gregory Brad
Hadley Douglas W.
Haffner Gerard
Harmsen Alexander E.
Harvey Robert
Howle Vanessa
Johnson Robert
Klitzer Ernest
Komorjai L.

Lipinski Elizabeth
Lozano Ríos Carlos
Maguinnes Donal
Mallon Thomas Patrick
Mandagi Marsellinus
Marsh John
Melachrinu Christina
Mitchko James
Moon Hoi Lee
Moulton Allan
Navickas Joseph L.
Ndubuisi Maureen
Nlandu Basinsa
O’Liai Simon
Palenske Debra
Pareira J.
Pierce Ashley
Pillepich Ann
Poku Robert Kyei
Purdy James
Ramsey John
Reamy R. Derek
Renner Gregory
Sears Aliman
Skarda Christine
Speck David
Spotton William
Stromberg Stephanie
Tavuzzi Marino
Tingley John
Tisdale Elisabeth
Walsh Joseph M.
Washington Debra
Whang Pil-Ho
Zegwaart, Huibert
FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE AT THE INSTITUTE

Assistantships
Description: There are a number of assistantships assigned to the Institute of Philosophy by the Rector of the University, or awarded to the Institute by the Belgian National Science Foundation. These assistantships are assigned to individual research departments. They carry with them both research and teaching responsibilities. Qualifications: A Master’s Degree from the Institute of Philosophy and demonstrated exceptional scholarly promise. The National Science foundation Awards also require European Community citizenship. Number: The number varies according to the availability of funds. Stipend: The assistantships are awarded on both a full-time and a part-time basis. They carry with them a monthly salary. Tenure: One to six academic years. Application: The available assistantships are announced regularly in university publications. Application is made through the Personnel Office of the University.

Stipends for the International Program
Description: To gain teaching and academic experience in the BA Program, as deemed necessary by the Director of the International Program. Qualifications: Prior to being offered a stipend, applicants must have received their Master’s Degree, and been accepted as possible doctoral candidates. Applicants must have an excellent knowledge of English grammar and composition. Number: 3 stipends. Tenure: One academic year, renewable. Application: Applications, together with an official transcript and a letter of reference, must be received no later than May 1st.

Katholieke Universiteit Leuven Doctoral Scholarships
Description: The University awards Doctoral Fellowships for exceptional doctoral candidates who have been selected and put forward by a faculty member of the University. The intention is to stimulate researchers of an exceptionally high calibre. These fellowships are usually reserved for students nearing the completion of their doctoral studies. Qualifications: Applicants must be doctoral students at a faculty of the University, nearing the completion of their studies. Number: Depends on the availability of funds for a particular year. Stipend: Full tuition, plus a stipend of maximum 750 euros per month (unmarried), 1,000 euros (married). Tenure: One year, once renewable. Application: Applications supporting the candidate are submitted by a professor of the University. The candidate’s curriculum vitae and a short description of the research is required. The deadline is February 1st.

Katholieke Universiteit Leuven Post-Doctoral Fellowships
Description: The University awards post-doctoral fellowships for exceptional foreign scholars wishing to come to Leuven for a period of research. Junior Fellowships are available to holders of a doctoral degree with a professorial appointment at a college or university.
Qualifications: Candidates must have a doctorate, must be invited by a University faculty and be nominated by a professor of the University.

Number: Depends on availability of funds for a particular year. Stipend: Junior fellows receive a stipend of 1250 euros per month (unmarried), 1500 euros per month (married). Senior Fellows receive a stipend of 1750 euros per month (married or unmarried). Fellows may also apply to have their travel expenses reimbursed. Tenure: Up to one academic year depending on the length of the research project. Renewable. Application: Application forms must be filled out and submitted by a professor of the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven together with the curriculum vitae of the candidate and a brief description of the proposed research.

