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A WORD OF INTRODUCTION
FROM DEAN BART RAYMAEKERS

With the strict regularity befitting a work of this kind, you receive the yearly Alumni Newsletter on your reading table. Maybe you limit yourself to having a quick look at some pages and add the magazine to a pile of older magazines. Or maybe you are really sincerely interested in the content and you decide to put the Newsletter aside for a while in order to read some texts more closely… when you find more time. In both cases, you will immediately recognize the style and atmosphere of the Institute of Philosophy.

One of the most remarkable events of the academic year 2015-2016 was the long-awaited renovation of the president’s building. The building with the striking wooden facade facing the Tiensestraat urgently needed to be renovated, partly because the utilities dated back to a long time ago. Because the building is classified as a monument, as is the entire the site, we were reassured that the look of the interior could not change significantly. In fact, quite the opposite happened: the building was restored to its original state, including the aphorisms in the waiting room of the dean! The restoration of the building was also a good opportunity to bring the Husserl-Archives up to modern archiving standards. The valuable manuscripts found a fitting and safe home in the university archives where they remain available for research. The Husserl-Archives will be equipped with a Husserl-room where guests and visitors can learn more about Husserl’s heritage. After one year, the buildings are now in use again. They were inaugurated with style on the 10th of May 2017.
The buildings of the Institute have always been the backdrop for new generations of students who are looking to find out what philosophy has to do with them and vice versa. In general they are here for four or five years, years that will later in life turn out to have been decisive for what followed. The academic staff stays here a lot longer than the students. At the end of the academic year 2015-2016, professor William Desmond retired. He had been a part of the International Program of the Institute since 1994. After years of hosting temporary visiting professors, the Institute brought on William Desmond full-time, as someone who matched perfectly with the aspirations and content of the International Program. He taught courses in many philosophical domains (metaphysics, ethics, aesthetics) for a long time. He became the first director of the International Program and as such shaped and improved the program, and his reputation also enabled him to contribute to the systematic expansion of the program. He deserves our lasting gratitude.

The end of his active career is a good reason to look back on the very first years of the International Program. Professor Steel’s contribution on this topic is quite unprecedented and makes one long for a more comprehensive and documented history of the Institute.

While some colleagues retire and leave the Institute, we are luckily also always in a position to welcome new staff members. Last year, we were joined by Grant Ramsey. He travelled all the way from Notre Dame in the US to Leuven to fortify our domain of philosophy of science as a research professor. Griet Galle received a part-time commission in the teacher training and our courses on philosophical skills. We were able to extend our administrative staff by taking on Julie van Vlasselaer, who will make sure all financial transactions are made correctly.

Apart from the many activities, lectures and colloquia (you can follow them via our newsletter) we should definitely not forget to mention the start of our Research Master. After approximately eight years of non-stop efforts, the Research Master finally started in October 2016. Combined with the one-year master, the Research Master offers a two-year program that prepares students even better for original research and a doctoral dissertation. The MPhil program, which over the years grew into a program with over 70 students, will be terminated. The experiences we gained from this program will be of excellent use for our new Research Master. The Institute is able to offer a comprehensive educational program; from bachelor to abridged bachelor, evening and working programs, master and Research Master in Dutch and English!

All these initiatives are made possible by the atmosphere of philosophy that can be felt at the Institute, because the love for philosophy remains common ground regardless of all differences and styles. The success of the Institute is still unmistakably connected to our internal unity, which is also highly appreciated by the outside world.

Bart Raymaekers
Dean
Dear Alumni

When you were pursuing your studies here in Leuven, you may have noticed and even admired the beautiful magnolia tree that stands between the Institute library and the Leo XIII Seminary – you can see the tree from the glassed-in stairway that leads down to the library basement. Well, right now that magnolia looks like a Christmas tree on steroids: spring has definitely arrived and the flowers – on magnolias and cherries, on daffodils and (soon, soon) tulips – are quite remarkable this year. And when the trees awaken and the blossoms bloom, I know that it’s time for me to once again write to our loyal alumni to introduce the latest edition of the Newsletter and to send a bit of news myself.

For the Institute of Philosophy, and for its International Programme in particular, 2016-17 has been an eventful year. When I look back, two major developments loom large in my mind. The first is the implementation of the new Master’s programme. In my Introduction to last year’s Newsletter I described at some length the basic structure of the new 1-year initial MA and the new 1-year Advanced Research MA (replacing our MPhil programme), but to recap: fewer but “heavier” six-credit core courses in the initial MA, more substantial eight-credit research seminars in the Advanced MA, which also involves writing a thesis in the form of an article with a target journal in mind. Although we’ll have to wait until the year is finished and the results of a broad student and faculty evaluation of the new programmes are known, I think that it’s fair to say that the feedback that I’ve heard and the impression that I’ve had of the implementation of the new courses of study have been on the whole very positive. I’ve been most directly involved in the Advanced Research Masters, where 30-odd students are enrolled in eight “majors”. The Common Seminar that these students were required to take is described in the “Courses in the Spotlight” section below. And both the Research Seminar that I’ve been co-teaching and the thesis that I am supervising leave me with the impression that this Advanced Master’s programme is genuinely helpful to talented students who want to make professional philosophy their career. I attended a number of sessions in one of the initial MA core courses, and could see that the extra hour of class time each week allowed the teachers and students to delve deeper into the philosophical material and gave more opportunity for student presentations and class discussion. There are, to be sure, some issues that need addressing, especially regarding the number of students in certain courses: in some of the Advanced Research Masters seminars there are few students, while in some of the normal six credit MA courses there are many – the latter a result also of the fact that we have again this year around 100 students in our initial MA programme! We’ll be working on ways to ame-
liorate those circumstances, and in general on improving these new courses of study for the next academic year, which will also see the first implementation of the full two-year Research Master (which is basically the initial MA + the advanced MA set together, with a large paper instead of a thesis as a requirement for finishing the first year of study). Stay tuned for more information in coming issues of the Newsletter.

The second big event over the past year, from my perspective, has to do with changes in the academic staff. New staff members have been hired: see the interviews with Griet Galle and Grant Ramsey. And this year was the first at the Institute after the retirement of Professor William Desmond. Let me dwell on that last point just a bit: William Desmond retired at the end of the 2015-16 academic year. As Carlos Steel notes below in his engaging overview of the “Heroic Beginnings of the International Programme”, William Desmond came to Leuven in 1992-93 as a Fulbright Scholar and was appointed as full professor here in 1994. For 22 years, William wrote his books, and taught his courses, and supervised a large number of doctoral dissertations (and an even larger number of master’s theses) as professor at the Institute of Philosophy. Undoubtedly many of you encountered William as he exercised one of those functions: he has devoted students (and colleagues) throughout the world, and one of them, Prof. Renée Ryan, has contributed her thoughts to the Newsletter below. In the present context, perhaps the most salient of William Desmond’s accomplishments is the fact that he was head of the International Programme for twelve years, a time during which the programme as a whole (and especially the MA courses of study) underwent a number of enormous changes as the University geared up to its increasing role as a “mass university”. This was also a time in which the Institute’s International Programme was professionalized, going from talented and dedicated but part-time student administrators (among whom were Renée Ryan and Emilia Brodencova) to the full-time administrative position that Emilia Brodencova now fills so well (and that is basically required by the complexities of the Leuven administrative regime). William Desmond played an outsized role in all this, with the result that, when I became Director of the International Programme, although I couldn’t rest on my laurels, a lot of the success that we’ve had traces its roots to William’s good stewardship and the programme to this day bears his imprint in many different ways. Moreover, on a more personal note, when I first came to Leuven, William took time out to sit with me (usually over coffee at now defunct taverne Erasmus) and explain, among other things, the Leuven grading scale and the ins-and-outs of teaching and research in what was for me a completely new academic environment. Both personally and on behalf of the International Programme, it’s a pleasure and a privilege to wish William Desmond all the best in his new status as emeritus, and we hope to see him often around the Institute!

The 2016-2017 academic year has in addition seen all of the usual forms of activity that we expect at the Institute of Philosophy, and this comes across in the pages of the Newsletter below. Teaching at the Institute is well represented here in the “Courses in the Spotlight” section, with descriptions of the Environmental Philosophy course taught by Ullrich Melle and the BA seminar on the Ethics of War taught by Johan Olsthoorn (in addition to the description of the Common Seminar mentioned above). The research focus in the Newsletter is on the activities of RIPPLE (Research in Political Philosophy Leuven), a large and extremely active group of researchers, as is witnessed by the many activities described below.
(and by Olsthoorn’s course). In the International Programme, with the full support of the Institute as a whole and Vice-Dean for Education Tim Heysse in particular, we’ve begun a project to introduce a “study counselling” service for especially new BA and BA-Abridged students. This is modelled on the Dutch programme’s “monitoraat”, which makes help available to new students in selecting their courses and honing their study techniques. You can read about the study counselling service below in the article by Chris Bessemans and Tine Vandendriessche. Finally, I should mention the “Focus on Italy” section of the Newsletter below, including several testimonies from Italians who are currently or who have been studying or working here in Leuven. This is yet further testimony to just how international the Institute of Philosophy is.

It remains for me to thank Ines Van Houtte and Emma Moormann for all their work in putting together the Newsletter and seeing it through production. And then, a farewell from me. This is my last year as head of the International Programme. After seven years full of new initiatives and educational policy changes and significant growth in the number of students enrolled in our International programme, it’s time for me to pass on the baton. Next year a new director will be sending you news from your alma mater, and I feel confident that that person will be every bit as engaged as I have been in working with the faculty, staff, and students of the Institute of Philosophy in order to ensure for our students the best possible philosophical education. And communication with you, our alumni, will I’m certain continue to be a priority for us: so keep in touch and thanks for all your support.
NEW FACULTY MEMBERS AT THE INSTITUTE OF PHILOSOPHY

An interview with Griet Galle

In October of this academic year, Griet Galle started as one of the new professors in the Institute of Philosophy. She is in charge of the philosophical courses in the Teacher Training Programme in Societal sciences and Philosophy, and of the Philosophical skills training in both the Dutch and the International Programmes of the Institute of Philosophy. She combines this 50% appointment as a professor with a 50% appointment as editorial director of the journal *Tijdschrift voor Filosofie*. All this she combines with a family life with a husband and four children. We were interested in finding out how she pulls all that off and how she deals with her different tasks.

You teach the ‘Research skills’ course to first year BA students. Am I right in supposing that this is not the favorite course of our philosophy students?

That’s correct. But I try to meet them part of the way by assigning individual tasks to them that are related to a topic of their interest. This helps, although, of course, the tasks still consist of searching databases and writing a bibliography, which is not particularly interesting on its own. So it will probably never be the favorite course of our students, but it is good that they can personalize the tasks and work on a topic that they find interesting. The Research skills course used to be a series of lectures, in which I gave, for instance, a demonstration of the use of databases. I noticed the students got bored, so I switched to seminars where students can, at their own pace, make exercises related to the content of the course and ask me for help and advice when needed.

Talking about personal interests: what was it that brought you to study philosophy?

I studied Latin and Greek in high school and was profoundly interested in these old languages and texts, but also in history and art. That made it hard for me to choose a university programme, because I wanted to study psychology, educational sciences, philosophy, history, history of art, Dutch and German or classics. In the end I chose philosophy, because the other programmes seemed a little bit too superficial, or rather because philosophy seemed to be more profound. And maybe also because philosophy is so comprehensive and fits various interests.

Did you quickly find your way to ancient philosophy?

As a philosophy student, my minor was Latin, which included courses like ‘Ancient history’ and ‘Medieval history’. Later on, I wrote my MA dissertation on the theater metaphor (‘life as theater’) in Stoic philosophy, Cynicism and Neoplatonism, with professor Steel as my supervisor. Then, I received an FWO scholarship to do research on the *quaestiones* (questions) of Petrus de Alvernia (end of the 13th century) on Aristotle’s *De Caelo* (*On the Heavens*) – a topic in the field of philosophy of nature and cosmology – again with professor Steel. It was a combination of philology – working with manuscripts and preparing a critical text edition –
and text interpretation. I found this extremely fascinating. Professor Steel also stimulated me to give lectures on the topic quickly, so that I could publish an article on it, etc. He knew how the system worked and coached me well.

That’s how you’ve been growing as an academic and stand where you stand now. If you could think freely about the changes you would like to make to this academic world, what would those be?

(laughing) A lot, but some of my ideas might not be suitable for publication. The first thing that pops into my mind is the fact that quantity seems to be more important than quality. That’s a major problem. By stressing the importance of publishing a lot and publishing quickly, it gets hard to receive project funding for, let’s say, making text editions, because they take a lot of time.

Secondly, the fact that everybody has to work too hard. I think that’s a problem that even affects the academic work itself. If you don’t have time to develop yourself as a person, to be there for your family, then this probably has consequences for your academic work or for the topics you’re interested in.

Another thing I find problematic is that education in general confirms social inequalities. Our rector recently wrote in an opinion piece that the university has no problem of democratization, because children in general have a higher level of education than their parents. But if you look at social classes, I think there is a persistent problem, namely that children from the lower social class seldom obtain a university degree. The problem arises in high school or even prior to that, because there is not enough support for children who are not well stimulated at home. When they become university students, it is already too late to remediate; they just don’t have a solid enough background.

One last thing I don’t think is positive, are all these gigantic, sometimes international projects, which require a lot of collaboration and the greatness of which often is greatness on paper only. Don’t underestimate the time researchers spend on writing these kinds of project proposals. Sometimes I wonder: would it not be better just to let everybody work quietly? Can we not trust that we’ll all do our job well and can we not just divide the money well, without putting so much time into the writing of project proposals?

Do you have examples, people you look up to, for instance intellectually?

As a teenager I never had an idol, and that’s still the case now. I can strongly admire some ideas, but I don’t have any philosophical heroes. In fact, I rather admire writers than philosophers. For instance Bernard Dewulf, whom I find amazing, because he combines beautiful thoughts about daily life with a wonderful way of putting them into words. I rather admire this kind of person, more than a philosopher who articulates his thoughts in a cold, rational manner. I can admire the subtlety of a philosopher, but it doesn’t move me in the same way. It can move me, though, when the text is written really beautifully. I enjoy the combination of the beauty of language, beautiful thoughts and something that really moves you.

I admire the scholastic philosophers, because they have the ability of dissecting complex problems or texts into pros and cons and making them look simple. Thomas Aquinas, for instance, explains complex Aristotelian texts in such a way that difficult passages become crystal-clear (which doesn’t mean that, according to contemporary standards, his interpretation is always correct).

Can you remember when you first felt a great enthusiasm for philosophy?

I do. The first time was when I started reading
about prenatal screening. Of course, I also felt a strong motivation when I was working on my PhD, but that was a strong intellectual motivation. The strongest motivation, for me, is one that results from a connection with real life.

I feel the same when I think about education. Now that I have children attending school, my interest in education is much deeper. I realize much better what education is and I see the problems my children and other children encounter. If I didn’t have children and just did research about it, it would be a totally different situation. There is a kind of connection now, which inspires my research.

Which topics would you like to investigate in the future?

Being in charge of the Teacher Training Programme, I would like to do some research on manuals and workbooks for teaching philosophy in secondary school. Which point of view do these books choose: historical and/or thematic; do they focus on philosophy or on doing philosophy; which topics, philosophers, ideas, subdomains of philosophy get the most attention? Do they imply an opinion on what philosophy is, or should be, and on the relation between philosophy and a vision of life, science, citizenship education, critical thinking, …? What I would also like to investigate is what kind of classroom methods these books advise: mainly ex cathedra teaching or also Socratic dialogues, debates, dilemma conversations, writing tasks, …? Finally, I would like to find out if they have a strategy for explaining difficult philosophical thought to young people in a simple way.

Besides this, I’m also interested in philosophy of education.

How do you combine your philosophical aspirations with your family life? And do you think the academic world is open to this?

That’s a difficult question. I’ve always pleaded for a good balance of work and family. On the one hand, I took a long maternity leave after the birth of each of my children, and I strove for a good balance of work and family when I was the faculty’s equal opportunities promoter. I also pointed out that it is problematic that researchers are expected to work extremely hard. On the other hand, I worked extremely hard myself. That was, in fact, an enormous contradiction, and it is one I’m still struggling with.

I often wonder: how can I combine both? A big advantage of academic work is the flexibility of working hours. I can pick up my children at school every day at 4 PM, which is very important for me. But the enormous workload is a big disadvantage. You have to work a lot, and this inevitably means spending less time with your children. When you work every evening and every weekend, you have less time for family trips. And now that my children are getting older, they start complaining about this. Sometimes they really get angry and say “I’ll talk to your Dean and I will tell him that he has to pay you a lot more” and “it’s really not fair that…”.

Do you really have to work every weekend?

I do, if I don’t want to deliver what I consider as really bad work – which I don’t want. I need to work every weekend to get done what I have to do. I have a difficult combination of tasks, especially since the courses I teach (Philosophical skills training, Teaching methodology) require a lot of time every year to get a grip on the rapid evolution in these fields.

Many women in academia seem to have more peace with it, or say that even if they don’t see their children very often, the time they spend together is quality time. I see my children quite often, but what I take care of are practical things. My husband is the one who goes walking with them or reads them stories. On the
other hand, maybe spending quality time with them (special time for fun, which is often a compensation for being absent) is not what children need. Maybe the most important thing is just being there.

What could the Institute do to allow you to have more time for your children?

(laughing) They could give me more assistants.

To conclude: has the Institute of Philosophy changed throughout the years?

Yes, certainly. Social contact has strongly decreased. In my first PhD years, we all met at 11 AM for coffee in the kitchen. Now we don’t do that anymore. Everybody seems to know the others less well. Maybe the fact that we became a more international faculty also plays a role in this.

We didn’t have so many conferences, but most colleagues attended the lectures. Now we have such a lot of congresses, but a smaller number of colleagues from the Institute participate in them.

A positive evolution is the so-called assistants’ pool. It is a worthy attempt to divide tasks more equally. In the past, when assistants fulfilled their tasks well, they only received more work. So this approach is better.

Another change is that, with regard to the choice of philosophical topics and courses, more attention is given to ‘what is close to reality’. Maybe we used to have too much metaphysics, whereas now, we have found a better connection to real life. I think that’s a positive evolution.

Thank you, professor Galle, for this very pleasant conversation. I wish you all the best with your busy combination of activities. Enjoy your job and your family. I’m convinced you will find the right balance.

By Tine Vandendriessche

An interview with Grant Ramsey

You state that you were born ‘in the wilds of northern California’, resulting in a deep appreciation for nature and that you spent time in the field studying rocks, plants, and insects. This might explain your interest in biology, but how did you end up in philosophy of biology?

I started out in college studying biology, chemistry, and geology. My focus on biology derived from my love of nature and an interest in conservation biology. But I initially got interested in philosophy not through biology, but through the study of physics. This occurred via dissatisfaction with the answers that my physics teacher would give about some of the basic concepts in physics, for example the notion of a force. We can use the concept of a force to explain and predict the behaviour of objects. But I had nagging questions about this: are there really such forces? Are they part of the basic furniture of the world or are they mere tools that help us to make predictions about the world?

Thus, I got interested in philosophical issues through physics, but then I kept my focus on biology as an undergraduate. I did a lot of field biology, including tropical rainforest biology, studying in Costa Rica and the Peruvian Amazon. It wasn’t until graduate school that I combined my love for biology with my passion for philosophy. I was fortunate to have gotten into a good programme in philosophy of biology and although I considered it a somewhat a tentative decision at first, I ended up really en-
joying it. So my long-standing interest in biology, combined by a passion for philosophy sparked by my college physics class, led me to become a philosopher of biology.

Your recent publications have indeed all been in the field of philosophy of biology. For instance, you have recently published a book called Chance in Evolution (University of Chicago Press, 2016) with Charles Pence. Can you explain what this book is about?

The book is a collection of articles written by authors from various backgrounds including theology, philosophy, history, and biology. The basic idea is that we often use the notion of chance as a description of both occurrences in the history of life but also of the theory of evolution itself. By this I mean that the theory is often framed in terms of chance. For instance, Jacques Monod’s book Chance and Necessity is a famous example. But it has not been clear what, precisely, we mean by ‘chance’. Is there a singular notion or is there a cluster of notions falling under the rubric of ‘chance’? There are different terms that are closely linked with it, such as randomness or stochasticity. They are used in different domains, but it is far from clear whether the concept of chance (or randomness or stochasticity) is used in the same way to refer to processes at vastly different scales, like chance mutations and chance species extinctions.

Thus, the goal of the book is to give readers an idea of the meaning and the origins of the notion of chance and what role chance plays in theory and in the history of life. This clearly concerns how we understand biological processes, but also how we see ourselves. If we want to understand our place in the history of life, we need to consider to what degree our existence is the result of chance. Was it extremely probable that organisms like us came about? And how does chance relate to the notion of probability?

It is no accident that the book was a product of collaboration. This is part of the philosophy of the Ramsey Lab where you want to promote a ‘lab culture’ (see http://www.theramseylab.org/). Can you explain a bit the idea behind this lab approach?

Coming from the sciences, one of the things I appreciated was the social structure of labs where you have a group of individuals – say a principal investigator, a group of postdocs, grad students, and perhaps undergraduates – working together on a set of related issues. Philosophy, on the other hand, is traditionally very individualistic, a way of engaging with scholarship involving a single individual that comes up with an idea and writes it down.

So my motivation behind taking the lab approach is to see to what degree some of the social structures of the sciences can be imported in philosophy to have a more collaborative way of doing philosophy, to co-author more articles and to have some projects that are perhaps linked not merely to single individuals, but are real higher-level group projects.

Recently a call for applicants was launched for a PhD project in philosophy of biology at the KU Leuven. Would that be an example of this more lab culture approach?

Yes, I hope to rebuild my group here and so I am hiring a PhD student right now and I am encouraging recent PhDs to apply for postdoc fellowships to work with me.

One particular project was the text mining website evoText, applying digital humanities to evolutionary biology literature (see https://evotext.org/). What do you think philosophers can learn from or do with it?

Over the last few decades, the totality of the academic journal literature has been digitized. The idea behind the evoText project is to gather together every article that has been published within a certain domain of science — we are currently focusing on biology and general science journals — and then use algorithms to
be able to answer questions about the nature and history of science.

This approach contrasts with more traditional approaches one could use to delve deeply into the history and philosophy of science. Traditional approaches involve a lot of close reading of texts, work in archives, and so forth. With the evoText project, the idea is that we shift from the close reading of texts to what some people call the distant reading of texts. We can ask broad questions of the scientific literature that involve not the analysis of a handful of texts, but of tens or even hundreds of thousands of articles.

We are interested in asking questions like these: Where does novelty in science come from? What kind of journals most likely serve as sources for the spread of novel ideas? Are these ideas mainly a product of high-impact, core journals where they enter and make an initial splash and then spread out to more peripheral journals? Or are peripheral journals the ones where the new ideas come in and then slowly make it into the core of the scientific field? And what happens when someone publishes on a particular topic in a journal such as *Science* or *Nature*? What effect does that have on subsequent research in this field?

We plan to use this vast amount of data and these algorithms to try to test classical philosophical questions. Take for instance discussions related to the work of Thomas Kuhn and his famous idea of revolutionary paradigm shifts. EvoText allows us to look closely at particular moments in science where one theory was displaced by another and to see what is happening with the language that is being used, which authors are being referred to, etc. The hope is to gain new insights into these processes and perhaps to even develop the ability to predict when and how scientists will change their received views.

You did your PhD at Duke University and then had a position at the University of Notre Dame before in July-August 2016 coming to Leuven. Do you see any main differences between these faculties and any particularities about the KU Leuven?

There are a lot of differences. Some of the differences are just the American versus European system. In the United States, faculty members are less autonomous, whereas here faculty have much more individual control over things like the hiring of graduate students and the invitation of colloquium speakers. At Duke and The University of Notre Dame, for example, there is the graduate school that funds graduate students and a committee for deciding which students to admit, whereas here the individual department members are responsible for gaining funds to hire students. So there is autonomy; we can hire the individuals we want. That is the upside of the story. The downside is, of course, that we have to do the work to get the funds, to advertise for these positions, etc. So there is a big difference concerning the unity and autonomy of the faculty and the way in which funding works.

