The Leuven Philosophy Newsletter is an annual publication dedicated to the men and women, alumni and alumnae, of the Institute of Philosophy.

The Newsletter welcomes all reader correspondence. Please write to:

The Leuven Philosophy Newsletter
Kardinaal Mercierplein 2
B-3000 Leuven
Belgium

Managing Editor:
Ines Van Houtte

Co-editors:
Emilia Brodencova
Margherita Tonon

Production: Dr. A. Tallon
Marquette University Press
Milwaukee WI
53233 USA

## CONTENTS

| A WORD OF INTRODUCTION FROM DEAN ANTOON VANDEVELDE | 2 |
| NEW FACULTY MEMBERS AT THE INSTITUTE OF PHILOSOPHY: PROFESSOR ROLAND BREEUR, PROFESSOR ANDREAS DE BLOCK AND PROFESSOR HELDER DE SCHUTTER | 5 |
| AN INTERVIEW WITH PROFESSOR ISO KERN | 10 |
| PROFESSOR DE DIJN BECOMES EMERITUS PROFESSOR | 15 |
| PROFESSOR ANDRÉ VAN DE PUTTE BECOMES EMERITUS PROFESSOR | 19 |
| A REPORT OF THE CONFERENCE “IN SEARCH OF A LOST LIBERALISM” | 26 |
| IN MEMORIAM PATRICIA DE MARTELAERE | 31 |
| LOOKING FOR GOOD LIFE: AN INTERVIEW WITH STEVEN NADLER | 33 |
| PHENOMENOLOGY — SCIENCE — PHILOSOPHY: CONFERENCE IN OCCASION OF EDMUND HUSSERL’S 150TH BIRTHDAY | 41 |
| INTERVIEW WITH CHRISTINE KORSGAARD, HOLDER OF THE CARDINAL MERCIER CHAIR 2009 | 51 |
| A REPORT OF ROSI BRAIDOTTI’S LECTURE “IMMANENCE AFTER SIMONE DE BEAUVIOR” | 57 |
| INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE: “HISTORICAL EPistemology” | 61 |
| DOCTORAL DISSERTATIONS 2007-2008 | 63 |
| DOCTORAL DISSERTATIONS 2008-2009 | 86 |
| NEWS 2008-2009 | 94 |
| FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE AT THE INSTITUTE | 99 |
Although the buildings of the Institute of Philosophy remain the same, its staff is rapidly changing. During the last years, we made substantial changes to the structure of our administration. Most of our administrative staff are young university graduates, often philosophers themselves. They know how to handle computers, they are not afraid of technical innovations, they know how to deal with the rapid changes our university is undergoing: the new Exam Administration System, the Modular Degree Scheme (a system by which degrees are obtained via a process of credit accumulation), the conversion of our one-year-Master into a two-year-Master in Philosophy, etc.

Our faculty staff is also rapidly changing. Professor Van de Putte and Professor De Dijn became emeriti professors last year. Professor De Martelaere died in March 2009. This year, Professor Cruysberghs, Professor Steel, Professor van Brakel, Professor Verhack and Professor Rob Devos will leave the Institute. Next year, we’ll take leave of Professor Bernet and Professor Burms, and one year later, of Professor Moors. Professor Horsten resigned and is now Professor of Philosophy at the University of Bristol. Professor Stone also left the K.U.Leuven. This year and next year, we’ll welcome ten new professors in total. Ten new faculty members from a total of 26 full-time professors: in two years time, we’ll replace more than one third of our academic staff. Young
researchers from the Institute will become professors, and more experienced researchers from other universities will join our staff. We hope that among them will be at least one woman. In this issue of the Newsletter, you can read interviews with Professor Breeur and Professor De Block, who became faculty members in 2008, and with Helder De Schutter, who was appointed Professor of Political Philosophy in 2009. Next year, there will certainly be more of these interviews.

The faces of our students also change, although they remain twenty forever. Last year, we counted 750 students – almost a record. The international program, in particular, attracted a lot of students. In the Dutch program, we had 50 new undergraduate students instead of 30, which made Philosophy the biggest winner of all K.U.Leuven faculties and brought us some free publicity in the Belgian newspapers. In 2011, we hope to start our two-year-Master. We’re working on a proposal, together with the other Philosophy departments in Flanders. Students will be able to choose one of three study tracks: an English research Master (based on our MPhil program), a Dutch teaching Master, and a Dutch socio-cultural Master. Philosophy is a two-year program in most other countries. So let’s hope the Minister of Education approves our plan.

As before, the Institute of Philosophy remains a place where one philosophical debate or lecture succeeds another. In this issue of the Newsletter, you’ll find interviews with Iso Kern, who delivered the Husserl memorial Lecture in 2008, with Christine Korsgaard, who held the Mercier Chair in 2009, and with Steven Nadler, who gave the Saint Thomas Lecture. You’ll also find reports of some of the major conferences and colloquia that took place at the Institute.

Everything changes, and everything remains the same. Philosophers have been trying for ages to unravel the tangle of identity and difference. Science moves forward, but does philosophy? Or is she only evolving, or even less than that? Philosophia perennis – philosophers are supposed to pass over the issues of the day, but are we not too much immunizing ourselves against the world? After World War II, Bertrand Russell was worried about the possibility that mankind, for the first time in history, could destroy itself completely. Today, we’re used to the fact that nuclear weapons are stored in our back yard. Scientists have alarmed us about global warming, the depletion of drinking water and the loss of the ozone shield. Environmental philosophers took up this warning. Etienne Vermeersch explained that every child born in a rich country is an ecological disaster. Ullrich Melle flirted with primitivism. People like Tom Lemaire urged us to change our lifestyle, because he was indignant about the fact that swallows didn’t return after the winter anymore, or that there were no more lark in the fields. At the Institute of Philosophy, there are still a few young researchers who study the impasses of environmental protection or the absurdity of cost-benefit analysis as a policy instrument for ecological issues. But this cannot hide the fact that it’s relatively quiet on the ecological front. Peter Sloterdijk’s demand ‘Du Müss Dein Leben Ändern’ (Suhrkamp, 2009) contains interesting arguments, but they passed by unnoticed.

At the same time, the world has become a theater full of threats. In the newspapers, terrorist attacks and crashing stock markets follow crashing airplanes and trains. Your friendly neighbor can turn out to be a serial rapist, your respectable colleague is caught plagiarizing one article after the other. After the crash
of communism came the crash of capitalism. We see it, we read about it, we live it, we worry, sometimes, we get angry when we think about it, but does it really affect us? They say Deans at Harvard received a letter, saying there would be no more wine at dinners with guests. The crisis had an immediate impact on American universities, because of the loss of value of their endowments. The financial means our universities receive from the government are too low, and this will certainly not change in the following years, but, on the other hand, we don't expect too much trouble. There's no panic here.

For the first time, economists admit they don't know. They don't know how deep the crisis is, and how long it will last. They even enjoy some prestige with this confession, which has been, since Socrates, the hallmark of philosophers. But meanwhile, these same philosophers remain deafeningly silent about what goes on in the world. For the first time in our lives, we experience a crisis for which the rich are paying in the first place. Does this spectacle alter our intuitions about what is just and good? Where are the philosophers who can read and interpret the financial crisis as a spiritual crisis? Where are the moral philosophers who can denounce the pleonexia and explain the hubris and excessive-ness that made the world economy crash for a second time in ten years and ruined millions of jobs?

The university, in all this, is nothing but a mirror of society. The Modular Degree Scheme, the so-called ‘flexibilization’ of higher education, the fact that students are called ‘customers’: all this shows that the consumption model has conquered the university. Students are not part of a class anymore; they follow an individual study path. They have to make choices within endlessly complicated programs of study and enter those choices in an equally complicated computer system. In doing so, the university prepares them for a life of job hopping. The motto is: one needs to learn how to deal with the fleetingness of life, to know that there's always another crash waiting behind the corner, to try to be smarter, as an individual, than the mechanisms that are imposed upon us. The counterpart of this is the disappearance of personal loyalties and the distrust of institutions and persons. All this is not inevitable, but we all know how the wind blows. And too few of us dare to sail against the wind.

Everything changes, or not? Last year in autumn, Constantin Meunier’s bas-relief in the courtyard of the Institute was restored and repainted once again. You know this work of art from the beginning of the 19th century, picturing activities that most of us never did or will do: harvest, industry, harbor, and mining. No lonesome work in your office, but collaboration in order to achieve something impossible. Tensed muscles, simple tools, people working in crowds. The bas-relief is a relic of the past. The philosopher and sociologist Richard Sennet, who very recently wrote a book about this (The Craftmen, Penguin, 2009), will shortly come to Leuven to deliver the Multatuli Lecture about this lost world. Well, our work of art is shining again, as if it were new. It is made from plaster, and thus extremely fragile. We have to restore it every few years. We asked to place a sheet of glass to protect it, so that, in 50 years, you can still come and admire it.

Toon Vandevelde, Dean of the Institute of Philosophy
NEW FACULTY MEMBERS AT THE INSTITUTE OF PHILOSOPHY

Two new professors joined the staff of the Institute of Philosophy on October 1, 2008, and one new professor was appointed in 2009. The appointment committee didn’t have to look far to find them, because all three were already postdoctoral researchers at the Institute. We’re happy to introduce them to you.

Roland Breeur’s office in the porter’s lodge of the Institute of Philosophy is full to the rafters with books. On his shelves, beside philosophy books, there’s a selection of literature and cd’s. One thing is immediately clear to the visitor: the man who succeeded Herman De Dijn as professor of Modern Philosophy is a culture lover, even if he’s not, like De Dijn, a member of the Centre for Culture and Philosophy. Roland Breeur is a collaborator of the Husserl Archives, which he joined when he was a post-doctoral researcher of the FWO (the Flemish Science Foundation).

Roland Breeur studied philosophy and social and cultural anthropology in Leuven in the 1980s. He went to Wuppertal and Bochum for further specialization, and buckled down to phenomenology under the guidance of Held and Waldenfels. After obtaining his PhD, he also completed a short research stay in Warwick.

For his doctoral dissertation, he focused on Proust, with Arnold Burms as his promoter. The central question was the relation between the singular and the subject, applied to themes from *A la recherche du temps perdu*, such as involuntary memory (*souvenir involontaire*), love, time and truth. The relation between Proust and Bergson and the reading of Merleau-Ponty served as philosophical background for this study.

After obtaining his PhD, the theme of singularity continued to play an important role in Breeur’s research. Sartre was one of the main authors he concentrated on. Breeur explains: “After my PhD, I elaborated the theme of singularity, starting from the phenomenology of Sartre and of other French phenomenologists such as Merleau-Ponty and Henry. The relation between conscience and ego is one of the central questions in Sartre’s early writings. This relation was one of the themes of my research, beside other, typically Sartrean themes such as freedom and imagination.” Breeur also stresses the social relevance of this kind of research: “Sartre’s concept of responsibility and his critique on what he calls “limited responsibility freedom” (“une liberté à responsabilité limitée”) remains actual, certainly in a time where we all are summoned to “take our own responsibility.”

In the last years, Roland Breeur has been concentrating his research on the “sources” of this French tradition. This explains his growing interest in classic French philosophers
(Descartes, Malebranche, Pascal, etc.) and writers (Racine, Fénelon, …). Breeur: “My interest is thematic, rather than historical. The history of philosophy has always occupied an important place in the curriculum of the Institute of Philosophy. But I do not have the erudition and synthetic capacity that are required to study authors in their historical context. I always need time to feel affinity with a philosopher. Descartes, for example, has been keeping me busy for many years, and serves as a “generator” of philosophical and thematic questions. His writings show how to articulate specific problems, such as: how can one describe passions within a mechanistic world view, why was the relation between body and soul not a problem for him (or for Malebranche), what is freedom?, etc. The classic French philosophers and writers offer enough questions of this kind to fill an entire career. Their grandeur and creativity is reflected even in the language they use.”

Interview by Ines Van Houtte

Andreas De Block followed an interesting academic track. He first studied philosophy at the Institute of Philosophy and then took up psychology and sexology at the universities of Ghent and Leuven. “From 1996 to 2002, I worked as an assistant, and later as a postdoctoral researcher at the Institute of Philosophy, under the guidance of Paul Moyaert. From 2003 to 2007, I was a postdoctoral researcher at the Philosophical Anthropology Department of Nijmegen University, where I worked with Philippe Van Haute. In 2005, I was appointed part-time guest professor at the Institute of Philosophy.”

Now, as a professor of the Institute, De Block teaches courses on philosophy of the body, philosophical reflection on biomedical sciences, ethics of sports and an introductory course in philosophy. De Block comments: “I like to teach, philosophy students as well as students who did not choose philosophy as their main subject of study. Of course, depending on the group of students you teach, your aims will be different. With philosophy students, I consider it my main task to familiarize them with themes they will not (or not often) discuss during their studies. With non-philosophy students, on the other hand, I think enthusiasm is of great importance. I try to make them excited about a philosophical view on men and world. I always try to keep a close connection between my research and teaching. This helps me to improve the quality of my teaching, and it also allows me to remain intellectually interested in what I’m teaching.”

In 2001, Professor De Block defended his doctoral dissertation about the failure of Freud’s sublimation theory. For Freud, sublimation was a defense mechanism to guarantee mental health. The problem is that the rest of Freud’s psychoanalytic theory aims to prove, above all, that all men are necessarily mentally ill. “This contradiction appears at all levels of Freud’s sublimation theory,” says De Block. “Even when Freud meticulously tries to put sublimation into practice, he fails to distinguish it from the ultimate pathogenic mechanism of repression.”

In recent years, Professor De Block has been exploring a new research area. “I didn’t really renounce psychoanalysis: I still think it opens an interesting perspective for many philosophical and anthropological questions. But since 2000, I rediscovered an ‘old love’ in my research,
namely biology. First, I tried to find common grounds between psychoanalysis and evolution theory, and to explain how this could be useful to philosophical anthropology. Later, my research became more and more evolutionary, although psychoanalysis certainly is still affecting my research. If I studied the relation between sexual selection and culture, it is partly because psychoanalysis sees a connection between both. And my attempts to analyze the concept of “mental disorder” with the help of evolution theory could be seen as what Freud called “the return of the repressed.”

“My current research cannot be lumped together into a single area of interest. I read and write about very different things, such as homosexuality and homophobia, culture, sports, evolution, psychiatry, biological taxonomy, ….” But De Block has to admit certain patterns can be discerned in his research: “Philosophical questions arising from irrational human behavior fascinate me. Beside this, there’s a second pivotal point in my research, namely, the problem of the reduction of social sciences to physical laws and processes. The more I study this problem, the more I’m surprised by all kinds of naïve statements about the social sciences by evolutionary psychologists and their followers. At the same time, I cannot deny I feel a certain sympathy for those who claim that evolution theory provides a framework to complete and even rectify more ideographic disciplines such as history and cultural anthropology.”

Interview by Yannick Joye

Helder De Schutter was appointed as the first tenure track professor of the Institute of Philosophy on October 1, 2009. The K.U.Leuven introduced this new system of appointments to allow young researchers to become professors more quickly after their Ph.D. After five years, their research and teaching is subject to evaluation. If this evaluation is positive, they become part of the staff. Helder De Schutter succeeded Professor André Van de Putte as professor of ethics and social and political philosophy.

Helder De Schutter decided to study German philology, because he wanted to become a secondary school teacher. Soon, his intellectual path took a different turn: “While I was studying Germanistics, I became interested in sociolinguistics. One of the problems that fascinated me was how group identities were formed by language. I wrote a dissertation on the Dutch school system in Brussels, which is strictly separated from the French system. At the same time, I took a class from Professor Van de Putte about Will Kymlicka and his ideas on multiculturalism, and then I realized: here are the tools to really understand what this is about. I learned that there is a romantic and a liberal view on language politics, the romantic view being absorbing, and the liberal view segregating, and that both have their pros and contras. Then I thought: this is what I’m going to work on. I really got interested in political philosophy. So I started to study philosophy, wondering how I could contribute to a better society, and how philosophical thinking could
contribute to that.”

So the academic philosopher plays a role in society? How?

“I decided to study philosophy, because I wanted to understand what is needed to change the world for the better. I discovered that it is possible to theoretically reflect, at a high level, on normative issues. And this reflection is important for the democratic process. Democratic communities often have to make difficult choices, the moral statute of which is unclear. In my opinion, it is the duty of us, political philosophers – at least of political philosophers as I see them – to determine the moral value of different options, to identify the best path to follow, and then to try to present this to society, thus feeding the democratic process. This is the goal, which evidently requires many years of study. One of my ‘heroes’ here is Philippe Van Parijs, who replied at the end of a book, dedicated to his work, that he spent the first half of his life to elaborate his own concept of a just society, and that he doesn’t want to die before, in the second half of his life, having tried to make it a reality. I don’t wish to draw such a sharp distinction, but I think an academic political philosopher should try to do both. It’s up to the democratic community to decide in the end, but people with sharp ideas are needed to keep the community awake.”

What are your research interests at this moment?

“My main interest is in collective identity. It is mysterious and difficult to grasp, but it plays a fundamental structuring role in society. Closely connected to this are the problems of self-government and autonomy. My doctoral dissertation, which I wrote under the guidance of André Van de Putte, dealt with the debate on language justice. There are 6000 languages in the world, but only 192 countries; almost all countries are multilingual, they all need a language policy that can deal with this. My question was: on which principles of justice should such a language policy be based? In my postdoctoral research, I focused on the problem of the formation of nations and the presence of different nations in one country. Right now, my first interest is in federalism. Although, up to now, this has not been an important research topic in political philosophy, it is connected with some important philosophical issues, such as sovereignty, citizenship, and the formation of states. To plead the case of federalism means to seek a balance between separation on the one hand, and a unitary state on the other hand, and this raises several philosophical questions. About 40 percent of the World population lives in a federal country, and among those are very powerful countries such as the US, Russia, Germany and India. Still, remarkably little politico-philosophical research has been carried out on federalism. One can find something about the subject in the writings of lesser known philosophers such as Proudhon or Althusius, and sometimes small passages in the works of great philosophers such as Kant, or in the contemporary debate on multiculturalism or global justice. But, in general, there’s still a lot of work to be done.”

Could you tell us more about your own position in the debate on nation and identity?

“I take up a middle-of-the-road position. On the one hand, I don’t adhere to the sort of anti-nationalism that doesn’t acknowledge any kind of pre-political collective identity. Philosophers like Habermas tend to support this point of view. Neither am I a supporter of liberal na-
tionalism, which is very popular in political philosophy today. I rather adhere to a position of national pluralism. What is at stake then, is to fully consider the confrontation with the other within a political community. I try to formulate principles for a linguistically and nationally heterogeneous political community. Some authors, like Kymlicka, try to mark out this heterogeneity in a territorial way within a federal system, but this is not always possible.”

You teach as well now. How do you like that?

“I teach four courses, and that’s a handful. So this is a very busy period, and I expect it to stay like that for a while, since I’m about to become a father for the second time. The four courses I teach are Contemporary Social and Political Theories: Liberalism, Introduction to Philosophy for students in Social Sciences, Ethics of Globalisation (together with Professor Vandevelde), and a Master Seminar on 18th century philosophy of language. Continental philosophy of language is another one of my passions, besides the contemporary moral and political debates on collective identity and justice. I studied the language theories of Condillac, Herder, Mauthner, Gadamer, Taylor, and Glissant. Philosophy of language often is a kind of microcosm, in which other aspects of their philosophical thought converge. In general, I think teaching makes my life a lot richer. I like writing and studying, but from time to time, I need more action. That’s why I enjoy teaching, going to conferences and keeping in touch with colleagues.”

Interview by Matthias Lievens
AN INTERVIEW WITH PROFESSOR ISO KERN

Invited for The Husserl Memorial Lecture

On Tuesday 8 April 2008 Professor Iso Kern (University Bern) delivered the Husserl Memorial Lecture. His paper was entitled Three Questions from Chinese Philosophy addressed to Husserl’s Phenomenology. The following day a seminar took place in the Husserl Archives. During his visit to Leuven, Professor Kern kindly took the time to meet with April Capili and Carlo Ierna.

Can you tell us something about your background? How did you come to study philosophy? What first made you interested in phenomenology?

After my college (or gymnasium as it is called in Switzerland), I had the idea—but was not yet sure—of studying theology. For theology it is always good to have a philosophical background. I also had the idea of, before doing anything else, getting more clarity about the fundamental questions in life. I had the idea that by starting with and doing some years of philosophy I would get some clarity about these. And so I started studying philosophy and never ended it.

I started philosophy in Louvain, because I started studying philosophy in 1956. I came from a Catholic but open family. Then Louvain was known for its open philosophy; it was not limited only to Thomism. And I think a year after my final examination of middle school, someone who did his doctorate in Louvain spoke of philosophy at the Institute at a meeting of the philosophical society of Bern. This was also a motive to choose Louvain, apart from its openness not only to Thomism, but also to phenomenology, and existentialism.

How did you come to get involved in phenomenology?

During the first two years of my studies in Louvain, I had the impression that there was always something unspeakable in Husserl as a fundamental thinker of our time. But it was never clear to me what it was. Husserl says this or that but I had thought that Husserl was a fundamental thinker. I received lessons on what phenomenology was, and so I thought, well, I shall concentrate my licentiat (I did my studies in French) on Husserl and then I also did my doctorate on Husserl. Then after my doctorate, I was immediately engaged in the Husserl Archives. And so I found this road of phenomenology. And I must say this kind of philosophy corresponds very much to my interest and my manner of thinking. I prefer an exact thinking. I was never much interested in Heidegger; his thinking was not appealing to me (compared to the less “enthusiastic” but serious thinking of Husserl). When I was in college, I also admired a Russian philosopher by the name of Vladimir Solovyev. He was influenced by German Idealism (Schelling, Hegel) but this kind of thinking does not correspond to my character, to my mental style. So I felt very at home in Husserl’s way of thinking—he does not have a fixed system; it is rather a manner of considering problems and this pleased
me very much, satisfied my intellectual requests.

Prof Melle mentioned yesterday that as early as your student days you have been interested in Chinese philosophy. When did you decide to devote yourself to serious study of Chinese philosophy?

Already as a student, we had here in Louvain at l’Institut Supérieur de Philosophie (I was astonished to see that it was already written here in the entrance above Hoger Instituut voor Wijsbegeerte), we had a professor, Robert Shu, a Chinese from the province of Ang Huwei and he taught as a matter of choice (and not as an obligatory course) Chinese philosophy and I attended his lectures. I was not so enthusiastic about what I heard during his lectures, but during this time of my studies in Louvain, it was in the late 50s of the past century, the philosophy of language was arising in England and the United States. And people said our philosophical problems are above all problems of language. Well, I thought, let me see if this is true in a completely other language and so I looked (for) the farthest language possible that also has a philosophical tradition. Let me see how philosophy is in a culture with a completely different language. Chinese and our German languages are very different in structure and have nothing to do with each other, except that they are both vehicles of thinking and speaking. And so I pushed in this direction. But then during some years when I was in the Archives and worked in the tradition of Husserl I did not have much time to do Chinese philosophy because I had to prepare the editions on intersubjectivity and I also had the idea of making the Habilitation in Germany. And so I had to concentrate first on our tradition. But my interest in Chinese philosophy was always present.

And then after my Habilitation, I learned classical Chinese again. At first I tried to combine my teaching in Heidelberg with the learning and studying of Chinese philosophy. But after some years I thought that if I would really enter into the matter I had to give up all my teaching tasks, to give everything up (and I was also director of the seminary in Heidelberg for a year) and to concentrate on Chinese philosophy. And so I went to Taiwan and then to China and lived there for 5 to 6 years. I tried to immerse myself in Chinese philosophy, which before I had only touched a little from the outside, which was not enough to understand the language and to understand the people of the philosophical language and their problems.

Were there particular ideas, claims, or insights in Chinese philosophy that attracted you?

In the history of Chinese philosophy, I concentrated mainly on what the Chinese call Shin Shue, the learning of the mind or of the heart. I also had to study some cosmological problems. Cosmological problems and political problems are linked in China because the political order and the cosmological order have to correspond. But I was not so interested in this cosmology, for I thought that on this matter the natural sciences are better. But there is no natural-mathematical science of the mind. And neurology is not the study of the mind. And in this domain I found in Chinese thinking ideas about the human mind or the human heart—the Chinese word for mind is originally heart. And so I concentrated more on this tradition of the mind in Chinese philosophy. Because of this I was also obliged to study Chinese Buddhism because the Buddhist philosophy (or at least some schools of Buddhist philosophy) are tremendously occupied with the human mind. It is not only a theoretical interest but also a practical interest:
how to change the human mind, as a conversion of consciousness. In this field of Chinese Buddhist philosophy (I can’t understand the Sanskrit language; I cannot read Sanskrit texts. But I learned some words to be able to identify the Chinese concepts and the Sanskrit terms which are also used in English in publications on Buddhist philosophy). I worked in this field and published also something in this field. The Confucian tradition in China also has a branch or aspect of philosophy of mind (we would say) or philosophy of the heart. This aspect was my main study.

Did you meet obstacles in your own way of thinking when you started to get deeper into Chinese philosophy?

Of course it was not easy. But you also have a lot of difficulties with entering into the thinking of Husserl. The Chinese have a different language and this meant additional difficulties. It was very difficult. Until now I can’t read a Chinese philosophical text fluently without problems.

It was very difficult though the conditions to learn Chinese philosophy were very good. In the beginning, when I was in Taiwan, I had private teachers. At this time, for one coming from Europe, who is—I was not rich, I had some money because I taught in Germany and I worked at the Husserl Archives—but I could afford to have private teachers. And so I read texts of Classical Chinese Philosophy. For instance, in Taiwan I had two teachers: one in Chinese Buddhism and one in the Chinese philosophy of 11th to the 17th century. I had texts and I read them. At every point when I had a problem, I made a note and then every week I went to my teachers and asked them “What is the meaning of that?” or “How is that to be understood?” So together with two private teachers I got a certain access.

Also in China, I was very happy to have an outstanding teacher in Chinese Buddhism who was not teaching at the university. He had to teach while leading a very difficult life. During the Cultural Revolution he had to work in a factory to make gloves. I met him by chance and I met him at least once every week. We read texts together. So slowly I came to understand something.

Let me turn to the lecture you delivered last night. Let me begin with a general question: How do you see your own effort to pose questions from Chinese philosophy to Husserlian phenomenology? Is it an attempt to show that they share similar ideas? Or is this your own way of “going beyond” Husserl?

My aim is less to find parallels. Sometimes it is useful to find parallels. But my aim is not properly comparative. My aim is to understand Chinese philosophy better. It is a special kind of philosophy. Chinese philosophy, for instance Confucian philosophy, is mostly oral or spoken philosophy and is less a written philosophy. One can have the impression that the aim of our philosophers during the last centuries was to write an enormous book, like Kritik der reinen Vernunft, to construct such a book, such a system of thought. Chinese philosophers do not have this tendency. The texts of Chinese philosophy are mostly protocols of dialogues—not of artificial dialogues but of real dialogues. Students asked the teacher and he answers and then they ask again. Or the other type of texts consists of letters to one person. So it is not so systematic and sometimes—or very often—it is not so clear. So I try to better understand what could it mean, when for instance, Meng Zi speaks of his ‘heart of compassion’. For me it is rather a search for clarity. And by doing this I hope that
Western philosophers would get more interested in this philosophical tradition of another great culture and could also learn something from this tradition. On the other hand, I would hope—when I was in China I did not only learn Chinese philosophy, I tried also to teach a little phenomenology—to motivate Chinese philosophers to think about their tradition, their problems in a more systematic, clear, and more precise manner.

*What would you suggest as a starting point to gain access to Chinese philosophy?*

It is very difficult to answer because Chinese philosophy also has a history of more or less 2500 years like our tradition. There are different histories of Chinese philosophy and also more specialization on some periods. What is mostly studied in the West is the classical Chinese philosophy: Kong Zi, Meng Zi, Chuang Zi, Lao Zi. These people are basic and you can’t put them away. If you want to study Chinese philosophy you have to study this base, the fundamentals. Because of all these texts there are also a lot of philological problems and I prefer not to lose my work in philological problems. Perhaps it is also a reason why I concentrated rather on the philosophy from the Dynasty of Song starting from the 14th (or some say it started in 10th century).

Which text to read first? You have to choose one that is translated into English, German, or French, of course. A very interesting text, a basic text is Wang Yang Ming’s *Chuang Shi Lu* or Wing-tsit Chan (who taught in New York). But it is not easy because if you read it there are only, as I said, small dialogues and some letters. To see things together, how these things depend one on another—it would be a good text to start with but it is perhaps similar to the Chinese language: it is not a small thing. You need a lot of endurance. If you study the Chinese language only a little you cannot understand it. You have to put several years into this kind of work. It is not a small affair. That’s perhaps one reason why Chinese philosophy is practically not here.

Naturally for instance, the works of Confucius—Confucius never wrote a book (the tradition says he wrote this or that but probably he wrote nothing, just like Socrates). But there are some short works and it is nice to read them. Meng Zi, who I also cited yesterday, is also translated into English and German. His work is more systematic. Confucius makes one or two statements often without giving an explanation. But Meng Zi gives reasons and so it is more accessible for us. Meng Zi is also Classical (4th or 3rd century BC) and Wang Yang Ming, as I said yesterday, relied much on his thinking.

How to start? Well perhaps Meng Zi or Wang Yang Ming. How to start in the study of European philosophy? Read some dialogues of Plato first.

*That’s what they say. The history of Western philosophy is a series of footnotes to Plato.*

Yes [laughing], Whitehead said that.

*In what other areas or on what other points do you think it would be fruitful to bring together European philosophy or phenomenology and Chinese philosophy?*

Generally speaking, as a prolegomenon, we have more and more relations with China—above all commercial, financial, industrial, and so on, but it would also be good if philosophers could get into touch and be able to speak with each other. The Chinese are now rather very busy in studying Western philosophy, but Western philosophers do not worry much about Chinese
philosophy. Apart from being a show of respect, I think it would also be a good thing to know each other better in terms of the field of the most important questions of life which have been posed in the two traditions.