Developing World Scholarships from the K.U. Leuven

Description: These scholarships are available to students from developing countries (Eastern Europe and former Soviet Union countries are not included). They are available for candidates wishing to study in the Master and Doctoral Programs, and for candidates engaged in post-doctoral research. Qualifications: The applicant must be a citizen of a developing country, holder of a university degree, and 30 years of age or younger. The applicant must not be studying or already have studied in an industrialized country (including Belgium). Further information on qualifications is available from the International Centre of the University. Number: Depends on applications and availability of funds. Stipend: Full tuition, plus an additional stipend ranging from 445 to 710 euros per month. Some costs will be reimbursed. Tenure: Up to 4 years. Application: Forms are available from the Office for International Relations, International Centre, Naamsestraat 22, Leuven B-3000, Belgium. tel. 32-16-32 40 24; fax 32-16-32 40 14. Applications must be received no later than November 30 of the previous academic year.

Fulbright Fellowships and Grants

Description: A variety of fellowships and grants are available through the Fulbright Commission for study and travel in Belgium. Awards are made for graduate study (Master’s and Doctoral work) and for postgraduate work. There are also teaching and research fellowships available for scholars. Qualifications: Applicants must be United States citizens, not currently living in Belgium or Luxembourg. Number: Open. Stipend: Depends on the Fellowship or Grant awarded. Tenure: This also depends on the individual case. Application: You must apply through the Fulbright Program Adviser on your home campus in the United States. At-large applicants must apply through the US Student Programs Division, Institute of International Education, 809 United Nations Plaza, New York, NY, 10017-3580; tel. 212-984-5330. The deadline is October 31st of the previous academic year.

The Belgian-American Educational Foundation Fellowships

Description: The Belgian American Educational Foundation (BAEF) encourages applications for fellowships for advanced study or research during the academic year 2004-2005, at a Belgian university or institution of higher learning. Qualifications: Applicants must be citizens of the United States and either have a Masters degree or equivalent degree, or be working towards a Ph.D. or equivalent degree. Preference is given to applicants under the age of 30 with
a reading and speaking knowledge of Dutch, French, or German. BAEF Fellows must reside in Belgium during the tenure of their fellowship. **Number:** Eight. **Stipend:** $17,000. If the fellow chooses to remain less than the full 12 months, the stipend will be prorated accordingly. The fellowship period must be at least 6 months. **Tenure:** One year. **Application:** Applicants should make their own arrangements to register or affiliate with a Belgian university or research institution. In addition to the application form, applicants must furnish 3 letters of recommendation, a letter of nomination from the Dean or his or her school, a brief biographical statement, and a statement of purpose. Application forms can be downloaded from the BAEF website at: [http://www.baef.be/content/fellowships_us_to_bel.html](http://www.baef.be/content/fellowships_us_to_bel.html). For Application blanks or additional information contact the Foundation at the above address, call 203-777-5765, or email: emile.boulpaep@yale.edu. Completed applications are due no later than January 31, 2004.

**The Flemish Community Fellowships**

**Description:** These fellowships are offered to students at a variety of levels who wish to spend a year or more at a university in the Flemish Community. **Qualifications:** Varies from country to country. **Number:** Also variable. In the United States, there are 5 scholarships available annually. **Tenure:** Ten months (October through July), twice renewable. **Application:** In the United States, applications are available from the Belgian Embassy, 3330 Garfield St., NW, Washington, DC, 20008. Tel. 202-333-6900; fax 301-229-7220. In other countries, contact your own Ministry of Education. The deadline is February 1 of the previous academic year.

**DeRance Scholarship**

**Description:** Scholarships available for seminarians or priests throughout the world who wish to study philosophy at the Institute of Philosophy. **Qualifications:** A Catholic seminarian or priest with sufficient academic background and acceptance by the community at the American College, Leuven. **Number:** 5 per year. **Tenure:** 1 year, renewable. **Stipend:** Full tuition, plus room and board at the American College. **Application:** Applications are available from the Rector, The American College, Naamsestraat 100, B-3000 Leuven, Belgium. Tel. 32-16-22 19 55; fax 32-16-23 14 17. The deadline for applications is May 30th of the previous academic year.