You also have a website about photography, which is another passion of yours ([http://www.grantramsey.com/](http://www.grantramsey.com/)). In the past, you gave courses on this topic. Do you see any link with the philosophy (of biology) and photographic theory, or do you really live in two worlds at the same time?

Years ago, there was considerable overlap between photography and my work in biology, since I did quite a bit documentation of the plant and insect subjects I was studying. At Notre Dame, I did design and teach a seminar on photography, in which I had the students do photographic projects and discuss philosophical issues related to photography. We read some works that were highly philosophical, and considered conceptual issues about the nature of photography and the experience of viewing a
photograph. For instance, what do you see when you see a photograph? To what degree are you seeing the objects in the image? In recent years, this has been less of a focus for me, but it is something that I hope to get back to in the future. I am a huge photography fan and continue to take pictures as often as I can, which, these days are most often of my family.

Finally, to end: What research are you planning for the near future? Are you planning to go out in the field again and study plants and insects?

In the immediate future I don't have plans to do empirical research, but I have had some wonderful experiences collaborating with scientists. For example, I wrote a paper with a couple of biological anthropologists on the concept of 'animal innovation'. Innovation is something that is used frequently to describe the behaviour of animals, as for instance a crow as being highly innovative. But the literature was often not clear about what exactly it means to be innovative. Is it just about performing novel behaviour? That does not seem right, since animals can produce novel behaviour merely by being clumsy, but that does not really seem to be true innovation. So what kind of novelty is innovation? These sort of questions I was interested in conceptually; the biological anthropologists were interested in the conceptual issues, but they were also collecting empirical data on orangutan behaviour in Borneo. They had to justify their claims that certain orangutan behaviours were innovative, so it was a fruitful collaboration and resulted in an article that had more conceptual analysis in it than a normal scientific paper would.

One of the things, therefore, that I would like to do at KU Leuven is to make more connections with scientists and possibly do projects that either combine conceptual work with more pragmatic questions about how to justify interpretations of data, or with involve actual studies of organisms. So, no concrete plans at the moment, but I hope to start to build bridges with empirical sciences.

That seems very promising. Thank you very much for this interview, professor Ramsey. And I wish you the best of luck with your future work at the KU Leuven!

By Massimiliano Simons
AN INTERVIEW WITH PROFESSOR EMERITUS WILLIAM DESMOND

‘Parachuted in from the outside’ in 1994, as he himself describes it, professor William Desmond quickly became an iconic presence at Leuven’s Institute of Philosophy. For more than two decades, the sympathetic yet enigmatic ‘American Irishman’ taught a variety of courses at the HIW, ranging from metaphysics to aesthetics and from Plato to Hegel, that always carried the stamp of his own original philosophy of the metaxu. Moreover, for fourteen years he served as the director of the International Programme, building up the global appeal of the Institute that today seems almost evident. Having taught his last course in Leuven in the 2016 Spring semester, now emeritus Desmond agreed to sit down with me for the following interview.

Simon Truwant: Let’s start at the beginning: How did you become interested in philosophy, and when did you know you wanted to do this for the rest of your life?

William Desmond: I think that I was already sensitive and attuned to philosophical themes when I was a teenager. This probably had its roots in a religious upbringing, which awakened in me a sense of the mysterious nature of human beings and the divine, and in an interest in poetry. But it was only when I saw teachers speaking more explicitly and articulately about these things at University College Cork that I realized philosophy was what I wanted to pursue further. As an undergraduate, I had actually signed up in the engineering faculty because of results in physics, math, and science subjects. But after about a month I decided that I wanted to study literature and philosophy instead, and either I fell in love with it or it fell in love with me. I got my Bachelor and Master degrees in Cork, and then went to Penn State in America and did a PhD.

Even when I started teaching philosophy afterwards, I first did not think of it as a career, but wanted to pursue certain philosophical questions for myself. It was more a vocation rather than a profession. That probably once again goes back to my own religious roots. I just tried to go as far as I could in thinking through of what I wanted to think through.

ST: What brought you to Leuven, and did you ever think you would be staying here for such a long time?

WD: Strangely, I could have probably already come to Leuven to do my PhD, because my supervisor in Cork, Brendan O’Mahony, was a graduate from here. But I went to Penn State, which was at that time probably the only truly continental department in the States. After going back and forth across the Atlantic, a col-

William Desmond:
“I am a creature of different seasons and two continents”
league at Loyola College in Baltimore, Bernard Nachbahr, set up an international programme for students here in Leuven. So in 1991-1992 I came here on a Fulbright fellowship and as a visiting professor in the International Programme. Carlos Steel was the dean then, and he asked me if I would be interested in coming back as director of the International Programme, which I did in December 1994. Leuven as a centre for continental philosophy and the history of philosophy was up there with the best of the world, but what attracted me and my family was also the European texture of life as well as the proximity to Ireland.

ST: Our International Programme has grown enormously over the years, showing the global appeal of the Institute. Similarly, you have stayed in Leuven all this time, even though you must have had the opportunity to go to more prestigious departments, for example in the States. What kept you here?

WD: I have had offers from the States, and I have sometimes wondered if I should have taken them. I always maintained tremendous contacts with America and served as the president of different philosophical societies, indicating that there were and still are people who know my work in America and respect it. For a good number of years now I have also had a visiting position at Villanova University, which is again a continental department that tries to stress the history of philosophy. But from the early days, the broad range of the programme and the intensiveness of the focus on philosophical studies in Leuven felt like something that was worthy for me to not only be part of but also to defend. Furthermore, I have enjoyed being a creature of different seasons and two continents. This notion of the between that is part of my philosophy, like being between two worlds that cannot be simply melded into one totality, has been central to my notion of the metaxu.

ST: As you mention, during the last years you have been combining teaching assignments in Leuven and Villanova. I won’t ask for your preference, but could you compare your teaching, the students, or the university life as a whole between those two places?

WD: In America, there is more a spirit of academic egalitarianism. Both graduate and undergraduate students very quickly came to call me William. If I am called professor or doctor Desmond in America that is often the anomaly. In Leuven, although this has weakened now, there is a certain sense of hierarchy, a distance of sorts between professors and students. Sometimes this distance can be conducive to the student pursuing things further, but sometimes it can also create a gap between the teacher and the student that is not always necessarily the best for philosophical conversation. Especially in earlier years, students in Leuven would fall into the role of listeners in the lectures rather than actively interacting with the professor. By contrast, many American students here have told me that they preferred just listening to a teacher who knows something about something, rather than the ‘bargain basement’ version of the Socratic argument where nobody knows anything but everyone has an opinion about something.

The lack of homogeneity in the student body is also a very significant factor here in Leuven: we have students from all different continents who come from various educational backgrounds and formations. The American universities have worked in recent years towards creating a diversity on campus, but in the International Programme you don’t have to work towards diversity because it is given by the nature of the institution and the programme itself. Continental departments in America particularly try to represent what is called ‘the value of diversity’ oriented towards increasing the number of international students and people from different ethnic backgrounds. That is
marvelous in its own way, but one of the dangers is that philosophy then tends to slip in the direction of something like cultural studies, rather than the labour of the concept, as Hegel put it, or the deeper perplexities that are generated by metaphysical astonishment.

ST: What has changed most significantly over the years at the HIW?

WD: When I came here first there were very few international professors. The other people who were of foreign birth, like Rudolf Bernet or Ullrich Melle, had lived in Belgium for a good part of their lives. I think I was really the only foreigner who had been ‘parachuted’ in from the outside and had not gone through the process of formation and education in Leuven itself. That has changed significantly now that so many foreign postdocs and faculty members are present.

Also, when I arrived here the administration at the Institute was very minimal. The bureaucratization of academic studies had not yet proceeded to the same extent as now. In recent years, this bureaucratization has developed to such an extent that it does cause some hesitations on my part about the loss of a kind of ‘anarchic spirit’ in philosophical thinking. Now a great deal is being done according to cybernetic forms, as if dictated by what needs to be filled in on computers instead of following the waywardness of the philosophical impulse to think about something strange. Maybe I am being too harsh in saying that, but there was a craziness of sorts about the earlier Institute as I experienced it, a kind of wise craziness when it came to seeding philosophical ideas. I still hope that the spirit of philosophical waywardness will not be entirely lost in the Institute.

This is, of course, not a question of the Institute of Philosophy itself, but of the whole global consumerist economy invading the academy with its templates. When the Bologna declaration decreed from higher than mount Sinai that education must take this form and this form only, I foresaw that there would be young scholars and young faculty who would look ahead and see the template according to which an academic is to be judged as valuable. And lo and behold, it has happened more often than I like to acknowledge; instead of following a question and its perplexing pathways, I find more and more that students ask themselves the question: ‘Will it get me a project?’ Alas, I have to say that this has also entered into the texture of the self-consciousness of the teachers - in my view to the detriment of a truer spirit of philosophical exploration.

ST: On to more philosophical topics then! You have written about many topics, including ethics, religion, art, and politics. Yet, there has always been a clear thread throughout your work, namely the idea of the intrinsic openness or porosity of being in all its forms. In this way, you developed your own unique philosophical position, establishing a metaxological view on the ethos, that seems to preclude the possibility of a closed philosophical system. Do you nevertheless feel that you are getting close to having said everything that you wanted to?

WD: Actually, my work argues against the claim to have the system but not against being systematic in one’s thinking. Some of my works are highly systematic in the latter sense, but it is a systematic approach that allows openness or thresholds that border on the transsystematic. This is where the porosity of being comes back in. I am committed to being as determinate and intelligible as possible, but I think there is always something that exceeds univocal determinability, and if we seek to give a logos of this ‘more’, we need to have conversations with the poets and the people coming out of sacred traditions to get a sense of it. The metaxological is a house of many mansions. I first really hit on the notion when I was doing my doc-
toral work and it is in one sense a simple fourfold of possibilities, but as I explored each of these possibilities further and further they deepened in intensiveness but also opened out in extensive range, often to my surprise.

So I definitely cannot say that I am getting closer to having said it all. When I look at the things that I have written, I am surprised in a good sense that they have a certain richness to them. And if there is any development in the work that I am now doing, it is thanks to this kind of saturated richness at play in certain notions that I have been meditating on for a long period of time. My most recent book, The Intimate Universal (2016), clearly deals with similar issues that one finds in Philosophy and its Others (1999), yet it brings out things that just simply were not expressed in that earlier book, certainly not in the form and language that I have come to feel more at home in now. There is in my work a strange returning to themes that have a depth which yields new insights when you return to them. Even though these themes remain a constant companion for me, they have a mysterious reserve that defeats all efforts to make them domesticated, familiar, things.

ST: Is there an encounter —or even a dispute— with another thinker that has particularly shaped your thought? I don't mean someone like Plato or Hegel, but a colleague of yours at the Institute or abroad?

WD: In all fairness, I cannot say that there is one particular individual who has been a constant companion or antagonist in my thinking. That may sound hybristic, but my true struggles have indeed been with Plato and Hegel. Of course, there are other thinkers too, Nietzsche for instance. But I have been struggling with Hegel for all of my life, learning from him and also trying to devise ways of speaking to things that he does not quite get. And Plato has also been a constant companion - not necessarily as an object of philological research but as an inspiring source of philosophical reflection.

On a more personal level, there was a philosopher in America who I came to be a good friend of and even loved: Paul Weiss, the founder of the Metaphysical Society of America and The Review of Metaphysics. He was a Sterling professor at Yale at a time when positivistic philosophy was in the dominant position, but he tried to defend a more encompassing vision of what philosophy ought to do. His life sort of exemplified a heroic struggle for philosophical clarity, and I admired him very much on that score, without necessarily sharing his philosophical views. In Ireland, I was good friends with Richard Kearney. There are some overlaps between what we do, but there is perhaps a stronger systematic strand in what I do whereas Richard is more hermeneutically inclined. Another Irish person who is really close to me and whom I admire tremendously and continues to inspire me is Cyril O'Regan, a theologian and philosopher with a superb sense of the panorama of Western thinking.

When it comes to Leuven, I don't think I would have been here at all had it not been for Carlos Steel and his support. He was the person who took the steps and got the appointment set up that allowed me to come here. Urbain Dhondt has also been a very good friend, not least because from the first day that I came here he offered help with my Flemish. In the twenty plus years that I have been here, I have been meeting him almost every Tuesday for a coffee and a ‘babbel’ about everything and nothing. In later years, I have been a bit of a lone wolf at times at the Institute, but I initially arrived in Leuven in a philosophical community where the things that I was interested in could really find a home. That has to do with many colleagues who are now retired, like Ignace Verhack and Herman De Dijn, or Ludwig Heyde from Nijmegen (a Hegel scholar and author of The Weight of Finitude), who was...
a very good friend of mine but died too young.

ST: Nowadays, do you (still) draw most of your inspiration from the classical philosophical texts, or rather from events and evolutions in our contemporary culture?

WD: I do look around at what’s going on in the world, but I don’t necessarily get much philosophical inspiration from the patterns of human behavior that are shaped by global capitalism at the moment. Instead, I see many of our philosophical, artistic, and religious possibilities being flattened.

In recent years I have been trying to simplify my mind, not to make it simple-minded but to empty it of the clutter that prevents me from expressing what is more essential in elementary and lucid language. I try to get rid of the ‘stuff’ in my mind and soul if it gets in the way of a purer passage of thinking. Some great religious thinkers are somehow in the space of the porosity in a more true way than our capitalist consumer culture, which just clutters up this more elementary porosity of being. And even music is extremely important in freeing up the flow of the soul. Practising philosophy is somehow an exercise in uncluttering this openness of the mind both to what is other to it and to itself as something mysteriously other to itself. Otherness is not merely something external, but something intimate in what we are ourselves.

There are some poetic and religious texts that I go to for this, but I am quite omnivorous and attentive to what is going on around me and sometimes something breaks through in the consumerist clutter that is more authentic and more true to the human being and our being in the world. I actually believe that this is always going to happen: it is not the case, as is often thought, that I am a cultural pessimist. Yet, the cultivation of this breakthrough has often been put on the back burner in relation to filling up the foreground of what Pascal calls ‘distractions’. I suppose this is a very old, classical, theme, but I would not want my message to be one lacking in affirmation of contemporary possibilities of philosophy and human beings. The songs of discouragement of the already defeated are not songs I want to sing.

ST: Do you ever feel that philosophizing, and in particular defending your own philosophical position, gets easier: either because the philosophical climate has changed, because people start to get more and more what you are after, or because you simply get better at it? Or does it remain the same, continuous, struggle, not just to convince other people but also merely to make them understand your project?

WD: I think that my first struggle is actually with myself in the sense of trying to find the true words to say not simply what I think, but what in some sense is to be thought. I don’t think of my work as one that is initiated by a kind of antagonist; I don’t need an enemy in order to think or to be myself. But I am lucky to have arrived at a stage in my own career where I am let be: I don’t have to prove myself even if people don’t agree or approve of what I do. That gives a kind of freedom to think. At one point, some publishers expressed a desire to publish my work and they gave me this freedom to just go ahead and write, that is, to not have to act in an instrumental way with relation to the things I write. So I tend to write things that come to me rather than plan out a course of action to get published by this publisher or that publisher.

I would say to people who are starting off as young students that I have also been in the position of being nothing, and that I know what it is like to try to find one’s own voice when one has no recognition and no name. I think this is part of philosophical testing, although I worry now that for many young thinkers the sense of challenge will be shaped by the need to get a project rather than to think about things themselves.
There is always something in reserve in a serious philosophical text that will come to the surface if your own mind is open to it. In teaching too: instead of reading lectures, I have broad themes that I talk about, and I often surprise myself by the freshness that comes to the old themes by picking them up again. It is like a performance of a musician: there are certain laid-down grooves that inevitably take place in life, but they still leave room for a variety of rhythms and tunes. One just has to stay attuned to what the music asks. There is the philosophical matter itself that requires respect and there is also the communicative act that has to treat the listener with respect and attention that justifies their being there to listen to you. There is always a tension there, but sometimes in the tension a surprising thing comes out, beyond tension. I think those are the great moments of communication and revelation.

**ST:** In conclusion, what does the future hold for you?

**WD:** I have plans for a number of volumes in the years to come. Among other things, I want to look at a manifold of things in connection with the beautiful. I won’t call it ‘Beauty and the Between’—people have been asking me that—but I am working on a volume of meditations with the title *Useless Beauty and the Passion of the Being.* I also have a volume of reflections on themes in metaphysics, which I call *The Voiding of Being: the Doing and Undoing of Metaphysics in Modernity.* And then I have a plan for a trilogy which I hybristically compare to the *Divina Comedia*: referring to hell, purgatory, and heaven, I am thinking of calling the three volumes *Desacrations, Purgations, and Consacrations.*

So I am not yet putting my boots up in front of the television to drink beer as I watch the sports. Many of my colleagues look forward to their retirement when they can pick up the thing they really love, be it golf, opera, or travelling. I understand this, but to me the kinds of things I want to think about have a certain inexhaustibility, and as long as my mind is still lucid enough I intend to be thinking...
OF GENEROSITY AND GRACIOUSNESS

A Word of Thanks to William Desmond

By Renée Köhler-Ryan

It is hardly coincidental that generosity is a major theme in the philosophical corpus of William Desmond. As his works remind, our world is sometimes dark and ever perplexing, but there is a harmony underlying all of this. Our cosmos resonates with something beyond. Being is a gift. Each of us is metaphysically predisposed toward the gift of gratitude, which needs our wholehearted cooperation in order to be achieved. When the editor of this Newsletter (which Desmond had me edit once upon a time, for a number of years) asked me to describe what it was like, from 2000 to 2008, to be Professor Desmond’s doctoral student and work in the International Programme Office that he directed, I was a little worried. Others in the International Programme doubtless share many of the same memories of lectures, formal seminars, and more informal conversations. In these fora, Desmond was consistently attentive to the need for conceptual rigor and insistent that we acknowledge and investigate all aspects of a problem. There was something more though: he would finally bring a philosophical point home using examples from everyday life, from local and international politics, and from literature and film. Like his work, his lectures and conversations are peppered with examples from the only seemingly mundane, accentuating that how philosophy is about being human. Philosophy, for Desmond, is also boundless. Any aspect of life is a source for philosophical analysis. A philosopher in the midst of a metaphysical enterprise finds intimations of the beyond in our lived world.
Desmond’s immense joy in this labor was constantly evident — even during a long day of work.

One of my most vivid semester-long memories is of a seminar that Professor Desmond co-taught with Professor Ignace Verhack, on Kierkegaard’s *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, in the old salons of the Archive building. It was mildly petrifying for each of us to present before these two, as well as our peers and other professors who had joined us. Nonetheless, we students were impressed both by Desmond and Verhack’s collegiality, and their excitement at our still ripening ideas. The philosophical framework that Desmond has developed over years now, to speak about his increasing appreciation of the *between* in which we are situated, was evident in those sessions. However, he never used it to insist or constrain; it was always there to elucidate.

It was always easy to explain why so many students flocked to Desmond’s classes, elected him as their supervisor, and found him during his regular office hours. His philosophical acumen, ready wit, and kindness were dependable. To his regular academic activities, which began daily after a very early start running and writing, he brought a human touch, not least because in his view a student was more than his programme of studies. As director of the International Programme, with extensive experience of being away from his own homeland, William carried with him the responsibility of caring for these students abroad. I often saw him deliberate, argue for, and enact policy decisions with this big picture in mind. As his teaching assistant I observed that such care was also there with individual students as they struggled through examinations and to meet deadlines. On occasion, he would reasonably and gently smooth over a situation that to any student would be difficult but to an international student might be devastating. Only a lack of graciousness was guaranteed to disturb — whether in student, bureaucrat, or colleague. In the moment, he would pass over the provocation where possible; but later he might reflect on it, often with stated incomprehension. For Desmond, finding and nurturing what is human and good is imperative; it is the stuff of life.

As anyone who knows him can tell, along with Desmond’s vision of the world comes a sense of humour that delights in both the clever and the absurd. When the boss would visit the International Programme Office (where I worked with John Hymers and Miles Smit, and then Emilia Brodencova, Andrew Cummings, and Margherita Tonon) his thoughtfulness and wit were present. Such meetings were something to look forward to — so long as we were getting our work done, there were no major disasters in the offing, and there wasn’t a huge chunk of manuscript almost ready for the publisher. During the regular times when a text was in its final stages, Desmond would be unmistakably preoccupied. All things considered, we had minimal roles in helping with the final product — indexing, copying, only very occasionally copy-editing. We knew, though, that the best way to help was always to take care of students, running daily business as usual, and leave any larger but non-urgent matters until submission. (It should be said that when needed, Desmond was always there for us — whether by email, phone, or on his bicycle in the matter of an hour.)

The manuscripts we saw in their various stages of final editing bore evidence of someone who knows the power of words. Each word was weighed; finding the right phrase was as important as the overall structure of the text. Sometimes one of us would hunt down a reference or find resources. Occasionally, we would exchange ideas with him about a concept being worked through (once, as a result, a discussion with John Hymers and me even made it into a
footnote). With William, philosophy is never removed from life, and life in those years, between those four walls of our little International Programme office, was always of the academy—even when we were filling in forms, writing copy, and taking calls from students from all over the world who wanted to join us at the Institute.

In all of this, Professor Desmond was able to maintain relationships with his students that were both professional and hospitable. We learned gradually that much of his apparently boundless energy came from the warmth of the home he and Maria share. They would have us over for end of semester seminar celebrations. More than once, when William was overseas for work, he would send a message to us through her. Once I had received my doctorate, both William and Maria insisted that some of our earlier formalities cease. Their generosity has extended beyond our shared work at the Institute and into the realm of friendship. This is something for which I am immensely grateful. In his book *Philosophy and Its Others*, Desmond argues for the mimetic dimension of ethics: “In the mimesis of the shown good, the self lives out its ethical debt to the good others who have already tried to show the way.” (178) We his students can only hope to pass on what we have learned from William Desmond.
The Heroic Beginnings of the International Programme

By Carlos Steel

In the years 1967-8 the university of Leuven was shaken by the cultural political student revolt which, starting in the US in the aftermath of the Vietnam war, swept through Europe. In the Belgian context, this student revolt in Leuven had also a political agenda: the realisation of full cultural autonomy for Flanders. Seen from this perspective, the existence of a bilingual university in the Flemish region became more and more problematic, particularly with the increasing number of students. After the bishops surrendered to the growing street protests, the political decision would soon follow. By the end of 1968 the decision was taken to divide the Catholic university of Leuven/Louvain into two fully autonomous institutions, one francophone and one with Dutch as language of instruction. The francophone university would move to a new campus about 35 km away, now known as Louvain-la-Neuve. One should know that there was never much enthusiasm for this radical university divide at the Institute of Philosophy, which was at that time under the presidency of the charismatic Mgr. Dondeyne. Although for many years there had existed two independent programmes, one in French, one in Dutch, there were no strict institutional boundaries between the two, which were cohabiting in a “Belgian compromise” in the same buildings. Many professors, in particular from the Flemish side, had teaching in both programmes and directed dissertations in both. Even after the formal political decision was taken to divide the university, some still hoped that it might be possible to keep at least the two institutes of philosophy together on the same campus. This was, however, an illusion. The francophone colleagues knew that, in accordance with the logic of the political decision – no matter how irrational it might have seemed to them –, they had to follow their colleagues to Louvain-la-Neuve. For how could the new francophone university flourish if the philosophers remained in Leuven, making interaction with other faculties at the new university difficult? Even those who had always been radical opponents of the transfer of the francophone university outside the historical town of Leuven, had to admit that, once the decision was taken, they had to give their full support to the newly founded institution at Louvain-la-Neuve. The last meeting of the council of the unitary Institute of philosophy was held on December 4, 1968, under the presidency of Dondeyne. At this meeting the duplication of the Institute of philosophy into two autonomous institutes, Institut supérieur de philosophie (ISP) and Hoger Instituut voor Wijsbegeerte (HIW) was accepted. Each institute would have its own president, secretary, and board. On the Flemish side, Dondeyne would become president with Professor Dhondt as secretary, whereas Professor George Van Riet would chair the Institut supérieur. After the meeting a notice was posted “to the attention of the Institute’s students”: “la situation créée laisse intact les liens de collaboration scientifique existant entre les deux institutions”. It was
announced that, as in the past, students could seek supervision for their licentiate thesis or their doctorate with professors belonging to another linguistic regime than the one they were enrolled in. A nice dream of keeping at least some intensive collaboration in research after the divide.