There are different aspects of Chinese philosophy from which we can learn—for example, the study of consciousness. Well, it is meditative consciousness, but not only that. Confucianism, and Chinese philosophy generally, is very much directed to practical questions—not of technique but of spiritual, practical questions. There is not only meditation but also other ideas about how to become a holy man or a really good man. I think from this field we can learn a lot. I also think that this orientation to the practical problems of life is also very important in our tradition. When we think about Socrates, Plato, the Neo-Platonic tradition, and Stoicism, and so forth, practical living—how to live—was among their main problems. In our own universities, we are discussing problems which seem to lose relation with our real life. There are some ethical problems that are important: ethical problems, problems of medicine, medical possibilities, or the development of our genes, and so on, which have an ethical side. But questions as to how to live—in relation to “official philosophy” these problems are a little in the background. The Chinese are philosophically directed to these problems. I think this orientation would also help us to remember that the most important task of philosophy is to help to answer questions of this kind.

Would you say that we are nowadays concentrating more on finding knowledge than finding wisdom?

Well, what is knowledge? What is wisdom?

Well, let us say one is more concerned with what is true than how to live well.

How to live well must also be based on truth or to live well means also to live in truth. I would not like to split knowledge and wisdom.

It’s a difference in accent.

As for knowledge, in the sense of mathematical knowledge or scientific knowledge of the natural sciences, philosophical knowledge must also have this aspect I guess. But not any kind of wisdom that is irrational.

Like you mentioned the Stoics, who were deeply concerned with rationality, were also searching for wisdom or saint-hood.

Yes.

Thank you, Professor, for taking the time to give this interview.

Thank you also.

by April Capili with Carlo Ierna
Professor De Dijn Becomes Emeritus Professor

An Interview with Professor Herman De Dijn

To celebrate the occasion of Professor Herman De Dijn’s becoming Emeritus Professor, a colloquium took place at the Institute on October 16th and 17th, 2008 on “Spinoza and Hume on Religion”. The valedictory lecture of Professor De Dijn entitled “Drie Soorten van Ververwondering”, which was followed by a reception, took place on October 17th in the Promotion Hall of the University (the lecture can be found on the website: www.herman deedijn.be). Professor Herman De Dijn was appointed associate professor at the Catholic University of Leuven in 1973. In 1977 he was promoted to professor and from 1979 to 2008 he taught at the Institute of Philosophy as full professor. Professor De Dijn has been invited to hold the Erasmus Lectureship at the Philosophy Department of Harvard University in the second semester of the academic year 2008-2009. There he will give one regular course and two public lectures on Spinoza.

Professor De Dijn gave an interview to Campuskrant in which he shared his memories about his time at the Institute. In this interview he reflects on the present status of philosophy and the academic life and speaks about his plans for the future.

Philosophers shouldn’t cut trees. They fall off ladders and then they have to walk with crutches for months. Herman De Dijn can confirm this. The heavy rehabilitation process did not affect his spirit. He looks back with great enthusiasm at the past years, and with great energy to the future. “I am 65. Maybe nowadays it seems a relatively late age to become emeritus but it also indicates that it was good to be at the HIW, the Institute of Philosophy, where I spent many very happy years.”

Pub-philosophy

“At the time I did not have any academic ambition at all. It was simply something I did not think about. I was going to become a
teacher or something like that. As soon as Msgr. Dondeyne asked me to become a ‘research-apprentice’ at what was called at the time NFWO, an institution I hadn’t heard of before, things started to roll. I had then to choose a topic for my PhD. Initially I wanted to choose something that was fashionable at the time, in the 1960s, hence something like Heidegger or Levinas. Dondeyne thought that there were more than enough theses being prepared on that topic. In the end, naive as I was, I chose Spinoza, a very hermetic philosopher. His *Ethics* is written in the style of Euclides’ *Elements*, which does not improve its readability. Anyhow, Spinoza together with David Hume, became the heroes in my scholary career.”

“In 1971 I completed my PhD. Wylleman, who at the time was president of the Institute, advised me to go abroad for a post-doc. Servotte helped me to find a place in Cambridge (UK), ‘of all places’. In 1973 there was a job-opening in the new International Programme at the HIW.”

“I enjoyed the intellectual climate at the HIW, because anything was possible. We discussed everything and with everyone, and we flew at each other - but always in the best possible comradeship. Nowadays researchers discuss too little. And they get together less as well, but this is a different matter. I sat talking for hours with Arnold Burms, my colleague and philosophical companion, most of the time in the Gambrinus, while Jan Matterne two tables away from us prepared his TV-scenarios for *Beschuldigde, Sta Op*. You will find the result of our countless conversations in a book we wrote together, a bestseller for that matter, and in some articles. We did not publish because we had to, but because we had seriously thought about something which we wanted to share, in the first place with our students and colleagues.”

“We discussed almost anything, even movies and novels; as philosophers we had very broad interests, not merely limited to our area of specialization. Herman Roelants organised for many years genuinely multi-disciplinary seminars, long before the word was fashionable. This was for me immensely stimulating.”

**The system**

“Things have changed a lot. Because of the scaling up, you can no longer have contact with everybody. This is the reason why many people fold back onto their own small research group and particular area of specialization, without keeping in sight more encompassing questions. Specialization is inevitable but it is not conducive to discussion across borders and therefore not to synthesis either. The consequence is that, today, also in the human sciences people only dare to say something about their limited specialization. This is certainly disastrous for philosophy.”

“And where does this come from? There are of course different causes but in the first place there is a certain undeniable pressure to publish, where journal ranking, impact-factors and so forth set the tone; even when one’s career as a whole is concerned, one only counts for as much as the whole of one’s specialized work. This system quality assessment on the basis of ‘publications in internationally ranked journals’ presupposes a conception of knowledge according to which scholars, through a solid specialization and supported by the findings of others, shift little by little the frontier of science. This is a complex debate, but such a conception of knowledge is I think inadequate for many human sciences and certainly for the greater part of the philosophical disciplines or discussions.”
“In celebration of my becoming emeritus I published a book, *Grensovergangen* (Crossing Borders) about “the humanities (Geisteswissenschaften), the university and university policy” (published by Peeters) where I deal at length with this sort of problems. I criticize the bibliometrical obsession, which in my opinion has nothing to do with the promotion of real knowledge. It is our duty, certainly as human scientists, to safeguard the authenticity of our discipline.”

“Specifically with regard to philosophy I think it should definitely continue to fulfill its critical and synthetic task and it should remain of relevance for society at large. My worries in this respect have nothing to do with the quality of my younger colleagues, but more with the climate and the system in which they will have to work and which do not provide the conditions for the kind of job philosophy, in my opinion, has to perform. I have become especially sensitive to this sort of thing since I have been vice-rector.”

“I was vice-rector for the group of Human & Social Sciences from 1995 to 2000. It was for me a completely new way of life. Work at the top can be very difficult, often at the cost of private life. I learned a lot back then, especially about how management and politics work. I have the best memories of working in a team, mainly with my colleague vice-rectors and also with ‘my’ deans and other team members. Others will have to judge my achievements. After five years, however, I decided to resign. I knew that if I did not want to lose contact myself with active philosophy for the rest of my life, I had to go back to the Institute of Philosophy. Fortunately, Rector Oosterlinck allowed me to go. The following years, including the first sabbatical year, meant for me the rediscovery of the amazing pleasure of teaching and research.”

**Tradition**

“As a teacher of modern philosophy I wanted to understand modern times or modernity, that which makes our times modern. If I had to define the core of my own contribution, it would be my insistence upon the inescapability and the importance of tradition also in and for modern times. According to some people it is not possible to be modern without breaking away from tradition. Tradition is therefore negative, something one needs to eliminate as quickly as possible. I dispute this view. There is only progress because tradition remains, if need be on the sly, and because progress transforms itself into a tradition. One starts to discover this in various disciplines, including in economics.”

“The place of religion is a nice illustration of this point. Authors like Richard Dawkins admit, almost incensed, that there is still religion and imply by their tone that it is only a matter of time before it disappears off stage with loud applause. This vision is not correct. Religion is a natural human phenomenon with an enormous capacity for adjustment. Even in modern society very many people seem to need religion (or some or other surrogate), as also non-believing human scientists and philosophers discover these days, especially because modern politics does not seem capable of creating meaning and values.”

**Heart**

“As a philosopher of modernity, I consider it my task to point out that modernity and rationality have their limits. They are rooted in something they cannot bring forth by themselves. Science cannot exist or survive on its own; it cannot pull itself out of the swamp by
its hair, like Baron von Münchhausen. Science is dependent on 'strange' things such as education, values and culture. Politics and ethics cannot be organized on a purely scientific basis. In bioethics, for example, some think you can solve all the problems on the basis of strictly rational principles and accurate reasoning. However, it is not evident to deduce from such principles why, for example, a dead human body deserves respect. Yet this respect is evident for everybody because it is rooted 'in the heart' and not so much in the ratio."

"Politics also needs to acknowledge the limits of rationality. Those responsible for making policy often assume that one has to master, control and steer things in order to make progress possible. Yet by the nearly blind focus on progress one may bring about exactly its opposite! Therefore we tend to lose from sight that which is the basis of everything, 'the attitudes of the heart'. These are the things you cannot manipulate or master just like that. Take for example a good neighborhood. Does it need to be steered and commanded with regulations? No. You obviously need to make sure that garbage is collected, that there is space for children to play and that there are some trees, etc., but, apart from this, you have to have faith in human relations. Create conditions for them to flourish, and probably this will produce good results. I say 'probably' because there is no guarantee that a good neighborhood will remain as such. Some things cannot be controlled or mastered directly."

"I am an emeritus professor now, but I am not falling into the notorious black hole. I intend to continue academic teaching to a limited extent, if asked to do so. I will continue giving public lectures; I am still busy writing and I also have plans for new books. I will be shortly going to Harvard, from January until June of 2009, where I will occupy the Erasmus Lectureship. What am I going to do there? Teach a course on Spinoza, of course. I will certainly remain active in philosophy as long as I can."

Interviewed and reported by Ludo Meyvis
Source: Campuskrant
PROFESSOR ANDRÉ VAN DE PUTTE BECOMES EMERITUS PROFESSOR

From December 11th to 13th, 2008 the Institute of Philosophy celebrated Professor Van de Putte’s becoming Emeritus Professor. Professor Van de Putte delivered his valedictory lecture entitled “De liberale res publica, de tuin en de universiteit” on Saturday, December 13th in the University Hall. The lecture was preceded by a two-day conference entitled “In Search of a Lost Liberalism – Constant, Tocqueville and the singularity of French Liberalism” (http://www.lostliberalism.be/). Professor Van de Putte began his career in 1969 as an assistant at the Faculty of Law. Under the supervision of Professor IJsseling, he wrote a doctoral dissertation on Louis Althusser. In 1981 he was appointed associate professor. Professor Van de Putte taught at the Faculty of Law, Social Sciences and at the Institute of Philosophy. In 1994 he was the co-founder of the successful lecture series “Lessons for the 21st century”. In 2000 he became the Dean of the Institute of Philosophy, finishing his term in 2006. Professor Van de Putte has published several articles in the field of political philosophy, more specifically on Edmund Burke, Claude Lefort and John Rawls, but also on contemporary social phenomena such as nationalism, multiculturalism and political freedom.

We hereby publish Professor Braeckman’s Laudatio for Professor Van de Putte and a conference report by Demin Duan.

Professor Braeckman’s Laudatio for Professor Van De Putte

Mr. Rector, honored colleagues, honored guests, dear André and family,

The farewell address that we have just heard is the perfect conclusion to our conference on French liberalism. It masterfully summarizes the problematic that has occupied us for the past few days and which inspired us to organize this conference. Political freedom, as you have again made clear, André, assumes more than just the liberal concept of freedom as non-interference; political freedom consists in the first place in the absence of domination. And the guarantee
of that freedom requires, besides the law, an active citizenship in the form of participation in the debate about the realization and design of the res publica. — Liberalism will be republican, or it will not be: that is the lesson that you have just given us.

However, we have learned something in addition to this from the lecture. And that is due to the fact that philosophy — and political philosophy as well — is still a discipline that, unlike any other, can be a “mirror of the soul.” For have you all listened closely to the choice of words in André's lecture? Have you noticed how it constantly shows a tension, a pull between a sphere where, on the one hand, desire, enjoyment, and intimacy predominate, and, on the other hand, virtue, duty, and public responsibility prevail? — Indeed, the liberal res publica expresses not only a vision of political freedom, but also appeals to a way of life to which André has dedicated himself.

This is not to say that we can give him all the credit for this. The ability to maintain this precarious balance between the pressure to devote oneself, apart from the world, to personal interests and desires, and the equally strong pressure to take up social responsibility in the world was instilled in him from childhood. It is therefore no wonder that precisely this tension characterized both his life and his career at this university. Hence, this tension is especially appropriate for raising the question that I would like to consider with you all today: “How could a ‘butcher's son from Zottegem’ become the dean of the Institute of Philosophy?”

For it is there that André's story begins: as the eldest son of a butcher's family from Zottegem — in the aftermath of the Second World War. His father was a hard worker who managed to build the family business into a respected butcher's shop. But the young André was fascinated by another aspect of his father: he was captain of the volunteer fire brigade as well. This notable position, combined with his normal day job, did not prevent him from taking on responsibility as chairman of various organizations in the community. On his mother's side, André was presented with a completely different lifestyle: that of turning in on oneself, away from the world, in order to read — and to read without pause. — Here, so much is clear, André's liberal republicanism was born: from a father who conscientiously committed himself to the local community and a mother who, with her hands full with work, dared to step back and immerse herself in the tradition of the 19th Century French novel.

Since the school in Zottegem only offered middle school, André departed at the age of fifteen for what remains to this day in his mind as his first great intellectual adventure: high school in classics at Sint-Barbara College in Ghent. André experienced the intellectual waters in which the Jesuits immersed him as a revelation. Besides the broad, humanistic education that he enjoyed, through which, among other things, his passion for theater was awakened, he also came in contact with people from diverse social backgrounds. Like his classmate Jacques Rogge, for example. — When Rogge was elected as the chairman of the IOC in 2001, this elicited — with reference to their shared studies at Sint-Barbara College — André's immortal words: “that could have happened to me too!” Although it has never been clear to me what exactly he meant by that. — But above all, at Sint-Barbara he learned that there are different ways to be obedient to the law. That much is clear from the following anecdote. For those who are old enough to remember: the work of Sartre
was at that time — in the mid-Fifties — on the ‘Index’ and was therefore forbidden reading for the students on Savaan Street. But that did not prevent the rhetoric instructor from confronting his students with Sartre’s texts, and indeed according to the motto: “it is indeed forbidden to read Sartre, but it is not forbidden to read from Sartre” — which is what the man promptly proceeded to do. This is truly a lesson that has remained with André his whole life and that he — as we shall see — would bring in practice at a celebrated moment.

In Ghent, at the boarding school, with the Jesuits, André had thus discovered the world, and they would come to know that in Zottegem. Driven by so much stimulating erudition, André threw himself into a number of activities in his leisure time that must be reported in the context of our investigation. First of all, no popular-scholarly publication was safe: with the insatiable hunger for reading that was awakened in him, he became an intellectual omnivore and consumed anything that could possibly satisfy his curiosity. Allegedly he had the entire Aula-series – which consisted of dozens of volumes – under his belt in no time. Faut le faire. In the meantime — and this is not well known — André took up cycling by way of relaxation. Long tours through the hills of southern East Flanders, over the cobblestones, along rough, muddy roads with gnarled willows along the side, and threatening clouds, heavy with rain — the course of ‘The Tour of Flanders’ — André as “Flandrien” - a die-hard road-cyclist: in spite of headwind and exhaustion, never giving up, but courageously pedaling his way back home. Those excursions were nonetheless child’s play in comparison with the great tours that André took with the scouts in the Black Forest or in Brittany during the school holidays. I’ll postpone this story for now. For André’s greatest passion of his incomparable wonder years deserves more attention: archaeology. In the area surrounding Zottegem, the ruins of a Roman village were discovered, and André was there to help with the excavation as an amateur archaeologist, and so was present for the birth of the local Provincial Gallo-Roman Museum. While at that time André did not realize how much his fascination with archaeology — digging up the origins and foundations of contemporary civilization — was a metaphor for his eventual passion, philosophy, the plan was ripening to satisfy his thirst for knowledge and his desire for the broadest possible education on a higher level. André wanted to study classical languages and archaeology, and that he would do. At the university. In Leuven.

Nevertheless, things turned out otherwise. Leuven was a disappointment. André had expected the same enthusiastic intellectual zeal from the study of classical languages that he had experienced with the Jesuits, but that was not to be. He rebounded from this by specializing in archeology. Through the Cultural Circle of Zottegem — of which he was a board member — he had met Max Wildiers. Wildiers had directed him to the work of Teilhard de Chardin. At once a Jesuit, and a palaeontologist, and equipped with the required speculative intellect. That was what he wanted! That was what he wanted to do. - André realized that philosophy had stolen his heart.

And what then followed was an intellectual tour de force. There was the realism of the father, and the idealism of the son. The father who stressed the importance of assuming a social obligation; the son who yearned for deep and subtle studies. The two had to be reconciled; and they were. How? By seven years of intense
study, in which André succeeded in accumulating three candidate diplomas in three years: one in classics, one in philosophy, and one in law. During the following four years, he added a licentiate in philosophy, a doctorate in law and a special licentiate in philosophy at the Institute of Philosophy.

The intense concentration on his studies did not keep André from being active in student life as well. We now find ourselves well into the ‘60’s, and Leuven is slowly beginning to buzz with all sorts of political, even if not subversive, student movements. André took part as well. Especially during his law studies, he underwent ‘politicization.’ He became a member of a student organization that was active with development cooperation, and of the so-called ‘university work community’ from which Acco had emerged a few years before.

However, due to a twist of fate, André missed the apotheosis. In the meantime, he had met Bernadette, who he married after his studies, in 1967. He was promptly called up for military service, and as a consequence he was forced to experience the heyday of Leuven’s Flemish movement in ’68 from afar, in a barracks out in the country. The only revolution that the young Van de Putte family got to experience was the birth of their son Bart.

When, in September 1969, André was demobilized and was appointed as lecturer in philosophy at the Faculty of Law in Leuven, he began once again a decisive chapter in his life.

As lecturer, André was supposed to write a doctorate. Since he missed the May revolt on the street, he wanted to make up for that lack of practical experience by studying the theory of revolution, so that he (in those days, inevitably) ended up reading Louis Althusser. Furthermore, just at that time a real ‘soixant-huitard’ settled in Leuven, who still clearly showed the signs of the struggle at the Parisian barricades. Sam IJsseling would supervise this doctorate, for he was all the rage in Leuven in those days. - Still the doctoral studies were a difficult time. Not so much because during the same time the young family quickly grew – after Bart in ’68, both Tim in ’70 and Pieter in ’73 entered the world, which was already a handful – but especially because it is often a lonely struggle, and André was regularly overcome by doubts. But the Flandrien in André didn’t give up. And, we must add, thanks in part to the regular meetings of the Ethics Department at the Institute of Philosophy. These meetings, which were led by the late André Wylleman and Urbain Dhondt, pulled André out of his isolation and provided him with the necessary intellectual oxygen. By the time he finished his PhD in 1975, André had not only a thorough knowledge of Marx from his doctoral adventure, but above all he had learned to read well, had developed a weakness for methodological questions, and had developed a keen eye for all sorts of conceptual distinctions. In short, the classicist had become a philosopher – and indeed of the better, somewhat juridical kind, with a good sense for conceptual nuance.

The period that followed, between 1975 and 1994, we must describe – by way of contrast with what was to come later – as the ‘hidden life of André’. Not because he disappeared from the stage, but because he calmly ‘did his own thing,’ somewhat withdrawn and far from all the academic commotion. At first, still as a lecturer, and from 1981 as associate professor and later as professor. It was the time in which he took on courses, initially outside the Institute of Philosophy – in the Law Faculty and in the social sciences – but later within the Institute as
well. It is especially the time in which he read a great deal and immersed himself in ethical, social and political questions that genuinely interested him. – Admittedly, André is not a man of many words – as a rule he is even inclined toward silence. And the same counts for writing. He is not a prolific writer. But what he does say or write, after much thought and consideration, always makes a difference. And what is true in particular of his especially ‘substantial’ courses – all of his former students are unanimous on this point – is also certainly true of the texts from that period. The classic example here is his brilliant introduction to the thought of Claude Lefort in the *Tijdschrift voor Filosofie* – the very first article about Lefort in the Dutch-speaking world. If the *Tijdschrift* were to track how often its articles are photocopied, I am convinced that André’s text would easily make the top five. The clarity of presentation, the depth of the analysis, combined with an exceptional loyalty to the way in which the author formulates the problem, makes this text an indispensable resource for whoever wishes to study Lefort. And the same can be said of the remainder of André’s texts, regardless of whether they deal with Eric Weil, Edmund Burke, or John Rawls, or with topics such as nationalism, multiculturalism, or political freedom. The final text – on “Political Freedom” – that appeared (in Dutch) in the *Tijdschrift voor Filosofie* in 2003 is especially outstanding. Anyone who has the slightest interest in our present neo-liberal-democratic system should read this text. And especially the committed liberals among us. André quite meticulously shows that it is impossible for liberalism to be what it so often pretends to be: the only genuine political and philosophical foundation of our society. Magnificent. But back to business.

Meanwhile we have moved on to 1994, the year in which the Institute of Philosophy celebrated its centenary and the ‘public life’ of André began. At that moment, he was elected for the first time faculty board. In the same year André – together with former Rector Dillemans, Minister of State Marc Eyskens and colleague Bart Raymaekers – took on one of the most prestigious and successful initiatives ever begun at the Institute of Philosophy, which to this day is managed from the Institute: the “Lectures for the 21st Century”. If philosophy at the end of the 20th Century still had the mission to form the meeting point in which all academic disciplines could find each other, then the “Lectures” are already a living witness to this. In that respect they respond completely to André’s philosophical desires – if I may express myself in this way: the series does exactly what André was once hoping to achieve by reading the entire Aula collection: to create an overview of the current state of the art in the most diverse disciplines.

During the six years in which André sat on the faculty board, and – without realizing it himself – warmed up to the larger work that awaited him, he was also a member of the Interfaculty Council for Development Cooperation and of the Education Council of the KULeuven. It was a period in which the whole university was preparing for a number of fundamental transformations that would change its face forever. With reference to a supposedly essential *aggiornamento* – the mantras of which have come to sound familiar: internationalization, professionalization, increased flexibility, visitation committees, evaluation, accreditation – things began to change almost everywhere at the KULeuven. At about the same time, at any rate within the span of a few years, the admin-
istrative structure of the university underwent a fundamental metamorphosis, research was organized along different lines, and everything was prepared for a series of seismic shifts in education – the aftershocks of which still reverberate to this day.

And precisely then, André, precisely at the moment when that storm hit, you were elected to be dean. Luckily for us, you had already seen the storm clouds gathering; and luckily for us, you are not daunted by the prospect of taking a rough road through the driving rain. But a ride through the Flemish Ardennes was child’s play compared to this. In those days, we all had the feeling that we had to rebuild the whole ship while sailing the high seas. But you were indeed the captain, with the task of bringing that rebuilt ship back on course. Today, friend and foe alike will recognize that you succeeded brilliantly. The transition to the semester system was introduced without any problem, and you received a visitation report that commanded respect. You did even better in the BA-MA reform. You made it so that at this moment, the Institute of Philosophy can offer one of the most attractive major/minor programs in all the BA education program. But your masterstroke was of course on the MA level. There, you managed to conjure up a two-year MA in the form of the MPhil Program, and indeed with the motto: “it might be forbidden to offer a two-year MA, but it is not forbidden to offer a one-year MA twice.” - Where else have we heard that? Indeed, a model of loyalty to the law, which your rhetoric instructor could only regard with admiration.

But if I have listened well, André, to the people to whom I’ve spoken in preparation for this laudatio, then I undoubtedly have the impression that the significance of your deanship should not in the first place be situated within the walls of the Institute of Philosophy, but much rather outside them: on the level of the university as a whole. And then it is difficult not to draw a parallel with your late father. As captain of the fire brigade, one takes responsibility for the community. That much is clear. And that is how it should be, and it is difficult to imagine otherwise. But as dean of the faculty, things are otherwise. In that capacity, one must defend interests: the interests of one’s own faculty. So I regard it as an indication of your republican heart, that you have always been able to see through the interests of your own faculty to the general interests of the university community, and that you have always acted in conformity with these general interests. That is undoubtedly a rather uncomfortable position, since you must be, on the one hand, a critical partisan of the prevailing policy, but, on the other hand, you want to shape that policy constructively. But, if I have been properly informed, it is precisely that delicate balancing act that you have been able to make your trademark in the Academic Council during your deanship. And that has not gone unnoticed. A similar, and allow me once again to call it a “republican” attitude, inspires confidence in an administration and generates authority. It inspires confidence because everyone knows that the case that you defend is not just that of an abstract general interest, but that of a general interest that has been critically tested against the concrete interests that you represent. And that attitude generates authority as well, because everyone sees that you never speak merely in your own name, but rather always in the name of the community that binds everyone seated at the table as well. Of course, we shall never determine exactly to what extent your “republican” contribution de-
determined policy in those years – that belongs to
the arcana of policy – but it requires little ima-
gination to realize that, precisely in that period
of fundamental reform, a voice that knew how
to keep the big picture in view through all of
the tumult could not have been just one voice
among all the others.

At any rate, André, I understand that those
six years as dean might just have been the most
difficult of your career, but at the same time the
most satisfying. You undoubtedly gave much of
yourself, but you received much in return: the
respect of your colleagues, friendships as well,
and above all the knowledge and the feeling
that you made a difference for the university
community and its mission, to which you have
dedicated your entire professional life. Today,
we officially conclude that professional life of
yours. And with that professional life, we close
an important part of your public life as well.
The rest, quiet, and diversion of private life
beacons. You have already taken up a number
of threads again: the reading of Shakespeare’s
dramas, the study of Italian – in order, finally,
to be able to read Machiavelli in his mother
tongue – the daily hour of work in the garden,
the renewed listening of Mahler’s romantic
symphonies or of Hayden’s ‘delicately ironizing’
sonatas – as you like to characterize them.

As coordinator of the Ethics Department
– once again, I use the old name for the center
where you had so many wonderful moments
in those days – as department coordinator, it
only remains for me to warmly thank you for
everything that you have done for the Institute,
your colleagues, the students, and the university
community. I think that we have every right
to say that we are glad and thankful that we
have crossed your path. But at this point, we
must part ways. Bernadette, your children, your
garden, and above all your grandchildren expect
you. At home. I wish all of you all the best.
Recent decades have seen a revival of interest in French liberalism, particularly in the thought of Montesquieu, Constant and Tocqueville. The conference “In Search of a Lost Liberalism: Constant, Tocqueville and the Singularity of French Liberalism”, organized on the occasion of Professor André Van de Putte’s retirement, was devoted to that cause. As the conference title tells, it proposed the perspective that contemporary political philosophy has not adequately represented the achievement of eighteenth and nineteenth century French liberalism. As a result, this particular strand of liberal tradition has to some extent been ‘lost’. The prestige, so the proposed perspective goes, was taken by another strand of liberalism initiated by Locke or Kant. The purpose of this conference is to bring this ‘lost’ strand of liberalism back to light, to ponder on its singularity, and moreover, to examine its relevance for our contemporary political philosophical debate.

Thanks to the organization of Center for Ethics, Social and Political Philosophy at the Hoger Instituut voor Wijsbegeerte of K.U.Leuven, and to the generous support of FWO-Vlaanderen, K.U.Leuven Research Fund, Joseph Van de Wiele Foundation, and L’Ambassade de France en Belgique, from 11th to 13th of December 2008, many scholars gathered at HIW to present papers and discuss issues on that topic. The conference began with a junior session in which three doctoral students from HIW presented their papers on French liberalism: Ryan Wines gave a paper on “Constant, Kant, and the Supposed Right to Lie”; Demin Duan spoke on “Understanding Tocqueville in the Light of his Writings on Imperialism and Colonialism”; Valentino Lumowa’s paper was entitled “Liberty vs. Civic Participation, and Romantic Appeal to the Principle of Patriotism”. Afterwards, Professor Antoon Vandeveldt, Dean of the Institute of Philosophy, opened the conference by introducing the main characteristics of French liberalism. In the following three days ten papers were presented by specialized scholars and the main session was closed by Professor Antoon Braeckman who summed up the events of the conference. The whole conference was ended with Professor André Van de Putte’s valedictory lecture “De Liberales res publica, de Tuin en de Universiteit”. Papers presented at this conference will appear in the forthcoming issue of Ethical Perspectives, Tijdschrift voor Filosofie, and a book. The present report aims to give an overview of these ten papers.

The opening lecture was given by Lucien Jaume (Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique & Sciences Po), entitled “Tocqueville Analyste des Groupements Intermédiaires: un Modèle Problématique”. Jaume introduced the presence of a conflict-managing model for democratic societies in Tocqueville’s writings. Such a model exists in Tocqueville’s particular
notion of intermediary associations and it corresponds well with our contemporary experience in managing problems brought out by cultural pluralism and globalization. But there are three points to be noted about this model. Firstly, Tocqueville’s concern with intermediary association is not primarily about channeling conflicting individual interests into harmony, as some interpreters might say. Rather, it is largely informed by the force of ‘public opinion’ that associations could bring upon individuals. Secondly, this model has two types of realization: one is the state-initiated French type, another is the society-initiated American type. Thirdly, what Tocqueville is essentially looking for in the phenomena of associations is not a conflict itself, but a kind authority that could finally arrest democratic individuals’ floating heart. It is this last point that distinguishes Tocqueville’s model from many other like-minded models for democratic conflict.

Céline Spector (Université Michel de Montaigne-Bordeaux) gave a paper entitled “Montesquieu était-il libéral?”. In her paper Spector put the conventional liberal interpretation of Montesquieu in question and undertook to give a more nuanced as well as balanced view of Montesquieu’s thought. In order to do so, Spector introduced several distinctions in Montesquieu’s thinking. The first distinction is between philosophical liberty and political liberty. Montesquieu’s notion of liberty is fundamentally political and does not require any philosophical enlightenment as prerequisite. In this regard, liberty is to be protected by a series of civil and political laws. The second distinction is made between ‘real liberty’ or ‘liberty protected by law’ and ‘liberty of illusion’. Spector argued that Montesquieu’s notion of liberty is more than the Lockean version of ‘lib-

erty protected by law’. Montesquieu developed a notion of ‘liberty of opinion’, which means that that people are free is not so much a result of real legal fabrication as the fact that they simply believe they are free, no matter what real legal or political condition is. This latter notion of liberty resembles what Machiavelli said about liberty. Nonetheless, Spector maintained that Montesquieu is neither Machiavellian nor liberal in traditional sense. Rather, Montesquieu should better be perceived in between: he is a political moderate who is fully aware of the importance of negative liberty in modern society, but who is also fully aware of the spiritual dimension of liberty.