**United States Veterans Training Benefits**

**Description:** The Bachelors, Masters, and Doctoral Programs at the Institute of Philosophy have all been approved by the Veterans Administration for awards for qualified US veterans and their dependents. **Qualification:** Determined by the US Veterans Administration. **Number:** Open. **Stipend:** Determined by the US Veterans Administration. **Tenure:** Determined by the US Veterans Administration. **Application:** Write to the US Veterans Administration, Department of Veterans Benefits, Washington DC, 20420.

**United States and Canadian Government Student Loans**

**Description:** The Institute of Philosophy, K.U.Leuven is an approved school within the US and Canadian Government Student Loans Programs. US and Canadian students may apply for a student loan through the K.U.Leuven. **Qualifications:** Applicants must be
US or Canadian citizens. Number: Unlimited. Stipend: The amount of the loan depends on the amount requested by the student and the limits set by the respective governments. Tenure: One academic year (loans must be repaid when the student has completed his/her education). Application: Applications are available in the United States through the Financial Aid Office at your home campus or through a bank. The school code number for US applicants is 006671. The section on the form to be completed by the school or institution can be sent to the following address once the section to be filled in by the student is complete: Edmund Guzman, Office for International Students, Naamsestraat 22, 3000 Leuven, Belgium. Tel. 32-(0)16-32-37-64; Fax. 32-(0)16-32-37-73.

**SOROS Foundation Scholarships**

Description: Scholarships for exceptional Hungarian researchers to pursue advanced studies at an approved university. Qualification: Approval by the selection committee in Budapest. Number: Approximately 8 per year. Stipend: 675 euros per month. Tenure: One academic year. Application: For further information and application forms, write to The SOROS Foundation Secretariat, P.O. Box 596, H-158 Budapest, Hungary.

**ERASMUS Program**

The Erasmus exchange programme gives EU students the opportunity to study abroad for one semester or for an entire academic year. Within the framework of bilateral exchange agreements, students may choose a university in a fellow EU country, and have the courses they follow abroad taken up in their Leuven study curriculum.

The H.I.W. currently has exchange agree-
Katholieke Universiteit Leuven
Institute of Philosophy
Alumni Association Membership Form

If you are not already a member, or if you have recently changed your address, please take a moment to fill out this form and join our Alumni Association. As a member of the association, you will receive a copy of the Alumni Newsletter and your name and address will be included in our Alumni Directory (Please Print Legibly).

Name: ..............................................

Date and Place of Birth: ..............

Profession / Title: ............................

Home (Permanent) Address: ...........

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Telephone: ........................................

Which degrees did you earn from the Institute Philosophy?

[ ] BA Year: .............................................................. ..............................................................

[ ] MA Year: .............................................................. ..............................................................

[ ] PhD Year: .............................................................. ..............................................................

[ ] Other Year: .............................................................. ..............................................................

Other Education (degrees from other colleges of or universities / Year):

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Do you have any news for the next issue of the NEWSLETTER? (e.g. new employment, promotions, publications, activities, etc.). Attach separate pages if necessary.

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The Leuven Philosophy Newsletter
c/o Ingrid Lombaerts
Kardinaal Mercierplein 2, B-3000 Leuven, Belgium
Fax [32] (0) 16 32 63 22
DO YOU NEED YOUR DIPLOMA?

A diploma is an important and useful document, yet some alumni/ae have yet to claim theirs.
If you are in Leuven, you can claim your diploma by coming to the secretariat.
If that is not possible, you can order your diploma to be sent to you by mail.
Simply fill in the form below and send it to

Prof. William Desmond,
International Program,
Kardinaal Mercierplein 2,
B-3000 Leuven,
Belgium.

Please include US$25 to cover the cost of processing and registered mail.
This fee can be sent as a cheque payable to the Institute of Philosophy, K.U.Leuven.

REQUEST FOR A DIPLOMA

Name and Surname: ............................................................................................................................................

Street Address: ..................................................................................................................................................

City and Postal Code: ........................................................................................................................................

Country: .........................................................................................................................................................

Diploma(s) Requested: ........................................................................................................................................