If the French speaking professors had to accept the idea that they would continue the tradition of the Institute at another quite different location, far from the historical place where it all started — for many a traumatic experience —, their Flemish counterparts were soon confronted with another challenge. How could they ensure in the future the international reputation of the Institute, when the language of instruction was Dutch, a language certainly less spoken and less used as second language than French (which in the late sixties still was dominant in the humanities)? Already in the 1920s, the Institute of Philosophy had 25% of its student population coming from outside Belgium, not only from European counties, but also from North and South America. This was quite exceptional at that time, as internationalisation had not yet become the mantra of universities. The influx from abroad continued after the Second World War, with the American College (and to some extent the Irish College) in Leuven playing a prominent role. Many priest students were sent to Leuven to study theology and/or philosophy. These students always opted for the French programme. One should not, however, overestimate their fluency in French: the Institute was very tolerant when it had to grade the oral exams. One might expect that after the Institute’s division the foreign students would all opt for the francophone Institute. But the fact that the American college was established in Leuven, at quite a distance from Louvain-la-Neuve, made it attractive for international students to stay in the old town if some linguistic accommodations could be made for them.

The first initiative to start a teaching programme in English came from the Faculty of Theology, which was most affected by the divide of the University since it always had a large international student group, in particular from the American College. Philosophy was less threatened as only a few priest students were sent to Leuven to study philosophy. Already in the academic year 1969-70 — only one year after the divide — the Faculty of Theology started a comprehensive graduate and post-graduate programme in theology, including a Bachelor’s Degree in Theology, a Master’s Degree in Theology, a Master in Moral and Religious Sciences, and a doctoral degree in Theology. Because it was not possible (and against Canon law!) to have a theology formation without philosophy, the Theology Faculty was obliged to introduce some philosophy courses in English, and therefore needed the cooperation of the Institute of Philosophy. It is recorded in the minutes of the board meeting of the Hoger Instituut voor Wijsbegeerte (22 March 1969) that Professor Neirynck, the Dean of the Faculty of Theology, had sent a letter to Professor Dondeyne, the president of the Institute of Philosophy, asking him whether the Institute might consider establishing an English programme in philosophy, at least at the post-graduate level, and whether students in philosophy could take some electives from the English courses in theology. As usual, the board minutes are brief: “since there was no time for discussion, the issue was postponed to a future meeting”. One might surmise that the first reaction to the proposal coming from Theology was one of hesitation and doubt. There certainly was not much zeal in the Flemish Philosophy Institute, which had just been given its autonomy, to start a programme in English. Where to find students? How to
make the programme known internationally? How to avoid a situation of competition with the francophone institute fishing in the same waters for potential students? Moreover, there was the negative publicity in the international intellectual community about the “splitting up” of the university and the radical Flemish nationalists who were to blame for it, as the rumour went. And above all, there were not qualified teachers among the staff. All had enjoyed an excellent bilingual education in Dutch and French, but English was only known from reading scholarly articles. Nevertheless, under pressure from Theology, the Philosophy Institute would comply, but at its leisure …

There are no minutes of the board regarding the issue. However, the decision to start an English programme was already taken at the beginning of 1970, as we know from the meeting of the common board of the two Institutes of Philosophy on January 23 1970. This common board had been set up to discuss practical problems arising from the splitting up of the Institute into two institutes (for example: how to divide the library? What to do with the archives? What would happen to the Husserl-archives? to the De Wulf-Mansion Center? etc…?). At that meeting Mgr Dondeyne informed his colleagues of the francophone Institut supérieur de Philosophie that the Flemish Institute intended to establish an English programme of philosophy starting from September 1970. The francophone colleagues were certainly not amused to be informed of such an initiative and made sarcastic comments about the Flemish first forbidding teaching in French, and then introducing English into the programme. A letter protesting the decision of the Flemish Institute to start an international programme was sent by the president of the ISP, Professor Van Riet, to Professor Ward Leemans, the secretary general of the common board of the two universities of Louvain. This common board had been set up to discuss the numerous problems following from the divorce of the two universities and to function as an instance of arbitration and reconciliation. It would continue to exist for many years. In his letter, Professor Van Riet argued that the use of the name “Higher Institute of Philosophy” could lead to confusion inasmuch as students abroad could come to believe that this programme was based in the Institut supérieur de Philosophie. It is true that the English terminology was intentionally ambiguous. The appeal of the ISP was rejected. It was also not possible for the Université Catholique de Louvain to itself organize courses in English in Leuven, as this was explicitly against the legal decree setting out the conditions of the division of the University. Despite the debate, the decision was taken. As one can see in the Programme of Courses for the academic year 1970-71, the HIW offered, in addition to its regular programme in Dutch, “a one-year Bachelor’s degree in Philosophy”. The structure of the programme would remain unchanged for many years. It contained the following general courses: Logic, Theory of Knowledge, Philosophy of Being, Philosophy of Man (as title, a curiosity!), Introduction to Ethics, Philosophy of Nature, History of Philosophy (ancient, medieval, modern), Research in Philosophy. Besides the general courses, students could take a number of special optional courses taught in other faculties. From 1972-73, the Bachelor’s programme became a three-year programme. Finally, in 1973-74 the Institute offered a Licentiate and doctoral programme in philosophy in English.

In the first years, all courses were given by staff members of the Institute, who were all Dutch speaking. However, to enhance the international quality of the programme, visiting professors from abroad with English as their native tongue were appointed. This was already
the case in the first year. Albert di Ianni, an American priest, who had defended a doctoral dissertation on moral judgments and prescriptions in Richard Hare, was asked to teach Logic. For medieval philosophy, the Institute could count on the teaching of a bright young scholar who just had defended his doctoral dissertation, Stephen Brown, who would become a highly distinguished professor in medieval philosophy and theology, and who is still teaching at Boston College. Stephen Brown told me that he had already taught the year before an optional course in theology in which he discussed nihilism using Stanley Rosen's book *Nihilism* (Yale University Press, 1969) as the basis for his course (Stanley Rosen would hold the Mercier chair at the HIW in 1996). Finding qualified visiting professors would remain a challenge for the board of the Institute in the coming years until the time came for a full internationalisation of the staff at the beginning of this century. The list of visiting professors is long and surprising: there are some big names and some less well known who made it afterwards, senior scholars but also younger and more extravagant ones. One finds Louis Dupré, John Skorupski, Jude Dougherty, Joseph J. Kockelmans, Joseph Romano, Ernest Wolf-Gazo, Daniel O. Dahlström, Bernard Nachbar and other directors of the Loyala House in Leuven, including William Desmond, who came first as visiting professor as well as Senior Fulbright scholar in 1992-3 and would in 1994 become full professor in Leuven and the first Director of the International Programme. It would take a long time before the academic English used at the Institute met the kind of standards that are now required by the Flemish government. I remember that when I was asked to teach in the programme, I was scared because I had not had much opportunity to use English. I decided to spend the summer in London with the whole family to allow me to take a three-week intensive course in English. Professor Dhondt travelled with one of the first assistants in the English programme, Jim Eiswert, in England. Herman De Dijn spent two years as doctoral student in Cambridge and Arnold Burms one year in Oxford. Whatever efforts were taken, all Flemish professors were autodidact in their practise of English and made all kinds of idiomatic errors in teaching, sometimes to the amusement of the audience. Fortunately, most of the students were non-native speakers of English either. I remember that I was discussing in a class the relation between philosophy and rhetoric. During the break, a student gently told me: professor you should say rhétoric with accent on rhe' and not on to'. I am still grateful for this correction. Many jokes circulated about the teaching of professor Van de Wiele. He had a gift for using examples from ordinary life to illustrate abstract philosophical concepts. As one of our alumni of the first generation, Stephen Luscomb (who now teaches music at the International School of Brussels), told me, Van de Wiele once wanted to illustrate something using an example from traffic, a situation where many cars go through a narrow place; but Van de Wiele could only think of the word in French or Dutch. He was looking for “bottle-neck”, but heard from one of the non-English-speaking students that it was “neck of the bottle” and continued to use this term throughout the lecture.

Apart from getting professors who would teach in English at an academic level, the main challenge of the new programme was to attract international students. American seminarians and priests usually came to Leuven for a degree in Theology. There was a group of priest students coming from India and Nigeria and even from South Africa. The Faculty of Theology sent students to the Institute who did not have sufficient philosophical background; they were
not always the best students. Most difficult at the beginning was to attract students without ecclesiastical affiliations. Publicity was made by Professor Wylleman through written correspondence with former doctoral students of the Institute now holding various teaching positions in the USA or Canada. Professor Wylleman knew many alumni, since he had been the secretary of the philosophy programme for many years when it was still unitary. Very active in promoting the programme was also the first assistant secretary of the international programme, Gerard Beretta, a Canadian Dutch scholar who was supposed to work on a doctoral dissertation. Most problematic was the student population of the undergraduate programme. For the full three-year Bachelor there were few candidates. Most students were interested in having a one-year degree or they came for a junior year abroad. The most successful institutional link has been with Loyola University Maryland in Baltimore. Also Carleton University in Ottawa sent and still sends talented students to Leuven for a year abroad. In the early years a problematic group was comprised of students enrolling for their first year of philosophy coming from Nigeria without any institutional affiliation. Checking diplomas, A and O levels, was almost impossible. Many students enrolled and never took exams; they just disappeared. Here again it took many years of experience before admissions standards were met. One should not forget that in these early years there was no help coming from the general administration of the university. Admissions decisions were taken in the small secretary building (near the Mercier statue) by the academic secretary of the programme and an assistant. The organisation of the programme in those early days was incredibly flexible and could be adapted to the needs and requirements of each individual student. As the institute was not yet a legal faculty but had a sui generis status as an ecclesiastical institution, it could organize its programme with few bureaucratic constraints. Another positive thing was that, with all the turmoil involved in the division of the Institute, relations with Vatican agencies were lost so that there was no longer interference from there.

The first generation of lay students in the seventies was in many ways a remarkable collection of extravagant characters: many students were adventurous, coming from the USA to Europe without much money (for Americans the programme was a bargain), some were late hippies; they came to class, had their coffee and breakfast on the benches, some came smoking or had their dog. But from the beginning we also had in this very diverse group some gifted students who were deeply and genuinely interested in philosophy and who later made their way into the academic profession. Many were surprised to find a rigid system of ex cathedra teaching professors and liked to interrupt the teachers in the midst of an argument: ‘let us discuss’. Another anecdote I have from Stephen Luscomb: “During a lecture, a student raised his hand to ask a question. The question was complex, and took a while to explain, and the student was not a native English-speaker. The question took a long time to ask. When the question was finally over, the professor looked around the room, counted the students present and said, “This question took five minutes to ask. There are thirty students present. That was 150 mind-minutes wasted.’ The professor then returned to his lecture, without making any attempt to answer the question.” Another cultural shock for American students was the examination system, and in particular the dominance of the oral exam. There were always two perspectives on the exam, that of the student and that of the professor, as the secretary of the programme often experienced: “Immediately after an exam a student came to the office to
complain about the behaviour of a professor during the exam: ‘I wasn’t prepared for the exam, and he knew it from the very first moment. So he asked more and more questions, punishing me for my lack of preparation, and humiliating me.’ After finishing all his exams, the professor himself came in with his grades and told about a student who seemed to know some things, and seemed to be nice, but who was not prepared. The professor tried to find something he knew to be able to give him a few points, but couldn’t find anything…”

International students live far from mama and her kitchen, they do not commute on the weekends, but stay in town. For them living in Leuven is much more and richer than just taking classes and going to the library. Of great importance for the student community was the student bar established in the basement of the main building, which is now included as the basement of the library. One cannot imagine today what was happening there in a university building: a student bar open every day until rather late at night, drinking, smoking, but also lively philosophy discussions between Flemish and international students and their professors who often joined after lectures or evening seminars. This remains for most of our alumni of these years probably their most vivid memory of their Leuven philosophy years. The Thomas feast with sketches, parodies of the professors, fake debates, music and other performances, and the Christmas party were also highlights: with all festivities and drinking and food (and smoking!) in the Mercier hall.

At the moment, the International programme attracts more students than the Flemish programme. We have students coming from more than fifty nationalities. Moreover after the wave of retirements of professors over the last ten years, the staff of the Institute has been radically internationalized. Most of the new professors have no degree from the Institute. It shows that, notwithstanding all hesitations, uncertainties, improvisations, and academic chaos, the decision to start an international programme in 1970 was in all respects courageous and forward-looking.

So there are many good reasons to celebrate in 2020 the international programme’s fifty year jubilee and we welcome alumni from those first years to send us their comments and anecdotes for the next Newsletter.

Carlos Steel
PROJECT OVERVIEW

Study support in the international programme

For over 40 years the Institute of Philosophy has hosted a complete programme in English. Throughout the last decade, the international programme has been continuously growing to the point where, in 2015-2016, it came to represent about 40% of all students at the Institute, and could boast students from 70 different nationalities. Put differently, in the last couple of years the international programme and the number of international students have become almost as large as their Dutch equivalents. For several years, international students came to Leuven primarily for their Masters, the Research Master (which has replaced the MPhil) or their PhD, but the bachelors programme has been continually gaining interest. The growth of the international programme is in many ways enriching: students from literally all over the world practice philosophy in Leuven on all levels (from the BA to the PhD), offering us a mixture of cultures, backgrounds, contexts and views – a truly international setting which the Belgian students also appreciate and profit from. If there is a downside to the success of the international programme, it has to do with managing this student flow.

More students bring with them more administration, questions, e-mails, need for guidance and sometimes also specific needs (ranging from an unfamiliarity with the KU Leuven and/or Flemish (university) culture and university administration, to study method, preparation for exams, ombuds issues, etc.) and requests (e.g. writing support, more feedback, Erasmus for international students). For some of these problems, the support has been moulded to the changing needs of the students. For instance, with regard to student administration there is an excellent international office at the Institute, and the HIW writing lab has been an innovative and still highly appreciated initiative.

In the Dutch/Flemish programme there has been a long history of study support, both on the administrative and on the study level. While students have always been offered support or help in the international programme, there was never really a structurally present service comparable to its Flemish equivalent – and often it came down to the willingness of some individuals to help students out as the need arose.

In 2016-2017 an educational project allowed us to rethink and evaluate the existing support service and to take the first steps to structurally embed study counselling and support in the international programme as the Institute has long done in the Dutch programme. Although course-content-based optional tutoring sessions – the well-known ‘monitoraten’ in the Dutch programme – faced some difficulties, a try-out for some – first stage BA – courses is currently underway. The difficulties can mostly be attributed to the apparently quite exclusively Flemish character of these ‘monitoraten’ or tutorials, meaning that for both international members of staff as well as for tutors and students, the concept and goal was sometimes a little vague. Something similar happened with the ‘mock exams’ (proefexamens or tussentijdse toetsen, which are customary in the educational culture in Leuven and Flanders); the modus operandi and ‘optional’ character (i.e. an evaluation that would not count) needed more explanation. Nevertheless, a large number of students took part in these ‘mock’ or ‘practice exams’ which,
in the end, aim to offer the student a way to get some familiarity with a course-specific exam and the kinds of questions that will be asked on the examination. For instance, most international students have not had any experience with oral examinations before coming to Leuven. The mock exam also allows the student to see for him- or herself whether he or she is doing alright on the level of understanding or whether additional effort is required. In addition, a general session on taking exams and answering exam questions was provided. In this way, we hope to offer general study advice on how best to answer exam questions – even the simplest advice like attentively reading the questions or properly structuring your answer can make a huge difference – and such advice does not always seem to be common knowledge amongst our freshmen.

Some of the project’s goals cover both the long-standing Dutch *monitoraat* (the tutorials) and the relatively new study counselling we are now offering in the international programme. For instance, in addition to collective sessions, study counsellors offer individual advice with regard to the programme, what courses to take, in which semester or year, very specific questions with regard to (improving) study method, special needs, etc. But, then again, it is important to get an idea how many students we are seeing, how often, how much time these meetings take, etc. Again, an increase in student numbers also entails an increase in the number of these kinds of requests. At the same time, the student counsellors and Institute itself put even more effort into communicating to students the risks of getting a low cumulative study efficiency (or CSE – students who have less than 30% are excluded from the programme for a year; students with 30-50% CSE receive a warning and are excluded from the programme if they do not obtain 50% the year thereafter). In particular, several groups of students (those who already had a warning in the previous year and freshmen running the risk of getting a low CSE) were personally invited in the first and second semester to discuss their status with the study counsellors in order to offer them clarification and/or support if needed. This policy in which departments actively reach out to their students is supported by the central services of the university and aims to offer timely support and, at the same time, to prevent students from spending years in a programme without ever graduating.

In brief, the growing number of international students brings with it an additional responsibility, namely to offer a well embedded and structural way for them to seek and get advice. In some cases, we can’t help as a faculty (e.g. with psycho-social issues), but in these cases, the university can offer support through their central services. However, in many other cases, it seems that we as a faculty can support students, but in a context in which the long-standing Dutch *monitoraat* also needs reflection, it is all the more challenging to offer a single support system for a highly diverse, global student population.

Chris Bessemans – project assistant
FOCUS ON ITALY

For quite a long time, the HIW has had good connections with Italian universities, their staff and their students. Probably the first Research Group of the institute one thinks of in this respect, is the De Wulf-Mansion Center for Ancient and Medieval Philosophy. They indeed visit Italy regularly to organize congresses, as can be seen in the visual impressions of the HIW in Italy below, but they are certainly not the only ones who are fond of Italy. A diverse set of articles written by professors, alumni and students aims to show you that there exists a lively exchange of people and ideas between Leuven and Italy.

THE RISE OF ITALIAN PHILOSOPHY?

... For when I am weak, then I am strong

(2 Corinthians 12:10)

In recent years, and in spite of the arguable decline of Italian Academia, several Italian philosophers have gained an increasing amount of international recognition in the fields of political theory, philosophical anthropology, aesthetics, and hermeneutics. This seems in contrast with a tendency that has been characterizing the past several decades. In fact, if one excludes Benedetto Croce (d. 1952) and Antonio Gramsci (d. 1937), hardly any Italian author has been recognized as a philosophical authority on an international scale during the 20th century — Umberto Eco (d. 2016) is a unique case, as his reputation was primarily due to his production as a novelist and as a literary critic. Yet, it should be emphasized that such a rather limited post-war reception has not been the consequence of a lack of innovative philosophical thinking from Italy. Quite to the opposite: Italian philosophy after World War II has produced significant contributions in different areas, especially in the fields of hermeneutics, history of philosophy, phenomenology, political philosophy and philosophy of religion. These are evident, for instance, in the seminal work accomplished by Norberto Bobbio (d. 2004) concerning philosophy of law and in the research done by Enzo Paci (d. 1976) concerning phenomenology and political philosophy, in a way that has anticipated some of the most recent developments in the field of phenomenological research. Moreover, essential contributions in the field of the theory of knowledge can be found in the work of Enzo Melandri (d. 1993), while scholars like Emilio Betti (d. 1968) and Luigi Pareyson (d. 1991) have inspired new approaches to hermeneutics and, furthermore others, like Cornelio Fabro (d. 1995) and Marco Maria Olivetti (d. 2006), have deeply innovated the philosophy of religion. The list could go on.

There are complex reasons why these authors have not obtained the full recognition that they deserve; they include a certain political discredit of Italy after the fall of the Fascist regime and, possibly, the marginalization of the Italian language. The situation, as mentioned above, has been changing in recent years. Authors like Giorgio Agamben, Roberto Esposito, Antonio Negri, Gianni Vattimo, Paolo Virno and a few others have been having
an increasing impact on larger contemporary
debates. A significant, though extrinsic, sign of
this renewed interest may be the publication of
new English translations (e.g., Joseph Buttigieg’s
*Prison Notebooks* of Gramsci, New York 2011, or
Brian and Rebecca Copenhaver’s *From Kant to
Croce: Modern Philosophy in Italy, 1800-1950*,
Toronto 2012), a bunch of collected works de-
voted to the exploration of the Italian thought
(from the 1996 *Radical Thought in Italy: A potential
politics*, edited by Virno and Michael Hardt to
*Contemporary Italian Political Philosophy*, edited
by Antonio Calcagno in 2015), or the recently es-
established SUNY Press book series, edited by
Silvia Benso and Brian Schroeder, consecrated
to “Contemporary Italian Philosophy”. But
there must be something else, beyond fashion
and book trends, to make the relevance of
Italian philosophy intrinsic.

Of course, a methodological *caveat* is due: it
is always questionable to identify “essential”
features of philosophy from a geographical,
linguistic, or cultural (not to say “national”)
point of view. As a matter of fact, contempo-
rary Italian philosophy has been heavily influ-
enced both by German and French philoso-
phers (e.g., Heidegger, Benjamin, Schmitt,
Husserl, Gehlen, Cassirer, Merleau-Ponty,
Levinas, Foucault, Derrida, Deleuze, Ricoeur,
etc.). It is hardly exaggerated to say that, con-
sidered as a whole, the philosophical research in
Italy, during the 20th century, has been the
most inclusive and hybrid of all other European
traditions. For this reason, it is perhaps too
rushed, with respect to Italian Philosophy, to
speak — as Esposito does — of a specific “con-
ceptual style”. It is not impossible, at any rate,
to detect a certain peculiar way of addressing
problems and arguing that developed in Italy in
the second half of the 20th century. Such a way
of thinking might have, in a sense, a ring to the
culture of the Italian Renaissance and
Quattrocento Humanism and attests to some
continuity throughout the centuries.

To what extent is it possible to identify an
intrinsic “Italian” qualification for philosophy?
Is there anything like a renaissance of philo-
sophical reflection in the Italian Peninsula
today? Does a search for such a philosophy
represent a promise for a deeper understanding
of the world and of the human life in it? Some
investigation in these directions might turn out
to open fresh vistas on the nature and destiny
of the current philosophical endeavors. In
order to challenge these questions, we do in-
tend to organize a lecture series to be held at
the Institute of Philosophy during the next
academic year: “Traces of Impure Reason:
Aspects of Italian Thought”

Two points we would like to address are:
1. How to explain the new interest in “Italian
Thought”?
2. Is it possible to describe, with reasonable
and distinctive accuracy, something like an
Italian Philosophy, without blurring the
individual features in the position of each
thinker?

The two questions above are closely con-
nected each to the other. In the first case, the
interest might rise from a new generation of
Italian philosophers who are contrasting what
we may call the “crisis” of philosophy. As a
consequence, this interest in Italian Philosophy
implies some fresh inquiry into the nature and
ramifications of such a crisis, *i.e.*, the difficult
self-understanding of philosophy with respect
to other disciplines; the disproportionate between
analysis and meta-analysis of the problems
(with a unprecedented development of the
latter at the cost of the former) as revealed by
current philosophical literature; the exclusion
of “philosophy” from the setting of the new
political and institutional agendas; the cultural
weakness and scientific irrelevance of “philos-
ophical expertise” as it is perceived in several
of today’s intellectual circles; the arguable decline of philosophical publications’ relevance for society and civic life; the dismissal of the liberal studies from the core of academic study; the decline of wisdom as a pursuit of learning, etc. Against such a crisis of philosophy, it should be tested whether the way of thinking labelled as “Italian Philosophy” is well-equipped to respond or not.