René Foqué (Katholieke Universiteit Leuven) delivered a speech titled “Montesquieu’s Constitutionalism: Bridging the Gap Between the Ancients and the Moderns.” He highlighted elements of constitutionalism in Montesquieu’s thought and examined its contemporary relevance. According to Foqué, Montesquieu’s constitutional thinking has its remote source in ancient political philosophy, especially Aristotle’s political thinking. By introducing a new method of legal research, Montesquieu re-contextualized this ancient political tradition for modern use. In doing so, Montesquieu sought to find an equilibrium between political liberty of citizens and a common value-orientation for political community. This is particularly relevant for contemporary contemplation on pluralism and its consequence on constitution making. More specifically, the constitutionalization of the European Union could find much inspiration in Montesquieu’s ground-breaking constitutional thought.

Helena Rosenblatt (The City University of New York) in her paper “French Liberals on Religion: Protestantism and Its Discontents”
addressed the religious aspect of French liberalism. Unlike many other commentators, Rosenblatt argued that French liberal thinkers—Constant, Guizot, Madame de Staël, etc.—did not intend to separate religion from politics at all. The major issue at the center of debate for these thinkers was not separation between church and state, but what kind of religion was most suitable for a drastically changing society. The conservative Catholicism, as represented by Joseph de Maistre, accused liberal Protestantism of being damaging for the integrity of society. Early socialism, though far different from Catholicism, took a similar stance in depreciating Protestantism as “divisive, individualistic, and selfish.” Strangely still, François Guizot, a well-known liberal thinker, himself a member of the Reformed Church, also took to denounce Christian rationalism (and thereby liberal Protestantism) and argued that France would and should remain Catholic. Against all of these, Rosenblatt argued, Benjamin Constant’s strong and vocal defense of liberal Protestantism stood out as a confirmation that liberalism is not necessarily void of spirituality. Rather, it could and should be sustained by a spiritual orientation.

Stephen Holmes (New York University) gave a lecture entitled “La Liberté de Dénouncer: Ancient and Modern”. In his lecture Holmes asked the question why it is wrong, both legally and morally, to create a “special court” with reduced procedural guarantees for those who are alleged to be especially dangerous. According to Holmes, the answer could be found in Benjamin Constant’s defense of modern liberty. According to Constant, while ostracism is common and legitimate in ancient democracy, it is both absurd and morally wrong to do the same in modern times. Or in other words, it is incorrect to require modern individuals to surrender their private rights for the sake of alleged public good. Thus, in modern society individual rights and liberty should be taken seriously in face of often dubious and obscure common interest. In judicial terms, all individuals should be assumed innocent before court and deserve to be treated with equal judicial procedures without discrimination. That is to say, public security should not be an excuse for compromising due rights for individuals.

Alan Kahan (University of Chicago) gave a paper on “Tocqueville and Imperialism”. In his paper Kahan discussed the issue of imperialism, colonialism and race in Tocqueville’s writings. Apart from the well-known writings on *De la démocratie en Amérique* and *L’Ancien Régime et la Révolution*, Tocqueville devoted a lot of time to issues like colonization and racial relationship. Tocqueville had a clear view on races, which was first spelled in *De la démocratie en Amérique*. In his correspondence with Arthur de Gobineau, we find him firmly rejecting the deterministic racist view. Despite this, however, he also claimed that for some people and some countries—i.e. Ireland at that time—liberal democratic regime would not work and a kind of enlightened despotism was appropriate. This seems to be at odds with his own defense of freedom elsewhere in his writings. Moreover, it is even more surprising that he ardently supported French conquest and colonization in Algeria. Tocqueville never wavered from the position that France should not abandon Algeria. For him, the conquest of Algeria was crucial to France’s national interest and her status in world. English rule of India was also of interest to Tocqueville. But it served primarily for him to search for better means of colonial rule. Thus, apparently there exists an incoherence in Tocqueville’s thinking: freedom
here and despotism there.

In his lecture “Was Tocqueville Immune to Philosophy?” Larry Siedentop (Oxford University) probed into the philosophical background of Tocqueville. Conventionally Tocqueville is thought to be immune to philosophy, which is confirmed by his own claim that he has the ‘least philosophical’ temperament possible. But, according to Siedentop, this might not be as true as it appears. Tocqueville was influenced by a philosophical trend that has not yet been adequately noticed. To trace this trend, we have first to look at the efforts made by some early nineteenth century French thinkers to reappraise the empiricist tradition. Maine de Biran was the eminent one to make that effort. By arguing that empiricism failed to give a full account of human experience, Biran introduced the element of ‘active’ self or inner intention to complement empiricist account of causal relations. Guizot later developed Biran’s philosophical findings in his dual explanation of human civilization — materialistic and idealistic development. Tocqueville, an admirer of Guizot’s research, proved to be a further bearer of this philosophical lineage. His contribution was to reconcile the two philosophical strands—materialism and idealism—into a sociological method that he used to explain historical transition. This was typically represented in his distinction of two kinds of society: aristocratic and democratic. Max Weber later adopted the same methodological tool and named it as ‘ideal type’.

In “Liberalisme, Neo-liberalisme en de Kredietcrisis” Frank Ankersmit (University of Groningen) talked about how to evaluate the doctrine of neo-liberalism that has been very popular since Reagan and Thatcher. Though carrying the tag ‘liberalism’, neo-liberalism actually is not a developed version of traditional liberalism. Rather, it should be noted that neo-liberalism abandoned the core value of the traditional liberalism and transformed it into “the most brute degeneration of capitalism”. A helpful indicator of this is the fact that neo-liberalism is also known as neo-conservatism, which has nothing to do with either liberal conservatism represented by Burke or conservative liberalism exemplified by Tocqueville. In this respect, the best corrective to this trend of neo-liberalism is perhaps to look back towards the traditional liberalism and restore the original meaning of being liberal.

Serge Audier (Université Paris-Sorbonne -Paris IV) in his speech “Raymond Aron, un ‘Néo-libéralisme de Tradition Française?’” put Aron’s liberalism in the light of liberal renewal of 1930s. He recalled that, though Aron apparently joined the camp of neo-liberalism by participating in the 1938 “Colloque Walter Lippmann”, he was actually more influenced by the old French liberal tradition represented by Montesquieu and Tocqueville. Because of this influence, Aron’s liberalism carried some features that could hardly be detected in neo-liberalism, such as emphasis on the political, appreciation of citizen participation, etc. Audier reached this conclusion by pointing out another aspect of Aron that has been misunderstood for long. He challenged the conventional wisdom—first forwarded by François Furet—that Tocqueville had been forgotten by French intellectuals until he was rediscovered by Aron in 1950s. By contrast, Audier contended that Tocqueville’s thought actually figured very importantly in Aron’s early thinking, that is, long before 1950s. Moreover, it was at least partially through Prévost-Paradol that Tocqueville’s beautiful thought was discovered by Aron.
The paper “Raymond Aron and the French Tradition of Political Moderation: A Reconsideration” given by Aurelian Craiutu (Indiana University) addressed the issue of political moderation in Raymond Aron’s political thinking. Having lived in a century full of radicalism and dramatic social change, Aron stood out as an unwavering moderate thinker who had written and acted in accordance with a spirit that recalls Montesquieu and Tocqueville. The emphasis on the political and pluralism serve as the essential proof against any sort of radicalism or utopianism. Furthermore, a conservative perspective on political reform, a taste of order and spiritual tranquility help tame often recurring desire for radical change. Interestingly, both Aron and Tocqueville experienced and commented on rampant revolution that happened in their lifetime: for Tocqueville it was the 1848 Revolution and for Aron the May 1968. Tellingly still, they adopted a similar opinion on the revolution: radical, not without reason, but largely futile. In this process, both of them developed their own temperament and strategy in fending off over-simplification, romanticization, and radicalization in political life.

Reported by Demin Duan
IN MEMORIAM
PATRICIA DE MARTELAERE

Zottem 1957 – Wezemaal 2009

Patricia De Martelaere died on the 4th of March 2009, four months after she heard from doctors that she had a brain tumor which was incurable.

Patricia De Martelaere was a born writer. By the age of thirteen she published a children's book. She was widely known by the public thanks to her novels which won prizes on many occasions. When she was a student her classmates envied the ease with which she could write her papers and theses. She obtained her doctoral degree at the Institute of Philosophy in Leuven, with Professor Herman De Dijn as her promoter. Her doctoral dissertation was on the skepticism of David Hume. Hume, Nietzsche and Wittgenstein were her important sources of inspiration in philosophy. In the 90’s she became interested also in Darwin and evolutionism and in her interviews she started to admit that philosophy did not quite give her what she expected of it. Through the exercise of tai-chi she became fascinated with Taoism and acupuncture, the classical Chinese philosophy and medicine. The bodily rootedness of this thinking, its relation to the unthinkable, the simplicity of stories and the finesse of the Chinese calligraphy attracted her. She would proudly show her philosophy colleagues on the cobblestones of the Institute of Philosophy her block in which she exercised writing Chinese characters. “I know that I am crazy’, she said, “but this is the most fascinating thing that I have ever experienced”.

Patricia De Martelaere had taught philosophy of language and anthropology at the Institute of Philosophy and at the K.U. Brussel for more than twenty years. She has been a full-time professor at our Institute since 2008. As a teacher she was adored by her students. She gave her classes in an inimitable way, with a bit of cynicism but still vulnerable. She was mainly cynical about academic philosophy. She was little interested in publishing in English academic journals which nobody ever reads. She loved teaching but the whole academic enterprise didn’t say much to her. She would never come to the faculty councils and meetings, or to lectures.
and congresses. If she had to give a lecture, she would be waiting at the door – because of fresh air, she would say – until the person giving a lecture before her would be done. When the K.U. Brussel wanted to hire her full-time, she refused because then she would also have to become the chair of the philosophy research unit and because she didn’t want to have anything to do with that bureaucracy. At that time she was publishing monthly an essay in the De Standaard der Letteren and she was thinking of leaving the university and becoming a journalist and living completely off her pen but she never did it.

Although Patricia De Maertelaere spoke somewhat sceptically of philosophy, she was certainly a real philosopher. She did not write any academic articles but she wrote essays, a genre situated at the borders between philosophy and literature. Her essays combined images and ideas. They are written in an extraordinarily clear manner. They are pearls of philosophical refinement. *Een verlangen naar ontroostbaarheid – Over leven, kunst en dood* (1993) [A longing for inconsolability – On life, art and death], *Verrassingen* (1997) [Surprises] and *Wereldvreemdheid* (2000) [Unworldliness] are her most important titles. She wrote about God and faith in *Een verlangen naar ontroostbaarheid*, one of the most moving essays that were ever published in the Dutch language (‘I am a God in the depth of your thoughts’). Furthermore her texts dealt with art and literature, with existential questions, with our relation with nature and above all with death. “Who is afraid of Death?” was the title of the Titus Brandsma Lecture that she gave in 2001. “Every morning when I wake up I am amazed that I am still alive” once she said. Or: “There hasn’t been a single hour in my life when I haven’t thought about death.”

To do philosophy is to learn how to die, Socrates used to say. In an epilogue to Seneca’s *De Vita Beata* the French classicist Paul Veyne asked himself whether philosophy can really help people to die. Much as we are afraid of dying, isn’t this finally an exam which at the end everybody passes? Hence isn’t the reflective life, led by the philosophers, i.e. the life that keeps death in sight, a futile life? Alas, Veyne sighs, according to Michel Foucault philosophy really seems to straighten out death, but I know many others for which it does not help. The lucidity and serenity with which Patricia De Martelaere behaved in the last four months of her sickness were impressive. This was certainly the result of a philosophical way of life. ‘I am in fact curious what it is to die’, she said. In *Wereldvreemdheid* she described the death of her dog (‘the first death in my life’) as falling asleep, as something not scary at all. It seems as if something escaped from our deepest inside. Or rather: dying is like learning to swim. You need to get familiar with a new medium and you need to have confidence in the carrying power instead of fighting it. The art of dying is not different from the art of living: learning to let go. ‘The message is: to let oneself be carried by a current; whether this is the current of life or the current of death. What is afraid of death in us is the same as that which doesn’t let us lose the grip of the side in the swimming-pool. The soul - we might say - is that which wants to let go. Maybe therefore the soul longs for the ultimate disorder of death.’ (Titus Brandsma Lecture 2001, Valkhof, Nijmegen, p. 22) Patricia stays in our thoughts, as an exemplary philosopher, as somebody who has found her Tao.

Dean Toon Vandevelde
Looking for Good Life:

An Interview with Steven Nadler

Steven Nadler is the William H. Hay II Professor of Philosophy at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. He has extensively studied philosophy of the seventeenth century with a particular focus on Spinoza on whom he has authored three books: Spinoza: A Life (1999), Spinoza’s Heresy: Immortality and the Jewish Mind (2002) and Spinoza’s Ethics: An Introduction (2006). His most recent book is The Best of All Possible Worlds: A Story of Philosophers, God and Evil in the Age of Reason to be reissued as a paperback by Princeton University Press in 2010. He is currently completing another book on Spinoza (A Book Forged in Hell, Spinoza’s Scandalous Treatise) and a book on Maimonides for Cambridge University Press (Maimonides’ Guide to the Perplexed: An Introduction).

On the 19th of March, 2009 Steven Nadler gave St.-Thomas’ lecture at the Institute of Philosophy “Spinoza, Leibniz, and the Gods of the Philosophers”. On the day after the lecture he kindly agreed to a short interview.

What does being a philosopher mean for you?

For me it means spending your time thinking about really interesting questions, reading deeply fascinating books and getting to talk to others about those same things.

How is philosophy related to the history of philosophy?

I am not sure I draw a deep distinction between them. If you think of philosophy as a kind of ongoing dialogue about certain questions, then some people you’re in dialogue with are still alive, and some of them are dead. To me what I do is no different from what a non-historical philosopher does; it’s just that the people I am in dialogue with lived three, four hundred years ago. In doing history of philosophy you are not just interested in what they said, but you are interested in why they say it. You want to look at their arguments and assess their arguments for their validity, test the arguments, and see whether they are right or not.

Since you said that philosophy for you is thinking about interesting questions — would you point out one question that has been the most interesting for you?

Well, lately, in my teaching but more so in my writing, especially on Spinoza, the most interesting question is ‘what is a good life?’ And not just in the ethical sense of what it is to be a good person, but what does it mean to flourish as a human being, what is it to lead a good life, to live well and to achieve a kind of meaningful resolution of things.

Have you come to your own answer to the question what a good life is?
No, I haven’t yet, but I am only fifty, it will take some time. I am still investigating people much smarter than I am and what they had to say about it. The philosophers whom I find interesting had the most resonant answers to this question: Spinoza, of course, Maimonides, Socrates. These are people who made this question the center of their philosophy. That is why, I think, so much of philosophy in the Anglo-American world in the last fifty years has not been very interesting, from my perspective, because it has been dominated by epistemology, metaphysics, theory of knowledge, logical analysis. Which is all very useful, but for a long time the question about the meaning of life and what is a good life was secondary, it did not get a lot of attention. That has changed in the last ten years or so, and you find in the philosophic literature more and more philosophers who are actually addressing that question again.

You have been interested in the Jewish philosophical tradition. If a Jew philosophizes, does not he become Greek?

That is a sort of eternal question of Jewish philosophy. First of all, what is Jewish philosophy? And then what is Jewish philosophy? And opponents of philosophizing in the Jewish tradition argue that it is to make Judaism into something Greek or Roman, something foreign to Judaism. But the interesting thing about Judaism is that philosophical questions are at the heart of its intellectual tradition. The Talmud is a deeply philosophical work, it debates about moral and political and religious questions, but approaches them in a very rational way. And if you read the Talmud, you see some classic tropes of philosophical discussion: reductio ad absurdum is a very common feature of the Talmud. And so I think there is something peculiarly rationalistic about Jewish philosophy, something peculiarly rationalistic about the Jewish intellectual tradition. But it does not mean you do not get in trouble – Maimonides was perceived to have over-rationalized or over-philosophized Judaism, and thus got into very serious trouble in the thirteenth century.

Yes, but it seems that Maimonides has taken so much from Aristotle, that he in a sense became Greek.

I suppose a Maimonidean response would be that there is nothing peculiarly Greek about it; it just so happens that Aristotle used those categories and terms. But why not think that what Aristotle is saying is not peculiarly Greek, but it is the truth? It just so happens that the truth was first spoken in the Greek language. But your point is well taken. I mean, it is to take Jewish religion and fit it into a Greek mold, or in his case also into an Islamic mold.

Is there something that a person who is not a scholar can still learn from Jewish philosophy?

Oh, absolutely. For example, let us go back to the first question we talked about – what does it mean to lead a good life; what is the role of rational thinking; what contribution does rational thinking make to happiness. And by rational thinking I mean using your intellect to understand nature and your place in nature, and how you should respond to the way things affect you, and how to deal with the passions that arise in the course of everyday life – this was a major topic, I think, for Maimonides, for Spinoza. It is not a peculiarly Jewish question…

If I am a very perplexed person, what could I still learn from Maimonides’ Guide to the Perplexed?

The perplexity he wants to resolve is this: you are not just perplexed, you are also learned in
a religious way. So the truly perplexed person for Maimonides is somebody who has understood the Torah and is well-versed in Jewish law and Jewish tradition — and then has read some Aristotle, and wonders ‘how can I reconcile these two things?’ We could abstract from that and say that the perplexed person might be somebody who is troubled by some apparent contradictions in life. You know, on the one hand I get great pleasure out of the pursuit of material goods. It brings me joy; it brings me what appears to be happiness. On the other hand, that same joy and happiness is often accompanied by pain and loss, and so I start to wonder, ‘well, are those really the true goods, and if not, what is the true good?’ This is what Spinoza says first turned him to philosophy. He says, I was engaged in ordinary affairs in my life: I was a businessman in Amsterdam, pursuing the things that people pursue, and I thought I was happy. And then I realized that the things I thought were making me happy, also made me unhappy, they were a source of joy but also a source of pain and loss, and so I decided that those cannot be the true goods. I think that is a sort of a perplexity that anybody can have. You do not have to be religious.

You do not need to read Maimonides or Spinoza to get the point that the material goods are not the goods to look for. Such a perplexity can be solved even by listening to some grandmother’s advice.

That is true, but you do need to read Maimonides to find out ‘what is the good to look for’. In fact, you do not even need your grandmother. You know from that contradiction, you know that there is something wrong with the goods you have been pursuing. So, you don’t need anybody to tell you that these are not the true goods. But then what do you do?

What is the path you take? Your grandmother may take, say, this path…

… trust in God and be good to other people…

How do you know your grandmother is right? Why to trust her? Should not you discover these things for yourself? I mean, maybe she is right, and maybe the things you learn through your independent investigations will confirm what she said, but unless you confirm them, why believe your grandmother?

Well, because, for example, she is a trustworthy person who does not want to deceive me.

But maybe she, even if she is totally sincere — of course she loves you and she wants to see you thrive — but maybe what she thinks she knows is not really true? I mean, I ask you why believe your grandmother, and your answer was why believe your grandmother — what I meant was why believe what your grandmother says is true. That is a matter of faith, right — you take your grandmother’s word on faith.

All authority, be it Spinoza or grandmother or the Torah, ultimately is a kind of belief, is it not?

Except that I do not think Spinoza is asking to believe what he says just because he is saying it. He is trying to show you how to figure out for yourself the true path to happiness. He does not want you to believe him on faith. And I think Maimonides does not do so either. But he is offering you a kind of path: ‘here, take this path and this will allow you to discover the truth’.

You have spent a lot of time studying the philosophers of the seventeenth-century. Are they still relevant, and if so, for whom?
Some of them are and some of them are not, I think. I think it would be difficult to make the case that — unless you are a deeply religious person of a certain kind — Arnauld is still relevant, or Malebranche. Descartes: you know, we do not believe we live in a Cartesian universe anymore. And Leibniz I find deeply fascinating, but it is difficult to imagine someone saying ‘I’m a Leibnizian’ today. But I think Spinoza, of all the early modern philosophers, is particularly relevant. Something about reading the *Ethics* strikes me, despite the seventeenth-century vocabulary and the Euclidian presentation and all that… when you get down to what Spinoza is saying, I think it speaks very easily to the modern mind, much more so than Descartes or Leibniz.

*Can you somehow account for the renewal of interest in Spinoza during the twentieth century?*

It is a good question. I think it has to do with the mysterious difficulty of his philosophy. People are, I think, always fascinated by somebody who is so cryptic. I think the *Ethics* is a very difficult work. In Jewish culture Spinoza is regarded with some fascination because of his excommunication from the synagogue, and the mystery of that. Also because he is such a radical thinker. Here is somebody who in the seventeenth century was saying things that nobody could imagine saying, really bald, audacious claims about God and nature, about democracy, about toleration. So I think he is a hero to many different sorts of groups. What is interesting is that different groups find him heroic for different reasons. In philosophy it is, I think, because Anglo-American philosophy from 1950 onward was so dominated by epistemology and metaphysics. There is a sort of canonical way of looking at the seventeenth century from Descartes on, so that Spinoza became one of the three canonical figures of the seventeenth century, with Descartes and Leibniz. And he seemed to fit into a certain story about the early modern thought. Descartes raised the problem of skepticism and the mind-body problem, and then Spinoza comes along and he has a solution to these various epistemological and metaphysical problems. And then Leibniz comes along with his solutions. And so Spinoza became fascinating to Anglo-American philosophers, because they were interested in epistemology and metaphysics, and so they made him fit. The trouble with that is that they only read parts I and II of the *Ethics*. They didn’t care about the moral philosophy or the discussions of virtue and happiness. So you get this very truncated picture of Spinoza, and you also are left wondering ‘why is this book called *Ethics*?’.

So I think at least for a good forty years or so there was not the real Spinoza that was of interest to philosophers; there was a Spinoza who fit into a certain story that they wanted to tell. This applies only to Anglo-American philosophy, I think the Dutch, and the French, and the Italians always had a much deeper reading of Spinoza. In the last twenty years, I think, the study of Spinoza in Anglo-American thought has become much deeper, more well-informed. Not just about the texts, but about the history of the texts, about Spinoza’s biography. So I think you see much better work on Spinoza now than you did twenty-five or thirty years ago, and a lot more of it, too.

*Soon after the publication of some of Spinoza’s works it seems that it was very popular to view them as the most godless creations a human mind ever created upon the earth. Could you say to whom Spinoza’s writings are still dangerous?*

They are still dangerous to anybody who wants
to encourage superstitions among people for the sake of getting them to follow. So, manipulative politicians, ecclesiastic authorities who want to control people's minds and lives — anybody who wants to exercise control over others by instilling false beliefs in them. They should find Spinoza threatening. You know, actors who become politicians and politicians who become actors, exactly the same thing that Plato was afraid of in the *Republic*.

*In the introduction to your Spinoza’s Heresy* you say that Spinoza got it all right. Apart from a possibility that he got it all wrong, could you say what you mean?

That was my personal editorializing, speaking as an atheist, and I think he got it right about ‘all there is is nature’. The claim that the human being is no more exempt from nature’s laws than any other creature. As he says, we are not a dominion within a dominion. There is nothing beyond this world, there is no world to come, there is just nature and we are part of nature. There is an inner life, of course, but it is not some supernatural realm that is immune to what is happening out there.

*Fine, you are a part of nature. How you, being a part of nature, can have anything to say about whether there is something above nature or there is not? You are just part of it. You might not have the slightest idea of what is above, or behind, or below nature.*

In that case I would be ignorant, would I?

Yes, very much so.

But as a rational being my desire would be to move from a position of ignorance to a position of knowledge. That is the goal. And that is something else I thought Spinoza got right — that virtue, and happiness and well-being consist not in putting my life in the hands of some ecclesiastic authority who promises me eternal happiness or threatens me with eternal punishment, but rather seeking to know as much as possible about nature and my place in it. Maybe I still have some doubts about the details, but not about the overall project — I think Spinoza's overall project is right.

*Does it mean that you are a dogmatic philosopher?*

No, like I said, I don't know about the details. Let us distinguish: so, the overall project of the philosopher is the pursuit of happiness and well-being, and that is as ancient as philosophy itself. And Spinoza believed that that was the project of philosophy. I think that is right. However, if happiness comes through knowledge — and happiness here would just mean peace of mind, a kind of flourishing as a rational being — if that comes through knowledge, then that seems to be the overall project. But the question is: what are the details of that project? Now, I may not agree with Spinoza on all the details. Spinoza says that the truly rational person will never feel envy or jealousy, will never think about death. I do not yet know if he is right about that. So, I am not dogmatic in that I think I know what needs to be known. What I am dogmatic about is, I think, that if there is happiness to be achieved, it is going to come through knowledge. Now, what that knowledge is, that is the question.

*You sound like an optimist about the possibility of knowledge.*

Yes, I would say that.

*On what is this mystical position of optimism based?*

Why is it mystical?
Because it has no rational basis whatsoever.

On the contrary, I think it is empirically proven that... – I think that my own experience and my experience of the history of science shows... well, let me go back a bit...— science, of course, has led to such horrendous things as nuclear weapons and such. But on an individual level it has been my experience that a great deal of suffering and pathos comes from ignorance. And especially ignorance, a sort of willful ignorance, an irrational grasping at faith rather than seeking for truth.

Could you give me one concrete example of how suffering, extreme suffering, comes from ignorance?

People who are blindly led by religious authorities to commit horrendous acts of terrorism. That sounds like taken from an American newspaper.

I will take it from any European newspaper, too.

Is any case, where is the ignorance here?

I would give you political examples, Vietnam. I mean the war should not have been waged in the first place. The decision to go to war in Vietnam was based on ignorance, on false beliefs. Iraq is another good case of ignorance leading to war.

Is war in Iraq based on ignorance?

Absolutely.

On ignorance of what?

Well, on so many levels. Ignorance of the situation in Iraq, ignorance of the situation in the United States, the idea that this was somehow a war essential to the United States’ security.

Perhaps that was just a cover of a knowledge of the fact that additional resources of oil are needed by the United States and of a knowledge of the fact that the American economy cannot survive without making war.

That is right, that is exactly my point.

So two points of knowledge, no ignorance.

Two points of ignorance. Because support for the war was only possible, if these myths were propagated across the American population.

The vulgus should not be manipulated?

No. They should be enlightened.

You are an extreme optimist if you think that representative democracy can survive without telling lies and creating fictions. But back to Spinoza. Could you give me a concrete example of how your reading of Spinoza has led to something you can apply to your own personal life?

I think part of the lessons I have learned from him are lessons I could have just as well have learned from Epictetus or Seneca. I think there are good Stoic lessons to be learned there – that very often, not always, but very often you cannot change the world, so you are better off just changing your judgments about the world. Things are not always going to go your way. I think that is probably – going back to one of your original questions: what can you learn from philosophy? – I think that is as good a lesson as you can learn from any discipline: that the world we inhabit is full of obstacles and forces working against us, not intentionally, but, you know, the world does not always move to my will. And the sooner I learn that, the better off I am.

But if it is reducible to this sentence of advice that ‘if you
can’t change the world, change the way you think about it’— well, one need not read Spinoza for ten years to come to such an advice, a Stoic commonsense would be enough.

Why Spinoza?

I think because Spinoza makes the point in a particularly clear way – I mean, it is paradoxical to say that Spinoza makes it clear – but he puts the point in the context of the broader picture of things, about who we are and what the world is like. I mean, going back to what you said about your grandmother: I could say to you, ‘Ah, don’t let it bother you so much! You know, you can’t change the world!’ But why would you believe me? If you are truly an inquisitive person, interested in your own well-being, you would want to know the bigger picture – why is it like that? Why should I take that attitude? Spinoza gives us an answer to that question. And I think his answer is – despite the fact that his lessons are Stoic ones, the Stoics still believed in providence, that there was something guiding things, not for our benefit, but there is something guiding nature – Spinoza does away with that. And to that extent, I think, his lesson is a bit more accessible to us.

If you would put it in one sentence – what reason Spinoza gives to take such an attitude?

The metaphysics that he demonstrates is one where everything happens according to the laws of nature, it is deterministic. Not fatalistic – I mean, it is not as if there is some point that everything is going to. But I think in order to take to heart the conclusion that you cannot do anything about the world around you: you know, you have loved ones, but sometimes you lose them; you acquire valuable goods, and sometimes they are gone the next day; you put money in the stock-market and the next day the stock-market goes down – unless you understand in a deep way that you could not have done anything about those things in the first place… So I think that is the difference between the philosopher and someone who is just listening to their grandmother. They may come to the same conclusion, but the philosopher knows why they came to that conclusion and why it is the right conclusion.

What do you think of the God of Abraham, Jacob and Isaac?

I think he is a literary character.

What do you think of this literary character?

I think he is deeply fascinating. I think he shows a great range of emotions and he is a terrific story-teller of sorts. Actually, the best account I ever heard of God – and this is what I think of God, this strikes me as very plausible: to me God is a sort of, how would I put this… it is the conscience in a way. The character God represents a personification of conscience in many ways. But do I believe that there is, ontologically, a being who is the one described in Hebrew Scripture? No.

At the beginning you said that you do not harshly distinguish between philosophers and historians of philosophy. But there still seems to be some difference between people who interpret what other people have said and people who just say things. Plato, Aristotle or Spinoza were saying things, and now others are interpreting what they said. If it could happen in the future, where would a new Spinoza or Aristotle or Descartes emerge from?