One could explain the renewed interest in Italian Philosophy in negative terms, viz., as a result of what can be considered as a partial loss of vivacity in German and French traditions. Especially French Philosophy has been dominant in European Continental Philosophy, but its propulsive force has been decreasing in the last two decades, also due to anagraphical reasons (i.e., the loss of major thinkers). In order to capture the seductive power of Italian Philosophy today, however, the negative and contingent aspects could hardly be enough. One has rather to take into consideration aspects of Italian thought which attune actual challenges.

In an article published in the Dictionary of Untranslatable (ed. B. Cassin), Remo Bodei elegantly draws a reliable profile of “Italian Philosophy”. Three of the features he outlines seem particularly important to us.

Firstly, Italian thought has developed as a ‘civic philosophy’, mainly intended for learned men but not for “specialists”, a philosophy written, one could say, for “non-philosophers” (Croce). Its audience had often been the public of the civitas — and this can be noticed in the active participation of major philosophical personalities in the political and social discourse (both Croce and Giovanni Gentile, d. 1944, have been Ministers of State). Therefore, it tends either to avoid technicality or to use and contextualize it in order to remain accessible to a wider learned audience. When one reads Giordano Bruno (d. 1600), Giambattista Vico (d. 1744), Giacomo Leopardi (d. 1837), and even Croce or Gramsci, one always experiences that of a limpid, rich, and no less than elegant language. Such language is — Bodei writes — “cultivated but not specialized, clear but not technical, intuitive but not mystical: language in which the greatest mathematical rigor exists alongside the most intense pathos”.

Secondly, the relevance of the rhetorical tradition for the development of philosophical analysis is common in Italian philosophy, which aims at combining the logic of reason with “poetic logic”, as Vico put it in his Scienza Nuova. The relation between imagination and reason, as Ernesto Grassi (d. 1991) stressed, is understood in terms of complementarity rather than in antagonistic, exclusive terms. The role of passions, the many externalizations of virtue, etc. give a peculiar touch of a “multi-versum rationality” (Bodei) that encompasses cognate domains of knowledge and overcomes disciplinary boundaries. In the spirit of Vico, for instance, “history cannot be more certain than when he who creates things also narrates them”: as a consequence, it is fair to say that all the major Italian historians, from Ludovico Antonio Muratori (d. 1750) to Arnaldo Momigliano (d. 1987) and Carlo Ginzburg have been both more philosophically competent and more oriented toward categorical analysis than the majority of their European colleagues — an aspect which could be seen as a defect, maybe, but which is hardly without impact on the cultural landscape that is saturated with such an intellectual tradition. For thinkers like Muratori and Vico, by the way, philosophy should never treat instances of emotion, religion or art as “irrational” or useless data. For them, these phenomena are rather characterized by their own inner logic, which should be recognized and carefully studied.

The third aspect to point out concerns the nature of philosophy itself, in that philosophy
investigates “the effective truth of the thing” (i.e., Machiavelli’s verità effettuale). It tends to do justice to the overlapping relationships between singularity and universality. Italian philosophy, therefore, is more a philosophy of “impure reason” (Bodei): it attempts to uncover the generality in light of something particular, avoiding the traps of any empty, exceedingly abstract reasoning. In this regard, we could also refer to the contribution of Francesco Guicciardini (d. 1540), an author whom Bodei does not mention. In particular, the Humanist notion of “discretion” (already crucial in the political thought of Baldassar Castiglione, d. 1529) speaks for a non-ideological style of thinking, in which the Greek concept of phronesis, though further refined, maintains a pivotal role.

Looking from a distinct perspective, one could also mention how a few circumstantial weaknesses of the Italian philosophical tradition could, in a rapidly changed context, turn out to be unexpected assets. The relative marginality of its language, for instance, has pulled the Italian scholarship to its fastidious and sophisticated engagement with the other philosophical literatures, granting to the History of philosophy a solidity and breath which is hardly to be found abroad; the “non-contemporaneity” (Bloch) of its main issues and the resistance to endorse the project of “philosophical Modernity” (Toulmin), on the other hand, might be fit in the post-modern condition. For those who never fully believed in modernity as a positive value, in other words, the post-modern atmosphere might be enjoyable and they might be equipped to breathe it more deeply than those awoken in disenchantment.

Last, but not least, one could ponder a sort of dialectical dimension in Italian thought, viz., the curious interplay of two opposite sentiments. On the one side, one cannot fail to notice how much Italian authors recognize their collateral role and “peripherality”: they are working neither in the capital of the “Empire” nor at the frontline of innovation – and they are aware of that. On the other side, however, some of them continue their conversation with the past, do not fully adopt any “imperial” agenda and keep displaying a certain “sprezzatura” of whom a royal privilege belongs. For thinkers like Betti, Gustavo Bontadini (d. 1990), Pareyson, Bobbio, Guido Calogero (d. 1986), and even Eco, Italian culture might be “provincial” de facto but not de iure, i.e., it must be able to look eye to eye, with no lack of self-worth, any theory and argument coming from the center of the empire(s). The self-confident “secondarity” (Brague) of Italian philosophy, in this sense, becomes a strength in these turbulent ages.

To some extent, contemporary philosophy in Italy continues the venerable tradition that goes back to Machiavelli: Italian thought vindicates the irreducible relevance of “conflict” and displays new tools for an effective “conflict management”. This aspect emerges, e.g., in the contribution of Operaism (viz., Mario Tronti, Toni Negri); political philosophy is a philosophy of resistance. However, such resistance must not be conceived as reactive, but affirmative in sort of Nietzschean way. The current rise of Italian Theory is just fashion and, as such, something that only touches the surface of things. However, as Psychoanalysis teaches, the surface goes deep: contingent and apparently meaningless events are symptomatic of deeper instances.

And this might be the motive behind the lecture series we are planning over the future semesters: an initiative organized not for the sake of “Italy”, but for that of philosophy.
HIW’S COSMOPOLITANISM AND ITALIAN PHILOSOPHY

Having come to study Philosophy at Leuven in 1993, first through Canada and then Italy, I was met with the excitement and hope of the new European Union. My first class in medieval philosophy with Professor Jos Decorte not only introduced the subject of the course, which was Anselm of Bec’s ontological argument through the ages, but it also offered a series of new opportunities. Professor Decorte explained how it was important that students travel to different parts of Europe in order to exchange ideas and learning about medieval philosophy. He spoke about his own experience in Belfast and how things had radically changed there on account of the recent peace accord. He made a point of greeting visiting Erasmus students from other European universities and he welcomed a guest professor from the US, Dr. Gregory Schufreider of Louisiana State University. For the first time in my life, I found myself in a truly international educational setting enriched by a diversity of cultures, languages and traditions of learning. A genuinely diverse body of students and scholars had gathered to study one of the great thinkers of the medieval world.

Leuven was a cosmopolitan centre of learning, and one could research a wide array of thinkers. One did not feel limited because the faculty and students were aware of and engaged with a broader philosophical tradition. In Canada, philosophy students were largely exposed to the Anglo-American and French schools of Philosophy, and in Italy, one had exposure to the broader Italian and German philosophical traditions. In Leuven, the borders defining philosophical schools and traditions were much more porous. I did not feel strange talking about either Italian Renaissance philosophy or the thought of the Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor, discussions that were more difficult to hold in Canada and Italy. Furthermore, because the HIW was a major centre for phenomenology and medieval philosophy, many Italian graduate students and researchers came to Leuven to either access manuscripts or meet other scholars and professors to discuss questions of philosophical importance. Professor Francesco del Punta of the Scuola Normale of Pisa sent many of his students to Leuven to take up post-doctoral fellowships. I came to know many Italian medievalists through seminars on Henry of Ghent and Aristotle. I also had interests in Husserl, Edith Stein and phenomenology, which allowed me to meet students and scholars from Milan, Verona, Pavia, and Venice. We discussed the Italian phenomenological and existential tradition and we read the works of important philosophers like Carlo Sini, Emanuele Severino, and Gianni Vattimo. We debated ideas found in the hermeneutics of Luigi Pareyson and the semiotics of Umberto Eco. Leuven was the place where I first encountered the ideas of then-living Italian philosophers.

The philosophical exchanges on contemporary Italian philosophy left an indelible impression on me, not only because of the depth of the ideas but also on account of the variety of approaches and schools. When I took up positions in the US and then in Canada, and having been deeply shaped by the HIW’s cosmopolita-
tan approach to philosophy, I sought to bring it to my own teaching and scholarship in my Anglo-American contexts. My time at the Institute of taught me that philosophy needs bridges that can span ages, linguistic traditions, and cultures. My scholarship, translation work, teaching, and conference-organising work all seek to continue to extend the approach I experienced in Leuven. For example, over the last decade or so, due to the deep economic crisis caused by the financial collapse of 2008, massive migration to Italian shores, and significant political shifts in the European Union, Italy has been experiencing a veritable explosion of thought. Thinkers like Roberto Esposito, Adriana Cavarero, Luisa Muraro, Franco Bifo, Berardi, Antonio Negri, Giorgio Agamben, Remo Bodei, Elena Pulcini Simona Forti, Ugo Perone, Lea Melandri, Luce Fabbri, Maurizio Lazzarato, Paolo Virno and Massimo Cacciari are addressing questions relevant to our world today. Through translation projects, collaboration with North American scholars interested in contemporary Italian philosophy, and conferences, I along with others, notably Silvia Benso of the Rochester Institute of Technology, are trying to bring the ideas of recent Italian thought into conversation with thinkers working in an Anglo-American context. My own home university will be hosting an international conference from March 24–26, 2017 on recent Italian thought, and a new learned society, The Society for Italian Philosophy, has been founded and will meet next Fall at the annual conference of the Society for Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy in Memphis.

I see my desire to bring different schools of philosophy together to question and dialogue as part of the legacy of the HIW operating in me. As the European Union faces serious challenges, both from within and from without, and as schools of philosophy become more territorial and less open to one another’s ideas and approaches because of shrinking resources, Leuven’s cosmopolitan approach to Philosophy and the openness to other schools of thought like Italian philosophy are beacons of hope in times that grow precariously darker.

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ITALIAN PHILOSOPHERS (AND PHILOSOPHY) IN LEUVEN

by Francesco Tava

On September 1, 2016 I entered my office at KU Leuven for the first time. I was starting a 3-year scholarship, which is now half-way over. I was still struggling to turn on my computer, when an old professor (whom I now really love) stormed in, and briskly asked me who I was.

When I said my name, he immediately added: “And where are you from?” Eventually, the conclusion of his syllogism was quite natural: “Italy, again!!!”

The old professor was right. The number of Italians at the Institute of Philosophy (and in Leuven, in general) is quickly growing. Not just students in Erasmus, but also Ph.D. candidates and young researchers, like myself. At least 90% of the prejudices regarding Italians
are actually right. We are clearly louder than other people, we like to hang around, and to speak our language, even in the presence of foreigners who are normally too polite to interrupt us and re-establish the Koine English. Personally, I’ve always sincerely loathed all these habits. On holidays, I’m the one who pretends to be from somewhere else, every time I stumble upon flocks of Italian tourists who are looking for the closest pizzeria. This did not prevent me, however, from pinpointing in record time the best pizza in Leuven (it’s ‘Mangia e Via’, in the Parkstraat), and to get friendly with the owner, who 50 years before me also emigrated. By the way, both his sons are lecturers at KU Leuven.

I do not want to linger on the causes of this new Italian diaspora. It is, indeed, quite a sad story – not so much for those who emigrate, as I think that working in international centers such as KU Leuven is actually a very good opportunity for young scholars. It is sad for Italy, whose university system, after years of financial cuts and bad governance, is unable to sustain a new generation of researchers, who could possibly succeed in improving things. This situation of course also has comic aspects, as when, for example, the former Italian Minister of Universities and Research, Stefania Giannini, more or less one year ago, wrote on Facebook how proud she was that the Italian academy led 30 Italian researchers to win ERC consolidator grants. One of the grant holders replied sharply to the Minister, emphasizing that more than 50% of these researchers were working in (and bringing money to) universities outside of Italy, and not because they chose to, but simply because finding jobs in Italy was rather impossible. More recently, the Italian Minister of Labour of Social Policies, Giuliano Poletti, was less indulgent than his colleague, when he publicly said that he personally knows lots of people who left Italy, and that this is for the best, since they were a bunch of jerks. He also added that not all of the 60 million people who still live in Italy are bad people. This is indeed very encouraging.

Given that the Italian contingency at KU Leuven, and specifically at the Institute of Philosophy, is expanding, I think that we should take advantage of this phenomenon. It is not only the number of Italians that is growing; it is also an interest in Italian philosophy and culture that is growing. Italian is the fourth most studied language worldwide, after English, French, and Spanish. This fact is particularly remarkable, considering the lack of practical reasons for deciding to learn Italian. The reason for this success is probably the widespread passion for the many forms of Italian culture, amongst which is its philosophical tradition. In my experience as a foreign visiting scholar in Czechia, the UK, and Belgium, I have always met students who asked me for advice, as they intended to learn Italian, in order to be able to read Agamben, Esposito, and Negri, but also Leopardi, Vico, and Machiavelli. This genuine interest deserves to be fulfilled. In this sense,
the presence of scholars who can contribute to the spread of knowledge of Italian philosophy should be seen as an important asset, and not as a sort of folkloristic extravaganza. I therefore applaud the initiative of Prof. Stefano Micali and Prof. Andrea Robiglio to promote a series of lectures on Italian philosophy, starting this year (see their contribution to this Newsletter). I think this will be a very good opportunity to deal with topics and problems that reveal the complexity of the Italian philosophical panorama, and also to encourage people to realize new translations and editions. My hope is that this initiative will soon translate into something more, such as the creation of a yearly course on “Italian Philosophy” at KU Leuven, which I am sure would be very successful.

Another modest contribution to the spreading of Italian philosophy is the research blog “Scuola di Milano” (sdm.phen.org), which I have recently started, together with other colleagues in Italy and abroad, with the generous support of the Open Commons of Phenomenology.

The “Milan School” emerged in the early 20th Century, further developed throughout the following decades, survived the year 1945, and eventually flourished after the Second World War. In particular, we decided to focus our attention on Antonio Banfi and Enzo Paci, in light of their work as mediators of Husserl’s thought in Italy. Phenomenology constitutes, indeed, a privileged gateway to the reflections of these authors. Besides the theme of phenomenology, another aspect that emerges in the reflections of these philosophers is the civil commitment which went along with their philosophical research. Banfi’s stance against fascism – although involving some ambiguities, which we will aim to explore – highlights a sort of political direction within the Milan School. The decision by many other members of the Milan School to embrace socialism and communism flowed from this political stance. Indeed, both Banfi and Paci showed, in different times and in various fashions, a keen interest in the socialist project, which was shared by other fellow scholars and students, like Giulio Preti and Remo Cantoni.

In order to better understand the tight bond between the Milan School and the phenomenological tradition, the blog intends to investigate the personal relationship between Banfi and Husserl, Banfi’s attempt to introduce Husserl’s early works (from the Philosophy as a Rigorous Science to the first volume of the) to Italy, as well as Paci’s reinterpretation of some cornerstones of the phenomenological discourse, such as the ideas of life-world and human praxis. The figures of Banfi and Paci also help to debunk the myth of the marginality and provincialism of twentieth-century Italian philosophy. Whilst, in fact, Banfi had the chance to study in Berlin with Simmel, and soon became a correspondent of Husserl’s, Paci’s work in the phenomenological field was well known in France, in Eastern Europe, and even in Leuven. These philosophers, as well as their many students, looked at the European philosophical debate with an open mind, beyond any narrow limitations set by their na-
tional panorama. This is one of the reasons why they still deserve attention today, in Italy and abroad.

I mentioned Paci and Leuven. This brings us back to where this piece started. Enzo Paci was hosted at the Husserl Archives in 1960, which shows how the link between Italian academia and KU Leuven is nothing new, but has deep roots in the history of phenomenology. During his visit, Paci wrote a very meaningful note in his diary. “I am completely seized by the élan of Husserl’s analysis. Things change in my very hands, and the world reveals new faces, which no one has ever seen. I myself am transformed, become somebody else. Yet, there is in all this something I do not control: a deep affinity, an Einfühlung between me and these Manuscripts. It is the Einfühlung between me and Husserl, who returns alive, in a way that amazes me, and also frightens me a little” (Leuven, 7th April, 1960).

I hope this brief note can serve as a point of departure for new investigations. And I also hope that a younger generation of Italian scholars in Leuven can help to make these investigations come alive.

**FORTISSIMI BELGAE**

*Impressions of alumnus Luca Gili*

After completing my MA in philosophy at the Scuola Normale in Pisa, I continued my studies at the Institute of Philosophy of KU Leuven. I was attracted by the fame of the Institute, especially by its world-class medieval philosophy department. I came as a visiting student from the PhD program of Padua University, but I ended up quitting Padua to become a full-time student at KU Leuven. I was lucky enough to obtain a generous FWO grant, which enabled me to live comfortably and to travel to conferences for four years. I did not think of job prospects when I enrolled, but my choice turned out to be the right one also in terms of employment. Upon completion of my PhD in 2016, I got a tenure-track job at a research university in Canada. I owe this accomplishment to the excellent training I received, to the network that Leuven enabled me to build, and to the international reputation of my Alma Mater.

Italians at the Hoger Instituut voor Wijsgeerete find a program that is partly similar to what they might have experienced in their native country. The main analogy is that the Institute is omnivorous. Unlike most North-American departments, it is not possible to classify the HIW as either analytical, continental, or exclusively historically-oriented. The De Wulf-Mansion Centre for Ancient, Medieval and Renaissance Philosophy became my new home. While we were talking of our dusty heroes, the colleagues across the corridor were doing philosophy of language, or phenomenology, or Kant, always providing us with new suggestions for our own research. I keep dear memories of some initiatives that involved different research centers: the “categories” reading group, convened by Karin De Boer, and the De Wulf-Mansion/CLA W Symposium, twice organized by Jan Heylen. These were fantastic occasions that forced us, the historians of the past, to speak to and learn from our colleagues from other subfields. This openness to all currents is perhaps familiar to Italian students. But unlike
most Italian departments, which tend to be too small to adequately cover all main subfields (the outliers being, perhaps, Rome Sapienza and Milano Statale), the HIW is large enough to have specialists of all major philosophical disciplines. In my limited experience, this is rather unique.

Another major difference with Italian departments is the library. I did my undergraduate studies at the Scuola Normale in Pisa, an institution that boasts one of the best philosophy collections in Italy, yet the Institute's library is definitely superior. I realized how privileged I was to study in Leuven whenever I was not in town. In the fall of 2015 I was visiting Fordham University in New York City, but I soon realized that the Institute's library was better than either the Fordham or NYU collections. I now live in Montreal, a metropolis of some four million inhabitants, with four large research universities, but I still daydream of the shelves in which the librarian Steven Spileers stores his treasures.

As a Leuven PhD student, I had the privilege to teach two courses in the international Bachelor Program. This allows me to draw comparisons with Italian undergraduate and graduate programs. Even though the quality of teaching at the undergraduate level is similar to that offered at Italian universities, I would recommend a Leuven BA both for the broader interests of the faculty and for the international character of faculty and students. As for the PhD program, I believe that Leuven is simply better than any Italian graduate philosophy program. Despite the efforts of many departments to raise the standards of PhD programs, the Italian “dottorato di ricerca” tends to be a one-to-one supervision with no other structured means for the intellectual growth of the students. The Leuven PhD is more similar to American programs, having a well-organized course-work component, the MPhil. The only minus of the program is that it does not enjoy the fame it deserves — except, perhaps, in minor subfields, where a PhD from KU Leuven is still looked at in awe. This might be linked to the above-mentioned Belgian understatement or, also, to the narrow scope that the compilers of the Philosophy Gourmet Report set for themselves.

Finally, a prominent reason to move to Leuven is the generous funding available to PhD students. Italian PhD grants are set at central level and are the same across all universities, but Italy is large enough to have a significant variance in costs of living. Unsurprisingly, a PhD scholarship in Leuven is more generous than those offered at most Italian universities.

Many Italians have visited Belgium over the centuries. Julius Cesar, impressed by their army, said that “the Belgians are the bravest of all” Gauls. He attributed their courage to the lack of comforts and luxuries that would have weakened their mind (\textit{ea qua ad effeminandos animos pertinent}). Today’s Belgians impress the visitors with the beauty of their towns and their endless varieties of beers. Many Italians who have reached Belgium in the past decades did not go back to cross the Rubicon and start a civil war, but happily settled in the land of King Philip. Leuven also became my home for four years. In a café in the Oude Markt I met my future wife, in Leuven my daughter was born. Whenever I go back to my Alma Mater, I will want to look again at the buildings and churches that I admired so many times with my better half.

For all these reasons, I warmly recommend the Higher Institute of Philosophy to all prospective students who are currently based in Italy. In Leuven they will find broader horizons, supportive and competent faculty, friends from all over the world, generous opportunities and the charm of Flemish Gothic architecture. Oh, and yes, geuze beer.

Luca Gili – Université du Québec à Montréal
When my name was suddenly announced, I hadn’t yet fully grasped the nature of the situation. I tried asking one of my fellow students in broken Italian whether this was actually happening now, or whether this was my cue to go and prepare the questions in some other room. Appearing somewhat confused and mumbling a response that I couldn’t understand anyway, my colleague gave me a certain look as if to say that I should’ve already been up there long ago. And so I made my way to the front of the auditorium, and my professor, addressing both me and the whole third year of Philosophy, presented us my questions on Wittgenstein’s “Ricerche filosofiche”. While formulating my answer in poor Italian, two main thoughts were rushing through my mind: 1. Where is my preparation time? But I always get a preparation time? Could I maybe ask for preparation time? 2. Why is everyone so obviously listening? Can’t they at least pretend not to be listening? But I seemed to be the only one who saw this as an odd situation, as even my professor indicated that I should not only address him, but also take into account my fellow students as well. In the meantime, the whole auditorium was listening with interest to how I was planning on solving the exam questions. Interruptions like “La vostra collega è arrivata da poco e parla già l’italiano! Che brava, non trovate?” and “l’esempio di Wittgenstein, il gir-rotondo, avete in Belgio il stesso gioco o no?” on the part of my professor, or people leaving the auditorium because they were desperate for that fifth macchiatone, took me by surprise, but at the same time made me feel far more relaxed than I had ever been on an exam. After the exam was over, I asked one of the other students how it works if you’re the last person on that list; do you then not need to study anymore? And if it’s usually in alphabetical order, do you then not need to study ever? She answered that she’d never actually thought about it that way before, and judging by her facial expression I could almost see her plan for next year developing in the back of her mind. This anecdote by no means intends to give the impression that Philosophy of Language – or of other subjects for that matter – was not taken seriously. Quite on the contrary, it was fantastic to spend hours analysing every paragraph of Wittgenstein’s Philosophical Investigations and getting his enthusiasm and inexhaustible source of knowledge to fuel our interests even more. Also, listening to how other students replied to exam questions made me learn quite a few do’s and don’ts for future exams. These and other memories still make me smile when I think back on my Erasmus experience in Venice, and apart from being able to learn Italian and to get to know the peculiar culture of the Venetians, it was very interesting and mind-altering to see the differences in educational approaches too.

By: Lalina Goddard
The HIW in general, and the De Wulf-Mansion Centre specifically, have various good connections with universities in Italy. This creates interesting possibilities for students and staff alike. The following pictures try to give an impression of the HIW in Italy.

Together with the universities of Milan, Paris Sorbonne IV and Lille III, members of the De Wulf-Mansion Centre organize the 'diatribai of Gargnano', a two-yearly conference on topics in late ancient philosophy and the Platonic tradition. The congress always takes place in the building on this picture, the Palazzo Feltrinelli at the Garda lake. There is a regular exchange of not only students, but also professors between Leuven and Milan. Professor Pieter D’Hoine, for example, taught in Milan a few years ago, and professors like Mauro Bonazzi and Franco Trabattoni came to Leuven for various courses and lectures.