Well, it is a good question. In a recent Internet debate about the most important philosopher in the 20th century, Wittgenstein won by a landslide. I think historians of philosophy who
do their job well are not just interpreting the thought of others, they are trying to get to the truth. So when you are writing about Spinoza, you want to know ‘is it right?’ And on the other hand, those who seem to be just saying something, like Wittgenstein – it is not coming out of the blue. Wittgenstein is interpreting Russell’s logical atomism, and Heidegger is interpreting Husserl, and so on. So, I mean, the difference between somebody like Plato, who is writing very close to the beginning of philosophy, and somebody like Quine, or Wittgenstein, or Donald Davidson or John Rawls, who is writing recently, is that at a certain point you cannot say something without at the same time interpreting the thought of others, whether you acknowledge it or not. So Quine could not have written what he had written without, say, A.G. Ayer and logical positivism. Philosophy, I think, is a historical enterprise. Maybe it is not as easily affected by historical and political circumstances, but it is embedded in the history of philosophy itself. But, I mean, I agree, your point is well taken. There are some people who are more interested in using philosophy to express their own views on things, as opposed to somebody who is using somebody else to express their own views on things. But I do not think the difference is as sharp and black and white, because, you know, Rawls wrote probably the most influential book in Anglo-American philosophy in the twentieth century, Theory of Justice. In many ways it is a commentary on Kant and others.

But where would you expect a new philosopher to emerge?

The trouble is that philosophy in America has become really introverted, there are only a handful of philosophers in the United States whom you would consider public intellectuals. And I think that is partly the fault of American culture and American media. So, for example, after 9/11 the media looked for people to comment on the events of 9/11. They went to political people, they went to poets, fiction writers, to other journalists, but rarely did they go to a philosopher. Maybe they went to historians… But you did not see any philosophers discussing these events. So it is probably the fault of the media, but it is also the fault of philosophers. I think a lot of philosophy has made itself irrelevant. There are clear exceptions. I think there are some very important philosophers who really are public intellectuals – Amartya Sen, Martha Nussbaum. They are almost the exceptions that prove the rule, but philosophy has become a very self-enclosed discipline. So I think the next great philosopher is not going to come out of the Anglo-American tradition. He is probably going to come from Europe, where philosophers are much more… I think the public is much more literate, philosophically literate, on the continent. And philosophers seem to be much more engaged in society. The trouble is, America is a very illiterate country. Most people get their information from television, and not even good television, but from bad television. I think it is really a minority – good, deep reading is a minority-activity in the United States.

In history, only a minority of the human race has been reading and thinking.

That may be so, but it is a bigger minority in places like France, Belgium, the Netherlands.

Interview by Arnis Ritups
To celebrate Edmund Husserl’s hundred and fiftieth birthday (April, 8th 2009), the Husserl Archive in Leuven, together with the Husserl Archives in Cologne and Freiburg, organized a four-day conference (1st-4th April, 2009) on Husserl’s philosophy. Consolidating and extending the tradition of the annual Husserl’s Memorial Lecture, which after a few years has become one among the most prestigious appointments for international scholars at the K.U.Leuven Institute of Philosophy, this conference offered a unique opportunity to rethink the actuality of Husserl’s thought.

With the participation of internationally acclaimed Husserl-scholars, the conference was not focused on one specific issue, aiming rather to draw a general balance of the relevance of Husserl’s thought within the actual philosophical debate. Mirroring this approach, the title chosen for the conference, ‘Phenomenology – Science – Philosophy’, clearly refers to the two fundamental domains in which the phenomenological enterprise has been engaged since its birth. On the one hand, an inquiry into the philosophical status of phenomenology is stimulated by the tension characterizing Husserl’s thought, namely – as Ullrich Melle puts it in his conference presentation – the tension between 1) the “positivism” mirrored by concrete and detailed descriptions and 2) the radical philosophical claim to ultimate truth and certainty of thinking, feeling and acting. On the other hand, as Husserl’s phenomenology from its very outset was engaged in a dialogue with contemporary sciences (especially mathematics and psychology), a further elaboration of this dialogue, which takes into account the present developments of the scientific methods and the concrete results of scientific research, also belongs to the urgencies of our times.

Proceeding along these two main fronts, the contributions proposed in this “memorial conference” were articulated in six plenary sessions and ten parallel sections. The task of going through the content of each of these contributions would exceed the scope of this report. In order to give at least a partial account of the spirit animating these four extremely intensive days, and thereby avoiding all arbitrariness in my choice, I would like to briefly outline the main issues dealt with by the speakers in the plenary sessions.

Opening the conference with the traditional Husserl’s Memorial Lecture, Robert Sokolowski presented a paper entitled ‘Husserl on First Philosophy’ before a crowded Cardinal Mercier Room. In this most profound speech, Sokolowski captivated the audience, investigating Husserl’s revitalization of Aristotle’s project of first philosophy, namely of the science of being as being. In Sokolowski’s view, indeed, it is precisely as first philosophy that phenomenology has continually resurged after being apparently eclipsed by following currents of thought, so that the motto of the city of Paris, ‘fluctuat nec mergitur’, would perfectly apply to Husserl’s philosophical work as well.
The analogy between Husserl’s and Aristotle’s account of first philosophy becomes more apparent if we consider that Aristotelian first philosophy is also called *metaphysics* (even though this name was not originally given by Aristotle himself): as such, first philosophy is an inquiry of truth as truth, a science of truth, that goes beyond the study of physical processes. In this sense, just as Aristotle’s first philosophy can be described as *ta meta ta physika*, Husserl’s transcendental phenomenology as first philosophy can be described as *ta meta ta psychika* and as *ta meta ta logika*. In fact, with respect to both psychology and logic, i.e. the two scientific fields that most deeply engaged Husserl’s reflections, phenomenology does not merely provide a descriptive eidetic account of the structures of consciousness and predication that are internal to these domains. Approaching science from the phenomenological transcendental perspective, Husserl is rather concerned with a more fundamental questioning: the questioning related to truth as such and to its rational achievement.

Considering some reflections on Husserl’s philosophy proposed by Leo Strauss in his letters to Voegelin, Sokolowski further stressed the meaning of phenomenological first philosophy as a foundational science of both philosophy and science, based on the restoration of Aristotle’s and Plato’s theoretical priorities: according to Strauss, indeed, Husserl’s *egoLOGY* should be conceived as a modern answer to the Platonic and Aristotelian question regarding *Nous* and its realization in lived experience. Leo Strauss’ remarks also helped Sokolowski in shedding light on the concrete character of the Ego as the core of subjective identity throughout the temporal unfolding of experience and as the responsible agent of truth.

Yet, why should phenomenology be the unique science capable of rendering the concrete meaning of the ego as agent of truth? Cannot this task be accomplished by other particular sciences? Husserl’s and Sokolowski’s answer to this latter question cannot but be negative. Particular sciences, be that physics, psychology or the more contemporary neuro-sciences, are self enclosed theoretical domains; as such they cannot account either for their status as sciences or for their claim for truthfulness. The task of a first philosophy, in its striving for apodicticity, is essentially beyond the nature of particular sciences, and demands a much deeper kind of inquiry, such as the Aristotelian and Husserlian inquiry regarding truth as such.

In the final section of his paper, Sokolowski addressed a less conventional issue in phenomenological scholarship, namely the political impact of Husserl’s reflections on first philosophy. Showing the problematic character of all solipsistic accounts of the experiencing subject, Sokolowski insisted on the role of Husserl’s analyses of the mundanization of the subject as revealing the profound political impact of Husserl’s thought: such an impact is fundamentally due to the bodily visibility of the subject in the public order, as a receptive and sensible *Cogito* communicating with others.

In his paper, entitled *Die Kulturbedeutung der Intentionalität. Zu Husserls Wirklichkeitsbegriff*, Ernst Wolfgang Orth investigated the concrete relevance of Husserl’s thought for an inquiry into the issue of “culture”. In doing this, Orth did not simply propose a study concerning the relevance of the phenomenological method for the cultural sciences, nor did he refer to phenomenology from the perspective of a factual culturalism. Basing on Husserl’s reflections on the life-world and mainly referring to the recently published volume XXXIX of the Husserlana
series [Die Lebenswelt], Orth rather set himself a much more ambitious aim, namely to show that Husserl’s phenomenology provides the elements to safeguard culture from naturalistic reductionism, thereby shedding light on the profound meaning of cultural reality.

The core of Orth’s argument consisted in manifesting the profound cultural meaning entailed in the most paradigmatic issue in phenomenology, namely intentionality, and in extending such a cultural meaning to reality as such, considered from a phenomenological perspective. The cultural character of phenomenology as a scientific project already transpires from the characterization of the phenomenological attitude achieved through the epoché. Inaugurating an anti-naturalistic and non-naïve approach to the world, the phenomenological attitude brings to light the profound cultural meaning of reality. It is precisely thanks to its anti-naturalistic approach to reality that phenomenology exceeds the boundaries of a mere theory of knowledge assuming the shape of philosophy of praxis.

If we first stick to the cultural meaning of the phenomenological theory of knowledge, we will notice the interest in the concrete cultural meaning of the world runs through the corpus of Husserl’s text, culminating in his later analyses on the life-world. Contrary to the abstractedness and the formality that Husserl himself often ascribed to Neo-Kantian theory of knowledge, the phenomenological analyses show that the intentional constitution of the world is intimately correlated to the intentional constitution of the subject as a real and identifiable person in the world. Besides, these analyses also demonstrate that world constitution is by no means a solipsistic accomplishment, being rather the dynamic and fluid result of intersubjective and generative constitution. It is precisely in this sense, as Husserl most explicitly claims in one of the manuscripts published in Husserliana XXXIX, that “Sie [die Welt] ist Welt der Kultur” (Hua XXXIX, p. 510). Yet, such a constant intentional accomplishment in the constitution of cultural meaning is not reducible to pure theorein, it is rather a form of praxis considered from the bottom up, namely from simple perception up to higher order forms of knowledge, constitution designates the stratified process of activity that intersubjectively institutes recognized practical meanings, allowing us to orient ourselves in a meaningful world with other subjects.

Concluding his paper, Orth thematized the somewhat paradoxical character of the relation between nature and culture in Husserl’s considerations. If, on the one hand, culture seems to presuppose mere nature as its ground, on the other hand, Husserl is well aware that, concretely speaking, there is no cultureless world as such, no historically naked and meaningless world. This paradox, however, might be only an apparent one: as Husserl stresses, mere nature is only given abstractively, through the method of Abbau, as a non-independent layer of the concrete world of lived experience, of the world that concretely unfolds itself in the process of Kulturbildung. Thus, the ultimate origin of the constitution of cultural meaning is not to be found within a layer that precedes culture, but rather in the very constant process of meaning-institution Sinnstiftung.

As Husserl notoriously claims in the first part of the Crisis, science and philosophy eventually represent two among the different instances of the fundamental phenomenon of culture: they are cultural and historic achievements that refer to the world as always already
constituted givenness. In its own cultural and scientific meaning, which goes beyond the mere naïve application of a given method to a given research-field, phenomenology is to be conceived as a most fundamental discipline: a transcendental “culture-anthropology”, whose outcome reverberates also in the development of the human ethos.

With a contribution entitled Transzendentale Phänomenologie, Rudolf Bernet directly faced a most controversial issue in Husserl’s phenomenology, namely its transcendentalism. Taking seriously the critique of transcendentalism raised by the “second generation” of phenomenologists, Bernet did not merely propose a revaluation of Husserl’s phenomenological approach regarding particular issues, addressing rather the very determination of phenomenology as transcendental philosophy. In what sense is Husserl’s phenomenology a transcendental philosophy? And moreover, what are the scope and the limits of a purely transcendental approach?

Sharing with the non-transcendental phenomenological approaches to experience (i.e. the ones assumed either by pure psychology or by a-subjective and existential philosophy) the bracketing of all metaphysical and logical constructions and the orientation to the Sache selbst, transcendental phenomenology is fundamentally an analysis of constitution. The minimalistic characterization of constitution, as the manifestation of something in its mode of appearance [etwas in einem Wie], has two essential implications for the description of the transcendental project: firstly, the structure of constitution is properly described by the reference to both a direct object (the “what” of appearance) and a dative of appearance (the subject to whom each and every phainomenon manifests itself); secondly, the transcendental subject, as the dative of appearance, does not impose himself/herself upon that which is to be constituted, being rather exclusively determined on the basis of his/her constitutive activity. The critique to Husserl’s transcendental phenomenology might precisely be related to a basic misunderstanding of the phenomenological approach to constitution and consequently to the underestimate of the plasticity and the dynamism peculiar to the transcendental subject, as it becomes clear if one considers the three main objections that were raised against transcendentalism.

1) According to the first objection, the analyses of constitution cannot account for the difference between events and objects. In this regard, however, it must be stressed that the noematic moment of intentional correlation does not coincide with an object, it rather designates the “experienced as such”, taken in its peculiar givenness. In this sense, it is quite possible to conceive of the transcendental constitution of meaningful events as an accomplishment that assumes the form of a Sinngebung. Thus, the limit of the transcendental approach does not concern events as such, but only those events that are deprived of meaning, such as traumas, i.e. events that crave for a constitutive Sinnbildung rather than being given thanks to an already accomplished Sinngebung.

2) The second critique against transcendentalism regards the absoluteness of consciousness, conceived as nulla re indiget ad existendum, which would exclude a proper understanding of the correlation as a constitutive co-determination between experience, the experienced and the experiencing. Yet, if one carefully considers the role of the phenomenological reduction in approaching the relation between consciousness and the world, this point will be inevitably weakened. The reduction, indeed, permits us
to conceive of the fundamental and reciprocal determination of the constituted and the constituting, without characterizing this co-dependence in merely existential or anthropological terms: as the dative of givenness, subjective consciousness has its own peculiar *Welthaftigkeit*, which is not reducible to mere factual existence in the world, but entails both the moment of facticity and the moment of *Sinngbung*.

3) Finally, the third objection refers to some problematic elements in Fink’s characterization of the phenomenologist as an unparticipating observer, which would imply a neglecting of the profound intertwining of the phenomenologist and the world. As a matter of fact, reflecting on his/her own constitutive accomplishments, the phenomenologist must recognize that all those events that cannot be transcendently constituted (such as the already mentioned traumatic events, but also the different forms of passive constitution) also withdraw from transcendental reflection. This means that the uncovering of a new dimension of intuitive givenness, which is implied by transcendental reflection, does not *per se* imply the complete transparency of givenness. Quite to the contrary: reflection is itself subordinated to the often opaque unfolding of life in its own dynamism. And this is the reason why the phenomenological observer cannot be completely detached from the world and from his/her own constitutive activity if he/she aims at rendering the complexity of lived experience.

As Bernet recognizes, Fink’s problematic account of the unparticipating observer is strictly related to an ambiguity in Husserl’s own philosophical project, which can be conceived as *sophia*, since it aims at giving a most complete eidetic account of the different phenomena, but also as *phronesis*, if it is able to stress the limits of such an eidetic approach recognizing the irreducibility of many events and individual phenomena to the static framework of eidetics. In this sense, there can be a phenomenology that does not conceive of itself as a transcendental phenomenology, and there can also be a transcendental phenomenology that does not conceive of itself as an eidetic science of consciousness. In both cases, phenomenology is constantly measured within the limits of *Sinngbung* and of eidetics. In both cases, as Bernet stresses, these limits are not to be overcome but rather stressed, since it is ultimately the phenomenon itself which decides what kind of science, and how much science, can properly account for it.

In spite of the apparently imposing title of his contribution, *Le sens de la phénoménologie*, **Marc Richir** did not intend to offer a definitive answer as to the determination of the ultimate meaning of phenomenology. Rather, reflecting on some problematic aspects in Husserl’s characterization of the phenomenon as such, Richir proposed his own original project of a “non-standard phenomenology”, which in many senses goes beyond the strictly Husserlian one.

Approaching some of the most complex and controversial issues in Husserl’s phenomenology, Richir particularly stressed the irreducibly elusive character of consciousness as a fleeting temporal unity and as an instable stream that in principle withdraws from all apprehension.

The first problem menacing all attempts to offer an eidetic account of the temporal unity of consciousness is linked to the circularity implicit in the very process of *Wesensschau*, whereby the intuition of the *eidos* is based on the arbitrariness of the examples, dissimulating that the *eidos* is at least implicitly presupposed from the very beginning. One further problem emerges
with regard to the infinite character of eidetic variation, which seems to involve a split between an imaginative and a real ego, as if the ego could suspend his/her own finitude as living cogito and be reduced to the eidos ego.

Facing both these problems, Richir insisted on the irreducible facticity of the subject, ultimately conceived as the symbolic crystallization of “transcendental interfacticity”: there is no eidetics that can eventually suppress the infinite potentialities of the finite ego, so that Husserl’s Wesensbetrachtung can only designate a regulative ideal opening up the meaning of variation and of universal rationality.

The irreducible opacity of consciousness ultimately reveals the dynamics of affectivity, which Richir describes as the contact of consciousness with itself, the motor of experience: only affectivity, modulated in particular affections and related to the activity, can originally be given. Intimately experienced by consciousness, this self-contact is more profound than each singular act of reflection; it defines the most archaic form of self-consciousness, which is neither something in space and time, nor something representable. The temporal and elusive character of the stream of consciousness and the non-representability of the phenomenon as such eventually give shape to the specific task of phenomenology, as a reflection on the radical indeterminacy of the appearing. It is precisely this task, according to Richir, that defines the revolutionary character of phenomenology as a mathesis of instability, as a mathesis of chaos.

Considering some of the aporias in Husserl’s account of internal time consciousness, Richir stressed the irreducibility of temporalization to intentionality; conceived in terms of affectivity, as the most archaic contact of consciousness with itself, temporality is by no means an intentional accomplishment. Developing this claim, in the second part of his contribution, Richir proposed some elements of his own original approach to phenomenology, of his phenomenologie non-standard.

Revealing the non-simultaneous and non-spatial convergence of simultaneity and succession, the aporias of time consciousness show the radical non-self-coincidence as the motor of consciousness. Ecarts is the keyword to describe this non-self-coincidence or affectivity, designating blind impulse, which is in many senses analogous to Spinoza’s conatus or to the Romantic Sehnsucht, going through the transcendental immemorial past and being oriented toward the constantly immature and unreachable transcendental future. However, this drive of affectivity can be considered blind only up to a certain point, since it appears concretely only in relation to objects, namely as modulated by what Richir calls the phenomenological schematism, the non-temporal and non-spatial concatenation of affection. Not arising from any subjective accomplishment, phenomenological schematism rather originates from transcendental interfacticity, which designates the past and the future where affections concretize in one or another subject and assume the shape of the Platonic chora. And this is eventually the core of Richir’s non-standard phenomenology: not only it is essential to relativize the notion of subjectivity, but most importantly the notion of ontology, since nothing that happens in this archaic field can be traced back to the stability of ousia. Yet, this instability of Being is not a mere nothing: it is rather the domain of non-representable Sachlichkeit, die Sache selbst of phenomenology, whose givenness is fundamentally mediated by touching and feeling rather than by seeing.
Presenting a text entitled *Gott in Edmund Husserls Phänomenologie*, Klaus Held tackled an important, although quite unusual, problem in Husserl’s thought, namely the role of the notions of God and religion. Retraceable in many of Husserl’s philosophical works, such as those regarding ontology and ethics, the concept of God is nonetheless exemplified at best via the notion of “teleology”. And precisely to such a teleological relevance of God do refer a considerable amount of the E-manuscripts, mainly devoted to theological issues.

As it already appears within the analyses on sensuous perception, Husserl’s account of intentionality is intrinsically characterized by a teleological orientation: in most general terms, the teleological tendency can be described as the most fundamental drive towards the achievement of a universal agreement, which as such would coincide with the entelechēia of consciousness. With regard to this, the problem of God emerges in a twofold function: both in relation to the universal agreement in the different syntheses of fulfillment, and in relation to the entelechēia of the striving for such a universal agreement. Although Husserl’s formulations in the E-manuscripts often equate God with the telos or entelechēia, Held believes that such an approach might be problematic, since it would contradict Husserl’s own claim, formulated in *Ideas I*, that the absolute of God ultimately transcends the absolute of consciousness. In order to avoid such a contradiction, Held suggests an analogy between Husserl’s idea of God and Plato’s account of the Good, t’agathōn. Just as, for Plato, the Good is the guarantee for the appropriateness of the ideas as models for shaping the world, in the same way, for Husserl, God assumes the function of guarantee for both the universal agreement of manifestation and the concrete fulfillment of the universal striving for truth. The function of this guarantee-role attributed to God is not so much relevant for the solipsistic experience, as it is for the intersubjective agreement.

In spite of what seems to be claimed in one manuscript dated 1908 (B II 2, *Absolutes Bewusstsein. Metaphysisches*), it is important to stress that the guarantee-role of God does not imply that God would have an effectively adequate experience. As Husserl notoriously states in paragraph 150 of *Ideas I*, indeed, the a priori laws of perspectival and inadequate manifestation are valid for each and every possible subject, including God. Given this eidetic law of perspectival manifestation, the guarantee-role of God is exclusively related to finite horizons of experience: the universal agreement can only be accomplished in terms of intersubjective perspective, as the agreement between individual and finite horizons of experience. Reconsidered in genetic phenomenological terms, this account implies that the progressive uncovering of world horizons also enlarges the domain of possible agreement and consequently the scope for God’s guarantee-role. In its concrete unfolding, the tendency toward the ultimate fulfillment coincides with the processes Selbstbesinnung and Beimmmung and sheds light on the ethical and historical relevance of phenomenological philosophy: the constant development of the philosophical consciousness – the Immerphilosophischer-Werden, as Held puts it – would ultimately lead up to the monotheistic faith in one Allweltgott (Hua XXXIX, p. 165).

Recapitulating, in Husserl’s thought we encounter two main characterizations of God. The first one, the idea of God as All-Subjektivität or Allpersonalität, is correlated to the telos as final and complete achievement. Such an idea
of God, as Held stresses, would ultimately contradict the necessary Faktum of perspectival experience and therefore coincide with a mere static “object of thought”. As an alternative to this concept of God as ideal pole, Husserl also points to another characterization, according to which God would still be unique and nonetheless related to the multiple gods of particular factual experiences. The power of this God, as Held puts it, would not be the superlative power of the ultimate guarantee, but rather the comparative power of the constant historical unfolding. Such a God is not a static one, it is rather im Werden. In this sense, Husserl's characterization comes close to the process theology of Alfred North Whitehead and to the reflections on God proposed by Teilhard de Charden. Furthermore, this characterization would also shed new light on the traditional God conception of metaphysics and on the problem of theodicy: if God is not the ideal pole of complete integrity, but is something that becomes and that participates of the very unfolding of world horizons, than the very problem of theodicy becomes obsolete.

Closing the conference with a paper entitled Self-Responsibility and Eudaimonia, John Drummond proposed a phenomenological account of ethics in light of the relation between authenticity – to which Drummond would rather substitute “self-responsibility” – and eudaimonia. Although Husserl’s approach to authenticity/self-responsibility appears to be divorced from his description of axiology and even from his explicit thematization of eudaimonia, Drummond believes that a eudemonistic interpretation of self-responsibility could precisely provide a more appropriate account of the moral end.

Going through the corpus of Husserl’s writings, the ideal of authentic reason defines the phenomenological response to the crisis investing both the philosophical along with, more generally, the practical and cultural thought. The definition of self-responsibility or authenticity is strictly related to the phenomenological account of reason (considered in its theoretical, volitional and axiological accomplishments) as teleologically striving for intuitive evidence. Indeed, an agent can be self-responsible only in the full exercise of reason, namely when he/she decides for himself/herself what is true, when he/she takes up the right attitude and emotions with regard to the different situations, to person and things, and when he/she autonomously decides what is rightly done and what is good. Such a self-responsible agent evidently stands in contrast with an agent who does not decide for himself/herself, be that in the passive acceptance of what is said to be true, right or good by others, or be that in judging without evidence. On the basis of Husserl's stratified account of reason, according to which axiological experience (noematically considered) is founded on presentational experience, an evaluative experience can be wrong in two senses: either the basic presentation is false or unjustified, or the founded emotion is unjustified, namely it is a non-appropriate affective response of the subject to the non-axiological properties of objects or situations. It is this very stratified structure which lays the basis for Drummond’s claim, according to which to have a self-responsible evaluative experience, a self-responsible and appropriate emotion, is to have the structure of justification.

This account of self-responsibility was further elucidated in its relation to eudaimonia, considered as the end of all moral life.

Mainly related to the consequentialist idea of the good as objects of self-responsible evalu-
ations and volitions borrowed from Brentano, Husserl’s explicit characterization of *eudaimonia* can be expressed through the categorical imperative “choose the best among all attainable ends”. However, the above sketched characterization of self-responsibility also points to a non-consequentialist, but rather aretic, account of *eudaimonia*. In this second shade of meaning, the good is defined on the basis of a deliberative process which eventually leads to an action that is appropriate to a given situation. The so-called “goods of agency”, which are achieved in this deliberative process, become convictions for the agent and inform his/her subsequent judgments, evaluations and volitions; they become habitualities that make up the disposition to expect certain features in certain situations, to pick out what is morally salient within a situation and to act consequently in a certain way. In spite of the similarities with Aristotle’s account of *aretai* as habits or dispositions that make possible a proper and reasonable action, in Husserl’s theory the self-responsible agent cannot merely follow the example of the *phronimos*. On the contrary, an agent is self-responsible only in the self-conscious and autonomous deliberation for the goods of agency. The authenticity which is actualized through the responsible self-realization of the agent is precisely the core of the eudemonistic character of phenomenological axiology: self-responsibility, in other words, coincides with the flourishing life for a rational agent.

It must further be stressed that the goods of agency realized in self-responsible deliberation are not goods for a solipsistic subject. On the contrary, they are necessarily and effectively chosen for the others as well as for oneself, they become potentially a common knowledge, grounded on historical tradition and on the constant confrontation with others. Moreover, these goods of agency, or second order goods, also assume a political meaning: they obligate us to act in a certain manner insofar as we recognize the desirability of primary goods, namely of the constituent goods without which one could not be a free agent at all. Finally, the universality of the goods of agency is perfectly consistent with the plurality of first order goods, with the democracy and the pluralism characterizing a free society, even if, on a universalistic ground, the pursuit of first order goods may be morally wrong, if this blocks the realization of good of agency for us and for others.

Going beyond both the Aristotelian and the contemporary naturalism in ethics, the phenomenological aretic approach permits us to acknowledge the transcendental dimension of the human being as capable of making moral sense of the world and as being teleologically oriented towards truth in its cognitive, axiological and practical guises. In conclusion, Drummond insisted on the actuality of Husserl’s eudemonistic approach to self-responsibility, claiming that it is compatible with new-Aristotelian approaches to ethics at both the meta-ethical and the normative levels, and that it could engage deontological or utilitarian viewpoints in a meaningful debate.

Last but not least, Thomas Vongehr’s multimedia presentation, *Husserl in Bilder*, deserves a special mention. In this concrete exemplification of *Bildbewusstein*, given on Thursday evening after a most demanding conference-day, Vongehr entertained the participants with images and anecdotes that brought them a little closer to the Philosopher’s concrete life.
List of the Speakers in the Parallel Sessions

Ullrich Melle:
Husserl’s Beweis für den transzendentalen Idealismus

Dominique Pradelle:
Le problème de la démarcation des sciences chez Husserl et Carnap

Laszlo Tengelyi:
Methodologischer Transzendentalismus in der Phänomenologie

Steven Galt Crowell:
Husserl’s Subjectivism: the “ganz einzigen ‘Formen” of Consciousness and the Philosophy of Mind

Agustin Serrano de Haro:
Husserl’s Mereological Argument for Transcendental Constitution

Eduard Marbach:
“So You Want to Naturalize Consciousness?” – “Why, why not?” – “But How?” Husserl meeting some offspring

Dan Zahavi:
Method or metaphysics? Husserl’s transcendental project

Denis Fisette:
Husserlian Phenomenology in cognitive sciences: promise or betrayal?

Sebastian Luft:
Phenomenology as First Philosophy: A Prehistory

Claudio Majolino:
“Nulla ‘re’ indiget ad existendum”. Le scandale d’une science de la conscience “absolue”

Dieter Lohmar:
Phänomenologische Methoden und empirische Erkenntnisse

Tetsuya Sakakibara:
Phenomenology in a different voice. - Husserl and Nishida in the 1930’s

Hanne Jacobs:
Towards a Phenomenological Account of Personal Identity

Lilian Alweiss:
Husserl and the Problem of Non-Existence

Nicolas de Warren:
The Merciful Arrangement: Consciousness and Sleep according to Husserl’s Phenomenology

Carlo Ierna:
Husserl’s Conception of the Ego in relation to Munich Phenomenology

Karl Mertens:
Möglichkeiten und Grenzen einer phänomenologischen Theorie des Handelns

Vincent Gerard:
De la mathesis universalis à la pluralité des matheseis

Sophie Loidolt:
Husserl und das Faktum der praktischen Vernunft – Phänomenologische Ansprüche an eine philosophische Ethik

Rochus Sowa:
Das Allgemeine als das „Gemeinsame“. Anmerkungen zum Proton Pseudos der Lehre Husserls von der Wesensanschauung
INTRODUCTION WITH
CHRISTINE KORSGAARD

Holder of the Cardinal Mercier Chair 2009

Professor Christine Korsgaard is at present the Arthur Kingsley Porter professor of philosophy at Harvard University. She works on moral philosophy and its history, practical reason, agency, personal identity, and human/animal relations. She is the author of four books. The Sources of Normativity (Cambridge 1996), an expanded version of her 1992 Tanner Lectures, examines the history of ideas about the foundations of obligation in modern moral philosophy and presents an account of her own. Creating the Kingdom of Ends (Cambridge 1996) is a collection of her essays on Kant's Ethics and Kantian Ethics. The Constitution of Agency (Oxford 2008) is a collection of her recent papers on practical reason and moral psychology. And Self-Constitution: Agency, Identity, and Integrity (Oxford 2009) is a book about the foundation of morality in the nature of agency. She is also one of the editors of Reclaiming the History of Ethics: Essays for John Rawls (Cambridge 1997).

On the 23rd of April 2009 she delivered the Cardinal Mercier Lecture entitled ‘The Activity of Reason’, and she gave two seminars on animal rights entitled ‘Animal Nature and the Good’ and ‘Human Beings and the Other Animals’. During her time in Leuven as holder of the Mercier Chair 2008-2009, she took the time to speak with Katrien Schaubroeck, and their conversation is recorded below.

Professor Korsgaard, how did you get interested in philosophy in general and in Kantian philosophy more specifically?

I think I was born interested in philosophy, because I was doing philosophy before I knew what it was. I am a first generation college student, so I hadn’t the vaguest idea that philosophy was an academic field. I was concerned as a teenager about issues about objectivity in ethics. I stumbled on Nietzsche and Plato and I discovered that the thing I was doing had a name! The interest in Kant and in Aristotle - those have always been two interests of mine - sprang from the early concern with the question how ethics could be objective or how the answers to ethical questions could be determinate. The idea of practical reason struck me as a way in which ethics could be determinate without raising any problems about facts and values. I was also attracted to Kant and Aristotle because I really like systematic philosophy. I like it when everything has to do with everything else.

You did your PhD under John Rawls’ supervision. What was your dissertation about?

I did my PhD with Rawls indeed. The first drafts of my dissertation were about Kant and Aristotle. Rawls told me to pick one of them, so I picked Kant and my doctoral dissertation became a search for the basis of the claim that the categorical imperative is a principle of reason. At that point a lot of people just took it for granted that that claim was supported by the fact that the universal law formulation was a formal principle. I wrote about the other two formulas as well, the formula of humanity and
the formula of autonomy. I worked through the formulas, and used them each to show a way in which the categorical imperative is a principle of reason.

So Aristotle was there from in the beginning, along with Kant? This combination isn’t very common, and many people think it is strange that you combine those two philosophers. Do you understand why they think so?

It is less uncommon now – I hope partly because of me. But it is true that when I started doing this, people found it very strange. But I have always believed that these two philosophers are perfectly compatible. Kant is more focused on the question what the principle of reason is and how to establish it. And Aristotle is more focused on the question of how human beings become susceptible to the influence of reason and how they become good at moral judgment and that requires a story about the virtues. So the emphases are different, but I don’t think the two stories are incompatible. When I was growing up philosophically, people said that Kant believes in universal principles while Aristotle says there are only general principles; that Aristotle says that you have to enjoy doing the virtuous thing in order to be virtuous whereas Kant says that you are most virtuous when you do the right thing in spite of your reluctance, and so on. I have written about those differences in my paper ‘From Duty and for the Sake of the Noble: Kant and Aristotle on Morally Good Action.’ I think that those differences can be traced back to differences in their theories about what the emotions are rather than differences in their ethical outlooks.

Aristotelian insights are not the only insights with which you enrich your basically Kantian approach to ethics. In The Sources of Normativity you combine a Kantian approach with an existentialist outlook. How does this combination work?

As Kant sees it, values are there because we value things, it is not the other way around. It is we, as rational agents, who confer value on things. Some people interpret Kant as saying that we confer value on everything else but ourselves; we just have intrinsic value. But in my view we also confer value on ourselves. We do this because we need reasons and we cannot have reasons unless we value ourselves. But of course I cannot say that that is a reason for conferring value on ourselves; that would be inconsistent. So my theory needs an existential moment when we bring value into the world, namely the moment when we decide to value ourselves. The other thing that is existential about the resulting view is that I have to bite this bullet: I have to accept the claim that if we failed, universally, to value ourselves then nothing would be valuable.

When you say that all value depends on the existence of valuing beings, that does not immediately sound like something that Kant would say, because he explicitly opposes the idea that something would be valuable just because I happen to like it. Isn’t that also true?

It is not desire, or liking, that confers value on the object. Conferring value on the object is something that you do by making a choice – where it is essential in Kant that making a choice is in fact making a law. Your law is an enactment of the value of the thing. You cannot do that just because you like it, because that would be not checking whether the maxim of pursuing this thing for this reason would serve as a universal law. The way I like to think of “value creation” in Kant, is in terms of form and matter. The matter is psychological stuff: our likings, interests, capacities for enjoying,
The form is the form of law: you impose that form on that matter and then you get things that are valuable.

In The Sources of Normativity you argue that we are all under a moral obligation because we are reflective beings. Being reflective we have the capacity to ask whether we should act in the way we happen to desire. That is why we need reasons that tell us what to do. In your view those reasons are based on our practical identities, our identities as a sister or a friend or a teacher... And because we have to value those identities in order to be able to act at all, we also have to value the basic human identity that underlies these identities and which we all share. That is how morality comes into our lives. Now, the obvious question is why there are so many people doing immoral things if the moral law is unavoidable in the way you describe it. What is wrong with, for instance, the mafioso, someone who acts in accordance with his practical identity as a member of the mafia, but who does not draw the conclusion that he is therefore under a moral obligation. Would you say that that makes him irrational?

It is certainly a failure of reason. The trouble with the word ‘irrational’ is that it sounds like the problem is a contradiction. And there is a problem of contradiction, but it is produced by something more important which is lack of reflective depth. The mafioso hasn’t thought through the meaning of his commitments, all the way down, whether he could really follow his principles in every possible situation. So what is wrong with him is a sort of lack of reflective depth and the resulting lack of moral imagination. Of course if you do the reasoning all the way down what you find is a contradiction - and that makes his state irrational but not in the sense that he already does contradict himself, only in the sense that if he reflected deeply enough he would discover a contradiction.

Returning to the Aristotelian language you use in your more recent work and also in the seminars you gave at the institute today, would you say that the mafioso is not only irrational, but also not well-functioning?

Yes, I would say that an immoral being is not well-functioning, although in a somewhat theoretical or distant sense. This has to do with the arguments from Self-Constition: he is not well-functioning in the sense he is not acting on a principle that holds his agency together in every possible situation, that would constitute him as an agent in every possible situation. Of course it is possible, even probable, that he will never get into the kind of situation in which this would be a troublesome fact to him. So he is not well functioning, but in a somewhat theoretical sense.

It is a common criticism of your approach to morality, advocated by Thomas Nagel among others, that it misrepresents what morality is about. It seems as if you are saying that one should be moral in order to be true to oneself, and to what one values about oneself. Morality, however, is not about yourself but about the value of other beings.

It is true that my account is like the Greek account of ethics, in the sense that I take it that the story to be told is the story about how to be a well-integrated, autonomous, well-functioning human being, and I see morality as sort of being the outer expression of that. What is wrong with the way in which the criticism you just mentioned is formulated, is that one isn’t moral in order to anything. It is not that you are moral in order to get integrity for yourself, rather than to do nice things for other people. Being just and honest and fair to other people is essential to being a well-integrated person, but it is not an alternative purpose that is at stake here. It is an alternative grounding of principles but this reflects
nothing about your purposes. Morality assigns us purposes, it is our moral duty to help those in need for its own sake – not to help those in need for something else. We are creatures who adopt our purposes – they are not given to us by our desires, and that means we need principles to guide their adoption. Those principles have to be grounded. I believe that they are constitutive principles of action, and so they are not themselves adopted, not something you have for a purpose. You are already committed to them. You need to make an integrated agent of yourself and those are the principles that tell you how to do it.

The topic of your seminars today and tomorrow is about animals and how we should treat them in a morally proper way. Kant does not appear as an attractive starting point if you want to talk about animal rights. Nevertheless you seem to be able to do that, to bring animals into the kingdom of ends, that is, the moral realm as Kant conceives it. How do you do this?

I got started on this whole project because I have been a vegetarian for my entire adult life. And I am a Kantian and a lot of people have asked me how I combine those two things. When I was asked to give the Tanner lecture at Michigan, I decided to take up the question and work out a view. There is a simple argument and a more complicated one. The simple argument is basically that when we legislate that certain things should be counted as reasons or values, although it is only rational agents that can do the legislating, we do not always represent our rational nature when we do the legislating. We sometimes represent, or speak for, our animal nature: the thing in us that is capable of pain and suffering for instance, the thing in us that likes to live, likes to move around, likes to play. If you legislate on behalf of your animal nature, you are, by the criterion of universality, legislating on behalf of animal nature in general, just as nothing counts as legislating on behalf of my own humanity that isn’t legislating on behalf of humanity in general. So that’s the simple claim: it’s just a mistake to think that because only we can legislate, only we are represented by our legislating.

The more complicated argument is something like this: there is a way in which every animal pursues its own good. I believe that’s a kind of tautology, since that’s what an animal is: something that pursues its own good. Legislating the moral law is just the human way of doing that. We demand respect and recognition from each other, that’s our way of pursuing our own good. We say to each other ‘I matter’. So legislating the moral law is a natural way of being an animal.

*But animals don’t say ‘I matter’*

But everything about them says ‘I matter’, and as I said, I think that’s almost a tautology. I mean that’s what they are – substances that matter to themselves.

*Would it be problematic for your view to take into account other parts of nature, like trees and oceans?*

I feel two different ways on this question. A part of me wants to say that only a conscious being has a final good, only a conscious being therefore is owed a certain kind of treatment. There is in the Tanner lecture ‘Fellow Creatures’ a footnote towards the end where I explore the idea that instead of thinking of moral standing as something that some things have and some things don’t, maybe there are ways in which we should treat everything in accordance with its nature. We share an animal nature with animals,
but we share an organic nature with plants, and we even share a nature with substances. Maybe that could ground certain ways of treating trees and oceans that, if not exactly duties that are owed to them, seem appropriate or suitable. So I come very close in that footnote to saying that we have duties to everything.

I would like to ask you a question of a wholly different kind. As you may have noticed there are very few women among the staff here at the institute. Partly that is because of the particular history of this institute. But the under-representation of women seems to be a problem at other philosophy departments too. I heard that also in the USA philosophy departments are special in that there aren't as many women as there should be or as you could expect there to be. Have you any thoughts about this gender issue that you want to share? Do you think the situation should change? And will it change by itself, or should we do something about it?

This is a very vexed problem for people of my generation. I came of age during the feminist revolution. And when I was in graduate school I would have been willing to bet that by the time I was the age I am now there would be many more women in philosophy. Everything looked like it was going to open up. What in fact happened, is still interesting but it isn't that. There are not many more women in philosophy. I think it is not even documentable that there are more at all, women still make up only about a quarter of professional philosophers in the US. What has happened is that women are much more centrally located and powerful. It has been in my generation that you had the first women chairs in major departments. I was the first woman ever to be the chair of Harvard's philosophy department; and lots of departments around the same time had their first woman chairs. And what also changed is that women are more widely read, not just by specialized audiences or other women. So women have become much more central regular players in the game. But there still are not very many of us. There was a theory when I was young that it had to do with the lack of role models, that once there was one woman in the upper ranks there would come more. But now at Harvard we have more senior women than any other good department in the English speaking world: Frances Kamm, Gisela Striker, Susanne Siegel, Alison Simmons …and it has no effect at all on undergraduate enrolment. So this has been a very great surprise also. Another argument that people used to make that I think has some validity is that there is an aggressive side to philosophy, a debate side, and that women find this off-putting or find themselves unable to participate in it. It is true that philosophical manners have improved since women have been more centrally located but the debate aspect of the subject is still there of course.

And do you think the current situation should change?

Oh, I absolutely think it should change. After all, we tell ourselves 'these are the most fundamental questions of human life'. Why should the most fundamental questions of human life be most interesting to male white people? That doesn't make any sense at all.

Another feature of this institute is that only few people work in analytic philosophy. The distinction between continental and analytic philosophy is, however, not always easy to make. Do you think there is a distinction and how would you describe it?

I think that it is largely sociological really. It has to do with particular traditions developing and people clinging to them My first year of teach-
ing was at Yale, which was a divisive department having a fight about this issue in those days (back in ’79–’80). Basically the analytic philosophers pretended to think that the continental philosophers had no logical facility whatever, and the continental philosophers pretended to think that analytic philosophers could only deal with trivia and never deal with big questions. This was obviously ridiculous, polemical stuff on both sides. But of course, when traditions go on for a while, people can become unintelligible to each other because it is easier to understand work within your own tradition of study. That creates barriers between the two schools of thought. And it is also true that in some cases, and I am afraid that at least in the universities that I know this happens more in the case of continental philosophers, people can get attached to their identity as a special kind of philosopher and then they have a motive for wanting the distinction to continue because they don’t have a way of self-identifying when the distinction disappears. Certainly analytic philosophy is a much less narrow affair than it was when I was growing up. It can no longer be said that analytic philosophers are not dealing with big questions.

*Of which your philosophical work is an excellent proof.*

*Thank you very much for your time, professor Korsgaard.*

Interview by Katrien Schaubroeck
IMMANENCE AFTER SIMONE DE BEAUVIOIR RESISTING TRANSCENDENTAL MASCULINITY

Public lecture and seminar by Professor Rosi Braidotti, Utrecht University

On 26 November 2009 Professor Rosi Braidotti visited the Institute of Philosophy and gave a lecture entitled “Immanence after Simone De Beauvoir - Resisting Transcendental Masculinity”, which was followed on 27 November by a seminar on the topic of “Feminist Philosophies of the Subject after Post-Structuralism.” The lecture and seminar were organized by LUCIDE and the Doctoral School in Humanities & Social Sciences, in the context of the PhD course in Feminist Theory.

LUCIDE, the Leuven University Centre for Interdisciplinary Research on Difference and Equality, aims at bundling the research at the K.U.Leuven about equality and diversity. The Centre focuses on interculturalism, gender, disability and age. In the course of a number of expert meetings on these topics, it became clear that researchers who are dealing with gender issues are in need of a theoretical backing. In order to meet this need, a PhD course in Feminist Theory was developed. In its first year, the course will deal with feminist epistemologies. The course took off in September 2009 and consists in a monthly reading seminar lead by Prof. Sarah Bracke. During the year-long course there are three lectures and seminars by international guest speakers, of whom Professor Braidotti was the first. Each guest speaker is invited in collaboration with another faculty, which underscores the interdisciplinary nature of the course. The Institute of Philosophy hosted the lecture and seminar by Professor Braidotti. The following guest speakers, Judith Butler (UC Berkeley) and Nira Yuval-Davis (UC London), will be welcomed by the Social Sciences Faculty and the Arts and Humanities Faculty. Moreover, the course is the first of its nature to be organised in collaboration with the Humanities and Social Sciences Doctoral Schools.

Professor Braidotti’s Lecture was attended by a large number of graduate and post-graduate students not only from the Institute of Philosophy but from other faculties as well. In her lecture, tellingly entitled “Immanence after Simone De Beauvoir - Resisting Transcendental Masculinity”, Braidotti gave an introduction to the topic of Feminist Philosophy, its evolution and its challenges from Simone De Beauvoir to its latest developments. More specifically, the lecture addressed the issue of difference from its original conceptualization as binary sexual opposition, to the latest re-conceptualization of difference beyond gender distinction, and across culture, race, and belonging.
It is not by chance that Simone De Beauvoir is taken as the starting point of the talk, in that she is unanimously seen as the first philosopher who reflectively addressed the issue of gender distinction and who anticipated the wave of post-1968 American Feminism. In fact, the English translation of Beauvoir’s major work *The Second Sex* has been extremely influential, albeit often polemically so, in shaping the theoretical contours of feminist thinking. This is the reason why Braidotti elected this as the starting point of her talk on feminist theory. Even though Beauvoir’s reception is often based upon misunderstandings and uncharitable readings, the limitations and shortcomings of her position also need to be emphasized. This assessment should, however, be tempered by the consideration that Beauvoir had only a certain set of concepts at her disposal, which were mainly inherited from French Cartesianism and through to phenomenology and Hegelian dialectic. Yet, it is precisely such a strong rationalist influence that, according to Braidotti, marks the limitation of Beauvoir’s project. For this reason, it is necessary to dwell briefly on the main features of such an approach in order to see more clearly the reasons why a new outlook might be necessary. Basing her analysis on a Hegelian dialectical distinction, Beauvoir explains that woman has been conceived hitherto as the ‘other’ of man, who is the subject *par excellence*, qualified as such by the possession of rationality and self-identity. According to this binary scheme, femininity, unlike its masculine counterpart, is described as something obscure and mysterious, incapable of transcendence, i.e., of freedom and projectuality towards a future. Beauvoir inscribes this analysis in the Hegelian-Marxist scheme of the master and slave dialectic and argues for an emancipation of the slave (as the other, the woman) in the mutual recognition of the two sexes as both free and capable of transcendence, that is of rational choice and projectuality. Hence, reason is seen as the common denominator which transcends all difference, unifying man and woman in their capacity to be subjects. Difference, instead, is seen as a negative, pejorative qualification which must be corrected and brought back to identity.

It is precisely from this negative definition of difference, as something that must be overcome by an appeal to universal reason, that feminist thought takes its start. According to Braidotti, Beauvoir’s view is based upon a Eurocentric form of humanism, whose presuppositions are called into questioned by subsequent efforts in feminist theory. “Equal to whom?” asks Irigaray, and this question implies the criticism of any naïve emancipatory attitude, which would demand homologization to a model of sameness which, after all, is still modeled upon masculinity, not to mention upon Europeanness and whiteness. The response is that of taking up again the ‘burden of difference,’ this time in a positive and productive fashion. Braidotti argues for the necessity of a reconceptualization of difference along the lines of a ‘standpoint theory’ and a ‘politics of location’ (à la Chandra Mohanty). In this way the primacy of a ‘first world’ perspective would be redressed, together with the notion of the ‘subject’ and of the ‘other.’ This means that the second wave of feminist philosophy focuses not only on the issue of gender, but also on questions such as

---

race and cultural or religious difference.

Ultimately, Braidotti describes such reconceptualization of difference in terms of centre-margins reflection. Such thinking emphasizes the knowledge that comes from the margins over and above the knowledge of the centre. The knowledge of the margins is considered much richer and more fruitful than that of the centre, in that the margins, because of their subaltern position, and in order to survive, must both know themselves and the centre, while the centre, in its own self-assured and unquestioned dominance, lacks self-knowledge and self-reflection. As an example, it is enough to think of the situation of an immigrant from a different culture, language and religion, living in the Western world: in order to fit in, and ultimately to survive, she needs both the knowledge of the world she is coming from, and an insight into the rules and practices that govern the new reality she has entered into. Her point of view, straddling two worlds, can shed new light upon the unquestioned practices of the self-proclaimed centre. On the contrary, every position which adopts a methodological nationalism or ethnocentrism is inescapably characterized by a structural ignorance.

For this reason, Braidotti proposes to reverse the epistemological paradigm according to which all differences, in order to be understood, need to be brought back to the form of identity and suggests, instead, that difference has a much greater cognitive capacity than identity. It is not necessary to appeal to a centre, or to an identity principle, in order to obtain firmly grounded knowledge (and in order to counter the charge of relativism). Braidotti claims that giving up the universal does not preclude feminist theory from having a strong conceptual grounding. On the contrary, difference is as structured as identity, and it is a matter of exploring and giving an account of such a structure. In order to do so, approaches such as Haraway’s notion of ‘situated knowledges,’ as well as the aforementioned ‘standpoint theory’ of Mohanty, could be of help. Hence, according to Braidotti, it is from the perspective of the margins that we can gain knowledge, not only of the periphery, but also of the centre itself. Braidotti concluded her talk by pointing to the new horizons of feminist theory, which, far from merely being a ‘melancholic science’ of the wrong reality, has to look ahead and take up the challenges of a post-anthropocentric theory and even post-humanism. In doing so, feminist theory is called to avoid the eternal weakness of philosophy, which is that of being always too late. Rather, it should embrace a positive and forward looking-attitude, engaging with the possibilities opened up by the latest technological developments and, drawing from the latest findings of science and biology, imagining new scenarios for the future.

The lecture and seminar of Professor Braidotti at the Institute of Philosophy was one of the many events organized by the PhD course in Feminist Theory and by its coordinator Sarah Bracke. In February 2010, participants will be able to follow a live video stream of Professor Judith Butler’s lecture “State Violence, Precarity, and the Siege of Gaza” at Utrecht University and subsequently ask questions. In May 2010, Professor Nira Yuval-Davis, from the Research Centre on Migration, Refugees and Belonging, University of East London, will be a guest speaker in the course. Moreover, within the Institute of Philosophy, a Feminism and

---

Philosophy Group has been established. The group will start by reading Beauvoir’s *The Second Sex* but plans other activities as well.

For more information about the PhD-course Feminist Theory, contact LUCIDE at info@lucide.kuleuven.be

For more information about the reading group *The Second Sex*, contact Willow Verkerk or Annelies Decat at willow.verkerk@student.kuleuven.be and annelies.decat@hiw.kuleuven.be

Report by Margherita Tonon and Annelies Decat
INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE: “HISTORICAL EPISTEMOLOGY”

10-12 December 2009, Leuven

Historical epistemology is now a blooming field of study, bringing history and philosophy together in new ways. Historians of science understand historical epistemology as both a philosophical underpinning of their work and a heuristic tool. Some of them aim at uncovering the historically situated conditions of a field of knowledge or of scientists’ objects of inquiry. Others study fundamental scientific concepts, which organize knowledge in different historical periods, along with the contingent conditions for their permanence or transformation. As Lorraine Daston puts it, historical epistemology is located in between the history of knowledge practices (such as experimenting, mathematical demonstrations or scientific observations) and the history of epistemology, which is a history of philosophical theories. In her view, historical epistemology concerns the new central epistemological categories’ and problems’ articulation and emergence from knowledge practices.

The most philosophically challenging version of historical epistemology is perhaps the one that focuses on our central epistemological concepts. Ian Hacking and others have argued that it is possible to differentiate styles of reasoning, each with its distinct point of origin and history. It turns out that rationality, but also objectivity and observation, for instance, are subject to historical determinants. Historical epistemologists question the assumption that our intuitions about central epistemological concepts are invariant, universal and stable. History might have crucially shaped not only the meaning of epistemic concepts but also our intuitions about them.

The aim of the conference in Leuven (Belgium), sponsored by the Leuven Formal Epistemology Project and the Max-Planck-Institut für Wissenschaftsgeschichte, was to combine history and epistemology in new and interesting ways. After an introduction that clarified the nature and scope of the historical epistemological project (Vermeir), a number of speakers presented examples of historical epistemology when discussing the history of central epistemic concepts (such as generality, by Chemla), of scientific concepts (such as inertia and fields in physics, by Van Dyck and Steinle, or fatigue in wartime experimental psychology, by Boor), and of central distinctions in science (such as the distinction between the abstract and the concrete, by Grosholz). Others discussed the role of concepts in the philosophy of the forefathers of the new historical epistemology, such as Canguillem (Chimisso, Hyder).

Besides these historiographical explorations, the speakers also presented philosophical reflections on the historicity of concepts. They discussed how concepts come into existence, how they migrate to other contexts, how these concepts retain traces of their original contexts...
(Arabatzis and Steinle) and how they become sedimented (Hyder). The speakers also studied how concepts can be individuated (Arabatzis) and how they become ordered in taxonomies (Cortois). Van Dyck reflected on the practice of writing a history of concepts as embedded in scientific practices and he wondered how these philosophical reflections might affect historiographical practice and vice versa. Of course, the program of historical epistemology was also analyzed critically and alternative approaches were explored. Kusch presented Craig’s and Williams’s ‘genealogy of knowledge’ as well as Wittgenstein’s, Geertz’s and Shapin’s ‘metrology of knowledge’ as possible alternative approaches, while Bloor presented a more sociologically oriented view on historical epistemology. The meaning and function of ‘concepts’ as well as of ‘norms’ were key in many of the discussions.

Animated debates were held on the desirability or undesirability of normativity in historical epistemology (Hyder, Arabatzis, Bloor and others), and on the role of sociology in historical epistemology.

Finally, Klein and Monaldi argued that not only the epistemology but also the ontology of the sciences has a history, and they discussed examples of new chemical substances (Klein) and new physical states (Monaldi) that have been artificially created in the laboratory. As a fitting conclusion, Schickore gave an overview of the recent interactions between history and philosophy of science and presented reflections on how these interactions could be continued in a fruitful way.

Report by Koen Vermeir
Annelies Jansoone, Martin Heidegger and the End of Traditional Philosophy. An Investigation of Misunderstandings, Promoter: Professor William Desmond.

It can be stated without any exaggeration that the work of the German metaphysician Karl Jaspers does not play any important role in the contemporary philosophical debates. Even during Jaspers’ life did his thinking in general, and his political philosophy in particular, receive little attention in spite of relevancy of his research into the borders and perversions of the modern sciences and their relation to philosophy; in spite of his life-long interest in humanism that is not culturally bound and in spite of his many lectures on religious fundamentalism and chemical warfare. If and when Jaspers’ name is mentioned in the modern philosophical encyclopedia, it is usually in the context of existentialism. Karl Jaspers was and still is considered, together with his contemporary and compatriot Martin Heidegger, as one of the great fathers of this philosophical current of the twentieth century.

In two parts, eight sections and eight chapters of my doctoral work I have been looking for the different philosophical and historical factors which could explain why until today Karl Jaspers has been always associated with Martin Heidegger even though both thinkers repeatedly and explicitly denied that their respective philosophies had anything to do with each other or with existentialism. The first, more introductory part of my research, on Philosophy and View of the World, goes back in time to the academic Germany of the first twenty years of the last century. The most diverse philosophers of Neo-Kantianism, life philosophy and phenomenology were back then involved in a heated discussion about the definition of philosophy itself as a ‘scientific’ endeavor. It was against this background that the first writings of Jaspers and Heidegger were introduced: they both offered a radical alternative to the philosophical positions of that time and this fact seems to imply from the very beginning that both Jaspers and Heidegger “were working on the revival of philosophy from the same fundamental situation” (Letter ‘Heidegger to Jaspers’ from April 1920).

In the first chapter of my work, Jaspers’ first philosophical book from 1919, his Psychologie der Weltanschauungen, is analyzed as an antonymous synthesis of the Hegelian dialectics and Kierkegaardian existential thinking. The complex concurrence of biographical, historical and philosophical motives, which made the psychiatrist Jaspers announce his philosophy as ‘psychology’, is the theme of the second chapter. The second, and the more extensive, part of my work focuses on the proper and comparative treatment of Jaspers’ and Heidegger’s ontological interests and it also addresses the misleading sophist reasoning that considers these interests as equivalent. Central here is the work Anmerkungen zu Karl Jaspers’ Psychologie der Weltanschauungen, an extensive review of Jaspers’ work from 1919 that
Heidegger wrote in 1920. The thorough analysis of this work leads to an interesting statement, namely that Martin Heidegger was the first to take up the philosophical delusion that Jaspers’ book had something to offer to his very own ontological project. In the four following chapters I demonstrate why Heidegger’s revolutionary *Anmerkungen* needs to be read less as a commentary on Jaspers’ revolutionary *Psychologie der Weltanschauungen* and more as an excellent summary of Heidegger’s world-famous *Seit und Zeit* which would appear seven years later.

In his *Anmerkungen* Heidegger takes over various lines of thought from his former* promoter Heinrich Rickert (chapter three) and he combines these with his own specific methodological critique of Dilthey’s *Typologie der Weltanschauungen* from 1911 (chapter four), which Heidegger unjustly places together with Jaspers’ *Psychologie der Weltanschauungen* (chapter five) in order to judge them both from the perspective of his earliest *Vorlesungen* on “the historical life” (chapter six).

In order to increase the distance between Jaspers’ periechontology and Heidegger’s fundamental ontology the seventh chapter focuses on the relation of both philosophers to the phenomenology of Edmund Husserl. Even Husserl was wrong to assume that Heidegger did not understand the point of his ‘strong science’ and that Jaspers knew better his phenomenological method than Husserl himself. In reality, Heidegger’s fundamental-ontological question about the being of beings cannot be understood without Husserl’s phenomenological reduction. Jaspers’ periechontological question about the all-embracing modi of being turns away from the scientific philosophy that both Husserl and Heidegger represented. Supported by the evidence of both the early and the later works of Husserl and Heidegger I analyze in the eighth chapter how the traditional philosophical themes of a human being, God and the world, on the one hand, find their definite end in Heidegger’s philosophical science and how, on the other hand, they are the part of Jaspers’ philosophical belief.

A thorough reading of their correspondence and of Jaspers’ *Notizen zu Martin Heidegger* (1978) supports this constitutive to and fro between Jaspers’ and Heidegger’s ontologies, while a compilation of striking quotes in the last section of my work has no other aim than to confirm the prevalence of the ‘ontological’ sophism which was torn to shreds in the previous chapters. The epilogue of my dissertation exposes from the terminological and historical perspective the circumstances which encouraged the philosophical association between Jaspers and Heidegger and which precluded the correct interpretation of both Jaspers’ and Heidegger’s thought on being.

**Leen de Bolle,**


This thesis attempts to provide a general introduction to the philosophy of Gilles Deleuze. As a starting point, I have used his *Difference and Repetition* from 1968. I have tried to demonstrate that the core of Deleuze’s thought is already present in *Difference and Repetition* and that this
book contains the conditions for all his later works. These conditions consist in thought’s complete liberation from the framework or authority by which it traditionally functions: consciousness, rationality, intentionality, etc., in favour of a new image of thought that accentuates unconscious forces and corporeal encounters. This is a philosophy of radical immanence. Deleuze constructs a plane of immanence on which there is an unlimited, impersonal, mechanic productivity. In my thesis I have elaborated three major themes: the dissolution of the self, of time and of being.

In the first chapter I have investigated in what sense difference and repetition can be conceived of in a positive way, in a way that is independent of representational thinking and the hegemony of the concept. Consequently, difference and repetition appear in a non-conceptual time and space. I have examined how Deleuze connects with Kant’s transcendental philosophy in which time and space are not concepts, but rather intuitions. This provides the transcendental philosophy by which Kant retraces the conditions of all possible experience. Deleuze relies on Maimon who provides Kant’s transcendental philosophy with a genetic perspective by which the conditions of real experience are investigated.

In the second chapter I have examined how Deleuze - in discussion with and against Kant, Hume, Plotinus, Bergson, Maimon, Leibniz, Freud, Sacher-Masoch and many others - advances three fundamental repetitions that constitute time: the constitution of the present (first synthesis), of the past (second synthesis) and the future (third synthesis). These repetitions are passive syntheses that operate in an unconscious, pre-individual, zone. With these passive syntheses, the active form of the ‘I think’ becomes completely dissolved. It splits open into a multiplicity of affects, contractions, contemplations, dreams and involuntarily memories. Time as a chronological succession, as the measure of movement, becomes an excessive event in which different velocities and slowness, a variety of different rhythms, coexist.

In the third chapter, I have presented the radical consequences of the dissolution of the self that Deleuze and Guattari (in the volumes Capitalism and Schizophrenia) strongly affirm. They propose a positive concept of schizophrenia in which desire is liberated from the form of the person, from pathology and from the Oedipus complex.