Prof. Pieter D’Hoine (third from the left) at the University of Catania (end of November 2016) for a book presentation of Ivan Licciardi about Simplicius and Parmenides. Catania is well-known for its studies of Neoplatonism, which makes them a good partner of the HIW. Recently, both institutes reached an Erasmus agreement.
Every year, professor Nicholas de Warren travels to Venice to teach in the Phenomenology Summer Course. This year’s summer school will focus on the complex relation between phenomenology and art. As can be seen on the pictures, various seminars take place in a relaxed and beautiful atmosphere.
On 19 February 2016, the Italian semiotician, philosopher, and writer Umberto Eco passed away. In 1985, he received the KU Leuven honorary doctorate for his achievements in the area of medieval philosophy, semiotics, and literature. In the minds of the general public, he will mostly be remembered as the best-selling author of classics such as *The Name of the Rose* and *Foucault’s Pendulum*.

Umberto Eco was born in Alessandria in northern Italy on 5 January 1932. He studied philosophy at the University of Turin, where he completed his studies in 1954 with a thesis on Thomas Aquinas. He also taught there from 1956 to 1964. In 1975, he became a professor of semiotics at the University of Bologna. He retired in 2008, but remained affiliated with the Scuola Superiore di Studi Umanistici, of which he was a co-founder.

In 1985, KU Leuven honoured Umberto Eco as a philosopher, semiotician, and essayist. It was his first honorary doctorate, but many others would follow. Eco received the honorary doctorate for his many publications in the field of medieval philosophy, aesthetics, and semiotics. In 1963, he had already won acclaim with his essay “Opera aperta” (about the ‘openness’ of contemporary art). In the seventies and eighties, his “Trattato di semiotica generale” (1975) and “Semiotica e filosofia del linguaggio” (1984) offered an encyclopaedic and comprehensive approach to a number of key concepts of semiotics.

In 1985, the laudatory speech was delivered by Professor Franco Musarra, who became a personal friend of Umberto Eco. The Italian author once remarked that the honorary doctorate from KU Leuven, along with that from the University of Cambridge, held special significance for him – not just because it was his very first, but also because of Leuven’s significance for the study of medieval philosophy. Rector Pieter De Somer awarded the honorary doctorate to Umberto Eco on Patron Saint’s Day of 1985. During the ceremony, Eco’s qualities as a fiction writer were mentioned only in passing. At the time, Umberto Eco had only one novel to his name: the one that made him world-famous. *The Name of the Rose* had been
published in 1980, and its success had been sensational. The novel is a multi-layered detective story that discusses issues of meaning and interpretation, truth and doubt, humour and ideology, all in a frequently entertaining way. Eco would go on to expand his oeuvre with several academic books, essays, and six novels, including the best-selling *Foucault’s Pendulum* (1988) and *The Island of the Day Before* (1994). His final novel *Numero Zero*, was published in 2014.

In 1999, Umberto Eco was a KU Leuven guest once again on the occasion of the international conference “Eco in Fabula”, which was entirely dedicated to his work. Like Eco’s oeuvre, the conference was interdisciplinary. It was organized by the Faculty of Arts and the Institute of Philosophy. Umberto Eco attended the entire conference, and his elaborate responses to the contributions were included in the book *Eco in Fabula* (2002).

Organizers Franco Musarra and Bart Van Den Bossche: “The conference was a unique experience, with an extraordinary Umberto Eco, and that is how we will always remember him: brilliant, exceptionally perceptive, often with strong opinions, and an equally strong sense of humour. Umberto Eco could talk about Jules Verne and medieval ideals of beauty with equal passion. He also had a very open and committed view on contemporary culture and society. But above all, Umberto Eco was an enthusiastic and warm person, who loved live and everything it had to offer.”

In 2007, Umberto Eco came to Leuven for the last time on the occasion of the honorary doctorate for Roberto Benigni. Our university remains grateful to him for his collaboration with professors and students.
The overall topic of Neil Walker’s Francqui chair reads “Europe: Imagining the First post-state Polity”. During his time in Belgium, Neil Walker will be doing research on various topics.
that fall under this broad umbrella. On the one hand, he will be extending the theme of his latest book (*Intimations of Global Law*), where he interpreted the rise of global law practices, not so much as the birth of a new jurisdictional layer of ‘planetary law’, but rather as pointing to a new, more *universal* mood in law. In Belgium, Neil Walker will explore to what extent these developments can be understood as a new form of *utopianism* in our globalised age. On the other hand, Neil Walker will focus specifically on the European Union, which he wishes to describe as an ongoing, open-ended, and perhaps now failing *experiment* in post-sovereign governance. It is rarely noticed, but the language of ‘experiment’ is rather important to the EU’s endeavour. Once used hopefully, it is now increasingly used pejoratively (the EU as a ‘failed experiment’, or as a ‘noble experiment that has run its course’). The experimental theme also allows an examination of the EU as a prototype for new political and legal forms, not only at a transnational level, but also at the regional level. For, as is well known from Scottish and Flemish experience, the European experiment also enabled new experiments in legal and political community formation below the state.

During Neil Walker’s stay in Belgium, there will be various public activities. Most importantly, Neil Walker will be delivering 6 public lectures and 6 expert seminars in Leuven. Towards the end of his stay, a two-day conference on Neil Walker’s work will be organized at the Université Libre de Bruxelles. But Neil Walker will also be participating in RIPPLE’s research life in more informal ways. He will for instance be giving feedback on the research of PhD-students working on our sovereignty research project (described below).

All information on Neil Walker’s Francqui Chair can be found here: https://ghum.kuleuven.be/EN/francqui-neilwalker/

By Raf Geenen

SOVEREIGNTY IN THE BELGIAN CONSTITUTION

The Centre for Ethics, Social and Political Philosophy is home to several large-scale research projects. One of these, called “Sovereignty in the Belgian Constitution: its 1831 meaning and its implications for political participation today” is distinctly multidisciplinary. This four-year project, supervised by prof. dr. Raf Geenens (Institute of Philosophy) and co-supervised by Prof. dr. Stefan Sottiaux (Faculty of Law) involves five PhD-students in two different faculties and is situated in what Anglo-American scholars call “constitutional theory”. This is a field at the intersection of political and legal philosophy, intellectual history, and constitutional law. In other countries this field has important representatives (think of Carl Schmitt or, more recently, Ronald Dworkin or Bruce Ackerman), but in Belgium this discipline is close to nonexistent. One of the purposes of this project is to change this. More specifically, our project seeks to use the methodology of constitutional theory to develop a novel interpretation of the conception of sovereignty that is ingrained in the Belgian constitution.
The starting point of our research is the phrase “Tous les pouvoirs émanent de la Nation” (art. 33), which is often considered the keystone of the Belgian constitution because it purportedly expresses the drafters’ view on sovereignty. Yet the phrase has generated a multitude of interpretations. Today, most public law textbooks in Belgium claim that the phrase gives sovereignty to the nation (a fictitious, transgenerational entity encompassing all past, present and future citizens) as opposed to the people (the currently existing generation of citizens).

Our research project will put into question this simplistic view and construct a more refined interpretation of the conception of sovereignty that underlies the Belgian constitution. This requires re-embedding the constitution in the political-philosophical debates of its day and investigating the intellectual sources of the Belgian “founding fathers”. These sources are almost invariably French liberal philosophers, whose ideas were eagerly absorbed in Belgium during the years of opposition against King William I.

Developing a new interpretation of the constitution is not of mere historical interest. Our contemporary political system faces increasing calls for greater citizen participation. Yet many of these calls—in particular: calls for referendums—are resisted by law scholars (and by the Council of State) as going against the spirit of the Belgian constitution and its inherent conception of sovereignty. But can the constitution really be invoked to this effect? We seek to show that it cannot. To the contrary: we believe that a proper reading of the Belgian drafters’ normative commitments might open the door to various forms of direct participation, such as referendums or deliberative democracy.

The proper execution of this project requires answering questions of a very different nature. Some of these questions (for instance concerning sovereignty, deliberative democracy, and constituent power) sit squarely in the field of political philosophy. Others (for instance concerning constitutional interpretation or constitutional change) belong to the field of legal philosophy. Many questions touch upon legal history (for instance when it comes to explaining the emergence of modern constitutionalism) and intellectual history (for instance when it comes to investigating the ideas of French liberal authors, or their Belgian acolytes). And the answers to these questions will have multiple repercussions for the field of Belgian public law. The eventual success of this project will depend on weaving these different research threads together.

In the context of this research project, the Centre for Ethics, Social and Political Philosophy is organizing various public activities. In June 2017, there will be a large international conference with, among others, Dieter Grimm, Andreas Kalyvas, and Neil Walker as keynote speakers. But there are also one-off lectures and workshops, both at the Institute of Philosophy and at the Faculty of Law.

By Raf Geenens
METAFOURUM AND THE IMPORTANCE OF INTERDISCIPLINARY REFLECTION

I have been asked to explain my engagement with Metaforum, the interdisciplinary consultative platform of our university. I would like to take the opportunity to explain my views on the necessity of interdisciplinary reflection.

In the last fifty years, academic research has become ever more specialised. Academics have found it necessary to refine their research methods and delineate their research questions with greater rigour. The idea was that it’s better to establish something with certainty than base oneself on broad yet disputable results. They presumed that stricter definitions of research domains would make research as such more manageable. The more specific the subject the simpler it will be to chart and account for all the studies that have been published on it. Specialisation also makes it possible for researchers to assert themselves in debate with other scholars who have focused their attention on the same domain, thereby facilitating project applications and the publication review process. This same specialisation has resulted in the emergence of diverse sub-disciplines, which in their turn have further subdivided into new sub-disciplines… I don’t need to mention that this evolution has also taken place within philosophy.

Within the university, this evolution is rarely considered problematic because it is presumed that scientific progress is something we need to fight for on different fronts at once. It is common to believe that if every academic is able to form a better and more accurate picture of what is going on within his or her subdomain, scientific knowledge will increase overall. This seems to be beyond question in disciplines in which knowledge is amassed cumulatively, but there are also disciplines in which knowledge is based on grasping cohesion or discerning links. The authority of such disciplines has declined, however. Essayistic reflections on history and culture or art and morality no longer seem to live up to what is understood to be academic knowledge. A certain suspicion has formed around what used to be called ‘literacy’, while the authority of scientific expertise has intensified.

From outside the university, specialization is sometimes considered an evasion of responsibility. Most people will understand that in technical or bio-sciences, you will need specialized researchers to deal with the different aspects of our natural environment. When people are confronted with urgent social, political or economic questions, however, they often feel betrayed when a researcher refuses to participate in public discussion, claiming that his expertise is only relevant to a subdomain of the problem under debate. Specialized knowledge would be easily accepted if there were sufficient reflection on how particular insights relate to one another. Synthesising heterogeneous scientific observations is difficult, however, especially in the social sciences where there is a proliferation of often parallel but incompatible vocabularies. There are also few incentives for academics to engage in this kind of interdisciplinary reflection. As a result, the fragmenta-
tion of academic knowledge leads many to question its relevance.

Most people agree that we need interdisciplinary reflection, but cultivating such a praxis is far from easy. Discussions about disciplinary competence tend on the whole to be unproductive, not only because domain delimitations tend as a rule to be based on highly abstract presuppositions, but also because what motivates such delimitations is often inspired by a sort of ‘turf war’ mentality. The simplest way to avoid issues of this kind is to take a concrete social problem recognised as such by all and to consider the perspective of a variety of disciplines on the said problem. It often becomes clear in such circumstances how different diagnoses frequently complement one another. Interdisciplinarity is a verb.

Metaforum was established at KU Leuven to help mitigate the said fragmentation. It invites researchers from different scientific disciplines to participate in working groups that tackle a specific socially relevant topic. The working group combines insights from different disciplines into a position paper. This paper is then presented and discussed at a symposium to which the general public as well as policy makers and professional stakeholders are invited. The following papers are the result of this kind of reflection: Resource Efficiency and Circular Economy (13-12-2016); The City of the Future (21-10-2016); Sustainable Food Production and Food Quality (03-10-2015); Evidence in Health Care (16-03-2015); KU Leuven Climate Neutral 2030 (04-12-2013); Genetically Modified Organisms (03-12-2013); Euthanasia (19-11-2013); Funding of the Art Sector (13-05-2013); Studium Generale (13-05-2013); Territoriality, Identity and Conflict in Brussels (12-02-2012); Secondary Education Reforms in Flanders (20-01-2012); Full Sequencing of the Human Genome (03-12-2011); Conservation, Management and Sustainable Development of Forests (24-11-2011); University, Church and Society (25-05-2011); Passenger

Mobility in Flanders (24-03-2011); Lifstyle and Socio-economic Differences in Overweight (23-11-2010); Biodiversity: Basic Product or Luxury Article? (04-11-2010); The Increased Use of Psychiatric Medication (05-03-2010). All these papers are available on the Metaforum website.

The main objective of Metaforum is to amend the public debate on important social problems by these papers. The idea is that a university has a responsibility to improve the quality of public opinion, certainly in our so-called ‘post-truth’ era. Universities are not the only institutions that are responsible for the quality of public opinion. Apart from decent press agencies and quality newspapers, we have a plethora of social organizations with competent research centres, ‘think tanks’ and ‘centres of knowledge’. How does (or should) a university differ from such institutions? At least six important main features have to be considered in response to this question. (1) Academic researchers, more than those from other institutions, participate in the international scientific forum. International recognition by relevant peer groups is the best criterion for high quality research. (2) As opposed to research centres belonging to pressure groups or commercial enterprises, academic research is essentially independent. The best way for the university to be useful is precisely by demonstrating its independence, also in social debate. Society needs this independence because it inspires confidence and ultimately lends authority. (3) A university boasts expertise in a multitude of different domains. Each social issue inevitably consists of different aspects that need to be discussed with the specific knowledge of different disciplines. No other social institution has the same multidisciplinary richness at its disposal. (4) A university does not feel the pressure to prove itself in the short-term with immediate and specific policies. Academic researchers can consider problems
from a wider perspective, with historical depth and room for the subtlety of ethical debate. (5) Academic quality, independence, a broader approach etc. do not separate the university from social reality, safe in a cocoon. On the contrary, the university has a long tradition to honour of critically questioning social developments and its own role within them. It should not hesitate, whenever necessary, to question prevalent assumptions and to challenge frontiers. (6) The future of our society is partially shaped at universities and by universities. In the long run, our most effective influence on social evolution is probably through our students. In the short-term they not only provide a most valuable, critical and unattached sounding board, but they are also a source of new ideas and insight. These features should form the foundations of a university’s contribution to social debate.

Metaforum has its offices in Leuven’s Hollands College, one of the best preserved colleges of the university, founded in 1617 to house theology students from the diocese of Haarlem in the Netherlands. The first president of this college was the famous Cornelius Jansenius (1585-1638). By accident of fate, the college was not immediately dismantled and sold off during the French occupation. As a result, eighteenth century elements have been preserved in the interiors of some of the rooms (the library, the stairwell, and the chapel). With the establishment of Metaforum in the Hollands College in 2011, the KU Leuven returned the college to its original function. The Hollands College is a place of encounter for academic conversation, consultation on current affairs, and culture. Metaforum also offers facilities to house overseas guests. In the initial phase, this has been limited to the provision of a number of offices for visiting scholars, but Metaforum also hopes to extend this to the provision of a number of studio apartments to facilitate the establishment of a School of Advanced Study. International scholars of renown will thus be able take advantage of short and long term residential stays and thereby function as a catalyst for Leuven’s own research activities.

The college offers an attractive residence in the heart of the city and is also particularly suitable for seminars and interdisciplinary conversation. Every Thursday, members of the university community are invited to lunch in the refectory as they participate in midday conversations in which researchers present their work or enter into debate on current social and cultural issues. Evening debates have also been organised in recent years around themes such as ‘Studium generale’ and ‘Utopia’. The chapel and the library are the most valuable and most delicate features of the Hollands College. The chapel continues to be used for occasional lectures and prize-giving ceremonies. The lounge and the chapel are also used by ensembles that fill the Hollands College with their music throughout the academic year. These musical events include renowned vocal ensembles (the Huelgas Ensemble, La Petite Bande), solo recitals and chamber music.

A university needs to be more than a centre for fragmented specialised research. It should also be a place for reflection and conversation, crossing disciplinary boundaries. Only thus can the work of each individual scholar be fully effective in both academic and social terms.

By Bart Pattyn
RIPPLE, an acronym for “Research in Political Philosophy Leuven”, is the main research group within the Center for Ethics, Social and Political Philosophy. Its story goes back to October 2003. At the time Bart Raymaekers and myself brought together a number of young pre- and post-doctoral researchers who were pursuing their research within the (dormant) interfaculty “Center for Political and Social Thought”, hosted by the Political Science Department in the Faculty of Social Sciences. In the absence of a fully-fledged doctoral programme, the aim was to establish a working group that would organize doctoral research seminars, workshops and conferences. However, by the end of the academic year 2003-2004, the ambitions had already increased to the extent that we drafted a first common research programme: “Democracy between Multiculturalism and Globalization”. The aim of the programme was to map the theoretical effects of multiculturalism and globalization on the foundational concepts of democracy (such as sovereignty, citizenship, representation, political community, cultural identity, etc.). We thereby intended to methodologically combine the Anglo-American normative and analytical approach with the Continental critical tradition as developed in German and French Political Philosophy. In sum, in this document, we clustered our various research interests and approaches in view of streamlining our research efforts, attracting new researchers, and applying for (external) research funding. In early 2005 we submitted a first project proposal both to the KU Leuven Research Council and – thanks to Tim Heyse, who in the meantime had joined us – to the KU Brussel Research Council: “Sovereignty and Democracy in the Post-national Constellation. An Investigation into the Transformations of the Nation-State in the Wake of Multiculturalism and Globalization”. To our delight, the proposal was granted funding from both Research Councils. The financial resources which this unexpected success entailed, enabled us to appoint two PhD students (from 2005 to 2009), while having enough money left to cover our operational needs. – The initial working group had been transformed into a research group: RIPPLE was born.

Today, more than a decade later, RIPPLE has evolved into the largest research group in political philosophy in the Low Countries and beyond. Among its staff members it counts eight senior and six post-doctoral researchers. Apart from the sixteen concluded doctoral dissertations, more than twenty doctoral students are currently involved in our research activities, next to a limited number of visiting scholars. Thematically we cover a wide range of political philosophical topics (Representation, (Global) Justice, (Global) Deliberative Democracy, Linguistic Justice, Climate Change, History of Modern Political Thought, etc.), however not without specific spearheads (Power and Representation; Federalism; A Wittgensteinian Approach to Morality and Politics; Sovereignty in the Belgian Constitution), yet all the while remaining loyal to our initial methodological commitment to foster the dialogue between the normative and critical traditions. (For more
details about our members and our past and present research activities, see our renewed website: hiw.kuleuven.be/ripple).

Multiple factors have been responsible for this successful development. To begin with, over the years we have succeeded in broadening the senior staff by attracting a number of bright young scholars, whose views and visions enriched and deepened the initial research outlook: Stefan Rummens, Helder De Schutter, Raf Geenens, and more recently, Matthias Lievens. At the same time we also widened our research scope. Helder De Schutter, for example, initiated from 2010 onwards the federalism and linguistic justice research lines, whereas Raf Geenens has recently set up an interdisciplinary investigation into sovereignty and constitutionalism together with colleagues from the Law Faculty. Furthermore, stimulated by our initial success, we continued to submit new project proposals for external funding. Over the years we have successfully applied to the KU Leuven Research Council (various programmes), Flanders’ Research Foundation (FWO), and the KU Leuven Interfaculty Council for Development Cooperation (IRO). Furthermore, we are currently partners in a seven-year interdisciplinary research project, based at the KU Leuven Center of Excellence ‘Global Governance Studies’, and we also take part in European FP7 and Horizon 2020 research programmes. Yet last but not least, we took care of our international outreach and visibility not only by making the Institute of Philosophy the venue of several large international conferences and numerous smaller expert workshops, but above all by attracting young scholars from all over the world. Since the foundation of RIPPLE we have welcomed pre-doctoral and post-doctoral researchers from more than twenty different countries around the globe.

Undeniably, RIPPLE’s trajectory has been fortunate thus far. Yet eventually, the secret of its strength and good fortune lies with the very people involved: with the determination of the senior staff to intensively consult and cooperate, and with the junior scholars to build a space for debate that is both stimulating and amicable: an environment in which sparkling new ideas may originate and flourish. As these conditions are nowadays more present than ever, it is to be expected that RIPPLE awaits an even brighter future ahead.

A. Braeckman
Linguistic Justice in Latin America

The scholars within the Centre for Ethics, Social and Political Philosophy who work within political philosophy have established a research group called RIPPLE: Research in Political Philosophy Leuven. About 15 of the scholars within RIPPLE are focusing in their research on normative political philosophy and questions of justice, and meet in the weekly “justice seminar”. What follows concerns a cooperative project of this justice group with scholars from South America on linguistic justice.

In the past decade, several normative analyses of language policy have emerged within political philosophy. These theories of ‘linguistic justice’ provide an answer to the question: what is a just language policy? This question involves sub-questions such as: (why) are languages morally important, and should we attach political importance to their recognition and preservation? Should we for example grant language rights to language groups, and save moribund indigenous languages from extinction?

Such questions are crucial to many multilingual societies, from Singapore over Nigeria to Brazil. Yet, the debate in political philosophy over linguistic justice has so far especially focused on a limited set of case-studies from Europe — notably Belgium, Spain and Switzerland — and Canada, and most of the literature on the topic is produced by theorists from those societies, such as Charles Taylor, Will Kymlicka or Philippe Van Parijs.

Yet, in these contexts, much of the linguistic diversity has disappeared as a result of centuries of standardization and nation-building. These have resulted in a map resembling a painting by Modigliani – as ingeniously remarked by Ernest Gellner in his Nations and Nationalism (1983) – with ethnographically and linguistically “neat flat surfaces” that are “clearly separated from each other”. Gellner contrasted this Modigliani type with one resembling a painting by Kokoshka, marked by many complex relations between individual units in an opaque landscape with fluid boundaries.

Linguistic diversity in Europe and North America resembles a Modigliani map. The vast linguistic diversity in other parts of the world, such as in Latin America, parts of Africa and South East Asia, corresponds more closely to a Kokoshka map, with societies with tens and even hundreds of language groups. What does linguistic justice imply for such situations? And is it not odd to theorize linguistic justice with as paradigmatic cases states with relatively few languages, situated in Modigliani settings?

In an effort to address, and potentially redress, this situation, a number of researchers in Leuven interested in linguistic justice have sought to establish links with a few non-European universities to think through issues of language rights, minority rights, multiculturalism and political decentralization in contexts beyond those standard cases. Through projects funded by KU Leuven, VLIR-UOS (Flemish Inter-University Council for Development Cooperation) and Coimbra fellowships, research links have been established with the Universidad Nacional de Córdoba in Argentina and the Universidad Mayor de San Simón in Cochabamba, Bolivia. The cooperation with Córdoba concentrates issues of fed-
eral decentralization. The contacts with Cochabamba are about linguistic justice, and it is those that I discuss here.

Cochabamba hosts the headquarters of PREIB-ANDES, a program for Bilingual Education connecting students, academics and professionals in six Latin American countries. This organization supports setting up bilingual education projects in Spanish and an additional, indigenous language, such as – in Bolivia – Quechua, Aymara, Guarani, or any other of the 36 official languages of Bolivia (which has as its official name Estado Plurinacional de Bolivia). Several of these 36 languages are spoken by populations of only a few thousand speakers. But some have large numbers of speakers; Quechua, for example, is spoken by 9 million people, of which 2.3 million live in Bolivia. The total number of indigenous language speakers in Bolivia amounts to 62 per cent of the population, or 6.6 million people.