In the fourth chapter, I address what remains when the dissolution of the subject, of time and of desire has been realized. This is a plane of immanence whose condition lies in a pure event that is absolutely one and radically contingent, and that nonetheless must be affirmed as such. In this respect Deleuze elaborates an ontology of the univocity of being which is inspired by Duns Scotus, Spinoza and Nietzsche and which advances being as an expressive and affirmative concept.

In the fifth and last chapter, I have tried to demonstrate that Deleuze’s thinking produces an endless play of impersonal productivity. The concept of ritornello from A Thousand Plateaus stands for a rhythm as the underlying dynamism of every order, structure or system that we usually conceive of as static, immobile institutions. With the concept of ‘exhaustion’ which Deleuze uses as the title of his commentary of Quad et autres textes pour la télévision of Samuel Beckett, I asked myself if the endless productivity of Deleuze’s philosophy ever finds a moment of rest, an ending point.

This dissertation is the first sustained philosophical and contextual reading of the Anglo-Irish politician Edmund Burke’s (1730-1797) text, A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful, published 250 years ago in 1757 (a revised 2nd ed. appeared in 1759). By focusing on the philosophical, historical, literary and religious contexts in particular, beauty and the sublime are read outside of Burke’s political career and within the context of the birth of aesthetics in the long eighteenth-century. This birth is seen as influenced by the growing concern with taste and passion in British philosophy over against reason and abstraction. A simplification of the outline of this dissertation can also be seen in the following diagram:

Part I: Beauty
   Chapter 1: Pleasure
   Chapter 2: Passion—love
   Chapter 3: Delicacy

Part II: the Sublime
   Chapter 4: Pain
   Chapter 5: Passion—fear
   Chapter 6: Power

Each of these chapters attempts to articulate one of the key constituent elements of understanding beauty and the sublime in their historical context. The vulnerability of the human being to these elements is thus necessary to move beyond an ‘abstract’ philosophical discussion of aesthetics. The dissertation concludes with a statement concerning the future of aesthetics as existing between the two affective spheres of beauty and the sublime without reducing one to the other.

KEVIN DEMIDDELE, Conditionals: Probability, Semantics, Pragmatics, Promoter: Professor Leon Horsten.

In this thesis, I aim to give a philosophical analysis of the probabilistic approach to conditionals. We will start, in the first chapter, by exploring the research field and our topic: conditionals. After tackling the question of what conditionals are, we will focus on the distinction between indicative and subjunctive conditionals. More specifically, we will deal with the issue of the classification of future conditionals. While these conditionals were traditionally grouped with the indicatives, there have been attempts to show that they belong with the subjunctives. We will consider Dudman’s defence of this thesis, which is based on grammatical considerations. Some critiques of this account will also be dealt with. Next, our topics will be Bennett’s defence of the traditional distinction and Edgington’s more gradual view of the distinction between indicatives and subjunctives. We conclude the first chapter with section 1.6, where we will criticize Morton’s claim that there are future Adams pairs. According to Morton, future conditionals are ambiguous between an indicative and a subjunctive reading. It will be argued that this is a mistake, that can be explained in terms of the distinction between global and local conditional probability, introduced by Kaufmann. After briefly touching upon some related topics we conclude the section by presenting another application of Kaufmann’s distinction, to alleged counterexamples to modus ponens. It is then argued that our earlier application of Kaufmann’s distinction was not ad hoc, but can be expected to be useful for resolving some other puzzles involving context-dependent conditionals.
To a certain extent, the probabilistic approach to conditionals reacts against the traditional way of analyzing conditionals. In the second chapter, we will be concerned with an examination of that tradition. We will deal with material implication, which can be seen as the representation of ‘if’ in classical logic. After outlining the problems with material implication, an examination of the traditional way of ‘solving’ these problems, namely Gricean pragmatics, follows. We will specifically focus on Grice’s account of conditionals, which aims to preserve the truth-conditions of material implication as the representation of the truth-conditions of natural language conditionals by explaining away its counterintuitive predictions pragmatically. Some more recent neo-Gricean theories will also be covered. We will deal with the account of Levinson, who argues that the traditional distinction between pragmatics and semantics is too strict, because pragmatistical features can play a role in determining truth-conditions. Another neo-Gricean approach we will examine is Relevance Theory, which is more psychologically inspired. We conclude the chapter with Jackson’s theory of conditionals, which is also a traditional truth-conditional account in the spirit of Grice, but which acknowledges the acceptability of conditionals to be captured in terms of conditional probability.

This leads us into the third chapter, where Adams’ probability logic and more in general his account of conditionals will be examined. Adams can be seen as the pioneer of the probabilistic approach to conditionals. He developed his probability logic for reasoning with uncertain premises and with a new approach to conditionals in mind. The main hypothesis of the approach is that the probability of a conditional $A \rightarrow C$ is the conditional probability of the consequent, given the antecedent, $p(C|A)$. This conditional probability can be interpreted as the probability of $C$ after learning that $A$ and this interpretation is often linked to the Ramsey test, a famous proposal by Frank Ramsey for evaluating conditionals. The Ramsey test plays a crucial role in many other recent theories of conditionals as well, so we will take some time to study it. Next, we will present Lewis’ triviality results in detail. These results show that the probability of conditionals cannot be the conditional probability of the consequent given the antecedent, when probability is conceived of as probability of truth. The triviality results are often seen as the strongest objection against the probabilistic approach, although defenders of this approach claim that the triviality results merely show that truth-conditionality with respect to conditionals must be given up. We will consider the most important arguments in this debate about truth-conditionality. Finally, we will investigate how pragmatics can be and why it should be incorporated in the probabilistic approach.

The fourth chapter, the longest, deals with some recent theories of conditionals. First, we will examine a proposal by Kaufmann, based on a theory by Jeffrey. Jeffrey proposes to hold on to the truth conditions of material implication in case the antecedent of a conditional is true. When the antecedent is false, the value of the conditional is its conditional probability. Jeffrey’s account has some counterintuitive results in the case of right-nested conditionals. As it is Kaufmann’s intention to develop an account that can deal with right-nested conditionals, these problems need to be fixed. This is done by taking up posterior facts that are causally independent of the antecedent in the calculation of the probability. Conditional probability
is then no longer calculated in the standard way, but similar to what we have seen to be the global conditional probability in chapter 1. At this point, we will make a small digression to say something about clausal implicatures. A second recent probabilistic theory of conditionals that we will examine is the evidential support theory by Douven. His idea is to add as an extra condition for acceptability of indicative conditionals the requirement that the antecedent should provide evidence for the consequent. So for an indicative conditional to be acceptable, $p(C|A)$ must be high and higher than $p(\overline{C})$. From this, some interesting possibilities result, which we will delve into. A third recent probabilistic approach to conditionals that we will discuss is Barnett’s suppositional approach. According to him, we use conditionals to make statements of the consequent within the context of the supposition that the antecedent is the case. Furthermore, he claims that this idea can be combined with truth-conditionality. Finally, we will be concerned with Nolan’s possible worlds account of indicative conditionals. While possible worlds accounts commonly deal with subjunctives, Nolan wants to develop a possible worlds approach for indicatives, thus aiming at a more unified understanding of conditionals. This approach is not probabilistic, but specifically formulated as a critique of the probabilistic approach, which explains why it is relevant to us.

A chapter on the cancelability test for implicatures was taken up as Appendix. This started out as a digression in the section on Gricean pragmatics, but soon took on the proportions of a full chapter. Grice’s claim that all conversational implicatures are cancelable is generally agreed to be true in pragmatic literature. If cancelability is a necessary feature of conversational implicatures, it is possible to construct a negative cancelability test for implicatures: all non-cancelable meanings that are rightfully inferred from an utterance cannot be implicatures. The test is typically used to distinguish a pragmatic part of the meaning of an utterance from its core, semantic meaning. However, in a recent article Matthew Weiner argues that some conversational implicatures are not cancelable and that, therefore, the negative cancelability test for implicatures is untrustworthy. We argue that Weiner overstates his case when he claims that the implicatures in his examples are uncancelable. His examples show that there are cases in which the literal, explicit denial of an implicature, typically formulated as ‘but I do not mean that $p$’, is insufficient to effectively cancel the implicature. But this does not mean that it is impossible to linguistically cancel these implicatures. Moreover, apart from literal cancelation, contextual cancelation must be considered. Next, we investigate the pragmatic role that irony plays in both of Weiner’s examples and argue that it provides reason to be suspicious about the theoretical importance of the alleged counterexamples. The final critical remark consists of the observation that, contrary to what Weiner claims, both of his examples are cases of particularized conversational implicatures. This gives the defender of the implicature test a fall-back position, should the refutation of Weiner’s counterexamples nevertheless appear unconvincing. Namely, it can be granted that the test is invalid for particularized conversational implicatures, but stands firm for generalized ones. We go on to read Weiner’s article charitably as a challenge to formulate the cancelability test for implicatures accurately. It is then argued that the test should not be interpreted as an algorithm or decision procedure, but rather
as a helpful tool for language users, already provided with certain intuitions. This appeal to intuitions does not preclude, pace Weiner, that the negative implicature test is in good shape. Next, we examine whether a positive test is possible, i.e., one that can tell us which inferences are implicatures. To conclude, the idea of an implicature test is situated within the context of the ongoing debate on the pragmatics-semantics distinction.


A natural place to bring up the topic of description is Russell's *Theory of Description* (1905). Russell's Theory was intended to defend the notion that definite descriptions are quantified expressions and not logically proper names, and to use such notion to solve a host of logical puzzles pertaining to non-denoting descriptions, propositional attitude attributions and identity statements. Since the appearance of Russell's article, two significantly notable challenges to Russell's theory have been raised by Strawson (1950) and Donnellan (1966). Both challenges were designed to show that Russell's Theory overlooked certain referential capacities of definite descriptions, especially given certain counter-examples in which the descriptions fail to uniquely denote in the Russellian sense.

This thesis is not a defense of Russell's Theory though some of my treatments of the issues are compatible with the Theory. Instead, the purpose of the thesis is to treat a variety of semantic and pragmatic issues in the current debates on the subject of descriptions. Therefore, the selection of the issues/problems is self-motivated rather than Russellian motivated.

Nevertheless, the issues treated happen to be also challenges to Russell's Theory.

The thesis can be divided into two main sections. The first section features six chapters dealing with semantic and pragmatic issues of descriptions in general. The second section devotes the final three chapters to a discussion of the descriptions of events. In the first six chapters, I discuss each problem of descriptions in two chapter increments, with the first chapter used for the presentation of the problem and the strategies offered by various commentators and with my own solution presented in the chapter that follows.

In chapters one and two, the problem of the Referential/Attributive Distinction originated by Donnellan is treated. He proposes a referential use of definite descriptions, in cases when the descriptions fail to denote in a Russellian sense. Chapter one features various semantic and pragmatic strategies for coping with the Donnellian distinction and their strengths and weaknesses. In chapter two, I offered a pragmatic strategy, based on the distinction of sentence, proposition and statement, for coping with the Donnellian Distinction. Chapters three and four deal with the descriptive use of indexicals. When Russell defended that definite descriptions are quantified expressions, the underlying implication is that definite description, *qua* expression type, is to be distinguished from other expression types such as proper name or indexical. In chapter three, a descriptive use of indexicals by Nunberg as well as Recanati’s spirited response are presented. According to Nunberg, we can find examples in which indexicals are used descriptively to contribute properties, sortals, classes and kinds, and, thereby, seemingly express general propositions. Such usages threaten to break the asymmetry between
description and referential term *qua* types. In chapter four, I present a Gricean implicature treatment to maintain the integrity of the asymmetry.

Chapters five and six address the problem of incomplete descriptions. Strawson observes that Russell’s Theory would predict propositions with incomplete descriptions, i.e., descriptions with insufficient descriptive contents, as expressing false propositions on the grounds of a failed uniqueness condition. Such prediction is counter-intuitive and fails to explain how determinate propositions are often expressed by propositions with such descriptions. In chapter five, Strawson’s concern and a more recent presentation from Wettstein and Salmon are presented as well as various semantic and pragmatic proposals in addressing the issue. In chapter six, I offer a domain delimitation treatment with the aide of situation semantics supplemented with domain indexing. I further strengthen my treatment by showing the strategy’s affinity with Relevance Theory.

The topic of event descriptions does not usually come up in the discussions on the semantics of definite descriptions because the topic can usually be treated without touching on issues normally pertaining to definite descriptions. Yet, the last three chapters of this thesis are devoted to event descriptions for the following reasons. First, the semantics of the event descriptions is no less about descriptions than the semantics of plain descriptions. The difference is that the study of descriptions pertains normally to point particles or spatio-temporal coordinates but pays little attention to events and other objects. Second, the fact that the study of event descriptions has a theoretical career of its own seems to show that a semantic study of descriptions is incomplete without examining the semantic issues raised in event descriptions. Though the last three chapters may have sufficient dynamics to be self-engaging, I bring in results and notions from the earlier chapters when it is appropriate.

In chapter seven, I use mainly the works of Bennett and Kim to examine the thick/thin distinction of event descriptions, and its bearing on the thick/thin distinction of event concepts. My observation is that Bennett’s thick event description offers a sharper distinction between an event and its description, and avoids more effectively the multiplication of events. In chapter eight, I present the fact/event distinction and imperfect/perfect nominal distinction in Vendler, Bennett and Asher, to show that perfect nominals name events and imperfect nominals name facts. Such syntactical distinction reveals deeper semantic and metaphysical differences resulting in facts and events being named by two different kinds of nominal. In chapter nine, I complete my discussion of event descriptions by treating action sentences in Davidson and Kim. I suggest that there are enough irregularities in some nonstandard adverbs which pose a formidable challenge to Davidson’s project of treating action sentences and adverb-dropping inference all under first-order logic. Some compromises, such as admitting the notion of adsentences and implicit comparison class to treat nonstandard adverbs, may be necessary.


St. Thomas Aquinas’ *Summa contra gentiles* (SCG) is a peculiar work that has occasioned a
myriad of interpretations. It has been understood variously as an exercise in what today is called natural theology, as a missionary manual (either intended to educate student missionaries on how to convert unbelievers or to be put directly into the hands of unbelievers so as to convince them of the truth of the Christian faith), as a Summa philosophica, as an exhortation to live a life of wisdom, and as an apologetic work. The reasons for the variety of interpretations are fairly plain. Upon assuming for himself the mantle of a wise man and explaining that he will treat the truths about God professed by the Catholic faith, Thomas splits the work into two main parts: the first part treats those truths about God for which natural reason is adequate while the second part treats those (distinctively Christian) truths about God for which natural reason is entirely incompetent. A work that so bifurcates the knowledge of God, between what is knowable through natural means and then what is known through revelation alone, is otherwise unheard of in the 13th century. This split is the primary cause of the variety of interpretations that the work has occasioned. Coupled with the fact that Thomas himself never clearly identifies why he is so splitting the truths about God (nor are we left with a well-preserved historical fact on the matter), the peculiarity of structure has been a fertile ground for differing interpretations.

In the dissertation I provide an account of the SCG by presenting how human nature is understood throughout. This may well seem peculiar, because the work, as noted, explicitly treats the knowledge of God – not human nature. However, the work is not about some sort of disembodied knowledge of God, but how concrete humans can and do understand God. For Thomas, one cannot know the nature of a thing without making recourse to its power and operation. Knowledge of a thing’s operation (or action) yields knowledge of power, which, in turn, yields knowledge of the thing’s nature. I explain (given the ‘operation yields power yields nature’ principle) how the SCG is a description of the power to know God and how this description itself yields a knowledge of human nature as the human being is directed to its highest and most noble object – God. In order to accomplish this, I show how human nature is manifested differently as God is approached differently. When God’s internal operations (knowing and willing) are discussed, then human nature is presented according to how humans say things about God; when God’s externally directed operation (that of creating) is discussed, we see one of the greatest expositions in the Thomist corpus on the unification of the soul and body; when God is presented as the end of all things, Thomas also provides one of his most elaborate treatments of human desire. I contend that the SCG’s elucidation of the human knowledge of God is, at all points, a twofold movement concurrently describing the human truths of the divine nature and circumscribing that (human) nature trying to come to an understanding of God. In the process of advancing these claims, I show that the SCG – even on the side of the bifurcation that restricts the content of discussion to those truths for which natural reason is adequate – proceeds according to what Thomas himself understood to be a theological plan and method. The purpose and method of the work, in both its parts, is explicitly theological. As to what purpose a description of the human capacity to know God according to strictly natural means but which proceeds according to the method of a theological endeavor might be, we cannot be
certain (Thomas does not tell us). However, I provide a suggestion: the first part of the SCG can be understood as a ‘theoretical circumscription’ of what human reason could achieve if, somehow, the error with which human reason is usually mixed could be held in abeyance. If grace acts upon but does not destroy nature, then it would seem to be incumbent upon the theologian and believer to understand the capacities of that nature as fully as possible. The first part of the SCG satisfies this requirement.

Understanding the limits and capacities of the human knowledge of God is, for Thomas, the best way to understand human nature, because in this one understands how the human being relates to its highest and most noble object. The SCG is such a project of describing the limits and capabilities of the human being and itself is, then, a mirror of human nature.

BENNY KARUVELIL,

Human knowledge and its ontogeny have always intrigued philosophers from the very beginning. The main reason why knowledge has been such an interesting question might well be the disparity between the ‘input’ and the ‘output,’ the problem of bridging the ‘gulf’ that yawns between our theory and the impoverished data, to borrow a Quinean expression. All kinds of possible explanations have been offered to solve this apparently intriguing puzzle. Plato’s theory of remembrance, Aristotle’s model of abstraction, Descartes’ postulation of a second substance, Locke’s views of ideas from sense perception, Kant’s theory of categories, etc. were all meant to answer this question.

In contemporary philosophical circles, the same issue has been taken up and discussed anew by two of the most highly acclaimed intellectuals of the twentieth century, viz., Willard van Orman Quine and Noam Chomsky. The prolonged arguments between them, together with the traditional mantle of classical empiricism and rationalism attached to their positions, gave the impression that they were holding mutually incompatible theories, a view that was often bolstered by their own writings. Because of the preoccupation with an exaggerated emphasis on these traditional mantles, most authors ignored the attempts by Quine and Chomsky to renew their own traditions whereby they made their positions more congruent. Thus, our comparative study of Quine and Chomsky was inspired both by the prominence of their contributions in the last few decades and by a wrong emphasis on the reasons of their divergent philosophical views.

The basic epistemological problem that Quine and Chomsky deal with amounts to explaining the child’s ability to project beyond what it experiences. In their efforts to account for this, Quine and his supporters equate the child to a good scientist, who is data-driven and is very good at inductive inferences. Chomsky and others, on the other hand, are more sympathetic to a gene-driven explanation, where the child is, by nature, given a highly articulated knowledge system, which just blooms into a full language, even with limited experience. They would add that if the ‘output’ contains more information than the ‘input,’ that ‘extra’ is to be the contribution of the mind.

As is clear, these positions have all the characteristics of the classical mantles which they have happily put on themselves, viz., of empiri-
cism and rationalism. However, in this study we were lead by the conviction that it is an illusion to regard rationalism and empiricism, especially the versions of them that Quine and Chomsky propose, as two contradictory theories that exhaust the possibilities of knowledge. And we succinctly present the traditional and new understandings of their positions in the title of the dissertation: ‘Holistic Behaviourism and Rationalistic Naturalism.’

With regard to the similarities in their view points, the only aspect that most people, considered was the terminological similarities when dealing with the innate contribution of mind in learning. We show, however, that the more important reconciling factors of their views are their linguistic approach to epistemology, and their concerns for naturalisation of philosophy, whereby science and scientific principles are taken to guide philosophising as well and not the other way around.

The intriguing question, then, is: if there are such similarities with regard to the goal of epistemology viz., to account for the relation between the ‘meagre input’ and the ‘torrential output’ and the proper method to be followed in doing epistemology, why do they hold such contrasting viewpoints? We argue that two of the most important reasons for their difference are their understanding of scientific method and their differing views on what language is. First of all, since the natural sciences lack a single method of doing science, Quine holds an externalistic approach in which science has to do only with the observable and the externals. Chomsky, on the contrary, thinks that an internalist approach which takes unobservable data seriously and which relies much on intuitions of the theorist as proper method of science. This differing emphases on externalism and internal-

ism have greatly influenced their views on how to go on with naturalisation of epistemology and they disagree on the details of it.

The second important reason of their divergent views was their differing conceptions of language. According to Chomsky language is a second order capacity, a particular brain state. But for Quine language is a social product that is learned from the child’s social interaction. In this perspective a behaviourist approach that relies much on the Skinnerian model of conditioned-response suffices to learn it. However, since for Chomsky language is a brain state, there is no question of learning at all. What takes place is a ‘maturation’ of an initial mental/ neural state and hence no behaviouristic account is sufficient to explain it. Along with these, we also point out a more unhealthy and even devastating tendency in philosophical circles as a whole, i.e., a tendency to absolutise one’s own views while rejecting the other’s, a tendency, which, both of them seem to hold. When such absolutist claims are abandoned, there is room for compatibility, complementarity, and revisability.

Katrien Schaubroeck,
*Normativity and Motivation. The Analytical Debate on Practical Reasons,*
Promoter: Professor Stefaan Cuypers.

Reasons and obligations pervade our lives. Not only with regard to our beliefs, but also with regard to our actions, we are guided by norms that determine whether we have a reason to believe or to act as we are inclined to do. This dissertation is about practical reasons (reasons to act) as opposed to theoretical reasons (reasons to believe). It starts from the observation that considerations such as ‘intentionally stepping on
his toe is bad’ or ‘the food in that restaurant is excellent’ or ‘this medicine cures best the disease he suffers from’ are normative, in the sense that they lay a claim on us, they give us a reason or sometimes even an obligation to do something. The most basic question raised by this observation is: Where does the normative authority come from? Which norm is implied here? Or, in other words, what gives rise to reasons to act?

In the theoretical domain, reasons derive from the norm that is imposed by the value of ‘truth’ or ‘justification’. What gives us a reason to believe that $P$, is the fact that $P$ is true or warranted. In the practical domain, however, it is far less clear what should be considered the guiding norm. One might think that ‘goodness’ fulfils this role, in the sense that what gives us a reason to $\phi$, is the fact that $\phi$-ing is good. But if one understands ‘goodness’ in a moral sense, one falsely reduces practical normativity to ethics: the supposition that all acting for a reason is acting on a moral basis, is obviously false. We often encounter reasons in practical life that are not derived from what we are morally obliged to do. To avoid this false restriction of practical normativity to ethics, one might suggest a broader understanding of ‘goodness’ than ‘moral goodness’. One might, for instance, define goodness in terms of satisfaction, in the sense that $\phi$-ing is good when it satisfies one of the agent’s desires. In fact, the idea that reasons for action must be defined in relation to an agent’s desires appeals to so many philosophers that it has become the default position. I will therefore start my analysis of the debate on practical reasons (after I sorted out some terminological issues in chapter 1) with an elaboration of the idea that practical reasons depend upon desires.

Bernard Williams offered the most famous defense of this idea in the agenda-setting article ‘Internal and external reasons’ (1979). Because Williams defines reasons as essentially related or ‘internal’ to an agent’s desires, Williams calls his theory ‘the internal reason theory’. Chapter 2 provides a critical analysis of the internal reason theory and the arguments that Williams offers in favour of it.

A growing number of philosophers rejects the internal reason theory for different kinds of reasons, the most important one being that Williams purportedly conflates normativity with motivation. Critics press the point that the fact that desires are indispensable to an explanation of what factually motivates a person, does not make them essential to a theory about reasons and what should motivate a person. The relation between normativity and motivation thus appears as the central problem in the contemporary debate on practical reasons. This dissertation aims to cover only the major positions and arguments that have been developed during the last three decades. Yet, as we will see, many positions and arguments can be traced back to the practical philosophy of Hume, Kant and even Plato. A detailed analysis of these classical philosophers’ influential approaches to normativity, reasons and action is beyond the scope and ambition of this dissertation, though it is important to note that they still serve as paradigms that structure the debate in contemporary analytical philosophy.

The dividing question in the current debate is not whether there really is a connection between normativity and motivation – of course there is, since people are sometimes motivated to do what they have a reason to do – but rather how this connection should be conceived. If it is a conceptual connection, like Williams argues against the background of the Humean
tradition, having a reason necessarily implies motivation, which seems too strong a connection to many. If the connection is considered to be empirical, the hardest task is to explain what makes it possible that reasons sometimes do influence motivation, if reasons are not conceptually related to desires.

Michael Smith’s reason theory, which is analyzed in chapter 3, attempts to connect desires and reasons through the notion of a fully rational agent. Rationality is invoked as the mediating term between what a person is motivated to do and what he has reason to do. Rationality is able to fulfill this mediating role in Smith’s theory because he conceives normative reasons as based on the desires of a fully rational agent. Smith’s position offers a clear illustration of how the debate on practical reasons is structured by the concern to find the right balance between normativity and motivation. Like Williams, Smith attempts to preserve a conceptual connection between normativity and motivation. But unlike Williams, he detaches reasons from the agent’s actual contingent desires and moves in the direction of a Kant-like theory about reasons in terms of rational principles.

Derek Parfit goes a step further than Smith and disavows any conceptual connection between reasons and desires. He exemplifies the external reason theory which is directly opposite to Williams’ internal reason theory. Parfit defines reasons in a Platonic style in terms of external facts about values. His defense of reason externalism and the problems that it gives rise to are the subjects of chapter 4.

Both Smith’s and Parfit’s alternatives to the internal reason theory suffer from their own problems, as I will argue in chapter 3 and 4. They fail to offer a more plausible or coherent view on normativity than Williams’. Yet, their criticism on Williams does reveal a weak point in the internal reason theory. Even if Williams succeeds in distinguishing a desire’s motivational power from its normative authority (thus escaping the accusation that he conflates normativity with motivation), it remains doubtful whether normative authority can be rightly ascribed to something as arbitrary and transient as a desire.

Chapter 5 examines this objection and offers yet another account of normative reasons, based on Harry Frankfurt’s notions of love and care. In addition to a critical evaluation of three established positions, this dissertation thus aspires to introduce a new and promising perspective in the ongoing debate on practical reasons.

In contradistinction to the things that we desire, the things that we love and care about possess an immediately acknowledged importance that authorizes them to guide and justify our actions. This means that the notions of care and love do not only carry motivational force, but are also invested with normative authority. It seems that Frankfurt (who has written extensively on love and care) is therefore on firmer ground than Williams to define practical reasons. In chapter 5 I will develop Frankfurt’s thoughts on the notions of care and love and sketch the outlines of an alternative reason theory which is on a par if not superior to the standard theories in the field.

STÉPHANE SYMONS, Traces of Truth, Images of Hope. Walter Benjamin and the Messianic, Promoter: Professor Paul Cruysberghs.

This thesis starts from the philosophy of the German philosopher and literary critic Walter Benjamin (1892-1940) to develop ideas about the messianic experience, the possibility that truth be revealed within history and
the difference between genuine encounters of transcendence and illusionary ones. Borrowing insights and beliefs, concepts and intuitions from sources as diverse as Jewish messianism and historical materialism, German Romanticism and surrealism, Goethe and Brecht, Benjamin’s writings form a meeting point of widely diverging strands of thought, deriving their continuity most often from an ongoing attempt to bring together what is otherwise kept strictly apart.

In a formula borrowed from his own philosophy of history, Benjamin’s thinking can be characterized as ‘neither a-theological, nor immediately theological’ in order to thus substantiate the claim that his Jewish messianic beliefs and his historical materialist convictions are not as irreconcilable as both schools of thought (personified, for Benjamin, in his friends Gershom Scholem and Bertolt Brecht) so often take them to be.

The place where Benjamin’s Jewish messianic beliefs and his historical materialist ideas meet, however, is strictly speaking not a philosophical position but the urgent moral feeling that it is necessary to side with the weak. It is this topic that is brought under research in the first chapter, focusing on Benjamin’s philosophy of history. From the standpoint of Benjamin’s historical materialism, the weak party is, of course, the proletariat. If the revolution should be proclaimed – and this, in Benjamin’s opinion, is not even an issue – it is in the name of the economically deprived, the politically powerless and the socially oppressed. It is their material conditions that need to be radically improved and it is, most obviously, the dream of a classless society which should continue to inspire our social goals and political action. However, the weak whose side Benjamin has so clearly chosen do not just wear the mask of a specific class. For Benjamin, that is to say, weakness remains, first and foremost, messianic: if it deserves our continuous attention and unceasing support, it is not only because it reveals the discontents that mark modernity or the aberrations that characterize industrial capitalism but, in the first instance, because it is in its features that comes to expression the lack of fulfillment of history in toto. If Benjamin’s philosophy is indeed an attempt to think through a concept of hope for fulfillment, it is developed from the perspective of those who most obviously lack it because they have lost the direct view on the truly transcendent or divine.

The second chapter, therefore, discusses the various ways in which, in Benjamin’s work, the lack of fulfillment of history as such manifests itself. Most crucial in this respect is a fundamental inaccessibility of doctrine [Lehre] and the idea that truth, though present within the world, has become distorted and therefore cannot be immediately recognized by human beings. This lack of immediate truth-revelation is a feature of history as such but it is experienced in historically variable ways. For this reason, the second chapter discusses the inherent connection between Benjamin’s messianic beliefs, i.e. his analysis of the lack of redemption of history in general, and his neo-Marxist critique of modernity, i.e. his historically specific determination of the alienation that lies in the scope of industrial capitalism.

The third chapter develops this idea further by discussing Benjamin’s epistemological insights. In his view, in an unredeemed world the representation of truth is inevitably tinged with a certain absence, thus denoting that the messianic experience renders just as much the restoration of an original truth than the understanding that this process of restoration has not yet
been fully completed. Benjamin thus makes the claim, not only that weakness is messianic (i.e. a token for the lack of redemption of history as such) but also that the messianic is essentially weak: human beings can encounter fragments of truth within the phenomena that surround them but these fragments retain an irreducible fragility since their immanence never gives way to a perfect presentation of transcendent truth. Even during those moments and in those places when and where a remnant of truth becomes visible, it never expresses itself in a complete or immediate manner.

For Benjamin, however, the lack of fulfillment of history does not only manifest itself as the loss of something original, i.e. as the absence of a direct relation between man and God, but also as the advent of something new, i.e. as the installment of a supposedly ‘guilty life’ within man which is believed to surrender him to the dark and enigmatic force of myth. The fourth chapter retraces this nexus between guilt and myth, analyzing the various ways in which it reveals itself (most significantly through law and fate) and the power that ultimately brings about its suspension (character, godly violence). This brings us to the difficult problem of determining the task of politics within a messianic framework: if no human being can be thought to render the force to truly redeem the lack of fulfillment of our world, what, then, can political action be expected to achieve? Benjamin’s own solution to these problems moved between the alternatives of, on the one hand, a ‘politics of waiting’, i.e. a plea for a society that builds itself on the non-violent, pure means of a ‘culture of the heart’ and, on the other, the violence of a nihilist anarchism that seeks to overthrow all legal systems and state-oriented politics.

The fifth and last chapter elaborates further on Benjamin’s notion of the mythic. The mythic is first analyzed as an illusionary experience of transcendence. With the notion of semblance [Schein], however, Benjamin makes the claim that it is ultimately impossible in an unfulfilled universe to make an a priori distinction between illusionary forms of transcendence and true ones. For this reason, the mythic is not to be reduced to a force of alienation since it can deliver a genuine nucleus of truth. It is from the perspective of this a priori inseparability between truth and illusion, at the core of Benjamin’s views on myth, that the last part of the fifth chapter will discuss his unfinished study on nineteenth century Paris, The Arcades Project.

STIJN LATRÉ, “Hamlet without the Prince.” Charles Taylor over Realisme, Pluralisme en Transcendentie [“Hamlet without the Prince.” Charles Taylor on Realism, Pluralism and Transcendence], Promoter: Professor Guido Vanheeswijck.

In this PhD, we carefully scrutinize Taylor’s view on moral identity and transcendence. The first part consists of a close reading of ‘Sources of the Self’. Taylors proves himself to be a resolute defender of a realistic account of morality. He thereby criticizes subjectivism and relativism, but also certain ‘monist’ modern views like liberalism, utilitarianism and Kantianism. For Taylor, a subject’s values can originate in himself or ‘something outside’, can be traced back to autonomy or heteronomy. The fruit of modernity is that no ‘social imaginary’ can be imposed on the subject as such. Values will nowadays always be ‘self-referential’. But whereas this self-referentiality concerns most certainly the manner in which the subject construes its moral identity, this self-referentiality
should not a priori extend to the matter of the values involved. Hence for Taylor, questions of moral justification are still legitimate and even somehow inescapable.

The second and third parts extend the scope of the problem of moral justification to the theme of transcendence. If values can be found outside the subject, how to conceive of this external source? As a horizontal or vertical transcendence? In the past ten years, Taylor has elaborated this theme in extension, culminating in his huge book A Secular Age. Taylor’s plea is for vertical transcendence, but in great respect for and openness to other positions, such as humanism, anti-humanism and materialism.

In the third part, we confront Taylor with other contemporary thinkers on the subject such as Vattimo, Gauchet, Girard, Ferry and the Flemish philosopher Herman De Dijn. In the conclusion, we applaud Taylor for his thorough-going research, but criticize him for a lack of clarity on certain sub-issues, such as his position as ‘internal realist and pluralist’.

CALLAN LENDSHAM, *The Demise of Scotus’ Foundational Project. From Proving the Necessity of Revelation to Assuming an Absolute Divine Theology*, Promoter: Professor Russell Friedman.

My thesis examines the question in John Duns Scotus’ (1265-1308) prologue to his Sentences commentary on the necessity of supernatural revelation for man in this life. It is part of his prologue to his Commentary on the Sentences of Peter Lombard. Such commentaries were the major vehicle for discussion of philosophy and theology in the middle ages (and also the way of getting a doctorate in theology in the medieval university). There are three versions of Scotus’ Sentences commentary: the Oxford Lectura version (1298-1300), on which is based the Oxford Ordinatio version (1302-1304), and the Parisian Reportata (1302-1304). Both the Lectura and the Ordinatio versions contain the question on the necessity of revelation. The Ordinatio has an annexed second question on the sufficiency of Sacred Scripture to provide those supernatural truths that are required by man in this life. The Reportata prologue does not question the necessity of the theology; it is focused on the subject of theology. My thesis attempts to examine the historical and doctrinal significance of the necessity-question, and to explain why Scotus abandoned it after the Ordinatio. My conclusion is that the Lectura version is rather conventional, but that during composition of the Ordinatio, Scotus realized that revelation could not be concluded to be necessary according to natural reason. Hence he withdrew the question when composing the Reportata version. I provide evidence on the basis of his annotations to the Ordinatio prologue that he thought his Ordinatio arguments were insufficient. This abandonment is philosophically significant, as one must recast the conventional account of Scotus’ view of the relation between faith and reason; instead of having one set doctrine on the matter, Scotus tries to rationalize the need for theology, and then retreats from this attempted rationalization. So no simple account can be given of his view of the relation between faith and reason.

RENEÉ RYAN, *From Head to Foot Set in our Place. Sacred Space as the Expression of Religious Experience and Imagination*, Promoter: Professor William Desmond.

This work is an exploration of the significance
of built sacred spaces, insofar as they have something to say of what it is to be human and called toward an affirmation and expression of being at its source. It takes as its overall architectonic Augustine’s vision of reality and particularly about human existence as creatio, conversio and formatio.

The first Part, Creatio, proposes that a sacred space is an elemental microcosm. It comprises four chapters. Chapter One (“Abstract (Cartesian) Space”) and Chapter Two (“The Particularity of Place-Theory”) situate the discussion within two strains of thought about Space: the rationalist account attributed to Descartes, and the response to this given by so-called place-theory. Arguing that each of these misses significant aspects of what it is to live in an elemental cosmos, the remaining two chapters propose turning to resources that are thereby overlooked. That is, Chapter Three (“Toward a Cosmic Space for the Sacred”) discusses ways toward a fuller sense of space, including Erwin Straus’s theory, which allows for both abstract and concrete modes of knowing the world; and medieval mapping, which integrates the particular and the universal into a cosmic view of reality. Chapter Four (“Sacred space as an Image of the Elemental Cosmos”) proposes more directly still that sacred space is modeled after the elemental cosmos, by considering Augustine’s notion that questioning the elements leads to God, alongside Gaston Bachelard’s claim that cosmos and psyche can be construed as similar.

Part II, Conversio, investigates the intricate and intimate movement of conversion as it is represented by the sacred space. Chapter Five (“The Labyrinthine Reflexive Paths of Conversion”) therefore discusses the nature of a labyrinth, comparing this to the paths inscribed within a sacred space, which it argues are like those according to which the religious subject constantly moves in relation to divine transcendence. The nature of self-reflective awareness is especially important here. Chapter Six (“Religious Festivity and the Space of Eternity”) discusses how the communal aspects opened up by such labyrinthine movement share the same foundations as those that ground festivity. The space of eternity, it is proffered, is continuous with the eternity that gives rise to the celebration of being that is festivity.

The third and final part relates the importance of formatio, by which the religious subject and the sacred space alike constantly participate in their ultimate end. Chapter Seven (“Anagogical Delimitations of Formation”) approaches this by positing that anagogy parallels formatio as a way to know literal reality in light of its eternal consequences. The emphasis on particularity entailed by thinking anagogy is suggested to be significant for anyone who has a role in forming a sacred space. Chapter Eight (“Participatory Displacement”) proposes that sacred space is involved in participatory displacement. That is, sacred spaces form a community because the subject in sacred space is constantly in relationship to other religious subjects. Sacred space transcends the finite boundaries of space and time, making the latter into fertile limit-points of communication between what is both here and beyond, in the space of eternity. The final chapter (“Architectural Expressions of Anagogical Formation”) discusses some examples of anagogy in architecture, together with their interpretations by others. In particular, it examines Abbot Suger’s understanding of anagogy within the church of St. Denis, so as to shed light on how formatio can be announced especially in the most practical architectural elements.
Discussion concludes by assessing how such an examination of sacred space responds to some of the philosophical claims of modernity about the nature of the human person, as well as proposing that there are constantly new ways in which to express religious experience and imagination in sacred space.

MIGLENA DIKOVA-MILANOVA,
*Kant and the Cultural Politics of the Sublime*, Promoter: Professor William Desmond.

This study attempts to define the notion of culture as disclosed in Kant’s philosophy – mainly in his critical writings. A second aim is to establish the relation between culture and the Kantian notion of the sublime. The structure and function of the sublime as presented in the *Critique of Judgment* reveals a powerful mechanism for resetting reason and using all of the mind’s impressive capacities. In this sense the Kantian sublime is an operational and internal part of the formation of human culture.

This inquiry leads to the conclusion that the Kantian idea of culture is intertwined within his grand vision of the inner architectonics of reason.

Therefore I have included an exploration of the possibility to base the model for interpreting contemporary culture’s diversity and conflicts on Kant’s structure of pure reason.

The first part is focused on an investigation of the Kantian notion of culture. Kant is placed in a dialogue with Lotman. The need to translate Kant’s strict philosophy of reason into a language that could interpret culture makes it necessary to develop the connection with Lotman’s ideas.

Due to the fact that this study is thematic in nature, the references to Kant’s writings contained in this part are selected with the aim to accentuate the transition between the domains of pure reason and to assist the elaboration on the points of intersection. These points, according to Kant, are formed in a twofold manner: Kant’s sublime is such a point of intersection: when theoretical and practical reason, or while the sensible and supersensible cross ways. Kant’s sublime is such a point of intersection.

Consequently, the first part also tries to establish the place of theoretical reason within the process of culture. A chapter on *focus imaginarius* is devoted to this issue.

The first part confirms that reason (in all its applications and modes as theoretical, practical, or reflective) judges and posits a reality that mirrors the specific character of our mind. Unavoidably, human understanding and reason humanize the environment that is judged. Hence, in Kant’s context culture is also a process of humanization. The culture of skill and discipline provide the complete Kantian definition of culture and respectively describe the two main lines of humanization: theoretical and practical.

The first part ends with a description of the interrelation between empirical culture and reason. Kant’s *The Conflict of the Faculties* defines the role of critical philosophy with respect to institutions such as the University. The university’s faculty of philosophy is able to transform and use reason’s inner critical abilities as tools for cultural critique.

The second part of this work is focused on the notion of the sublime. It states that the sublime could be situated exactly at the border between the theoretical and practical domains of reason. This border in Kant’s view has at least two guises: an abyss and a passage. The
sublime’s inner structure contains a gulf that separates the domains of reason. Therefore, the Kantian sublime is rather more abyssal than reconciling. In other words, the sublime presents the border between the domains as being constantly present.

Since the Kantian notion of an abyss appears not only in the third Critique, the second part reflects on the essay ‘The End of All Things’ as well. Furthermore, this study explores the connection between the abyss and Kant’s physico-theological proof of the existence of God as described in the *Critique of Pure Reason*.

The second part also analyses more deeply the notion of the points of intersection and their significance for both formation and interpretation of culture. In this context the beautiful (as depicted in the third Critique) is presented here as a point of intersection that is quite different from the sublime.

The second part concludes with looking at Kant’s geographical and geometrical metaphors and comparisons. Kant often describes the inner structure of reason in geometrical and geographical terms. So, the inner structure of reason can also be named a geography of reason. I point out that the internal geography-like configuration of reason represents a permanent underlying frame. And this frame stresses and defines our commonly shared reality. The model of culture copies and continues to reproduce this frame.

The third and final part aims at disclosing both: the limitations and the wider possibilities of the Kantian perspective on reason and reality. This part, hence, reveals how contemporary non-system philosophy responds to, complements, alters, and further develops the Kantian model of thought. Kant id confronted with the views of Gilles Deleuze and Joseph Margolis.


This dissertation concerns the normative foundations of contemporary, liberal democracies. Why is it important to us that decisions are made in a democratic way? Or, more generally, why is democracy a valuable mode of coexistence?

I investigated two different philosophical models, each of which offers a different reconstruction of the normative self-understanding of democratic societies and hence gives a different answer to these questions: the now-dominant model of deliberative democracy as forwarded by Jürgen Habermas (°1929), and the French-liberal model of Claude Lefort (°1924).

Habermas’s model is built on the assumption that the principles, practices and institutions of democracy can be derived from the demands of rational communication. The norms that structure our political interaction are a continuation, be it on a different level, of norms that are already present in our linguistic interactions in daily life. To the extent that a separate sphere of political action is required, this is primarily the case because of practical considerations: because the complexity of contemporary problems surpasses the problem-solving capacity of more small scale interactions, because administrative power needs to be centrally steered, to enforce the juridical system. Yet the expectations of democratic citizens with regard to the sphere of politics and the importance which events in this sphere adopt for them, is not fundamentally determined by the properties of this sphere. Habermas does acknowledge that
there are different types of “interests” at stake in politics (material, moral, and ethical interests), but none of these interests is intrinsically related to the sphere of politics. I described this reconstruction as a kind of “functionalism”. Politics matters to the Habermasian citizen, but solely for functional reasons: to formulate a rational answer to prepolitical problems, to protect prepolitical forms of communicative integration, and so on. The importance of the political sphere to democratic citizens is always explained here prior to and independently of the existence of the political sphere. Within this scheme, democracy can only be justified as the best – or the most rational – regime to deal with such prepolitical concerns.

Inspiration for an alternative model was sought in the work of Claude Lefort. At the surface of things, Habermas and Lefort come to very similar conclusions: they both steer a middle course between liberalism and republicanism, they both conceptualize democracy as a discursive, open, never-ending conflict, they both emphasize the co-originality of private and public autonomy. Yet when one looks at their underlying anthropology, important differences transpire. For Lefort, politics plays a more fundamental role in human coexistence. Here, the political sphere has first and foremost a “symbolic” role: the way political interaction is structured determines how people understand their mutual relations throughout society in its entirety. The political sphere, in short, is the place where society’s collective self-understanding is at stake.

The difference with Habermas became particularly clear by looking at the role of political power within this grid. For Lefort, political power is primarily a medium of collective self-representation and is therefore an ineluctable anthropological given. Firstly, because the place of power is the central vantage point from where society looks at itself and understands itself as one. Secondly, because the self-image that is being constructed here, exercises power over society and its members. Thirdly, because this image always contains an interpretation of the political relations between individuals and is thus itself coded in terms of power. The originality of Lefort’s typically “French” liberalism consists in the connection he draws between the recognition of this condition and political freedom. Democratic regimes institutionalize in their decision procedures a certain awareness of the “gap” between the citizens’ collective self-representation and the contingent, power-imbued history of the creation of this self-image. Representation here means that this underlying power constellation is no longer covered up but is explicitly made visible or represented. Thus, democracy is being justified in this model as the only “correct” way of dealing with our inevitable “political condition”, that is, with the presence and the role of power in society.

In Habermas’s model, by contrast, political power – even if it is clearly present as a necessary condition for the citizens’ democratic self-government – is primarily required for practical reasons. It is an instrument to realize the citizens’ normative expectations, expectations that have no direct relation with the medium of power and that can be formulated prior to the political sphere.

The final conclusion of my dissertation reads that Habermas cannot possibly reconstruct the normative content of democracy, as his ideal leaves no place for those normative intuitions that are positively correlated to the exercise of political power. A democratic order is not just valuable because of its concrete
realizations, but also because it orders the relations between citizens qua political actors in a specific way. To the extent that our normative understanding of democracy is indeed related to such intrinsically “political” reasons, it cannot be captured by Habermas’s model.

The systematic elaboration of an alternative model (a task which Lefort himself neglects as well) falls outside the scope of this dissertation. In my final chapter, however, I did indicate a possible direction for such an endeavor. By introducing the notion of “political recognition”, I hinted at the kind of intersubjectivity that cannot be found or realized outside or before the political sphere. For, this kind of recognition is precisely concerned with the mutual recognition of citizens as equal holders of collective power.

ANNE TOPOLSKI, A Political Ethics of Intersubjectivity: Between Hannah Arendt, Emmanuel Levinas and the Judaic, Promoter: Professor Bart Raymaekers.

“It’s really a wonder that I haven’t dropped all my ideals because they seem so absurd and impossible to carry out. Yet I keep them, because in spite of everything I still believe that people are really good at heart.” Anne(lies) Frank (15/7/44)

This dissertation seeks to explore the possibility of an approach to the political that is rooted in intersubjectivity and by this means includes a space for ethics. It arose in response to the contemporary lack of interest (and general disdain) in the political among citizens in developed nations, especially among those of my generation as well as in response to the post-Shoah call Never Again. These concerns led me to seek an approach to the political that was inspirational, that could motivate individuals to participate, as well as one that approached the ‘other’ in positive rather than negative terms. The first, as I hope to make clear in part one, is certainly to be found in the thought of Hannah Arendt and the second in the thought of Emmanuel Levinas. After considering both authors, I was struck by the surprising and remarkable resonances in their different projects. It is these resonances that also pointed the way towards the Judaic. Yet my goal is not to harmonize the thought of Arendt and Levinas (an undesirable if impossible endeavor), rather it is to consider what can be learned from these resonances with regard to the above concerns. It is this goal that led me to ask whether an intersubjective approach to the political may help to revitalize this realm of human interaction. Intersubjectivity, it seemed to me, is the bridge between Arendt’s notion of the political as rooted in plurality and Levinas’ ethics of alterity, a bridge that may also be a response to the hope that humanity will never again experience its inhumanity. My hypothesis is that because of the tendency, partially determined by history, to view the political in terms of either individuals or collectivity, a reflection on what is in fact central to the political – the relations between people – has been overlooked. While the former model starts from distinct subjects, often giving priority to the private sphere, and moves towards the public in order to understand the ‘we’, the latter begins from a ‘we’ and thus finds itself struggling to respect the dignity of individuality that defines modernity.

I begin in chapter 1 by presenting what I take to be central, and valuable, to Arendt’s conception of the political developed in response to her original analysis of totalitarianism. In addition, I present the girder of Arendt’s analysis
of the human condition by presenting two important constellations: labor, work and action; and, public, private and social. In chapter 2, I focus on her concept of action, in its relation to freedom and power, which I argue are the basis for her understanding of plurality, interpreted intersubjectively as the between which arises from agonistic dialogue, as the condition for the political. What I am most intrigued by in Arendt’s interpretation of the political is the notion of the between, of intersubjectivity, as the basis for the creation of a shared ‘objective’ reality, a creation that cannot be undertaken by an individual or by a collectivity but that requires a plurality of distinct perspectives. In chapter 3, I narrow my reading of Arendt to the relationship between the political and morality/ethics by focusing on her writings dealing with judgment and responsibility, both of which also arise from an intersubjective dialogue based on disensus. Here I argue that disensus — rooted in the alterity of the other, as opposed to consensus, must underline our understanding of the political for the sake of the political and the ethical. Andrew Schaap argues there is a certain ethical, as opposed to moral (which he associates with liberalism), significance to political conflict, or agonism. Specifically in the case of Arendt, he identifies the fact that conflict has the ability to disclose a shared world to those in dialogue. While, I agree that this is an example of Arendt’s implicit ethics, I do not think this is a sufficient for a political realm characterized by uncertainty and ambiguity. While Arendt offers many hints about the potential relationship, she herself does not explore it.

It is for this reason that I turn to the thought of Emmanuel Levinas in part 2. In chapter 4, I consider his unique approach to ethics that embraces what Arendt sees as central to the political, its condition of plurality, a plurality based in alterity and its prioritization of the intersubjective relationship that is not defined by the same (that is consensus). What Levinas offers is a penetrating analysis of the intersubjective relationship, in ethical terms, which could possibly ‘ground’ Arendt’s political notion of plurality and create a bridge to the ethical. I argue that intersubjectivity, the relation between the I and the other(s), offers a promising ground from which to relate the ethical and political. In chapter 5, I propose to consider Levinas’ own reflection, or indications, on the political focusing on his writings on Israel, human rights, the third and justice. In chapter 6, I challenge Levinas’ politics based on Arendt’s arguments for the political elaborated in part 1. I show how his understanding of the political fails to address her justified concerns that what is needed is a political response. In other words, while his phenomenology of the face-to-face justifies the commandment thou shall not kill, in its ethical form (or in its Biblical form) it cannot appear in the political realm - the realm from which totalitarianism arose.

Part 3 is dedicated to the Judaic resonances in Arendt and Levinas and the potential inspiration the Judaic can provide for a political ethics of intersubjectivity. In chapter 7, I turn to Levinas’ so called confessional writings which I argue cannot be read as distinct from his phenomenological project. While this is most evident in his later writings, there are certainly traces of the Judaic as early as Totality and Infinity. While this calls for an additional translation of Levinas, that is in addition to his claim to have translated the Bible into Greek (a project I question), I will argue that Levinas’ Judaic approach which clearly has an affect on his understanding of alterity and ethics, especially in his later
writings, does not limit its relevance to this particular community given its phenomenological basis. While I will not go so far as to suggest that it is universal, for reasons that will become clear in my reading of Arendt, I would say that its generality approaches the horizon of humanity which is as close to universality as we should aspire. Following an analysis of the Judaic in Levinas, I pose the question of whether Arendt can also be read as a Judaic thinker. Chapter 8 has as its goal to explore the Judaic aspects of Arendt's thought, in light of the definition provided by Levinas, such as her understanding of the political in light of plurality, her approach to education and thinking (and to the world in general) in terms of responsibility, and the political significance of storytelling.

Having analyzed, separately, the Judaic resonances in their thought, I turn in chapter 9 to the potential for the Judaic in my own project focusing on four elements: hope, relationality, responsibility and education. I will also demonstrate how a Judaic horizon can further support this political ethics of intersubjectivity. In this vein, I explore the relational aspects of both the ethical and the political, arguing that the latter requires a framework inspired by the former. Another manner in which to grasp this relational level and specifically its Judaic influence is in the notion of a horizontal transcendence based on asymmetrical difference. It is also the latter that relates to the agonal (or amicable/friendly) aspect of the political Arendt puts forward, an aspect complimented by the more fraternal nature of the ethical.

In general terms, of this point of intersection is via the relationship between alterity, in Levinas, and that of plurality, in Arendt. In my understanding of the latter it is based on a fundamental respect for alterity in the form of the distinction of individuals. Thus while it takes on a political form, it is not reduced to a notion based on the same as is the case in many political theories. I hope in this way to create a bridge between the ethical and political via intersubjectivity responsibility, framing the former through the latter. Lastly, in the conclusion, I return to consider what can be learned from an intersubjective approach to political ethics. While this does not, to be sure, amount to a comprehensive political doctrine, I hope that it offers a contribution to the political in the form of a distinctive mode or orientation with regard to both thought and action, a contribution that can: 1) create a critical distance from which to consider the political, 2) challenge the assumption that our understanding of the political must arise from either the individual, the citizen, or the group, and 3) point towards a new perspective on the political in light of an intersubjective understanding of the human condition with regard to our responsibility for others and the shared world.
DOCTORAL DISSERTATIONS
2008-2009

BENJAMIN HOWE, The History of Arne Naess’ Environmental Philosophy and Its Reception, Promoter: Professor Ullrich Melle.
In his dissertation, Benjamin Howe challenges a long-standing convention in environmental philosophy, namely that Arne Naess is the founder of the deep ecology school of thought. Naess claims that his environmental philosophy is informed by the philosophy of language that he first defended as a participant in the seminars of the Vienna Circle. A proponent of what we nowadays would call experimental philosophy, he argues that all claims about meaning are empirically testable and that therefore the study of semantics depends on the empirical observation of speakers. No one denies that Naess’ environmental philosophy is shaped by his approach to semantics, yet most interpretations of his environmental philosophy contradict his philosophy of language. Benjamin Howe also shows that commentators overlook several of Naess’ most important essays.

DARIAN MEACHAM, Phenomenological Approaches to the Political in Patocka and Merleau-Ponty, Promoter: Professor Rudolf Bernet.
This dissertation examines the relation between various forms of memory, our relation to the past, and the experience of being with others in forms of institutional political community. In Husserlian terms, these are questions concerning the formation of “community-horizons” that take various simple or stratified forms such as, “family, nation, supranational”. Thus, the questions that this dissertation addresses are versions of the ones that concerned Edmund Husserl in The Crisis of the European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology and its appendices. How is it that these various forms of community-horizon are established and maintained? What role does our understanding or experience of our history, as a form of memory (which differs from our experience of the history of others), play in the formation, maintenance and breakdown of these community-horizons? And further, how is it that the specific community-horizons that we take to be our own are in fact not ours, so much as we are theirs? The specific aim is to explore these issues in light of Jan Patocka and Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenological analyses of the political, and their interpretations of two of Husserl’s key ideas, the phenomenological epoché and institution (Stiftung). Darian Meacham uses their development of these fundamental Husserlian ideas to explore the problems surrounding the formation, reiteration, erosion and political institutionalization of different forms of community-horizons.

WILLIAM HAMRICK, Overcoming the Bifurcation of Nature: Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Alfred North Whitehead, Promoter: Professor André Cloots.
The subject of this study is the overcoming of what Alfred North Whitehead criticized as “the bifurcation of nature” into “nature apprehended in awareness and the nature which is the cause of awareness.” According to this view, what passes into our eyes, light waves, is not visible, and what is visible—colors and other “secondary” qualities—is not there. Thus, we have “two systems of reality,” as Whitehead observed, nature as scientific object and nature as perceived. The bifurcation took different and even contradictory forms throughout modern (17th- and 18th-century) philosophy, and quickly extended beyond appearances and reality to bifurcations of bodies and minds, matter and spirit, efficient and final causes, and even the relation of God and the world. The impetus created by the various forms of the bifurcation led to a philosophical and scientific commitment powerful enough to reach well into the 20th century.

This thesis is a critical examination of the way that Maurice Merleau-Ponty attempted to overcome that view of nature and our place within it, and of the ways that Whitehead’s process philosophy did help, and could have further helped, Merleau-Ponty formulate his alternative view. Both thinkers came together conceptually to argue against the bifurcation in their reactions to the same philosophical sources in modern philosophy, and they arrived at a convincing alternative to the bifurcation even though they approached the problem from considerably different philosophical perspectives. This thesis attempts to show that what Merleau-Ponty learned from his limited reading of Whitehead’s texts did help him formulate his later ontology, as well as that a greater familiarity with Whitehead’s process metaphysics could have offered him more adequate and precise conceptual support.

Niall Keane, On What Remains Concealed: Heidegger’s Plato and Man’s Comportment Towards the Hidden, Promoter: Professor Rudolf Bernet

This dissertation is devoted to offering a thorough reassessment of Heidegger’s relationship to Plato, which is at the service of a better understanding of the centrality of man’s proper comportment towards what remains hidden. To this end, Niall Keane argues that Heidegger’s various interpretations of Plato can be gathered together and put at the service of illuminating the developments of and shifts in Heidegger’s own thinking. What makes Heidegger’s encounter with Plato so important for an understanding of his own philosophical positions on the centrality of hiddenness to phenomenology is that his readings of Plato testify to a form of hiddenness operative in Heidegger’s own thinking; the secrecy of Plato’s thought remains hidden from Heidegger’s phenomenological reading and, as such, this hiddenness becomes determining in its very indeterminacy. This dissertation investigates the spectre of Plato in Heidegger’s writings and puts its finger on the issue that causes Heidegger to oscillate so wildly – namely, the problem of the hidden in the unhidden and Plato’s mindfulness (or lack thereof) of the crucial role and importance of hiddenness in the life of thought. Keane does not attempt to resolve these tensions or oscillations, but rather sees them and renders them thematic. Above all, he attempts to clarify how it is that an examination of hiddenness, in the light of Heidegger’s confrontations with Plato, can help us to comprehend the driving motivation of Heidegger’s own questioning. Moreover, as a consequence of understanding this motivation, one can sub-
sequently gain a better insight into the nature of self-hiddenness and the very challenge it poses to a phenomenology of lived interpretation. In the final reckoning, Keane holds that the only way to understand Heidegger’s own thought is to accept the fact that discontinuity and finitude are intrinsic to the enactment of his own phenomenological ways.


This dissertation concerns Bernard Williams’ repudiation of the morality system, a peculiar variety of moral thought, whose characteristic features are moral obligation, impartiality, and the denial of moral luck. The dissertation proffers a new reading, according to which the apparently disparate themes in Williams’ writings on moral philosophy cohere in the critique of the morality system. As opposed to Williams’ rejection of the morality system, Okumu brings to the fore Williams’ positive views on moral philosophy, especially in relation to the notion of projects and of reasons for action. Williams claims that the only rationality of reasons for action is that of internal reasons, the view that an agent can reach the conclusion to act only via a sound deliberative route from the motivations in his actual motivational set. A motivational set names desires or projects which prompt an individual to act. In his dissertation, Okumu explains and comments on Williams’ repudiation of the morality system, relative to moral obligation and to moral luck. Williams rejects moral obligation because it distorts ethical life as it is actually experienced. Morality makes the notion of moral obligation ultimate and overriding. But Williams argues that moral obligation should be seen as merely one kind of consideration among others. He proffers the notion of importance to show that obligations can be overridden depending on the importance of the ethical consideration in question. Concerning moral luck, the dissertation questions the view that ethics is immune to luck and shows ways in which Williams and Thomas Nagel ascribe luck to ethics.


Current Whiteheadian scholarship on religious themes mostly focuses on his controversial concept of God. This dissertation aims to fill a gap in Whiteheadian scholarship by focusing on the concept of religion itself in Whitehead’s philosophy. The novelty of Whitehead’s theory of religion lies in the process metaphysics that it presupposes. For him religion, like the whole of reality, is inherently developing, evolving, and he captures this succinctly in *Religion in the Making*. There are, at least, three metaphysical models of religion (Repetition, Representation, Participation) germinal in Whitehead’s works. The last one being Whitehead’s take on the subject. A metaphysics of Participation makes religion a synergy of wills, both human and divine. Kenneth Mason calls this position *ethnopoiesis* because the synergy of human and divine wills in Whitehead’s theory of religion ends in the creation (*poiesis*) of a distinct community of people (*ethnos*). Furthermore, this dissertation offers an extensive elaboration of the notion of Religious Importance and gives a sketch of Whitehead’s
genealogy of religion. It also focuses on the notion of solitariness, which lies at the basis of the “dynamism” of religion. Solitariness is understood as interiority and read as a continuation of the turn to inwardness prevalent in modern philosophy since Descartes. Religion, however, is not a happening on a personal level only. Solitariness in religion needs to extend towards solidarity. It is on this regard that a Whiteheadian theory of the event of the religious is developed in order to emphasize that the happening of religion extends beyond personal religious experience and its expression. A theory of the event of the religious metaphysically defines religion as a happening: becoming-religion. The happening of religion is not dependent upon a singular momentous conversion experience. The event of the religious, for Whitehead, is a happening in the ordinari-ness of life.