Arrangements were made for the PREOIB-ANDES group to meet with linguistic justice scholars from Europe and North-America, with the explicit aim to incorporate Latin American cases, ideas and scholars into the debate on linguistic justice. This took shape during a conference in Cochabamba on the politics and the practice of language rights and bilingual education, in September 2016. The Leuven participants to this VLIR-UOS-subsidized INCO (international conference) were Michael Jewkes, Sergi Morales and Helder De Schutter. The other participants included seven PROEIB-ANDES professors, and three professors from Germany, the US and Canada, and, importantly, some 25 students. Most of these students come from the different language groups in Bolivia; each of the language groups receives the opportunity to select and send one student who is funded by development aid to Cochabamba to enroll in the bilingual education program. These are gifted students who on top of their first degree lasting about 6 years, in addition enrolled for the 2 extra years that this program requires. Most of these students were determined to move back to their own indigenous group after their studies, to standardize their indigenous language, to seek to teach it to the children, to produce poetry and knowledge in it, and to generally keep it alive. It is therefore evident that these students were passionate about the nature of linguistic justice and the value of mother-tongues, and often these students were the ones asking the most fundamental and challenging questions.

The discussions took place over the course of three intense days. Each of the professors gave two lectures, one in an internal seminar and one for a wider audience. Most of the discussions took place in Spanish, even though some (limited) translation was foreseen. To give a flavor of those discussions, the most intense discussions revolved over the following two topics.

The first was the normative rationale for language policy recognition; what makes language important enough to seek to preserve moribund languages and to seek political means to provide language recognition? Interestingly, many of the Bolivian students and Latin American professors took issue with the premise of ‘normative individualism’ shared by a majority (though not all) of the European and north-American guests. Ontologically speaking, we are, so the latter argue, constitutively embedded within our language to such an extent that seeing oneself ontologically apart from one’s linguistic background is impossible. But they argue that ontological embeddedness is compatible with normative individualism. Languages are desirable only to the extent that they serve the interests of individuals, who are the only ultimate units of moral concern. For example, in dealing with clashes between the
interests of individuals and the survival of their languages – take the case of individual speakers who prefer to migrate away from a small, moribund language in order to seek wider socio-economic opportunities, therefore further threatening the survival of the language – we should not grant any value to languages in themselves, apart from the value they have for their speakers. Yet, several of the Bolivian students and Latin American professors had a different take, and were skeptical about those claims of normative individualism. They posit the intrinsic value of languages – the idea that languages have value in themselves, and they justify a corresponding duty of individuals to carry on linguistic heritages. This led to animated debates, especially around the contributions of the Canadian scholar David Robichaud, whose paper was a critique of *el valor intrínseco de la lengua*. Whereas in the existing normative discussion over language policy, it is customary to present the debate as one between those views defending the identity value of language and others primarily stressing the non-identity functions of language (such as ensuring efficiency, democracy and equality of opportunity), the discussions with the ‘Latin Americas’ led to a different contrast, between the intrinsic value of languages (languages have moral rights) and the instrumental value of language (languages only have value in so far as they are valuable to individuals).

A second recurring discussion was the way in which governmental recognition ought to be granted to languages. Is the idea of a form of equality among the official languages, as is upheld by for example Switzerland, Belgium or South Africa (the South African constitution speaks of ‘parity of esteem’) also plausible in a part of the world where Spanish is the dominant language, and where most indigenous languages are small? Should we not develop less far-reaching models of linguistic justice for such contexts, where perhaps a higher status is to be granted to Spanish, alongside more limited forms of recognition for indigenous groups? Or should we instead go for a priority of recognition for the indigenous languages that are on the verge of disappearing? Intense discussions were therefore held over two main models of linguistic justice realized in various parts of the ‘West’: *linguistic territoriality*, which requires partitioning a country into territorial units with monolingual official policies (such as in Belgium or Switzerland), and *linguistic personality*, which grants recognition to multiple languages within the same territory and where the language rights ‘travel’ with the speakers wherever the speakers are in the country (as is in vogue in South Africa or Canada). Should such models be attenuated for linguistically very hybrid societies, or should they be upheld in their pristine form?

Whereas the first discussion over normative justifications ended in a firm politico-philosophical debate with widely diverging standpoints, the second ended more open-endedly with the suggestion that perhaps a distinct category of linguistic justice is to be worked out for indigenous populations within a state with a clear majority language that functions as a lingua franca for the other language groups, and in which most governmental functions are exercised.

Apart from these content matters, the conference included also organizational issues, about how the local group can set-up a local PhD-program and initiate PhD-exchanges with Europe and Leuven, and how we can keep this conversation ongoing and mutually relevant. It was a most intense and for philosophers fairly unique interdisciplinary experience that was enriching both theoretically and culturally.

By Helder De Schutter
It is a long-standing commonplace that philosophers are engaged less and less in the study of actual policy-making. The usual divisions across academic fields certainly do not help them engage with concrete political problems. The 7-year project ‘Global Governance and Democratic Government’ (2010-2017) is the proof that this commonplace is misguided. This project, funded by the KU Leuven Research Council, has been jointly created by the GGS (KU Leuven Centre for Global Governance Studies) and CESSP (Centre for Ethics, Social and Political Philosophy). It also includes several professors and researchers who come from different academic research paths and work within the Social Science, Law and Economics departments. The main goal of the project is to create a new paradigm of democratic government within global governance. The collaboration of several researchers working on this main purpose has achieved two main goals. On one hand, the project has fostered critical research on the concept of governance, an empty signifier that is more and more the focus of attention in the social sciences and the legal scholarly literature. On the other hand, the project has aimed to bring the problem of democracy within the governance narrative, asking questions about the impact of the governance discourse on democratic theory. There have been two main phases in the project. One (2010-2014) was concerned with discussing the role of concepts such as ‘representation’ and ‘justice’ within governance whereas the other, which is still ongoing, has focused more and more on the question of global commons. Needless to say, both questions are extremely relevant for today’s political debate. Think of the increasing importance of supranational organizations such as the EU Commission in shaping the life of millions of people. The role of political philosophers within the project has been crucial, and their contribution has come from the two main streams of political philosophy, continental and analytical. Our aim has been, first of all, to question the assumptions of the governance narrative that are often taken for granted in academic scholarship that is concerned with this problem. The continental part of the project has brought a more critical and realist perspective, trying to address problems of power, conflict, freedom and underlining the importance of historicizing and unmasking the ideological aspects of the ambiguous notion of democratic governance. Analytical scholars have brought their added value from a normative perspective. Their aim has been to ask question on the justice and moral legitimacy of the governance discourse. It has not always been easy to deal with these problems from an interdisciplinary point of view. Very often, the project members had to face huge disagreements on methodology and conceptual work. Yet, the continuous interdisciplinary interaction with colleagues coming from completely different backgrounds has been both stimulating and challenging. The project ‘Global Governance and Democratic Government’ is an example of how academia should work in a truly interdisciplinary manner.

By Alessandro Mulieri
This July the CESPF was proud to continue its recent tradition of hosting a 2-week summer school for students from the Monterrey Institute of Technology and Higher Education, Mexico. The summer school, which is now in its 5th edition, is a joint initiative of the Institute of Philosophy and the Faculty of Law and attracts around 15 young Mexican students each year with backgrounds in areas as diverse as engineering, journalism, mathematics and political science.

Having spent their first two-weeks studying the legal dimensions of human rights in the Law Faculty, the students then arrived at the Institute of Philosophy for a two-week introduction to ethics and political philosophy organized around the theme of globalization. Topics for the course included: the ethics of migration; the ethics of global democracy; and the ethics of nationalism and cultural diversity. Central to the approach of the summer school was to partner introductory lectures from CESPF members with afternoon activities and visits linked to the theme of the day. Hence, a class on the ethics of poverty was followed by an interactive ‘giving game’ organized for us by the Flemish branch of Peter Singer’s ‘Effective Altruism’ movement.

Needless to say, some of the students acclimatized better to the cultural and intellectual challenge than others. While complaints about food (‘not spicy enough’), the weather (‘not sunny enough’) and their mode of transportation (cars are preferred to bikes in Monterrey!) were heard; for the most part the students fully embraced the challenge of spending a month in what, for them, was a fairly alien environment. Moreover, while very few of the students had any kind of background in philosophy, by the end of the two weeks all were able to participate in and contribute to a series of short debates based around the theme of the course.

Meanwhile for the Professors, Postdocs and Doctoral students of the CESPF, it offered a chance to discuss topics central to their work with an audience that – on a range of topics from the use of torture to the obligations of the ‘global rich’ – started from a set of quite different cultural intuitions. It is our very much our hope that this shared cultural and intellectual exchange will continue for many years to come.

By Michael Jewkes
The birth of ethos out of pathos

On October 6, 2016, Bernhard Waldenfels delivered the 26th Husserl Memorial Lecture, an annual lecture organized by the Husserl Archives at the Institute of Philosophy. Waldenfels is a very original, prolific German philosopher whose thought is dedicated to the challenges given by the Other – that is, by our experience of that which is other than ourselves. Waldenfels has been engaging in the last decades with the different realms of the phenomenon of alterity. In particular, he has been expounding on the role that the German concept of ‘das Fremde’ (often translated as ‘the alien’) plays in Husserl’s late phenomenology, as well as on the central question posed by the encounter with ‘l’Autre’ in Levinas’ ‘ethics as first philosophy’. His reflections revolve around the paradoxical position of the alien: The alien is extraordinary relative both to the given order in general, as well as to the great plurality of forms that arise from the differences between orders and alterities. If, on the one hand, the extraordinary is what cannot be experienced, thought or told within an order of things and discourse, then on the other hand, it is exactly extra-ordinary in relation to this specific order. Waldenfels’ philosophical vocation seems to consist in two main strengths of focus. He gives great attention to the gap that is inherent to the sense given in the encounter with the alien or Other, and yet he does so without neglecting the modes of accessibility of what is originally inaccessible.

Waldenfels’ path is in many ways intertwined with the early decades of the Husserl Archives in Leuven. Waldenfels’ visit gave him the chance to reflect upon this intertwinement, as he looked over the Archives’ collection of photographs documenting the several colloquia and symposia in which he participated there. In a deeper sense, Waldenfels undertook one of the main desiderata of Van Breda’s philosophical legacy: to maintain the spirit of phenomenology as a vivid, living thinking, something to be carried beyond national borders as a means of mutual understanding. Some of Waldenfels’ most influential work developed out of his will to cross borders. This was a time when in Germany, French philosophers such as Merleau-Ponty were considered not worthy of serious philosophical engagement. For example, the influential Gadamer denigrated him as a “cheap French moralist”. Nonetheless, the young Waldenfels opted to go to Paris to pursue his philosophical studies and fell in love with the fresh way that phenomenology had developed on the western side of the river Rhine by former visitors and life-long friends of the Husserl-Archives in Leuven such as Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Emmanuel Levinas, Paul Ricoeur and, later on, Jacques Derrida. One can say without exaggeration that the traditions of Merleau-Ponty, Levinas Ricoeur and eventually also Derrida were all introduced in Germany thanks primarily to Bernhard Waldenfels. This introduction began with his seminal works, such as Phänomenologie in Frankreich (1983) or Deutsch-Französische Gedankengänge (1995).

Waldenfels’ continued intellectual dialogue with these thinkers converges in his unique account of philosophy as ‘responsive phenomenology’. Here Waldenfels attempts to do justice to the experience of the alien or Other. The
Husserl Memorial Lecture 2016

THE BIRTH OF ETHOS OUT OF PATHOS
Prof. Dr. Bernhard Waldenfels (University of Bochum)

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The concept of ‘response’ can be considered as the cipher of his philosophical stance. It addresses both the intertwining of call and response in experience and speech, (see among others Antwortregister, 1994) and the interplay of pathos and response (see in this respect Bruchlinien der Erfahrung, 2002).

His Husserl Memorial Lecture was titled “The Birth of Ethos out of Pathos: Paths of Responsive Phenomenology” and offered an outline of his original approach. With the remainder of this piece we will present that outline and discuss it briefly.

The point of departure of his reflections consists in the fact that ethos is not self-evident and that we must question its origins: how does ethos come about? As Merleau-Ponty claimed that phenomenology deals with meaning in statu nascendi, Waldenfels approaches ethos from a genetic perspective. Although genetic phenomenology is clearly different from Nietzsche’s genealogy of the moral, both are intrinsically interested in the roots. Bergson’s search for the origin of morality and religion as well as Levinas’ ethics of the Other both share with Husserl and Nietzsche a common style of questioning the genesis of values.

Before we proceed further, we should note that both Waldenfels’ understanding of the method of genetic phenomenology and the meaning of ethos both remained mostly untouched and somehow presupposed in his exposition. In his understanding, the concept of ethos seems to consist in an ethical attitude in the common sense of the word, i.e. as a morally good attitude. On the contrary, its origin from pathos, its ‘birth’ was widely elucidated: ethos does not derive from goals, norms or cost/benefit analyses, but from our response to what happens, what makes claims to us.

The lecture developed his thesis in the following steps: 1. Ethos and morality; 2. The blind spot of morality; 3. Pathos, affect, feeling; 4. Pathos, response, diathesis; 5. The pathic and the ethical.

1. Ethos and morality

While ethics has always been expressed by the question ‘how should we live and act?’, the Greek concept of ethos and its Latin counterpart ‘mores’ radically changed meaning in the passage from antiquity to modernity. In antiquity, and paradigmatically with Aristotle, ethics was directly derived from ethos as a doctrine of the good life. Since all activities were considered goal-oriented, ethics was developed to illuminate practical life and suggested the cultivation of good friendships, to reach the goal of living a good life. However, stresses Waldenfels, the contemporary understanding cannot avoid questioning the implicit teleology of the antique world-view. If everything strives towards something good, what is this good for?

In modernity, and paradigmatically with Kant, morality was tied to law and became concerned more with norms than with goals. It no longer clarified concrete, practical life, but instead gave maxims to behave according to general, formal principles. As Hume put it, the “is” and the “ought” had to be distinguished. Nevertheless, this distinction risks to become a tragic separation and leads to the unavoidable doubt of how, and even if, there can be a “voice of conscience” appealing to the moral law.

Against this ideal-typical characterization of the ethics of the antiques against the ethics of the moderns, Waldenfels tries to suggest a third path. Note that Max Scheler, a phenomenologist that Waldenfels did not mention, sketched in his ethics a similar distinction between formalist ethics and the ethics of goals and goods. But Waldenfels will not follow Scheler in proposing a positive access to values in emotional experience.
2. The blind spot of morality
Many early phenomenologists, such as Husserl, Scheler, Geiger, von Hildebrandt and Stein (only to name a few) granted to intentional feeling the capability of giving access to values. They therefore believed in an accessible and concrete ground for a rational ethics. Meanwhile, Waldenfels considers the problem of the foundation of morality as such a phenomenology’s blind spot. In claiming that morality is unable to ground itself, he drew on the metaphor of the *punctum caecum*, i.e. the point where the optic nerve enters the eye and where the eye receives no light stimulus. The metaphor does not simply stress the fact that something is not seen. But actually suggests that the origin of the gaze escapes itself. Accordingly, Waldenfels stresses that there is a moment of a-morality in any form of morality. Any attempt of self-grounding leads to an infinite regress that only postpones the threatening void, namely the abyss of sense in which consists one’s encounter with the alien. If one does not consider this abyss, affirms Waldenfels, morality risks of becoming a quasi-religion that does not realize its own impossible grounding. Therefore, he pleads for an “ethical epoché” through which the self-evident ground of morality should be questioned in order to understand its origin. Despite his direct quotation of Husserl, who spoke himself about the need for an “ethical epoché”, Waldenfels follows a different path, one more indebted to Nietzsche’s style of thinking.

3. Pathos, affect, feeling
While Husserl concentrates on the axiological experience in feelings and on the motivational laws of decision and volition, Waldenfels is more keen to unravel the subpersonal structures of pathetic experience. As he puts it, responsive ethics begins with the outspring of the pathetic. We must reassess the concept of pathos in order to overcome the narrowness of modernity. In doing so, one can thus highlight how the moment of the pathetic should be re-integrated in the picture of our concrete experience. These following nuances of this concept have to be distinguished:

i. what befalls us - in opposition to what we ourselves do;
ii. what we suffer passively;
iii. our affects;
iv. our passions – in contrast to apathy.

Since antiquity, the pathos has been considered as the irrational as such, even if Plato and Aristotle did depict it as complementary to reason. The most radical denigration of the pathos was plead for by the stoics, who suggested that in order to live an ethical life, one should reach the state of a complete neutralization of one’s own passions – what they called ‘ataraxia’. Throughout antiquity, the pathic has been subordinated to activity and energy. The same concept of teleology, which is central for antique ethics, puts pathos in the shadow of goals and efficacy.

In modernity the pathos got stuck in Cartesian dualism. If, on the one hand, it was shadowed by subjective activity then on the other hand it had to be conformed to objective causality. Accordingly, contemporary naturalism leads to the complete subjectivization, atomization, and privatization of pathos. The pathic became a mere mental state, as with features such as colors and pain. While Waldenfels shares this diagnosis with the early phenomenological movement, he vividly refuses its attempt at considering feeling as having the role of a thought power, next to cognition and action. On the contrary, such parallelism is according to him an expression of the limits and the weaknesses of modern ethics. Phenomenology cannot be happy with a revision and correction of these modern terms; it should go beyond them.
4. Pathos, response, and diastasis
Based on Erwin Strauss’ distinction between the pathic and the gnostic, i.e. between the centripetal moment of being affected by something and the centrifugal counterpart of being directed towards something, Waldenfels aims at providing a phenomenological description of the pathic through the triad ‘pathos, response, and diastasis’.

a. With pathos he refers to an event that affects the person whose bodily involvement demands that they be understood not anymore as a mere subject, but as a patient.

b. Response is the act through which one returns to what has affected her or him. By responding, what happens to us is realized. In this double movement of being patient and respondent, the patient herself gains awareness and splits itself.

c. The concept of “diastasis” refers to the gap of temporality which is peculiar of the pathic because of the fact that the patient is always necessarily affected too soon, while the response is always constitutively too late.

5. The pathic and the ethical
Finally, how does this triadic dynamic address the original question, i.e. the question of the origin of the ethos out of pathos? Waldenfels’ phenomenological approach aims not only at claiming that ethics comes out of the pathic, but wishes first and foremost to show how this comes about. In the last part of his lecture, he outlined five characteristics that can describe some traits of the how of this supposed origin of ethos out of pathos: its inevitability, its demand-character, its appeal-character, the responsive freedom, and the role of the senses.

i. Inevitability: Pathos eludes binary differences like those of good and bad, fact and norm, is and ought. It expresses first of all an inability not to, a practical necessity: we cannot not answer. In fact, we do not control whether we respond. However, we do control how we respond. Furthermore, a difference is inherent to the response itself. The act of responding never coincides with the given answer: that to which (or to whom) a response is given does not coincide to the what of the answer. This hiatus between responding and the given response is defined by Waldenfels as ‘responsive difference’.

ii. Demand-character: responsive ethics is not primarily based on the fact that in our actions we are following goals and rules, but rather on the fact that we respond to situations. In this way, the responsivity presupposes that situations demand actions from us. Expounding on the concept of demand-characters (Aufforderungscharaktere) that was developed by the Gestalt-theory and that was translated by Gibson as ‘affordance’, Waldenfels claims that things around us are what they are by inviting us to do something. They are not primarily ‘facts’ (literally ‘deeds’), but ‘to-dos’, faciendum. Practical engagement is not led primarily by norms but by the demands of things that have urgently to be done – precisely here and now.

iii. Affection and appeal: Waldenfels stresses the distinction between affection (i.e. an unaddressed demand that touches me) and appeal. (i.e. an addressed demand that not only touches me but that, unlike mere affection, comes from someone who is my equal). In this regard Waldenfels deviates from Levinas, considering the appeal not only as a category that pertains to responses directed to humans, but also to responses towards other non-human subjects, the environment as a whole, or even valuable things such as cultural heritage. Doing this, he somehow questions any implicit distinction between someone and something, between human and non-human. Waldenfels suggests that this very distinction should be clari-
fied from a genetic point of view.

Glossing on the German word for appeal (Anspruch), Waldenfels explicates its double-meaning: demand to something (Anspruch zu etwas) and appeal to someone (Anspruch an jemanden). Far from being an idiosyncrasy of the German language, Waldenfels believes that the closeness of these meanings to be an essential trait of the appeal. As he puts it, any appeal is the claim to something, and that claims is and has to be expressed in the appeal to someone.

iv. Although a response is inevitable, there can be also a paradoxical response, i.e. the refusal of answering. To give no answer is also an answer, as the well known idiom says. The inevitability of the claim excludes that we can choose between yes and no as between two equal possibilities. There is a kind of yes before any affirmation or negation. This intuition is expressed by both Nietzsche and Husserl, though in very different terms. The former claimed that a great yes to life is already uttered once we seek for the value of life. Therefore, we don’t have the necessary distance for a complete evaluation or devaluation of life itself. The latter describes, in his genetic analysis of the experience that is implicitly presupposed by any form of logic acts, a form of pre-predicative positive belief that precedes any position-taking in judgement. This is a kind of originary affirmation that is inherent to the pre-predicative belief at stake in perceptual commitments. To affirm or negate something consists in underlining or singling out this something that is somehow positively pre-given before a yes or a no, before the belief in it was questioned. According to Husserl, logical negation presupposes a form of positive belief in what will then be negated because of some newly-occurring reasons that bring the originary belief into question. Concerning negation, Freud distinguishes logical negation (Negation) from the subconscious dynamics of practical negation (in German Verneinung), where the latter refers back to a defense mechanism. Building upon these disparate intuitions, Waldenfels suggests that we must to distinguish the responsive yes from a predicative yes. The responsive yes is somehow the positive counterpart of Freud’s practical negation. These interplays of pathos and response show how there is neither a causal dependence between claim and answer nor a merely spontaneous freedom according to which I begin straightforwardly from myself. On the contrary, Waldenfels speaks of a ‘responsive freedom’ in which we are called to responsivity by the necessity of responding. It is the bow of our implicit and explicit responding which makes the difference. The risk of the ethical, what Waldenfels calls in a somehow Heidegerrian gestus ‘the abyss’, consists in the possibility of refusing to be responsive. This can happen on the level of a personal decision to abstain from responding, as in the case of Bartleby the scrivener, the clerk depicted by Melville, who refuses overnight his duty repeating stereotypically: “I would prefer not to”. He gives no further reasons of the kind that would appease Habermas, or any “Diskursethiker” (i.e. practical philosophers that base their approach on rational discourse practices). This negation causes a break that cannot be filled by reasons. As suggested by Waldenfels, this refusal can be even more radical, as a form of Freudian practical negation to be responsive.

v. Ethos of the senses: To summarize Waldenfels’ position, as it has been masterfully offered in this 26th Husserl Memorial Lecture: we can say that the ethical does not coincide with the pathical or follow after it as effect after cause. Paradoxically ethics is nurtured by the pathic. Ethos or morality without pathos would be robbed of its own impulses. On the contrary, ethos out of pathos demands a bottom-up ethics that begins in the depths of experience – out of the senses themselves. What
is perceived is never ethically neutral, otherwise our experience would be artificially neutralized or ethical anaesthetized. Each act of looking or hearing has its counterpoint in looking away or intentionally not listening (in German: wegsehen, wghören).

The day after, in a small seminar for the research unit of the Husserl Archives, several questions were raised in the dialogical discussion with Bernhard Waldenfels, especially concerning his understanding of intentionality and his divergence from some essential traits of Husserl’s understanding of this keystone of phenomenology. He revolved again about his core intuition that pathos has to be taken in its radicality, as being beyond good and bad, as the limit phenomena of being shaken, surprised and shocked by something that can gain meaning only in the movement of responding to it. However, any response has to be reminiscent of the responsive difference, i.e. of the fact that it can not exhaust the alterity of that to whom or to which it is a response to. Nevertheless, being responsive also demands us to be able to speak ‘in the place of the other’, i.e. trying to express the reasons of the other without covering the transcendence of meaning that alterity implies. As the subtitle of this 26th Husserl Memorial Lectures already suggests, responsive phenomenology is a project that requires us to follow several paths to reconstruct a viable ethics from the bottom-up. It is a task that Waldenfels has stressed in this lecture, on the basis of his lifelong theoretical struggle that surely deserves our further reflection.
COURSES IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Ecophilosophy

This year’s class on “Ecophilosophy” was devoted to the discussion of the animal issue in continental philosophy. The class was attended by an unusually large audience of seventy students, three times as large as in other years.