Banu Kilan, John Rawls and the Idea of an ‘Overlapping Consensus’ for a Pluralist Society, Promoter: Professor André Van de Putte. This dissertation is dedicated to the discussion and critique of John Rawls’s ideal of an “overlapping consensus” as he developed this concept with his theory of political liberalism. Given that in a pluralist modern society no comprehensive doctrine, even a comprehensive liberal view of politics, can secure the basis of social unity, nor provide the content of public reason on fundamental political questions, Rawls believes that only a free-standing political conception of justice which does not ground its principles on any particular comprehensive doctrine (e.g. Kantian comprehensive liberalism) and which applies solely to a specific ‘political’ domain can gain the overlapping consensus of many citizens who are divided by incommensurable religious, philosophical, and moral conceptions of the good. In his Political Liberalism and subsequent works, Rawls shows us how such an overlapping consensus can be approximated and strived for as an ideal even though it can never be completely achieved. The main goal of this dissertation is to ask why it would be desirable to espouse such an ideal in a pluralist democratic society, and to analyze the moral, philosophical as well as the socio-political issues at stake in it.

Banu Kilan states that the tension in Rawls’s work between, on the one hand, maintaining the wish for creating ‘free-standing’ and ‘complete’ conceptions of political justice, and, on the other hand, the possibility of challenging their framework from within through the integration of different comprehensive doctrines, can have significant implications for the achievement of consensus and stability in Rawls’s political liberalism. In light of this basic insight, the author of this dissertation tries to look at Rawls’s conception of consensus from an inter-subjective and context-sensitive perspective and, as an important aspect of this dimension, she highlights the significant role civil society - which remains a neglected concept - could play in political liberalism.

Jason Costanzo, Idea and Intuition: On the Perceptibility of the Platonic Ideas in the Thought of Arthur Schopenhauer, Promoter: Professor William Desmond. Perhaps one of the more difficult subjects within the history of philosophy is the precise nature and interpretation of Plato’s Ideas. What are the Ideas? How do they relate to things in nature? How is the particular and
empirical entity informed by such a universal? Is there an idea for this ‘tree’, for that ‘bed’, for the ‘number’ that I conceive? And what of art? Is art just the fleeting imitation of the eternally real, or is there something much more fundamentally real to its nature? These and more questions find an interesting answer on the basis of Schopenhauer’s interpretation of the Platonic Ideas as perceptible. This singular transformation, from the intelligible and abstract to the sensuous and intuitive, offers a number of possible solutions to age-old problems with respect to the Ideas, which have dogged philosophy for centuries. But what are the consequences of such a change? What becomes of reason when the true heart of knowing is now placed before the senses? What becomes of knowledge when it serves to instantiate the desires of a needy and tumultuous Will? Such are the questions that are brought to the fore through Schopenhauer’s analysis of the perceptibility of the Platonic Ideas arising on the basis of the Will in nature.

Jan Heylen, Carnapian Modal and Epistemic Logic and Arithmetic with Descriptions, Promoter: Professor Leon Horsten.

The subject of this dissertation is Carnapian modal and epistemic logic and arithmetic with descriptions. The first part discusses Carnapian modal logic and arithmetic. More specifically, it focuses on the problem of the collapse of the difference between ordinary and necessary truth, a problem caused by certain self-predication principles and the standard induction principle. Jan Heylen demonstrates that the problematic self-predication principles are invalid, but that there are, nevertheless, description theories that can be combined without problems with forms of Carnapian modal logic. He also presents alternative induction principles, and shows how problematic a collapse of modalities can be for arithmetic. The chapter on Carnapian modal logic with descriptions also discusses the problem of a partial collapse of de re modal truths in de dicto modal truths. In his second part, Jan Heylen deals with Carnapian epistemic logic and arithmetic and initiates a logic of arithmetical knowledge. In connection with this, he discusses the problem of de re arithmetical knowledge. He also makes an attempt to extend this logic with a description theory. The work on collapse arguments proves itself to be of great value for the evaluation of an argument (the ‘Description Argument’) concerning the limits of de re demonstrability about the natural numbers. The conclusion of the Description Argument is that it is undemonstrable that there is a natural number that has a certain property but of which it is undemonstrable that it has that property. A crucial step in the Description Argument involves a self-predication principle. This principle can be used to prove a collapse result for the background theory against which the Description Argument was formulated. Either the Description Argument is sound but its conclusion is trivial, or the Description Argument is unsound.


This dissertation starts with the psychological and philosophical problem of spatial perception, and the way in which
Husserl's theory of perception has contributed to finding a solution to this problem. Husserl's ideas are contrasted with, on the one hand, the influential theories of George Berkeley and Thomas Reid, and, on the other hand, the main thoughts and ideas in contemporary philosophy of mind.

Seeing space is 'in principle' impossible; the anatomy of the eye does not allow it. This fact turned into an unsolvable problem when philosophy adapted the phenomenological object of vision to scientific findings about viewing. In doing so, it was philosophy itself that created the idea of a non-spatial visual representation. The strategies developed by the history of philosophy to circumvent this imaginary obstacle continue to affect the contemporary debate on knowledge and perception. The relation between seeing and the other sensory faculties plays a crucial part in this pseudo-problem, as well as in the solution to it.

One of the results of this doctoral project lies in the analysis of the relation between properties and concepts. It shows that different forms of sensory experience have different structures. These structures offer a more reliable guideline for the determination of the spatial ability of perception, than do philosophical traditions or common-sense ideas.

JACOB LONGSHORE, A Peircean Account of the Nature of Relations, Promoter: Professor William Desmond, co-promoter: Professor Jaap van Brakel.

The driving question of this dissertation is: 'How do relations come into being?' Whether a relation be physical or logical, singular or plural, it must arise from conditions which did not include it; if this did not occur, change would be impossible. Jacob Longshore turned to Charles Sanders Peirce because, first, his work is among the strongest on the matter; for his own questions are informed by the triple standpoints of natural science, mathematics, and logic. Also, relation is a key concept in his thinking, both explicitly and implicitly.

Chapter one presents a formal interpretation of pragmatism which both ensures its necessary validity and accommodates relation as primitive. Chapter two examines Peirce's definitions of relation. Longshore argues that these definitions are different views of the same thing. In the following chapters, he discusses Peirce's concept of cause, presents a categorial account of the birth of relations, and examines Peirce's idea of continuity. Continuity is understood as relational generality, so the properties of a continuum correspond to the features of any relation. According to Peirce a continuum contains its own boundaries, and it can be divided infinitely. Longshore argues that a continuum must also be capable of reducing its own dimensions. With this additional feature, a law of relations can be drawn up. This law of relations represents the end toward which relations tend when they are born.

CARLO IERNA, The Origin and Unity of Edmund Husserl’s “Logical Investigations”, Promoter: Professor Ullrich Melle.

What this dissertation aims to achieve is an assessment of the origin and unity of Husserl's Logical Investigations. It is the sediment of Husserl's logical investigations during the 1890s, which is the main period Carlo Ierna analyzes in this dissertation. Ierna takes the history of its development as fundamental for the determination of its basic
structure.

The *Logical Investigations* are located between Husserl’s Brentanist phase and the ultimate development of transcendental phenomenology. Therefore, Carlo Ierna starts with an analysis of Husserl’s development between the *Philosophy of Arithmetic* (1891) and *Logical Investigations* (1900/01) with respect to the fundamental issues in the justification of knowledge in mathematics and logic. Husserl himself points out, in his sketches for a new preface to the second edition of the *Logical Investigations*, the developmental history of the work from the *Philosophy of Arithmetic* onward.

It can be clearly demonstrated that Husserl’s mathematical background has an enduring relevance, and that he developed, at a very early stage, a theory of higher order objects. The historical analysis of the context in which Husserl’s position develops allows us to attain a better understanding of the possible influence of Frege, Twardowski, and others. It also shows the strong connection between the structure and the history of development of Husserl’s *Logical Investigations*.


This research both explores and assesses Gurwitsch's criticisms and contributions to Husserl’s program. Wherever it is possible, Gurwitsch advocates the introduction of *gestalt* theoretic organization into phenomenology. This is done through the dismissal of the constancy hypothesis, which is the assumption of a lawful and strict correlation between stimuli and sensation. Thus, Gurwitsch carries out an incipient phenomenological reduction.

**Daniel Marcelle** then discusses some aspects of whole-part organization that are important for Gurwitsch. Gurwitsch’s discussion of the problem of independent parts in Husserl, i.e., that they maintain their identity in and out of wholes, demonstrates the advancement of *gestalt* theory. It is the relationship of relevance that holds wholes together. Parts obtain their roles, meaning, and existence, from the whole of which they are a part, and at the same time contribute to the constitution of the whole. This method and ontology then can be applied to aspects of consciousness.

Gurwitsch’s acceptance of *gestalt* theory leads to his rich and novel positions concerning a field-theory of consciousness with the introduction of a thematic field and new insights into marginal consciousness. A fantastic contribution on the part of Gurwitsch lies within his understanding of the perceptual noema. Daniel Marcelle shows some key steps of the Gurwitsch-Føllesdal debate on this theme, and shows how Gurwitsch’s noema may be conceptualized.


Hegel’s concept of sublation (*Aufhebung*) is essential to his philosophy. The peculiar and complex way Hegel combines the two senses of this concept (in German, ‘aufheben’ both means ‘to negate’ and ‘to preserve’) has been widely misunderstood. This study presents a critical interpretation of sublation’s coherence, purpose, and significance, for both the study of Hegel and philosophy in general.
The first part, on structure, analyzes the concept of sublation in terms of how Hegel himself presents it, both explicitly and implicitly. It thus helps clarify the most common misconceptions about sublation. The second part takes up three examples from the *Science of Logic* in order to illustrate how the concept of sublation functions in Hegel’s system. The third part offers two basic critiques of Hegel’s concept of sublation, and explores the significance of sublation for philosophy in general. Moreover, the last chapter reveals how the overall form of this study has been designed to reflect its content. That is, the oppositions presented in the organization of this study of sublation—between structure and function, internality and externality, and interpretation and critique—are themselves shown to be sublated. Through this correspondence of form and content, a means to apply sublation beyond Hegel’s own philosophy is suggested, in a manner which attempts to address and overcome Hegel’s rejection of such formal methodology. Thus, Part III presents a critical interpretation of Hegel’s concept of sublation that is itself a sublation of Hegel. The purpose of this sublation is not simply to present yet another deconstruction of the Hegelian system of philosophy but to offer something constructive in its place.


Computers are formal systems; and the mind is a very complex structure originating in and associated with the brain. This is true especially with regard to cognition and intelligence. In that sense, the basic question of artificial intelligence (AI), “Can a machine think?”, refers to the question “is it possible to design formal systems that can imitate the very complex structure of the human mind?” In order to give an affirmative answer to this question, some theoretical models on mind, logic and linguistics should be developed under a unified methodological framework. This methodological framework requires considering the definition of AI and the principles of modeling and simulation in artificial intelligence. This dissertation aims to construct models of mind, language, and logic in order to present a new methodological approach to AI. The aim of this dissertation is to reach certain methodological principles in order to settle what is basically required for the construction of thinking machines. For this dissertation, constructing thinking machines is not an essential part of its aims; rather is it a research method providing a tool for analyzing certain philosophical problems from a different perspective. In other words, this is not an engineering or cognitive scientific project but a methodological one that examines a different analysis of certain philosophical issues.
NEWS 2008-2009

From the 9th throughout the 13th of September, 2008 the biannual 27th International Hegel Congress of the International Hegel Society took place at the Institute. The theme of the congress was “Geist?”. The introductory word was given by Paul Cruysberghs (Organizer), L. De Witte (Governor of the Province Vlaams-Brabant), Antoon Vandevaelde (Dean of the Institute of Philosophy), and by A. Arndt (President of the Hegel-Society). On the 9th of September Michael Forster gave a lecture on “Ursprung und Wesen des Hegelschen Geistbegriffs”. On the 10th of September the speakers were: Walter Jaeschke: “Der Geist und seine Wissenschaften” and Valentin Kanawrow: “Der Geist als Ontologem der Epoche der Aufklärung”. On the 11th of September the lectures were given by Anton Friedrich Koch: “Hegelsche Subjekte in Raum und Zeit” and by Emilio Brito: “Hegel et le Saint-Esprit”. On the 12th of September Jens Halfwassen gave a lecture on “Hegel und Plotin über Selbsterkenntnis und Denken seiner selbst”. On the 13th of September the speaker was Pirmin Stekeler-Weithofer: “Von einer bloßen ‘Philosophy of Mind’ zu einer vollen Philosophie des Geistes. Hegels Weg von der Subjektivität zur Intersubjektivität”.

Bernard Flynn (New School for Social Research / Empire State College, New York) held a seminar on September 29th at the Institute of Philosophy. Flynn, who is an outstanding scholar in French political philosophy, discussed Merleau-Ponty’s political philosophy.


On the 1st of October 2008 the first lecture of a lecture series “Global Justice” took place. The lecture series was organized by the Center for Ethics and Social and Political Philosophy of the Institute of Philosophy and by the Research Group for Political Philosophy of HU Brussel. The theme of the series was “Beyond Westphalia. Sovereignty and Interventions after the Nation-state”. On October 1st Wendy Brown gave the first lecture on “Porous Sovereignty, Walled Democracy”. The other lectures were as follows: Paul Scheffer: “Het vooroordeel gewogen”; Costas Douzinas: “The Normative Sources of Empire”; Rainer Forst: “Two Pictures of Justice”; Rainer Bauböck: “Democratic Citizenship, Global Justice and Freedom of Movement”.

On March 12th, Thomas Leinkauf (Universität Münster) spoke about “Philosophical Texts and Images in the 16th and 17th Century” and Thomas Pink (King’s College London) closed the series on April 20th with “Promises and Obligations”.

To celebrate the occasion of Professor Herman De Dijn’s becoming emeritus, a colloquium took place at the Institute on the 16th and the 17th of October on “Spinoza and Hume on Religion”. On October 16th the speakers were: Peter Kail: “Religion, Projection and Anthropomorphism”; Patricia de Martelaere: “Hume, the Dao and De Dijn”; Willem Lemmens: “Hume on Religion and Morality”; John Cottingham: “Atheists without knowing it? Hume’s critique of religious mysticism”; Wiep Van Bunge: “Spinoza on Religious Truths”. On October 17th the lectures were given by: J. Thomas Cook: “Libertas philosophandi and freedom of mind: Freedom of (and freedom from) religion in Spinoza’s Ttv”; Paul Jeffermans: “Imagination and Reason in the Theological Political Treatise of Spinoza”; Arnold Burms: “Spinoza and Santayana”. The valedictory lecture of Professor De Dijn on “Drie Soorten van Verwondering”, followed by a reception, took place on the 17th of October in the Promotion Hall of the University. Professor Herman De Dijn has been invited to come for the second semester of the academic year of 2008-2009, to hold the Erasmus Lectureship at Harvard University (Philosophy Department). He will give one lecture and three classes there about Spinoza.


On the 22nd of October the workgroup “Filosofie en Maatschappij” opened the second edition of the “De Avonden” with a debate on sense and nonsense of the rhetoric. The workgroup “Filosofie en Maatschappij” also organized in the 2008-2009 academic year, in cooperation with Cinema Zed and Het Fimhuis, a film series “Denkbeelden”.


On the 25th of October 2008 the Irish Philosophical Society organized a one day conference in philosophy of education. Theme of the conference was “Education: Ethical or Instrumental?”.

The 15th edition of the “Lessen voor de XXIe

The Formal Epistemology Seminar began with its series of lectures on the 14th of November.

The thirtieth edition of the Nederlands-Vlaamse Filosofiedag took place this year in Leuven on the 27th of November 2008. Its theme was “Utopie en Verbeelding”.

On the 28th of November the Overlegcentrum voor Christelijke Ethiek at the Institute of Philosophy organized a discussion on the “Ethical Aspects of the Financial Crisis”.

The annual Christmas Feast took place on the 4th of December in the Sint-Antoniuszaal. The evening began with a Christmas ceremony, followed by a reception and dinner.


On December 17th K.U.Leuven awarded a doctorate honoris causa to Bas Van Fraassen (San Francisco State University), one of the most important contemporary philosophers of science. The academic ceremony took place at the Institute of Philosophy and it consisted of, among others, Professor Van Fraassen giving a lecture on “Representation in Art and in Science”.

The De Wulf-Mansion Centre of the Institute of Philosophy and the Centre De Wulf-Mansion
of the UCL organized together an international conference on “Aristotle’s Ethics Today”. The conference took place on the 18th of December in Leuven and on the 19th of December in Louvain-la-Neuve.

From January 8th until January 10th, 2009 a congress entitled “Bartholomew of Messina and the Cultural Life at the Court of King Manfred of Sicily” took place at the Institute of Philosophy. It was organized by the Institute for Medieval and Renaissance Studies (K.U.Leuven) in collaboration with the Institut d’études médiévales (UCL).

On March 13th the Institute of Philosophy and the Faculty of Social Sciences jointly organized a seminar entitled “Politics and the Good Life”. This international seminar on contemporary applications of Aristotelian insights on politics, ethics and the good life was part of the week-long programme “Science and Ethics”.

On the 19th of March the Institute of Philosophy celebrated the Feast of Saint Thomas Aquinas during which Steve Nadel (University of Wisconsin-Madison) delivered a lecture on “Spinoza, Leibniz, and the Gods of the Philosophers”. This was followed by a reception.

From the 1st of April until the 4th of April Husserl-Archives Leuven held a four-day conference on the occasion of Edmund Husserl’s 150th birthday. The keynote speakers included: Rudolf Berner on “Transzendentale Phänomenologie?”; John Drummond on “Self-Responsibility and Eudaimonia”; Klaus Held on “Gott in Husserls Phänomenologie”; Ernst Wolfgang Orth on “Die Kulturbedeutung der Intentionalität. Zu Husserls Wirklichkeitsbegriff” and Marc Richir on “Le sens de la phénoménologie”. The Husserl-Memorial Lecture was given by Robert Sokolowski on “Husserl on First Philosophy”.

In April 2009 the Institute of Philosophy hosted a Study Day and a Symposium entitled “Metaphysics, Religion, Postmodernism: Themes Round William Desmond’s God and the Between”. On the 21st of April there was an afternoon for MPhil and doctoral students to present their ideas about this work. On the 28th of April a Symposium on the same work was held, including presentations from an international gathering of scholars. The night before the Symposium Cyril O’Regan, one of the speakers at the Symposium, gave a guest lecture entitled “Ruysbroeck’s Critique of Hegel”.

The Mercier Chair was held this year by Christine M. Korsgaard (Harvard University) on the 22nd and 23rd of April. On the 22nd of April she gave a seminar on “Animal Nature and the Good”. On the 23rd of April she gave a seminar on “Human Beings and the Other Animals” and a lecture entitled “The Activity of Reason”. This was be followed by a reception.

On the 9th of May the annual study day of the Wijsgerig Gezelschap took place. The topic of
the study day was Environmental Philosophy.

On the 12th of May a Seminar on “Hereditary Sin in Kierkegaard’s Concept of Anxiety” was organized at the Institute of Philosophy. Introduction was given by Prof. dr. N.-J. Cappelørn, director of the Kierkegaard Research Center in Copenhagen.

On May 12th and May 13th the De Wulf-Mansion Centre of the Institute organized a workshop on “John Duns Scotus and Later Medieval Philosophy: Some Work in Progress”. Presentations were given by some of the foremost historians of later medieval philosophy, as well as by several doctoral students currently working on their dissertations.

Pierre Guénancia (Université de Bourgogne) was a guest at the Institute on the 27th and the 28th of May. On the first day he gave a seminar on the theme of “Le représentation de soi”. On the second day he gave a lecture on the theme of “Admiration & générosité”.

On the 28th of May Robert C. Neville (Boston University) spoke on the topic of “The Axiology of Thinking”.

From the 10th of June until the 12th of June 2009, researchers from the Formal Epistemology Project (FEP) organized a conference on Formal Methods in the Epistemology of Religion, with lectures held by Richard Swinburne, Alan Hajek, Herman Philipse, and others. The FEP also hosted, beside many other seminars and lectures, a conference on Conditionals and Conditionalization (4th until 6th September 2009).

From the 17th until the 20th of August, students and teachers of the first Summer School in Philosophy put an end to the peace and quiet of a warm summer at the Institute of Philosophy. Kant’s questions “What can I know?”, “What ought I to do?”, “What can I hope for?” and “What is man?” served as a guide to professors and researchers of the Institute, who offered an original introduction and refresher of their philosophical knowledge to 40 enthusiastic participants.

From the 17th of September until the 19th of September the Centre for Ethics, Social and Political Philosophy organized an international conference entitled “A World without Politics?”. The main topic of discussion was globalization and the rapid changes of international political structures that are a result of this phenomenon. Among the invited speakers were Etienne Balibar, Jean en Joshua Cohen, Andreas Kalyvas, Margaret Moore, Chantal Mouffe, Charles Sabel and Boaventura de Sousa Santos.
FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE
AT THE INSTITUTE

Doctoral scholarships 2010-2011
The Institute of Philosophy is offering the following scholarships for the academic year of 2010-2011:

Four doctoral scholarships for one year
Description: four doctoral scholarships for one year each. The first aim of these positions is to start a doctoral research project, under the guidance of a professor of the Institute of Philosophy. During this year, candidates must apply for an FWO or BOF grant to obtain funding for the remaining years of the doctoral project.
Qualifications: MPhil of MA Philosophy degree (and another MA degree), or dossier that can be evaluated as equivalent.
Application: Candidates need to apply electronically. With their application they should attach a research project for which they use the form for application to the doctoral programme. Candidates who have already been accepted into the doctoral programme may submit their application to the doctoral programme. The deadline for application is June 1st, 2010.

One doctoral scholarship for one year for a doctorandus at an advanced stage of his/her doctoral project
Description: One doctoral scholarship for one year for one doctorandus at an advanced stage of his/her doctoral project. This scholarship is aimed at students who have almost finished their research project and who will be accepted for defense of their dissertation within 10 months.
Qualifications: Candidates must have fulfilled all doctoral programme requirements (progress reports, etc.)

Application: Candidates should apply electronically, attaching a letter from their promoter confirming that the doctoral project is in advanced stage (a table of contents and overview of the parts that have already been written should be included) and guaranteeing that the defense will take place during the academic year. The deadline for application is June 1st, 2010.

MPhil scholarships
Description: Every year, the Institute of Philosophy offers five to seven MPhil scholarships of 2000 Euros each. The MPhil scholarships are announced on the Institute’s website in the spring semester. The application form, application deadlines and information can also be found there.

Qualifications: Each applicant must have an excellent individual dossier (including details of previous education, results obtained, letters of recommendation and motivation, and a research project).

Katholieke Universiteit Leuven Doctoral Scholarships
Description: The University awards special doctoral student grants for advanced K.U.Leuven doctoral students (BOF-BDM).

Qualifications: Applicants must have graduated at least four years prior to the formal submission date and may not have received research funding enabling them to prepare a doctorate. The candidates should however have done some research at
the K.U.Leuven Association on short-term applied or policy-oriented projects allowing them to get a doctoral degree within a period of one to two years as from the official granting date of the scholarship. **Number:** Depends on the availability of funds for a particular year. **Stipend:** The doctoral student receives a grant or salary equal to 100% of the net amount of an assistant’s salary. **Tenure:** One year, once renewable. **Application:** Applications include the candidate’s curriculum vitae, a description of the research project and of previous research activities, and a letter from the academic supervisor covering comments on the project and the candidate, an explanation of why no alternative financing is available, and confirmation that the doctorate will indeed be completed in a timely manner. The deadline is January 14th.

**Katholieke Universiteit Leuven**

**Post-Doctoral Scholarships**

**Short postdoctoral positions for K.U.Leuven doctoral students (BOF-PDM-short term).**

**Description:** These full-time research mandates are explicitly aimed at providing young researchers the opportunity to expand their research activities at K.U.Leuven. High quality scientific research will be stimulated. When granted a PDM mandate, candidates are expected to submit an application for an FWO post-doctoral grant prior to the next deadline. **Stipend:** Salary is at the level of doctor-assistant with adjusted seniority. **Tenure:** one year. **Application deadline:** March 18th.

**Long postdoctoral positions for non-K.U.Leuven postdoctoral researchers (BOF-PDM-long term).**

**Description:** These full-time research mandates are explicitly intended to attract young and excellent, non-K.U.Leuven postdoctoral researchers. They may not have been related to K.U.Leuven as a researcher in a period of at least 3 years before the date of submission of the pre-application. The profile must be of that kind that the candidate is able to acquire a Research professorship or an appointment on a vacant academic staff position. **Stipend:** Salary is at the level of doctor-assistant with adjusted seniority. **Tenure:** maximum 3 years. **Application:** There is no specific submission date. A continuous submission is possible.

**Katholieke Universiteit Leuven**

**Post-Doctoral Fellowships**

**Description:** The University awards post-doctoral fellowships for senior researchers who obtained their doctoral degree at a non-K.U.Leuven university (BOF-SF). **Qualifications:** Candidates must have publically defended their doctoral thesis at least 8 years before the official submission date, must be invited by a University faculty and be nominated by a professor of the University. As a general rule, the fellows should bring in a new contribution, in the shape of knowledge and expertise, that is lacking or insufficiently developed and possibly strengthened in the applicant’s research group. **Number:** Depends on availability of funds for a particular year. **Stipend:** A grant, a salary or a reimbursement of expenses is determined in accordance with the level of the fellow and the percentage of stipend in the fellow’s own institution. **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.
Development Cooperation Scholarships from the K.U.Leuven

Description: These scholarships are available to students from developing countries (former Soviet Union countries and Eastern European countries, including countries applying for membership in the EU are not included). They are available for candidates wishing to study in the Doctoral Programs. Qualifications: The applicant must be a citizen of a developing country, holder of a master’s degree with excellent academic qualifications, and 35 years of age or younger. Further information on qualifications is available on the website: http://www.kuleuven.be/iro/ or from the International Office of the university. Number: around 15 scholarships per academic year. Stipend: The stipend includes full tuition, health insurance coverage, plus an additional stipend of 1300 Euros per month. Tenure: Up to 4 years. Application: Online Application Forms are available on the website: http://www.kuleuven.be/iro/. Applications must be received no later than January 1st.

FWO Grants

Description: scholarship for preparing a PhD (fwo-aspirant). Qualifications: Applicants need to be a European citizen or need to have a masters degree from a European university and to have permission to the doctoral program. The masters degree should not be obtained more then 5 years ago. Stipend: Grant equal to 100% of the net amount of an assistant’s salary. Tenure: The scholarship initially starts for 2 years and can be extended for another 2 years. Application: Applications are accepted until February 1st. fwo website: www.fwo.be.

FWO Post-Doctoral scholarships

Description: research scholarship at postdoctoral level. Qualifications: All nationalities can apply. Candidates must have defended their Ph.D. not more then 5 years ago. Tenure: 3 years, renewable. Application: Applications are accepted until February 1st. fwo website: www.fwo.be.

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. See http://www.fulbrightalumni.org/olc/pub/FBA/cpages/gfn/grants.jsp for more information.

The Belgian-American Educational Foundation Fellowships

Descriptions: The Belgian American Educational Foundation (BAEF) encourages applications for fellowships for advanced study or research. Fellowships are offered to American students, who wish to study in Belgium, and to Belgian students, who wish to study in the US. Please see www.baef.be for more information.

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. 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.
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-1538 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 agreements with the philosophy departments of the following universities: Czech Republic: Charles University Prague (Univerzita Karlova
v Praze); Finland: University of Helsinki; France: Université Lille III – Charles De Gaulle, Université Paris X – Nanterre; Germany: Ruhr-Universität Bochum, Katholische Universität zu Eichstätt, Albert Ludwigs Universität Freiburg, Universität zu Köln, Bergische Universität Wuppertal, Bayerische Julius-Maximilians-Universität Würzburg; Hungary: Eötvös-Lorand University Budapest; Ireland: University College Dublin, National University of Ireland – Maynooth; Italy: Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore Milano, Università degli Studi di Padova, Università di Pisa, Università Ca’ Foscari di Venezia; The Netherlands: Katholieke Universiteit Nijmegen; Rijksuniversiteit Leiden; Poland: Catholic University of Lublin, University of Warsaw; Portugal: University of Lisbon; Spain: Universidad autónoma de Madrid; Sweden: University of Linköping; Université de Lausanne; Turkey: Ankara University; United Kingdom: The Queen’s University of Belfast; Heythrop College University of London. The Erasmus coordinator of the HIW is Prof. André Cloots.
The *Tijdschrift voor Filosofie*, founded in 1939, is published four times a year. Each volume totals more than 800 pages and is also available online. All universities of the Dutch-speaking regions (including South Africa) are represented in the editorial council. Currently the journal is led by an independent international editorial board, which has its seat at the Institute of Philosophy of the K.U.Leuven.

The *Tijdschrift voor Filosofie* is open to all trends of thinking and to the various fields of philosophy. It contains thematic, historical and critical contributions, as well as reviews and descriptive bibliographies, written by philosophers from different countries. It publishes articles in Dutch, English, French, German and South African Dutch, all with an English abstract. Each contribution is double-blind peer reviewed by at least two experts from different universities.

**EDITORIAL OFFICE**

*Tijdschrift voor Filosofie*,
Kard. Mercierplein 2,
B-3000 Leuven, Belgium.
+ 32 16 32 63 26
Tijdschrift.Filosofie@hiw.kuleuven.be
www.hiw.kuleuven.ac.be/tvf.

**EDITOR-IN-CHIEF**

Prof. dr. Rudi Visker (K.U.Leuven)

**SUBSCRIPTION**

Belgium and the Netherlands:
€ 60 (students € 30).
Other countries: € 75.
Subscribers receive the printed *Tijdschrift voor Filosofie* four times a year and obtain access to all available online articles.
New subscribers address to Peeters Publishers, Bondgenotenlaan 153,
B-3000 Leuven, Belgium.
+ 32 16 23 51 70
order@peeters-leuven.be
www.peeters-leuven.be.