Since the mid-seventies a far-reaching social, political, ethical, scientific and philosophical transformation and reevaluation of our understanding and treatment of animals has been taking place. In new sciences like cognitive ethology, animal studies and animal welfare science but also in philosophy, the richness, complexity and subjectivity of animal lives, their moral status, and our equally complex relationships with animals, reaching from the most relentless exploitation and mass slaughter to the loving care for our pets are investigated and critically evaluated.

In our class we focused on the contribution of some major philosophers from contemporary continental philosophy to the ongoing debate on the animal question. We read relevant texts from Nietzsche, Heidegger, Bataille, Levinas, Foucault, Deleuze and Guattari, Derrida, Ferry, Cixous and Irigaray as well as commentaries on these texts by contemporary authors, all collected in the book *Animal Philosophy: Ethics and Identity* edited by Peter Atterton and Matthew Calarco.

In most general terms one can say that each of these authors wrestles with the central issue of understanding the radical otherness of the animal while also acknowledging its closeness to us. During the discussions it also became clear that the animal issue is as much, and maybe even more, a symbolic as a factual issue and that it is impossible to neatly separate the factual from the symbolic. But then, of course, it is also a question of power and of legitimizing ruthless instrumentalisation and exploitation.

Continental Philosophy is mostly characterized by the mode of questioning, of problematizing, of radical critique and “deconstruction” of long-held and seldom-questioned presuppositions. Because of their many incoherences and their no longer acceptable practical consequences, our views on animals almost cry out for such problematizing and deconstructing. After thirteen weeks of intense and engaged discussions it became clear to all of us that the animal haunts us more than ever and that we cannot afford to avoid or marginalize it in our philosophy.

By Ulrich Melle

Ethics of war

War is a terrible thing. Wars typically involve widespread physical and mental suffering, the killing of innocents, and vast cultural and environmental destruction. Its horrors shock our conscience and tear at our heart. Painful as the persistence of war and political violence is in the modern world, it has long been realized that it is sometimes permissible or even required to use military force against other humans. As Augustine wrote, “it would be worse if wrongdoers dominated those who are more just” (*City of God*, 4.15).

In this BA3 seminar we tackled a host of different questions pertaining to the ethics of
war, from various angles (historical, systematic, applied). Which conditions of violence count as war? Is war morally exceptional or do the same moral rules govern killing in war as outside of war? Which moral norms govern when, how, and by whom military force may be used? Why did medieval theologians traditionally discuss the morality of war under the heading of ‘charity’ rather than of ‘justice’ – and what theoretical ramifications did this have? Can states be sensibly said to have rights of ‘self-defence’? Is the principle of the moral equality of combatants philosophically defensible? What does terrorism mean and what makes it morally wrong?

To address these questions and similar ones, we began by reading sections from classical texts by Aquinas, Grotius, Locke, Kant, and J.S. Mill. We then moved on to contemporary proponents and critics of the ‘just war theory’: Michael Walzer, Jeff McMahan, David Rodin, and Cécile Fabre. The aim of these sessions was twofold: providing a theoretical overview and inspiring students to come up with their own research questions. The thirteen international students taking this year-long module were expected to write a concluding BA dissertation (7,500 words) on the subject. In the second semester, each student presented their research in a graded 25-minute presentation. The two four-hour long presentation sessions flew by due to the captivating nature of the questions tackled and the pizza generously provided by the lecturer. Indeed, for many students the subject was more than a quaint philosophical exercise, having come from countries – including Armenia, Pakistan, the US, Nigeria, and Thailand – that experienced political violence or military oppression in recent history.

The students are exploring a wide range of different topics in their dissertations. What kind of reparative duties do states have that have committed the unforgivable crime of genocide? Is nuclear deterrence morally permissible? Which conditions need to be met for humanitarian intervention to be morally permissible? Is there a moral and conceptual difference between state terror and terrorism committed by non-state actors? Do states have a right to psychologically train soldiers to kill? The course hopes to have helped students to think more clearly about the distressing news we receive daily from Syria and other war-torn places.

By Johan Olsthoorn

**Common Seminar: Research as a Career**

As long as there’s been an advanced research master’s programme in philosophy in Leuven, there’s been a course entitled “Common Seminar” associated with that programme. Originally, the idea was to bring together in one room on several occasions everyone in the programme, giving all the students the possibility of cross-disciplinary interaction and enrichment, as well as a chance to meet with a variety of professors at the Institute of Philosophy, while taking part in a number of shared activities.

From the first, the question was: which activities? Back when the advanced research master’s was called the “MPhil”, a number of models were tried. One year the common seminar was centered around ongoing presentations concerning the students’ thesis work; another year it was centered on all students attending (and subsequently discussing) the Thursday Lectures that the Institute organized six times a year. In 2010-2011, a new model was tried, one based on giving the students the opportunity to acquire skills that are needed to
do a PhD and academic research in philosophy more generally. Since the MPhil was a “dense” programme, involving a good deal of high-level course work as well as a significant thesis, the Common Seminar was deliberately kept light on work and the majority of meetings were held during the autumn semester of the one-academic-year programme. Some earlier practices were retained: one session was dedicated to the publication process, as well as to sketching the place that teaching, conferences, and book reviews play in the world of academic philosophy; a further session to aspects of grant application writing (with a special emphasis on the Flanders Research Foundation (FWO) PhD scholarships). Three sessions on the theory and practice of delivering oral presentations at conferences and workshops were added.

With the implementation of a new “Research Master” programme in 2016-2017, the faculty decided to revamp the Common Seminar as well. Its overall aim remained the same: to introduce advanced graduate students who are considering the possibility of doing a PhD to some of the demands and the practices of academic philosophy. One of the assets of the course, we think, is the fact that it is taught by various professors, each of whom draws from his or her own experiences; feedback on various assignments (written and oral) is also provided by various teachers, something which the students appreciated very much. Several of the sessions were devoted to passing on information about important topics such as plagiarism, applying to doctoral programmes (Prof. Andreas De Block), the publication process and the importance of presenting papers at conferences (Prof. Stefan Rummens). But most of the nine sessions were devoted to learning and practicing skills needed to do research in academic philosophy. As a part of that, the structure of the sessions on how to deliver a paper at an academic conference (Friedman) remained basically the same as in earlier years. A two-hour session was devoted to tips on delivering a paper, tips like repeating the paper’s main points, maintaining eye-contact, utilizing voice intonation, and keeping to time. Included in that session were short video clips by professional public speakers, as well as video clips of professional philosophers giving papers. To give them practice in delivering an academic paper, the roughly 30 students were split into four groups for two separate sessions of two-three hours each (led by Friedman, Jan Heylen, Pieter Adriaens, and Matthias Lievens). During the first session, each student gave a five-minute presentation on a philosophical topic of their choice, after which the other students and teacher gave feedback just on the delivery of the talk (not on content). During the second session, each student delivered a ten-minute presentation on the same philosophical topic, using either a handout of powerpoint presentation as supporting material; this time, the audience gave feedback on both delivery and content.

The biggest change to the Common Seminar this year was its focus on writing, and feedback on written work submitted by the students throughout the semester was a major part of the class. The students were shown how to formulate a good research question, how to write a conference abstract, a grant proposal, and a journal article (de Boer), as well as a c.v. and personal statement (Friedman). In each case, guidelines and concrete examples were provided, and the students were involved as much as possible in the discussion. In the case of the conference abstracts, for instance, de Boer discussed the weak and strong elements of a number of abstracts that had been posted online. She did the same with a number of introductions of already published articles. In this case, the students were asked to choose one
introduction and discuss it with their neighbour for about 10 minutes. They were also asked to discuss their own conference abstract with their neighbour, which is a relatively simple and productive way of organizing peer assessment.

As far as the writing skills are concerned, writing the introduction to a journal article proved to be the biggest challenge. Some students felt they were not ready to write the introduction to their thesis during the fall term, because they had not yet done the research and didn’t yet have a clear enough idea of where they wanted to go. For a number of students, the problem runs deeper: for them, the emphasis on formal requirements, structure, style, etc., seemed to have very little to do with the reason why they study philosophy and why they love doing philosophy. Why should we conform to mainstream academic practices and forego originality or a more literary approach to philosophy? Why should we force our thoughts into molds that are foreign to the way we think? This resistance was somewhat unexpected, and from next year onward we will try to have an open discussion about these questions at an earlier stage. Responding to the concerns, we told the students that complying with these formal rules is all about getting their message across as clearly and succinctly as possible, and need not affect the content of the text. As we see it, the confrontation with this aspect of academic research is important even though it can seem limiting. Some of the students told us they felt more secure and better prepared to write their thesis, essays, and journal articles. Others may have realized that being an academic philosopher is very different from being a philosophy student, and may have decided to devote their life to something else, or to devote time to philosophy in a non-academic setting. Since the purpose of the Common Seminar is to give students considering an academic career in philosophy some insight into what that career would involve as well as some tools to successfully negotiate it, whether the course helps students feel better prepared to pursue that career or helps them to make a considered decision not to pursue an academic career, we think the course has fulfilled its goal.

By Karin de Boer and Russ Friedman
The dissertation consists of three parts. (1) In the first part, the *Essais* are being interpreted as Montaigne’s endless attempt to understand the traps of the self-consciousness. Caudron starts by noting that the *Essais* are funded by a kind of compulsion that is in the first place connected to the realization that being self-conscious goes hand in hand with the prototypical experience of being-a-self. He then shows that the discovery of this experience is a paradoxical experience for Montaigne, because he realizes that his self-understanding is thoroughly determined and defined by meanings that force themselves on him in both a coercive and unfree way. Caudron shows how, according to Montaigne, this absolute lack of autonomy is camouflaged by the individual in an almost natural way by means of an illusion of autonomy and personal identity that is on the brink of becoming a form of madness and self-deceit.

The second chapter studies Descartes and especially his scientific thinking and his change to the metaphysics against the background of the problems that on which Montaigne in the *Essais*. The starting point is the impact the experience of subjective certainty had on Descartes. But just because Descartes has the satisfying experience that some mathematical arguments can be accompanied by undoubtable certainty, he will feel forced by Montaigne to find a metaphysical foundation for this certainty. The common thread then is, that, although Descartes gains an absolute trust in the powers of his own mind from this experience, his method and science become nonetheless soaked with the (montaignian) realization that the mind is intrinsically vulnerable and inclined to lapse into expressions of self-deceit and even madness. In other words, Caudron shows that the cartesian philosophy is founded by a concern which influenced Descartes in the sense that it made him not only doubt his own subjective experience of certainty, but also in the sense that this concern urged him to use his free will to discover a metaphysical foundation that would be able to embed the undeniable experience of autonomy and personal identity definitively.

Benjamin De Mesel, *Wittgensteinian Approaches to Moral Philosophy*. Promotor: Prof. S. Rummens

The aim of this dissertation is to show that Ludwig Wittgenstein’s later philosophical methods are helpful to understand some of his ethical views and can be fruitfully applied to several problems in moral philosophy. The dissertation consists of three parts. (1) In the first part, De Mesel discusses Wittgenstein’s later philosophical methods. (2) The second part is an investigation of how these methods help to understand some of Wittgenstein’s ethical views. (3) In the third part, Wittgenstein’s later methods are applied to problems in contemporary moral philosophy.

(1) The first part consists of two chapters. In Chapter 2, De Mesel unpacks Wittgenstein’s comparison of philosophical methods to therapies and show that the comparison has often been misleadingly interpreted by commentators. In Chapter 3, he discusses the concept ‘surveyable representation’ and provide a new interpretation of it. He argues that it is both possible and useful for moral philosophers to provide surveyable representations of moral word use.

(2) How can Wittgenstein’s later methods help to understand some of his ethical views? De Mesel provides two examples. Chapter 4 discusses the claim that, according to Wittgenstein, ‘moral’ is a classification by use and not by subject matter. In Chapter 5, he examines the way in which Wittgenstein allows for the idea of objectivity in ethics.

(3) In the third part of the dissertation, De Mesel looks at contributions that Wittgenstein’s later methods can make to three debates in contemporary moral philosophy. In Chapter 6, he outlines a Wittgensteinian approach to the debate on moral perception. In Chapter 7, he offers a Wittgensteinian diagnosis of the debate between cognitivists and non-cognitivists. Chapter 8 focuses on questions for moral advice of the form ‘Should I do x or y?’ Inspired by Wittgenstein’s methods, De Mesel compares moral and non-moral versions of the question ‘Should I do x or y?’ and concludes that, while non-moral questions of that form typically ask for answers of the form ‘You should do x/y’ or ‘Do x/y’, moral questions often do not ask for such answers.

Willem Styffelaers, *’No Spiritual Investment in the World As It Is.’ Gnosticism and Postwar German Thought*. Promotor: Prof. A. Cloots

In the course of the 20th century, a significant number of philosophers, historians, and theologians have tried to understand modern thought through the concept of Gnosticism. This connection between modernity and Gnosticism, however, is not self-evident, neither on historical nor on conceptual grounds. Indeed, Gnosticism is an early-Christian heresy, while modern thought arose more than a millennium after Gnosticism’s decline and is almost always considered to be secular and even atheistic. It is the aim of this dissertation to explore why so many thinkers have used the concept of Gnosticism to make sense of the most diverse modern phenomena such as democratic and totalitarian politics, modern science and philosophy, or the processes of disenchantment and secularization.
This dissertation presents a history of the idea or concept of Gnosticism in postwar German philosophy and focuses, in particular, on the thought of Hans Blumenberg, Jacob Taubes, Eric Voegelin, Gershom Scholem, Hans Jonas and Odo Marquard. Although these thinkers had very different interpretations of the relation between Gnosticism and modernity, they all claimed that modern thought rejected, just like ancient Gnosticism, the immediate spiritual meaning of the world. This rejection can be evaluated positively or negatively but inevitably it has implications for the modern attitude towards the world. On the one hand, the moderns can believe, just like the ancient Gnostics or Apocalyptics, that a meaningless world should be abolished altogether in order for religious redemption or for a utopian, better world to be possible. On the other hand, the moderns can also try to save this meaningless world from its downfall either by retrieving its pre-modern meaning or by creating and inventing new values themselves. The first part of this dissertation, entitled “The Gnostic Age” elaborates on the first strategy; the following part on the second strategy in which modernity has to be understood as the “overcoming of Gnosticism.”


In this dissertation, I expound Aquinas’ account of change. I maintain that Aquinas’ account is meant to describe both spiritual and material changes. I suggest that Aquinas’ favorite model involves a passage from potentiality to actuality. In addition, I state that ‘change’ is identical to the second potentiality/first actuality of a process that includes three steps, a first potentiality, a second potentiality (or first actuality), and a second actuality. I analyze the semantics of propositions that describe changing processes. I maintain that Aquinas subscribed to the view that past and future tense statements can have a truth-value. I argue that Aristotle accepted a restricted version of the principle of plenitude, but Aquinas rejected the principle in all its formulations. I state that Aquinas’ theory entails that future events do not exist, according to the ‘actual’ sense of existence. My second claim is about the logic of future contingents. I claim that Aquinas’ argument is logically sound, but presupposes that the so-called K-formula is not a tautology of Aquinas’ modal system. Finally, I maintain that Aquinas’ definition of time is not circular and I conclude by stating that time has extra-mental existence.

Wai Ch’uin Leong, *Triangulation, Thought and Joint Commitment: A Joint Commitment Account of the Objectivity of Thought.* Promotor: Prof. F. Buekens

This work starts from the following question: what makes a thought true or false? The truth or falsity of a thought depends on two factors: the content of the thought, and the way things are. This work focuses on the former factor. A thought is objective, in the sense that if it is true, it is so regardless of who entertains it. Therefore, a thought can be shared by multiple people. But how is it possible to share the exact same thought? The primary aim of this work is to discuss this question.

Donald Davidson proposes what he calls “triangulation” to answer this question. Roughly speaking, he argues that a thought is objective because the content of a thought is determined by the interactions between agents, therefore the content is something that is essentially shared in the first place. However, Davidson’s argument does not explain clearly how or why the content of a thought is determined by agents’ interactions, hence it is not surprising that the argument has not convinced many philosophers over the years.

Nevertheless, Leong thinks Davidson’s argument is basically correct. The goal of the current work, therefore, is to further develop this approach. Leong argues that the interactions that are required by the determination of the content of a thought involves what Margaret Gilbert calls “joint commitment.” Gilbert thinks that joint commitment is a basic component of people’s cooperation, and Leong thinks that a thought is the result of people’s cooperation. Simply put, he argues that the content of a thought is determined by certain joint commitments of the involved agents. These joint commitments determined what the agents’ concepts correctly apply to, and these concepts also constitute their thoughts.

The argument in this dissertation is also supported by studies in developmental psychology. Various studies about infants younger than 9-month and chimpanzees have results that strongly suggest that understanding of joint commitment is essential to concept possession.

Humans are cooperative animals. Our society, technology, and culture are the fruits of our joint actions. If the argument of this current work is correct, then even our thoughts and concepts are the results of our cooperation.


This dissertation investigates the origin and transformation of the concept of curiosity in Augustine and demonstrates a theoretical tension between *De doctrina christiana* and the *Confessions*. It argues that each work represents an alternative attempt to redefine the purpose and boundaries of human knowledge and to elaborate a Christian model meant to replace pagan epistemology and its system of disciplines. The thesis proposes a distinction between a “model of subordination” according to *De doctrina christiana* and a “model of confession” according to the *Confessions*: in the former, curiosity is a marginal phenomenon associated with superstition (the real antagonist of truth) whereas in the latter model, it becomes a crucial taxonomic category and is characterised as a temptation of God. This polarisation between two epistemological projects reveals a shift in Augustine’s understanding of illegitimate knowledge and seeks to call into question a widespread monolithic interpretation of his conception of curiosity. Moreover, a comparison of the two approaches shows that the two works rely on...
upon different anthropologies and that they differ with regard to how they define the agency of the human creature (the ways in which humans may and ought to pursue God and hence truth), the nature of human desire (whether it is in principle good and simply in need of correction or whether it is inherently sinful and needs to be restrained as far as possible) and the function of human rationality (whether humans ought to use knowledge as a means to ascend to truth or whether they ought to use the magisterium to confess and hence to do truth). The results of the thesis suggest novel categories to explain conflicting medieval appropriations of the Augustinian idea of curiosity.


This dissertation develops a philosophical anthropology through explicating Sartre's highly technical concept of 'mage'.

The first, theoretical part contains four chapters, each one focusing on one of Sartre's main early philosophical works. First of all, in *The Transcendence of the Ego* (1936), Sartre shows how our spontaneous actions and feelings on the pre-reflective level come to be reflected upon and are then magically hypostatized onto the pre-reflective level. Second of all, in *Sketch for a Theory of the Emotions* (1938) one sees how emotion is inherently magical in the sense that certain emotive qualities come to inhere in objects (e.g., a 'stupid' computer) through a given emotion (anger) that transforms a world of determinism into a world of feeling. Third of all, *The Imaginary* (1940) is inherently magical for Sartre in that anything we imagine is a spontaneous creation of consciousness that has the power to bewitch us, often to quite extreme levels. All of this culminates, fourth of all, with the argument that Sartre's preoccupation with magic in the 1930s led him to form his ontological system of 1944, evident most of all in his account value and possession. The ultimate claim here is that any serious study of human reality needs to be aware of such magical being.

These theoretical findings are then applied to a specific case in a second part: disgust. Through dialogue with Freud and Kolnai, O'ShieÌŠ comes to discover that disgust is a quintessentially magical phenomenon that has a 'violation of value' structure at its core. With Kolnai disgust always involves revolting qualities of things that automatically invade and besmirch our values in quite a visceral manner. With Freud disgust is a policing mechanism between the unconscious and conscious realms, thereby making morality and civilization possible as such. With Sartre nausea is our automatic recognition of contingency and antivalence. Disgust is precisely when these invade and contaminate our valuing being. A last chapter then studies magical being in even more concrete case studies—namely advertising; racism and stupidity; and Schreber—where O'ShieÌŠ concludes to come to that it is in fact in emotion where our values are lived out most powerfully and importantly.


The dissertation begins with the Kierkegaardian critique of the fundamental problems in Kantian and Hegelian philosophies of religion; viz., to be religious is nothing but to be ethical. As it unfolds the systematic reduction of religion to philosophy in the works of German thinkers, this dissertation focuses on finding the solution to the problem through comparative examinations of Tanabe's metanoetics and Desmond's metaxology. Morisato aims to conclude that these contemporary thinkers—as they draw their inspirations from the different religious traditions of Christianity and Pure Land Buddhism—successfully reconfigure the relation of faith and reason. In this sense, a philosopher can become mindful of the significance of religious faith as something irreducible to the confines of his autonomous reasoning or ethics.


This dissertation investigates the problem of human action and its place in nature in the thought of Thomas Aquinas. As much as this problem is a modern one—informed by characteristically modern notions like physical determinism and laws of nature—, a cognate of it, Loewe argues, can also be found in the Middle Ages. Thinkers of the Middle Ages made a distinction between the natural realm, which they thought of as the realm of occurrences that always or for the most part happen in the same way, and the realm of human conduct, which they thought of as the realm in which things could have been otherwise. Medieval philosophers did not debate whether human actions were just physical phenomena, as thinkers today do. They were, for the most part, anti-materialists because they thought that human beings had an immaterial soul, with two immaterial powers, the intellect and the will, which placed them firmly above the physical world. However, medieval philosophers did have differing views on whether the realm of nature should be appealed to, for methodological reasons, in order to develop an adequate metaphysics of the realm of human conduct. Some thinkers, like John Duns Scotus, thought that this should not be done. This dissertation investigates the alternative view espoused by Thomas Aquinas, who, as Loewe argues, holds that, in order to understand human agency, we can and should extend the metaphysics of the natural world to the realm of human conduct. As Loewe puts it—this is the main claim of my dissertation—, Aquinas is a "methodological naturalist about human action."

The goal of this dissertation is twofold. In five of six chapters, Loewe gives an extended argument for attributing methodological naturalism to Aquinas. He aims to show that methodological naturalism is at the heart of his account of human action by showing that explanatory models of his natural philosophy inform
crucial aspects of his theory of action. Then, in the last chapter, he provides an explanation as to why Aquinas thinks it useful to draw on these explanatory models. The main reason why Aquinas thinks we should appeal to natural philosophy to elucidate human action is, he argues, that natural philosophy deals with material phenomena, which are epistemically easily accessible, whereas a great deal of action theory deals with immaterial phenomena—pertaining to the human soul—, which are epistemically less easily accessible.


This dissertation traces the development in Augustine of Hippo’s thinking concerning the relationship between love and freedom across two pivotal texts: the De libero arbitrio and the Confessions. Camacho argues that what emerges in Augustine’s thought is the startling realization that genuine freedom is constituted by submission to a good beyond our anticipation, i.e., a good encountered in the experience of love. As Augustine came to see, the human person is ecstatically self-surface, drawn dynamically to the good through affect and rationality. Given this philosophical anthropology, the primary concern of the ethical life has less to do with autonomous willing, and more to do with properly nurturing and attuning our desire through a purifying attention. In other words, as Augustine shows us, the aim of the moral life is to allow our self-exceeding loves—and the good at which they aim—to form and reform the self.

This project aims to rehabilitate an Augustinian account of freedom by arguing for a renewed appreciation of the goodness of being, and for a recovery of the notion of loving-desire that constitutes our fundamental way of relating to this good. Given the fundamentally ecstatic nature of the human person revealed in love, freedom cannot be conceived purely as self-determination; as Augustine argues, we are made free by a transcendental source of our being. Augustine’s account of love has enduring philosophical relevance, then, not least because it disrupts our prevalent notion of freedom as self-determination. In contrast to our own dominant ethics of autonomy, Augustine argues that true freedom depends upon what exceeds self-willing: we only become free when we are able to acknowledge our finitude, and thereby learn to love others rightly.


This research focuses on the role of oracular divination in the thought of Plutarch of Chaeronea. Its peculiar nature of “intermediary” between the human and the divine is highlighted by a careful study of his Delphic dialogues, developed in the first three chapters. The final chapter collects and re-elaborates the results of the philosophical-conceptual analysis and gives an original reading of divination in Plutarch, in light of his psycho-

logical and cosmological conceptions.

Chapter I, devoted to De Pythiae oraculis, proposes the Delphic temple, in its physical appearance and divinatory role, as a symbol endowed with a fundamental gnoseological function. The psycho-physical status of the Delphic priestess and the dynamic of enthusiasm are analysed in connection with Plutarch’s anthropology and psychology.

Chapter II, devoted to De defectu oraculorum, stresses the importance of mythical narratives as valuable sources of knowledge. The interplay between the god and the cosmos is analysed in light of the notion of “divine responsibility” while stressing the mediated character of god’s action in the world. Attention is paid to the “double causation” theory applied to divination, and to the key concepts of prōtēma, krēsis and kairēs.

Chapter III, devoted to De E apud Delbos, emphasises the manifold image of Apollo, and the tension between his unitary transcendent essence and his manifold immanent character. After considering the importance of symbols and riddles in philosophy, as repositories of hidden meanings, the analysis dwells on Plutarch’s complex dualistic theory and his relation with Oriental wisdom and traditions.

Chapter IV, “Divination and the soul”, merges and combines the ideas developed in the previous chapters and focuses on the role of the soul (individual and cosmic) in Plutarch’s conception of divination. A comparison is proposed between the function and structure of individual soul in oracular divination and in the demonic-Socratic mantra (De genio Socratis). Finally, Plutarch’s conception of divination is explored in light of his reading of Plato’s psychogony (De animae praecipuatione in Timaeo).

The study has shown that the Delphic temple represents the place on earth where the cosmic powers of reason and necessity manifest themselves with the utmost clarity.


Human enhancement can be defined as any deliberate technological and/or biomedical intervention on the healthy human body or mind to improve its physical and/or mental capacities above the level that is typical of human beings, with a view to increasing our welfare.

The primary objective of this research is to ethically investigate the pursuit of human enhancement — bringing to the fore the ethical complexity of this modern biomedical technology — with a view to determining its ethical viability, desirability, and necessity in the global context. In this pursuit, this dissertation simultaneously explores whether the Treatment-Enhancement Distinction has an inevitable role to play in the moral evaluation of human enhancement.

In order to achieve the proposed objective, the dissertation investigates three prominent approaches from the mainstream debate on human enhancement, namely, Julian Savulescu’s Welfarist Approach, Allen

Against the background of the three approaches that Irudhayadson has employed, the dissertation critically evaluates the pursuit of human enhancement and brings to light various ethical concerns; it analyses the normative significance of human nature by interpreting it from the perspective of human vulnerability; it explores and defends the viability of the treatment-enhancement distinction in the ethics of human enhancement; it scrutinizes the dispositions driving the human enhancement enterprise; it reviews the ultimate end of human enhancement and the limits of the pursuit of human enhancement with a view to determining whether we could promote human enhancement; it proposes a 'responsible human enhancement' in order to determine the nature of technology in the context of human enhancement, especially by studying the relationship between 'possibility and permissibility' in respect of the ethics of human enhancement; and finally, with a view to answering the question whether human enhancement makes our life better, the dissertation explores whether a healthier life, a life with better advantages, or a longer life, promotes a better life. Based on our analysis hitherto, we propose a case-by-case ethical appraisal of human enhancement which does not advocate a wholesale rejection of human enhancement, because when the human enhancement project is responsible and ethical, we may have no problem in considering its promotion.

Allen Jones, Pain and Metal Phenomena: Thinking at the Limit with Modern Philosophy. Promotor: Prof. R. Breur

It is generally held that our time is one that is wanting for a unifying image of culture. But perhaps, in the narrower sense of the term, we are not 'wanting' for such an image at all. If we lack such a unifying image, it may be that this is precisely because we no longer desire it. Rather than unifying images, our time is one that is characterized by an ever-shifting dispersion of problems-to-be-solved. These problems appear to circle restlessly around an insatiable desire for making life pass more effortlessly, more painlessly. Understood in this way, a problem is always the sign of a tension to be released, an obstacle to be overcome, or a wound to be healed. And it finds its place in an already-constituted historical or natural arrangement. The terms 'inefficiency', 'imbalance', and 'dysfunction'—whether we find them in economics, social theory, or psychology—are always the watchwords for some wasteful excess of effort that itself obstructs the path to fulfillment and enjoyment. If mankind has become little more than a shifting arrangement of problems, then what would remain of it if the totality of these problems were finally to be solved? Would it turn its attention to the creation of art or music? Could it have a sense of humor? Or perhaps, in a delicious bit of historical irony, would it ultimately 'shut itself down' out of pure boredom? This work examines this relationship between suffering and creativity. Because Hegel, Nietzsche, Bergson and Freud were themselves preoccupied with these questions in one form or another, Jones has chosen them as his primary interlocutors.

Willow Verkerk, Nietzsche's Ethics of Friendship: Reading Nietzsche as an Agonistic and Bestowing Friend. Promotor: Prof. P. Van Tongeren

Nietzsche is a philosopher who both performs and teaches an ethics of friendship with the aim of furthering passionate knowledge-seeking and shared self-overcoming. Verkerk's argument is that we have failed to understand the meaning of Nietzschean friendship, specifically its therapeutic and creative aims which necessarily include agonistic interactions. An account of Nietzschean friendship must acknowledge the important role of 'gen' in his ethics otherwise it fails to grasp the significance of Nietzsche's re-evaluative project. Nietzsche distinguishes friendship from love as a relationship in which the possessive drives active in love are sublimated into a shared higher goal. He brings entity into friendship not to deny the joyful possibilities of friendship, but instead to transform friendship into an exercise of therapeutics that promotes free-spiritedness and self-reflection with greater tenacity. Nietzsche believes that conflict promotes shared enhancement and that in order to grow, people require companions who are capable of questioning and potentially defeating them. Through his writings on friendship and love, Nietzsche requests his readers to come to terms with their habits, beliefs, and values and to enter into relationships that will support further self-analysis. Nietzsche's writings on friendship have an ethical orientation that challenges the nihilism of small comforts and the prejudices of confirmed beliefs with a post-meta-physical approach to life that celebrates human struggle and creation.


This dissertation focuses on the issue of 'race and the body' in the context of Emmanuel Levinas's philosophy. The objectives are to contextualize and then to situate the question of racism and the ethicized embodied subject. Contemporary discussions on racism go far beyond fixed biogenetic theories, physiological differences and blood relations. The other person's difference is often taken as the condition of his or her identity and difference; and here one moves from a phenomenology of differences to a reductionist ontology. In clarifying the notions of race and racism, the dissertation argues that racism in its pure form is still prevalent today, yet now under disguise as an attack on the body; for the body remains the source of racism. This dissertation studies racism from the viewpoint of Levinas, whose experience and conception of racism take the form of Jewish persecution. Levinas warns that Hitlerism must not be dismissed as a form of madness, but that it is the concrete manifestation of racism as a diabolical criminality. One must move beyond classical interpretations of the body that either suppress it as crude matter (liberalism) or call for an identification with the body (materialism). The danger is that such an identification
between our bodies and ourselves might be absolutized, as the case of Hitheism.

According to Levinas’s early account of subjectivity, the ego totalizes the totality of the world, yet what is problematic about such a totalizing subject is the ontological prioritization of autonomy and affirmation of radical freedom that excludes transcendence otherness. Racism is one such modality of the violent domination of the radical otherness of the other human person, where the egoist subject totalizes and reduces the radical alterity of the other person to its self-sameness as a mere thought and object of comprehension. Any such reduction and denial of the other deprives the other of his or her irreducible transcendence. This dissertation argues against this violent autonomy, holding, with Levinas, that the ego is radically separated upon the entrance of the other person, who resists totalization and reduction and thereby challenges the egoism of the subject. The Other as absolute otherness thus remains a non-encapsposable transcendence. Though the actual point of attack in racism is the body, the paradox is that Levinas argues for an ethicized bodily subject beyond racism.

Kellen Dale Plaxco, *Didymus the Blind, Origen, and the Trinity*. Promotor: Prof. G. Van Riel and Prof. M. R. Barnes

This dissertation reconstructs Didymus’s Blind’s theology in *On the Holy Spirit* as a pro-Nicene response to Origen’s theology of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The study begins by setting Origen’s speculation into a broad framework of schemes of emanation in Christianity and Platonism. Plaxco provides an account of Origen’s grammar of participation, which orders the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in a hierarchical series of causes. He shows how Origen’s grammar of participation draws on the philosophy of Numenius of Apamea, and he argues that Origen uses his grammar of participation to oppose monarchian theologies that identify the three as a single, undifferentiated substance. He then shows how Origen’s grammar of participation to oppose monarchian polemics (e.g., John 16:14). Plaxco argues that Origen’s grammar of participation, which orders the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in a hierarchical series of causes, yields a “low” pneumatology.

With Origen’s theology in view, Plaxco turns to Didymus’s Blind’s *On the Holy Spirit*. He contextualizes Didymus’s response to angelomorphic pneumatology in terms of pro-Nicene theology. He begins by showing how Didymus transforms exegesis of a key verse in anti-monarchian polemic (John 16:14). Plaxco argues that Didymus opposed Eunomius’ reading of John 16:14, as well as Eunomius’ claim that the Holy Spirit is subordinated to the Son. He then shows how Didymus’ doctrine of inseparable operation helps him oppose an anti-Nicene reading of John 5:19 and John 14:26. Finally, Plaxco argues that Didymus retains certain features of earlier Alexandrian tradition while transforming others in light of Nicaea. He retains a “spiritual” participation in the Holy Spirit and a theology of the “image” of God. He replaces Origen’s tiered trinity with a “high” pneumatology and pro-Nicene theology. The Holy Spirit is the transcendent, “paradigmatic cause” of the impression of holiness in the soul. Didymus argues this point in pro-Nicene terms in order to ground an anti-Manichaean asceticism: the monk can neither purify himself nor become irredeemably evil.


This dissertation studies the so-called kind-crossing- or metabasis-prohibition in Aristotle, where it first occurs, and in Neoplatonism. According to Aristotle, demonstrations that cross from one genus to another (e.g., from arithmetic to geometry), i.e. those demonstrations that employ propositions pertaining to different genera, cannot produce scientific knowledge. Steinkrüger rejects the majority of previous explanations offered in the literature, which make the concept of a domain of a science necessary, sufficient and explanatory for the metabasis-prohibition, on textual and philosophical grounds. Instead, he argues that the metabasis-prohibition has its root in Aristotle’s metaphysical theory of essence and per se predication and in his conviction that scientific knowledge is of the essence. As a consequence, the metabasis-prohibition primarily applies to kinds like triangle and circle, which are parts of what previous scholars have understood the domain of a science to be, and only derivatively to larger domains comprising these subjects. Combining this explanation with well-known structures providing for the unity of sciences (kath’ hén and pros hén unity), Steinkrüger is able to explain all passages related to metabasis, such as the several examples and the subordination-exception. His explanation also avoids various problems the traditional interpretation faces, such as the arbitrary expansion of domains of sciences. In the second part, he turns to Neoplatonic responses to the metabasis-prohibition, and especially to Proclus, who appears to agree with the metabasis-prohibition in his *In Eud.,* but appears to violate it in his natural philosophy. Proclus and Simplicius both adhered to a model of explanation that can be called geometrical atomism and which claims, in short, that certain physical properties supervise on elementary stereometric bodies. This theory, going back to Plato, was rejected by Aristotle in his *De Caelo* on grounds of, *inter alia,* violating the metabasis-prohibition. Steinkrüger argues that Proclus affirms the metabasis-prohibition on formal grounds but since his metaphysics of essences is different from Aristotle’s, he rejects the metabasis-allegation in the case of geometrical atomism.
HIW NEWS 2015-2016

Personalia

On June 1, 2016, Grant Ramsey was appointed as BOF-ZAP associate professor at the HIW. Before he came to Leuven, he worked at the University of Notre Dame (USA). At the HIW he will be teaching, among other courses, philosophy of science and analytical philosophy.

On October 1, 2016, Griet Galle was promoted to the rank of assistant professor. Griet Galle has been working at the Institute as the editorial secretary of the Tijdschrift voor Filosofie and as a substitute teacher for various courses. She was appointed as a part-time lecturer to coordinate the philosophical part of the teacher training program and to teach the course ‘Research and Writing Tutorial’ in the Dutch and English program. She will also continue her function as editorial secretary.

Nicolas de Warren was promoted to the rank of full professor on October 1, 2016.

Thursday Lectures and Lectures for the 21st Century

In 2015-2016, the Institute of Philosophy had a rich programme of lectures and seminars.

There were six Thursday Lectures:

• Marcel van Ackeren (Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität Münster) What Does Philosophy Owe to Its History? The Relation between Historical and Systematic Aspects (22 October 2015)
• Johanna Oksala (University of Helsinki/New School for Social Research) Political Philosophy in the Era of Climate Change (5 November 2015)
• Sylvia Wenmackers (KU Leuven) Children of the Cosmos: Reasoning about the Effectiveness of Mathematics in Physics (26 November 2015)
• Raf Geenens (KU Leuven) Sovereignty as Autonomy (25 February 2016)
• Kathi Beier (University of Vienna/KU Leuven) The Soul, the Virtues, and the Human Good. Insights from Aristotle and Aquinas (24 March 2016)
• Angelica Nuzzo (Graduate Center and Brooklyn College, CUNY) Spontaneity, Autonomy, (Self-) Realization: Freedom for Kant and Hegel (28 April 2016)

The Lectures for the 21st Century celebrated their 22nd edition. The 2015-2016 programme was as follows:

• Marianne Thyssen, Meer werkgelegenheid en rechtvaardigheid: de nieuwe sociale agenda van de Juncker Commissie (26 October 2015)
• Filip Abraham, De problemen met onze Europese Economische en Monetaire Unie (9 November 2015)
• Koenraad Matthijs & Sofie Vanasse, Het gezin van morgen: rood of blauw (16 November 2015)
• Dirk De Wachter, “Borderline Times”: een psychiatrische diagnose van de Tijd (23 November 2015)
• Ronny Bruffaerts, Als suïcide een maatschappelijk probleem is, waarom behandelen we het dan als een klinisch probleem? (30 November 2015)
• Karel Van Acker, Circulaire economie: een economie zonder schaarse grondstoffen? (7 December 2015)
• Walter Bogaerts, Nucleaire technologie in de 21ste eeuw: Zijn onze kerncentrales aangetast? Wat met onze nucleaire afvalstoffen? (6 February 2016)
• Manuel Sintubin, Knot niet met wrijving! De dreiging van geïnduceerde aardbevingen (15 February 2016)
• Jan Barons, Visuele literatuur (22 February 2016)
• Steven Eggermont, Opzetten in een seksuele mediacultuur: de impact van seksualisering en pornificatie op de ontwikkeling van kinderen en adolescenten (29 February 2016)
• Jan Cools, Leukemie: spellingsfouten in de DNA code (14 March 2016)
• Sylvia Wenmackers, Waarschijnlijkheid: objectieve kansen en subjectieve graden van overtuiging (21 March 2016)

Other lectures and conferences

• From 15-16 October, the Centre for Logic and Analytic Philosophy organised an international conference on Pathologizing Body and Mind – Leuven Philosophy of Medicine Conference 2015.

• The Husserl Memorial Lecture 2016 was given by Sara Heinämaa. On Tuesday, October 27, she gave a guest lecture in the Cardinal Mercier Room on Gender, Embodiment and Intersubjectivity: a Phenomenological
• From 9-11 November, the Leuven Epistemology Group (LEG) organised the international Epistemic Norms Conference. The keynote speakers were Jessica Brown, Igor Douven, Pascal Engel, Sanford Goldberg, Peter Graham, Frank Hofmann, Jennifer Lackey en Clayton Littlejohn.

• Professor Darian Leader held the Cardinal Mercier Chair in the academic year 2015-2016. On Wednesday November 18, he gave a guest lecture in the Cardinal Mercier room on Bipolar Times. The next day, he gave two guest seminars on Diagnostic Issues in Psychoanalysis.

• On December 15, the Wijsgerig Gezelschap te Leuven organised a book presentation of Auteur de la bêtise (Classiques Garnier), written by Roland Breeur, Stefano Micali and Arnold Burms interviewed the author.

• On February 15, the Centre for Metaphysics, Philosophy of Religion and Philosophy of Culture organised a colloquium in remembrance of Peter Losonczii, entitled: The Future of Political Theology.

• On February 25, a second book presentation was organised by the Wijsgerig Gezelschap te Leuven, this time about De tijd, het schrift, het verschil (Polis/Klement), the philosophical testament of Samuel IJsseleng. Gido Berns and Erik Meganck both held a short lecture about Samuel IJsseleng and his vision on philosophy.

• Jean-Luc Nancy visited the Institute of Philosophy on March 1 and gave a very popular lecture in the Cardinal Mercier room on Le présent du temps. Nancy also gave two guest seminars on art and politics and the deconstruction of Christianity.

• Lynne Rudder Baker was scheduled to give the guest lecture at the yearly Saint Thomas Feast, which took place on March 7. The title of her lecture was Eternal God – Temporal World. Unfortunately, she was unable to come. Her text was then presented by professor Katherine Sonderegger, William Meade Professor of Theology at the Virginia Theological Seminary in Alexandria, Virginia.

• Several conferences took place in the spring semester: the international conference Utopias in Ancient Thought (10-12 March 2016, organised by Prof. Jan Opsomer), the 5th RELUX Epistemology Colloquium (7-9 March 2016, organised by the Leuven Epistemology Group), a workshop about The Body in Spinoza’s Philosophy (28 March 2016, organised by Sean Winkler), the second claw-dwmc symposium (22 April 2016, jointly organised by the Centre for Logic and Analytic Philosophy and the De Wulf-Mansion Centre for Ancient, Medieval and Renaissance Philosophy), a workshop on Lambert, Tetens and Kant (9 May 2016, organised by Prof. Karin de Boer), the second Cologne Leuven Epistemology Meeting (27-28 May, organised by LEG), a workshop on Husserl and America (30 May 2016, organised by Francesco Tava), the fourth edition of the Leuven Kant Conference (2-3 June 2016, organised by Prof. Karin de Boer), a book workshop on Responding to Global Poverty (7-8 June 2016, organised by RIPPLE) and the First Biennial Conference of the European Hobbes Society (21-22 September 2016, organised by Johan Olsthoorn).

• The Sixth Graduate Student Conference took place on Friday April 15. The Graduate Student Conference is held over one day in the early spring of each year and brings together graduate students to present their research projects. Julia Jansen gave the keynote lecture on The Problem of Realism in the Space of Contingency.

• The yearly Festival of Philosophy focused on the topic of Borders. The keynote lecture was given by Frank Furedi. There were also lectures and talks by Peter Venmans, Steven Vanackere, Helder De Schutter, Paul Schefter, Montasser Attieemeh, Anya Topolski, Dries Deweer, Liesbeth Schoonheim, Nadia Fadil and Naema Tahirt. The evening performance was given by Tom Lanoye, Nicolas Rombouts and Teun Verbeugnen.

• The yearly study day of the Wijsgerig Gezelschap te Leuven focused on the theme Radicalisation. The speakers were Matthias Lievens, Thomas Berns and Lado Abicht. The wsg. also organised a study evening on Huit en Weerds, in cooperation with the Tijdschrift voor Filosofie. Herman Westerink, Lode Lauwaert and Herman Siemens gave a guest lecture about their article in that special edition of the Tijdschrift.

• The summer school of the Institute of Philosophy celebrated its eighth edition. From August 22 to 25, a group of 50 participants studied and discussed Immanuel Kant’s four questions: “What can I know?”, “What should I do?”, “What may I hope?”, “What is man?”. For the fourth time, the summer school included an advanced programme (for 77 participants). The theme of this programme was “Contemporary French Philosophy.”
FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE AT THE INSTITUTE OF PHILOSOPHY

Institute of Philosophy Teaching and Research Assistantships
The Institute of Philosophy offers to self-supporting PhD students the possibility of teaching seminars and doing research support tasks. They are hired as job students and receive a salary of ± €6,000/year. Selection: each year in June.

Institute of Philosophy Research Projects
Description: Every year, PhD scholarships are available for particular research projects, for which professors of the Institute of Philosophy acquired competitive funding. Qualifications: MA Philosophy degree and experience in the requested field. Tenure: usually four years. Application: project descriptions, application procedures and deadlines are announced at www hw.kuleuven.be/eng/jobsscholarships.html when available.

KU Leuven Post-Doctoral Scholarschips
Description: Short postdoctoral positions for KU Leuven doctoral students (80%-90%). These full-time research mandates are explicitly aimed at providing young researchers with the opportunity to expand their research activities at KU 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: Each year in March.

KU Leuven Post-Doctoral Fellowships
Description: The University awards postdoctoral fellowships for senior researchers who obtained their doctoral degree at a non-KU Leuven university (80%-90%). 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. Exceptionally renewable. Application: Application forms must be filled out and submitted by a KU Leuven professor together with the curriculum vitae of the candidate and a brief description of the proposed research. Submission dates: March and September.

KU Leuven Development Cooperation Scholarships
Description: These scholarships are available to students from developing countries (former Soviet Union countries and Eastern European countries are not included). They are available for candidates wishing to study in the Doctoral Programme. Qualifications: The applicant must be a citizen of a developing country and holder of a master’s degree with excellent academic qualifications. The time period between the date of completion of their MA degree and the date of submission of their scholarship application can be no more than ten years. Women are encouraged to apply. Further information on qualifications is available on the website http://www.kuleuven.be/iro/ or at 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 1140 Euros per month. Tenure: Up to 4 years. Application: Online Application Forms are available on the website: http://www.kuleuven.be/iro/. Application deadline: each year in November.

FWO PhD Scholarships
Description: scholarship for preparing a PhD (two-aspirant). Qualifications: Applicants need to be a European citizen or need to have a Master’s degree from a European university. They also need to have been admitted to the doctoral programme. The Master’s degree must have been obtained no more than 5 years before the start date of the fellowship. 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: http://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 than 3 years ago (this time limit is postponed by one year in case of pregnancy or parental leave and does not apply to candidates who have not yet reached the age of 36). Tenure: 3 years, renewable. Application: Applications are accepted until February 1st.

Fulbright Fellowships and Grants
Description: A variety of fellowships and grants are available through the Fullbright 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 www.fullbright.be/study-in-belgium/scholarships-for-us-citizens-studying-or-researching-in-belgium/ for more information.

The Belgian-American Educational Foundation Fellowships
Description: 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 http://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. Information can also be found at www.studyinflanders.be/en/scholarship-programmes/

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

Canadian Government Student Loans
Description: The Government of Canada and most provincial or territorial governments work together to deliver federal and provincial student loan and grant programs. Qualifications: Applicants must be Canadian citizens, permanent residents of Canada or designated as protected persons. Application: see www.canlearn.ca/eng/loans_grants/loans/apply.shtml

Aid to the Church in Need scholarships for priests and religious
Description: Scholarships for priests and religious. Prospective key personnel and teaching staff, such as seminary professors, novice mistresses and masters, canon lawyers, etc., are the primary receivers of these scholarships. Support of the local bishop is needed. Studies considered: MA and doctoral studies. Application: Write to Aid to the Church in Need — International, Postfach 1209, D-61452 Königstein (Germany). Deadline: each year in February.

ERASMUS Programme
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